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Bologna goes global - Commissioner Figel' puts higher education reform in a global context

On 17 and 18 May, Ministers responsible for Higher Education from 45 European countries will meet in London to discuss progress made in the Bologna Process, which aims to establish a European Higher Education Area by 2010. Ministers will also adopt a strategy on how to reach out to other continents, and will approve the creation of a Register of European Higher Education Quality Assurance Agencies.

The Bologna process has grown from 29 countries in 1999 to 45 today, and an additional country (Montenegro) will join at the Ministerial Meeting in London. The latest **Bologna Stocktaking Report**, which is to be presented to Ministers in London, concludes that 'good progress' has been made in implementing the Bologna reforms. The Commission's own **Eurydice report**¹ supports this positive conclusion.

The main Bologna reforms concentrate on:

- the **three-cycle degree structure** (bachelor, master, doctorate),
- **quality assurance** in higher education, and
- **recognition of qualifications and periods of study**

Together, these reform efforts have created new opportunities for universities and students. The creation of a new Register of European Higher Education Quality Assurance Agencies will help to raise the visibility of European higher education and boost confidence in institutions and programmes within Europe and worldwide.

Commenting on the forthcoming London ministerial meeting, the European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, Ján Figel', said: *"Bologna reforms are important but Europe should now go beyond them, as universities should also modernise the content of their curricula, create virtual campuses and reform their governance. They should also professionalize their management, diversify their funding and open up to new types of learners, businesses and society at large, in Europe and beyond. Countries should modernise their higher education systems in all their areas of activity - education, research and innovation - making them more coherent, more flexible, and more responsive to the needs of society. These would be great steps towards the goals of the European Higher Education Area as well as the European Research Area. "*

¹

"Focus on the Structure of Higher Education in Europe 2006/07 - National Trends in the Bologna Process"

A recent **Eurobarometer Survey** among teaching professionals in higher education shows that a large majority of teachers agree that their institutions should open up for adult learners. It also **shows broad support for higher education reform**: Most university teachers feel that their institutions need more autonomy and better internal management. They believe that partnerships with business and competition among institutions will reinforce universities and that private funding and student fees are an acceptable source of extra income. A large majority acknowledged the need for European quality standards and for European quality labels and most believe that student mobility should become an obligatory part of study programmes.

More work is needed, however to implement 'lifelong learning' in everyday university practice. The Commission is working with Member States and the higher education sector to help implement the modernisation agenda for universities in the framework of the **Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs**. Grant support is provided through the new Lifelong Learning Programme (Erasmus actions), the 7th EU Framework Programme for Research and the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme, as well as the Structural Funds and EIB loans. An important task will be the implementation of the proposed European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EU), which corresponds with the framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area (Bologna).

The European Higher Education Area in a Global Setting

Ministers in London will adopt a **strategy to help position European higher education in a global context**. International dialogue, comparison and competition are strong drivers for quality enhancement in the field of higher education. **Activities will include**: better information provision; promoting attractiveness and competitiveness of European higher education establishments; enhancing partnerships; strengthening policy dialogue; and improving recognition arrangements.

The Commission supports the global strategy in concrete terms through its policies and programmes. For example, help with higher education reforms in the EU's neighbouring countries is available through various programmes, and more particularly through the Tempus programme. Relations with other continents are supported through a series of bilateral or multilateral cooperation programmes: EU-USA/Canada, Asia-Link, Edu-Link, ALFA and ALBAN for Latin America and the new Nyerere Programme for Africa. Finally, there is also the **Erasmus Mundus** programme, which provides scholarships for students from across the world to study on integrated master-level programmes in different European countries. Increased attention to cooperation with non-European institutions is also a hallmark of the Commission's support to Higher Education Institution's research activities through the 7th EU Framework Programme for Research.

For more information:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna_en.html

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/bologna/>