

Opening remarks

Barbara Weitgruber, Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests,

On behalf of the two co-hosts of the Second Bologna Policy Forum, Hungary and Austria, it is an honor for me to welcome you in Vienna to this Information Session on the European Higher Education Area.

Let me start by thanking all of you for joining us here today and for your interest in the Bologna Process and in the developing European Higher Education Area, which is probably the largest regional higher education reform initiative in the world encompassing as of yesterday 47 European countries with about 4,000 higher education institutions, 20 million students and 1.5 Million members of staff (435,000 researchers).

With their Strategy “European Higher Education in a Global Setting” adopted in 2007 the Ministers of the countries participating in the Bologna Process identified five priority areas in the international context of the European Higher Education Area:

- Improving information on the EHEA

- Promoting European Higher Education to enhance its world-wide attractiveness
- Intensifying policy dialogue
- Strengthening cooperation based on partnership
- Furthering the recognition of qualifications

Higher education and research have always been international. The opportunity for all stakeholders to engage in policy dialogue however has increased with the interest in the Bologna Process across the world. As higher education institutions, staff and students and their representative organizations as well as European and international organizations are key partners in the Bologna Process, they are also main stakeholders in this dialogue.

With the first Policy Forum in April 2009, representatives from 61 countries confirmed their interest in fostering mutual understanding and learning in the field of higher education. It was then also decided to hold a second Bologna Policy Forum in Vienna this year.

While the Policy Forum focuses on the overarching topic of “Building the Global Knowledge Society” and the three working groups will deal with multiple expectations, cooperation and competition and brain circulation, the focus of this session is the development of the European Higher Education Area. The aim is to provide a short

overview including the core values and main elements of the Bologna Process and the context in which it was initiated.

As you can see from the list of the speakers giving their views on the actions taken and the lessons learnt, the stakeholder approach which characterizes the Bologna Process and makes it so unique, is also reflected in the composition of the panel and will provide you with a number of perspectives on the developments.

I hope that the presentations and discussions this morning will not only be interesting and stimulating, but also a good starting point for the Bologna Policy Forum beginning in the early afternoon.

I wish you all an inspiring morning and look forward to seeing you later today at the Forum.

May I now give the floor to the Director General for International Affairs of the Ministry of Education in Spain José Manuela Martínez Sierra representing the Spanish EU Presidency also holding the Chair of the Bologna Process. He will be followed by Stamenka Uvalic-Trumbic, the head of delegation of UNESCO at the Bologna Policy Forum and chief of section for Reform, Innovation and Quality Assurance.

After all the opening remarks the Director General for Education, Training, Culture and Youth of the European Commission Odile Quintin will present the European Union contribution to internationalization followed by Siegbert Wuttig from the German Academic Exchange Service giving us a concrete example of cooperation in the ERASMUS MUNDUS Programme ASEMUNDUS.

The panel on the Bologna process – action taken and lessons learnt - will then be chaired by José Manuela Martínez Sierra who I now invite to take the floor for his opening remarks.