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EUA Press Statement on the forthcoming Bologna Process Ministerial Conference

Later this month (26-27 April), Ministers responsible for higher education from the 47 member countries of the Bologna Process will gather in Bucharest, Romania, for the latest Ministerial Conference. As a consultative member of the process, EUA will participate in the conference that will emphasise the importance of higher education in Europe's joint efforts to overcome the present crisis and will put forward political orientations for the development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

EUA Secretary General, Lesley Wilson, comments: *"EUA's work has shown that over the first decade of the Bologna Process (1999-2009), universities across Europe have implemented the overwhelming majority of structural elements of Bologna – such as the three-cycle degree system (bachelor, master, doctorate) and credit transfer systems. The second decade now aims to consolidate these reforms in order to achieve the underlying aims such as increasing mobility and employability of graduates, improving quality of teaching and learning, and developing lifelong learning. The meeting in Bucharest will therefore be an important opportunity to underline the need for future investment in higher education as the only way out of the crisis and for partnership between governments, higher education institutions and students to make a strong EHEA a reality."*

"From EUA's perspective, we believe that it is more important than ever, in these challenging economic times, that governments support universities as they have a unique role to play in providing graduates with the competences needed to respond to rapidly changing labour markets, and in acting as strategic motors of local and regional development across Europe."

In preparation for the Conference, and the resulting Ministerial Communiqué, EUA has prepared a statement designed to underline the priorities for consolidating the European Higher Education Area in the years to come and underlining the action taken by universities in the last years.

Amongst the priorities outlined in the statement is the need to:

- enhance partnerships between governments and other stakeholders
- (for governments) improve the key framework conditions for universities (notably in terms of increased public funding and autonomy)
- promote the concept of the "engaged university" (for example, acting as motors of regional development, collaborating with a range of stakeholders and enhancing the employment prospects of both traditional students and lifelong learners)
- increase synergies between the European Higher Education and Research areas (notably through the development of doctoral education)
- promote and increase the added value of mobility
- continue to build a "European higher education identity in the world".

The statement also reminds ministers that it is critical that the ownership of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) in the EHEA remains with the stakeholders, and thus that ministers give a mandate to the E4 group (ENQA, ESU, EUA and EURASHE) to present proposals for the revision of the ESG. This should be done in full consultation with the broader stakeholder community and the representatives of the EHEA governments.

The statement can be downloaded here:

http://www.eua.be/Libraries/Policy_Positions/Universities_in_the_EHEA_EUA_Statement_for_Bologna_Ministerial_Conference.sflb.ashx

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The European University Association, as the representative organisation of both the European universities and the national rectors' conferences, is the main voice of the higher education community in Europe. EUA's mission is to promote the development of a coherent system of European higher education and research.

Background – notes for editors

- More information on the Ministerial Conference is available on the official European Higher Education Area website: <http://www.ehea.info/>
- In March 2010, EUA published the Trends 2010 report which looked back at the first decade of the Bologna Process (1999-2009) and the challenges that lie ahead for the following decade. This report can be downloaded here:
http://www.eua.be/typo3conf/ext/bzb_securelink/pushFile.php?cuid=399&file=fileadmin/user_upload/files/Publications/Trends_2010.pdf