

## **EUA Statement on the Bologna Process**

### **Bergen Ministerial meeting 19 – 20 May 2005**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION: THE UNIVERSITIES AND THE BOLOGNA PROCESS 2003 - 2005**

Europe's universities ***stand firmly behind the Bologna reforms*** and willingly accept their responsibility in driving forward the Process. ***On behalf of its members, 34 European rectors' conferences and over 700 individual institutions, the European University Association (EUA) has consistently promoted the Process across Europe.***

In preparing today's conference, EUA has in particular:

- Produced **the Trends IV Report** that gives a snapshot of the state of implementation of the Bologna reforms across Europe;
- Organised the Third Convention of European Higher Education Institutions that brought together well over 600 participants and resulted in the **Glasgow Declaration: 'Strong Universities for a Strong Europe'** which you find in your documents.

#### **II. THE FINDINGS OF THE TRENDS REPORT**

The Trends IV Report (authored by Sybille Reichert and Christian Tauch), shows the ***widespread support for reform*** that exists in European higher education institutions. Universities willingly accept their responsibility in driving forward the process of implementation in the next five years.

It is a sign of ***progress that has been made since we last met in Berlin in 2003*** when the challenge (identified by Trends III) was still to turn the different reforms into an everyday reality for teachers and students. Now the Bologna Process has become an everyday reality for universities.

Trends IV also shows that more effective implementation of reform is being hindered by a ***lack of institutional autonomy*** to make decisions on the key elements of the Bologna reforms. Notably there is clear ***evidence that success in improving quality within institutions is directly correlated with the degree of institutional autonomy*** - institutions which display the greatest ownership for internal quality processes, thus taking seriously and demonstrating real accountability, are also those with the most functional autonomy.

#### **III. THE GLASGOW DECLARATION "STRONG UNIVERSITIES FOR A STRONG EUROPE" – BOLOGNA IN A BROADER CONTEXT**

The Glasgow Convention adopted last month made it possible for 600 Universities to draw conclusions both from Trends IV and the other activities in which they have been involved over the last two years. The Glasgow Declaration sets out our ***policy***

**agenda for the years to come** and provides the basis for dialogue between public authorities and universities called for by Commission President Barroso, in Glasgow, who emphasised that the future of European universities is “unquestionably one of Europe's top priorities.”

The Glasgow Declaration underlines universities’ commitment to pushing forward reform, including a **refocusing of the Bologna reforms towards implementation in institutions** now that, mid-way to 2010, the legislative framework is largely in place. In addition to redoubling efforts to restructure curricula, this also means giving a higher priority to the social dimension, and providing incentives for mobility of students and staff at all levels: we strongly support including action in these two areas as a priority over the next two years. In order to enhance the acceptance of first cycle qualifications we furthermore urge governments to take their responsibilities in restructuring public sector career paths accordingly.

For universities, **implementing the Bologna reforms and meeting the research and innovation goals of the Lisbon Agenda are inextricably linked** in ensuring that universities realise their potential as key actors in shaping Europe’s knowledge societies. As university leaders we realise that this requires developing increasingly differentiated missions and profiles to address responsibly the challenges of global competition and social cohesion.

Trends IV confirmed the **central role of doctoral programmes** in linking higher education and research and the need to ensure that, while the central element remains the advancement of knowledge through research, doctoral training must also meet the needs of an employment market that is wider than academia.

#### **IV: CONCLUSIONS – PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE**

Let me conclude by four points:

1. Europe needs **strong, autonomous and accountable institutions** able to push forward and build on the burgeoning **reform and innovation** that is already underway. This is why **we call on governments to give universities the autonomy they need, be it legal, administrative or financial, to allow them to continue to implement the reforms we have all agreed upon.**
2. For Europe to play its role in an increasingly global environment means that it is important not to lose sight of the European dimension of our work and thus of our **common European objectives**. This means enhancing **quality** through reinforcing cooperation and networking between universities but also moving forward together with ENQA, ESIB and EURASHE to enhance accountability procedures, and, in particular, the **establishment of the European Register for Quality Assurance Agencies and the European Register Committee.**
3. There is the **crucial topic of funding**: We appreciate that the draft Communiqué, in looking forward to 2010, refers to the need for sustainable

funding for higher education institutions. Adequate funding is a prerequisite for securing universities' future, and, with it, their capacity for promoting cultural, social and technological innovation which is, ultimately, the goal of the Bologna Process and part of the vision for 2010 that is currently taking shape. **Europe cannot hope to compete with education systems in other parts of the world** – bearing in mind, as already outlined by Commissioner Figel, that the EU spends only 1.2% of GDP on universities, whereas the figure is 2.7 % in the US and 2.6 % in Canada as well as in South Korea - **if higher education and research budgets are not viewed as an investment in the future, and urgently increased**. We appreciate that public funding of higher education institutions already represents between 1.6 % and 1.7 % of GDP in Scandinavian countries.

4. Minister Cimet – in her opening address – raised the question of what goals we have for our Common Higher Education Area beyond 2010. Here, at the Ministerial meeting, the time may have come to admit that the Bologna Process so far was, understandably, mainly concerned with the compatibility of structures and the mobility of people. Now, in 2005, the Process needs to address the vital issue of how **to link the Bologna Process to the needs and challenges of the emerging knowledge society**, in general, and to the Lisbon goals, in particular.

We have to see that behind the Bologna Process there is a broader issue, namely – as the Commission stated in its recent Communication – “Mobilising the Brainpower of Europe”. In mobilising this brainpower, and in linking the Bologna and Lisbon Processes, it should become clear that **Europe needs strong universities** (in the broadest sense) as **“motors” in the knowledge triangle of education, research and innovation**. We need universities that are able to move out from the shadows of nation states and are able to do both: go for excellence in research as well as in teaching and provide broad, equitable access to basic higher education in Europe.

As President of the European University Association I can confirm: Universities in Europe are ready to take up a **strategic debate** on how to empower them to become even stronger actors in the emerging EUROPE OF KNOWLEDGE.

Georg Winckler  
Bergen, 19 May 2005