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Europe's universities: ready to drive Bologna forward to 2010

EUA President, Professor Georg Winckler, addressed European Education Ministers at the Bergen Ministerial meeting 19-20 May setting out the position of the Association's 750 members.

Professor Winckler welcomed the recognition in the Communiqué of the central role of institutions and confirmed that Europe's universities are committed to the Bologna reforms and accept their responsibility in driving forward the process, now that the legislative framework is largely in place across Europe. He underlined that this reflects an important shift in responsibility from national government to institutions that EUA identified in the report *Trends IV: European Universities Implementing Bologna*. As Prof. Winckler told Ministers: "We need universities that are able to move out from the shadows of nation states and are able to do both: go for excellence in research as well as in teaching and provide broad, equitable access to basic higher education in Europe."

Professor Winckler underlined the importance of autonomy and of adequate and sustainable funding in realising this vision, and in securing the future of Europe's universities. He welcomed the reference to these crucial topics in the Communiqué, stressing that Europe's universities cannot hope to compete with educational systems in other parts of the world if higher education and research budgets are not viewed as an investment in the future and urgently increased.

Professor Winckler also pointed out that, for universities, implementing the Bologna reforms and meeting the research and innovation goals of the Lisbon Agenda are inextricably linked in ensuring that universities realise their potential as key actors in shaping Europe's knowledge societies, saying that "Europe needs strong universities, in the broadest sense, as 'motors' in the knowledge triangle of education, research and innovation."

This is reflected in the Communiqué as it reaffirms the importance of doctoral programmes in linking the European Higher Education and Research Areas and recognises specifically the work of EUA by asking the Association to prepare a report "on the further development of the basic principles for doctoral programmes, to be presented to Ministers in 2007."

The Communiqué also asks EUA together with ENQA and the other 'E4' partners, ESIB and EURASHE, to move forward with the establishment of a European register of quality assurance agencies. This is an important issue for universities and students, and shows that while much has been achieved in the field of quality assurance through the adoption in Bergen of the standards and guidelines developed since Berlin, much remains to be done in future. This is all the more important as the *Trends IV* report reveals a direct correlation between the success of institutions in improving quality and the degree of institutional autonomy they enjoy, and for this reason it will continue to be a priority for EUA to work together with its members to enhance quality in institutions across Europe.

Lastly, given EUA's broad geographical coverage, the Association welcomes Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine who joined the Bologna process at the Bergen meeting and looks forward to intensifying cooperation with universities in these countries, of which 30 are already members.

- [EUA Statement on the Bologna Process for Bergen Ministerial meeting 19-20 May 2005](#)
- [EUA Report - Trends IV: European Universities Implementing Bologna](#)

For further information:

Elizabeth Tapper,
Press Officer

Tel: +32 2 234 38 80

Mobile/GSM: +32 473 748 785

Email: elizabeth.tapper@eua.be

Visit our website at www.eua.be

Background

The European University Association (EUA) is the representative organisation of more than 750 higher education institutions and National Rectors' Conferences in 45 countries across Europe. EUA is active in the development of higher education policy in Europe working with the EU institutions and other key partners to promote sustainable reform, and ensuring that universities participate fully in the Bologna Process and its follow-up bodies. The Association also works increasingly in the area of European research policy, with the aim of emphasising the crucial role of the university in strengthening Europe's research capacity and promoting the development of the knowledge society. EUA's unique position enables it to make the link between the two policy areas through the dual mission of its member universities, namely teaching and research.

At the Bergen Ministerial Summit, EUA President Prof. Georg Winckler presented the Association's statement on the Bologna Process. It outlines the concerns of EUA's members and priorities for the future based on the work of the Association since the Berlin Summit (2003), the discussions of over 600 participants at its recent Convention of European higher education institutions in Glasgow and the findings of the Trends IV report. EUA's report *Trends IV: European Universities Implementing Bologna*, the latest in the influential Trends reports series produced for each of the Ministerial meetings, formed part of the Bologna stocktaking process. The report, which sets out the challenges faced by European higher education institutions in implementing the Bologna reforms at the mid-term point to 2010, provides a snapshot of the current state of play in Europe's universities by analysing the implementation of degree structures, recognition and quality issues, as well as the link between teaching and research.

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