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Graz Declaration

Forward from Berlin: the role of universities

To 2010 and beyond

1. *Universities* are central to the development of European society. They create, safeguard and transmit knowledge vital for social and economic welfare, locally, regionally and globally. They cultivate European values and culture.
2. *Universities* advocate a Europe of knowledge, based on a strong research capacity and research-based education in universities – singly and in partnership – across the continent. Cultural and linguistic diversity enhances teaching and research.
3. The development of European universities is based on a set of core values: *equity and access; research and scholarship in all disciplines as an integral part of higher education; high academic quality; cultural and linguistic diversity.*
4. *Students* are key partners within the academic community. The Bologna reforms will: facilitate the introduction of flexible and individualised learning paths for all students; improve the employability of graduates and make our institutions attractive to students from Europe and from other continents.
5. *European universities* are active on a global scale, contributing to innovation and sustainable economic development. Competitiveness and excellence must be balanced with social cohesion and access. The Bologna Reforms will only be successful if universities address both the challenge of global competition and the importance of fostering a stronger civic society across Europe.
6. *Universities* must continue to foster the highest level of quality, governance and leadership.

Universities as a public responsibility

7. *Governments, universities and their students* must all be committed to the long-term vision of a Europe of knowledge. Universities should be encouraged to develop in different forms and to generate funds from a variety of sources. However, higher education remains first and foremost a public responsibility so as to maintain core academic and civic values, stimulate overall excellence and enable universities to play their role as essential partners in advancing social, economic and cultural development.
8. *Governments* must therefore empower institutions and strengthen their essential autonomy by providing stable legal and funding environments. Universities accept accountability and will assume the responsibility of implementing reform in close cooperation with students and stakeholders, improving institutional quality and strategic management capacity.

Research as an integral part of higher education

9. The integral link between higher education and research is central to European higher education and a defining feature of Europe's universities. *Governments* need to be aware of this interaction and to promote closer links between the European Higher Education and Research Areas as a means of strengthening Europe's research capacity, and improving the quality and attractiveness of European higher education. They should therefore fully recognise the doctoral level as the third 'cycle' in the Bologna Process. *Universities* need to keep pressing the case for research-led teaching and learning in Europe's universities. Graduates at all levels must have been exposed to a research environment and to research-based training in order to meet the needs of Europe as a knowledge society.
10. The diversity of universities across Europe provides great potential for fruitful collaboration based upon different interests, missions and strengths. Enhancing European collaboration and increasing mobility at the doctoral and post-doctoral levels are essential, for example through the promotion of Joint Doctoral programmes, as a further means of linking the European Higher education and Research Areas.

Improving academic quality by building strong institutions

11. Successful implementation of reforms requires leadership, quality and strategic management within each institution. *Governments* must create the conditions enabling universities to take long-term decisions regarding their internal organisation and administration, e.g. the structure and internal balance between institutional level and faculties and the management of staff. *Governments and universities* should enter negotiated contracts of sufficient duration to allow and support innovation.
12. *Universities* for their part must foster leadership and create a structure of governance that will allow the institution as a whole to create rigorous internal quality assurance, accountability and transparency. Students should play their part by serving on relevant committees. External stakeholders should serve on governing or advisory boards.

Pushing Forward the Bologna Process

13. The Bologna Process must avoid over-regulation and instead develop reference points and common level and course descriptors.
14. Implementing a system of three levels (the doctoral level being the third) requires further change. *Universities* see the priorities for action as:
 - Consolidating ECTS as a means to restructure and develop curricula with the aim of creating student-centred and flexible learning paths including lifelong
 - ~~Discussing~~ and developing common definitions of qualification frameworks and learning outcomes at the European level while safeguarding the benefits of diversity and institutional autonomy in relation to curricula;
 - Involving academics, students, professional organisations and employers in redesigning the curricula in order to give bachelor and master degrees meaning in their own right;
 - Continuing to define and promote employability skills in a broad sense in the curriculum and ensuring that first cycle programmes offer the option of entering the labour market;
 - Introducing the Diploma Supplement more widely, and in major languages, as a means to enhance employability, making it widely known among employers and professional organisations.

Mobility and the Social Dimension

15. Student mobility in itself promotes academic quality. It enables diversity to be an asset, enhancing the quality of teaching and research through comparative and distinctive approaches to learning. It increases the employability of individuals. Staff mobility has similar benefits.
16. If the EHEA is to become a reality *governments* must: tackle the current obstacles to mobility, amend legislation on student support, e.g. to make study grants and loans portable and improve regulations on health care, social services and work permits.
17. *Governments and institutions* together must give incentives to mobility by improving student support (including social support, housing and opportunities for part-time work) academic and professional counselling, language learning and the recognition of qualifications. Institutions must ensure that full use is made of tools which promote mobility, in particular ECTS and the Diploma Supplement. Possibilities also need to be increased for short-term mobility, and mobility of part-time, distance and mature students.
18. Career paths for young researchers and teachers, including measures to encourage young PhDs to continue working in/return to Europe, must be improved. Gender perspectives require special measures for dual career families. Restrictions on transfer of pension rights must be removed through portable pensions and other forms of social support.
19. Increasing the participation of women in research and teaching is essential in a competitive Europe. Gender equality promotes academic quality and *universities* must promote it through their human resource management policies.

20. The TRENDS III Report demonstrates that the information base, in particular in relation to mobility issues, is inadequate. National governments should co-operate to improve statistical data and work with the European Commission to review existing monitoring mechanisms. There should be more research on issues related to the development of the EHEA.
21. Joint programmes and degrees based on integrated curricula are excellent means for strengthening European cooperation. *Governments* must remove legal obstacles to the awarding and recognition of joint degrees and also consider the specific financial requirements of such collaboration.
22. *Institutions* should identify the need for and then develop joint programmes, promoting the exchange of best practice from current pilot projects and ensuring high quality by encouraging the definition of learning outcomes and competences and the widespread use of ECTS credits.

Quality assurance: a policy framework for Europe

23. Quality assurance is a major issue in the Bologna process, and its importance is increasing. The EUA proposes a coherent QA policy for Europe, based on the belief: that institutional autonomy creates and requires responsibility, that *universities* are responsible for developing internal quality cultures and that progress at European level involving all stakeholders is a necessary next step.
24. An internal quality culture and effective procedures foster vibrant intellectual and educational attainment. Effective leadership, management and governance also do this. With the active contribution of students, *universities* must monitor and evaluate all their activities, including study programmes and service departments. External quality assurance procedures should focus on checking through institutional audit that internal monitoring has been effectively done.
25. The purpose of a European dimension to quality assurance is to promote mutual trust and improve transparency while respecting the diversity of national contexts and subject areas.
26. QA procedures for Europe must: promote academic and organisational quality, respect institutional autonomy, develop internal quality cultures, be cost effective, include evaluation of the QA agencies, minimise bureaucracy and cost, and avoid over regulation.
27. EUA therefore proposes that stakeholders, and in particular universities, should collaborate to establish a provisional 'Higher Education Quality Committee for Europe'. This should be independent, respect the responsibility of institutions for quality and demonstrate responsiveness to public concerns. It would provide a forum for discussion and, through the appointment of a small board, monitor the application of a proposed code of principles, developing a true European dimension in quality assurance.

Universities at the centre of reform

28. The Bologna process was initially politically driven. But it is now gaining momentum because of the active and voluntary participation of all interested partners: higher education institutions, governments, students and other stakeholders. Top down reforms are not sufficient to reach the ambitious goals set for 2010. The main challenge is now to ensure that the reforms are fully integrated into core institutional functions and development processes, to make them self-sustaining. Universities must have time to transform legislative changes into meaningful academic aims and institutional realities.

29. Governments and other stakeholders need to acknowledge the extent of institutional innovation, and the crucial contribution universities do and must make to the European Research Area and the longer-term development of the European knowledge society as outlined in the Lisbon declaration of the European Union. By united action, European higher education – which now touches the lives of more than half the population of Europe – can improve the entire continent.

Leuven, 4 July 2003