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**Executive Summary**

This E-note provides an immediate report on the main outcomes of the Bologna Process ministerial summit in London on 17-18 May 2007.

**Attachment**

London Communiqué

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## Bologna Process ministerial summit in London, 17-18 May 2007

**Introduction**

1. This Europe Note reports on the main outcomes of the Bologna Process ministerial summit which took place in London on 17-18 May. The E-note gives background to the Bologna Process and summarises the priorities for future action identified by European ministers for higher education (HE) in the London Communiqué (attached).<sup>1</sup> An initial consideration of the implications of the Communiqué for UK HE is also included.

**Background to the Bologna Process**

2. The Bologna Process to create the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010 was launched in 1999 with the Bologna Declaration signed by 29 European countries<sup>2</sup>. The overarching objectives of the Process are to facilitate student and staff mobility in Europe and to enhance the attractiveness and competitiveness of European higher education in a global market. Ten action lines have now been identified to make the EHEA a reality, including:
  - Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees
  - Adoption of a system essentially based on three cycles
  - Establishment of a system of credits
  - Promotion of mobility
  - Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance
  - Promotion of the European dimension in HE
  - Focus on lifelong learning
  - Inclusion of higher education institutions (HEIs) and students
  - Promotion of the attractiveness of the EHEA
  - Doctoral studies and the synergy between the EHEA and the European Research Area (ERA)

<sup>1</sup> The text of the London Communiqué can also be downloaded at:

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/bologna/uploads/documents/LC18May07.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the Bologna Process please visit: <http://www.bologna2009benelux.org/> The Europe Unit's website also includes an overview of the Bologna Process:

[www.europeunit.ac.uk/bologna\\_process/index.cfm](http://www.europeunit.ac.uk/bologna_process/index.cfm).

3. Ministers from participating countries meet to review progress and set new priorities for action every two years. The London summit in May 2007 followed previous meetings in Prague in 2001, Berlin in 2003, and Bergen in 2005. A Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) attended by ministry and stakeholder representatives steers the Process in between summits.

### **Outcomes of the London ministerial summit, 17-18 May 2007**

#### **UK delegation**

4. Alan Johnson, Secretary of State for Education and Skills, delivered the welcoming address to the summit. Bill Rammell MP, DfES Minister of State for Higher Education and Lifelong Learning, chaired the discussions on the Communiqué. Professor Drummond Bone, President of Universities UK, also attended as a UK HE sector representative and Peter Williams, Chief Executive of the UK Quality Assurance Agency, participated as President of the European Association of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).<sup>3</sup>

#### **New members**

5. The Republic of Montenegro was welcomed as a new participating country in the Bologna Process, bringing the total number of participating countries to 46. Ministers did not approve applications to participate in the process from the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Israel, the Kyrgyz Republic and Kosovo as they are not party to the European Cultural Convention. The UK welcomes the interest in the Bologna Process which demonstrates its success as it continues to expand and appeal to new members from Europe and the rest of the world.

#### **Stocktaking process and implementation of existing action lines**

6. The Stocktaking report<sup>4</sup> presented at the London summit showed that good progress has been made towards the creation of the EHEA since the Bergen summit in 2005. The report identified general areas for improvement as being the creation of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) and the recognition of qualifications.
7. No new action lines for the Bologna Process were proposed at the London summit. Whilst there was some discussion on the future of the Bologna Process post-2010, Ministers agreed that the focus should continue to be on the implementation of existing action lines in the next two years.

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<sup>3</sup> The following UK representatives also attended: Mr David Bacon, Head of HE Division, Welsh National Assembly; Mr Dominic McCullough, Higher Education Policy Branch, Northern Ireland Executive; Ms Gill Troup, Higher Education and Science Division, Scottish Executive. Professor Sir Roderick Floud, President Emeritus of London Metropolitan University, as Vice President of the European University Association; Wes Streeting, Vice President (Education), National Union of Students; Paul Bennett, University and College Lecturers' Union (UCU), as part of the Education International (EI) Pan European Structure.

<sup>4</sup> The Stocktaking Process measures the progress of implementation of Bologna Process reforms in participating countries. The Stocktaking report details progress in assuring quality of education, providing national qualifications frameworks, provision of the Diploma Supplement and the use of a three-cycle system.

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/bologna/uploads/documents/6909-BolognaProcessST.pdf>

### **Qualifications Framework in the European Higher Education Area**

8. At the Bergen summit in 2005, Ministers adopted the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA<sup>5</sup>. Ministers also called for the elaboration of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) to be compatible with the overarching framework by 2010. The Bergen Communiqué called for a self-certification process on the compatibility of national qualifications frameworks with the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA. Scotland took part in a pilot self-certification and has successfully self-certified its national Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions (the Scottish FQHE) against the Bologna Process Framework.<sup>6</sup> The Communiqué endorsed this process and England, Wales and Northern Ireland look forward to self-certifying their NQFs in the near future. The UK HE sector therefore welcomes the focus on qualifications frameworks in the Communiqué and the role for the Council of Europe in sharing experience in developing NQFs.
9. The Communiqué also clarified that the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA will remain the qualifications framework for HE qualifications in Europe. The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF)<sup>7</sup> will support mobility between HE and other types of learning.

### **Quality assurance – Register of European Higher Education Quality Assurance Agencies (REHEQA)**

10. At the ministerial summit in Bergen in 2005, HE Ministers adopted a report setting out European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESGs).<sup>8</sup> The report was produced by ENQA, in cooperation with the European University Association (EUA), European Association of Institutions of Higher Education (EURASHE), and the National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB) - the so-called 'E4' group. All countries have started to implement the ESGs. At the Bergen summit, the E4 Group was also given the mandate to develop a Register of European Higher Education Quality Assurance Agencies in the lead-up to the London summit.
11. The London Communiqué adopts a register intended to provide clear and reliable information to all EHEA stakeholders and the general public regarding the alignment of QA agencies (whether members of ENQA or not) with the ESGs. The UK HE sector supports the strong role for universities, students and other stakeholders in the ownership of the Register. The Register will be voluntary and self-financing, with a small, legally independent Secretariat based in Brussels. Government representatives will be members of the Register's General Assembly, which has a

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<sup>5</sup> It is an overarching, generic framework with three cycles; generic qualifications descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences and typical credit ranges in the first and second cycles. The full report on the Framework of Qualifications for EHEA can be downloaded at: [www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main\\_doc/050218\\_QF\\_EHEA.pdf](http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/050218_QF_EHEA.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Both these reports can be found at: <http://www.enic-naric.net/index.asp?display=qf>

<sup>7</sup> On 5 September 2006, the European Commission adopted a proposal on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/com\\_2006\\_0479\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/com_2006_0479_en.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.engq.eu/pubitem.lasso?id=34843&cont=pubdetail>

role in approving applications for inclusion in the Register. The Register will be reviewed externally after two years of operation, taking account of the views of all stakeholders.

### **Recognition of degrees and study periods**

12. 38 of the 46 countries participating in the Bologna Process have ratified the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of HE Qualifications.<sup>9</sup> Ministers urged those countries still to ratify it to do so as a matter of priority. Ministers asked the Bologna Follow-Up Group to arrange for National Recognition Information Centres (NARICS)<sup>10</sup> to analyse national action plans and spread good practice in recognition.

### **Doctoral candidates**

13. Ministers reiterated the need for a close alignment between the EHEA and the European Research Area (ERA). They recognise that improving the status, career prospects and funding for doctoral candidates is a precondition for strengthening Europe's research capacity and meeting the goals of the EU's Lisbon Agenda.<sup>11</sup> Ministers asked HEIs to reinforce their efforts to develop career paths and opportunities for doctoral candidates and early stage researchers. Importantly, however, Ministers reaffirmed their wish that overregulation of doctoral programmes must be avoided.
14. Ministers welcomed the EUA's report on doctoral programmes in Europe<sup>12</sup>, which they asked for at the Bergen summit. They invited the EUA to continue their work in sharing information and experience of different doctoral programmes and procedures in the emerging EHEA. The UK has experience to share in supervisor training, assessment procedures and the development of new doctoral programmes.
15. The UK HE sector has been very involved and very influential in this area of the Bologna Process. It is important that the UK continues to be engaged in the debate in this area between now and 2009.

### **The social dimension**

16. Ministers and other participants at the London summit, notably the European Students' Union (ESU), stressed the importance of the social dimension in the Bologna Process. Widening participation and enabling students from socially disadvantaged groups to access HE was agreed to be a "*necessary condition for the attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA*".

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<sup>9</sup> For more information on the Lisbon Convention please visit:

[www.coe.int/T/DG4/HigherEducation/Recognition/LRC\\_EN.asp#TopOfPage](http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/HigherEducation/Recognition/LRC_EN.asp#TopOfPage)

<sup>10</sup> For information on the UK NARIC please visit: [www.naric.org.uk](http://www.naric.org.uk).

<sup>11</sup> The Lisbon Strategy aims to make the EU the world's most competitive, knowledge-based economy by 2012.

<sup>12</sup>

file:///C:/Documents%20and%20Settings/pauld/Local%20Settings/Temporary%20Internet%20Files/Content.IE5/8PWT6BCD/264,8,IV Recommendations – 2

Participating countries are asked to report to the Ministerial summit in 2009 on measures taken at a national level to widen participation in HE including action plans and measures to evaluate their effectiveness.

### **Mobility**

17. The role of mobility was re-stated as one of the key objectives of the Bologna Process. In the Communiqué, Ministers commit to report on action at national level to promote mobility of staff and students, including measurements for future evaluation. To address the lack of data available on the mobility of staff and students, Ministers asked Eurostat and Eurostudent<sup>13</sup> to develop comparable and reliable indicators to measure progress. Ministers also agreed to set up a network of national experts to share information and help overcome obstacles to the portability of grants and loans where appropriate.

### **The Strategy for the EHEA in a Global Setting**

18. One of the central goals of the Bologna Process is to improve the attractiveness of the EHEA to other regions of the world. In the London Communiqué, Ministers acknowledge the importance of a coherent strategy for the EHEA in this relationship. Ministers call for improvement of the information available about European HE to the rest of the world by developing the Bologna Secretariat website, by building upon the EUA's Bologna Handbook<sup>14</sup> and by improving recognition of qualifications. HEIs and national recognition authorities are asked to assess qualifications from outside the EHEA as they would those from inside the EHEA.

### **The future of the European Higher Education Area**

19. The Ministers in London asked the BFUG to report back to the next ministerial meeting in 2009 on how the EHEA might develop after 2010, keeping in mind that the current consensus-based, bottom-up decision making process has worked very well so far. The BFUG was also asked to decide on the nature, content and place of the Ministerial meeting in 2010, with a decision to be made in the first half of 2008. The UK welcomes the focus on the importance of partnership with HEIs, students and other stakeholders.

### **Looking to the 2009 Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve ministerial summit**

20. The London ministerial summit accepted the Benelux countries' offer to host the next ministerial summit in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve in 2009. A further stocktaking report will be presented to Ministers in 2009. It will continue to cover the degree system, employability of graduates,

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<sup>13</sup> Eurostat is the statistical office of the European Commission. <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/> The Eurostudent project collates comparable data on the socio-economic background and living conditions of students throughout Europe. [www.eurostudent.eu](http://www.eurostudent.eu)

<sup>14</sup> The EUA Bologna Handbook is designed to support HE professionals, both academic and administrative, in introducing and implementing all aspects of the Bologna Process in their institution. <http://www.eua.be/index.php?id=129>



recognition of degrees and study periods and implementation of all aspects of quality assurance in line with the ESGs. The report will have a particular focus on progress in:

- development of the qualitative analysis of mobility;
- the Bologna Process in a global context;
- the social dimension;
- addressing in a more integrated way NQFs, learning outcomes and credits, lifelong learning and the recognition of prior learning.

21. The UK HE Europe Unit will continue to monitor and engage in Bologna Process discussions in the lead-up to the 2009 summit. It will be particularly important for the sector to influence forthcoming discussions on the EHEA in a global setting, doctoral programmes in Europe and the future of the Process. The Unit, working with Bologna Experts<sup>15</sup> and other stakeholders, will also continue to support the sector in implementing key Bologna Process reforms, such as the Diploma Supplement.

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<sup>15</sup> The UK has 15 'Bologna Experts' whose job it is to help inform UK higher education institutions about the Bologna Process reforms. The experts were appointed by the British Council, in cooperation with UK HE stakeholders, following approval by the European Commission.



18 May 2007

## London Communiqué

### **Towards the European Higher Education Area: responding to challenges in a globalised world**

#### **1. Introduction**

1.1 We, the Ministers responsible for Higher Education in the countries participating in the Bologna Process, have met in London to review progress made since we convened in Bergen in 2005.

1.2 Based on our agreed criteria for country membership, we welcome the Republic of Montenegro as a member of the Bologna Process.

1.3 Developments over the last two years have brought us a significant step closer to the realisation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Building on our rich and diverse European cultural heritage, we are developing an EHEA based on institutional autonomy, academic freedom, equal opportunities and democratic principles that will facilitate mobility, increase employability and strengthen Europe's attractiveness and competitiveness. As we look ahead, we recognise that, in a changing world, there will be a continuing need to adapt our higher education systems, to ensure that the EHEA remains competitive and can respond effectively to the challenges of globalisation. In the short term, we appreciate that implementing the Bologna reforms is a significant task, and appreciate the continuing support and commitment of all partners in the process. We welcome the contribution of the working groups and seminars in helping to drive forward progress. We agree to continue to work together in partnership, assisting one another in our efforts and promoting the exchange of good practice.

1.4 We reaffirm our commitment to increasing the compatibility and comparability of our higher education systems, whilst at the same time respecting their diversity. We recognise the important influence higher education institutions (HEIs) exert on developing our societies, based on their traditions as centres of learning, research, creativity and knowledge transfer as well as their key role in defining and transmitting the values on which our societies are built. Our aim is to ensure that our HEIs have the necessary resources to continue to fulfil their full range of purposes. Those purposes include: preparing students for life as active citizens in a democratic society; preparing students for their future careers and enabling their personal development; creating and maintaining a broad, advanced knowledge base; and stimulating research and innovation.

1.5 We therefore underline the importance of strong institutions, which are diverse, adequately funded, autonomous and accountable. The principles of non-discrimination and equitable access should be respected and promoted throughout the EHEA. We commit to upholding these principles and to ensuring that neither students nor staff suffer discrimination of any kind.

## **2. Progress towards the EHEA**

2.1 Our stocktaking report, along with EUA's *Trends V* report, ESIB's *Bologna With Student Eyes* and Eurydice's *Focus on the Structure of Higher Education in Europe*, confirms that there has been good overall progress in the last two years. There is an increasing awareness that a significant outcome of the process will be a move towards student-centred higher education and away from teacher driven provision. We will continue to support this important development.

### Mobility

2.2 Mobility of staff, students and graduates is one of the core elements of the Bologna Process, creating opportunities for personal growth, developing international cooperation between individuals and institutions, enhancing the quality of higher education and research, and giving substance to the European dimension.

2.3 Some progress has been made since 1999, but many challenges remain. Among the obstacles to mobility, issues relating to immigration, recognition, insufficient financial incentives and inflexible pension arrangements feature prominently. We recognise the responsibility of individual Governments to facilitate the delivery of visas, residence and work permits, as appropriate. Where these measures are outside our competence as Ministers for Higher Education, we undertake to work within our respective Governments for decisive progress in this area. At national level, we will work to implement fully the agreed recognition tools and procedures and consider ways of further incentivising mobility for both staff and students. This includes encouraging a significant increase in the number of joint programmes and the creation of flexible curricula, as well as urging our institutions to take greater responsibility for staff and student mobility, more equitably balanced between countries across the EHEA.

### Degree structure

2.4 Good progress is being made at national and institutional levels towards our goal of an EHEA based on a three-cycle degree system. The number of students enrolled on courses in the first two-cycles has increased significantly and there has been a reduction in structural barriers between cycles. Similarly, there has been an increase in the number of structured doctoral programmes. We underline the importance of curricula reform leading to qualifications better suited both to the needs of the labour market and to further study. Efforts should concentrate in future on removing barriers to access and progression between cycles and on proper implementation of ECTS based on learning outcomes and student workload. We underline the importance of improving graduate employability, whilst noting that data gathering on this issue needs to be developed further.

### Recognition

2.5 Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components of the EHEA, both internally and in a global context. Easily readable and comparable degrees and accessible information on educational systems and qualifications frameworks are prerequisites for citizens' mobility and ensuring the continuing attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA. While we are pleased that 38 members of the Bologna Process, including Montenegro, have now ratified the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the recognition of qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European region (Lisbon Recognition Convention), we urge the remaining members to do so as a matter of priority.

2.6 There has been progress in the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), ECTS and diploma supplements, but the range of national and institutional approaches to recognition needs to be more coherent. To improve recognition practices, we therefore ask the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) to arrange for the ENIC/NARIC networks to analyse our national action plans and spread good practice.

#### Qualifications Frameworks

2.7 Qualifications frameworks are important instruments in achieving comparability and transparency within the EHEA and facilitating the movement of learners within, as well as between, higher education systems. They should also help HEIs to develop modules and study programmes based on learning outcomes and credits, and improve the recognition of qualifications as well as all forms of prior learning.

2.8 We note that some initial progress has been made towards the implementation of national qualifications frameworks, but that much more effort is required. We commit ourselves to fully implementing such national qualifications frameworks, certified against the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA, by 2010. Recognising that this is a challenging task, we ask the Council of Europe to support the sharing of experience in the elaboration of national qualifications frameworks. We emphasise that qualification frameworks should be designed so as to encourage greater mobility of students and teachers and improve employability.

2.9 We are satisfied that national qualifications frameworks compatible with the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA will also be compatible with the proposal from the European Commission on a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

2.10 We see the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA, which we agreed in Bergen, as a central element of the promotion of European higher education in a global context.

#### Lifelong Learning

2.11 The stocktaking report shows that some elements of flexible learning exist in most countries, but a more systematic development of flexible learning paths to support lifelong learning is at an early stage. We therefore ask BFUG to increase the sharing of good practice and to work towards a common understanding of the role of

higher education in lifelong learning. Only in a small number of EHEA countries could the recognition of prior learning for access and credits be said to be well developed. Working in cooperation with ENIC/NARIC, we invite BFUG to develop proposals for improving the recognition of prior learning.

#### Quality Assurance and a European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies

2.12 The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA adopted in Bergen (ESG) have been a powerful driver of change in relation to quality assurance. All countries have started to implement them and some have made substantial progress. External quality assurance in particular is much better developed than before. The extent of student involvement at all levels has increased since 2005, although improvement is still necessary. Since the main responsibility for quality lies with HEIs, they should continue to develop their systems of quality assurance. We acknowledge the progress made with regard to mutual recognition of accreditation and quality assurance decisions, and encourage continued international cooperation amongst quality assurance agencies.

2.13 The first European Quality Assurance Forum, jointly organised by EUA, ENQA, EURASHE and ESIB (the E4 Group) in 2006 provided an opportunity to discuss European developments in quality assurance. We encourage the four organisations to continue to organise European Quality Assurance Fora on an annual basis, to facilitate the sharing of good practice and ensure that quality in the EHEA continues to improve.

2.14 We thank the E4 Group for responding to our request to further develop the practicalities of setting up a Register of European Higher Education Quality Assurance Agencies. The purpose of the register is to allow all stakeholders and the general public open access to objective information about trustworthy quality assurance agencies that are working in line with the ESG. It will therefore enhance confidence in higher education in the EHEA and beyond, and facilitate the mutual recognition of quality assurance and accreditation decisions. We welcome the establishment of a register by the E4 group, working in partnership, based on their proposed operational model. The register will be voluntary, self-financing, independent and transparent. Applications for inclusion on the register should be evaluated on the basis of substantial compliance with the ESG, evidenced through an independent review process endorsed by national authorities, where this endorsement is required by those authorities. We ask the E4 group to report progress to us regularly through BFUG, and to ensure that after two years of operation, the register is evaluated externally, taking account of the views of all stakeholders.

#### Doctoral candidates

2.15 Closer alignment of the EHEA with the European Research Area (ERA) remains an important objective. We recognise the value of developing and maintaining a wide variety of doctoral programmes linked to the overarching qualifications framework for the EHEA, whilst avoiding overregulation. At the same time, we appreciate that enhancing provision in the third cycle and improving the status, career prospects and funding for early stage researchers are essential preconditions for meeting Europe's objectives of strengthening research capacity and improving the quality and competitiveness of European higher education.

2.16 We therefore invite our HEIs to reinforce their efforts to embed doctoral programmes in institutional strategies and policies, and to develop appropriate career paths and opportunities for doctoral candidates and early stage researchers.

2.17 We invite EUA to continue to support the sharing of experience among HEIs on the range of innovative doctoral programmes that are emerging across Europe as well as on other crucial issues such as transparent access arrangements, supervision and assessment procedures, the development of transferable skills and ways of enhancing employability. We will look for appropriate opportunities to encourage greater exchange of information on funding and other issues between our Governments as well as with other research funding bodies.

#### Social dimension

2.18 Higher education should play a strong role in fostering social cohesion, reducing inequalities and raising the level of knowledge, skills and competences in society. Policy should therefore aim to maximise the potential of individuals in terms of their personal development and their contribution to a sustainable and democratic knowledge-based society. We share the societal aspiration that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations. We reaffirm the importance of students being able to complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background. We therefore continue our efforts to provide adequate student services, create more flexible learning pathways into and within higher education, and to widen participation at all levels on the basis of equal opportunity.

#### The European Higher Education Area in a global context

2.19 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. Moreover, we acknowledge that efforts have been made in some countries in other parts of the world to bring their higher education systems more closely into line with the Bologna framework.

2.20 We adopt the strategy "The European Higher Education Area in a Global Setting" and will take forward work in the core policy areas: improving information on, and promoting the attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA; strengthening cooperation based on partnership; intensifying policy dialogue; and improving recognition. This work ought to be seen in relation to the OECD/UNESCO *Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education*.

### **3. Priorities for 2009**

3.1 Over the next two years, we agree to concentrate on completing agreed Action Lines, including the ongoing priorities of the three-cycle degree system, quality assurance and recognition of degrees and study periods. We will focus in particular on the following areas for action.

### Mobility

3.2 In our national reports for 2009, we will report on action taken at national level to promote the mobility of students and staff, including measures for future evaluation. We will focus on the main national challenges identified in paragraph 2.3 above. We also agree to set up a network of national experts to share information, and help to identify and overcome obstacles to the portability of grants and loans.

### Social Dimension

3.3 Similarly, we will report on our national strategies and policies for the social dimension, including action plans and measures to evaluate their effectiveness. We will invite all stakeholders to participate in, and support this work, at the national level.

### Data collection

3.4 We recognise the need to improve the availability of data on both mobility and the social dimension across all the countries participating in the Bologna Process. We therefore ask the European Commission (Eurostat), in conjunction with Eurostudent, to develop comparable and reliable indicators and data to measure progress towards the overall objective for the social dimension and student and staff mobility in all Bologna countries. Data in this field should cover participative equity in higher education as well as employability for graduates. This task should be carried out in conjunction with BFUG and a report should be submitted to our 2009 Ministerial conference.

### Employability

3.5 Following up on the introduction of the three-cycle degree system, we ask BFUG to consider in more detail how to improve employability in relation to each of these cycles as well as in the context of lifelong learning. This will involve the responsibilities of all stakeholders. Governments and HEIs will need to communicate more with employers and other stakeholders on the rationale for their reforms. We will work, as appropriate, within our governments to ensure that employment and career structures within the public service are fully compatible with the new degree system. We urge institutions to further develop partnerships and cooperation with employers in the ongoing process of curriculum innovation based on learning outcomes.

### The European Higher Education Area in a global context

3.6 We ask BFUG to report back to us on overall developments in this area at the European, national and institutional levels by 2009. All stakeholders have a role here within their spheres of responsibility. In reporting on the implementation of the strategy for the EHEA in a global context, BFUG should in particular give consideration to two priorities. First, to improve the information available about the EHEA, by developing the Bologna Secretariat website and building on EUA's Bologna Handbook; and second, to improve recognition. We call on HEIs, ENIC/NARIC centres and other competent recognition authorities within the EHEA to assess qualifications from other parts of the world with the same open mind with which they would expect European qualifications to be assessed elsewhere, and to base this recognition on the principles of the LRC.

### Stocktaking

3.7 We ask BFUG to continue the stocktaking process, based on national reports, in time for our 2009 Ministerial conference. We expect further development of the qualitative analysis in stocktaking, particularly in relation to mobility, the Bologna Process in a global context and the social dimension. The fields covered by stocktaking should continue to include the degree system and employability of graduates, recognition of degrees and study periods and implementation of all aspects of quality assurance in line with the ESG. With a view to the development of more student-centred, outcome-based learning, the next exercise should also address in an integrated way national qualifications frameworks, learning outcomes and credits, lifelong learning, and the recognition of prior learning.

#### **4. Looking forward to 2010 and beyond**

4.1 As the EHEA continues to develop and respond to the challenges of globalisation, we anticipate that the need for collaboration will continue beyond 2010.

4.2 We are determined to seize 2010, which will mark the passage from the Bologna Process to the EHEA, as an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to higher education as a key element in making our societies sustainable, at national as well as at European level. We will take 2010 as an opportunity to reformulate the vision that motivated us in setting the Bologna Process in motion in 1999 and to make the case for an EHEA underpinned by values and visions that go beyond issues of structures and tools. We undertake to make 2010 an opportunity to reset our higher education systems on a course that looks beyond the immediate issues and makes them fit to take up the challenges that will determine our future.

4.3 We ask BFUG as a whole to consider further how the EHEA might develop after 2010 and to report back to the next ministerial meeting in 2009. This should include proposals for appropriate support structures, bearing in mind that the current informal collaborative arrangements are working well and have brought about unprecedented change.

4.4 Building on previous stocktaking exercises, *Trends*, and *Bologna With Student Eyes*, we invite BFUG to consider for 2010 the preparation of a report including an independent assessment, in partnership with the consultative members, evaluating the overall progress of the Bologna Process across the EHEA since 1999.

4.5 We delegate the decision on the nature, content and place of any Ministerial meeting in 2010 to BFUG, to be taken within the first half of 2008.

4.6 Our next meeting will be hosted by the Benelux countries in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve on 28-29 April 2009.



18 May 2007

## London Communiqué

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1.1 We, the Ministers responsible for Higher Education in the countries participating in the Bologna Process, have met in London to review progress made since we convened in Bergen in 2005.

1.2 Based on our agreed criteria for country membership, we welcome the Republic of Montenegro as a member of the Bologna Process.

1.3 Developments over the last two years have brought us a significant step closer to the realisation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Building on our rich and diverse European cultural heritage, we are developing an EHEA based on institutional autonomy, academic freedom, equal opportunities and democratic principles that will facilitate mobility, increase employability and strengthen Europe's attractiveness and competitiveness. As we look ahead, we recognise that, in a changing world, there will be a continuing need to adapt our higher education systems, to ensure that the EHEA remains competitive and can respond effectively to the challenges of globalisation. In the short term, we appreciate that implementing the Bologna reforms is a significant task, and appreciate the continuing support and commitment of all partners in the process. We welcome the contribution of the working groups and seminars in helping to drive forward progress. We agree to continue to work together in partnership, assisting one another in our efforts and promoting the exchange of good practice.

1.4 We reaffirm our commitment to increasing the compatibility and comparability of our higher education systems, whilst at the same time respecting their diversity. We recognise the important influence higher education institutions (HEIs) exert on developing our societies, based on their traditions as centres of learning, research, creativity and knowledge transfer as well as their key role in defining and transmitting the values on which our societies are built. Our aim is to ensure that our HEIs have the necessary resources to continue to fulfil their full range of purposes. Those purposes include: preparing students for life as active citizens in a democratic society; preparing students for their future careers and enabling their personal development; creating and maintaining a broad, advanced knowledge base; and stimulating research and innovation.

1.5 We therefore underline the importance of strong institutions, which are diverse, adequately funded, autonomous and accountable. The principles of non-discrimination and equitable access should be respected and promoted throughout the EHEA. We commit to upholding these principles and to ensuring that neither students nor staff suffer discrimination of any kind.

## **2. Progress towards the EHEA**

2.1 Our stocktaking report, along with EUA's *Trends V* report, ESIB's *Bologna With Student Eyes* and Eurydice's *Focus on the Structure of Higher Education in Europe*, confirms that there has been good overall progress in the last two years. There is an increasing awareness that a significant outcome of the process will be a move towards student-centred higher education and away from teacher driven provision. We will continue to support this important development.

### Mobility

2.2 Mobility of staff, students and graduates is one of the core elements of the Bologna Process, creating opportunities for personal growth, developing international cooperation between individuals and institutions, enhancing the quality of higher education and research, and giving substance to the European dimension.

2.3 Some progress has been made since 1999, but many challenges remain. Among the obstacles to mobility, issues relating to immigration, recognition, insufficient financial incentives and inflexible pension arrangements feature prominently. We recognise the responsibility of individual Governments to facilitate the delivery of visas, residence and work permits, as appropriate. Where these measures are outside our competence as Ministers for Higher Education, we undertake to work within our respective Governments for decisive progress in this area. At national level, we will work to implement fully the agreed recognition tools and procedures and consider ways of further incentivising mobility for both staff and students. This includes encouraging a significant increase in the number of joint programmes and the creation of flexible curricula, as well as urging our institutions to take greater responsibility for staff and student mobility, more equitably balanced between countries across the EHEA.

### Degree structure

2.4 Good progress is being made at national and institutional levels towards our goal of an EHEA based on a three-cycle degree system. The number of students enrolled on courses in the first two-cycles has increased significantly and there has been a reduction in structural barriers between cycles. Similarly, there has been an increase in the number of structured doctoral programmes. We underline the importance of curricula reform leading to qualifications better suited both to the needs of the labour market and to further study. Efforts should concentrate in future on removing barriers to access and progression between cycles and on proper implementation of ECTS based on learning outcomes and student workload. We underline the importance of improving graduate employability, whilst noting that data gathering on this issue needs to be developed further.

### Recognition

2.5 Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components of the EHEA, both internally and in a global context. Easily readable and comparable degrees and accessible information on educational systems and qualifications frameworks are prerequisites for citizens' mobility and ensuring the continuing attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA. While we are pleased that 38 members of the Bologna Process, including Montenegro, have now ratified the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the recognition of qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European region (Lisbon Recognition Convention), we urge the remaining members to do so as a matter of priority.

2.6 There has been progress in the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), ECTS and diploma supplements, but the range of national and institutional approaches to recognition needs to be more coherent. To improve recognition practices, we therefore ask the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) to arrange for the ENIC/NARIC networks to analyse our national action plans and spread good practice.

### Qualifications Frameworks

2.7 Qualifications frameworks are important instruments in achieving comparability and transparency within the EHEA and facilitating the movement of learners within, as well as between, higher education systems. They should also help HEIs to develop modules and study programmes based on learning outcomes and credits, and improve the recognition of qualifications as well as all forms of prior learning.

2.8 We note that some initial progress has been made towards the implementation of national qualifications frameworks, but that much more effort is required. We commit ourselves to fully implementing such national qualifications frameworks, certified against the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA, by 2010. Recognising that this is a challenging task, we ask the Council of Europe to support the sharing of experience in the elaboration of national qualifications frameworks. We emphasise that qualification frameworks should be designed so as to encourage greater mobility of students and teachers and improve employability.

2.9 We are satisfied that national qualifications frameworks compatible with the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA will also be compatible with the proposal from the European Commission on a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

2.10 We see the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA, which we agreed in Bergen, as a central element of the promotion of European higher education in a global context.

### Lifelong Learning

2.11 The stocktaking report shows that some elements of flexible learning exist in most countries, but a more systematic development of flexible learning paths to support lifelong learning is at an early stage. We therefore ask BFUG to increase the sharing of good practice and to work towards a common understanding of the role of

higher education in lifelong learning. Only in a small number of EHEA countries could the recognition of prior learning for access and credits be said to be well developed. Working in cooperation with ENIC/NARIC, we invite BFUG to develop proposals for improving the recognition of prior learning.

#### Quality Assurance and a European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies

2.12 The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA adopted in Bergen (ESG) have been a powerful driver of change in relation to quality assurance. All countries have started to implement them and some have made substantial progress. External quality assurance in particular is much better developed than before. The extent of student involvement at all levels has increased since 2005, although improvement is still necessary. Since the main responsibility for quality lies with HEIs, they should continue to develop their systems of quality assurance. We acknowledge the progress made with regard to mutual recognition of accreditation and quality assurance decisions, and encourage continued international cooperation amongst quality assurance agencies.

2.13 The first European Quality Assurance Forum, jointly organised by EUA, ENQA, EURASHE and ESIB (the E4 Group) in 2006 provided an opportunity to discuss European developments in quality assurance. We encourage the four organisations to continue to organise European Quality Assurance Fora on an annual basis, to facilitate the sharing of good practice and ensure that quality in the EHEA continues to improve.

2.14 We thank the E4 Group for responding to our request to further develop the practicalities of setting up a Register of European Higher Education Quality Assurance Agencies. The purpose of the register is to allow all stakeholders and the general public open access to objective information about trustworthy quality assurance agencies that are working in line with the ESG. It will therefore enhance confidence in higher education in the EHEA and beyond, and facilitate the mutual recognition of quality assurance and accreditation decisions. We welcome the establishment of a register by the E4 group, working in partnership, based on their proposed operational model. The register will be voluntary, self-financing, independent and transparent. Applications for inclusion on the register should be evaluated on the basis of substantial compliance with the ESG, evidenced through an independent review process endorsed by national authorities, where this endorsement is required by those authorities. We ask the E4 group to report progress to us regularly through BFUG, and to ensure that after two years of operation, the register is evaluated externally, taking account of the views of all stakeholders.

#### Doctoral candidates

2.15 Closer alignment of the EHEA with the European Research Area (ERA) remains an important objective. We recognise the value of developing and maintaining a wide variety of doctoral programmes linked to the overarching qualifications framework for the EHEA, whilst avoiding overregulation. At the same time, we appreciate that enhancing provision in the third cycle and improving the status, career prospects and funding for early stage researchers are essential preconditions for meeting Europe's objectives of strengthening research capacity and improving the quality and competitiveness of European higher education.

2.16 We therefore invite our HEIs to reinforce their efforts to embed doctoral programmes in institutional strategies and policies, and to develop appropriate career paths and opportunities for doctoral candidates and early stage researchers.

2.17 We invite EUA to continue to support the sharing of experience among HEIs on the range of innovative doctoral programmes that are emerging across Europe as well as on other crucial issues such as transparent access arrangements, supervision and assessment procedures, the development of transferable skills and ways of enhancing employability. We will look for appropriate opportunities to encourage greater exchange of information on funding and other issues between our Governments as well as with other research funding bodies.

#### Social dimension

2.18 Higher education should play a strong role in fostering social cohesion, reducing inequalities and raising the level of knowledge, skills and competences in society. Policy should therefore aim to maximise the potential of individuals in terms of their personal development and their contribution to a sustainable and democratic knowledge-based society. We share the societal aspiration that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations. We reaffirm the importance of students being able to complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background. We therefore continue our efforts to provide adequate student services, create more flexible learning pathways into and within higher education, and to widen participation at all levels on the basis of equal opportunity.

#### The European Higher Education Area in a global context

2.19 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. Moreover, we acknowledge that efforts have been made in some countries in other parts of the world to bring their higher education systems more closely into line with the Bologna framework.

2.20 We adopt the strategy "The European Higher Education Area in a Global Setting" and will take forward work in the core policy areas: improving information on, and promoting the attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA; strengthening cooperation based on partnership; intensifying policy dialogue; and improving recognition. This work ought to be seen in relation to the OECD/UNESCO *Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education*.

### **3. Priorities for 2009**

3.1 Over the next two years, we agree to concentrate on completing agreed Action Lines, including the ongoing priorities of the three-cycle degree system, quality assurance and recognition of degrees and study periods. We will focus in particular on the following areas for action.

### Mobility

3.2 In our national reports for 2009, we will report on action taken at national level to promote the mobility of students and staff, including measures for future evaluation. We will focus on the main national challenges identified in paragraph 2.3 above. We also agree to set up a network of national experts to share information, and help to identify and overcome obstacles to the portability of grants and loans.

### Social Dimension

3.3 Similarly, we will report on our national strategies and policies for the social dimension, including action plans and measures to evaluate their effectiveness. We will invite all stakeholders to participate in, and support this work, at the national level.

### Data collection

3.4 We recognise the need to improve the availability of data on both mobility and the social dimension across all the countries participating in the Bologna Process. We therefore ask the European Commission (Eurostat), in conjunction with Eurostudent, to develop comparable and reliable indicators and data to measure progress towards the overall objective for the social dimension and student and staff mobility in all Bologna countries. Data in this field should cover participative equity in higher education as well as employability for graduates. This task should be carried out in conjunction with BFUG and a report should be submitted to our 2009 Ministerial conference.

### Employability

3.5 Following up on the introduction of the three-cycle degree system, we ask BFUG to consider in more detail how to improve employability in relation to each of these cycles as well as in the context of lifelong learning. This will involve the responsibilities of all stakeholders. Governments and HEIs will need to communicate more with employers and other stakeholders on the rationale for their reforms. We will work, as appropriate, within our governments to ensure that employment and career structures within the public service are fully compatible with the new degree system. We urge institutions to further develop partnerships and cooperation with employers in the ongoing process of curriculum innovation based on learning outcomes.

### The European Higher Education Area in a global context

3.6 We ask BFUG to report back to us on overall developments in this area at the European, national and institutional levels by 2009. All stakeholders have a role here within their spheres of responsibility. In reporting on the implementation of the strategy for the EHEA in a global context, BFUG should in particular give consideration to two priorities. First, to improve the information available about the EHEA, by developing the Bologna Secretariat website and building on EUA's Bologna Handbook; and second, to improve recognition. We call on HEIs, ENIC/NARIC centres and other competent recognition authorities within the EHEA to assess qualifications from other parts of the world with the same open mind with which they would expect European qualifications to be assessed elsewhere, and to base this recognition on the principles of the LRC.

### Stocktaking

3.7 We ask BFUG to continue the stocktaking process, based on national reports, in time for our 2009 Ministerial conference. We expect further development of the qualitative analysis in stocktaking, particularly in relation to mobility, the Bologna Process in a global context and the social dimension. The fields covered by stocktaking should continue to include the degree system and employability of graduates, recognition of degrees and study periods and implementation of all aspects of quality assurance in line with the ESG. With a view to the development of more student-centred, outcome-based learning, the next exercise should also address in an integrated way national qualifications frameworks, learning outcomes and credits, lifelong learning, and the recognition of prior learning.

#### **4. Looking forward to 2010 and beyond**

4.1 As the EHEA continues to develop and respond to the challenges of globalisation, we anticipate that the need for collaboration will continue beyond 2010.

4.2 We are determined to seize 2010, which will mark the passage from the Bologna Process to the EHEA, as an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to higher education as a key element in making our societies sustainable, at national as well as at European level. We will take 2010 as an opportunity to reformulate the vision that motivated us in setting the Bologna Process in motion in 1999 and to make the case for an EHEA underpinned by values and visions that go beyond issues of structures and tools. We undertake to make 2010 an opportunity to reset our higher education systems on a course that looks beyond the immediate issues and makes them fit to take up the challenges that will determine our future.

4.3 We ask BFUG as a whole to consider further how the EHEA might develop after 2010 and to report back to the next ministerial meeting in 2009. This should include proposals for appropriate support structures, bearing in mind that the current informal collaborative arrangements are working well and have brought about unprecedented change.

4.4 Building on previous stocktaking exercises, *Trends*, and *Bologna With Student Eyes*, we invite BFUG to consider for 2010 the preparation of a report including an independent assessment, in partnership with the consultative members, evaluating the overall progress of the Bologna Process across the EHEA since 1999.

4.5 We delegate the decision on the nature, content and place of any Ministerial meeting in 2010 to BFUG, to be taken within the first half of 2008.

4.6 Our next meeting will be hosted by the Benelux countries in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve on 28-29 April 2009.