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CONTRIBUTIONS BY THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE TO THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

2003 – 2005

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Research Division)*

INTRODUCTION

The Council of Europe has contributed to the Bologna Process aiming to establish a European Higher Education Area by 2010 almost since the inception of the Process. At the 2003 plenary session of the Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research (CD-ESR) (Strasbourg, 9 – 10 October) among other things:

- approved the policy orientations for its contribution to the Bologna Process; in particular, underlined the importance of Council of Europe contributions in the areas of:
 - recognition, qualifications frameworks and quality assurance;
 - the public responsibility for higher education and research;
 - higher education governance;
- further underlined its willingness to contribute to the BFUG stock taking;
- encouraged the Bureau and the Secretariat to contribute to the Bologna seminar on recognition issues announced by Latvia;
- underlined the particular role of the Council of Europe in providing a bridge between the Bologna Process and States party to the European Cultural Convention that have not yet acceded to the Process, or that have done so only recently;
- underlined the importance of providing adequate national frameworks for the implementation of the goals of the Bologna Process and ensure synergies between implementation at national and European level.

The purpose of the present document is to outline the Council of Europe's contribution to the Bologna Process between Berlin and Bergen.

The Council of Europe will, of course, continue to contribute to the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG) and Board, through the Chair of the CD-ESR and the Secretariat, and it will continue to provide expertise for Bologna seminars and activities, whether through members of the CD-ESR and its Bureau or through the Secretariat. In addition, it will make specific contributions, the most important of which are outlined below.

It should also be pointed out that the CD-ESR is in itself a valuable forum for discussing the Bologna Process, as it has a double composition of government and academic members, and as its membership includes all 48 States party to the European Cultural Convention and therefore potential members of the Bologna Process, as well as observer delegations including Canada, Israel, Japan, Mexico and the United States as well as IGOs and NGOs active in the field.

In particular, the Council of Europe focuses its contribution to the European Higher Education Area in 2003-2005 on three action lines:

- **recognition of qualifications** (one of the three priorities outlined in the Berlin Communiqué)
 - through the ENIC Network and the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee, promote implementation of the Convention, further develop recognition policies and disseminate examples of good practice;

- apply the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention to new recognition issues, including transnational education arrangements and new types of qualifications;
 - promote the recognition of joint degrees, *inter alia* through a draft Recommendation on this topic that will be submitted to the Convention Committee on 9 June 2004.
- **An efficient implementation of structural reforms and the social dimension of the Bologna Process** is a transversal issue. In the period 2003-05 the Council of Europe focuses on the Public Responsibility for Higher Education and Research as well as higher education governance.
 - **work with countries that are either new parties to the Process or that are not Parties to the Process but whose higher education systems are in transition** mainly in the areas
 - advice on new legislation
 - advice on policy development
 - sharing examples of good practice

These action lines are projected into concrete actions as follows:

1) THROUGH THE BOLOGNA WORK PROGRAMME

Seminars and conferences

The Council of Europe will organize a Bologna seminar on the public responsibility for higher education and research at Council headquarters in Strasbourg on 23 – 24 September 2004. Invitations to the seminar will be sent to the CD-ESR, the Bologna Follow Up Group and observers. The draft program for the conference has already been submitted to the BFUG.

In addition, the Council of Europe is associated with two further conferences in the proposed work programme: the conference on recognition issues in Latvia and the conference on “New Generations of Laws for Higher Education” to be organized by CEPES in cooperation with the EUA and the Council of Europe on November 4 – 6, 2004 in Poland.

Beyond the seminars referred to above, the Council of Europe is prepared to contribute to a range of seminars if this is requested by the organizers, just as was done in the period 2001 – 03.

Working groups and other development work

There are two areas in which Ministers called for further development work: quality assurance and a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area. This work should be done under the authority of the Follow Up Group.

For the work on quality assurance, a specific mandate has been given to ENQA, the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB, and it is likely that the ENIC and NARIC Networks will be consulted in this work. The Council of Europe will contribute through the ENIC Network.

In the case of the qualifications framework, the Council of Europe will be willing and able to contribute to the working group that the BFUG may choose to establish.

The Council of Europe could also contribute to different parts of the stock taking exercise.

2) THROUGH WORK WITH PRIORITY COUNTRIES

This is recognized as an area in which the Council of Europe has specific competence and a specific responsibility. In the period 2001 – 2003, the Council worked with all four new countries admitted from South East Europe as well as with Russia. Since the Berlin conference, the following activities have been carried out or have been planned:

- national seminar for Serbia on recognition and the Lisboa Recognition Convention, Beograd, 28 – 29 September 2003;
- national seminar for Russia, Sankt Peterburg, 29 – 30 October 2003 on prospect and perspectives after the Berlin conference;
- regional conference on higher education legislation in South East Europe, Tetovo, 10 – 11 November 2003;
- introductory seminar to the Bologna Process, Kiyv, 25 – 26 November 2003;
- regional conference on the implementation of the Bologna Process in the four countries of South East Europe admitted to the Bologna Process in 2003, Strasbourg, 2 – 3 December 2003;
- national seminar for “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Skopje, March 2004;
- national seminar focusing on specific aspects of the Bologna Seminar, Ukraine (Dnipropetrovsk), April 2004;
- contribution to the conference to be organized by UNESCO/CEPES in Kiyv on 13 – 14 May 2004.

In addition, the Council of Europe organized a national seminar for Moldova on higher education governance and reform in Chişinău on 16 – 17 October 2003.