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## FROM BERLIN TO BERGEN The EU Contribution

### 1. Introduction

On 19 September 2003, the Ministers of Higher Education of the Bologna Signatory States gathered in Berlin and adopted a Communiqué taking note of progress made so far and defining three intermediate priorities for the next two years: quality assurance, two-cycle system and recognition of degrees and periods of studies. A stocktaking exercise will be organised before the next Ministerial meeting in Bergen, Norway in May 2005.

Ministers also decided that the doctoral phase will be covered by the Bologna Reforms (transparency, quality assurance etc.) and to promote closer links between the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the European Research Area (ERA).

The Bologna process coincides with Commission policy in higher education supported through European programmes and notably Socrates-Erasmus. The Commission supports and stimulates Bologna activities at European level and participates as a full member in the Bologna Follow-up Group and the Bologna Board.

From an EU perspective the Bologna process fits into a broader agenda defined in Lisbon in March 2000, when EU Heads of State and Government decided on an objective and a strategy to make Europe by 2010 *"the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion"*. In Barcelona, in March 2002, they added that the European education and training systems should become a *"world quality reference"*.

EU Education Ministers have translated this far-reaching ambition into a series of shared objectives for the different education and training systems in Europe. Progress in reaching these objectives will be evaluated against "Reference Levels of European Average Performance" or "European Benchmarks".

The Commission presented in November 2003 a draft for the Interim Report on the implementation of the shared objectives, to be submitted jointly by the Commission and the EU Ministers of Education and Training to the European Council in spring 2004. Although its overall scope is wider, the Interim Report will also recall commitments made by Ministers in Bologna, Prague and Berlin; will stress the link with the Copenhagen process on enhanced European co-operation in Vocational Education and Training, launched in December 2002, and look for possible synergies in important fields such as transparency of qualifications, credit transfer and quality assurance.

In Berlin, four countries from the Western Balkans joined the Bologna process: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Serbia and Montenegro, as well as Andorra, the Holy See and Russia. The Commission is considering specific support measures for the countries covered by Tempus-Cards and Tempus-Tacis. A Joint Socrates-Tempus Call is being prepared.

*The current paper sets out the EU contribution to the Bologna process, provided by the European Commission, in partnership with the higher education sector and supported through the Socrates Programme.*

The paper starts with the Commission contribution to the realisation of the three intermediate priorities defined in Berlin: quality assurance, two-cycle system and recognition of degrees and periods of study. In addition, the paper describes Commission initiatives on promoting mobility, raising the attractiveness of European higher education and developing the doctoral phase (EHEA-ERA). The paper also addresses horizontal issues, such as the Stocktaking exercise, Bologna Promotion and support to Bologna Seminars and Conferences. Relevant sections of the Berlin Communiqué are quoted in italics.

## **2. Quality Assurance**

*"The quality of higher education has proven to be at the heart of the setting up of a European Higher Education Area. Ministers commit themselves to supporting further development of quality assurance at institutional, national and European level. They stress the need to develop mutually shared criteria and methodologies on quality assurance."*

### **2.1 ENQA Mandate**

*"At the European level, Ministers call upon ENQA through its members, in co-operation with the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB, to develop an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance, to explore ways of ensuring an adequate peer review system for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies, and to report back through the Follow-up Group to Ministers in 2005. Due account will be taken of the expertise of other quality assurance associations and networks."*

The Commission will support and contribute to the realisation of this Mandate given by Ministers to ENQA. Two Working Groups organised by ENQA will examine proposals prepared by experts on the different elements of the Mandate. One Working

Group on standards, procedures and guidelines and one Working Group on setting up an adequate peer review system. Experts would draw on existing studies and on experiences of ENQA and its members, organised in regional (North and Eastern Europe) or specialised networks (European Consortia for Accreditation). They will examine EUA Institutional Evaluations, the competence based approach of the Tuning Project as well as the work of subject specific professional accrediting agencies such as EQUIS. Experiences in other parts of the world, notably the United States, will be considered as well.

ENQA will present its work plan for the Mandate to the Bologna Follow-up Group and report on progress made in the first and second half of 2004. A Pre-final Report would need to be presented by the beginning of 2005 in order to be finalised in advance of the Ministerial meeting in Bergen in May 2005.

## **2.2 Networking of Agencies**

*"Therefore, they [Ministers] agree that by 2005 national quality assurance systems should include:*

- *A definition of the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved.*
- *Evaluation of programmes or institutions, including internal assessment, external review, participation of students and the publication of results.*
- *A system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures.*
- *International participation, co-operation and networking."*

The Commission has no role in setting up national systems but contributes to the realisation of this objective by supporting the networking of agencies and systems through ENQA, the European Network for Quality assurance in Higher Education, established on the basis of the 1998 Council Recommendation on European Cooperation in Quality Assurance in Higher Education. ENQA supports its members through exchange of information and good practice, staff training and seminars. ENQA undertakes and publishes studies and surveys on quality assurance developments in Europe and maintains a web site.

ENQA also functions as a Policy Forum on European quality assurance developments. For this purpose higher education sector organisations are represented in the ENQA Steering Committee and government officials take part in the annual General Assembly.

ENQA intends to transform itself into an association and extend its membership to agencies from all 40 Bologna Signatory States. The ENQA General Assembly of May 2004 will decide which reforms are needed for ENQA to carry out its triple task of service provider to its members, policy forum and facilitator of transnational evaluations.

## **2.3 Quality Culture within Institutions**

*"They [Ministers] also stress that consistent with the principle of institutional autonomy, the primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution itself and this provides the basis for real accountability of the academic system within the national quality framework."*

The Commission supports higher education institutions building up their own internal quality assurance capacity through a pilot scheme, organised by the European University Association EUA. In annual rounds, six groups of universities and other higher education institutions work together on themes such as "research management", "teaching and learning" and "implementing Bologna reforms". The pilot scheme helps institutions to introduce internal quality assurance mechanisms, improve their quality levels and being better prepared for external evaluations. The first round in 2002-2003 demonstrated the need for strong university leadership and university autonomy in developing a quality culture. A second round takes place in 2003-2004 and a third round is foreseen for 2004-2005, thus spreading this experience across a variety of institutions in Europe.

#### **2.4. Transnational Evaluation and Accreditation**

Most evaluation and accreditation is carried out on a national or regional basis. It is expected that these local exercises will become more comparable and more European through the use of "an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines" and the involvement of foreign experts. In a limited number of cases there is scope for transnational evaluation and accreditation. For instance in highly internationalised fields of study like business and engineering or in cases where universities or sponsors (public or private) seek to obtain a label for reasons of branding or consumer protection. Integrated study programmes, like joint masters, obviously require a collaborative effort of the respective quality assurance agencies.

The Commission supports the setting up and testing phase of transnational evaluation and accreditation. As an experiment, ENQA has carried out in 2002-2003 an external evaluation of 14 departments against sets of common evaluation criteria in three subject areas: History, Physics and Veterinary Science. The Transnational European Evaluation Project (TEEP 2002) has shown that it is possible to evaluate study programmes across borders against sets of common criteria as long as the universities concerned agree to take the common criteria as a starting point for the evaluation.

ENQA intends to organise more transnational evaluations of single, double and joint degrees. The Commission would welcome such proposals as well as proposals from subject specific professional organisations developing European Cooperation in Accreditation in fields like medicine or engineering.

Early 2004, the Commission will present a Report to the Parliament and the Council of Ministers on the implementation of the Council Recommendation of September 1998 on European co-operation in quality assurance in higher education. Drawing lessons from the experiences acquired, the Commission Report will contain proposals on how to make European quality assurance more coherent in line with the commitments made by Ministers in Bologna, Prague and Berlin.

### **3. The Two Cycle System – Towards a European Qualifications Framework**

*"All Ministers commit themselves to having started the implementation of the two cycle system by 2005."*

*"Ministers encourage the member States to elaborate a framework of comparable and compatible qualifications for their higher education systems, which should seek to describe qualifications in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile. They also undertake to elaborate an overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Area."*

The Commission supports initiatives enhancing the comparability and compatibility of qualifications and notably the university project "Tuning Educational Structures in Europe" in which professors from 135 universities seek to describe the content of qualifications in nine different subject areas in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile. The Commission supported the Copenhagen Bologna Seminar on Qualification Structures in March 2003 and will support in 2004 an initiative to design an overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Area against which national frameworks would articulate. Building on this initiative, the Commission will encourage the development of a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong learning.

### **4. Recognition of Degrees and Periods of Study**

*"Ministers stress the important role played by the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) in facilitating student mobility and international curriculum development. They note that ECTS is increasingly becoming a generalised basis for the national credit systems. They encourage further progress with the goal that the ECTS becomes not only a transfer but also an accumulation system, to be applied consistently as it develops within the emerging European Higher Education Area."*

*"They set the objective that every student graduating as from 2005 should receive the Diploma Supplement automatically and free of charge. It should be issued in a widely spoken European language."*

The Commission has taken several initiatives to promote ECTS. Institutions wishing to introduce ECTS for the first time may apply for an ECTS Introduction Grant. Institutions which use ECTS in all first and cycle degree programmes may apply for the ECTS label. Label holding institutions (only a few in 2004) may apply for an "ECTS for Lifelong Learning Grant". They will form a fast growing Pilot Group, testing the use of "ECTS for Lifelong Learning".

In 2004, the Commission will launch a special Campaign to promote the wide and consistent use of ECTS throughout Europe. A short brochure "ECTS Key Features" is available on the web and will be distributed widely in hard copy. The ECTS Users Guide on the web will be restyled and completed with examples from the ECTS practice. Country Teams of ECTS/DS Counsellors, currently active in 30 countries will be reinforced and given extra support in their task of advising universities on how to introduce ECTS correctly and how to prepare for the label (see also section 10).

In parallel, the Diploma Supplement is being promoted and the institutions may apply for a Diploma Supplement label. By the end of 2003, the Commission has come forward with a proposal to integrate different transparency instruments developed for vocational training (like Europass, European Portfolio and the European CV) and bring them together into a single European Framework for Transparency of Qualifications and Competences, called EUROPASS, which will include the Diploma Supplement, used in higher education.

The Commission continues to support the NARIC network of credential evaluators, cooperating closely with the parallel network of ENIC centres coordinated by Council of Europe/UNESCO-CEPES. The Commission will support measures to enhance the visibility and effectiveness of the centres and welcomes in particular the cooperation between ENIC/NARIC and ENQA, exploring the links between recognition and quality assurance.

## **5. Promotion of Mobility**

*“They [Ministers] note with satisfaction that since their last meeting, mobility figures have increased, thanks also to the substantial support of the European Union programmes, and agree to undertake the necessary steps to improve the quality and coverage of statistical data on student mobility.*

*They reaffirm their intention to make every effort to remove all obstacles for mobility within the European Higher Education Area. With a view to promoting student mobility, Ministers take the necessary steps to enable the portability of national loans and grants.”*

The Commission will seek to increase mobility figures even further, based on the use of both public and private funding. A Call was launched in the framework of Socrates Action 6 (Observation of education systems, policies and innovation) to support activities aiming at mapping student and teacher mobility, eliminating obstacles to mobility and enabling the portability of national loans and grants.

## **6. European Higher Education Area and European Research Area – Two Pillars of the Knowledge Based Society – Cooperation at Doctoral Level**

*“Ministers call for increased mobility at the doctoral and postdoctoral levels and encourage the institutions concerned to increase their co-operation in doctoral studies and the training of young researchers.”*

The Commission welcomes the proposed extension of the Bologna reforms (transparency, credits, quality assurance, recognition etc.) to the doctoral level. In February 2003, the Commission adopted a Communication “The Role of the Universities in the Europe of Knowledge”<sup>1</sup>, exploring the challenges universities are faced with at the crossroads between education, advanced training, research and innovation. In July 2003, the Commission adopted a Communication “Researchers in

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2003) 58 final of 05.02.2003

the European Research Area, One Profession, Multiple Careers"<sup>2</sup>, which recommends that doctoral programmes take into account broader needs of the labour market and integrate structured mentoring as an integral part. The time may indeed be right to take a fresh look at the notion of "European doctorates" and the recognition of doctoral degrees in Europe for the purpose of careers in R&D. Bologna Signatory States are called upon to adjust the legislative framework so that joint doctorates can be implemented more easily and obstacles to recognition removed. The Commission will present proposals for follow-up measures in the first half of 2004.

As a concrete step, the Commission will support in 2004-2005 a pilot project examining the status of doctoral candidates, the functioning of doctoral programmes in Europe, ways to improve them and to promote pooling of resources in cross-border activities and programmes, possibly leading to a "European Doctorate".

#### **7. Promotion of the European Dimension in Higher Education**

*"Ministers agree to engage at the national level to remove legal obstacles to the establishment and recognition of such degrees and to actively support the development and adequate quality assurance of integrated curricula leading to joint degrees."*

The Commission helps universities develop integrated study programmes through Socrates-Erasmus Curriculum Development Projects. The implementation of integrated programmes is supported through Socrates-Erasmus student and staff mobility and Intensive Programmes (like summer courses). Special support for the implementation of Joint Masters will be provided as from 2004 through the proposed programme Erasmus Mundus, building inter alia on the Joint Masters Pilot Project 2002-2003.

#### **8. Promoting the Attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area**

*"Ministers agree that the attractiveness and openness of the European higher education should be reinforced. They confirm their readiness to further develop scholarship programmes for students from third countries."*

The Commission will award up to 8000 scholarships to students and scholars from other continents and from Europe in the framework of the Erasmus Mundus programme. Through this programme, the Commission will also support a marketing strategy for European Higher Education, bringing European quality and distinctiveness higher up the attention scale of the best partners, students and scholars world-wide.

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<sup>2</sup> COM(2003) 436 final of 18.07.2003

## **9. Stocktaking**

*"Ministers charge the Follow-up Group with organising a stocktaking process in time for their summit in 2005 and undertaking to prepare detailed reports on the progress and implementation of the intermediate priorities set for the next two years."*

The Commission will help undertake a coherent stocktaking exercise in close cooperation with the Bologna Board and the Bologna Secretariat. The result should be a clear overview of the progress made in the signatory states ("Bologna Scoreboard") and an analytic report to be presented at the Bergen Ministerial Conference in May 2005. The Commission will also consider establishing a Compendium of institutions having successfully introduced the Bologna reforms.

## **10. Promoting Bologna**

*"Ministers welcome the commitment of Higher Education Institutions and students to the Bologna Process and recognise that it is ultimately the active participation of all partners in the Process that will ensure its long-term success."*

The Trends III report and the Eurydice Survey have demonstrated that Bologna is gaining ground, but, being a top-down process it has in many cases not yet reached the work floor. In too many cases, the reforms are so far only plans or promises, without real steps to implement them. The Commission will therefore take the initiative to help provide interested parties with up-to-date documentation, handbooks, case studies and workshops on the Bologna reforms, providing a European dimension and a comparative perspective.

The Commission will also support the setting up of National Teams of Bologna Promoters. Senior Academics, (Vice-)Rectors, Deans, Directors of Study, International Relations Officers and Student Representatives, who are successful in introducing the Bologna reforms in their institutions will be invited to advise colleagues in their country and occasionally abroad. Some of the Bologna Promoters would also function as ECTS/DS Counsellors. The National Teams will be organised and supported in a decentralised way through the Socrates-Erasmus National Agencies, in close consultation with public authorities, the national member of the Bologna Follow-up Group and the higher education sector of the country concerned.

## **11. Bologna Seminars and Conferences**

The Commission will support a limited number of official Bologna Seminars in priority areas, the Pre-Bergen Higher Education Convention and the Bergen Ministerial Conference.



## **BOLOGNA ACTION LINES**

### **Bologna Declaration**

1. Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees
2. Adoption of a system essentially based on two cycles
3. Establishment of a system of credits
4. Promotion of mobility
5. Promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance
6. Promotion of the European dimension in higher education

### **Prague Communiqué**

7. Lifelong learning
8. Higher education institutions and students
9. Promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area

### **Berlin Communiqué**

10. European Higher Education Area and European Research Area – two pillars of the knowledge based society.

## **WEB SITES**

### **DG Education and Culture**

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education\\_culture/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/education_culture/index_en.htm)

### **Lisbon Strategy - Education and Training 2010**

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/et\\_2010\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/et_2010_en.html)

### **Strategies for Lifelong Learning**

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/lll\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/lll_en.html)

### **Bologna Process - Higher Education**

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/et\\_2010\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/et_2010_en.html)

<http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de>

<http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no>

### **Copenhagen Process – Vocational Education and Training**

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/vocational\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/vocational_en.html)

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/copenhagen/resolution\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/copenhagen/resolution_en.pdf)

### **Communication on the Role of the Universities in the Europe of Knowledge**

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/com\\_2003\\_0058\\_f\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/com_2003_0058_f_en.pdf)

[http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2003/com2003\\_0058en01.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2003/com2003_0058en01.pdf)

**Communication on Investment**

[http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2002/com2002\\_0779en01.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2002/com2002_0779en01.pdf)

**Communication on Benchmarking**

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/keydoc/2002/bench\\_en.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/keydoc/2002/bench_en.pdf)

**Erasmus Mundus**

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/mundus/index\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/mundus/index_en.html)

**e-learning**

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/elearning/programme\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/elearning/programme_en.html)

**ENIC and NARIC networks**

<http://www.enic-naric.net>

**PLOTEUS**

<http://www.ploteus.net>

**Tuning educational structures in Europe**

<http://odur.let.rug.nl/TuningProject>

<http://www.relint.deusto.es/TuningProject/index.htm>

**ENQA**

<http://www.enqa.net/>

**EUA**

<http://www.unige.ch/eua>

**EURASHE**

<http://www.eurashe.be/info/info.htm>

**ESIB**

<http://www.esib.org>

**Council of Europe**

<http://www.coe.int>

**UNESCO-CEPES**

<http://www.cepes.ro>