

The Bologna Process 2020 - The European Higher Education Area in the new decade

1 Since its inception in 1999, the Bologna Process has led to the creation of a strong and robust European Higher Education Area; it has rendered European higher education more attractive and competitive on a global scale by rooting it firmly in Europe's intellectual, scientific and cultural heritage and ambitions. The change brought about by the Bologna Process has led to greater compatibility and comparability of the systems of higher education. The structure of higher education has been modernized with the adoption of a three-cycle structure including the possibility of a short cycle within or linked to the first cycle; quality assurance guidelines have been developed, a European register for quality assurance agencies has been created; an agreement has been reached at European level on appropriate qualifications frameworks based on learning outcomes to facilitate recognition. Moreover, the Bologna Process has availed itself of the technical instruments of the Diploma Supplement and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System to further increase transparency and compatibility of programmes.

2 There has been strong adherence to these principles, especially since the Bologna Process has managed to instil European higher education with a permanent sense of cooperation by encouraging and increasing dialogue between the different stakeholders, governments, institutions, students and personnel.

3 The main objectives as set out by the Bologna Declaration are as valid today as they were in 1999. The Bologna Process will continue to contribute to the creation of the Europe of knowledge. By ensuring that European higher education strengthens its world-wide attraction equal to Europe's extraordinary cultural and scientific traditions, it is a major contributor to its development. It will continue to be a key element to promote the citizens' mobility and their employability.

4 Therefore, the full implementation of these principles and objectives will still require continual momentum after 2010. The European Higher Education Area shall more firmly be based on convergent degree structures and commonly agreed standards and instruments that guarantee the quality and the transparency of provision and qualifications. Progress on agreements for easy recognition supported by the **development of national qualifications frameworks** remains of utmost importance.

5 The Bologna Process up to 2020 should contribute to making Europe a highly creative and innovative region as well as an attractive global partner in the advent of a global knowledge society. The European Higher Education Area in 2020 shall therefore be an area where higher education is a public responsibility and where institutions of higher education are responsive to the needs of society through the diversity of their missions and purposes. The necessary continued reform of higher education systems and policies will continue to be firmly rooted in the fundamental European values of academic freedom, institutional autonomy and active participation of students and staff.

6 Higher education is a global phenomenon of which European Higher Education is a part. European higher education will be further embedded in an institutional culture of internationalisation and collaboration. The **attractiveness and openness of European higher education** will be highlighted. Competition on a global scale will be complemented by policy dialogue and cooperation based on partnership with other regions of the world most prominently through the Bologna Policy Fora.

7 Mobility of students and staff will strengthen the internationalization of European higher education. Mobility is important for personal development and in an increasingly multicultural society, it fosters respect for diversity; it is thus a key ingredient for a more stable and peaceful world. Mobility also underpins the multilingual tradition of the European higher education area and it increases cooperation between institutions.

8 Therefore, mobility of students and staff within Europe as a sign of promoted and shared European citizenship, as well as of exchanges with the wider world in a spirit of solidarity and competitiveness, will feature prominently on the agenda of the Bologna Process beyond 2010. Mobility policies must thus bring together political initiatives of this kind with a range of practical measures running from recognition through financing to receiving students at host institutions. These policies should aim at more mobility of a higher quality, at a more balanced flow of incoming and outgoing students and at a better participation rate of less prepared and/or underprivileged groups. They must also devise different formulas for mobility to seek to include students who have family and/or work obligations.

9 *Mobility should become the rule and no longer be the exception.* In all degree programmes curricula will be designed in such a way that they create "mobility windows". Joint degree programmes should be promoted and attention should be given to developing the mobility potentials in particular in master's and doctoral programmes as a compulsory ingredient of research training.

10 As far as mobility of staff is concerned, framework conditions will be established to simplify the application processes for immigration into the EHEA as well as within and to ensure appropriate access to social security and portable pension rights for mobile staff.

11 An improved mobility framework will require the support of other ministries, in particular the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Ministries of Labour, Ministries of Interior and Ministries of Finance, in order to facilitate the granting of visas and work permits as well as the portability of grants and loans.

12 Mobility must be part of a sustainable institutional **internationalisation** strategy, including "on-campus internationalisation", promoting contacts between foreign and national students and staff and accompanied by a full range of activities to reach those who do not go abroad and those who need to be stimulated to go.

13 European higher education will more specifically face the major challenges posed by globalisation and demography. In order for European higher education to respond adequately to those challenges, **excellence** must be pursued at all levels of the institutions of higher education, in teaching and research as well as in innovation and community engagement.

14 The **demographic challenge** of an ageing population in a knowledge society can only be met by fully engaging in **lifelong learning** practices and by reinforcing the **social dimension** of higher education.

15 Indeed, social and human growth are indispensable components for European citizenship; the advent of a Europe of knowledge that is highly creative and innovative rests upon the ability of its citizens to summon the competences that are necessary to address the new challenges. This can only happen if higher education taps into resources that have hitherto been neglected.

16 The design of **lifelong learning strategies** to empower the individual to fully seize the opportunities of and fully contribute to a highly creative and innovative society will be the focus of the national and institutional plans for the decade to come. Lifelong learning places the learner at the centre; it is a multifaceted concept, which may involve climbing higher up the qualifications ladder, extending knowledge, gaining new skills and competences or simply pursuing learning to enrich one's personal growth. The implementation of lifelong learning strategies requires strong partnerships between public authorities, institutions and employers and it rests upon **recognition of prior learning**. Flexible learning paths as well as work based trajectories should lead to a system of validation in which there is equivalence of recognized prior learning with initial training programmes. Lifelong learning entails that qualifications can be obtained through a variety of routes.

17 The social dimension calls for equitable access into, successful progress and completion of higher education for the whole spectrum of the population in their various walks of life and age groups; it requires a learning environment of great quality geared to the needs of a diverse student body. The student body within higher education should reflect the diversity of Europe's populations and significant progress should be made within each participating country over the next decade.

18 The social dimension of higher education cannot be dissociated from the objective of **employability**. Higher education should equip students with the knowledge, skills, competences and attributes that individuals need in the workplace, whether in employee or self-employed status, whether in private or public employment, whether to gain employment, or to become self-employed, to maintain employment or to renew those skills and attributes throughout their working lives. Higher education institutions and employers are to engage in a meaningful dialogue allowing employers to clarify their needs, institutions to be more responsive, and allowing both to cooperate for a sustainable development of the professions. Business engagement will be encouraged to foster the employability of graduates at all levels of higher education.

19 Improved and enhanced **data collection** will help monitor progress made in the attainment of the objectives set out in the social dimension, employability and mobility agendas, as well in all priority areas where appropriate, and will serve as a basis for benchmarking.

20 In order for the combined objectives of lifelong learning, the social dimension and employability to be achieved, **curricular reform** will be an ongoing process. **Learning outcomes** have been generically defined for the degree structure and have become one of the building blocks of the Bologna Process, with institutions of higher education being at the heart of the underlying paradigm shift from teacher- to student-centred learning. More specific descriptors linked to given subject areas should now be developed, with due consideration for programme diversity and academic autonomy.

21 The Bologna Process has achieved **transparency** through its convergent degree structure, its qualifications frameworks and its compatible quality assurance mechanisms. At the same time, there is **increasing differentiation** in the missions of higher education institutions. Institutions should be supported to achieve excellence in those areas where they show their major strengths. Governments in close cooperation with other stakeholders should stimulate this development. In the light of this greater **diversification of higher education**, the Bologna Process will contribute to the creation and the monitoring of new instruments designed to point out the strengths of institutions with diverse mission statements.

These instruments should be relevant information tools for students and academic staff alike; moreover, they should help higher education institutions to establish cooperative partnerships, to compare and identify their competitive position, and to strive for excellence. All such instruments, which should be developed with full stakeholder involvement, need to relate closely to quality assurance and recognition and should be based on sound data collection and the design of corresponding indicators. [The paragraph will be discussed further and amended after the mini-seminar on typology and rankings to be held on 13.2. in Prague]

22 Moreover, higher education institutions have gained greater autonomy along with rapidly growing expectations to be responsive to societal needs and to be accountable. At a moment of financial and economic crisis, higher education is a long term investment preparing our societies to address the challenges of the decade to come and therefore remains a priority for public and private funding. Within a framework of public responsibility, **multiple funding** is seen as an opportunity to guarantee further sustainable development of institutions and their autonomy. The sharing of good practice in relation to accessing diverse sources of funding will be a priority.

23 [Paragraph containing the concrete targets to be discussed further]

In the next decade we will focus on the following concrete targets:

- Internationalisation and mobility:

- 25% of those students graduating in 2020 will have been physically mobile [or proportional increase benchmark?]
- curricula will be designed in such a way that they create “mobility windows”;
- the number of joint programmes will have been doubled;
- mobility within doctoral programmes should be promoted;
- the granting of visas and work permits as well as the portability of grants and loans will be made easier.
- Internationalisation and mobility, in particular their quality, should be included both in the framework of internal as well as external quality assessment schemes.

[- Targets for other action lines (social dimension, recognition, NQF....) to be completed]

24 The present **organisational structure** of the Bologna Process is endorsed as being fit for purpose. [Sentence on co-chairing of Bologna Process to be added]

25 In order to interact with other policy areas, BFUG will set up a number of working groups gathering experts and policy makers from other fields, like immigration, social security and employment.

26 We entrust the Bologna Follow-up Group to prepare a work plan to address the challenges identified in this Communiqué, allowing the future integration of the data collection results and the outcome of the independent assessment of the Bologna Process.

27 We will meet again at the Bologna anniversary conference jointly hosted by Austria and Hungary in Budapest and Vienna on 11-12 March 2010. The next regular ministerial conference will be hosted by Romania in Bucharest in April 2012. The following ministerial conferences will be held in 2015, 2018 and 2020.