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CONFERENCE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE

COUNCIL OF EUROPE SEMINAR

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THE BOLOGNA PROCESS: FROM BERLIN TO 2005

Secretariat discussion document

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

BACKGROUND

The Ministerial Conference to be held in Berlin on 18 – 19 September 2003 will take stock of the progress in the Bologna Process and outline the further development of the Process until the next Ministerial Conference in 2005. The key document from the Conference will be the Berlin Communiqué, which will be sent to CD-ESR delegations shortly before the plenary session or tabled at the meeting.

The present document has to be written well before the Berlin Conference to allow delegations time to prepare for the debate at the plenary session and it cannot anticipate the outcomes of the Berlin meeting with any kind of authority. Nevertheless, in addition to providing a brief overview of developments since the 2002 plenary session, it will seek to identify some possible issues for discussion at the 2003 plenary session. These should then be complemented with the outcomes of the Berlin Conference.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

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:

1. Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees
2. Adoption of a system essentially based on two cycles
3. Establishment of a system of credits
4. Promotion of mobility
5. Promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance
6. Promotion of the European dimension in higher education

In the Praha Communiqué, three further action lines were added:

7. Lifelong learning
8. Higher education institutions and students
9. Promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area

Further action lines may be added in Berlin - there is currently discussion on doctoral studies/training of researchers – while the understanding of some of the existing action lines may be concretised. For example, both lifelong learning and higher education and students are

important aspects of the social dimension of higher education, while at the same time, lifelong learning is also highly relevant to a discussion of qualifications frameworks (degree structure), and higher education and students are closely connected to higher education governance.

Currently, the Bologna Process is overseen between Ministerial meetings by a Follow Up Group, consisting of all members and observers, and a Preparatory Group, consisting of a limited number of members as well as the observers and with a mandate focusing on the preparation of the Ministerial conference. As an observer, the Council of Europe has contributed actively to both groups. The follow up structure is likely to be modified in Berlin, but there is likely to be a full group consisting of all members and observers and a smaller, Bureau-like group. In the current proposals, the Council of Europe will participate in both, and the Council has declared its willingness to do so. Whatever the details of the follow up structure, it should be underliend that the Bologna Process will continue to be a dynamic interaction between overall policies defined at European level and their implementation at national and institutional level. And as we are reaching the medium period of the Process, more and more emphasis should be placed on the implementation and concrete steps.

While the Bologna Process was expanded to include 33 countries at the Praha Ministerial Conference in 2001, four new countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”) have applied for accession in Berlin under the criteria defined in the Praha Communiqué. While the decision on admissions will be made by the Ministers in Berlin, it seems reasonable to assume that all four countries will be admitted, so that the Process will have at least 37 members after Berlin. In addition, the Ministers will be invited to redefine the criteria combining a geographical/institutional framework, for which the European Cultural Convention has been proposed, with criteria as to plans for policy reform and actual implementation of the Bologna policies. It is possible that a very limited number of additional countries that have already elaborated national reports in line with the suggested new criteria (currently Andorra and Russia) may be admitted to the Process at the Berlin Conference but, again, this will be decided by the Ministers.

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE’S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

The importance the Council of Europe attaches to the Bologna Process was underliend through the message sent by the Secretary general to the Berlin Conference (reproduced in the Appendix).

Throughout the period 2001 – 2003, the Council of Europe has contributed 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 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;
- (iii) as an important actor in the field of recognition;
- (iv) through other aspects of the activities programme;
- (v) 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 party to it.

The Chair and the Secretary to the CD-ESR have participated actively in all meetings of the *Bologna Follow Up and Preparatory Groups*, which also include a number of Bureau members and other members of the Committee in their capacities as national representatives. The Council of Europe has also contributed to paying the expenses of the Rapporteur of the Bologna Follow Up Group to the Berlin Ministerial meeting, Professor Pavel Zgaga, as a supplement to the grant the Rapporteur receives from the European Commission for this task, and which presupposes some additional funding from other sources.

The role of the *Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research (CD-ESR)* is crucial in that it comprises government and academic delegates from the 48 States party to the European Cultural Convention as well as observers representing countries¹ relevant to the external dimension of the Bologna Process and international IGOs and NGOs active in the higher education field, notably the EUA and ESIB. At the 2001 and 2002 plenary sessions of the Committee, its round table debate focused on the Bologna Process. The debates were of high quality and also fulfilled an important information function, in particular with regard to “non-Bologna” countries. The Bologna debate at the 2003 session is expected to follow in this track and will take on particular importance as it comes at the outset of new two year period of the Process.

As delegates will recall, the Council of Europe has also contributed through organizing, in cooperation with the Portuguese authorities, one of the *official Bologna seminars* in the work programme between the Ministerial conferences of Praha and Berlin. The conference on Recognition Issues in the Bologna Process was held in Lisboa on 11 - 12 April 2002 and also marked the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Lisboa Recognition Convention². In addition, the Council of Europe has been a very active contributor to several Bologna seminars organized in 2003:

- at the seminar on the Social Dimension of Higher Education, organized by the Greek authorities in Athenai in February, both the Chair and the Secretary of the CD-ESR made presentations on the role of higher education in GATS and on the public responsibility for higher education, respectively
- at the seminar on Student Participation in Higher Education Governance organized by the Norwegian authorities in Oslo in June, the Council of Europe presented a survey on student participation and placed this in a context drawing on the pilot project on the University as a Site of Citizenship as well as other relevant elements. Bureau member Jürgen Kohler, the Chair and the Secretary of the CD-ESR were among the contributors to the seminar;
- the Vice Chair was the main organizer of the Bologna seminar on Recognition and Credit Systems in the Context of Lifelong Learning (Praha, June), at which the Secretary to the Committee was Rapporteur. He was also Rapporteur to the seminar on Qualifications Structures organized by the Danish authorities in København in March.
- The Chair contributed a presentation to the seminar on Integrated Programmes organized by the Italian authorities in Mantova in April.

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 and the Code of Good Practice in the Provision of

¹ Currently Canada, Israel, Japan, Mexico, the USA.

² The text of the Convention and its Explanatory Report as well as an updated list of signatures and ratifications will be found at <http://conventions.coe.int>, search for ETS 165.

Transnational Education are important standard setting instruments. The Recommendation on criteria and procedures should also be noted in this context. 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.

At its 2003 meeting (Vaduz, 18 – 20 May), the ENIC Network approved a draft Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees and decided to submit it to the Lisboa Recognition Convention Committee for adoption (cf. item 7 of the CD-ESR agenda). The Convention Committee will meet in Strasbourg in May/June 2004, end-on with the ENIC/NARIC meeting.

Anticipating and contributing to the identification of priorities for the Bologna Process in 2003 – 2005, the CD-ESR Bureau has launched *work in two areas*:

- public responsibility for higher education and research;
- higher education governance.

Both are key elements of the Bologna Process, and both go beyond this Process. A Working Party has been appointed for each activity, which will be discussed under separate items of the CD-ESR agenda. It is nevertheless important to underline that these two activities will constitute an important part of the Council of Europe contribution to the Bologna Process over the next couple of years. A seminar on the public responsibility will be held in Strasbourg in 2004 as a contribution to the Bologna Process.

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. In 2003, the Council has given advice on legal reform in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and is engaged in a large-scale effort to propose a framework law for higher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Council has organized *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. Thus seminars were held in Tirana on 7 – 8 November, in Sarajevo on 11 – 12 November 2002 and in Skopje on 5 February 2003. 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 contributed to the final conference of this project, held in Beograd on 14 – 15 November 2002. The Council and the EUA also organized a higher education component of a large-scale conference on education reform in Beograd on 5 - 7 September 2002.

In addition, the Council of Europe offered to pay travel and subsistence expenses for one participant from each of these four applicant countries to all official Bologna seminars after the Bologna Follow Up Group in may 2002 decided that these seminars should also be open to the

four applicant countries. “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and Serbia and Montenegro has made good use of this offer.

Russia has also expressed a strong interest in the Bologna Process, and, with the Russian authorities, the Council of Europe organized a major national conference in Sankt Peterburg on 2 – 3 December 2002. The Russian Minister of Education, Professor Filippov, the Chair of the Duma Education Committee, Dr. Shishlov, and a high number of Rectors and Vice Rectors participated in the conference, as did the Chair and Vice Chair of the CD-ESR, the Chairs of the Bologna Follow Up and Preparatory Groups, the Rapporteur of the Follow Up Group for the Berlin Higher Education Summit, the Council of Europe Secretariat, representatives of ESIB and international experts. A follow up conference is planned for the end of October 2003, also in Sankt Peterburg.

The Council of Europe further contributes to the *external dimension* of the Bologna Process through its contribution to the UNESCO Global Forum on International Quality Assurance, Accreditation and the Recognition of Qualifications³ (Paris, 17 – 18 October 2002 and Oslo, 26 – 27 may 2003) and its participation in the working group that prepared the Global Forum. Several UNESCO Regions are now considering revising their respective regional conventions on the basis of the Lisboa Recognition Convention, and the African Region is already doing so. It seems likely that UNESCO will launch a feasibility study as a first step of the overall revision of its Conventions, and that the Council of Europe will be invited to contribute to this. Developments in the Bologna Process have also been prominent in the discussions of the Global Forum and the working group.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

On the basis of the activities carried out in 201 – 2003, the two new activities on the public responsibility for higher education and research and higher education governance and the outcome of the Berlin Ministerial Conference, the CD-ESR is invited to consider and suggest priorities for the Council of Europe’s contribution to the Bologna Process in 2003 – 2005. It is suggested that the discussion comprise:

- (i) the main contributions on the priority topics of the Bologna Process;
- (ii) activities in favour of Cultural Convention States that have not yet acceded to the Bologna Process, or that have done so only recently;
- (iii) participation in the follow up structures and initiatives within this framework;
- (iv) how to use the CD-ESR itself, though its double composition and representation of all Cultural Convention States, as a platform also in the context of the European Higher Education Area.

³ For further details, see http://www.unesco.org/education/studyingabroad/launch_gf02

APPENDIX

Message to the Berlin Higher Education Summit

From Mr Walter Schwimmer,
Secretary General of the Council of Europe

I confirm the Council of Europe's commitment to the Bologna Process aiming to establish a European Higher Education Area by 2010. In this way, the Council of Europe will, with all the participating countries and important partners help bring about the most important reform of higher education in Europe since the immediate aftermath of 1968.

As Ministers responsible for higher education, you will at the Berlin Higher Education Summit make decisions that will bring the Bologna Process an important step forward in terms of both content and geographical scope, based on our common heritage and values as transmitted by the European higher education community.

The Council of Europe is fully prepared to continue to play an important role in carrying out your decisions and in forming the work programme of the Bologna Process through active participation in the Bologna follow-up structures. I firmly believe the participation of a pan-European intergovernmental organisation will be a useful supplement to the expertise of the representatives of national Ministries in the follow-up structures.

In keeping with its fundamental values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, the Council of Europe is committed to equal opportunities for higher education for all qualified candidates regardless of their gender, race, colour, disability, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status. The Council of Europe therefore believes that public authorities should play an important role in the provision of higher education as well as in devising the framework within which this provision is given. As a contribution to the reflection on the social dimension of higher education, the Council of Europe therefore intends to organise a major conference on the public responsibility for higher education in 2004. The conference will be held at Council of Europe headquarters in Strasbourg, and I would very much welcome its inclusion in the official work programme of the Bologna Process 2003 – 2005.

Having in mind that new demands on and changes in European higher education systems should be followed with efficient and participative higher education governance, this is another key area to which the Council of Europe will contribute on the strength of years of experience from both intergovernmental and bilateral work. In this area, the Council of Europe will address a number of issues including the definition of institutional autonomy, student participation in higher education governance, the relationship between institutional self-governance and the participation of external stakeholders in the decision making of higher education institutions and the relationship between the central levels of the institution and the faculties.

On the basis of our Lisbon Recognition Convention, and in co-operation with the European Commission and UNESCO, the Council of Europe will continue to develop policies and best practice to facilitate the recognition of higher education qualifications, as well as qualifications giving access to higher education throughout the European Higher Education Area. The ENIC Network has approved a draft Recommendation on the recognition of joint degrees, which will be submitted to the Lisbon Recognition Convention for adoption in 2004, as well as a statement on its contribution to the Bologna Process.

On the basis of the pan-European platform offered by the European Cultural Convention, the Council of Europe is uniquely well placed to provide a bridge between the European Higher Education Area and the remaining countries of Europe. Over the past two years, the Council of Europe has presented the main policies of the Bologna process to important parts of the higher education communities of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", all of which have now applied for membership of the Bologna Process, as well as in Russia. The Council of Europe has also assisted with the revision of national legislation in these countries, underlining the importance of legislative reforms for the Bologna Process to reach its goals. The Council of Europe will continue to help implementing the policies that make up the backbone of the European Higher Education Area in those European countries that have not yet become a party to the Area, or that have joined only recently.

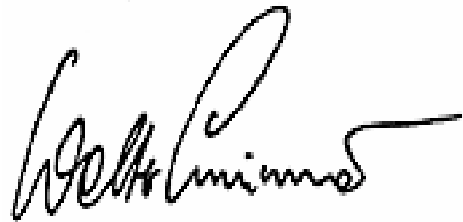
Not least, the Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research (CD-ESR), through its double membership of government and academic representatives contributes significantly to the dialogue between policy makers in Ministries responsible for higher education and the higher education community.

The CD-ESR is well placed to give an impetus to what should be the ultimate goal of the Bologna Process:

a European Higher Education Area encompassing as much of Europe as possible and building on clear policies that will enhance the quality and attractiveness of higher education in Europe, stimulate the mobility of students, graduates and staff and guide public authorities and institutions in fulfilling the main purpose of higher education:

- preparation for the labour market
- preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies;
- personal development;
- development and maintenance of an advanced knowledge base.

I wish the Berlin Higher Education Summit every success in its progress towards the European Higher Education Area and assure you of the full support of the Council of Europe in this endeavour.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Walter Schwimmer', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Walter SCHWIMMER