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London Communiqué: Bologna Process: Continuing Challenges in a Globalised World

Introduction	Comments on introduction
<p>The Bologna Process is bringing about unprecedented change in European higher education, as we continue our efforts to enhance the quality of European higher education, introduce easily readable and comparable degrees within a coherent framework, and increase mobility. This is a welcome development. The progress made over the last two years has brought us a significant step closer to the realisation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). This would not have been possible without the enthusiastic and committed partnership approach adopted by all stakeholders.</p> <p>We, the ministers responsible for Higher Education in the participating countries of the Bologna-Process, met in London to review the progress made since we convened in Bergen in 2005 and set clear goals for the next two years. As we look ahead, we recognise that in a changing world, there will be a continuing need to support the evolution of the EHEA. Over the next two years, we will strengthen and develop collaboration within the EHEA, as well as with partners in other parts of the world. In the short term, we appreciate that implementing the Bologna reforms is an enormous task, particularly for countries that joined the process more recently. We reaffirm our commitment to assist the newer member countries in their efforts.</p>	<p>There should be a reference that even though great progress has been made in implementing the Bologna Action lines at the systemic level, but that the implementation of the reforms at the institutional level will still take time.</p> <p>Besides, it is an enormous task for all; not just countries that joined the process more recently and it is also not always the ones having joined more recently which need most support for their efforts.</p>

Values and aims of the Bologna Process and the EHEA

In establishing the EHEA, we are aiming to modernise higher education and help higher education institutions (HEIs) adapt to the changing needs of the knowledge-based societies in which we live. We also recognise the important influence HEIs exert in developing our modern societies, building on their strong tradition of teaching, research and knowledge transfer. We reaffirm our commitment to increasing the compatibility and comparability of our higher education systems whilst at the same time maintaining their diversity. Our aim is to ensure that our HEIs continue to fulfil their full range of purposes. These include preparing students for life as active citizens in democratic societies; developing and maintaining a broad, advanced knowledge base and stimulating research and innovation; preparing students for the labour market and enabling personal development for students.

We underline the importance of strong, autonomous institutions, with the freedom to pursue their own institutional missions. Access to higher education and the participation of students and staff in the development and dissemination of knowledge should not be made hostage to fluctuating political relationships. We commit to following these basic principles throughout the European Higher Education Area.

<p>Progress towards the EHEA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Highlights from the Stocktaking report</i> 	<p>Comments on Progress towards the EHEA</p>
<p><u>Mobility</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mobility remains key goal of Bologna process; we should ensure that all of our actions support this goal.</i> • <i>Acknowledge that there are still a number of practical difficulties to overcome before we achieve this goal</i> • <i>Support the further development of joint degrees (depending on results of stocktaking and EUA trends)</i> <p>We also recognise the continuing need to remove obstacles to mobility within the EHEA and from other parts of the world, particularly in the field of visa and immigration policy.</p>	<p>Comments on mobility</p> <p>Austria would like to see proposals from the Seminar on staff mobility and from the working group on Social Dimension and data on the mobility of staff and students – if available.</p>
<p><u>Social dimension</u></p> <p>Higher education plays a strong role in fostering social cohesion, reducing inequalities and raising the level of competences in society. It helps to maximise the potential of individuals in terms of their personal development and their contribution to a sustainable and democratic knowledge-based society. Our ultimate goal is that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education should reflect the diversity of our populations. We must continue our efforts to widen</p>	<p>Comments on the Social Dimension</p> <p>Austria would like to see a proposal from the Social Dimension Working Group for this paragraph.</p>

<p>participation at all levels on the basis of equal opportunity. *</p> <p>We agree to set up a network of national experts to facilitate the portability of grants and loans, to share information and help to identify and overcome obstacles. This follows on from discussions amongst our student support experts over the last two years that demonstrated the need for mutual assistance to implement portable grants and loans.</p>	
<p><u>Qualifications Framework</u></p> <p>The necessary orientation of HEIs towards qualifications based on learning outcomes and competencies, and the improved recognition of qualifications will be taken forward by the development of qualifications frameworks.</p> <p>We take note of the progress towards the implementation of national qualifications frameworks in line with the overarching <i>Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA</i>. We commit ourselves to fully implementing such a national qualifications framework, certified against the overarching framework, by 2010. We ask the Council of Europe to support the sharing of experience in the elaboration of national qualifications frameworks.</p> <p>We see the overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area as a central element of the promotion of European higher education both within and outwith Europe.</p> <p>We note the parallel development within the EU of a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF). We are</p>	<p>Comments on the Qualifications Framework</p> <p>“Education” should not be plural</p> <p>Maybe the wording should be more realistic “is planned to be compatible”.</p> <p>Besides, the main issue will be that national qualifications</p>

<p>satisfied that the Framework for Qualifications in the EHEA will be compatible with the EQF.</p>	<p>frameworks which are compatible with the overarching EHEA framework (and this is what we speak about in the Bologna context), will also be compatible with the EQF.</p>
<p><u>Quality Assurance/European Register of QA Agencies</u></p> <p>We adopt the model of a Register of European Higher Education Quality Assurance Agencies, as outlined by ENQA in cooperation with EUA, EURASHE and ESIB. We note with satisfaction that the Register will be self financing and rely, so far as possible, on the experience and expertise of existing organisations. We commit ourselves to implement such a tool in order to allow all stakeholders and the general public to access freely objective information about quality assurance agencies working in line with the European Standards and Guidelines. We ask ENQA, in cooperation with EUA, EURASHE and ESIB, to implement the Register in accordance with the following requirements (<i>to be developed</i>), overseen by BFUG.</p>	<p>Comments on Quality Assurance/European Register of QA Agencies</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Comments on national action plans for recognition – recognition of higher education qualifications, of periods of studies and of prior, experiential learning are an integral part of the Bologna Process and a prerequisite of mobility. Reliable, easily understandable degrees and easily accessible information on educational systems and qualifications frameworks are necessary.</i> 	<p>Comments on national action plans for recognition</p> <p>A proposal should come from the results of the seminar in Riga, if possible.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Comments on basic principles for doctoral programmes</i> 	<p>Comments on basic principles for doctoral programmes</p> <p>The proposal should come from the project led by EUA.</p>

<u>[The European Higher Education Area in the global context</u>	Comments on the EHEA in the global context
<p>We are pleased that in many parts of the world, the Bologna reforms have created considerable interest and stimulated discussion between European and international partners on a range of issues. These include the recognition of qualifications, the benefits of cooperation based upon partnership, mutual trust and understanding, and the underlying values of the Bologna Process.</p> <p>We ask the BFUG to give priority to improving information available about the EHEA, building on existing communications tools. We want to deepen the fruitful exchange on higher education policy development with our partners in other parts of the world and develop dialogue, cooperation and mobility, at the level of governments, higher education institutions, and educational associations and international organisations and institutions.]</p>	<p>Austria would like to see the complete text as submitted by the working group on this topic:</p> <p>“We are pleased that in many parts of the world, the Bologna reforms have created considerable interest and stimulated discussions between European and international partners on a range of issues. These include the recognition of qualifications, the benefits of cooperation based upon partnership, mutual trust and understanding, and the underlying values of the Bologna Process.</p> <p>We take note of the report of the BFUG and endorse the strategy "The European Higher Education Area in a Global Setting". We recognize the need to take the strategy forward and call upon BFUG - by drawing on the expertise of relevant European organisations and institutions as well as on national and institutional levels - to define best practice with a view to programmes and tools for implementing the strategy. This should encompass the development of a proposal for a set of European principles for framework conditions for international students and scholars, and a report on progress made regarding strategies and implementation at the level of the Bologna Process, as well as on national and institutional levels to be submitted to the ministers by 2009.</p> <p>We have also agreed to give a new impetus to efforts to enhance the attractiveness of European higher education worldwide, by establishing a network of national organisations in each of our countries with a mandate to</p>

	<p>promote our higher education systems and institutions across the world.”</p>
<p>Priorities for 2009 (to be informed by stocktaking)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Concentrate on completing agreed Action Lines; picking up the pace of implementation, and adapting effectively to changes outwith the EHEA</i> • <i>Agree to report by 2009 on action being taken at the national level to increase student and staff mobility</i> • <i>Agree to report by 2009 on national [strategies] [policies] for the social dimension</i> • <i>Ask BFUG to address the identified data gaps and continue developing established contacts with data and information providers, particularly Unesco/OECD/Eurostat/Eurostudent. And ask BFUG to engage one of these providers to enhance the comparability and reliability of data across the EHEA.</i> • <i>Ask BFUG to elaborate further the Strategy for European Higher Education Area in a Global Setting</i> • <i>Work on employability should be continued and possibly expanded in working group/seminar/inclusion in stocktaking on employability</i> <p>We recognise the role of higher education in delivering the skills and attributes that individuals need in the workplace and that</p>	<p>Comments on Priorities for 2009</p> <p>Apart from the priorities which result from the stocktaking and the various working groups and projects, the major priority should be the reflection on the future (post 2010).</p>

<p>employers require. We believe that preparing people for employability and lifelong learning also contributes strongly to fulfilling the social dimension. We therefore believe that employability needs to be addressed in each of the three cycles. We encourage our institutions to develop employability strategies that include looking at how employability can be embedded in the curriculum and how they can enable learners to build upon prior learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Something about research?</i> • <i>Next stocktaking exercise</i> 	
<p>2010 and beyond</p> <p>Over and above the priorities set for the next two years we agree that we need to focus our efforts on completing the implementation of the Bologna Action lines by 2010. We can anticipate however that, as the EHEA continues to develop and respond to the challenges of globalisation, the need for collaboration will not come to an end.</p> <p>We also recognise the need to define in more concrete terms our vision for EHEA. Our discussions over the last two days suggest the following characteristics should be the basis of our future work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good governance/autonomous universities 	<p>Comments on 2010 and beyond</p> <p>As mentioned earlier, it needs to be clear that there is a distinction between the framework conditions to enable the implementation of all Bologna action lines, which need to be created by governments and the concrete implementation at the institutional level, which will take longer.</p>

- an embedded quality improvement culture
- relevant curricula, leading to highly valued qualifications, recognised throughout the EHEA and beyond by employers and universities
- increased student and staff mobility
- equitable access for all and a strong social dimension
- an increasingly strong link between higher education and research
- effective knowledge transfer and better engagement between universities and business, industry and the wider community.

We ask the BFUG to refine the key characteristics for a successful EHEA, and take this into account as the context for the next and future stocktaking exercises.

We invite BFUG to arrange for 2010 the preparation of a comprehensive report evaluating the overall progress of the Bologna Process. This report should be prepared in partnership with the consultative members. We delegate the decision on the nature, content and place of any ministerial meeting in 2010 to be taken by BFUG within the first half of 2008.

We also ask BFUG to consider further how the EHEA might need to be supported after 2010, bearing in mind that the current informal collaborative arrangements are working well.

We welcome the Republic of Montenegro as a full member of the Bologna Process [note - to be updated as required in response to other applicants]

Maybe we should refer to “current arrangements” or “current structures” instead of “informal collaborative arrangements”.

We will hold the next ministerial meeting in Leuven in 2009.	
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