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# GRAZ READER

**EUA Convention of European Higher Education Institutions**  
*Strengthening the Role of Institutions*

**Graz, 29 – 31 May 2003**



## INTRODUCTION

This short reader has been prepared by the EUA for all participants at the Graz Convention. It contains a collection of documents which together make up a body of important information for the discussions on the future of higher education in Europe which will take place at the Convention.

The reader begins with the five EUA introductory statements to the Graz themes. These statements aim to focus discussion on key questions for the future role of higher education institutions in Europe, and to take forward the policy positions which have been adopted by EUA throughout the past two years.

These EUA introductory statements draw also upon the EUA response to the European Commission's Communication on the Role of the Universities in the Europe of Knowledge, while the early findings of the Trends III report have informed the statement on Theme 5. Trends III, the Communication on the role of Universities, and the EUA response to the Communication will be provided in Graz as main documents for discussion.

The reader also includes a selection of policy documents for European higher education institutions produced during the past two years, and relevant for the thematic discussions. Other Conference documents can be found on the Conference website.

EUA Secretariat  
May 2003



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**EUA Working Group  
Introductory Statements**





## EUA Convention of Higher Education Institutions

Graz, 29-31 May 2003

### Theme I: European Higher Education in a Globalised World

#### Context

1. Several European policy developments have been significant drivers for change in higher education:
  - The Bologna Declaration is a powerful impetus for change (i) for individual higher education institutions as they implement the new degree structure, ECTS, the Diploma Supplement, etc. and (ii) for the education sector as whole as it engages in a wide-ranging debate that touches upon all aspects of teaching-related activities.
  - Discussions about the European Research Area centres on intensified co-ordination and integration of research efforts. While interuniversity co-operation in research has been a historical hallmark of higher education, the European Research Area constitutes an increased challenge to the way universities work.
  - The Lisbon and the Barcelona Summits have clearly identified strengthening Europe as a knowledge society as a central policy objective.
2. These European developments are occurring in a context of increased globalisation that raises fundamental questions: What should be the contribution of universities to the construction of Europe? How should each university and the sector as a whole position itself in the context of the above-mentioned pressures? More specifically, what balance should be reached between Europeanisation, internationalisation or globalisation?
3. Historically, the European higher education sector has been viewed as a public responsibility and universities as important contributors to national and regional development. Today, universities are faced with the strategic options of positioning themselves locally, regionally, nationally, and in a European and international context. The choices they make will influence their activities, their governance and their organisational culture. Particularly, what are the implications for each university, its students and the sector as a whole of the emphasis placed on the economic dimension of the knowledge society and the market pressures induced by globalisation?

#### General Issues

4. What does it mean to be a *European* university within the European higher education and research areas? Is there a common thread of European values underpinning European universities, or are academic values universal? Is there shared agreement that the common characteristics and core values of European universities help to explain the purpose of strengthening the European higher education and research areas? Such core values include:

- Higher education as a public service and a public responsibility
  - Equity and democratic access to higher education
  - Openness to linguistic and cultural diversity
  - Demonstration of the integral link between research and teaching for a large number of institutions across Europe.
5. If openness to the wider academic community is a universal academic value, why should European co-operation be a priority? Is the focus on Europe by chance or by design?
  6. Universities have been seen and see themselves within a local or national context with clear geographical boundaries. When conceptualising universities as operating within a supra-national context, such as the European higher education and research areas, the frame of reference for universities shifts to a supra-national context for which new procedures and paradigms are needed.
  7. EUA believes that a specific European approach to higher education needs to be further developed based on defining European elements, recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of European higher education, and developing European frameworks and models for universities.

### Framework for Discussion

8. The framework for discussion will consider the appropriate actions at **institutional**, **national**, **European** and **international** levels to reach the objectives of positioning each university and the sector as a whole within a global context while maintaining an emphasis on the academic and social missions of higher education, and the objective of creating Europe.

### Group I.A: Universities as a Public Responsibility

9. Higher education institutions in Europe have a strong tradition of fulfilling the public responsibility of developing educated citizens. This responsibility includes contributing to the creation of Europe. This means:
  - Ensuring equitable and democratic access to all students;
  - Maintaining, in universities, the integral link between teaching and research to enhance doctoral training and encourage research careers;
  - Strengthening the internal quality culture and public accountability of higher education institutions;
  - Demonstrating on the national ministries' part, a commitment to the construction of Europe to enable universities to fulfil their own roles with an appropriate degree of autonomy, and a stable funding and legal environment;
  - Recognizing the need for strong higher education institutions, distributed across the entire European continent.
10. If these goals are agreed, what are the conditions and the actions required at **institutional**, **national**, and **European** levels to ensure that European higher education is able to balance such conflicting pressures as serving society, creating the European higher education and research areas, etc, within an increasingly global and market-driven environment? The group will consider the "General Issues" (p.1 of this document) and might want to examine the texts provided for Theme 3 (internal quality) and Theme 4 (internal and external governance).

11. In addition, at the **international** level, European universities working outside Europe are invited to uphold the values of a publicly-minded sector: e.g., being fully cognisant and respectful of cultural differences, aware of their activities' effects on the local society and economy, minimising any negative impact these may have through dialogue with stakeholders and appropriate action, and demonstrating their quality to local stakeholders.

### **Group I.B: Working Together in Europe**

12. European universities are in a unique position to co-operate in teaching and research and in this way to benefit to the maximum from Europe's cultural, academic and linguistic diversity. What are the appropriate conditions and actions required to maximise such co-operation? The group is invited to consider the following issues:

#### **13. Institutional level:**

- Each university must examine carefully its strengths and weaknesses in order to clarify its profile, identify its mission and goals, and action plans to meet these goals.
- Universities need to embrace inter-institutional co-operation through targeted networking at the European level as a key element of their institutional mandate, in order to achieve critical mass in key fields and contribute to fulfilling their specific mission and goals.
- Tools already developed for European and international co-operation need to be fully implemented, e.g., ECTS, Diploma Supplement, etc.

14. **National level:** Ministries need to tackle identified obstacles to the mobility of students and academic staff, promote mobility through incentive schemes and specifically address student support and recognition issues linked to joint degrees.

#### **15. European level:**

- Research co-operation in Europe needs to be encouraged to create a competitive and efficient research environment, drawing young researchers to Europe, and contributing to Europe's economic and social development. Research co-operation does not mean concentrating more resources on an ever limited number of institutions, but increasing the number of universities across the whole of Europe that excel in specific research areas.
- Compatibility of funding mechanisms is needed for higher education institutions.
- There are significant economic differences within Europe. The impact on genuine co-operation of this unequal playing field requires particular attention.
- In order to encourage further the development of a European dimension in universities, EUA will launch a 'European label'. The label will be awarded on the basis of evaluations focused on the development and implementation of a European strategy that will include such reference points as: mobility of students and researchers, research partnerships (through FP6 and other programmes), inter-disciplinarity, implementation of ECTS and the Diploma supplement, joint masters and joint doctorates that are coherent and integrated.

16. **International level:** European universities working outside Europe are invited to uphold the values of a publicly-minded sector: e.g., fully recognising and respecting cultural differences, taking full account of their activities' effects on the local society and economy, minimising any negative impact these may have through dialogue with stakeholders and appropriate action, and demonstrating their quality to local stakeholders.

## Group I.C: Developing a European Dimension to Quality Assurance

17. Given the trends in Europeanisation, internationalisation and globalisation as well as the public accountability required of European higher education, questions of quality will become even more critical in the future. The group is invited to consider the following EUA proposal for promoting a European dimension in quality assurance.

### *Introduction*

18. EUA distinguishes **two major dimensions** to quality in higher education: an internal that is the responsibility of the institution; an external that is part of the public accountability procedures. The combination of both the internal and the external aspects should meet the following **goals**:

- Developing a European dimension in higher education and managing diversity while achieving greater compatibility.
- Promoting innovative, creative and dynamic institutions in a context characterised by diversity of missions, levels, and contexts.
- Preserving and extending institutional autonomy while meeting the need for accountability.
- Avoiding a big bureaucracy related to quality assurance or producing burdensome mechanisms that would generate QA fatigue and the standardisation of institutions or curricula.

19. In addition, there are **four levels** to the quality debate that must be carefully distinguished:

- The **institutional level** is the most important in affecting quality. It is only if an institution has developed and integrated a strong internal quality culture that quality will be effectively promoted. The EUA's Quality Culture project is a significant step in developing sound practices for developing and monitoring quality internally. It is clear, however, that the optimal preconditions for promoting internal quality have to do, in part, with the autonomy of institutions, which must have the capacity for long-term strategic planning and monitoring the quality of their activities.
- At **national or regional level**, quality assurance procedures in Europe are characterised by their great diversity. Some are focused on institutional audits, others on programme evaluations. Some are governmental processes, others semi-governmental and still others self-regulatory (managed by the higher education institutions). Some result in accreditation judgments, others are evaluation procedures. This diversity is seen as one of the obstacles to creating a European dimension in quality assurance. EUA notes these difficulties and believes that higher education institutions will continue to function within a variety of national or regional regulatory frameworks.
- Therefore, the diversity in quality assurance procedures at **European level** must be accepted as a fact while efforts to promote a European dimension for quality assurance must be pursued. To this end, EUA proposes a code of principles and an action plan as detailed below.
- This code of principles arises from **international** discussions within a variety of organisations that point to the need for an international quality assurance code of principles, as a minimum first step to address issues raised by transnational education. Therefore, it is important to reach an agreement on a European code of principles. Such a step would allow Europe to shape and influence effectively current international discussions.

## ***A Code of Principles***

20. **Institutional responsibility:** EUA believes that, with the active contribution of their students, higher education institutions are responsible, in the first instance, for monitoring and evaluating all of their activities, including the quality of their study programmes, their service departments, etc. This internal, cyclical monitoring can be done with the contribution of peers, internal and external to the institution, students and stakeholders, as appropriate.
21. **Public accountability:** Ideally, external quality assurance procedures should be focused on checking that the internal monitoring is done effectively (through institutional audits), with the exception of the regulated professions (e.g., engineering) that require programme accreditation in order to ensure public health and safety. While expressing its preference for an institutional audit, EUA realises that specific QA procedures will be set within a national or federal context and that they will remain a political prerogative at that level.
22. **A code of principles:** Given the diversity of external quality assurance procedures in Europe, and the direction taken by current international discussions, EUA recommends that all procedures are based on the following generic principles<sup>1</sup>, which are compatible with various international proposals, to ensure that quality assurance is effective in improving quality rather than simply controlling it:
- QA procedures must promote institutional autonomy and diversity and foster innovation by evaluating institutions against their mission and strategic plans.
  - QA procedures must promote cultural and organisational quality, rather than commercial quality.
  - QA procedures – whether evaluation or accreditation – must be geared at enhancement, which means that they must prompt institutions to develop internal quality measures and must emphasise self-evaluation as a key step in the procedure.
  - QA procedures must assure public accountability by (i) including stakeholders in the process, (ii) communicating the results to the public and (iii) be independent, in terms of their outcomes, of governments, interest groups and individual higher education institutions.
  - QA procedures must follow guidelines that are transparent to the public and higher education institutions and must have specified and fair appeals procedures.
  - QA agencies (where they exist) must be evaluated themselves, on a cyclical basis, in terms of the adequacy of their resources and their impact on institutions.
  - QA procedures must be cost-effective and should not be a drain on the public purse.

## ***A Higher Education Quality Committee for Europe***

23. The adoption of a code of principles raises the question of monitoring its implementation and supporting the development of good practices. As a first proposal for discussion, EUA recommends the creation of a **Higher Education Quality Committee for Europe** that would include two bodies: a forum and a board.
- The **forum** would serve as a round-table to discuss issues and trends in higher education and quality assurance. It would include as its members:
    - o All accredited QA agencies working in Europe (including non-governmental and non-European agencies)

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<sup>1</sup> This is largely based on the EUA Position Paper on Quality, approved by the EUA Council, Dubrovnik, September 2001

- All higher education institutions with degree-awarding powers
- The **board** would be a decision-making body and serve as a meta-evaluation agency.
  - Its members would include representatives of governments, higher education institutions (such as EUA), student associations (such as ESIB), employers, trade unions and the EC
  - It would report to the Bologna signatory countries
  - It would work with similar bodies around the world to ensure the transparency of European higher education at international level.

### ***Timescale***

24. To achieve this goal, EUA proposes the following steps and timescale:

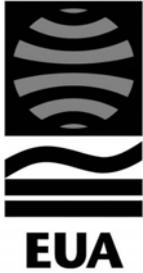
**May 2003:** EUA members will discuss, refine and develop the code of principles (Graz Convention) and make recommendations to the Ministers to support this in the period 2003 - 2005.

**October 2003 – June 2004:** EUA will propose the governance, mandate and status of the Higher Education Quality Committee, along with a business plan and identification of funding sources. The Committee will include representatives of higher education, students as the main partners, buffers bodies, representatives from the civil society, governmental and semi-governmental agency representatives.

**July – December 2004:** Experimental phase for the Committee

**January – December 2005:** Evaluation of the experimental phase and implementation of conclusions and recommendations

**January 2006:** Launch of the new Committee



## EUA Convention of Higher Education Institutions

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### *Theme II: Revisiting the Links between Teaching and Research*

#### **Introduction**

1. Europe's universities have a unique contribution to make to improving Europe's research capacity. They provide a culture of scientific and critical thinking, and have a monopoly in awarding doctoral degrees. They are responsible for training young researchers for both the public and the private sectors. Developments in research influence and transform the training of young researchers, and the capacities needed by future generations of researchers. The "intellectual "buzz" in universities created by the interaction of generations and disciplines cannot be matched by even the most high quality research institutes.
2. One of the characteristics of European universities is that teaching and research are interdependent. Moreover, universities maintaining this integral link between teaching and research are to be found across Europe. Research activities underpin high quality teaching and enhance knowledge transmission and transfer as well as being the motor for international co-operation, cross-sector collaboration, and involvement in local / regional / national problem-solving actions. This gives universities a unique role in supporting sustainable economic and social development across the continent, and one which can be enhanced through working together and targeted networking activities in a variety of different forms.

#### **Goals of the Graz Discussion**

3. EUA believes that strengthening research capacity is crucial in reinforcing the role of the universities in the European knowledge society. EUA's position is set out in more detail in the Association's response to the "Communication from the Commission on the Role of the Universities in the Europe of Knowledge"<sup>1</sup>. The Graz discussions are focussed on issues of particular importance for the future development of the Bologna Process and its articulation with the emerging European Research Area. Participants are invited to identify steps to be taken by individual institutions, EUA, funding bodies, national governments, and at European level.
4. Although research training is recognised as a part of higher education in the Bologna Process, the focus of the process so far has been on the "two main cycles". In parallel, the European Research Area (ERA) has focused on co-operation and mobility opportunities needed for researchers and has not incorporated the importance of structured teaching and learning processes prior to doctoral and postdoctoral levels. The EUA wishes to focus discussion on the interfaces between these two European processes and to underline the need in both cases for strong universities capable of developing clear teaching and research strategies. Particular importance is attached to ensuring that the link between teaching and research is fully recognised within the Bologna Process. This means looking more closely at doctoral and post-doctoral research training and at further defining means of strengthening structured cooperation at European level.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. EUA Statement on the Role of the Universities in the Europe of Knowledge – available on the EUA and the Conference website and distributed to Conference participants.

## Themes for Discussion

In this context participants are invited to concentrate on following four issues for discussion:

### 5. Research as an integral part of all levels of higher education

- While accepting increased differentiation of mission, universities must ensure that their graduates at all levels have been exposed to a research environment and to research-based training, are skilled in problem solving, and have been introduced to research methods in an appropriate way as part of their education. It will be important to make a clear case for research-led teaching and learning in Europe's universities in response to different government initiatives to concentrate teaching in teaching-only universities.

### 6. Creating optimal conditions for master-level and PhD studies

- The introduction of new two-tier structured degrees across Europe has been rapid, and these changes will necessarily have an impact upon doctoral studies. The new bachelors and masters are increasingly being defined in terms of credits, levels and learning outcomes, and there is progressively more focus on the design and reform of curricula. It will be important to look closely at issues of curricular structure and content, and at the link between teaching/knowledge transmission and research training and activity at each level, including the bachelor level.
- In view of the changes at bachelor and master levels, the interface between master and PhD level will require particular attention, specifically to ensuring that the goal of PhDs remains that of advancing knowledge in a particular area and providing the most appropriate environment for promoting creative and innovative research. In addition, it is important to ensure that doctoral students also receive training in all the necessary skills required to become competent researchers.

### 7. Strengthen European co-operation at doctoral and postdoctoral level

- The training of researchers involves transmitting specific research skills, complementary or horizontal skills and an element of mobility through international research experience. More transparent study structures should facilitate cross-border co-operation and mobility, and attention needs to focus on identifying the different possibilities of working together, and particularly on how to optimise this cooperation at doctorate and post-doctorate levels. This means that increased efforts need to be made to reduce the well-known obstacles to mobility, and to promote examples of good practices of co-operation at the doctoral level<sup>2</sup>. This should also include consideration of career prospects and the development of career paths for young researchers, and the need for financial support to encourage young PhDs to continue working in Europe.

### 8. Support targeted research networking among Europe's universities

- The geographical spread of universities across Europe provides the potential for networking based upon common interests and complementary strengths. A process of priority-setting in individual universities and defining areas of strength in research as well as teaching can form the basis for successful European cooperation. Increased co-operation, networking and clustering can take many forms leading, for example, to the development of joint degrees, doctoral programmes, doctoral schools, research projects and collaboration with local/regional and European partners in industry and academia alike. The group is invited to consider how more targeted interuniversity cooperation and networking can contribute to optimising research potential, and thus to the pursuit of excellence and the improvement of academic quality in all universities across the continent, as well as to consider "brain drain" issues within Europe.

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<sup>2</sup> EUA has submitted a project proposal to examine joint doctoral degrees in Europe.



## EUA Convention of Higher Education Institutions

Graz, 29-31 May 2003

### *Theme III: Strengthening a Quality Culture within Institutions*

#### **Introduction**

1. The past decade has seen an explosion of national quality assurance systems in Europe that have been developed to assure the public that universities are fulfilling their role and functions in society. As important as these external processes are, however, it is essential that universities develop an internal quality culture to monitor all their activities and services in a way that is congruent with core academic values. The EUA Quality Culture Project, funded by the Socrates programme, reveals great commitment and enthusiasm on the part of the participating universities to develop quality internally, identify and compare good practices and implement appropriate action plans. The project results will be disseminated widely in autumn 2003.

#### ***Internal Quality: “Good principles” vs. “good practices”***

2. Since quality is contextual, best practices in internal quality cannot be seen as universal recipes: each institution must decide for itself what these are, based on an analysis of its specific needs and context. Therefore, it is useful to make a distinction between principles and their grounding in actual practices – with the details of such practices filled out by each institution, and through mutual learning within EUA.
3. Key principles have to do with the overarching framework of an internal quality culture – namely, that each university organises its internal review to fit its own objectives and be coherent with its own academic and organisational values. At the same time, each must balance these with national external accountability procedures and ensure, among other objectives, the success of students within an agreed national framework and a European and international perspective. These principles include the following:
  - Building a university community and staff identification within the institution
  - Developing the participation of students in the university community
  - Embedding a quality culture through internal communication, discussions and devolved responsibility while understanding the resistance to change and developing strategies to overcome it
  - Agreeing on an overarching framework for quality review processes and standards which will review periodically all programmes and activities
  - Defining key institutional data – historical, comparative, national and international – and systematically collecting and analysing them
  - Involving students, academic and administrative staff, and the appropriate external stakeholders
  - Stressing the self-evaluation stage as a collective exercise for the unit under review to ensure the implementation of appropriate change and include academic and administrative staff and students

- Ensuring a follow-up of the internal reviews: e.g., implementation of the appropriate recommendations and feedback loops into strategic management
4. The specific of how to apply these principles will vary. It is useful to note, however, that of the eight principles listed above, only one involves a management practice (institutional data collection). All the others require a leadership that is attentive to both individual staff development and community building – the two essential prerequisites for quality and change.

### ***Preconditions: Autonomy, Effectiveness and Accountability***

5. **Autonomy:** The autonomy of institutions is the precondition for promoting internal quality: institutions must have the capacity for long-term strategic planning to develop quality monitoring of their activities in a meaningful way (i.e., to ensure feedback into the strategic planning process). This implies a stable funding and legal environment and the capacity for career management of academic and administrative staff.
6. **Effectiveness:** Universities must examine carefully their internal and external governance to optimise decision making, engage students and stakeholders, ensure an effective administrative structure and develop an internal and external communication strategy.
7. **Accountability:** Once internal quality culture is developed and universities review cyclically their own programmes and activities, EUA recommends that external accountability procedures take the form of an institutional audit that would evaluate the robustness and the embedding of internal quality processes.

### ***Goals of the Graz Discussion:***

8. The group is invited to suggest concrete operational proposals for universities to develop and monitor quality internally, while taking into account the general changing context of higher education: increased globalisation, internationalisation, and Europeanisation; increased pressures to co-operate and compete with other universities; and evolving trends in accountability and autonomy.

### ***Structure for the Discussion:***

9. The Bologna process and the procedures that are needed to strengthen the creation of a higher education area, more specifically, to foster the mobility of students and professionals and increase the attractiveness of the European higher education sector imply a number of actions to promote transparency, recognition, and quality. The group working on Theme 3 are invited to discuss the scope of these issues and clarify the respective responsibilities of the different actors and stakeholders.

### ***Issues for Discussion***

#### **10. Internal quality**

The working groups in Graz are asked to consider the **internal** quality processes needed to bolster quality and transparency in European higher education:

- How to define and introduce internal quality in universities?
- What should be the **scope** of internal quality monitoring (e.g., programmes, departments, support services, research, decision-making structures and processes, administration, teaching and learning, etc.).
- How should these internal processes be organised: e.g., their **cycle**, the appropriate use of internal and external **peers**?
- What actions should universities take to ensure quality at **doctoral level** and foster inter-university co-operation for doctoral students?

### 11. Internal quality and implementation of the Bologna process

The implementation of the Bologna reforms constitutes both a major challenge and an opportunity to bring about significant and positive change across institutions. Participants are invited to comment on actions institutions can take to implement the Bologna process and leverage its positive aspects. These actions could include:

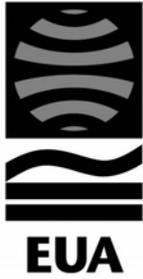
- Creation of a Bologna co-ordination office to provide advice, disseminate lessons learned across the institution, and ensure consistency of standards as curricula are being reformed;
- Implementation of internal programme evaluations to evaluate newly created degrees;
- Development and implementation of an internal information strategy to foster a better understanding of the Bologna process and of an external information strategy to increase transparency for students, employers and society in general;
- Development of administrative resources and structures to facilitate mobility (e.g., staff trained to deal with admissions and transfer issues, organisation of orientation programmes, student support services including academic advising).

### 12. External accountability

Taking into account the fact that EUA is advocating the development of an internal quality culture and vesting with universities the responsibility for evaluating programmes among other institutional activities, please clarify whether external accountability would need to be focused on programmes or rather should be focused on the institutions as a whole in the form of **institutional audits**?

The goal of this discussion is not to compare different national QA systems, but to indicate the direction that QA procedures could and should take in order to effectively balance accountability and autonomy.





# EUA Convention of Higher Education Institutions

Graz, 29-31 May 2003

## *Theme IV: Improving Institutional Governance and Management*

### Context

1. In a number of European countries, new regulations concerning university boards are being introduced (e.g., Austria, Denmark) and are redefining the role and responsibilities of rectors and the relationship of higher education institutions to funding bodies, whether these are funding research, teaching or other core activities. In seeking to strengthen the role of institutions in the European higher education and research areas, and their contribution to the creation of Europe within a globalised world, EUA recognises the importance of effective governance and management<sup>1</sup> in university to achieve the following objectives:
  - To ensure the universities' contribution to the development of the European higher education and research areas and to the construction of Europe within a globalised world;
  - To promote the dynamism of each institution and of the sector as a whole through a vigorous dialogue with stakeholders while ensuring a long-term vision for universities;
  - To sustain creativity and innovation in universities within a higher education landscape characterised by mission diversity;
  - To strengthen the link between research and teaching through appropriate strategies;
  - To ensure students' success by providing them with the optimum conditions for formal and non-formal learning during their studies.
2. To achieve these objectives, EUA invites higher education institutions and public authorities to consider:
3. **The optimal balance between centralisation and decentralisation** (relative responsibility of faculties and central university leadership) should be based on notions of institutional effectiveness and a clear internal division of responsibilities, within a participative and collegial system. The optimal balance would allow the central leadership to set the overall institutional strategy while the faculties develop their strategies in close articulation with the institutional vision. This means that funding should flow directly to the centre and redistribution should be based on transparent and clear internal rules.
4. **Students** are key members of the academic community and their potential must be developed through appropriate leadership training and opportunities to serve on those university committees where they can contribute. This will ensure that their perspective is taken into account and, given the complexity of universities, will provide students with an invaluable experience in problem solving and teamwork.

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<sup>1</sup> In this text, governance refers to university boards and management of the internal organisation to the institution.

5. The relationship to **external stakeholders** must be carefully thought out in terms of:
  - Clarity of roles and expected contributions of universities and their stakeholders, respectively: while stakeholders contribute richness to the strategic discussions in universities, their often short-term view must be balanced by the long-term, academic and public service vision of higher education.
  - Careful identification of external stakeholders, including reaching out to those who tend to keep their distance from higher education institutions (e.g., SMEs, some categories of adult learners).
6. The role of **public authorities** is important in providing a stable funding environment that enables institutions to develop long-term strategies for the core academic activities. In a context of mission diversity, legal frameworks must be stable and allow the flexibility for universities to develop decision-making structures that are congruent with their specific missions and goals and enable them to develop human resource policies that are adapted to their current academic and administrative staffing requirements. In addition, legal frameworks must promote European co-operation in research and teaching and articulation with the non-university sector.
7. **Governance** is emerging as a critical issue in many European countries. Business models cannot be exported wholesale in universities because they do not support the multiple goals to which higher education is committed. New models of governance must be adapted to universities, while identifying the appropriate conditions for effective internal steering and external accountability.
8. The optimal balance between **accountability and autonomy** is based on the universities' central responsibility for internal quality while external accountability should review how this responsibility is carried out. EUA recommends that external accountability procedures take the form of an **institutional audit** that would evaluate the robustness and the embedding of internal quality monitoring processes.

### **Goals of the Graz Discussions:**

9. Fully aware of the diversity of cultures and practices across national systems and individual universities in Europe, the aim is not to provide guidelines or blueprint solutions to either universities or governments. EUA believes, however, that European universities and higher education systems can learn a great deal from one another and that it would be mutually beneficial to examine and share experience on key governance and management issues. Graz discussions should therefore focus on areas where agreement is possible, and on sharing **good principles** for European development.
10. Specifically, the discussion groups are invited to:
  - Take into account the changing context of higher education: e.g., changing missions of universities; evolving trends in autonomy and accountability; increased inter-university competition and co-operation;
  - Define conditions and principles of effective governance and management of higher education institutions in the European higher education and research areas;
  - Discuss, develop and adopt the draft policy statement (above) to be incorporated into the Graz Declaration, and which will be addressed to both universities and public authorities.
11. While differentiating between governance and management, the discussion groups are invited to:

- Define the issues for each of these two dimensions;
- Demonstrate solutions found in different cultural and institutional settings; and,
- Identify good principles and good practices.

## **Structure for the Graz Discussions**

Participants are invited to examine the preconditions to ensure the key objectives listed in the introduction of this document, e.g.:

### **1. *In relation to governance:***

- The role of public authorities and funding bodies (i.e., funding students and institutions; for research and teaching): planning or regulatory function?
- Mechanisms for managing the relationship to the public authorities and funding bodies, e.g., on a fixed-term negotiable contract basis?
- Financing mechanisms: lump-sum budget and results/output-oriented funding?
- Reducing regulations, within a context of measured autonomy and accountability, to optimise the capacity of universities to act and take decisions for their internal organisation and administration, e.g., concerning the appointment of university leaders or the approval of curricula.
- Role and training of Advisory/Management Boards and the participation of external stakeholders?

### **2. *In relation to management:***

- Distinguishing between management and leadership and the leadership styles best adapted to universities;
- Ways to develop management and leadership skills among institutional decision makers at all levels;
- Participation of students in decision-making and ways to develop their capacity to contribute effectively;
- The structure and the internal balance of power between the institutional level and the faculties which allow an institution to develop and implement policies, and become more than the sum of its constituent parts (i.e., no legal or financial autonomy for faculties or other sub-units within the university, but decentralisation of decision making in an institutional framework);
- Policies that would allow universities to manage effectively academic and administrative careers;
- Role of external stakeholders in internal decisions;
- Role of internal quality culture in strategic management;
- Internal and external communication strategy to explain decisions and be accountable to the internal and external community.





## EUA Convention of Higher Education Institutions

Graz, 29-31 May 2003

### *Theme V: Pushing Forward Bologna and Prague*

#### **Introduction**

1. Since the Salamanca Convention in March 2001, and the creation of EUA, one of the Associations' key concerns has been to contribute to the further development of the Bologna Process both at policy level through representing the universities in the Bologna Follow-Up Group that is preparing the draft Berlin Communiqué, and through conferences, workshops and projects related to different Bologna Action Lines.
2. With EC support, EUA is also responsible for the preparation of the TRENDS III Report to be presented to Ministers at their September meeting. Contrary to TRENDS I and II which looked primarily at national developments, TRENDS III concentrates on the institutional level. It is based on the results of a survey of all EUA members, other higher education institutions and student associations with the goal of identifying the main challenges in the implementation of Bologna from the perspective of higher education leaders.
3. TRENDS III authors, Sybille Reichert and Christian Tauch note that "This challenge is only beginning to be realised in its full scope. As institutions dive into the vicissitudes of designing new curricula in accordance with Bologna principles they are often not yet aware of the systemic changes which Bologna, as a package of different but interlinked objectives, implies. At first, most institutions are focussing on curricular reform. Other Bologna objectives, such as establishing ECTS on an institution-wide basis or promoting mobility, may not be new and are rarely seen as systemically relevant. But it may be expected that the more curricular changes advance and the more systemically relevant aims of Bologna and Prague, like encouraging life-long learning and looking for mutual recognition between quality assurance procedures, will be acknowledged at institutional level, the more challenging the Bologna reforms will become."
4. The three Bologna Working Groups in Graz are invited to build on the achievements of the last two years in order to identify issues to be addressed at institutional and governmental level in the next phase of the process. While accepting that all the different aspects of the process are closely interrelated

#### **Group A. A More Transparent Structure of Degrees: Next Steps**

5. TRENDS III demonstrates that the two-tier model is becoming the dominant structure in Europe and that over 80 per cent of Bologna countries and over 50 per cent of institutions which responded to the survey have introduced or are introducing this model.

6. At the same time, it is becoming clear that the introduction of the two tiers is merely the first step in a much longer process of moving towards a more transparent system of degrees. The authors point out that “the emerging solutions bear the risk of creating new incompatibilities and that, once a certain level of comparable structures has been reached, the horizon opens on an entirely new set of challenges such as defining transparent and comparable ‘level descriptors’, ‘learning outcomes’, ‘qualification frameworks’ and so on.”
7. The Report also shows that higher education leaders are even more committed than other players to demonstrating that wider considerations of ‘employability’ are taken into account in curricular reform. As the authors state, this may be interpreted as part of the “change of paradigm in education which can be seen as a part and parcel of a new emphasis on lifelong learning, of a changing student population, of new modes of delivery of study programmes etc., involves a shift from input to output definitions, from a teacher-centred to a student-centred approach, from formal definitions (length of programmes etc.) to definitions of competencies.”
8. Therefore Working Group A is asked to concentrate on:
  - How to ensure that the implementation of the new degree structures is accompanied by the necessary curricular reform?
  - What are the appropriate ‘entry requirements’ to the Master level?
  - How to give meaning to Bachelor level degrees in their own right and not just as a stepping stone to the Master level through strengthening dialogue with professional associations, employers and other stakeholders on curricular reform?
  - How to contribute to the ongoing European discussions on level indicators for Bachelors and Masters and the need for defining learning outcomes and qualifications’ profiles?
  - How doctoral studies should be incorporated in the Bologna process?
  - The extent to which the Dublin Descriptors (cf. Convention reader) and the approach and outcomes achieved by the first phase of the Tuning Project (cf. Convention web site) can be used in a wider framework to work towards further defining a transparent structure of degrees in Europe?

## **Group B. Transparency, Recognition, and ECTS at European Level**

9. Moving on from structures, another set of issues relates to the need to improve mobility, transparency, flexibility and the compatibility of study programmes and qualifications. The TRENDS III Report demonstrates the growing importance of ECTS that has, in effect, become “the” European credit system, and as such has been included in many European higher education laws. EUA formally endorsed the use of ECTS as a credit transfer and accumulation system for Europe at its October 2002 Zürich Conference.
10. At the same time, the TRENDS III authors note that while “the basic elements and principles of ECTS seem simple enough, its implementation in the highly differentiated European higher education systems is fraught with all sorts of problems. As ECTS spreads to ever more countries and institutions, the problems encountered are multiplying. Despite many years of promoting the introduction of ECTS, the financial support provided through the Socrates/Erasmus programme and the activities of the ECTS Counsellors Group (set up by the EU Commission and managed by the European University Association), a relatively high level of ignorance and insecurity regarding the basic mechanisms of the system persist.”

11. In terms of the introduction of ECTS not only as a transfer but also as a credit accumulation system there are also a number of issues that need to be explored further. Discussions in the Tuning Project, the group of ECTS counsellors and at the Zürich conference reveal a degree of consensus that credits are not entities in themselves but always describe work completed as part of a curriculum. This means that in a credit accumulation system “credits are accumulated in a coherent study programme, reflecting a certain amount of work successfully completed at a certain level for a recognised qualification.”
12. Along with ECTS, the Diploma Supplement (DS) is the other main transparency tool of the Bologna Process. While the DS is being introduced in ever more countries, the TRENDS III Report shows that awareness of its existence or utility is limited both within institutions and with employers.
13. Finally, it is important to underline that more than half of the institutions that responded to the TRENDS III survey consider that the Bologna Process will facilitate recognition more generally.
14. Working Group B participants are invited to focus on how to:
  - Ensure that the use of ECTS is integrated into institution-wide policies and that its guidelines, principles and tools are properly understood;
  - Ensure that the basic principles and tools of ECTS, as laid down in the Zürich Recommendations, and its key features are translated into institutional guidelines and conveyed to academic and administrative staff and students alike in order to exploit the potential of ECTS as a transparency tool;
  - Provide support and advice, in particular regarding credit allocation, workload definition, and the use of ECTS for credit accumulation;
  - Increase awareness of the potential benefits of the Diploma Supplement, especially among employers;
  - Encourage higher education institutions to develop more and better institutional recognition procedures and improved communications both internally with students and externally with bodies such as ENIC/NARICS.

### **Group C. The Social Dimension**

15. In Prague, the Minister of Higher Education affirmed that higher education remains a public responsibility, and agreed on the need to take account of the social dimension of the Bologna Process. They also reiterated their commitment to improving mobility and removing all obstacles to free movement. Thanks primarily to the action of the National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB) and the Greek EU Presidency, these issues have increasingly been on the agenda over the last year. EUA has contributed to these debates, and believes that further reflection and action are necessary to ensure the long-term support of higher education institutions and their students to the Bologna process.
16. This debate also involves consideration of the need to achieve a balance between inter-institutional cooperation and solidarity on the one hand, and competition on the other, in the light of steadily decreasing funds for higher education institutions. The TRENDS III authors point out that while “most countries have witnessed and fostered increasing participation in higher education, as a recipe for increased individual, social and economic welfare. ....At the same time, global competition in research and technology transfer makes concentration of excellence

and selective support of the proven strong players seem the most efficient and promising path to follow."

17. The key issues proposed for discussion in Working Group C are as follows:

- The social conditions of studying, including flexible and open access (e.g., the function and the reality of tuition fees, their impact on access, mobility and student success rates);
- The social conditions of, and obstacles to mobility;
- The concept of solidarity, including brain drain issues, among countries and institutions in a European Higher Education Area with almost 40 members;
- How to find a balance between cooperation and competition in the future development of our higher education institutions?
- How to balance widened access, diversified provision and concentration of excellence in the same institution?

# **Recommended Supplementary Texts**





## **European University Association**

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**To:** EUA Board and Council, Zurich, 9 - 10 October 2002

**From:** EUA Secretariat

**Re:** GATS

### **Introduction**

This text builds on:

- the Joint Declaration that EUA signed in September 2001, with the Academic Council on Education (ACE), the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) and the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA),
- the Joint Declaration with ESIB signed in March 2002,
- the note to the EUA Council, and the EUA press communiqué in June 2002,
- various communications from national conferences of rectors in Europe.

These documents point to a range of issues, questions and concerns regarding GATS in terms of (I) its potential impact on the sector and (II) its framework and processes, and (III) concludes with the principles the higher education community might wish to uphold in any discussions regarding these issues.

## I Potential impact

**Internationalisation** has been a feature of universities since their origins. This process enriches the universities' core activities – teaching and research.

**Globalisation** and the emergence of a global higher education market is an undeniable fact and one that leads to positive change: e.g., it creates pressure on institutions to improve their activities and their information to the public, to organise themselves more efficiently, to monitor better their activities, etc.

So far, **globalisation and internationalisation** of higher education have been **relatively gradual processes**, initiated for the most part by the actors on the ground, rather than processes simply imposed from outside the sector. The further inclusion of higher education in the GATS will accelerate this movement – crucially, from the top down, with little input from the sector – and contains the following risks:

### At system level

**A potential risk to national authority.** GATS negotiations are led by trade officers, even when they concern higher education. In Europe, trade negotiations fall under the purview of the European Commission's DG for trade. This has the potential of eroding the principle of subsidiarity that governs higher education and placing the sector in a complex situation, under two authorities and two regimes: one governed by national public sector regulations and one by European trade regulations<sup>1</sup>. It is interesting to note that the Commission has taken a firm stand against including audio-visual services in GATS negotiations but, so far, a softer one concerning higher education, even though, in training graduates to work in the audio-visual sector, higher education constitutes one of the main pipelines that feeds into the cultural sector.

**A potential risk to the creation of a European space for higher education and research.** Further commitment of higher education within the GATS would accelerate a process of globalisation and result in increased competition and diversification among higher education institutions in order to secure market advantage. Such an acceleration of the globalisation process would be untimely as the European higher education sector is engaged in a process of convergence through partnerships and mutualisation of experience.

**A potential risk to higher education systems in developing countries or countries in transition, whether in or outside Europe.** The competition for higher education market shares in developing countries poses specific threats to political and economic development (e.g., increased brain drain, reduced opportunity for nation-building and democracy). In addition, since appropriate regional and global frameworks for quality assurance are not yet in place, increased globalisation without proper regulation may foster poor academic standards and even fraud with the penetration of questionable providers.

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<sup>1</sup> The EU's common commercial policy (CCP) is established mainly under Article 133 of the EC Treaty. The Community has exclusive competence for matters under GATT 1994 and competence is shared with the Member States on matters under the GATS and TRIPS Agreements, although there is no strictly delimited division of competence.

## At institutional level

**A potential risk to core academic values.** The increased “marketisation” of higher education can lead to an instrumentalisation of teaching and research, and implies a view of learners and students as consumers rather than full partners in the academic community, ignoring their multi-dimensional status and role. The search for market advantage can lead to an erosion of the central commitment of a publicly minded sector to broaden and widen access as a mechanism for social, political and economic inclusion.

**A potential risk to institutional integrity.** In accordance with the GATS framework, the GATS proposals currently on the table, view higher education in a fragmented way, as a series of processes (e.g., lifelong learning, specific services). This means that within an institution, some of its functions would fall under the GATS regime while others would not, with the attendant risk that the former could be spun off to cope with those national legal frameworks that prevent institutions from accruing non-governmental income. The GATS has not been applied yet to the energy sector. The liberalisation process of this sector, however, has led to a fragmentation into specialised entities – generation, transmission and distribution – one that remained public and two that have become private. The resulting unbridled competition has led to a maelstrom of problems for consumers and governments (Enron, the California crisis, the bankruptcy of British Energy).

## II. The GATS framework and processes:

**Article 1.3** exempts from the GATS “any services supplied in the exercise of governmental authority” where these services are defined as being supplied “neither on a commercial basis nor in competition with one or more service suppliers”. The interpretation of Article 1.3 is still open to debate, particularly in view of the hybrid nature of many higher education sectors and institutions. As long as Article 1.3 is untested, it is difficult to measure its consequences in terms of public funding to students and to institutions.

**Asymmetric negotiations** are possible in GATS negotiations. This means that Country A may request access to Country B’s higher education market, while Country B can request access to Country A for another type of service. This asymmetrical principle may put in balance higher education against other – perhaps more lucrative – sectors. This might explain why, in the Uruguay Round, the EU agreed to open the European higher education sector to foreign providers while not asking, at the time, for reciprocity. The current EU proposal (July 2002), targeted at opening the US market, is an effort to redress the balance.

### III. Conclusion

The higher education sector urges European ministries of education, DG Education and Culture and DG Research of the European Commission, ESIB and other non-governmental organisations to establish a dialogue with trade officers **to promote greater transparency in the negotiation process and to uphold the following principles:**

#### **At system level:**

**Lisbon Convention:** One of the major positive results of the debate concerning higher education and the GATS is that it has focused attention on global quality assurance and recognition issues and has revived interest in the Lisbon Convention. EUA urges governments to ratify and take appropriate measures to implement this Convention, if they have not done so already.

**The Bologna process:** If the priority for European higher education is the implementation of the Bologna process, a risk/benefit analysis must be conducted to assess how further liberalisation under GATS might affect it at this stage.

**National and regional quality assurance:** The need for well-developed national and regional quality assurance frameworks must be recognised, and efforts undertaken to increase cooperation and mutual acceptance. Specific transnational procedures should also be established.

#### **At institutional level:**

**The integrity of higher education institutions:** The integrity of higher education institutions and the necessity to view them holistically rather than as an assemblage of unconnected processes and functions must be maintained.

**The centrality of students as partners:** The all-encompassing nature of the university experience in developing students academically and socially and the fact that learning is a transaction between teachers and students, mean that students cannot be seen narrowly as consumers or that higher education cannot be seen instrumentally as delivering a product.

**Access as a condition for social, political and economic inclusion:** Equality of access to a publicly accountable sector is a central goal in promoting democracy.

**Appropriate distinction between public-orientated institutions (public and private) and the for-profit higher education sector:** A distinction must be made between, on the one hand, public and private institutions that are guided by academic and social imperatives, and, on the other hand, for-profit higher education which are guided by economic imperatives.

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ESIB, Statement on the commodification of education  
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EUA, Joint Declaration with ACE, ACCU and CHEA, *Higher Education and the GATS*,  
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### **Other useful sources**

Agence Education Formation, *L'Union Européenne présente ses requêtes à l'OMC*, AEF 04/07/2002

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**Web sites:**

**ESIB**

<http://www.esib.org/>

**European Commission:**

General information about the EU and GATS

<http://gats-info.eu.int/>

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/wto\\_overview/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/wto_overview/index_en.htm)

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/pdf/wtorepeu\\_1.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/pdf/wtorepeu_1.pdf)

For EU commitments in HE

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For specific country commitments in HE

<http://gats-info.eu.int/gats-info/swtosvc.pl?&SECCODE=05.C>

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The commercial policy of the European Union

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/misc/tib3\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/misc/tib3_en.htm)

For a useful and exhaustive list of international links

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/index_en.htm)

**OECD:**

<http://oecd.org>, click on “Promoting trade liberalisation”;

<http://www.oecd.org/EN/document/O,,EN-document-4-nodirectorate-no-20-25748-4,00.html>, for workshop summaries of the Washington May 2002 meeting on GATS and higher education.

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## Quality Assurance in Higher Education:

### A Policy paper of the European University Association

#### 1. Background

This EUA policy paper on quality assurance arises from five key developments that have taken place in Europe over the past few years:

The **Magna Charta Universitatum** (1988) which upholds university autonomy, must be the precondition for fostering the adaptability of universities to the ever-changing requirements of today's society.

The meeting of ministers at the **Sorbonne's** 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary (1998) referred to the central role of higher education in the development of Europe through the creation of a **European Higher Education Area**.

The **Bologna Declaration** (1999) by which the 29 signatory states agreed to act in concert to increase the competitiveness of Europe through a range of measures aimed at creating a European Higher Education Area. These include **the adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees and a system of credits**. The objectives of such tools are to promote mobility, European co-operation in quality assurance, inter-institutional co-operation, and integrated programmes of study, training and research.

The **Salamanca Convention** (2001) of European higher education institutions considered quality as a fundamental building block of the European Higher Education Area and made it the underlying condition for trust, relevance of degrees, mobility, compatibility and attractiveness.

Similarly, the recent **Communiqué** of the European education ministers (Prague, 2001) regards quality as a major factor in determining the competitiveness and attractiveness of European higher education.

In this context, *the European University Association confirms the central role of quality in higher education*, and affirms that the evaluation of quality should:

- be based on trust and co-operation between institutions and evaluation agencies;
- take into account the goals and mission of institutions and programmes;
- consider the balance between tradition and innovation, academic excellence and socioeconomic relevance, the coherence of curricula and students' freedom of choice;
- examine teaching and research as well as management and administration;
- include responsiveness to students' needs and the provision of non-educational services.

Quality assurance refers to a set of procedures adopted by higher education institutions, national education systems and international agencies through which quality is maintained and enhanced.

Quality assurance is effective when it refers to the very core of the higher education activity and when its results are made public.

Quality assurance implies academic autonomy and is closely dependent on academic management that is based on the principles of efficacy, academic and scientific performance as well as competitiveness.

Quality assurance can succeed only if it becomes inherent to the institutional culture. Such a culture generates the necessary motivation and ensures competence in implementing quality assurance mechanisms.

## **2. Benchmarking quality management**

Various higher education systems have developed policies regarding quality criteria, quality assessment, quality assurance, and quality management. The quality of higher education can be defined in various ways as: excellence, "zero defects", "goal adequacy", capacity for ongoing improvement, minimum standard, marketability, or competitiveness. Every approach has its contextual justification. **Quality starts by ensuring minimum standards. It extends to the capacity of ongoing improvement and includes a competitive dimension at the national and at international levels.**

*The European University Association* considers that it is important to identify common benchmarks for quality management and assurance to contribute to the creation of the European Higher Education Area. These quality benchmarks must focus on the multiple dimensions of academic activities, as follows:

- a) **academic autonomy as an instrument for improved performance and competitiveness;**
- b) **explicit institutional mission and objectives of institutions and programmes;**
- c) **transparent and non-discriminatory access and recruitment policies, the possibility of a second chance and fair appeals policies;**
- d) **curricular quality;**

- e) **academic staff quality**;
- f) **permanent feedback from the students** and responsiveness to their suggestions, proposals, and critique;
- g) **flexible organisation** allowing credit transfer, interdisciplinarity, studying within the framework of various programmes or institutions;
- h) **quality of infrastructure** and **availability of adequate equipment**;
- i) **resource** allocation with the capacity of obtaining extra-budgetary resources, motivating academic staff and investing in buildings and equipment;
- j) **accountability** with regard to the use of human and material resources, and systematic auditing;
- k) **feedback from stakeholders** and the possibility of adapting degree programmes to labour-market needs;
- l) **international scientific competitiveness**;
- m) **internal quality assurance mechanisms**;
- n) **contribution** to public debate and democracy;
- o) **innovation potential** in technical, scientific, cultural and artistic fields.

### 3. Accreditation principles

Various countries have developed specific accreditation systems. **The *European University Association* considers accreditation as one possible outcome of quality assurance and defines it as a formal recognition of the fulfilment of minimum, publicly stated standards referring to the quality of a programme or an institution.** Accreditation is the adequate mechanism for assuring minimum standards of education and, in some cases, can be seen as the first step toward quality.

It must be used, however, in combination with robust institutional quality review. **Periodic self assessment** of each institution or programme is an important step in quality assurance. **Self assessment carries more weight, however, if it is accompanied by an external assessment phase performed by independent assessment agencies. In turn, ensuring an international dimension will contribute to the quality of national assessments.**

Communication among national systems is still poor and there is a quality information gap. It is necessary that different national systems should accept a univocal significance of accreditation. **The *European University Association* considers that the time has come to take steps towards making accreditation standards of various European countries compatible with one another through bilateral or multilateral agreements. At present, however, there is no need to develop a single European accreditation system, but it is timely to think about criteria and mechanisms to validate the accreditation procedures applied in Europe.**

Specifically, the European University Association regards the following **principles** as central to accreditation procedures. They must be:

- a) geared at quality enhancement which means that the process will focus on the internal quality control mechanisms in the institution and assure that these are used for strategic planning;
- b) preserve institutional diversity and autonomy as well as foster innovation by evaluating institutions against their missions and strategic plans;
- c) assure public accountability by (i) including stakeholders in the process, (ii) communicating the results to the public, and (iii) be independent of governments, interest groups and higher education institutions;
- d) consist of a self-evaluation and an external assessment with a clear emphasis on self evaluation as a formative step in institutional planning;
- e) have guidelines that are transparent to the higher education institutions and the public;
- f) set up a procedure that makes clear distinctions between conditions for accreditation and recommendations for improvement;
- g) have a specified and fair appeals procedure;
- h) be re-assessed on a cyclical basis in terms of the adequacy of an agency's resources and its impact on institutions.

***The European University Association encourages institutions to ensure the internal review of their programmes and supports initiatives in Europe to promote defined and appropriate mechanisms for the accreditation of institutions.***

#### **4. European and international co-operation**

In the context of globalisation and internationalisation, quality assessment implies, more than ever, comparing approaches and results, as well as learning from good practice. It is necessary and beneficial to extend **international co-operation** among institutions in view of implementing quality assessment and assurance mechanisms, improving the assessment of academic programmes, sharing assessment methods and exchanging experience.

***The European University Association*** encourages the networking of institutions in matters of comparing organisations and results, ensuring co-operation in designing and improving quality assessment methods, comparing and developing quality assessment systems, making public examples of good practice and sharing experience (e.g., on the introduction of new degrees or ECTS) – these are effective means to consolidate the quality of higher education programmes. To this end, the ***European University Association*** will co-operate closely with ENQA (European Network of Quality Agencies), ESIB, OECD, UNESCO-CEPES and other international organisations and institutions concerned with the quality of higher education.

***The European University Association supports the development of a database regarding higher education systems, dissemination of information on innovation, and elaboration of comparative studies of systems and institutions.***

## 5. Conclusion

In the present context of changes brought about by globalisation and the internationalisation of the academic sector, the *European University Association* and its members support steps taken by institutions, in partnerships with governments, towards:

- a) operating changes towards the expansion of the European dimension of higher education and the creation of the **European Higher Education Area**;
- b) curricular reform;
- c) improving academic management, including the capacity for internal quality management;
- d) developing universities as teaching, learning, research and service-providing units;
- e) expanding and consolidating scientific research in universities;
- f) adopting compatible mechanisms for quality assessment;
- g) achieving convergent education systems by rendering them comparable and compatible, based on **common denominators with a European dimension**.

*Approved by the EUA Council  
Dubrovnik, 27 September 2001*



## EUA Convention of Higher Education Institutions

Graz, 29-31 May 2003

*The EUA Institutional Evaluation Programme: Most frequently analysed issues*

# Improving Institutional Governance and Management

## The Institutional Evaluation Programme: Frequently analysed problems since 1993

### 1. Background

The Institutional Evaluation Programme, launched in 1993, has evaluated over 80 universities in 30 countries (Europe, Latin America and South Africa). The Programme supports the idea of a university that strives for *autonomy* while being *accountable* for its decisions. In this perspective, the Programme analyses a university's capacity for change in an approach that may be described as outcome-oriented. The evaluations are conducted by European teams of current and former rectors who raise four questions:

- (1) What is the institution trying to do?
- (2) How is the institution trying to do it?
- (3) How does the institution know if it works?
- (4) How does the institution change in order to improve?

The following summary, based on an analysis of about 60 evaluation reports and focused on management and leadership issues, reveals the common issues that cut across the diversity in national contexts: i.e., both the challenges faced by universities and the conditions for appropriate responses.

### 2. Conditions for effective leadership and ownership

The evaluation reports reveal a wide consensus within the pool of EUA evaluators regarding the appropriate conditions to promote a university's capacity for strategic management and change.

#### 2.1 Senior leadership

- Senior leadership plays a decisive role in defining the university's mission, its aims and objectives as well as in ensuring their appropriateness. Senior leadership is involved in communicating the university's mission at local, national, European and international levels, as appropriate.
- Senior leadership is in charge of structuring decision-making processes and procedures and supervising their effectiveness.
- Senior leadership is involved in monitoring the outcomes of the various processes and procedures to ensure quality in the areas of learning and teaching, research and knowledge transfer.
- Senior leadership is responsible for the feedback and follow-up of the monitoring processes in order to sustain appropriate strategies and planning. This implies that senior leadership steers the processes and procedures needed to develop the university's mid-

and long-term strategies – in an on-going manner – to enhance the university’s capacity for change.

- Senior leadership is the guardian of institutional autonomy and responsible for both internal and external accountability.

## **2.2 Decision-making structures and balance of power**

Decision-making processes need to reflect an organisation and structures that adhere to the principles of quality, accountability, transparency and effectiveness. In addition, the balance of power between the rectoral level and the faculties is decisive to ensure:

- the university’s effectiveness in formulating a coherent and cohesive mission,
- setting priorities and targets for the university as a whole,
- defining and managing processes and procedures in order to implement the university’s aims and objectives,
- monitoring the quality of outcomes and feeding information into the strategic quality cycle.

In short, the right balance of power between the rectoral level and the faculties is a necessary precondition to develop the university’s capacity for change. This requires:

- Transparent, finely tuned and flexible decision-making processes that take into account the need for both top-down and bottom-approaches, ensuring that decisions are made at the lowest appropriate level
- Constant monitoring of the balance between centralised and decentralised decision-making. This constitutes a constant threat that could lead to fragmentation due to “centrifugal forces” within the university. This means:
  - o Ensuring that the university’s mission and vision are translated into faculties’ and departments’ objectives to guarantee that the distribution of power at various levels serves the aim of putting the university’s mission and objectives into practice (e.g., the university should not be a loose collection of faculties, financed directly by the State; research units should not strive for institutional autonomy). The whole university should be greater than the sum of its parts.
  - o Balancing individual initiatives and institutional liability (conditioned autonomy): in this perspective, balance of power needs to be established at an institutional level (e.g. between university – faculties and departments) in relation to individual academic core activities (e.g., research) with a view to promoting the strategic co-operation and co-ordination of the whole university.

Thus, the rationalisation of the internal distribution of power and a high degree of transparency in decision making are of major importance.

## **2.3 Building a university community**

Institutional governance and management, however, do not lie exclusively with the senior leadership. Senior leadership must ensure the commitment of individual members of the university. Thus, leadership and ownership are two sides of the same coin. This implies:

- Extending, in an appropriate manner, the concepts of leadership and responsibility beyond the senior leadership level
- Engaging students, academic and administrative staff

- Ensuring, as appropriate, the *participation of stakeholder* groups at all levels of the university
- Developing the management skills of academic and administrative staff members to ensure that they are sufficiently qualified for participating in decision-making processes (an important aspect of an overall staff development framework)
- Clarifying job descriptions and reporting lines
- Providing transparent communication

### 3. Most frequently made recommendations

A set of *recommendations* regarding management and leadership issues can be identified in most of the evaluation reports that were analysed:

- to re-think:
  - the procedure of *electing* Rectors and Vice-Rectors respectively
  - the question of whether some powers of the Senate could be delegated either to the Rector and the Rectorate Council
  - the tools and instruments provided for strategic decision making
- to ensure:
  - transparency in decision-making processes and structures
  - continuity between decision making and implementation of decisions
  - an effective and “lean” organisation
  - participation and communication
  - an effective and efficient administration
  - the structure and organisation of institutional governance and management based on statutes.

\*

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The EUA wishes to acknowledge the contribution of Dr Stefanie Hofmann (HRK) who read, analysed and synthesised the evaluation reports. The full version of her report – on which the above summary is based – covers a greater range of issues and will be published in autumn 2003. EUA wishes to extend grateful thanks to Professor Klaus-Dieter Wolff (ACQUIN) who was convinced of the usefulness of this synthesis, and to Professor Klaus Landfried and the HRK for making this work possible by giving leave to Dr Hofmann in order to give her the required time to accomplish this useful analysis.

In addition to the **Institutional Evaluation Programme**, EUA offers annually, with IMHE/OECD, the **Management Seminar**, a residential seminar designed for newly appointed rectors and vice-rectors. The objective of the seminar is to develop leadership skills taking into account the changing higher education context. **Both of these membership services are currently open for registration.**

Finally, the project report of EUA’s **Quality Culture Project** (Socrates-funded Programme) will be available in autumn 2003. A grant application for **Phase II** of this project has been

submitted to the Socrates Programme. If granted, the call for applications will be sent in autumn 2003.

These are only some of the activities organised by EUA. For more information please consult the EUA website: [www.unige.ch/eua](http://www.unige.ch/eua)

# Survey on Master Degrees and Joint Degrees in Europe

## MASTER DEGREES IN THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

by Christian Tauch

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The main conclusion of the survey is that, although there is still a significant variety with regard to the duration and architecture of degrees in the European Higher Education Area, there is a dominant trend towards Master level degrees that require the equivalent of 300 ECTS credits, although examples of slightly longer and slightly shorter courses can be found.

2. It is suggested that in the further discussions on the Bologna Process and in particular in the preparation of the Berlin Conference 2003 the participants agree on the definition that **a Master degree in the European Higher Education Area requires normally the completion of 300 ECTS credits, of which at least 60 should be obtained at the graduate level in the area of the specialisation concerned.**

This would allow for the following patterns:

- 180 credits Bachelor + 120 credits Master
- 240 credits Bachelor + 90 to 120 credits Master (of which up to 30 or 60 may be waived in view of previous studies during the final Bachelor year, provided the minimum number of 60 credits remain at graduate level)
- 300 credits Master (integrated programme).

3. It became obvious that medicine and related disciplines require a different scheme in most countries but this is not in contradiction to the quite homogeneous pattern that prevails in all other disciplines. When a country, as e.g. Denmark has done, decides to introduce the Bachelor-Master system also in the medical fields, it is likely to fix the required number of credits for the Master at 180 ECTS credits, in order to maintain the overall length of study of 360 ECTS credits.

4. In a number of countries there are cases of extremely long courses of 5–6 years duration that are considered “undergraduate“ courses. This is clearly out of line with the international definitions of “undergraduate“ and “(post)graduate“ and weakens the European and international competitiveness of these countries. There is an urgent need for them to reassess, in their own interest, both the structuring and the labelling of their courses.

5. The realisation of the European Higher Education Area requires more guidance as to the number of credits required for the completion of what is internationally regarded as a degree at Master level. Courses that are too short may find it very difficult, if not impossible, to get transferable accreditation when it is generalised in Europe.

60 credits Master should allow the completion of a 300 credits degree only if they follow a

240 credit Bachelor in the same or a closely related field.

It seems therefore wise that the majority of countries and institutions seem inclined to offer 90–120 Master programmes. It is of course always possible to waive some of these credits for certain students if their previous qualification suggests it.

6. In some countries, the differentiation between more “academic” and more “professional” Master degrees seems irrelevant whereas others distinguish quite clearly between the two, and have in many cases decided to introduce new professional Masters.

7. In all countries where long (270–300 ECTS credits) and short (60–120) Master programmes exist in parallel, their academic value is considered to be the same. Therefore, in many countries, little attempts are made to differentiate between the two in terms of nomenclature. One rather relies on the Diploma Supplement to explain the exact nature of the programme.

8. The general requirement for access to a postgraduate Master programme is usually the completion of an undergraduate degree at Bachelor level, but a growing number of countries are allowing access to holders of equivalent, often less formal, qualifications and provide more bridges between the professional higher education sector and the universities.

9. Credit systems have been or are being introduced in almost all countries and there is a clear trend to use ECTS. Equally, the Diploma Supplement is used or being introduced in a majority of countries.

10. Few higher education institutions feel the need to seek accreditation from foreign agencies, as national and regional accreditation agencies are developing rapidly in most parts of Europe.

## **JOINT DEGREE STUDY**

by Andrejs Rauhvargers

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Joint degrees are high on the European political agenda. At the 2001 Prague Higher Education Summit, Ministers called upon the higher education sector to step up the development of modules, courses and curricula “offered in partnership by institutions from different countries and leading to a recognized joint degree”.

Expectations regarding the development of joint degrees as a means of achieving the goals of the Bologna Declaration are high. Respondents believe that such an initiative is relevant to virtually all the goals and will boost the development of joint quality assurance, recognition, and the transparency and convergence of higher education systems throughout Europe, as well as student and staff mobility, graduate employability, the European dimension of studies and the attractiveness of European education in general.

In the vast majority of countries taking part in the EU Socrates programme, higher education institutions have to some extent already engaged in joint degree partnerships with foreign institutions and this trend is intensifying. Bilateral partnerships are still more common than multilateral ones, but strong joint degree networks along subject lines have already emerged.

Joint degrees in Europe exist in most fields of study. The present survey shows that they are most commonly established in economics/business and engineering, followed by law and management. European studies/political science, communications and media, foreign languages and social sciences are also often cited. The languages of tuition are usually those of the partner countries and/or English.

Joint degrees are more common at Master and doctoral levels than at first degree level or outside the university sector. ECTS (the European Credit Transfer System) or compatible credit systems are used for the award of most joint degrees at Bachelor and Master levels.

While the allocation of funding for degrees awarded jointly with foreign institutions usually follows the same rules as in the case of national programmes, more funding is normally required, at the very least to ensure the joint development of programmes, and student and staff mobility.

Joint degree programmes are usually based on inter-institutional rather than intergovernmental or other higher level agreements.

Very few countries have specific legal provisions regarding joint degrees. While this does not normally deter the establishment of joint programmes as such, it can cause serious problems for the award and recognition of the joint degrees.

The award of a single degree in the name of several institutions is still legally difficult. Joint degrees are therefore usually awarded either as double degrees (two separate national qualifications), or as one national qualification with reference to the fact that it results from a joint programme. This may range from an unofficial joint certificate giving the names of all partners to the barest of indications that cooperation has occurred at all.

Parts of joint programmes undertaken by students at partner institutions are often recognised automatically. Recognition of joint degrees by the partners is usually ensured through cooperation agreements.

The situation is less straightforward where national and international recognition are concerned. When a joint degree is awarded as a national degree, it is recognised nationally and regarded internationally like any other foreign degree. However, if it is a real joint award, it falls outside the framework of both national and international legislation and therefore encounters problems of recognition.

Several issues have to be addressed in the near future in order to promote the further development of joint degrees. They include the national legal framework for degrees, the issues of national and international recognition and quality assurance, and support for student and staff mobility. There is also a need to agree upon a common definition of the “joint degree” concept.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations of the Conference**

### ***Different dimensions of master degrees***

(In this document the term master degree is used to describe all second-cycle higher education degrees at master level irrespective of their different national titles)

As the study made by European University Association shows most European countries have introduced or are about to introduce a higher education degree structure based on a sequence of bachelor, master and doctoral degrees.

According to this report, there is still some variety in the length of the study programmes leading to the master's degree, but there seems to be a trend towards master degrees the total extent of which is 300 ECTS credits. In practice, this usually means five years of full-time studies.

The degree structures still vary considerably between the countries taking part in the Bologna Process. In addition, the two-tier structure is still perceived differently in our respective countries. In some higher education systems, bachelor's and master's degrees are seen as clearly self-supporting entities, whereas in others, the two cycles form rather a cumulative sequence of knowledge, skills and competencies in more or less the same disciplinary area. These differences can be accommodated within the European Higher Education Area if reconciled with its objective of creating more flexibility and individual choice in higher education qualifications.

Traditionally, most higher education institutions not included in the university sector in Europe have offered bachelor degrees, and only recently have they introduced master degrees in some countries. This development serves the purpose of diversification of higher education, which is called for by European labour market needs and the increasingly heterogeneous student population.

In order to increase the transparency of qualifications earned at different types of institutions or with different profiles, all higher education institutions should make use of the Diploma Supplement. Governments should make every effort to ensure that qualifications at the same level earned in different types of institutions enjoy, where appropriate, the same civil effect in professional life and in the pursuit of further studies.

The diversification of contents and profile of degree programmes calls for a common framework of reference of European higher education qualifications in order to increase transparency and thus to facilitate both national and international student mobility. Increasing student and teacher/staff mobility adds to cultural understanding and appreciation and promotes innovation in European higher education. Readable and comparable degree structures facilitate the professional recognition of qualifications and the mobility of labour force thus contributing to making the European labour market more dynamic for employers and graduates.

### ***European higher education - a hallmark of excellence***

Many European higher education institutions offer degree programmes designed for and marketed to international students. To serve this purpose, many institutions have chosen to develop education through widely-used foreign languages. This approach is understandable and welcome, as it increases the global attractiveness and competitiveness of higher education institutions in smaller linguistic areas. Development of the EHEA must not, however, lead to a mono-linguistic world of higher education. Within the EHEA governments and higher education institutions should make every effort to ensure teaching of the national languages to foreign students, even if the degree programme itself is in another language and proficiency in the language of the host country is not a prerequisite for admission. Multiculturalism, pluralism and linguistic skills are to remain the intrinsic values of European higher education.

Joint master degrees at the European level should become an important feature of European higher education both to promote intra-European cooperation and in order to attract talented students and researchers from other continents to study and work in Europe. Particular attention needs to be paid to introducing quality assurance mechanisms and to solving the specific recognition issues raised by joint degrees.

To serve a wider range of international students and contribute to capacity building in developing countries, the possibility of delivering European higher education through branch campuses operated by consortia of European universities should be explored and encouraged, especially at the master's level.

### ***Two-tier degree structure: implications for mobility***

*General:* Steps must be taken to consolidate and increase the present volume of mobility, also for longer periods of time. In order to be able to monitor in any precise way the volumes and flows in mobility, reliable statistical data not available at present need to be produced on a regular basis. The ratification of the Lisbon Recognition Convention in all EHEA countries would be desirable to increase mobility.

*Intra-European mobility:* Further growth in intra-European mobility (exchanges) presupposes a strong effort by governments and higher education institutions to consolidate and extend inter-institutional arrangements of a high quality, which will assure full recognition of periods studied and credits earned abroad. This also entails a coherent application of ECTS across the entire EHEA, as laid down in the recent “Key Features” document and the recommendations of the Zürich Conference on ECTS. National support schemes should be made portable.

With reference to intra-European degree (vertical) mobility, a strong plea is made to governments and institutions to ensure equal treatment of bachelor degrees between EHEA countries as a formal requirement for admission to master programmes.

*Mobility between Europe and the world:* In order to attract more students and young researchers from outside of Europe, supportive action is necessary. One such activity is the marketing of European higher education on other continents. Another is the creation of internationally attractive programmes taught in major world languages. Europe's offer of this type of education must be considerably stepped up, beyond its present modest level. Framework conditions, such as conditions for entry and residence of third-country nationals in Europe, work permits and student services, must be improved to facilitate access to European higher education.

## ***Framework of reference for master degrees in Europe***

There are various European initiatives underway today that aim at defining learning outcomes and skills and competencies both at the bachelor and master level. This will allow capitalising on the richness of European higher education traditions and creating European profiles in the various disciplines. At the same time, the promotion of mobility in Europe requires increased transparency and comparability of European higher education qualifications. Some common criteria for the structural definition of master's degrees - in their various national names - are needed. This framework of reference should be flexible enough to allow national and institutional variations, but at the same time clear enough to serve as a definition.

The following recommendations adopted by the participants in the conference could be seen as useful common denominators for a master degree in the EHEA:

1. A master degree is a second-cycle higher education qualification. The entry to a master's programme usually requires a completed bachelor degree at a recognised higher education institution. Bachelor and master degrees should have different defined outcomes and should be awarded at different levels.

2. Students awarded a master degree must have achieved the level of knowledge and understanding, or high level in artistic competence when appropriate, which allows them to integrate knowledge, and handle complexity, formulate judgements and communicate their conclusions to an expert and to a non-expert audience.

Students with a master degree will have the learning skills needed to pursue further studies or research in a largely self-directed, autonomous manner.

3. All bachelor degrees should open access to master studies and all master degrees should give access to doctoral studies. A transition from master level to doctoral studies without the formal award of a master's degree should be considered possible if the student demonstrates that he/she has the necessary abilities.

Differences in orientation or profile of programmes should not affect the civil effect of the master degrees.

4. Bachelor and master programmes should be described on the basis of content, quality and learning outcomes, not only according to the duration of programmes or other formal characteristics.

5. There are several ongoing international projects related to developing coherent quality assurance mechanisms in the EHEA. This work should be continued, and international aspects of national and regional quality assurance systems should be further developed.
6. Joint master programmes at the European level should be developed to promote intra-European cooperation and attract talented students and researchers from other continents to study and work in Europe. Particular attention must be paid to solving recognition problems related to joint degrees.
7. While master degree programmes normally carry 90 - 120 ECTS credits, the minimum requirements should amount to 60 ECTS credits at master level. As the length and the content of bachelor degrees vary, there is a need to have similar flexibility at the master level. Credits awarded should be of the appropriate profile.
8. In certain fields, there may continue to exist integrated one-tier programmes leading to master degrees. Yet, opportunities for access to intermediate qualifications and transfer to other programmes should be encouraged.
9. Programmes leading to a master degree may have different orientations and various profiles in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs. Master degrees can be taken at universities and in some countries, in other higher education institutions.
10. In order to increase transparency it is important that the specific orientation and profile of a given qualification is explained in the Diploma Supplement issued to the student.





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## *THE BOLOGNA PROCESS*

### *Seminar on “Integrated curricula – Implications and Prospects”*

***Mantova, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> April 2003***

### ***FINAL REPORT***

#### **1. Preamble**

The European summit of education ministers held in Prague on 19 May 2001 drew attention to joint programmes and degrees. The final communiqué expressly calls upon the higher education sector “to increase the development of modules, courses and curricula at all levels with ‘European’ content, orientation or organisation. This concerns particularly modules, courses and curricula offered in partnership by institutions from different countries and leading to a recognised joint degree”.

This commitment had already been highlighted in the Bologna Declaration which explicitly set as an objective the “promotion of the necessary European dimension in higher education, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research”.

Nevertheless, still today restrictive national legislations make joint degrees impossible to award and recognise in most European countries.

#### **2. Main features of joint study programmes**

Co-operation between HE institutions of different countries in specific disciplines has generated common education and training activities, generally under the heading of joint study programmes, which are characterised by a common assumption of responsibility by the participating institutions as regards:

- the definition of the objectives of the programme
- the design of the curriculum;
- the organisation of the studies;
- the type of qualifications awarded.

##### **2.1. Objectives of the programme**

The objectives of a programme are jointly defined by partner institutions with a view to giving graduates an added value when they enter the European/international job market. This requires the identification of professional profiles that will be needed, as well as a search for coherence between the objectives pursued and the curriculum developed.



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### **2.2. Design of the Curriculum**

Cooperation in curriculum design means drawing up of a common study path aimed at reaching the educational goals that have been jointly defined.

In these schemes the partners offer specific segments which complement the overall curriculum designed, thus making it necessary for students to spend time at each or several of the participating institutions. In some instances, joint programmes based on the combination of segments identify some existing components of each participating institutions' study programmes - be they basic parts of the curriculum or specialist areas - and then proceed to put together a programme which utilises those components to the maximum. In other cases, new segments are developed by the institutions involved. Overall, it is the organic combination of diverse approaches, in terms of contents, conceptualisation and teaching methods, that should form the key feature of an integrated curriculum. Accordingly, in this context student mobility is seen not only as a cross-cultural experience - that has a value in itself - but also as a means of acquiring knowledge and skills not available at the home institution and which complement and integrate the activities carried out at the home institution.

### **2.3. Organisation of Studies**

The organisation or management of studies mainly concerns decisions on logistical and financial aspects of the programme, the selection of students and the choosing of the teaching staff. In joint programmes there are different approaches to these organisational issues. Students from various institutions may, for example, rotate systematically among different institutions or be able to choose the partner institution where certain modules can be taken. They may be subject to the same selection procedures or be selected by each institution in accordance with different criteria. The contributions of teachers from partner institutions may be organised in different ways.

### **2.4. Type of Qualifications Awarded**

The type of qualifications awarded by partners depends on the characteristics of the programme in terms of curriculum design and programme organisation. A programme that is jointly designed and implemented, on the basis of bilateral or multilateral agreements also including a common definition of the required learning outcomes, should naturally lead to a single qualification awarded jointly by all participating institutions. At present, however, in many cases national legal constraints make it impossible, to award fully recognised joint degrees. Very often, therefore, two national degrees have been awarded instead, even when they do not reflect/represent accurately the joint design and implementation of the programme.

## **3. Contributions already made on joint study programmes and joint degrees**

### **3.1. The Stockholm conclusions**

The seminar on the development of joint degrees, that took place in Stockholm in May 2002 within the framework of the Bologna process, explored the theme mainly from a



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legal point of view. In the conclusions and recommendations of the seminar *the following criteria have been identified as common denominators for European joint degrees:*

- two or more participating institutions in two or more countries;
- the duration of study outside the home institution should be substantial and continuous (e.g., one year at bachelor level);
- joint degrees should require a joint study programme established by cooperation, confirmed in a written agreement, between institutions;
- joint degrees should be based on bilateral or multilateral agreements on jointly arranged and approved programmes, with no restrictions concerning study fields or subjects;
- full use should be made of the Diploma Supplement and ECTS in order to ensure comparability of qualifications;
- a joint degree should preferably be documented in a single document issued by the participating institutions in accordance with national regulations;
- joint degrees and study programmes should require student and staff/teacher mobility;
- linguistic diversity in a European perspective should be ensured;
- joint study programmes should have a European dimension, whether physical mobility or intercultural competence in the curriculum.

### **3. 2. The EUA Survey on Master and Joint Degrees in Europe**

The survey, presented in September 2002, was commissioned by the European University Association (EUA) with the support of the European Commission. It is an attempt to describe and analyse the state of the art with reference to master level programmes and joint degrees offered across Europe. The analysis of joint degrees in the European Higher Education Area was undertaken by Andrejs Rauhvargers .

The study offers a definition for joint degrees proposing that they should be awarded on completion of joint study programmes *that share at least some of the following characteristics:*

- curricula are developed or approved jointly by two or more institutions;
- students from each participating institution study parts of the programme at other partner institutions;
- the students' stays at the partner institutions are of comparable length;
- periods of study and exams passed at the partner institutions are recognised fully and automatically;
- professors of each participating institution also teach at the other partner institutions, work out the curricula jointly and form joint commissions to decide about admission and the awarding of the degrees;
- after completion of each individual programme, students are conferred the national degrees of each participating institution or just one degree jointly agreed upon by them all.

The survey confirmed the Stockholm conclusions.



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#### **4. The Mantova conclusions and recommendations**

This seminar focused on the curricular component of joint degree programmes, on the assumption that curricular integration - intended as joint curriculum design and implementation – is a necessary condition for awarding joint degrees.

A report on “Joint Degrees: the Italian Experience in the European Context” – distributed to all participants – provided some background information on the Italian case. During the seminar the theme was approached at three levels, the country, the institutions and the learners/users. Special emphasis was placed on the institutional perspective, exploring why institutions might get engaged in developing integrated curricula, what methods they could use and what models they could adopt. The reflections presented by three panels of experienced speakers were discussed in the working groups. Both presentations and group discussions contributed first to the development of a shared vision and then to the formulation of a set of recommendations.

##### **4. 1. Shared vision**

- Joint degree programmes based on integrated curricula are one of the major priorities for the building of a European “identity” within the common European Higher Education Area, as they provide the learners in all cycles – including doctoral studies - with a coherent, recognisable and challenging experience of European diversity. This is also an obvious added value to national HE systems.
- Joint degree programmes based on integrated curricula are valuable instruments for developing European “citizenship” and “employability”. These terms are used in a broad sense and from the point of view of students and citizens. That is, “citizenship” means having the cultural, linguistic and social experience necessary to live knowledgeably and responsibly in the multinational/multilingual framework of the broader Europe; “employability” means not only being able to find employment or have the attributes that industry or other employers desire, but also having the knowledge and competences necessary to have a satisfactory and fulfilling professional life in a global society.
- Joint doctoral programmes educating for research professions in Europe are a cornerstone for greater co-operation between the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area. Synergy between the two areas is viewed as an essential prerequisite for the creation of a Europe of Knowledge.

##### **4. 2. Recommendations to the education ministers meeting in Berlin**

- Legal obstacles to the awarding and recognition of joint degrees should be removed in all countries.
- Additional funds should be provided to cover the higher costs of joint degree programmes, keeping in mind particularly the need to create equal opportunities for



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student participation. Besides national and regional governments, which will normally bear the costs, HE institutions - in the framework of their autonomy -, international bodies and other actors should be invited to provide special support for these programmes.

- Involvement of institutions in joint degree programmes should be encouraged and supported in all Bologna signatory countries, particularly in those which are not yet participating actively.
- Public awareness of the high value of joint degree programmes based on integrated curricula, in terms of European identity, citizenship and employability, should be increased, also by guaranteeing adequate visibility to existing examples of good practice.

### **4. 3. Recommendations to HE institutions**

- The development of European joint degree programmes should be based on the criteria identified in the Stockholm conclusions. Moreover, a clear distinction should be made between joint and double degree programmes, in terms of their curricular objectives and organizational models, also with a view to protecting the learners/users. A complete glossary of terms should be drawn.
- Joint degree programmes based on integrated curricula should be developed to address identified needs of European and global society that cannot be adequately addressed through national programmes, both in educating new professional figures and identifying new research areas.
- Students, graduates, employers and other relevant actors should be consulted about the areas in which the implementation of joint degree programmes would be most appropriate. However, it is recommended that HE institutions use to full potential their role as proactive planners for long range societal needs. Students should also be involved in planning and evaluation activities.
- Institutions that develop joint programmes should fully integrate and support them as a core function of their mission.
- Partners for a joint degree programme should be chosen on the basis of shared mission and commitment, as well as their capacity to develop and sustain such a programme in academic, organisational and financial terms. Thematic networks could provide experience for identifying suitable partners in any European country.
- Full consensus should be reached with partners regarding the model and the methodology to be used, as well as the elements of innovation and academic interest.



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- Learning outcomes and competencies, as well as student workload described in ECTS credits, should be viewed as crucial elements in constructing any joint programme.
- Adequate quality assurance procedures should be jointly developed and activated by partners in a joint programme, and made explicit to learners/users.
- Proper provision for linguistic diversity and language learning should be ensured all through joint degree programmes. These programmes should also promote European identity, citizenship and employability.

*May 12, 2003*



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### **Credit Transfer and Accumulation – the Challenge for Institutions and Students**

**EUA/Swiss Confederation Conference  
ETH Zürich, 11/12 October 2002**

#### **Conclusions and Recommendations for Action**

##### **I. CONTEXT**

The Salamanca Convention of Higher Education Institutions held in March 2001 defined the goal for European higher education of “organising diversity” of institutions and systems in terms of “...sufficient self regulation to ensure the minimum level of cohesion” and ensuring that “efforts towards compatibility are not undermined by too much variance in the definition and implementation of credits.”

Both the Salamanca Convention and the Prague Conference of Education Ministers agreed on the importance of credit systems for both transfer and accumulation, and on the need for progress on these issues.

In Zürich, the 330 participants from European universities, student bodies, national ministries and international organisations agreed on a number of key features of credit transfer and accumulation and on the importance of introducing widely the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) as the only tried and tested credit system in Europe. At the same time, a number of open issues for further reflection were identified as we move forward towards Graz and Berlin.

##### **II. ECTS: A CREDIT SYSTEM FOR EUROPE**

Over the last decade, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) has been successfully introduced through Socrates ERASMUS. Initially designed to facilitate European mobility, ECTS has primarily been used so far on a small scale as a credit transfer system, with its impact limited to a relatively small number of students. The further development of ECTS into a credit accumulation system at national level, speeded up by the Bologna Process, effectively means mainstreaming ECTS as a

generalised credit system for the emerging European Higher Education Area. It thus becomes of key importance to Europe's higher education institutions and students.

### III. OBJECTIVES

As a credit transfer system, ECTS:

- facilitates the transfer of students between European countries, and in particular enhances the quality of student mobility in ERASMUS, thus facilitating academic recognition
- promotes key aspects of the European dimension<sup>1</sup> in Higher Education

As an accumulation system, ECTS:

- supports widespread curricular reform in national systems
- enables widespread mobility within institutions, national systems and internationally
- allows transfer from outside the higher education context, thus facilitating Lifelong Learning and the recognition of informal and non-formal learning, and also promoting greater flexibility in learning and qualification processes
- facilitates access to the labour market
- enhances the transparency and comparability of European systems, thus also promoting the attractiveness of European higher education towards the rest of the world

As a credit transfer and accumulation system, the key goals of ECTS are:

- to improve transparency and comparability of study programmes and qualifications
- to facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications.

### IV. KEY FEATURES

- ECTS is a student-centred system based on the *student workload* required to achieve the objectives of a programme. These objectives are preferably specified in terms of *learning outcomes*.
- ECTS is based on the convention that 60 credits measure the notional workload of an average full time student during one academic year. This includes time spent attending lectures, seminars, project and laboratory work, independent study, preparing for and taking examinations, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> of the *Memorandum on Higher Education in the European Community, 1991*: which defines the European dimension as : student mobility; cooperation between institutions; Europe in the curriculum; the central importance of language; the training of teachers; recognition of qualifications and periods of study; the international role of higher education; information and policy analysis; dialogue with the higher education sector.

- Credits are allocated to all educational and training components of a study programme (such as modules, courses, placements, dissertation work, etc.). They reflect the quantity of work each component requires in relation to the total quantity of work necessary to complete a full year of study in the programme considered.
- Credits can be obtained only after completion of the work required and appropriate assessment of the learning outcomes achieved.
- ECTS presupposes the use of a minimum number of essential tools. First and foremost, this means respect for the *Learning Agreement*. For student mobility and credit transfer this has to be concluded, before departure, between the student and the responsible academic bodies of the two institutions concerned. The use of Learning Agreements should also be extended to non-mobile home students for registering study options and programmes.<sup>2</sup>
- As an accumulation system, ECTS credits are used to describe entire study programmes on the basis of their official length. There is broad agreement that first cycle degrees lasting three to four years require 180-240 credit points.
- Credits are not automatically interchangeable from one context to another. They can only be used to obtain a recognised qualification when they constitute an approved part of a study programme.
- The Diploma Supplement and ECTS are complementary tools for enhancing transparency and facilitating recognition.

## V. TOWARDS GRAZ AND BERLIN: NEXT STEPS

### Europe's Universities

The Zürich Conference demonstrated that Europe's universities recognise the importance of credit transfer and accumulation for the future development of the EHEA and accept their own responsibilities in this process. This means that on the basis of the key features agreed in Zürich, institutions need to be able to apply ECTS in a transparent but flexible way, taking into account their own specific missions and priorities.

### **EUA therefore recommends that its member institutions:**

- commit themselves to implementing ECTS in line with the objectives and key features outlined in this document;
- ensure that they are fully aware of the potential of ECTS for supporting curricular reform, and not just as a support for international cooperation;
- assess the cost and benefits of developing and expanding ECTS, and allocate sufficient human and financial resources for its implementation and proper use;

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<sup>2</sup> other essential ECTS tools are the Course Catalogue and the Transcript of Records

- develop appropriate instruments to ensure adequate monitoring and regular evaluation of the use of ECTS.

## **The European University Association (EUA)**

EUA will:

- Encourage and support its members in the implementation of the Zürich recommendations at institutional and European level;
- Through its Socrates-supported ECTS monitoring visits and the EUA institutional review programme, follow-up the following open questions identified during discussions in Zürich:
  - ***The role of ECTS in the development of joint degrees***
  - ***The introduction and use of ECTS at doctoral level***
  - ***The ECTS grading scale and national credit systems***
  - ***Linking credits and different levels of study***
  - ***ECTS and quality: ECTS as an instrument for promoting transparency in a comparative perspective***
- Take forward the outcomes of the Zürich Conference to the Graz Convention of European Higher Education Institutions (May 2003);
- Present the recommendations formally to the Bologna Follow-Up Group for inclusion in the preparation of the Berlin Ministers' meeting (September 2003)

EUA December 2002

## The Lisbon Convention - What is it?

*The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region* was developed by the Council of Europe and UNESCO and adopted by national representatives meeting in Lisbon on 8 - 11 April 1997. This Council of Europe/ UNESCO Convention – usually referred to as the Lisbon Convention – has since been ratified by most European countries. The full text and a continually updated list of signatures and ratifications may be found at <http://conventions.coe.int>; search for ETS 165.

Among the main points of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention are the following:

- Holders of qualifications issued in one country shall have adequate access to an assessment of these qualifications in another country.
- No discrimination shall be made in this respect on any ground such as the applicant's gender, race, colour, disability, language, religion, political opinion, national, ethnic or social origin.
- The responsibility to demonstrate that an application does not fulfil the relevant requirements lies with the body undertaking the assessment.
- Each country shall recognise qualifications – whether for access to higher education, for periods of study or for higher education degrees – as similar to the corresponding qualifications in its own system unless it can show that there are substantial differences between its own qualifications and the qualifications for which recognition is sought.
- Recognition of a higher education qualification issued in another country shall have one or both of the following consequences:
  - a. access to further higher education studies, including relevant examinations and preparations for the doctorate, on the same conditions as candidates from the country in which recognition is sought;
  - b. the use of an academic title, subject to the laws and regulations of the country in which recognition is sought.

In addition, recognition may facilitate access to the labour market.

- All countries shall develop procedures to assess whether refugees and displaced persons fulfil the relevant requirements for access to higher education or to employment activities, even in cases in which the qualifications cannot be proven through documentary evidence.
- All countries shall provide information on the institutions and programmes they consider as belonging to their higher education systems.
- All countries shall appoint a national information centre, one important task of which is to offer advice on the recognition of foreign qualifications to students, graduates, employers, higher education institutions and other interested parties or persons.
- All countries shall encourage their higher education institutions to issue the Diploma Supplement to their students in order to facilitate recognition. The Diploma Supplement is an instrument developed jointly by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO that aims to describe the qualification in an easily understandable way and relating it to the higher education system within which it was issued.



# The Diploma Supplement

*This Diploma Supplement model was developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES. The purpose of the supplement is to provide sufficient independent data to improve the international 'transparency' and fair academic and professional recognition of qualifications. It is designed to provide a description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed by the individual named on the original accompanying qualification. It should be free from any value judgements, equivalence statements or suggestions about recognition. Information in all eight sections should be provided. Where information is not provided, an explanation should give the reason why.*

## 1 INFORMATION IDENTIFYING THE HOLDER OF THE QUALIFICATION

- 1.1 Family name(s):
- 1.2 Given name(s):
- 1.3 Date of birth (*day/month/year*):
- 1.4 Student identification number or code (*if available*):

## 2 INFORMATION IDENTIFYING THE QUALIFICATION

- 2.1 Name of qualification and (*if applicable*) title conferred (*in original language*):
- 2.2 Main field(s) of study for the qualification:
- 2.3 Name and status of awarding institution (*in original language*):
- 2.4 Name and status of institution (*if different from 2.3*) administering studies (*in original language*):
- 2.5 Language(s) of instruction/examination:

## 3 INFORMATION ON THE LEVEL OF THE QUALIFICATION

- 3.1 Level of qualification:
- 3.2 Official length of programme:
- 3.3 Access requirements(s)

## 4 INFORMATION ON THE CONTENTS AND RESULTS GAINED

- 4.1 Mode of study:
- 4.2 Programme details:
- 4.3 Components (e.g. modules or units studied), and the individual grades/marks/credits obtained:  
*(if this information is available on an official transcript this should be used here)*
- 4.4 Grading scheme and, if available, grade distribution guidance:

4.5 Overall classification of the qualification (*in original language*):

## 5 INFORMATION ON THE FUNCTION OF THE QUALIFICATION

5.1 Access to further study:

5.2 Professional status (*if applicable*):

## 6 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

6.1 Additional information:

6.2 Further information sources:

## 7 CERTIFICATION OF THE SUPPLEMENT

7.1 Date:

7.2 Signature:

7.3 Capacity:

7.4 Official stamp or seal:

## 8 INFORMATION ON THE NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

*(N.B. Institutions who intend to issue Diploma Supplements should refer to the explanatory notes that explain how to complete them.)*

# Towards shared descriptors for Bachelors and Masters

A report from a Joint Quality Initiative informal group (contributors to the discussions and drafting of the BaMa descriptors include those listed in Annex A)

## I. Background

1. The Bologna declaration / process proposes the introduction, within a European higher education space, of a system of qualifications in higher (tertiary) education that is based on two cycles. The first (undergraduate) cycle culminates in the award of Bachelor's degrees. The second cycle of study seeks to build on those attributes gained during the first cycle, leading to (postgraduate) qualifications that include Master's degrees and doctorates. The Bologna process also seeks to encourage a nomenclature of awards that is comparable between countries and is easily readable, thus enhancing understanding of HE qualifications and encouraging mobility of those studying within the European higher education space.

2. One aspect of the work under the Joint Quality Initiative (JQI) has been to consider the development of descriptors for Bachelor's and Master's (BaMa descriptors) that might be shared within Europe and be available for a variety of purposes depending on particular national, regional or institutional contexts and requirements. A group with members from several national or region QA organisations (see Annex A) has discussed the diverse requirements for, and characteristics of, such BaMa descriptors, and have developed descriptors that may now be tested and shared.

3. Several national and regional projects have sought, or are currently working, to identify the characteristics associated with particular HE qualifications, and develop taxonomies and frameworks that clarify the relationships between qualifications. The work of the JQI group has included detailed consideration of such projects and has additionally drawn on the outcomes of discussions in Helsinki on common characteristics of Bachelor's. The Helsinki discussions characterised Bachelor's by the extent of study (years or ECTS); the work of the JQI group has been concerned with identifying the academic and other requirements that, as the outcomes of study, characterise and distinguish between Bachelor's and Master's.

4. A survey was carried out amongst participants in the JQI project in preparation for the discussions on the possible form, content and application of BaMa descriptors. Responses indicated a variety of needs and potential uses for such descriptors, and also the importance of having a shared understanding of the terms used both within the descriptors and to describe the context(s) in which they may be applied.

5. All participants agreed that each descriptor should indicate an overarching summary of the outcomes of a whole programme of study. The descriptor should be concerned with the totality of the study, and a student's abilities and attributes that have resulted in the award of the qualification. The descriptor should not be limited to describing merely the outcomes of units of assessment at the level of the qualification. The group has thus sought to develop a shared *qualification descriptor*, not a shared *level descriptor*. It was however noted that within some national, regional and institutional contexts there might also be a requirement for the local development of level descriptors.

6. The JQI group discussed the merits of seeking a single shared descriptor for Bachelor's and similarly one for Master's, as opposed to seeking a process to demonstrate 'compatibility' between descriptors developed for national, regional or institutional purposes and that that reflect the detail of local contexts. In line with the essence of Bologna the group concluded that it should seek a single generic descriptor for *all* Bachelor's degrees, and similarly a single generic descriptor for *all* Master's degrees. The group recognises that the development of these descriptors should not hinder any national, regional or local requirements for additional descriptors.

7. There are a wide variety of programmes leading to Bachelor's awards, differing in content, delivery and process, and nomenclature; for example, a number of countries discriminate between Professional Bachelor's and Academic Bachelor's awards. Similarly, there are a wide variety of programmes leading to different types of Master's degree. It was agreed that the value of the generic descriptors would be enhanced substantially if they could be cross-referenced to more detailed programme profiles or specifications.

8. A programme profile / specification would identify the particular components of the programme leading to the qualification; for example it might include prerequisites for entry to the programme, details of the components, their delivery and assessment, and any requirements relating to regulated professions. The form and components within the profile would reflect national, regional or institutional contexts and be related to the needs and responsibilities of those awarding or accrediting the particular programme.

9. The JQI group considered that, in keeping with the Bologna process, the shared descriptors should be formulated in a language and style that is 'readable' by all who would have an interest in them, in particular students, their sponsors, employers, HE academics and their managers, and the general public. The following represents proposals towards generic descriptors that may be useful as indicators or reference points to the abilities and qualities of holders of Bachelor's and Master's degrees awarded within the European higher education space.

## II. Shared descriptors for Bachelor's and Master's

10. Bachelor's degrees are awarded to students who:

have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon and supersedes their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study;

can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional<sup>1</sup> approach to their work or vocation, and have competences<sup>2</sup> typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study;

have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues;

can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences;

have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy.

.....

1 The word 'professional' is used in the descriptors in its broadest sense, relating to those attributes relevant to undertaking work or a vocation and that involves the application of some aspects of advanced learning. It is not used with regard to those specific requirements relating to regulated professions. The latter may be identified with the profile / specification.

2 The word 'competence' is used in the descriptors in its broadest sense, allowing for gradation of abilities or skills. It is not used in the narrower sense identified solely on the basis of a 'yes/no' assessment.

11. Master's degrees<sup>3</sup> are awarded to students who:

have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with Bachelor's level, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research<sup>4</sup> context; can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study;

have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgements with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgements;

can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously;

have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.

### III Testing the shared descriptors

12. Members of the group have initiated discussions about options for testing the BaMa descriptors in joint 'pilot studies' that involve different approaches to QA. Such studies will seek to investigate the utility of the descriptors, and in particular their form, components and levels of expectations. In addition to contributing to transparency concerning the nature of Bachelors and Masters qualifications, it is anticipated that such trans-national investigations will also contribute to enhancing the understanding and recognition of the various purposes and characteristics of different evaluation systems.

- .....
- 3 Some JQI representative suggested that MBA programmes should be specifically excluded; others consider that MBA programmes should reflect the attributes contained within the shared Masters descriptor.
  - 4 'research' is used to cover a wide variety of activities, with the context often related to a field of study; the term is used here to represent a careful study or investigation based on a systematic understanding and critical awareness of knowledge.
- .....

#### Annex A Those who have contributed to the discussions and drafting of the shared BaMa descriptors include:

Marlies Leegwater (MinOCW; Netherlands)	Bryan Maguire (NQAI; Ireland)
Dirk Van Damme (Flemish Inter-universities Council)	Jose-Gines Mora (Council of Universities; Spain)
Mark Frederiks (HBO-raad; Netherlands)	Ulf Ohlund (HSV; Sweden)
Josep Grifoll (Agenqua; Catalunya)	Seamus Puirseil (HETAC; Ireland)
Nick Harris (QAA; UK)	Hermann Reuke (ZEvA; Germany)
Linda de Kock (Min. Flemish Community)	Sverre Rustad (NNR; Norway)
Wofgang Koerner (MKW Nierdersachsen; Germany)	Gemma Reurat (Agenqua; Catalunya)
Cees Karssen (Trailblazer Committee, Netherlands)	Ko Scheele (Insp. Onderwijs; Netherlands)
Dorte Kristoffersen (EVA; Denmark)	Christian Thune (EVA; Denmark)
Tobias Lindeberg (EVA; Denmark)	Noel Vercruysse (Min. Flemish Community)
	Ton Vroeijenstijn (VSNU; Netherlands)
	Inge de Wolf (Insp. Onderwijs; Netherlands)

#### The differences are:

##### **knowledge and understanding**

- .. *from* .. advanced textbook level + .. *to* .. extended / enhanced knowledge and understanding that provide a basis or opportunity for originality in developing or applying ideas .. often in a research context ... ;

##### **•applying knowledge and understanding**

- .. *from* .. devising and sustaining arguments .. *to* .. problem-solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts .. ;

##### **•making judgements**

- .. *from*.. gathering and interpreting relevant data .. *to*.. having the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgements with incomplete data .. ;

**communication**

- .. *from* .. can communicate information, ideas problems and solutions .. *to* .. can communicate their conclusions and the underpinning knowledge and rationale under;

**learning skills**

- .. *from* .. have developed those skills needed to study further with a high level of autonomy .. *to* .. studying in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.



HELLENIC REPUBLIC  
MINISTRY OF NATIONAL  
EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS  
AFFAIRS



EDUCATION RESEARCH  
CENTER



Greek Presidency  
of the European Union



Education and Culture

**Socrates**

## **BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP SEMINAR**

### **“EXPLORING THE SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA”**

**Athens, Greece  
19-20 February 2003  
Divani Caravel Hotel**

## **CONCLUSIONS**

**BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP SEMINAR  
“EXPLORING THE SOCIAL DIMENSIONS  
OF THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA”  
ATHENS, GREECE, 19-20 FEBRUARY 2003**

**Conclusions**

**A. The issues of the “social dimension” and the “public good”**

1. In the Berlin Communiqué, the Ministers should explicitly reaffirm the importance of the social dimension of the Bologna Process towards the construction of the European Higher Education Area. They should also reaffirm their position that higher education should be considered a public good and a public responsibility. Moreover, the Ministers should specify the social aspects of the European Higher Education Area, taking also stock of the outcomes of the official Bologna Seminar held in Athens and of the European Student Convention.
2. Improving the social characteristics of the European Higher Education Area should counterbalance the need for competitiveness and be seen as a value in itself as well as one of the conditions of competitiveness, and should aim at reducing the social gap and strengthening social cohesion, both at national and at European level. In the knowledge-based society and economy, the social component should be given considerable concern with regards to research as well.
3. Higher education as a public good cannot only be interpreted as an economic issue but also as a social and political one. In that context, higher education should be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction and the defence of free education.
4. Under conditions of wide access to higher education, the need for quality and accountability becomes predominant, and should be realised through the establishment of appropriate quality assurance procedures. At the same time, the maintenance of public support on the one hand and the efficient use of the available resources on the other are of special importance as well.
5. Appropriate studying and living conditions should be ensured for the students so that they can finalise successfully their studies in time without being prevented by obstacles related to their social and economic background. In this context, it is necessary to introduce and maintain social support schemes for the students, including grants, portable as far as possible, loan schemes, health care and insurance, housing and academic and social counselling.
6. Removing the obstacles to the free movement of students should be considered a prerequisite for provision of equal mobility opportunities to all students irrespective of their social and economic background, thus providing for a genuine mobility.
7. Participants underlined the need for on-going research at European level, including comparative analyses and best practices, so that the social dimension of the Bologna Process and the consideration of higher education as public good and public responsibility to be further improved.

## **B. The issue of the GATS negotiations**

1. Participants took notice of the emerging global market for higher education services as well as developments in trading these services in the framework of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) within the World Trade Organisation (WTO).
2. Participants also noted the increasing trend towards global competition in higher education. However, they reaffirmed that the main objective driving the creation of the EHEA and the internationalisation of HE on a global level, should first and foremost be based on academic values and co-operation between different countries and regions of the world.
3. Participants welcomed the announcement of the European Commission not to include education in its negotiation proposal for the ongoing GATS negotiations as a positive development. The majority also welcomed the efforts of keeping the existing commitments of the EU limited entirely to for-profit privately funded education services.
4. Participants reaffirmed the commitment of the Prague Communiqué for considering higher education a public good and stressed that any negotiations about trade in education services must not jeopardise the responsibility of financing the public education sector. They further stressed, that recognition agreements and the right of countries to implement quality assurance mechanisms should not be put in question.
5. Generally, participants believe that the positions to develop future and maintain existing regulatory and funding frameworks on national and international level have to be guaranteed.
6. Participants also believe that it is necessary to continue to develop alternative frameworks for internationalisation within the Bologna Process and the international context based on academic co-operation, trust and respect for diversity.
7. Furthermore, it is necessary in each country to assess the possible impacts of GATS on education systems from a legal and practical perspective, also taking into account the role of higher education in society.
8. Participants expressed the need for transparency in the GATS negotiations and that GATS negotiators should consult closely the higher education stakeholders.
9. Participants stressed that in case of the necessity of dispute settlement under GATS procedures, experts from the higher education sector should be consulted.
10. It is asked from the Bologna Follow-Up Group to elaborate a text proposal on European higher education and GATS for inclusion in the Berlin Communiqué by the next meeting of the Bologna Follow-up Group in June 2003.



# **EUA General Policy Papers**



## **Message from the Salamanca Convention of European higher education institutions**

### **Shaping the European Higher Education Area**

*Over 300 European higher education institutions and their main representative organizations gathered in Salamanca on 29-30 March 2001. Their purpose was to prepare their input to the Prague meeting of the Ministers in charge of higher education in the countries involved in the Bologna process; they have agreed on the following goals, principles and priorities:*

#### **Shaping the future**

European higher education institutions reaffirm their support to the principles of the Bologna Declaration and their commitment to the creation of the European Higher Education Area by the end of the decade. They see the establishing of the European University Association (EUA) in Salamanca to be of both symbolic and practical value in conveying their voice more effectively to governments and society and thus in supporting them shape their own future in the European Higher Education Area.

#### **I. Principles**

##### **Autonomy with accountability**

Progress requires that European universities be empowered to act in line with the guiding principle of autonomy with accountability. As autonomous and responsible legal, educational and social entities, they confirm their adhesion to the principles of the *Magna Charta Universitatum* of 1988 and, in particular, to that of academic freedom. Thus, universities must be able to shape their strategies, choose their priorities in teaching and research, allocate their resources, profile their curricula and set their criteria for the acceptance of professors and students. European higher education institutions accept the challenges of operating in a competitive environment at home, in Europe and in the world, but to do so they need the necessary managerial freedom, light and supportive regulatory frameworks and fair financing, or they will be placed at a disadvantage in cooperation and competition. The dynamics needed for the completion of the European Higher Education Area will remain unfulfilled or will result in unequal competition, if the current overregulation and minute administrative and financial control of higher education in many countries is upheld.

Competition serves quality in higher education, is not exclusive of co-operation and cannot be reduced to a commercial concept. Universities in some countries in Europe are not yet in a position to compete on equal terms and are in particular faced with unwanted brain drain within Europe.

##### **Education as a public responsibility**

The European Higher Education Area must be built on the European traditions of education as a public responsibility; of broad and open access to undergraduate as well as graduate studies; of education for personal development and lifelong learning; and of citizenship as well as of short and long-term social relevance.

### **Research-based higher education**

As research is a driving force of higher education, the creation of the European Higher Education Area must go hand in hand with that of the European Research Area.

### **Organising diversity**

European higher education is characterised by its diversity in terms of languages, national systems, institutional types and profiles and curricular orientation. At the same time its future depends on its ability to organise this valuable diversity effectively to produce positive outcomes rather than difficulties, and flexibility rather than opacity. Higher education institutions wish to build on convergence - in particular on common denominators shared across borders in a given subject area - and to deal with diversity as an asset, rather than as a reason for non-recognition or exclusion. They are committed to creating sufficient self-regulation in order to ensure the minimum level of cohesion so that their efforts towards compatibility are not undermined by too much variance in the definition and implementation of credits, main degree categories and quality criteria.

## **II. Key issues**

### **Quality as a fundamental building stone**

The European Higher Education Area needs to build on academic core values while meeting stakeholders' expectations, i.e., demonstrating quality. Indeed, quality assessment must take into consideration the goals and mission of institutions and programmes. It requires a balance between innovation and tradition, academic excellence and social/economic relevance, the coherence of curricula and students' freedom of choice. It encompasses teaching and research as well as governance and administration, responsiveness to students' needs and the provision of noneducational services. Inherent quality does not suffice, it needs to be demonstrated and guaranteed in order to be acknowledged and trusted by students, partners and society at home, in Europe and in the world.

***Quality is the basic underlying condition for trust, relevance, mobility, compatibility and attractiveness in the European Higher Education Area.***

#### **• Trust building**

As research evaluation has an international dimension so does quality assurance in higher education.

In Europe, quality assurance should not be based on a single agency enforcing a common set of standards. The way into the future will be to design mechanisms at European level for the mutual acceptance of quality assurance outcomes, with "accreditation" as one possible option. Such mechanisms should respect national, linguistic and discipline differences and not overload universities.

#### **• Relevance**

Relevance to the European labour market needs to be reflected in different ways in curricula, depending on whether the competencies acquired are for employment after the first or the second degree. Employability in a lifelong learning perspective is best served through the inherent value of quality education, the diversity of approaches and course profiles, the flexibility of

programmes with multiple entry and exit points and the development of transversal skills and competencies such as communication and languages, ability to mobilise knowledge, problem solving, team work and social processes.

- **Mobility**

The free mobility of students, staff and graduates is an essential dimension of the European Higher Education Area. European universities want to foster more mobility - both of the "horizontal" and the "vertical" type - and do not see virtual mobility as a substitute for physical mobility. They are willing to use existing instruments for recognition and mobility (ECTS, Lisbon Convention, Diploma Supplement, NARIC/ENIC network) in a positive and flexible way. In view of the importance of teaching staff with European experience, universities wish to eliminate nationality requirements and other obstacles and disincentives for academic careers in Europe. However, a common European approach to virtual mobility and transnational education is also needed.

- **Compatible qualifications at the undergraduate and graduate levels**

Higher education institutions endorse the move towards a compatible qualification framework based on a main articulation in undergraduate and postgraduate studies. There is broad agreement that first degrees should require 180 to 240 ECTS points but need to be diverse leading to employment or mainly preparing for further, postgraduate studies. Under certain circumstances a university may decide to establish an integrated curriculum leading directly to a Master-level degree. Subject-based networks have an important role to play in reaching such decisions. Universities are convinced of the benefits of a credit accumulation and transfer system based on ECTS and on their basic right to decide on the acceptability of credits obtained elsewhere.

- **Attractiveness**

European higher education institutions want to be in a position to attract talent from all over the world. This requires action at institutional, national and European levels. Specific measures include the adaptation of curricula, degrees readable inside and outside Europe, credible quality assurance measures, programmes taught in major world languages, adequate information and marketing, welcoming services for foreign students and scholars, and strategic networking. Success also depends on the speedy removal of prohibitive immigration and labour market regulations.

**European higher education institutions recognise that their students need and demand qualifications which they can use effectively for the purpose of their studies and careers all over Europe. The institutions and their networks and organisations acknowledge their role and responsibility in this regard, and confirm their willingness to organise themselves accordingly within the framework of autonomy.**

*Higher education institutions call on governments, in their national and European contexts, to facilitate and encourage change and to provide a framework for co-ordination and guidance towards convergence. They affirm their capacity and willingness to initiate and support progress within a joint endeavour*

- to redefine higher education and research for the whole of Europe;
- to reform and rejuvenate curricula and higher education as a whole;

- to enhance and build on the research dimension in higher education;
- to adopt mutually acceptable mechanisms for the evaluation, assurance and certification of quality;
- to build on common denominators with a European dimension and ensure compatibility between diverse institutions, curricula and degrees;
- to promote the mobility of students and staff and the employability of graduates in Europe;
- to support the modernisation efforts of universities in countries where the challenges of the European Higher Education Area are greatest;
- to meet the challenges of being readable, attractive and competitive at home, in Europe and in the world; and
- to continue to consider higher education as an essential public responsibility.

\* \* \*

*(last version 02.05.2001)*



## **UNIVERSITIES AS THE MOTOR FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A EUROPE OF KNOWLEDGE**

As the representative body of European Universities (30 National Rectors' Conferences and almost 600 individual institutions), the European University Association (EUA) addresses itself to the Heads of Government meeting in Barcelona. Almost two years after the Lisbon Summit which set out clear strategic goals for the European Union, the EUA sees the Barcelona meeting as a crucial opportunity to take stock of progress since Lisbon and redefine the priorities for the years to come.

Considerable progress has been made since Lisbon in the development of the European Higher Education Area, in particular through the Bologna Process where 32 national higher education systems are working together on common topics in an agreed framework with common goals and in the introduction of the European Research Area. Indeed, the universities of Europe have shown their commitment to this process through the creation of the EUA, founded in Salamanca in March 2001, as the result of a merger between two existing bodies, with a clear mission to promote the development of a coherent system of European higher education and research.

The EUA welcomes the Member States and the Commission's intention to make "knowledge" one of the three main priorities for the coming years, and underlines the importance that the universities, by their very nature and mission, attach to the integration of strategies and policies in the field of higher education and research.

The link between higher education and research lies at the basis of the university as an institution with its mission to ensure constantly the relationship between the production and the diffusion and dissemination of knowledge. This is the strength and the originality of the university as an institution which, in a similar way throughout Europe, for many centuries, has had this double responsibility of teaching and research of promoting innovation and ensuring continuity.

The EUA wishes to underline the fundamental role of the university as institution in building Europe, and in further defining the European social model. In recent decades, in response to increased student numbers and growing societal demand, the university has shown itself capable of responding to these challenges through opening to its environment, both economic and cultural. The university is thus a fundamental element of social cohesion, constructing a shared community based upon common values among various sectors of the population in different countries, through its mission:

- To educate and train for employment ever larger numbers of young, and not so young, people across Europe - the vast majority of future leaders of Europe pass through the universities at formative periods in their life;
- To provide and transmit knowledge, and take responsibility for the creation of at least a major part of new knowledge, so important in fostering economic competitiveness and regional development.

Since the mid-1980s Europe's universities have been active partners in supporting mobility and networking across Europe, both within the European Union and beyond. Much has been done, but much remains to be done in the continued promotion of mobility and the removal of the different obstacles to mobility. EUA confirms the willingness and the preparedness of Europe's universities to play an active role in this process both in relation to the mobility of students and teaching staff, and of young and more senior researchers.

In facing the challenges of global competition the existence of high quality doctoral programmes becomes more and more crucial. The university, thanks to its pluridisciplinary teaching and learning environment, remains the natural location. European universities have a long tradition of ensuring the training of young researchers, and preserving this commitment to teaching and research in a large number of institutions across Europe provides a guarantee of geographically balanced economic, cultural and social development. In the present demographic context attractive training possibilities and highly qualified human resources, are a key element in increasing competitiveness.

The further development of mobility and networking between university staff and students at all levels is crucial for the successful articulation of policies and practices linking education and research. Once again the EUA draws attention to the unique role of the university as the only institution which as its core business provides students with training by and through research, and simultaneously ensures constant contact and interaction between students, teachers and researchers. It is through this constant interaction and cross-fertilisation that teaching quality is maintained and innovation is promoted.

The EUA wishes to underline the key role of the institution "university" in these endeavours, and encourages the Heads of Government to make more systematic use of this resource in the important process of consolidating and strengthening Europe's position in the perspective of a global competitive world, and in the creation of a European Area of Knowledge.



**Students and universities: An academic community on the move**  
**EUA and ESIB Joint Declaration**  
**Paris, 6 March 2002**

ESIB – The National Unions of Students in Europe (hereafter referred to as ESIB) and EUA – European University Association (hereafter referred to as EUA), representing more than 10 million students, 32 rectors’ conferences and 600 universities or equivalent institutions across the whole of Europe, present together, for the first time, a shared vision for the future of higher education in Europe.

Universities are acknowledged as the main platform in which dialogue and learning between the generations take place. While students have always embraced their role in promoting reform and development, future work must be undertaken in broader partnerships. This can only strengthen the role that higher education plays in shaping and contributing towards civic society.

*Students, Universities and Europe*

The importance of universities and students working together at local, regional, national and European level is clear. The future of Europe depends upon the ability to build together a learning society based upon the diversity of cultures and experience, and underpinned by shared values.

Both EUA and ESIB therefore signal their willingness to work together on issues of importance for the Laeken Convention on the future of the European Union, and to make a significant contribution on the changing role of higher education in an increasingly inter-connected global society. Students have a unique contribution to make in the consultation of civil society that is being planned as part of the Laeken process.

EUA and ESIB are committed to joint action at the European level. While the following are current priorities – the construction of the European Higher Education Area and the globalisation process – EUA and ESIB will also discuss, further to this declaration, common fields of interest in achieving the “Europe of knowledge”.

## *European Higher Education Area*

The creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is an important objective that both EUA and ESIB support and towards which we are already contributing fully.

All key stakeholders must be involved in the process. Now that the creation of the EHEA is entering the implementation phase, the active participation of universities and students is of increased importance. ESIB and EUA are both taking a pro-active approach to inform, encourage and support our members in this respect. We are also both fully involved at European level in the various groups and fora preparing the next stages of the EHEA.

The creation of the European Higher Education Area implies the reform of some aspects of traditional existing practices in many countries of Europe. We would like to draw attention to the following issues:

- **Mobility**

Increased and more flexible mobility of students and university staff is a fundamental building block for the EHEA. Much work has already been done to identify and remove barriers to mobility. We encourage the implementation of the Mobility Action Plan developed under the French Presidency of the EU to meet and exceed the targets established by the European Commission.

- **Improving quality mechanisms**

Effective and transparent quality assurance mechanisms are a necessity to ensure mutual trust and confidence across European higher education, thus facilitating the recognition of qualifications, degrees and diplomas for both academic and employment purposes. Quality assurance mechanisms must also look to enhance the overall student experience (e.g., student support services and extra-curricular development). Taken together these factors should foster a quality culture within institutions and across the EHEA.

- **A European credit accumulation and transfer system**

Once the necessary quality assurance procedures are in place, our goal is to remove barriers to recognition and credit accumulation to the extent that institutions can pre-recognise existing qualifications using an agreed code of practice that serves the interest of students and protects the autonomy of institutions.

- **Social Issues**

Higher education in Europe should be democratic and accessible for all. Social issues are central to the creation of the EHEA. These include a thorough and comprehensive student support system including, e.g., counselling, financial support, work rights and practical legal advice. To achieve equality of opportunity in an increasingly diverse university population, such a system must ensure maximum flexibility.

- **Links with the European Research Area**

The construction of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) should not be separated from the development of a European Research Area (ERA). Integrated learning, teaching and research is essential to the European vision of a democratic and dynamic

university system, and the construction of EHEA and ERA should therefore be regarded as aspects of a common process.

- South Eastern Europe

The creation of the European Higher Education Area must be a truly European process in order to gain the benefits of our continent's diversity. We do not consider South Eastern Europe as a peripheral region in this process, but fully involved as an integral partner. The full inclusion of South Eastern Europe in the EHEA will be an essential element for the success of the Stabilisation and Accession Process leading to EU membership. EUA and ESIB are concerned by the tendency to exclude some countries in South East Europe from the developing ERA.

*Europe and the globalisation process*

Whilst global competition might be seen as a way to enhance the overall quality of the higher education sector, the principles behind cooperation in the EHEA and with other systems of higher education should be based on educational solidarity.

Both EUA and ESIB share the opinion that education is a public good of benefit to individuals and societies, and not merely a tradable service. We consider that current attempts to extend commitments in Higher Education Services within the GATS framework are not in the best interests of higher education institutions, students or society in general. Education is a fundamental human right. Higher education should not be reduced to a commodity. Education should not be covered by an agreement primarily concerned with promoting free trade.

EUA and ESIB promote internationalisation. However, a system of regulations must be developed from within the higher education community.

*Conclusion*

We affirm that ESIB and EUA are ready to contribute not only to the construction of the European Higher Education Area but more generally to the development of tomorrow's Europe, in which our members and constituents will play a leading, formulative role.





## **THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITIES IN SHAPING THE FUTURE OF EUROPE<sup>1</sup> EUA STATEMENT TO THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION**

As the European Convention moves forward to the phase of drafting proposals for Europe's future constitution, the European University Association (EUA), as the representative body of European Universities (34 National Rectors' Conferences and over 600 individual institutions), addresses itself to the members of the European Convention and to the Heads of Government who will subsequently form the Intergovernmental Conference.

The EUA wishes to underline the fundamental role of the university in building Europe, and in further defining and developing the European social model.

The link between higher education and research lies at the heart of the university, an institution whose historical roots are pan-European, and whose mission to ensure the relationship between the production, transmission, dissemination and use of knowledge remains uniquely adapted to shaping our common European future. This is the strength and originality of the university, an institution which has maintained its dual responsibility for teaching and research over many centuries. Through remaining autonomous, accountable and independent of political interference, the university has been at the centre of European development - promoting learning, stimulating critical thought and innovation, and at the same time ensuring continuity.

In recent decades, in response to growing societal demands and increased student numbers, the university has shown itself capable of responding to new challenges through opening to its environment, both economic and cultural, and playing a full role in civil society.

Europe's universities have become active partners in building Europe, both within the European Union and beyond, supporting cooperation, mobility and networking, in particular within the framework of the Bologna process. This has been aptly demonstrated in the key role played by Europe's universities since 1989 in uniting peoples throughout the continent, and fostering peace, stability and sustainable development.

<sup>1</sup> Launched through the Laeken Declaration of 15 December 2001

Looking to the future, Europe's universities will play a fundamental role in further developing Europe and in responding to the needs of citizens. Acting at local, regional, national, European and global level, constructing a shared community based upon common values, their mission is to:

- educate ever larger numbers of young, and not so young, people across Europe for active citizenship and employment. Not only future leaders, but also the majority of Europe's citizens will pass through the universities at formative periods in their life, experiencing training by and through research, and ensuring constant contact and interaction between students, teachers and researchers;
- build links with all types of stakeholders: economic, social and cultural, thus showing their willingness to listen and respond to the various needs of society;
- transmit knowledge, and take responsibility for the creation of a major part of new knowledge, so important for the well-being of citizens, and for fostering economic growth and regional development;
- ensure the training of young researchers, and preserve the commitment to teaching and research across Europe, providing a guarantee of geographically balanced economic, cultural and social development.

In March 2000, the European Council set the strategic goal for Europe to become, *“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”* and in Barcelona went further, calling for Europe's education systems to become, *“a world reference”* by 2010.

If these ambitions are to be fulfilled, Europe needs strong universities, and a renewed and concerted commitment to higher education. Europe's universities are unique institutions, and developing the enormous potential of this resource is a fundamental condition for the successful construction of Europe.

**As autonomous institutions with a distinct European mission, universities across the continent make a fundamental contribution to building European society through their role in the production, transmission and transfer of knowledge.**

**European University Association (EUA)  
29 January 2003**