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THE BOLOGNA PROCESS : NEXT STOP, BERLIN IN 2003

Higher education ministers from 32 European countries met in Prague on 19 May, two years after the [Bologna Declaration](#) (pdf format) launched the process of creating a "European higher education area" by 2010. Their Prague meeting confirmed that the key points of this process are:

* **Simplifying the patchwork of higher education qualifications.**

The aim is to continue developing a system of easily 'readable' and comparable degrees, based on undergraduate and postgraduate studies. At the same time, more flexibility would be ensured by a course credit system (such as the [ECTS](#)) providing for both transferability and accumulation. The Prague communiqué says:

- Ministers strongly encouraged universities and other higher education institutions to take full advantage of existing national legislation and European tools aimed at facilitating academic and professional recognition of course units, degrees and other awards, so that citizens can effectively use their qualifications, competencies and skills throughout the European Higher Education Area. Ministers called upon existing organisations and networks such as [NARIC](#) and [ENIC](#) to promote, at institutional, national and European level, simple, efficient and fair recognition reflecting the underlying diversity of qualifications.

* **Improving mobility within Europe and attracting students from around the world.**

- Ministers...confirmed their commitment to pursue the removal of all obstacles to the free movement of students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff...

- Ministers agreed on the importance of enhancing (the) attractiveness of European higher education to students from Europe and other parts of the world. The readability and comparability of European higher education degrees world-wide should be enhanced by the development of a common framework of qualifications, as well as by coherent quality assurance and accreditation/certification mechanisms and by increased information efforts.

* **Ensuring high standards.**

- Ministers pointed out that quality is the basic underlying condition for trust, relevance, mobility, compatibility and attractiveness in the European Higher Education Area.

- Ministers recognized the vital role that quality assurance systems play in ensuring high quality standards and in facilitating the comparability of qualifications throughout Europe. They also encouraged closer cooperation between recognition and quality assurance networks. Further they encouraged universities and other higher education institutions to disseminate examples of best practice and to design scenarios for the mutual acceptance of evaluation and accreditation/certification mechanisms. Ministers called upon the universities and other higher education institutions, national agencies and the European Network of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), in cooperation with corresponding bodies from countries which are not members of ENQA, to collaborate in establishing a common framework of reference and to disseminate best practice.

At the Prague meeting, the ministers also emphasised lifelong learning.

Lifelong learning is an essential element of the European Higher Education Area.

They called on higher education institutions **and students** to be involved in shaping a compatible and efficient, yet diversified and adaptable European Higher Education Area.

- Ministers affirmed that students should participate in and influence the organisation and content of education at universities and higher education institutions. Ministers also reaffirmed the need, recalled by students, to take account of the social dimension in the Bologna process.

And they wanted a more **European** slant.

- In order to further strengthen the important European dimensions of higher education and graduate employability, ministers called 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 degree curricula offered in partnership by institutions from different countries and leading to a joint recognized joint degree.

Continued follow-up

- Ministers welcomed new members to join the Bologna process after applications from ministers representing countries for which the European Community programmes Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci or Tempus-Cards are open. They accepted applications from Croatia, Cyprus and Turkey.

- Ministers decided that a new follow-up meeting will take place in the second half of 2003 in Berlin to review progress and set directions and priorities for the next stages of the process towards the European Higher Education Area. They confirmed the need for a structure for the follow-up work, consisting of a follow-up group and a preparatory group. The follow-up group should be composed of representatives of all signatories, new participants and the European Commission, and should be chaired by the EU Presidency at the time. The preparatory group should be composed of representatives of the countries hosting the previous ministerial meetings and the

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next ministerial meeting, two EU member states and two non-EU member states; these latter four representatives will be elected by the follow-up group. The EU Presidency at the time and the European Commission will also be part of the preparatory group. The preparatory group will be chaired by the representative of the country hosting the next ministerial meeting.



[Socrates] - [Erasmus]