

## **PRESS RELEASE. Official Conclusions of Lithuanian Presidency of the EU Council Conference „European higher education in the world”**

6th September, 2013, Vilnius, Lithuania

**The objective of the international conference „European Higher Education in the World“ held on 5-6<sup>th</sup> of September in Vilnius, Lithuania was to debate the different topics addressed in the Communication, especially how internationalisation can best be achieved by individual countries and higher education institutions and how it can contribute to their development, focussing on cooperation with non-EU countries - the mutually beneficial opportunities offered by the broader international context.**

The Communication of the European Commission on "European higher education in the world" introduces the idea of “comprehensive internationalisation”, and urges the Member States and their higher education institutions to not only concentrate on mobility but to also put an emphasis on the value and importance of international strategic partnerships, and other areas of cooperation where the EU has an added value, such as the development of joint degrees. Most universities already work within strategic partnerships: specific support for them will be provided through the [Erasmus+ programme](#) and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions which will offer support not only in terms of international students and staff mobility, but also for the setting up of international partnerships, for joint degrees and capacity building. The main goal of internationalisation is to enhance quality and competitiveness of European higher education.

It is not enough to leave it to the universities to implement the strategies; the Member States have a role to play to provide support to their universities, and resources to ensure sustainability. The discussions of these two days show that many universities and governments have already strategies, or they plan to develop one. In this context the diversity of HEIs has to be preserved and promoted. There are many good examples to learn from and all of them have a holistic approach requiring strong leadership.

We have been reminded that effective internationalisation implies coherence of goals of various policy makers, and the importance of including various stakeholders and tools in internationalisation. And the toolbox is wider than mobility. It includes a stronger focus on quality as well as the new available opportunities that complement traditional tools - for instance via the use of online resources, introducing common European diploma.

The participants, including the students’ representatives, pointed out the importance of focussing on students’ needs, the social dimension, accessibility to international mobility, balance between digital and physical mobility instruments, inward and outward mobility.

The Bologna process set in motion a series of actions needed to make European higher education more competitive and more attractive for students and academics from other continents. We have seen that a lot is going on in this field, but that more can be done to strengthen the European position in the global arena, continue attracting talent and connecting with the rest of the world. The strengthened intra EU cooperation, including in the area of quality assurance and mutual recognition of qualifications and diplomas is needed in order to increase attractiveness. It is easy to fasten in our habits. The outsiders’ voice – both from other sectors than education and from other

parts of the world than Europe, gives us new and perhaps unexpected perspectives on what we are doing, but the award of degree diploma should remain within the remit of HEIs.

In order to guarantee a concrete follow up and continuous improvement of these strategies appropriate monitoring and evidence gathering mechanisms are necessary.

More information about the Conference: <http://www.mosta.lt/en/events/70-european-higher-education-in-the-world>

Latest news about the Conference: <https://twitter.com/IHE2013>

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