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**Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research
(CD-ESR)**

1st plenary session

Strasbourg, 3 – 4 October 2002

Room 5 – 09.30 hours

**THE BOLOGNA PROCESS:
ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES**

Secretariat discussion document by the Directorate General IV: Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport (Directorate of School, Out-of-School and Higher Education/Higher Education and Research Division)

ITEM 7

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DRAFT DECISION

The CD-ESR:

- (i) took stock of the contribution of the Council of Europe to the Bologna Process;
- (ii) approved the action taken by the Bureau and the Secretariat so far;
- (iii) asked the Bureau, the Working Party on the Bologna Process and the Secretariat to prepare further Council of Europe contributions on the basis of the outcome of the discussion.

INTRODUCTION

The Bologna Process is the most important and wide ranging reform of higher education in Europe since the immediate aftermath of 1968. The ultimate aim of the Process is to establish a European Higher Education Area by 2010 in which staff and students can move with ease and have fair recognition of their qualifications. This overall goal is reflected in the six main goals defined in the Bologna Declaration:

- a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, including the implementation of the Diploma Supplement;
- a system essentially based on two main cycles:
 - a first cycle relevant to the labour market;
 - a second cycle requiring the completion of the first cycle;
- a system of accumulation and transfer of credits;
- the mobility of students, teachers, researchers, etc;
- cooperation in quality assurance;
- the European dimension of higher education¹.

An important goal of the Process is thus to move higher education in Europe towards a more transparent and mutually recognized system which would place the diversified national systems into a common frame based on three outcome levels – Bachelor, Master and Doctoral - and recognized different paths according to which they were achieved.

The Ministerial meeting in Praha took stock of progress in the move towards a European Higher Education Area and also gave further impetus to the Process by addressing a limited number of new areas. This is less a shift in priorities and attention than an expansion of the Process to a number of new topics, or at least by giving certain topics more emphasis. The Ministers confirmed the orientations of Bologna and in stronger terms underlined the importance of higher education for democratic values and the value of a diversity of cultures and languages as well as of higher education systems. While the Praha communiqué does not use the term “democratic culture”, this is in effect one of its main concerns, all the more so as it also underlines the need for student participation.

An important step forward was the actual recognition of students as “competent, active and constructive partners” and the emphasis on cooperation with higher education institutions, which was in a symbolic way demonstrated by the “dialogue” between Ministers, European higher education institutions and students on the first day of the meeting and incorporating some parts of the declarations of Salamanca and Göteborg into the Praha Communiqué. For example, the students were instrumental in bringing in the aspect of the social dimension of the Process and the recognition of education as a public good and a public responsibility.

At least two further areas were underlined more strongly in Praha than in Bologna. One is lifelong learning, an issue that many higher education institutions have been

¹ Cf. Pedro Lourtie, presentation to the Conference of Directors General for Higher Education and Heads of the Rectors Conferences of the European Union, Aveiro, April 2000, reproduced at http://www.esib.org/prague/documents/follow_up.htm

slow to address, while the second element is a stronger emphasis on quality assurance and not least the close link between quality assurance and the recognition of qualifications.

The Bologna Declaration, the Praha Communiqué as well as a number of other key texts in the Bologna Process are reproduced in the compendium of reference texts issued as a separate document for the CD-ESR plenary session.

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONTRIBUTION

The Council of Europe is now firmly established as an important contributor to the Bologna Process, in several ways:

- (i) as an observer in the formal structures of the process; on the Follow Up Group as well as on the Preparatory Group;
- (ii) as a bridge between those countries party to the Process and the remaining European countries that may benefit from the process but that are not (yet) party to it;
- (iii) as a platform for debate between Ministry and academic representatives, through the double composition of CD-ESR representatives, and the role of the EUA and ESIB as observers on the Committee as well as the Council's close cooperation with both organizations;
- (iv) as an important actor in the field of recognition;
- (v) through other aspects of the activities programme.

While all five are important points, it is suggested that the discussion should focus on the activities programme with some attention also being given to how the double composition of the CD-ESR can be taken full advantage of.

The *recognition of qualifications* is one of the Council of Europe's long standing contributions to higher education in Europe and one that plays a key role in the Bologna Process. The Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention as well as the Recommendation on criteria and procedures and the Code of Good Practice in the provision of Transnational Education are important standard setting instruments. The ENIC Network, in close cooperation with the NARIC Network, is working on areas of importance to the Bologna Process, including the cooperation between the recognition and quality assurance communities. The importance of the ENIC Network as an advisory body to the CD-ESR should be made more visible. The conference on recognition issues in Lisboa also identified a number of additional issues that needs further work:

- (i) information on recognition;
- (ii) recognition for the labour market;
- (iii) recognition of non-traditional qualifications and learning outcomes;
- (iv) recognition of transnational education.

In addition, it is clear that the issue of trade in higher education in the context of GATS is emerging strongly as an issue related to the external dimension of the Bologna Process. In recognition terms, the issue is above all how the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention and other recognition instruments can serve as standards against which to measure the quality of “trade offers” in higher education. GATS is the topic of a separate item on the CD-ESR agenda, but there is a link to the Bologna Process.

- Does the CD-ESR plenary wish to give further input to the ENIC Network in its work on recognition issues in the context of the European Higher Education Area?
- Should the CD-ESR propose specific goals for recognition activities in the Bologna Process in the period 2003 – 2005?

The link between quality assurance and recognition was underlined by the Ministers in their Praha Communiqué, in which they called on the recognition and quality assurance networks to cooperate more closely. Steps are already being taken in this direction. However, it may also be worth underlining that as late as 1997, when the Lisboa Recognition Convention was adopted, it proved difficult to win approval for forceful provisions on quality assurance, or rather on the outcomes as quality assurance as a factor in the recognition of individual qualifications, in the text of the Convention. Today, the discussion is no longer on whether quality assurance is legitimate and needed, but on what kind of quality assurance best serves the purpose. Amending the Lisboa Recognition Convention to take account of this development would clearly be a very difficult undertaking, but the Convention foresees that the Convention Committee may adopt subsidiary texts.

- Should consideration be given to a subsidiary text on the relationship between quality assurance and recognition?

In a passage that has been given somewhat less publicity, the Bologna Declaration also points to the *role of higher education in developing and maintaining democratic societies*, with a specific reference to South East Europe. In other words, the Ministers recognized that higher education has an important mission in building and maintaining the *democratic culture* without which democratic institutions cannot function. The Council of Europe can draw on a rich experience in this field, both through the pilot project on the University as a Site of Citizenship, which is the topic of a separate item of the CD-ESR agenda, and the Legislative Reform Project. The current Bologna work programme in particular emphasizes student participation, and the Council of Europe will contribute to the Bologna seminar on student participation in higher education governance that will be organized by the Norwegian authorities in Oslo in June 2003.

- How could the Council of Europe further contribute to the aspect of the European Higher Education Area focusing on democratic culture and participation?

- Should the concept of participation be broadened, in the next period (2003 – 2005) to encompass other aspects of life at higher education institutions than governance? If yes, how can the CD-ESR contribute in this sense?

Lifelong learning was the topic of a CD-ESR project, with special emphasis on equity, which led to Recommendation (2002) 6 by the Committee of Ministers to member states on higher education policies in lifelong learning. The transferability in and openness² of the system are two important objectives of the lifelong learning attitude to the implementation of the principles of the Bologna Declaration into higher education systems. In this sense we also understand lifelong learning as one of the priority topics in the Bologna process, as underlined in particular in the Praha Communiqué. In 2003, two Bologna seminars will consider lifelong learning related topics. In March, the Danish authorities will organize a seminar on the Contribution from Higher Education to Lifelong Learning, for which the Secretary to the CD-ESR has been invited to be General Rapporteur, and in June the Czech authorities will organize a seminar on Recognition and Credit Systems (ECTS and ECTS compatible) for Higher Education in the Context of Lifelong Learning, to which the Council of Europe will contribute, in particular on the third workshop of the Lifelong Learning project, on qualifications in higher education.

- How can the Council of Europe contribute to developing lifelong learning policies within the framework of the Bologna process?
- Should the CD-ESR propose a specific focus for such activities in the period 2003 – 2005?

The Council of Europe's role as a *bridge between "Bologna" and "non-Bologna" countries* implies a particular role in helping disseminate information on the Bologna Process in the countries party to the European Cultural Convention that are not party to the Bologna Process as well providing advice on higher education reform. The most comprehensive examples of this is the Council's efforts, with the EUA, in favour of higher education in Serbia as well as its work on higher education legislation in Kosovo. The aspect of Bologna was also very present in the advice given on draft higher education legislation for *Republika Srpska* in May – July 2002.

The Council would aim to organize information seminars on the Bologna process in countries in South East Europe that have now applied for accession, to be followed up by more targeted activities on specific topics. In Yugoslavia, this work is further advanced, as there was a large conference on higher education policies and reform in March 2001 that was followed up by a conference on quality assurance and evaluation in November 2001. The EUA has since carried out an institutional self-evaluation programme, and the Council and the EUA are planning a follow up conference on quality assurance/evaluation in October/November 2002 as well as a conference on recognition to be followed up by targeted work on the ECTS and the Diploma Supplement. The Council and the EUA will also organize a higher education

² Meaning open pathways which allow continuity in studies at any age and time.

component of a large scale conference on education reform in Beograd in early September 2002.

Russia has also expressed a strong interest in the Bologna process, and the Council of Europe aims at organizing a major national conference in Moskva in the summer of 2003, to be preceded by a regional conference in Sankt Peterburg in autumn 2002.

These activities are also linked to the question of *further accessions* to the Bologna Process and of taking stock of the progress made in implementing the goals of the Process is currently being debated within the follow up structures and is likely to be on the agenda of the Ministerial conference in Berlin. The Council of Europe is contributing actively to this debate with the goal of making the Process as broad as possible yet also making sure that there is a real chance of implementing its policy goals.

In this context, it may be worth underlining that the Bologna Process has two aspects. On the one hand, it is an “example of good practice” indicating higher education policies and practices that are seen as beneficial by the participating countries and that may be of interest to other countries or systems of higher education, especially in newly developing democracies and countries in transition where there is a need for reforms in the higher education sector. On the other hand, it is a formal structure seeking to set up a European Higher Education Area with a number of common characteristics defined in the Bologna Declaration and subsequent policy texts like the Praha Communiqué and within which students and staff will be able to move with relative ease. In the first sense, all countries can use the example of the Bologna Process as a guide in their own higher education policies or in selected areas thereof without any further obligations or geographical or political limitations. In the second sense, the European Higher Education Area will be based on commitments and coordinated policies in key areas.

- How can the Council of Europe best serve as a bridge between “Bologna” and “non Bologna” countries?
- How can it best assist countries that are not yet party to the Bologna Process in making use of the Process as an example of good practice and/or in formally adhering to the Process?

CONCLUSION

The CD-ESR is invited to give guidance to the Bureau, the Working party and the Secretariat in their further work on the Council of Europe contribution to the Bologna Process. The draft decision is reproduced on page 2.

(iv) APPENDIX 1

**BOLOGNA FOLLOW UP
WORK PROGRAMME
LIST OF OFFICIAL CONFERENCES
BETWEEN PRAGUE AND BERLIN
2002-2003**

Assembled by the Belgian Presidency (September 2001) and revised by the Spanish presidency (May 2002)

I. Bologna Seminars:**1. Co-operation concerning accreditation and quality assurance**

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 12-13 March 2002 | Conference “Working on the European Dimension of Quality” |
| Subject area | Accreditation and QA |
| Location | Amsterdam 12-13 March 2002 |
| Organisation | Netherlands (Ministerie van OC&W), Flemish Community of Belgium (Departement Onderwijs), Germany (HRK), CHEPS |

2. Recognition issues and the use of credits

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| 11-12 April 2002 | From Lisboa to a European Higher Education Area: Recognition Issues in the Bologna Process |
| Subject area | Recognition issues |
| Location | Lisbon |
| Organisation | Council of Europe and Ministry of Education Portugal |
| 11-12 October 2002 | Conference on ECTS – The Challenge for Institutions |
| Subject area | The use of credits |
| Location | Zürich |
| Organisation | Swiss Confederation (ATH Zürich and CRUS) and EUA |

3. Development of joint degrees

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 30-31 May 2002 | Seminar on Joint Degrees in European perspective |
| Subject area | Development of joint degrees (legal aspects, common European framework, etc.) |
| Location | Stockholm |
| Organisation | Ministry of Education and Science Sweden |
| | |
| February 2003 | Seminar on Master Degrees |
| Subject area | Stock-taking seminar on Master degrees (on request by the follow-up meeting 13.09.01) |
| Location | Helsinki |
| Organisation | Ministry of Education Finland |
| | |
| Spring 2003 | Seminar on Integrated Programmes |
| Subject area | Joint degrees (aspect of curriculum development) |
| Location | Italy |
| Organisation | Ministry of Higher Education and Research Italy |

4. Social dimension of the Bologna process, with special attention to obstacles of mobility and student involvement

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| 17-18 February 2003 | Seminar on the Social Dimension of the Higher Education Area |
| Subject area | Social dimension (general overview) |
| Location | Athens |
| Organisation | Ministry of National Education and Religion Affairs Greece |
| | |
| 12-14 June 2003 | Seminar on Student Participation in Governance in Higher Education |
| Subject area | Social dimension: student involvement |
| Location | Oslo |
| Organisation | Ministry of Education, and Research. Norway |

5. Lifelong learning

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Beginning 2003 | Seminar on the Contribution from Higher Education to Lifelong Learning |
| Subject area | LLL |
| Location | Denmark |
| Organisation | Ministry of Education Denmark |
| Beginning of June 2003 | Seminar on Recognition and Credit Systems (ECTS and ECTS compatible for Higher Education in the Context of Lifelong Learning |
| Subject area | LLL - validation of non-formal learning experiences- |
| Location | Prague |
| Organisation | Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports Czech Republic |

II. Other scheduled meetings:

- 21-22 January 2002 Seminar on Transparency and Accreditation
Madrid (Council of Universities)
- 23-24 May 2002 Meeting of the Bologna Follow-up Group
Santander (Council of Universities, Spain)
- September 2002 Presentation of the Results of the TSC project
(EURASHE)
- 18-20 October 2002 Meeting of the Regional Central and Eastern European
Sub-network of International Network of Quality
Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE),
Prague (Czech Republic in co-operation with ENQA),
but open to all countries participating in the Bologna
process. Exchange of information in the view of
stimulation of co-operation with related European
networks.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| ESIB Conventions | March 2003 (Croatia or Latvia) November 2002, Denmark 21-23 February 2003, Athens |
| EUA | 29-31 May 2003 (Graz) Convention of Higher Education Institutions, cf. Salamanca Convention |