



Making the Most of Our Potential: Consolidating the European Higher Education Area

Bucharest Communiqué

FINAL VERSION

We, the Ministers responsible for higher education in the 47 countries of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) have met in Bucharest, on 26 and 27 April 2012, to take stock of the achievements of the Bologna Process and agree on the future priorities of the EHEA.33333

Investing in higher education for the future

Europe is undergoing an economic and financial crisis with damaging societal effects. Within the field of higher education, the crisis is affecting the availability of adequate funding and making graduates' job prospects more uncertain.

Higher education is an important part of the solution to our current difficulties. Strong and accountable higher education systems provide the foundations for thriving knowledge societies. Higher education should be at the heart of our efforts to overcome the crisis – now more than ever.

With this in mind, we commit to securing the highest possible level of public funding for higher education and drawing on other appropriate sources, as an investment in our future. We will support our institutions in the education of creative, innovative, critically thinking and responsible graduates needed for economic growth and the sustainable development of our democracies. We are dedicated to working together in this way to reduce youth unemployment.

The EHEA yesterday, today and tomorrow

The Bologna reforms have changed the face of higher education across Europe, thanks to the involvement and dedication of higher education institutions, staff and students.

Higher education structures in Europe are now more compatible and comparable. Quality assurance systems contribute to building trust, higher education qualifications are more recognisable across borders and participation in higher education has widened. Students today benefit from a wider variety of educational opportunities and are increasingly mobile. The vision of an integrated EHEA is within reach.

However, as the report on the implementation of the Bologna Process shows, we must make further efforts to consolidate and build on progress. We will strive for more coherence between our policies, especially in completing the transition to the three cycle system, the use of ECTS credits, the issuing of Diploma Supplements, the enhancement of quality assurance and the implementation of qualifications frameworks, including the definition and evaluation of learning outcomes.

We will pursue the following goals: to provide quality higher education for all, to enhance graduates' employability and to strengthen mobility as a means for better learning.

Our actions towards these goals will be underpinned by constant efforts to align national practices with the objectives and policies of the EHEA, while addressing those policy areas where further work is needed. For 2012-2015, we will especially concentrate on fully supporting our higher education institutions and stakeholders in their efforts to deliver meaningful changes and to further the comprehensive implementation of all Bologna action lines.

Providing quality higher education for all

Widening access to higher education is a precondition for societal progress and economic development. We agree to adopt national measures for widening overall access to quality higher education. We will work to raise completion rates and ensure timely progression in higher education in all EHEA countries.

The student body entering and graduating from higher education institutions should reflect the diversity of Europe's populations. We will step up our efforts towards underrepresented groups to develop the **social dimension** of higher education, reduce inequalities and provide adequate student support

services, counselling and guidance, flexible learning paths and alternative access routes, including recognition of prior learning. We encourage the use of peer learning on the social dimension and aim to monitor progress in this area.

We reiterate our commitment to promote **student-centred learning** in higher education, characterised by innovative methods of teaching that involve students as active participants in their own learning. Together with institutions, students and staff, we will facilitate a supportive and inspiring working and learning environment.

Higher education should be an open process in which students develop intellectual independence and personal self-assuredness alongside disciplinary knowledge and skills. Through the pursuit of academic learning and research, students should acquire the ability confidently to assess situations and ground their actions in critical thought.

Quality assurance is essential for building trust and to reinforce the attractiveness of the EHEA's offerings, including in the provision of cross-border education. We commit to both maintaining the public responsibility for quality assurance and to actively involve a wide range of stakeholders in this development. We acknowledge the ENQA, ESU, EUA and EURASHE (the E4 group) report on the implementation and application of the "European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance" (ESG)¹. We will revise the ESG to improve their clarity, applicability and usefulness, including their scope. The revision will be based upon an initial proposal to be prepared by the E4 in cooperation with Education International, BUSINESSEUROPE and the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), which will be submitted to the Bologna Follow-Up Group.

We welcome the external evaluation of EQAR and we encourage quality assurance agencies to apply for registration. We will allow EQAR-registered agencies to perform their activities across the EHEA, while complying with national requirements. In particular, we will aim to recognise quality assurance decisions of EQAR-registered agencies on joint and double degree programmes.

We confirm our commitment to maintaining public responsibility for higher education and acknowledge the need to open a dialogue on **funding and governance** of higher education. We recognise the importance of further developing appropriate funding instruments to pursue our common goals. Furthermore, we stress the importance of developing more efficient governance and managerial structures at higher education institutions. We commit to supporting the engagement of students and staff in governance structures at all levels and reiterate our commitment to autonomous and accountable higher education institutions that embrace academic freedom.

Enhancing employability to serve Europe's needs

Today's graduates need to combine transversal, multidisciplinary and innovation skills and competences with up-to-date subject-specific knowledge so as to be able to contribute to the wider needs of society and the labour market. We aim to enhance the **employability** and personal and professional development of graduates throughout their careers. We will achieve this by improving cooperation between employers, students and higher education institutions, especially in the development of study programmes that help increase the innovation, entrepreneurial and research potential of graduates. Lifelong learning is one of the important factors in meeting the needs of a changing labour market, and higher education institutions play a central role in transferring knowledge and strengthening regional development, including by the continuous development of competences and reinforcement of knowledge alliances.

Our societies need higher education institutions to contribute innovatively to sustainable development and therefore, higher education must ensure a stronger link between **research**, teaching and learning at all levels. Study programmes must reflect changing research priorities and emerging disciplines, and research should underpin teaching and learning. In this respect, we will sustain a diversity of doctoral programmes. Taking into account the "Salzburg II recommendations"² and the Principles for Innovative

¹ European Association for Quality Assurance (2011): "Mapping the Implementation and application of the ESG";
² European University Association (2010): "Salzburg II Recommendations";

Doctoral Training,³ we will explore how to promote quality, transparency, employability and mobility in the third cycle, as the education and training of doctoral candidates has a particular role in bridging the EHEA and the European Research Area (ERA). Next to doctoral training, high quality second cycle programmes are a necessary precondition for the success of linking teaching, learning and research. Keeping wide diversity and simultaneously increasing readability, we might also explore further possible common principles for master programmes in the EHEA, taking account of previous work⁴.

To consolidate the EHEA, meaningful implementation of **learning outcomes** is needed. The development, understanding and practical use of learning outcomes is crucial to the success of ECTS, the Diploma Supplement, recognition, qualifications frameworks and quality assurance – all of which are interdependent. We call on institutions to further link study credits with both learning outcomes and student workload, and to include the attainment of learning outcomes in assessment procedures. We will work to ensure that the ECTS Users' Guide⁵ fully reflects the state of on-going work on learning outcomes and recognition of prior learning.

We welcome the progress in developing **qualifications frameworks**; they improve transparency and will enable higher education systems to be more open and flexible. We acknowledge that realising the full benefits of qualifications frameworks can in practice be more challenging than developing the structures. The development of qualifications frameworks must continue so that they become an everyday reality for students, staff and employers. Meanwhile, some countries face challenges in finalising national frameworks and in self-certifying compatibility with the framework of qualifications of the EHEA (QF-EHEA) by the end of 2012. These countries need to redouble their efforts and to take advantage of the support and experience of others in order to achieve this goal.

A common understanding of the levels of our qualifications frameworks is essential to recognition for both academic and professional purposes. School leaving qualifications giving access to higher education will be considered as being of European Qualifications Framework (EQF) level 4, or equivalent levels for countries not bound by the EQF, where they are included in National Qualifications Frameworks. We further commit to referencing first, second and third cycle qualifications against EQF levels 6, 7 and 8 respectively, or against equivalent levels for countries not bound by the EQF. We will explore how the QF-EHEA could take account of short cycle qualifications (EQF level 5) and encourage countries to use the QF-EHEA for referencing these qualifications in national contexts where they exist. We ask the Council of Europe and the European Commission to continue to coordinate efforts to make the respective qualifications frameworks work well in practice.

We welcome the clear reference to ECTS, to the European Qualifications Framework and to learning outcomes in the European Commission's proposal for a revision of the EU Directive on the recognition of **professional qualifications**. We underline the importance of taking appropriate account of these elements in recognition decisions.

Strengthening mobility for better learning

Learning mobility is essential to ensure the quality of higher education, enhance students' employability and expand cross-border collaboration within the EHEA and beyond. We adopt the strategy "Mobility for Better Learning"⁶ as an addendum, including its mobility target, as an integral part of our efforts to promote an element of internationalisation in all of higher education.

Sufficient financial support to students is essential in ensuring equal access and mobility opportunities. We reiterate our commitment to full **portability** of national grants and loans across the EHEA and call on the European Union to underpin this endeavour through its policies.

³ European Commission (2011): "Report of Mapping Exercise on Doctoral Training in Europe – Towards a common approach";

⁴ European University Association (2009): "Survey of Master Degrees in Europe";

⁵ European Commission (2009): "ECTS Users' Guide";

⁶ Bucharest Ministerial Conference (2012): "Mobility for Better Learning. Mobility strategy 2020 for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)";

Fair academic and professional **recognition**, including recognition of non-formal and informal learning, is at the core of the EHEA. It is a direct benefit for students' academic mobility, it improves graduates' chances of professional mobility and it represents an accurate measure of the degree of convergence and trust attained. We are determined to remove outstanding obstacles hindering effective and proper recognition and are willing to work together towards the automatic recognition of comparable academic degrees, building on the tools of the Bologna framework, as a long-term goal of the EHEA. We therefore commit to reviewing our national legislation to comply with the Lisbon Recognition Convention⁷. We welcome the European Area of Recognition (EAR) Manual⁸ and recommend its use as a set of guidelines for recognition of foreign qualifications and a compendium of good practices, as well as encourage higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies to assess institutional recognition procedures in internal and external quality assurance.

We strive for open higher education systems and better **balanced mobility** in the EHEA. If mobility imbalances between EHEA countries are deemed unsustainable by at least one party, we encourage the countries involved to jointly seek a solution, in line with the EHEA Mobility Strategy.

We encourage higher education institutions to further develop **joint programmes and degrees** as part of a wider EHEA approach. We will examine national rules and practices relating to joint programmes and degrees as a way to dismantle obstacles to cooperation and mobility embedded in national contexts.

Cooperation with other regions of the world and **international openness** are key factors to the development of the EHEA. We commit to further exploring the global understanding of the EHEA goals and principles in line with the strategic priorities set by the 2007 strategy for "the EHEA in a Global Setting"⁹. We will evaluate the strategy's implementation by 2015 with the aim to provide guidelines for further internationalisation developments. The Bologna Policy Forum will continue as an opportunity for dialogue and its format will be further developed with our global partners.

Improvement of data collection and transparency to underpin political goals

We welcome the improved quality of data and information on higher education. We ask for more targeted data collection and referencing against common indicators, particularly on employability, the social dimension, lifelong learning, internationalisation, portability of grants/loans, and student and staff mobility. We ask Eurostat, Eurydice and Eurostudent to monitor the implementation of the reforms and to report back in 2015.

We will encourage the development of a system of voluntary peer learning and reviewing in countries that request it. This will help to assess the level of implementation of Bologna reforms and promote good practices as a dynamic way of addressing the challenges facing European higher education.

We will strive to make higher education systems easier to understand for the public, and especially for students and employers. We will support the improvement of current and developing transparency tools in order to make them more user-driven and to ground them on empirical evidence. We aim to reach an agreement on common guidelines for transparency by 2015.

Setting out priorities for 2012-2015

Having outlined the main EHEA goals in the coming years, we set out the following priorities for action by 2015.

At the national level, together with the relevant stakeholders, and especially with higher education institutions, we will:

- Reflect thoroughly on the findings of the 2012 Bologna Implementation Report and take into account its conclusions and recommendations;

⁷ Council of Europe/UNESCO (1997): "Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region";

⁸ NUFFIC, Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in higher education (2012): "European Area of Recognition Manual";

⁹ London Ministerial Conference (2007): "European Higher Education in a Global Setting. A Strategy for the External Dimension of the Bologna Process".

- Strengthen policies of widening overall access and raising completion rates, including measures targeting the increased participation of underrepresented groups;
- Establish conditions that foster student-centred learning, innovative teaching methods and a supportive and inspiring working and learning environment, while continuing to involve students and staff in governance structures at all levels;
- Allow EQAR-registered quality assurance agencies to perform their activities across the EHEA, while complying with national requirements;
- Work to enhance employability, lifelong learning, problem-solving and entrepreneurial skills through improved cooperation with employers, especially in the development of educational programmes;
- Ensure that qualifications frameworks, ECTS and Diploma Supplement implementation is based on learning outcomes;
- Invite countries that cannot finalise the implementation of national qualifications frameworks compatible with QF-EHEA by the end of 2012 to redouble their efforts and submit a revised roadmap for this task;
- Implement the recommendations of the strategy "Mobility for better learning" and work towards full portability of national grants and loans across the EHEA;
- Review national legislation to fully comply with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and promote the use of the EAR-manual to advance recognition practices;
- Encourage knowledge-based alliances in the EHEA, focusing on research and technology.

At the European level, in preparation of the Ministerial Conference in 2015 and together with relevant stakeholders, we will:

- Ask Eurostat, Eurydice and Eurostudent to monitor progress in the implementation of the Bologna Process reforms and the strategy "Mobility for better learning";
- Develop a system of voluntary peer learning and reviewing by 2013 in countries which request it and initiate a pilot project to promote peer learning on the social dimension of higher education;
- Develop a proposal for a revised version of the ESG for adoption;
- Promote quality, transparency, employability and mobility in the third cycle, while also building additional bridges between the EHEA and the ERA;
- Work to ensure that the ECTS Users' Guide fully reflects the state of on-going work on learning outcomes and recognition of prior learning;
- Coordinate the work of ensuring that qualifications frameworks work in practice, emphasising their link to learning outcomes and explore how the QF-EHEA could take account of short cycle qualifications in national contexts;
- Support the work of a pathfinder group of countries exploring ways to achieve the automatic academic recognition of comparable degrees;
- Examine national legislation and practices relating to joint programmes and degrees as a way to dismantle obstacles to cooperation and mobility embedded in national contexts;
- Evaluate the implementation of the "EHEA in a Global Setting" Strategy;
- Develop EHEA guidelines for transparency policies and continue to monitor current and developing transparency tools.

The next EHEA Ministerial Conference will take place in Yerevan, Armenia in 2015, where the progress on the priorities set above will be reviewed.



EUROPEAN
Higher Education Area



Mobility for Better Learning

Mobility strategy 2020 for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)

I. Mobility aims and targets

Promoting high quality mobility of students, early stage researchers, teachers and other staff in higher education has been a central objective of the Bologna Process from the very beginning. High quality mobility pursues educational goals such as enhancing the competences, knowledge and skills of those involved. It contributes to expanding and improving academic collaboration and dissemination of innovations and knowledge within the EHEA, further internationalising higher education systems and institutions and improving them through comparison with one another, promoting the employability and personal development of the mobile people and strengthening the cultural identity of Europe. Mobility is essential to ensure high quality higher education and it is also an important pillar for exchange and collaboration with other parts of the world. In the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, we have formulated a mobility target that in 2020, at least 20% of those graduating in the EHEA should have had a study or training period abroad. Further to our declarations and communiqués hitherto and building up on our mobility target for 2020, we want to undertake the following measures which shall be implemented at institutional, national or European level:

II. Measures for the implementation of the mobility aims and targets

1. We agree that all member countries develop and implement their own internationalisation and mobility strategies or policies with concrete aims and measurable mobility targets.

They will include mobility aims for exchanges with partners inside and outside the EHEA, concrete measures for the expansion of mobility and the removal of obstacles to mobility, building on the action taken in this field in accordance with the London Communiqué. Measures will be defined with regard to improving the recognition of studies and training periods spent abroad, foreign language proficiency of mobile students and staff as well as regarding financial support. The strategies of the EHEA countries should include measurable and realistic mobility targets, improved monitoring tools and strategies for information and promotion of mobility opportunities.

2. We reaffirm and elaborate our mobility target formulated at Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve and lay down additional targets.

1. We define our mobility target from the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve communiqué more precisely as follows:

(a) We measure physical mobility in all three cycles of the Bologna Process.

(b) We include in our mobility target the periods spent abroad corresponding to at least 15 ECTS credit points or three months within any of the three cycles (credit mobility) as well as stays in which a degree is obtained abroad (degree mobility).

2. In Leuven/Louvain-La-Neuve we decided to include only outward mobility in our mobility target. In addition to our quantitative target for the outward mobility of graduates in the

EHEA, we now also want to draw attention to mobility into the EHEA such as the number of students enrolled in the EHEA who have obtained their prior qualification outside the EHEA as one possible indicator of its international attractiveness. We invite the European Commission (in particular Eurostat with the collaboration of the European Statistical System and its partners in international organisations) to collect corresponding data so that we can assess the progress in achieving the target for outward mobility and establish a reliable data basis regarding inward mobility with the possible aim of defining a target in 2015.

3. Therefore, in support of the specified indicators, we invite the European Commission (Eurostat) to develop and provide data:

(a) On degree and credit mobility to and from countries outside the EHEA.

(b) On the various mobility types (degree and credit mobility), in addition also short-term mobility corresponding to less than 15 ECTS credit points or three months.

In addition and where applicable, EHEA countries in co-operation with the European Commission and Eurostudent to develop and provide data:

(c) On mobility of early stage researchers, teachers, and staff in higher education.

(d) On the social dimension of mobility.

3. We strive for open higher education systems and better balanced mobility in the EHEA.

Our demand for more balanced mobility is directed particularly at degree mobility since it can have a sustained effect on the host and home countries, can facilitate capacity building and cooperation and may lead to brain gain on the one side and to brain drain on the other. Efforts made by governments as well as higher education institutions confronted with high levels of incoming degree and credit mobility deserve our acknowledgement and attention in order to strengthen the EHEA.

Joint study programmes, multilateral summer schools and regional forms of higher education collaboration are promising instruments to support a better balance in mobility flows. The return of graduates to their home countries can be supported through the creation of attractive working conditions and specific incentive systems (e.g. return grants).

In order to be able to better evaluate the development of degree mobility in the EHEA and react in good time to possible negative consequences for certain countries and regions, we intend in future to analyse the mobility flows systematically and regularly.

If the findings show greater imbalances over longer periods of time, the governments concerned should jointly investigate the causes, consider carefully the advantages and disadvantages of the specific imbalance and seek solutions if deemed necessary. Dealing with the matter multilaterally might also be considered.

4. We encourage the member countries to strive for more and better balanced mobility of the EHEA with countries outside the EHEA.

In each of our countries, we commit to intensifying structural collaboration with developing and emerging countries and using appropriate measures to motivate more Europeans, in particular, to study, teach and research in these countries. At the same time, in order to become more attractive for students, early stage researchers, teachers and other staff from non-EHEA

countries, we call on the EHEA countries to develop new study programmes and better promote programmes and other incentives for mobility periods in the EHEA.

5. We shall take measures to dismantle existing obstacles to mobility.

While increasing the motivation of students, early stage researchers, teachers and other staff to be mobile is of paramount importance for the success of any mobility measures, there is still a series of obstacles on different levels which impact on the substantial expansion of mobility inside and outside the EHEA. In order to reduce them, we intend to take the following measures:

- (1) As far as possible, to expand mobility funding and to enable a wide-reaching portability of grants, loans and scholarships provided by our countries as well as to further improve the exchange of information regarding the portability of national grants and loans across the EHEA to reach the mobility targets agreed upon in the EHEA.
- (2) To work with higher education institutions to increase the quality and relevance of mobility periods, ensuring that they contribute to high academic standards, to the employability as well as the linguistic and intercultural competence of graduates and to the excellence of academic staff.
- (3) We request that the European Union secures adequate mobility funding with appropriate funding through its education programmes. We acknowledge mobility funding by national, regional and private sources and commit to furthering co-funding.¹
- (4) We will ensure that the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention are taken up in national legislation and that recognition of qualifications or credits obtained elsewhere is guided by an open minded and positive approach.
- (5) We will identify in our countries problems, e.g. in relation to issuing visas, residence and work permits in the higher education field, and we will take measures accordingly to make mobility easier. The work of the European Commission to monitor progress in removing the obstacles on the framework conditions for learning mobility can serve as a model.
- (6) We welcome the work of the European Commission as well as of national supplementary pension providers on further promoting ideas and concepts to overcome the mobility obstacles linked to the national supplementary pension systems as far as the mobility of staff in higher education is concerned.
- (7) We will give extra attention and opportunities to under-represented groups to be mobile and recognise the importance of adequate student support services to this end.
- (8) As a prerequisite for mobility and internationalisation, we support the teaching of foreign languages at all levels, starting from primary education. We also strongly support the improvement of the language capabilities of teachers.

6. We will use quality assurance and transparency tools for promoting high quality mobility inside and outside the EHEA.

¹ Without prejudice to the budget.

Transparency of structures and instruments and mutual trust in the higher education systems of all the EHEA countries are at the core of the EHEA and a necessary prerequisite for mobility. We further encourage the application of the qualifications framework for the EHEA, of the ECTS and of the Diploma Supplement and intend to strengthen the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) by using the register better as a reference instrument especially by deploying the quality assurance agencies listed in it consistently in the respective member countries.

Furthermore, in accrediting or recognising study programmes we must pay even greater attention to ensuring that the professional perspectives opened up by a study programme are clearly set out. We aim to facilitate the alignment of EU legislation on professional qualifications with the EHEA (e.g. reference to learning outcomes, promoting even greater comparability in the use of ECTS as the basis for such recognition). We request the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) to engage in a dialogue with the European Commission and the national authorities responsible for professional qualifications in order to establish effective cooperation to this end. In addition, we ask the BFUG to explore the feasibility of entrusting agencies registered in the EQAR with the assessment of the conformity of regulated qualifications.

We also seek dialogue with other parts of the world and suggest more intensive collaboration in the field of quality assurance with regions outside Europe. We call on the networks active in this field to investigate the possibility of establishing greater transparency and better reciprocal understanding of already existing quality assurance procedures with countries or regions outside Europe. Worldwide collaboration in quality assurance can also be intensified by more quality assurance agencies from outside Europe being included in the EQAR on the basis of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG).

7. In the spirit of enhancing mobility, we advocate that countries pass on the flexibilities of the Bologna framework to the higher education institutions and restrict the state regulation of study courses to a minimum

We want to leave our higher education institutions the greatest possible room for manoeuvre within the framework which we have created with the EHEA so that they can intensify their cooperation and set up joint programmes more easily. National rules should not be a barrier for individual mobility and university cooperation. Therefore we will avoid rigid regulations and allow more flexibility. We will support the joint efforts of competent authorities and quality assurance agencies to create external quality assurance processes that minimize the bureaucratic burden on joint programmes. Single accreditation procedures that substitute the different national accreditation procedures should fit the different national purposes of all partners.

8. We want to increase mobility through improved information about study programmes.

Within our respective national systems, we undertake to shorten response times for international applications, to set up or improve a national website providing information about the study programmes of its higher education institutions as well as the existing professional student support structures, and link it to a common website that is attractive and highly visible for students. Furthermore, we mandate the BFUG to conduct a needs analysis amongst students and higher education institutions, to take stock of and to map existing admission systems, to collect examples of good practice and to explore

- the potential of using common standards for the description of study programmes,

- ways to facilitate access to relevant information while avoiding additional burden on institutions, making best use of information already available,
- how universities involved in organising ERASMUS Mundus Masters classes or their successors could cooperate in setting up a joint internet-based admission system,
- ways to assist interested member countries in developing their national internet-based admission systems by benchmarking good practices and the possibility of regional cooperation as a means to developing common or compatible internet-based admission systems,
- the possibility of enhancing cooperation in verifying the documentation of foreign qualifications in order to support institutions during the admission process.

9. We will improve the communication of the individual, institutional and social benefits of periods spent abroad.

The communication should target parents, career advisors and students. In order to systematically record the private and social returns of learning mobility, also with regard to the employability of higher education graduates, we suggest regular accompanying research and particularly the preparation of graduate surveys.

10. We call on higher education institutions

- to adopt and implement their own strategy for their internationalisation and for the promotion of mobility in accordance with their respective profile involving the stakeholders (in particular students, early stage researchers, teachers and other staff in higher education);
- to pay attention to the mobility and international competence of their staff, in particular to give fair and formal recognition for competences gained abroad, to offer attractive incentives for their greater participation in internationalisation and mobility measures as well as to ensure good working conditions for mobile staff;
- to create mobility-friendly structures and framework conditions for mobility abroad;
- to develop other possibilities for mobility such as virtual mobility and enable non-mobile students to have an "international experience at home";

In order to give us an overview regarding the implementation of our mobility strategy and the measures it contains, we request the BFUG to report on progress at the next ministerial conference in 2015.

We will look at the impact of national higher education policies on learning mobility and on the balance of mobility flows. As a basis for this, the member countries will, in their national reports for the next ministerial conference, provide information about the development and implementation of the national strategies and the progress towards achieving their mobility targets and on the removal of obstacles to mobility. Reports and further efforts will be made to improve the availability of internationally comparable data on the issue in order to promote policy learning.



Beyond the Bologna Process: Creating and connecting national, regional and global higher education areas

Statement of the Third Bologna Policy Forum

Bucharest, April 27th, 2012

We, the Ministers responsible for Higher Education and heads of delegation of the authorities, institutions and organisations present at the Third Bologna Policy Forum, reaffirm the aims of increased cooperation and policy dialogue between our countries and different higher education areas and acknowledge the relevance of this event in achieving them.

International cooperation in the field of higher education has a vital role to play in developing and maintaining cohesive, sustainable and open societies. This includes a strong commitment to higher education as a key contributor to the development of democracy, human rights protection and sustainable growth necessary for global recovery from the economic crisis.

The third edition of the Bologna Policy Forum focused on creating and connecting national, regional and global higher education spaces, while deepening the discussions on the following four topics reflecting on future approaches for dialogue in this context.

Public responsibility for and of higher education within national and regional context. This refers, *inter alia*, to providing appropriate investment and public funding to sustain equitable higher education, as well as to setting in place the regulatory framework and policy environment for autonomous higher education institutions to fulfil their diverse missions.

We acknowledge the importance of active participation of the academic community – students, faculty, staff and institutional leadership - in the governance and development of higher education responsive to societal change and economic needs. Similarly, we stress the importance of creating open and flexible pathways so that citizens with varied educational and social backgrounds can access and successfully complete higher education.

Global academic mobility: Incentives and barriers, balances and imbalances. Academic mobility has become increasingly meaningful in providing global perspectives, fostering active citizenship and equipping graduates with the right mix of knowledge, skills and competences which enable them to better respond to national, regional and global challenges.

We continue to strive for open and transparent education systems and better balanced mobility within and between our higher education areas and systems. We want to intensify the academic exchange of ideas and people in our regions, and to create innovative networks.

In this context, we aim to continue working towards reducing the diverse obstacles for mobility between our education areas, such as the lack of transparency of qualifications, financial barriers for students, problems with academic and professional recognition, as well as administrative hurdles.

In the framework of Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), we acknowledge the work aimed at exploring how the regional recognition conventions in Europe ("Council of Europe/ UNESCO Lisbon Convention")¹ and Asia and the Pacific ("Tokyo Convention")² may be used to further recognition between the two regions.

We will further strive for the implementation of the UNESCO/ OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education³ and the meaningful role they give to all actors in higher education for quality assurance.

¹ [Council](#) of Europe, UNESCO (1997): The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention)

² UNESCO (2011): Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education (Tokyo Convention)

³ [UNESCO](#), OECD (2005): Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education"

We will continue to support, fund and promote academic mobility, which helps the sustainable development of our societies. We will encourage higher education institutions to further develop joint programmes and joint degrees. Where appropriate, higher education institutions are also encouraged to make the best use of mobility and cooperation opportunities provided by the European Union programmes.

Global and regional approaches to quality enhancement of higher education. In the current international context, we particularly underline the importance of quality assurance. We consider it both a tool to strengthen the capacity of higher education institutions to enhance the quality of provision and an instrument to promote transparency and trust.

We support the conclusion of the international conference on quality assurance co-organised by the Flemish Government and the European Commission in December 2011. Despite the fact that different regions and countries have developed different approaches to quality assurance, we have similar challenges and interests. We can therefore benefit by working towards solutions which, although they have to be adapted to our own contexts, can share a common basis.

We aim to further develop robust and functional quality assurance systems and to promote cooperation between them. We also stress the important role of qualification frameworks and quality assurance in facilitating the recognition of qualifications and international mobility.

The contribution of HE reforms to enhancing graduate employability. One of the essential missions of higher education systems is to foster long term employability of graduates. Increasing the fair recognition of studies and qualifications, based on the various existing international conventions, will support a better link between higher education and the global economy. We stress the importance of the learning outcomes approach as a common base for mainstreaming lifelong learning, implementing the recognition and validation of prior learning and increasing the readability of qualifications.

Different regions of the world can learn from each other's experience of enhancing employability of graduates by, inter alia, exchanging the results of data collection in the field of employability and by sharing examples of good practice.

Way forward

The Bologna Policy Forum concept should be further enriched and taken forward, in order to maximise its potential for policy dialogue. In this sense, an evaluation of the Bologna Policy Forum will be organised immediately after the event with all participant delegations. Our aim is to enhance the common understanding of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) goals and principles, as well as to encourage active exchanges between the EHEA and other parts of the world, and thus underpin and complement the on-going internationalisation initiatives and efforts at institutional and national levels.

Regional exchanges and peer learning should strengthen the political commitments agreed at the Bologna Policy Fora, while also involving practitioners and representatives of the academic communities in a long term policy exchange. We agree that this policy cooperation should focus on specific topics and that it may in particular involve countries or regions which have expressed a particular interest in the topic at hand. We also reiterate our support for global student and academic staff dialogue.

We therefore ask the Bologna Follow Up Group, in partnership with the national contact persons identified by all countries participating in the Policy Forum, to explore this possibility further. The national contact persons will act as liaisons between our countries and bring our contribution to the follow-up of the Bologna Policy Forum.

To this aim, we strongly support and encourage events to take place in the frame of the policy dialogue for further cooperation initiated by the Bologna Policy Fora⁴.

The next Bologna Policy Forum will be convened in 2015 in Armenia.

⁴ A tentative and non-exhaustive list of these events is enclosed as Annex 1.

Annex 1

List of events to take place in the frame of the Bologna Policy Forum dialogue

2012 – Policy dialogue between the European Union and the Southern Mediterranean region on higher education, organised by the European Commission (dates TBC)

24-25 May, 2012: The Value of the PhD: Building Capacity and Refining Purpose, 3rd International CODOC Project workshop organized by the European University Association (EUA) and the Inter-American Organisation for Higher Education (OUI), University of Sao Paulo, Brazil

21-22 June, 2012: Europe-Africa Quality Connect: A bi-regional approach to Strengthening University Capacity for Change: Dissemination Conference organized by the European University Association (EUA) and the Association of African Universities (AAU), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

4-7 July, 2012: Transatlantic Dialogue: Leading the Globally Engaged Institution – New Directions, choice and Dilemmas, organized by EUA, the American Council for Education (ACE) and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), Salzburg, Austria.

Autumn 2012: Seminar for Bologna Policy Forum national contact points, organised by the European Commission

Autumn 2012/ Spring 2013 – International conference on the 'Interaction between HE researchers and policy makers in the field of trust, recognition and quality assurance', organised by the Flemish Community of Belgium

17-21 September 2012: Global Student Leaders Summit, hosted in partnership by the European Students' Union (ESU) and National Union of Students in the UK, London (TBC)

24-25 September, 2012: Final Dissemination Conference: CODOC- Cooperation on Doctoral Education between Latin America, Southern Africa, Asia and Europe, organized by the European University Association, the ASEAN University Network, the Southern African Regional University Association, the Inter-American Organisation for Higher Education and Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden.

11-12 October 2012 : 4th ASEM Seminar on Quality Assurance in Higher education in Paris (Sèvres) organised by the French ministry for Higher education and Research in collaboration with the ASEM.

12-14 November, 2012: Innovative Strategies for Higher Education in Latin America and Europe: International Collaboration and Regional Development, First bi-regional University Association Conference of the Alfa-Puentes project, hosted in partnership with the European University Association, the Association of Universities 'Grupo Montevideo' and 22 national and regional university association in Latin America and Europe, Sao Paulo, Brazil.

14 -15 March 2013, AHELO Project Results Conference, Utrecht, The Netherlands