

FROM BERLIN TO BERGEN

General Report from the Bologna Follow-up Group to the Ministerial Conference in Bergen 19-20 May 2005

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1. HALFWAY TOWARDS 2010

Halfway in the Bologna Process towards 2010, we start to see the contours of the European Higher Education Area. It is not a single, unified higher education system, but a group of more than forty national systems developing according to jointly agreed principles. As additional countries want to join when Ministers meet in Bergen in May 2005, the Bologna Process can be seen as a truly pan-European Process.

For many countries, “Bologna” is an inspiration and a recipe for highly needed reforms in their higher education systems. At the same time we are building a common framework to realise the idea that students and staff shall be able to move freely within our common Area, having full recognition of their qualifications. There are limitations to the free movement set by legal and financial restrictions outside the competence of Ministers of Education, but building a Europe of Knowledge, we must strive to overcome these problems.

At the previous Ministerial Conference in Berlin in September 2003, priority was given to the further development of three central elements in the Bologna Process,

- a three-cycle degree system in each Member State with degrees at Bachelor, Master and Doctor level,
- national quality assurance systems co-operating in a Europe-wide network,
- mutual recognition between Member States of degrees and study periods.

Each of these elements has a national dimension and a European Dimension. So has the concept of qualifications frameworks; national frameworks fitting into *an overarching framework for the European Higher Education Area*. The Follow-up Group will report on the development of an overarching framework for higher education that may be a first element in a European educational framework spanning also vocational education and training.

Ministers have also asked for the development of an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance to be used in the national quality assurance systems. The Follow-up Group can report that agreement on key points has been reached, thus introducing a European dimension in quality assurance.

There exists already an international legal instrument for mutual recognition of degrees and study periods: the Lisbon Recognition Convention. By March 2005 the Lisbon Recognition Convention has been ratified by 31 of the 40 Member States of the Bologna Process and by the five prospective Member States. Formal problems related to the ratification procedure should not keep Member States from practicing the principles of the Lisbon Convention, thus recognising degrees and study periods from other Member States as equivalent to degrees and study periods in their own educational system. Correspondingly, higher education institutions in all Member States should recognise courses from partner institutions in other Member States as equivalent to their own courses.

The year 2010 may be the end of the Bologna Process, but it will at the same time be the beginning of the European Higher Education Area, an area which must continue to develop *after* 2010. Before 2010, Ministers must decide how this should be organised. The Bergen Conference may advise on the way to proceed.

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Chair, Bologna Follow-up Group

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2. THE BFUG WORK PROGRAMME 2003-2005

In the Berlin Communiqué, Ministers asked the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) to co-ordinate activities in the Bologna Process as indicated in the themes and actions covered by the communiqué and to report on them in time for the next Ministerial Conference in 2005.

The recommendations of the Berlin Communiqué were directed at national authorities, institutions and organisations. Countries and organisations have launched relevant follow-up activities in accordance with the Communiqué. This active participation of all partners is of great importance the long-term success of the Bologna Process.

To co-ordinate activities, the BFUG developed a Work Programme for 2003-2005, decided in its final form in March 2004. Members and consultative members of the Bologna Process have initiated most of the actions included in the Work Programme, and as such, it is basically a bottom-up process. However, the Follow-up Group has ensured that the Work Programme related in the best possible way to the Berlin Communiqué as a whole and that it had a reasonable balance between the various action lines of the Bologna Process.

Seminars were the main vehicle for the follow-up of the Prague Communiqué, and have also been important in the follow-up after Berlin. The EU Commission has supported a number of Bologna Follow-up Seminars in priority areas under the Socrates and Tempus programmes. A number of Bologna Follow-up Seminars were included in the BFUG Work Programme. Responsibility for organising these seminars was widely spread among participating countries and organisations. Condensed reports from the seminars have been included in this report.

The intermediate priorities defined in the Berlin Communiqué have been central in the Work Programme.

It was clear from the Berlin Communiqué that the Ministers envisaged that the BFUG should take responsibility for actions in the following areas:

- monitoring the ENQA project on quality assurance;
- developing an overarching framework of qualifications;
- realising the stocktaking exercise.

As may be seen from separate sections in this general report, these projects have received special attention from the BFUG.

The Follow-up Group has met six times between Berlin and Bergen, being assisted by a Board and a Secretariat as prescribed by the Berlin Communiqué.

All documents and reports referred to in this general report are available at <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/>.

All working documents for the BFUG and the Board in the 2003-2005 period has been available "Behind the Curtain" at <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/b/hind.htm>. When the Norwegian Bologna Secretariat stops operations on 30 June 2005, the web page will be "frozen" as the archives for the Bologna Process for the 2003-2005 period, available for all interested parties.

3. THE BOLOGNA ACTION LINES

Six action lines were introduced 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 co-operation in quality assurance;
6. Promotion of the European dimension in higher education.

Three more were introduced in the Prague Communiqué:

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

A tenth action line was introduced in the Berlin Communiqué:

10. Doctoral studies and the synergy between the EHEA and the ERA.

In the follow-up after Prague and Berlin, *the social dimension of higher education* has been seen as an overarching or transversal action line.

When the Follow-up Group made a selection of seminars for the inclusion in the BFUG Work Programme 2003-2005, a reasonable coverage of the various action lines was sought. This supplemented the selection according to the explicit priorities of the Berlin Communiqué.

As the process has been developing, action lines have tended to overlap or merge and new concepts have been introduced. As an example, action lines 1,2,3 and an important part of 10 may now be described within *a framework of qualifications for higher education*, the ambition is that also action line 7 may be included in *a general framework of qualifications* that may span both higher education and vocational education and training and also possibly other parts of the educational system. Establishing *the overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area* will be essential also for action line 6, the European dimension..

A concept implicit in action lines 1 and 4 that has turned out to be central for the Bologna Process; *recognition of degrees and study periods*. The legal instrument has been with us from the start, in the form of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, saying that all States party to the Convention shall recognise degrees and study periods from other States party to the convention as equivalent to degrees and study periods in their own system, provided there are no substantial differences. Hence the appeal from Ministers in Berlin that all Bologna Member states should ratify the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

Action line 5 *Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance* has been central in the follow-up after Berlin. With the development of an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance, a common basis for recognition is introduced. The co-operation and trust developing in the quality assurance sector may also be seen as yet another element of the European dimension of higher education (action line 6).

Action line 8 keeps reminding us of the importance of higher education institutions and student organisations as partners in the process. The active participation of institutions and their staff and of students in *the implementation* of the European Higher Education Area will be vital for the success of the Bologna Process. This implies that basic principles for this partnership between national authorities and the higher education sector must be clearly visible also in the description of the EHEA, first of all the principle of autonomous institutions and the principle of student participation in the governance of higher education institutions.

Action line 8 also initiated after Prague the discussion of higher education as a public good and a public responsibility. The public responsibility for higher education encompasses the structural elements of the Bologna Process such as a national framework, degree structure, quality assurance and recognition. The public responsibility for the structure of higher education is in all countries defined by the national legislation. A special seminar was organised by the Council of Europe in September 2004 to look closer into the public responsibility for higher education and research, and another seminar organised by UNESCO/CEPES in November 2004 studied the legislation for higher education in a large group of Bologna Member States (see chapter 4 on seminars).

Funding of higher education may – at least partly - be considered a public responsibility. However, in any system, individuals have to carry some of the cost. Student support is a key economic issue where no readymade answer exists, but which is intimately linked to the public responsibility for making higher education more accessible. Student support is also an important factor for mobility.

Student and staff mobility is at the heart of the Bologna Process and *Mobility* has been seen as a separate Bologna action line (action line 4). However, several seminars and also discussions in the Follow-up Group has shown that Mobility is indeed a transversal subject. Being aware that many challenges must be met to further increase mobility between different groups of Member States, further studies will be necessary on various elements, including the recognition issue, the social and linguistic issues, the financial issues, immigration and social security issues and the legislative framework.

A tentative conclusion regarding action lines may be that they have been imperative for the dynamics of the Bologna Process. However, this does not necessarily imply that they should also be parameters for the description of the European Higher Education Area which will be the *outcome* of the Bologna Process: The action lines have shown the way to go, but they do not explicitly define the final goal.

4. BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP SEMINARS

Seminars were the main vehicle for the follow-up of the Prague Communiqué, and they have also been important elements in the follow-up after Berlin. *Bologna Follow-up Seminars* have been organised by individual Member States and by consultative member organisations in accordance with their own priorities and objectives, taking account of criteria approved by the Follow-up Group. Fourteen Bologna Follow-up Seminars were included in the BFUG Work Programme 2003-2005, reflecting the priorities set by the Ministers in Berlin and having the potential of contributing most to the realisation of the European Higher Education Area.

Seminars were open to participants from all signatory countries and from those who applied to join, to the representatives of European Commission, Council of Europe, UNESCO-CEPES, EUA, EURASHE and ESIB as well as to other interested parties. All seminars consisted of plenary sessions and workshops, giving opportunity for an active participation and for elaboration of various aspects of the seminar themes. Surveys and background documents were prepared by organisers. This material is available at the Bologna-Bergen web site <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/> together with complete reports and recommendations from each seminar.

The seminars have been important to increase the awareness of the Bologna Process in Member States and also in potential Member States. The Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES have both been very active in their support of the new Member States and the building of bridges to potential new Members. EUA and ESIB have been co-organisers of a number of seminars, also reaching out to National Rectors' Conferences and National Student Unions in Member States and stimulating the dialogue at national level between Bologna Partners.

Recommendations from Bologna Follow-up Seminars have fed into the stocktaking project, into the development of the overarching framework for qualifications and into the joint efforts in quality assurance. Recommendations from seminars have also directly influenced the drafting of the Bergen Communiqué.

4.1 "Joint Degrees – Further Development", Stockholm, 6-7 May 2004

50 participants from 18 countries and a number of organisations attended this seminar organised by the Swedish Ministry for Education and Research. The seminar built on previous activity in the field. Two seminars were held in the preceding period related to joint degrees: in May 2002, also in Stockholm, and in Mantova in April 2003, focussing on integrated curricula. In addition, a survey in 2002 and a project on joint master's degree programmes, both conducted by the EUA, had pointed to a number of problems. In the Berlin Communiqué, Ministers undertook to remove legal obstacles to the establishment and recognition of joint degrees and actively support the development and adequate quality assurance of integrated curricula leading to such degrees.

The seminar considered the situation against this background. In most Bologna countries, degrees are regulated in national legislation. Many higher education institutions co-operate in developing and delivering joint study programmes and joint degrees, but few joint diplomas are awarded. Most countries do not make explicit legal provision for the awarding of joint degrees and joint diplomas. The seminar reiterated the importance of joint degrees for

achieving the Bologna objectives, underlining that the process of developing and offering joint study programmes is the core activity, and discussed aspects such as the use of the Diploma Supplement and ECTS and quality assurance. In a lifelong learning perspective it was pointed out that the possibilities for all types of students to participate should be taken into account when developing joint study programmes and joint degrees.

It was recommended that the Bologna Follow-up Group should map the experience of higher education institutions and students with joint study programmes and joint degrees, and if possible report conclusions and recommendations to the Bergen ministerial meeting. Further, each country should report on the progress made in removing legal obstacles to joint degrees as agreed in the Berlin Communiqué. As a result of the latter recommendation a question about this was included in the template for the national reports.

General Rapporteur for the seminar was Professor Pavel Zgaga. The seminar made the following recommendations to the Bergen Ministerial Meeting:

- The possibility of awarding joint degrees with national and foreign higher education institutions should be clearly referred to in national legislation. Every country should report on the progress of their work in time for the ministerial meeting in 2007.
- The format of the Diploma Supplement should be adapted to facilitate the description of joint degrees. The Diploma Supplement should include a cross-reference when double degrees are issued.
- Ministers should encourage the development of incentives for higher education institutions to participate in joint study programmes leading to joint degrees. Higher education institutions should give proper recognition to students and staff who participate in joint degree programmes.

4.2 “Bologna and the challenges of e-learning and distance education”, Ghent, 4-5 June 2004

The main focus of the seminar organised by the Ministry of the Flemish Community (Belgium) and the University of Ghent in cooperation several academic partners, was on the integration of the lifelong learning perspective in higher education. In particular the seminar explored the issue of widening access to higher education, e.g. for a more mature student public that combines studies with other responsibilities.

The seminar was attended by 100 policy makers, representatives of the academic world and specialists both in international relations and in e-learning from a large variety of countries and organisations participating in the Bologna process.

The seminar discussed how non-classical teaching and learning forms can be of use in an emerging European Higher Education Area of which quality assurance and recognition, as well as mobility and social issues are the corner stones. The challenges higher distance education poses in this perspective were explored accordingly.

General Rapporteur was Professor Jef Van den Branden. The following recommendations were made for the further development of the Bologna process:

- To make the EHEA an *Open* Higher Education Area by fully integrating the dimension of flexible learning paths supported by e-learning and other non-classical learning and teaching forms.
- To extend quality assurance, accreditation and qualification frameworks to e-learning and other non classical modes of delivery in an integrated approach encompassing the full range of higher education.
- In the context of widening access, to develop leadership in higher education institutions in order to integrate a lifelong learning-for-all strategy in joint responsibility with staff, students and the local and international community.
- To explore how the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention may be used to establish common understanding and shared standards on the validation of prior learning experiences in both formal and non-formal settings as a concrete step to the integration of the lifelong learning perspective in higher education.
- To acknowledge the contribution of so-called “virtual mobility” to international academic exchange and joint curriculum development to take on board in the design of international mobility schemes.
- To promote a broad approach to all “Bologna tools” (as for instance ECTS and Diploma Supplement) to include e-learning and non classical teaching and learning.

4.3 “Using Learning Outcomes”, Edinburgh, 1-2 July 2004

The seminar, organised by the Scottish Ministry for Education together with national partners, brought together some 160 participants from 28 countries and from partner organisations. A background report had been commissioned from Professor Stephen Adam, examining the concept of learning outcomes both from a theoretical point of view and in relation to current practice.

Considerable activity was found to be taking place across Europe, but relatively few countries or higher education institutions had implemented learning outcomes in a systematic way. One conclusion in the report was that learning outcomes may enhance all the Bologna action lines. They were seen as part of a shift in emphasis from the teacher to the learner, and in this connection students pointed out that for learning to be genuinely student-centred, the students must also be included in the process of formulating the learning outcomes.

There was general agreement on the usefulness of moving towards an outcomes-based approach in the description of modules/units, study programmes and qualifications. Such an approach lies at the centre of the development of an overarching framework of qualifications for the EHEA, and the seminar provided important input to this work. Descriptions in terms of learning outcomes also facilitate comparison of knowledge, understanding and skills acquired in informal or non-formal learning with formal qualifications, and hence contribute to flexible learning paths in a lifelong learning perspective. In the same way they may facilitate mobility between vocational education and training and higher education.

The seminar discussed the role of learning outcomes in relation to issues such as transparency, mobility, recognition and quality assurance, underlining that they are not the solution to all problems, but a useful tool at both the conceptual and practical levels. Unresolved issues i.a. in relation to credits were pointed out. Also, the concept is used in different ways in different contexts, sometimes in a very technical way, and a common understanding therefore needs to be developed, taking into account the importance of diversity and flexibility.

The seminar recommended that the BFUG should take a leading role in ensuring coherence across the different strands of development of the Bologna Process affected by learning outcomes, and more broadly between the Bologna and Copenhagen processes.

The seminar further recommended that the following themes should be considered for inclusion in the Bergen Communiqué:

- The importance of learning outcomes for the future development of Diploma Supplements, ECTS and qualifications frameworks, as a tool to promote transparency and mobility, while supporting flexibility and diversity across the European Higher Education Area.
- The need to accept that the pace and nature of change will not be uniform across all countries or all disciplines. Such flexibility will protect the diversity inherent in the European Higher Education Area and lead to greater ownership of the final outcome.
- The need for continuing dialogue to achieve a common language and a shared understanding of that language.

4.4 “Assessment and accreditation in the European framework”, Santander 28-30 July 2004

The seminar organized by the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports and the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation was attended by approximately 125 policy makers, representatives of the academic world and specialists both in international relations and in assessment and accreditation.

The main objective was to move forward in the development of common methodological tools for quality evaluation and accreditation of higher education within the European framework of the Bologna Declaration, with a view to identifying tools that are generally accepted as suitable and effective. Additional objectives were to compare processes and to analyse the networking of evaluation agencies and bodies with a view to the mutual recognition of their decisions. General Rapporteur was Director Leonardo M. González.

It was confirmed that the networks of agencies will have an important role to play in the establishment of common accreditation criteria and methodologies that may lead to the mutual recognition of their decisions, in particular by means of their efforts to push for more and better knowledge of good practices and exchange of information and experience.

At the same time it was made clear that in defining these common criteria and methodologies it is necessary to take into account the diversity of the various systems and traditions that will go into the construction of a comparable framework.

There is a clear need to establish a glossary of terms that will make it possible to interpret the main features of each institution in the light of common but flexible principles and points of reference agreed at European level.

For the implantation of an effective culture of quality, it is essential that governments, higher education institutions, quality agencies, teachers and students all participate, in view of the expectation that this process will benefit not only the involved agents but also society at large.

It will only be possible to establish common criteria and methodologies if mutual trust among institutions and agencies is achieved on a basis of greater transparency in accreditation processes. To that end it is essential to promote a peer review process among agencies.

Accreditation is viewed as an essential tool for the promotion of quality assurance in higher education systems. The accreditation process should be linked to the implementation of specific recommendations for the improvement of the evaluated qualifications and institutions. It was recommended that a concrete accreditation scheme be set up within the Bologna process.

4.5 “Public Responsibility for Higher Education and Research”, Strasbourg 21-22 September 2004

Approximately 80 participants from 36 countries and a number of organisations participated in this seminar organised by the Council of Europe. General rapporteur was IAU Secretary General Eva Egron Polak. Recommendations were addressed to public authorities in States Party to the European Cultural Convention and some directly to Ministers in Bergen:

Public responsibility for higher education and research should be understood as a multidimensional concept that includes the establishment and maintenance of the required legal infrastructure, elaboration of policy, provision of funds and the further development of the social dimension, to meet current and future needs of the Knowledge Society.

Public responsibilities should be exercised throughout the European Higher Education Area with due regard for the need of higher education and research institutions and systems to act freely and efficiently in the pursuit of their mission.

For universities to meet society’s requirements for research and respond to public interests, public authorities must provide adequate funds and, together with the research community, design policies to regulate conditions under which private resources can best be used.

To respond to increased pressure for cost-sharing in higher education, public authorities should stimulate further research and debate on the impact of different instruments such as tuition fees, student grants, bursaries and loans etc, on aspects such as equality of opportunity, system efficiency, social cohesion, impact on public funding etc, as a basis for future action.

Public authorities should ensure that appropriate bridges exist between higher education and the world of work. Such bridging include a coherent qualifications framework at national and European levels, transparent mechanisms for recognition of qualifications and quality assurance, two way information flows between the labour market and higher education.

Public authorities should establish cost-effective quality assessment mechanisms that are built on trust, give due regard to internal quality development processes, have the right to independent decision-making and abide by agreed-upon principles.

Recommendations to the Bergen Ministerial Conference:

- Ministers were asked to affirm their commitment to making equal opportunity in higher education a fundamental building block of the European Higher Education Area. They were asked to undertake actions that will allow the development of systemic and institutional responses to enable all individuals to realize their full potential.
- Ministers were also asked to acknowledge that funding, motivating and stimulating the development of higher education and research is as important a part of public responsibility. Ministers were asked to stimulate a comprehensive analysis of various approaches that would lead to increased funds for higher education and research, meeting equity, effectiveness and efficiency objectives as well as those of quality and autonomy.

Building the Knowledge Society that is democratic, inclusive, equitable and competitive is a shared responsibility in which an examination of the responsibilities of public authorities must be completed by an analysis of the public responsibility of all other stakeholders. Participants urged that such corresponding analysis be undertaken as well.

4.6 “Designing policies for mobile students”, Noordwijk, 10-12 October 2004

Approximately 130 participants from 30 countries and a number of organisations participated. In this seminar organised by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. General Rapporteur was Professor Pavel Zgaga.

The participants in the seminar concluded that structural cross-border cooperation between institutions and high-quality mobility of students and staff make an indispensable contribution to creating a well-educated and internationally oriented work-force and strengthen the intellectual, cultural, social, scientific and technological dimensions of the European knowledge-based society. When designing policies to facilitate and further mobility, this is to be taken into account. A sustained and continued attention for the implementation of already agreed policies and principles in the field of student mobility is required.

Regarding the external quality assurance and requirements by national governments the seminar appeals to national authorities to standardize criteria or mutually recognize each others accreditation decisions and organise trust.

To increase the transparency of Europe's more than 3000 institutions of higher education, a pilot for a *European typology of institutions* has been started and a draft typology is tried out. The seminar asked that the pilot should take into consideration related work carried out by UNESCO-CEPES by the UNESCO-OECD activity on Guidelines on Quality Provisions in Cross Border Higher Education. The results of this pilot study could be reported to the Bologna process.

The *portability of students loans and grants* is an important instrument in the promotion of mobility. The various systems of student support are basically designed for the students that study in their country of origin. Portability of student grants ought to be studied more closely within a EU-context. This should be done in relation to, amongst others, fees and maintenance costs.

The participants in the seminar concluded that a European fund for student support could reduce some obstacles for mobility, and that a network of student support experts from the member states should be founded.

Participants affirmed that issues relating to the portability of student support is a complex area, where education policy as well as income politics and social welfare are intertwined, and with national and supra-national interests at stake. In light of the wishes to increase mobility, student support is an important subject to be taken up in the context of the European Union, because of the tension between national policies and EU-jurisprudence. These legal issues are to be linked with political, social and administrative issues. The participants called on all parties involved to take the necessary steps to reach a satisfactory solution for the problems identified.

4.7 “The employability and its links to the objectives of the Bologna Process”, Bled 22-23 October 2004

Approximately 115 participants from 24 countries and a number of organisations participated. General Rapporteur was Martina Vukasović.

This was the first Bologna Seminar handling employability. One major step forward in this issue was that the participants agreed on a definition on the term “employability”:

A set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy.

The participants concluded that there are problems in many countries getting acceptance for the first degree in the labour market. This implies that there are challenges in fulfilling the Bologna action line *Adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate*. It is a goal in the Bologna Process that a degree awarded after the first cycle shall be relevant to the European labour market as an appropriate level of qualification.

Achieving the goal in strengthening employability, several measures must be taken. Employers, trade unions’ organisations and professional associations must be involved in the development and creation of new types of qualifications and new curricula. The BFUG must strengthen the participation of these stakeholders.

The seminar participants also recommended that the notion of employability are included as reference points in further Bologna seminars and other activities, in particular those dealing with learning outcomes and an Overarching Framework of Qualification for EHEA.

4.8 “New Generations of Policy Documents and Laws for Higher Education: Their Thrust in the Context of the Bologna Process”, Warsaw 4-6 November 2004

The conference was attended by 40 international participants from 22 different countries and from partner organisations, 20 participants from Poland, and two observers from USA. The main objective was to analyse how laws on higher education are reflecting the realization of the objectives of the Bologna Process. Professor Hans de Wit served as General Rapporteur.

Presentations were made on the theme of the conference from 11 different national perspectives, followed by a session featuring comparative perspectives on policy and legislative initiatives for higher education. A comparative analysis was also presented. The presentations and analysis provided relevant information on legal reforms in Europe in the context of the Bologna Process.

Notwithstanding the fact that different countries are at different stages of implementation, there was agreement that most countries have adopted, or are in the process of adopting, legislation enabling achievement of the Bologna goals in the agreed timeframe. At the same time it was recognised that national agendas play a key role in the implementation of the Bologna objectives and in the elaboration of new higher education legislation. Current reforms in national higher education legislation cannot be attributed solely to the Bologna Process. Some were already initiated prior to 1999; in other cases the Bologna Declaration is used as a ‘lever’ for national policy and to solve national problems.

Following the presentations and discussions, one could observe on the one hand a *growing convergence* in line with the Bologna goals (regarding degree systems, credits and accreditation), and on the other hand a *continuation of diversity* that will remain. The latter might even be reinforced, in that higher education is still a national responsibility and is defined foremost by national contexts, constraints and priorities.

Participants agreed that the approach to higher education legislation reform by general framework laws, is most appropriate. Regulating in detail not only results in inflexibility, it is also in contradiction with the trend to deregulate and provide more autonomy. While legislation is an important aspect of implementation, it cannot take the place of commitment, interaction and trust among the different stakeholders.

It was recommended to the member countries in the Bologna Process that they implement general framework legislation for higher education instead of detailed regulatory legislation. It was also recommended that they translate their national policy documents and higher education legislation into English or another major language of the EHEA.

It was recommended to the Bologna Follow-Up Group that it supplements the present stock-taking exercise with one on higher education legislation. This will help to better understand the legal implications of the Bologna Process in different countries, to get a better picture of convergence and diversity in European higher education, to exchange experiences and expertise, and to assist those countries still in the preparatory stage of legislative reforms.

4.9 “Bachelor’s Degree: What Is It?” St. Petersburg, 25-26 November 2004

The seminar was jointly organised by the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, the Committee for Education and Science of the State Duma, St. Petersburg State University and the Council of Europe. It was attended by around 150 participants from Russia and 30 participants from 13 other countries. The working languages were English and Russian. General Rapporteur was Sverre Rustad from the BFUG Secretariat.

The seminar had a double focus, in that part of the discussion was concerned with general characteristics of the bachelor’s degree and the benefits and possible disadvantages of a two- (three-) cycle structure, whereas another part was concerned more particularly with the situation in Russia. In the general part, employability and the relation to the labour market was a special theme. There was consensus that bachelor programmes should have a balance between generic and specialist skills, with an emphasis on learning to learn, and that relations between higher education institutions and employers need to be strengthened. Not least is this the case in Russia, where the bachelor’s degree is not well known or accepted and where employers tend to favour traditional integrated programmes. In general more emphasis should be placed on stimulating the creative development of the student, and all bachelor programmes should therefore be research-based.

With regard to the situation in Russia, focus was on the extent and pace of change. It was argued that moving too quickly would risk throwing over board valuable elements of the existing system and thus reducing standards. At present the two-cycle degree structure is voluntary for the institutions, and there were different views on whether it should be made obligatory. On the other hand there seemed to be a general consensus that the bachelor’s degree in Russia should have a duration of 4 years due to the low entry level (11 years of school) compared with many other countries.

The following conclusions and recommendations were submitted to the BFUG for consideration:

- Taking into account the significant role played by humanities and social sciences in curricula in terms of ensuring generic competences, and at the same time widely divergent views and practices concerning the number of credits allocated to the humanities in different study programmes, the seminar recommends to set up a special working group for the study of the role to be played by humanities in higher education.
- Proceeding from the general agreement that bachelor-level programmes are meant to ensure sufficiently broad competences, programme designers are recommended to pay special attention to interdisciplinary and field-specific modules. Based on existing descriptors the structure of competences would then be as follows: generic competences, interdisciplinary competences, field-specific competences and subject-specific competences.
- In designing bachelor-level study programmes for higher education, the designers should pay more attention to labour-market requirements and challenges.
- It is recommended to amend the position taken by the Bologna Declaration to make it clear that access to doctoral studies shall require a completed master’s degree.

4.10 “Improving the recognition system of degrees and study credit points in the European Higher Education Area”, Riga, 3-4 December 2004

This seminar, organised by Latvian authorities in co-operation with the Council of Europe, was attended by approximately 160 participants from 30 different countries and from partner organisations. Professor Stephen Adams served as General Rapporteur.

Many Bologna action lines have direct links to recognition. Without effective processes for recognition, important Bologna objectives will not be achieved. However, the Riga seminar indicated what can be achieved and generated a strong agreement about the way forward.

Ministers in Bergen were urged to:

- Amend national legislation to incorporate the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and adopt effective measures to ensure their practical implementation at all appropriate levels;
- Recognise that reaching the goals of the Bologna Process requires defining ‘recognition’ as positioning a holder of a foreign qualification in the host country’s education or employment system, and therefore to:
 - o emphasize the benefits of national qualifications frameworks and endorse the creation of the overarching framework of qualifications for the EHEA on the grounds of their contribution to recognition, mobility and transparency;
 - o promote an intensive national and international dialogue, informed by ENICs and NARICS, to exchange good practice.
- As a matter of urgency, launch a campaign to convey accurate and pertinent information on the Bologna Process to other parts of the world.

At the level of ENIC and NARIC networks it was recommended that:

- The existing cooperation between recognition and quality assurance networks should be further strengthened. It needs to be acknowledged that recognition and quality assurance are intimately related;
- It is explored how the emerging qualifications frameworks and usage of learning outcomes can be applied for improving recognition practices, including the recognition of lifelong learning and other non-traditional qualifications, and how they relate to the legal framework of the Lisbon Recognition Convention;
- The networks take an active part in informing on the Bologna Process in the wider world, using their long-standing contacts and information exchange channels.

At national level it was recommended that:

- Effective measures are taken in respect of non-traditional providers to offer them access to state recognition procedures and ongoing quality assurance monitoring.
- The contribution of learning outcomes to recognition in higher education and lifelong learning is acknowledged and a strategy for their implementation is developed.
- Steps are taken to monitor the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, with a view to encouraging fair and equal treatment of applicants within countries.

In *higher education institutions* steps should be taken to develop institutional recognition policies and practices and to disseminate information on the legal framework for recognition and best practice at the level of faculties and study programmes.

4.11 “The Framework of Qualifications of the EHEA”, Copenhagen, 13-14 January 2005

Approximately 120 representatives from 28 countries participated in this seminar, organised by the Danish authorities. General Rapporteur was Sjur Bergan, Council of Europe. The purpose of the seminar was to discuss the report from a Working Group on the overarching qualification framework, appointed by the BFUG as a central element in the follow-up of the Berlin Ministerial Conference, see Ch. 6 of this report. The participants recommended:

That *Ministers, meeting in Bergen in May 2005*

- adopt the overarching framework for qualifications of the European Higher Education Area as proposed by the BFUG Working Group;
- mandate the BFUG to elaborate criteria and procedures for a self-certification system for national framework of qualifications where quality assurance is included and to submit it for final adoption to the Ministerial meeting in 2007;
- delegate responsibility for the maintenance and development of the overarching framework to the BFUG and any successor executive structure;
- commit to elaborating national framework of qualifications compatible with the overarching framework for qualifications of the EHEA by 2010;
- commit to taking adequate account of the overarching framework for qualifications of the EHEA, as well as to consulting all parties to the Bologna Process, in any future development of frameworks for other parts of the education system.

That *public authorities responsible for national education systems*

- in elaborating and maintaining their national qualifications be guided by and ensure compatibility with the overarching framework for qualifications of the EHEA;
- involve all relevant stakeholders both within and outside of higher education;
- identify a nationally agreed set of purposes for their national qualification framework;
- ensure that their national framework link academic standards, quality assurance systems and public understanding of recognized qualifications;
- ensure that the description of each qualification within their national framework of qualifications explicitly state:
 - o to which further qualification(s) that particular qualification gives access;
 - o the relationship of the qualification in question to the three generic cycles of the overarching framework;
- ensure that their national framework associate the relevant transparency instruments, such as the Diploma Supplement, ECTS and Europass.
- ensure that their national framework facilitate learning paths that integrate non-formal and informal learning as well as various entry and exit points.

That *higher education institutions as well as students and their organizations* continue to contribute as active stakeholders to the development and maintenance of national framework of qualifications as well as the overarching framework for qualifications of the EHEA;

That *ENIC and NARIC Networks and individual recognition centers* provide clear and adequate information on the overarching framework for qualifications of the EHEA as well as on national frameworks to recognition networks and centers and higher education institutions in other parts of the world.

That *appropriate international bodies* review current transparency instruments, such as ECTS and the Diploma Supplement, in the light of the development of qualifications frameworks.

4.12 The social dimension of the European higher education area and world-wide competition, Paris 27-28 January 2005

The seminar was organised by the French Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research in co-operation with ESIB – The National Unions of Students in Europe. General Rapporteur was Vera Stastna. There were more than 180 participants from 33 European countries and 2 countries outside Europe (Australia and Argentina).

The General Rapporteur observed that the social dimension will be one of the values which would make the EHEA truly European. The social dimension includes all provisions needed for having equal access, progress and completion of higher education. Enlarging the existing gap between different parts of Europe should be avoided and at national level the gap between those who benefit from higher education and come back during their full life and those who have never used this possibility should be closed.

Participants agreed that:

- strengthening the social dimension of higher education is one of the conditions for making real a knowledge society, which implies increasing the number of graduates from higher education through lifelong learning;
- social and economic background should not be a barrier to access to higher education, successful completion of studies and meaningful employment after graduation;
- taking into account the social dimension in the EHEA both at the national level and the European level contributes to the creation of a coherent, balanced and competitive European higher education area.

Participants recommended that:

- the process of building the European higher education area prove its social dimension and set it as a priority;
- in that perspective, a specific analytical survey, built on existing initiatives and under the authority of the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG), focused on the social and economic situation of students, including obstacles to access and mobility and taking into account the lifelong learning objectives, should be carried out by 2007 in all Bologna member States;
- decisions for financing in the European higher education area take into account social cohesion objectives regarding access to higher education, living and studying conditions, financial and material support, services for students such as information, guidance and advice, and also mobility support at the European level and the national level alike;
- quality assurance mechanisms which are developing both internally and externally integrate as a must the social dimension in all aspects dealing with living and studying conditions and relate it to the multiple purposes of higher education and long-term results;
- beyond Bergen, in order to make the social dimension of the EHEA a reality, it is vital to secure the full involvement and the working together of national authorities, higher education institutions and students, which is the only guarantee for effectiveness.

4.13. “Doctoral Programmes for the European Knowledge Society” Salzburg, 3-5 February 2005

270 participants from 35 countries and from partner organisations participated in this seminar, organised by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, and the European University Association. From the discussions in Salzburg a consensus emerged on a set of ten basic principles:

1. The core component of doctoral training is the advancement of knowledge through original research. At the same time it is recognised that doctoral training must increasingly meet the needs of an employment market that is wider than academia.
2. Embedding in institutional strategies and policies: universities as institutions need to assume responsibility for ensuring that the doctoral programmes and research training they offer are designed to meet new challenges and include appropriate professional career development opportunities.
3. The importance of diversity: the rich diversity of doctoral programmes in Europe, including joint doctorates, is a strength which has to be underpinned by quality and sound practice.
4. Doctoral candidates as early stage researchers: should be recognized as professionals – with commensurate rights - who make a key contribution to the creation of new knowledge.
5. The crucial role of supervision and assessment: in respect of individual doctoral candidates, arrangements for supervision and assessment should be based on a transparent contractual framework of shared responsibilities between doctoral candidates, supervisors and the institution (and where appropriate including other partners).
6. Achieving critical mass: Doctoral programmes should seek to achieve critical mass and should draw on different types of innovative practice being introduced in universities across Europe, bearing in mind that different solutions may be appropriate to different contexts.
7. Duration: doctoral programmes should operate within an appropriate time duration (three to four years full-time as a rule).
8. The promotion of innovative structures: to meet the challenge of interdisciplinary training and the development of transferable skills
9. Increasing mobility: Doctoral programmes should seek to offer geographical as well as interdisciplinary and intersectoral mobility and international collaboration within an integrated framework of cooperation between universities and other partners.
10. Ensuring appropriate funding: the development of quality doctoral programmes and the successful completion by doctoral candidates requires appropriate and sustainable funding.

Participants recommended to the BFUG that the ten principles outlined above provide the basis for the further work of the BFUG and thus feed into the drafting of the Bergen Communiqué, and that the Ministers in Bergen then call on EUA through its members to prepare a report under the responsibility of the BFUG on the further development of these principles to be presented to Ministers in 2007.

4.14. “Cooperation between accreditation committees/agencies” Warsaw, 14-16 February 2005

58 participants from 23 countries participated in this seminar, organised by the Polish State Accreditation Committee in collaboration with the Polish Ministry of National Education and Sports. The majority of the participants were representatives from quality assurance/ accreditation agencies. Ministries, partner organisations and higher education institutions were also represented.

General Rapporteur was Professor Włodzimierz Siwiński and Mieczysław W. Socha from the Polish State Accreditation Committee.

The Seminar focused on experiences in quality assurance in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, and Spain.

The discussions showed that there has been a major development in quality assurance and accreditation, since the beginning of the Bologna Process. It also showed that the speed and direction of the development was somewhat different from country to country. There are major challenges in mutual recognition of degrees and study programs.

Participation of major stakeholders was also discussed. The discussions showed for instance that there were major differences concerning what would be adequate student involvement. The seminar did not manage to bring the discussion on this item to any conclusion.

All though not unanimous, the seminar participants recommended that:

1. Mutual recognition of education and diplomas can be supported by mutual acquaintance of quality assurance systems. Mutual recognition of accreditation decisions should be encouraged.
2. As a necessary condition of building an agreement between participating countries of Bologna Process, we consider that it should ensure and provide for:
 - regular, mutual sharing of information about education and accreditation systems,
 - mutual visits, joint training of experts,
 - promotion of mutual mechanisms of recognition,
 - promotion of similarities in higher education systems
3. The national system of accreditation should apply for all higher education institutions established within each country. Preference should be given to accreditation committees or agencies established or recognized under the laws of the state. A higher education institution might apply for accreditation from an accreditation body from outside the country. This external quality assurance can be accepted and recognized if the external accreditation body is recognized by national authorities.

The EU Commission had reservations concerning the third recommendation, advocating that higher education institutions better have the freedom of choice of accreditation agency as long as the agency chosen is listed in the European Register of Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agencies.

6. AN OVERARCHING FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA *(preliminary text)*

In the Berlin Communiqué, Ministers encouraged the member states to elaborate a framework of comparable and compatible qualifications for their higher education systems, which should seek to describe qualifications in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile. They also undertook to elaborate an overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area.

Meeting in March 2004, the BFUG approved the establishment of a Working Group to coordinate the work on the development of an overarching framework of qualifications for the EHEA. The Working Group was joined by a number of experts.

The report from the Working Group was presented in December 2004, to be discussed at the Bologna Follow-up Seminar in Copenhagen in January 2005, cf. chapter 4, section 4.11. The Working Group has since revised the report and presented it to the BFUG in March 2005 to advise the Ministerial Conference in Bergen.

The Working Group has drawn heavily upon work done by others, especially that of the Joint Quality Initiative who formulated and further developed the ‘Dublin Descriptors’. It has drawn on experiences in countries that have already established qualifications framework for their national higher education systems, and conducted a comparative study of existing national frameworks. The Working Group has also consulted other organisations that have contributed to the discussions.

The Working Group has taken into account other policy areas, including those within the Copenhagen Process and the wider Lisbon Agenda. The European Commission has contributed both through its interests in the Bologna process and as coordinator of the Copenhagen process and of the Lisbon process .

6.1 Conclusions

The report builds on the assumption that qualifications are primarily a matter of national concern and articulated in national qualifications frameworks and that such national frameworks can be inter-connected through linkage to the overarching framework of EHEA.

The Working Group and its experts provide a series of recommendations and proposals regarding the framework for qualifications of the EHEA, and advice on good practice in developing national (or equivalent) frameworks.

It is recommended that:

- the framework for qualifications in the EHEA should be an overarching framework with a high level of generality, consisting of three main cycles, with additional provision for a short cycle within the first cycle;
- the framework should include cycle descriptors in the form of generic qualification descriptors that can be used as reference points. It is *proposed that*:

- the Dublin Descriptors are adopted as the cycle descriptors for the framework for qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. They offer generic statements of typical expectations of achievements and abilities associated with awards that represent the end of each of a Bologna cycle.
- responsibility for the maintenance and development of the framework rests with the Bologna Follow-up Group and any successor executive structures established by the ministers for the furtherance of the EHEA.
- all signatories will complete the self-certification process by 2010.

It is proposed that:

- *guidelines* for the range of ECTS typically associated with the completion of each cycle include:
 - Short cycle (within the first cycle) qualifications may typically include / be represented by approximately 120 ECTS credits;
 - First cycle qualifications may typically include / be represented by 180-240 ECTS credits;
 - Second cycle qualifications may typically include / be represented by 90-120 ECTS credits, with a minimum of 60 credits at the level of 2nd cycle;
 - Third cycle qualifications do not necessarily have credits associated with them.
- *criteria* for the verification that national frameworks are compatible with the EHEA framework include:
 - The national framework for higher education qualifications and the body or bodies responsible for its development are designated by the national ministry with responsibility for higher education
 - The national framework and its qualifications are demonstrably based on learning outcomes and the qualifications are linked to ECTS credits
 - The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national framework are transparent
 - The national framework, and any alignment with the European framework, is referenced in all Diploma Supplements
 - There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications in the national framework and the cycle qualification descriptors of the European framework
 - The responsibilities of the domestic parties to the national framework are clearly determined and published
- each country should certify the compatibility of its own framework with the overarching framework, and that details of this self-certification be published, with the following *procedures* used for self-certification of compatibility:
 - The competent national body/bodies shall self-certify the compatibility of the national framework with the European framework
 - The self-certification and the evidence supporting it shall be published
 - The ENIC/NARIC network shall maintain a public listing of States that have completed the self-certification process

- The completion of the self-certification process shall be noted on Diploma Supplements issued subsequently national frameworks should include awards that integrate recognition of non-formal and informal learning experiences.

Advice on good practice to facilitate the creation of successful new national frameworks of qualifications includes:

- the development and review process for producing good national frameworks are most effective when they involve all relevant stakeholders both within and outside higher education. Higher education frameworks naturally link to vocational education and training and post-secondary education and as such are best viewed and treated as a national initiative. This also makes possible the inclusion of, or links to, other areas of education and training outside higher education.
- a framework for higher education qualifications should identify a clear and nationally-agreed set of purposes. Frameworks for higher education qualifications benefit from the inclusion of cycles and /or levels, and articulation with outcome-focussed indicators and/or descriptors of qualifications. Higher education frameworks of qualifications can also benefit from being directly linked to credit accumulation and transfer systems.
- frameworks for higher education qualifications should explicitly link academic standards, national and institutional quality assurance systems, and public understanding of the place and level of nationally recognised qualifications. Public confidence in academic standards requires public understanding of the achievements represented by different higher education qualifications and titles.

The report stresses the importance of national authority in the development of national frameworks and their associated instruments, and the importance of considering the EHEA framework, the Dublin descriptors, and the guideline ranges on ECTS credits as ‘*reference points*’.

6.2 The framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area

	Outcomes	ECTS Credits
Short cycle (within the first cycle) qualification	<p><i>Qualifications that signify completion of the higher education short cycle (within the first cycle) are awarded to students who:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon general secondary education and is typically at a level supported by advanced textbooks; such knowledge provides an underpinning for a field of work or vocation, personal development, and further studies to complete the first cycle;</i> • <i>can apply their knowledge and understanding in occupational contexts;</i> • <i>have the ability to identify and use data to formulate responses to well-defined concrete and abstract problems;</i> • <i>can communicate about their understanding, skills and activities, with peers, supervisors and clients; have the learning skills to undertake further studies with some autonomy.</i> 	approximately 120 ECTS credits

<p>First cycle qualification</p>	<p>Qualifications that signify completion of the first cycle are awarded to students who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study;</i> • <i>can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study;</i> • <i>have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues;</i> • <i>can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences;</i> • <i>have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy.</i> 	<p>typically include 180-240 ECTS credits</p>
<p>Second cycle qualification</p>	<p>Qualifications that signify completion of the second cycle are awarded to students who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with the first cycle, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context;</i> • <i>can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study;</i> • <i>have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgements with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgements;</i> • <i>can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously;</i> • <i>have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.</i> 	<p>typically include 90-120 ECTS credits, with a minimum of 60 credits at the level of 2nd cycle</p>

Third cycle qualification	<p>Qualifications that signify completion of the third cycle are awarded to students who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field;</i> • <i>have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity;</i> • <i>have made a contribution through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication;</i> • <i>are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas;</i> • <i>can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general about their areas of expertise;</i> • <i>can be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge based society.</i> 	Not specified
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6.3 Follow-up by the BFUG

The Bologna Follow-up Group discussed the revised report from the WorkingGroup in its meeting in March 2005 and decided to recommend to Ministers that they should adopt the overarching framework for qualifications of the European Higher Education Area as proposed by the Working Group. The BFUG also recommended that Ministers underline the importance of linking the overarching framework for higher education to the broader European framework of qualifications for lifelong learning encompassing general education as well as vocational education and training as it is now being developed within the European Union and ask the European Commission to consult all parties to the Bologna Process in this work.

The BFUG further recommended that Ministers commit themselves to elaborating national frameworks of qualifications compatible with the overarching framework for qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. The Follow-up Group declared its willingness to overlook the maintenance and further development of the framework and to ensure the compatibility between national frameworks and the overarching European framework.

7. EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN QUALITY ASSURANCE

In the Berlin Communiqué, Ministers committed themselves to supporting further development of quality assurance at institutional, national and European level. They stressed the need to develop mutually shared criteria and methodologies on quality assurance. They also stressed that the primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution itself and this provides the basis for real accountability of the academic system within the national quality framework.

Ministers agreed that by 2005 national quality assurance systems should include:

- A definition of the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved.
- Evaluation of programmes or institutions, including internal assessment, external review, participation of students and the publication of results.
- A system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures.
- International participation, co-operation and networking.

At the European level, Ministers called upon ENQA through its members, in co-operation with the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB, to develop an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance, to explore ways of ensuring an adequate peer review system for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies, and to report back through the Follow-up Group to Ministers in 2005. Due account should be taken of the expertise of other quality assurance associations and networks.

7.1 The ENQA Report

The report from this work was sent to the BFUG on 21 February 2005. The main results and recommendations of the report are:

- There will be European standards for internal and external quality assurance, and for external quality assurance agencies.
- European quality assurance agencies will be expected to submit themselves to a cyclical review within five years.
- There will be an emphasis on subsidiarity, with reviews being undertaken nationally where possible.
- A European register of quality assurance agencies will be produced.
- A European Register Committee will act as a gatekeeper for the inclusion of agencies in the register.
- A European Consultative Forum for Quality Assurance in Higher Education will be established.

When the recommendations are implemented:

- The consistency of quality assurance across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) will be improved by the use of agreed standards and guidelines.
- Higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies across the EHEA will be able to use common reference points for quality assurance.
- The register will make it easier to identify professional and credible agencies.
- Procedures for the recognition of qualifications will be strengthened.

- The credibility of the work of quality assurance agencies will be enhanced.
- The exchange of viewpoints and experiences amongst agencies and other key stakeholders (including higher education institutions, students and labour market representatives) will be enhanced through the work of the European Consultative Forum for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.
- The mutual trust among institutions and agencies will grow.
- The move toward mutual recognition will be assisted.

7.2 European standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions

Int.1 Policy and procedures for quality assurance:

Institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards. They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work. To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality. The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available. They should also include a role for students and other stakeholders.

Int.2 Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards:

Institutions should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards.

Int.3 Assessment of students:

Students should be assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently.

Int.4 Quality assurance of teaching staff:

Institutions should have ways of satisfying themselves that staff involved with the teaching of students are qualified and competent to do so. They should be available to those undertaking external reviews, and commented upon in reports.

Int.5 Learning resources and student support:

Institutions should ensure that the resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offered.

Int.6 Information systems:

Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes of study and other activities.

Int.7 Public information:

Institutions should regularly publish up to date, impartial and objective information, both quantitative and qualitative, about the programmes and awards they are offering.

7.3 European standards for the external quality assurance of higher education

Ext.1 Use of internal quality assurance procedures:

External quality assurance procedures should take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

Ext.2 Development of external quality assurance processes:

The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes should be determined before the processes themselves are developed, by all those responsible (including higher education institutions) and should be published with a description of the procedures to be used.

Ext.3 Criteria for decisions:

Any formal decisions made as a result of an external quality assurance activity should be based on explicit published criteria that are applied consistently.

Ext.4 Processes fit for purpose:

All external quality assurance processes should be designed specifically to ensure their fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for them.

Ext.5 Reporting:

Reports should be published and should be written in a style, which is clear and readily accessible to its intended readership. Any decisions, commendations or recommendations contained in reports should be easy for a reader to find.

Ext.6 Follow-up procedures:

Quality assurance processes which contain recommendations for action or which require a subsequent action plan, should have a predetermined follow-up procedure which is implemented consistently.

Ext.7 Periodic reviews:

External quality assurance of institutions and/or programmes should be undertaken on a cyclical basis. The length of the cycle and the review procedures to be used should be clearly defined and published in advance.

Ext.8 System-wide analyses:

Quality assurance agencies should produce from time to time summary reports describing and analysing the general findings of their reviews, evaluations, assessments etc.

7.4. European standards for external quality assurance agencies

Age.1 Use of external quality assurance procedures for higher education:

The external quality assurance of agencies should take into account the presence and effectiveness of the external quality assurance processes described in Part 2 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

Age.2 Official status:

Agencies should be formally recognised by competent public authorities in the European Higher Education Area as agencies with responsibilities for external quality assurance and

should have an established legal basis. They should comply with any requirements of the legislative jurisdictions within which they operate.

Age.3 Activities:

Agencies should undertake external quality assurance activities (at institutional or programme level) on a regular basis.

Age.4 Resources:

Agencies should have adequate and proportional resources, both human and financial, to enable them to organise and run their external quality assurance process(es) in an effective and efficient manner, with appropriate provision for the development of their processes and procedures.

Age.5 Mission statement:

Agencies should have clear and explicit goals and objectives for their work, contained in a publicly available statement.

Age.6 Independence:

Agencies should be independent to the extent both that they have autonomous responsibility for their operations and that the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders.

Age.7 External quality assurance criteria and processes used by the agencies:

The processes, criteria and procedures used by agencies should be pre-defined and publicly available. These processes will normally be expected to include:

- a self-assessment or equivalent procedure by the subject of the quality assurance process;
- an external assessment by a group of experts, including, as appropriate, (a) student member(s), and site visits as decided by the agency;
- publication of a report, including any decisions, recommendations or other formal outcomes;
- a follow-up procedure to review actions taken by the subject of the quality assurance process in the light of any recommendations contained in the report.

Age.8 Accountability procedures:

Agencies should have in place procedures for their own accountability.

7.5 A European Register and a European Register Committee.

The report states that a European register of quality assurance agencies will be produced and a European Register Committee will act as a gatekeeper for the inclusion of agencies in the register. The register will make it easier to identify professional and credible agencies, thus providing useful information to national quality agencies and to institutions.

The report assumes that the European Register Committee will decide on admissions to the European Register. The proposal is to establish a light, non-bureaucratic construction with nine members nominated by ENQA, EUA, EURASHE, ESIB and other organisations representing employers, unions and professional organisations plus government representatives. The members are assumed to act in an individual capacity and not as

mandated representatives of the nominating organisations. The proposal is that ENQA should perform the secretarial duties for the committee. The European Register Committee shouldl as one of its first implementation tasks formalise the ownership of the register. It is further suggested that the Committee shall establish an independent appeals system. Legal advice should be sought by the organisations that would be willing to establish the European Register Committee *before* the Committee is being established.

7.6 Recommendations from the Bologna Follow-up Group

(Preliminary text)

In its meeting on 1-2 March 2005, the BFUG welcomed the establishment of a European Register of quality assurance agencies and asked ENQA to develop rules and regulations for such a register, starting with quality assurance agencies based in Europe, i.e. the countries participating in the Bologna Process. The BFUG asked the Board to consider the composition and responsibilities of the proposed European Register Committee as a basis for discussion at the next BFUG meeting.

8. RECOGNITION OF DEGREES AND STUDY PERIODS

8.1 The Lisbon Recognition Convention

In the Berlin Communiqué, Ministers underlined the importance of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, which should be ratified by all countries participating in the Bologna Process, and called on the ENIC and NARIC networks along with the competent National Authorities to further the implementation of the Convention. They also made recognition an element of the stocktaking exercise, see Chapter 5 of this report.

Main points of the Lisbon Convention are:

- Each country shall recognise qualifications from other countries as similar to the corresponding qualifications in its own system unless there are substantial differences.
- All countries shall provide information on the institutions and programmes belonging to their higher education systems.
- All countries shall appoint a national information centre, one important task of which is to offer advice on the recognition of foreign qualifications.
- All countries shall encourage their higher education institutions to issue the Diploma Supplement to their students to facilitate recognition.

The national information centres co-operate through the European Network of Information Centres, the ENIC Network.

In most participating countries, it is the responsibility of the higher education institutions to consider the inclusion of study periods from foreign institutions as elements in their own study programmes. It follows from the Lisbon Recognition Convention that the higher education institutions shall recognise courses at Bologna partner institutions on equal terms with their own. Recognition decisions should be fair, fast and transparent, as a direct result of the comparability and transparency introduced by Bologna-related reforms.

By March 2005 only 31 of the 40 participating countries in the Bologna Process had ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

8.2. Recognition of joint degrees

In Berlin, Ministers agreed to engage at the national level to remove legal obstacles to the establishment and recognition of such degrees and to actively support the development and adequate quality assurance of integrated curricula leading to joint degrees.

The Stockholm seminar on joint degrees in May 2004 (see Chapter 4, section 4.1) was a follow-up of two previous seminars related to joint degrees. It was reported in Stockholm that many higher education institutions cooperate in developing and delivering joint study programmes and joint degrees, but few joint diplomas are awarded, as most countries had not yet made explicit legal provision for the awarding of joint degrees and joint diplomas.

In June 2004, the Committee of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region adopted a Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees as a subsidiary text to the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

The recommendation states that Governments should review their legislation with a view to removing any legal obstacles to the recognition of joint degrees and introduce legal provisions that would facilitate such recognition.

A joint degree is, for the purposes of the recommendation, understood as referring to a higher education qualification issued jointly by at least two or more higher education institutions on the basis of a study programme developed and/or provided jointly by the higher education institutions. A joint degree may be issued as

- a joint diploma in addition to one or more national diplomas ;
- a joint diploma issued by the institutions offering the study programme in question without being accompanied by any national diploma ;
- one or more national diplomas issued officially as the only attestation of the joint qualification in question.

Competent recognition authorities should recognize foreign joint degrees unless they can demonstrate that there is a substantial difference between the joint degree for which recognition is sought and the comparable qualification within their own national higher education system. They should recognize these degrees with the greatest flexibility possible. They may make recognition conditional on all parts of the study programme and/or the institutions providing the programme being subject to transparent quality assessment or being considered as belonging to the education system of one or more participating country.

In order to facilitate recognition, candidates earning joint degrees should be provided with a Diploma Supplement, and study programmes leading to joint degrees should make use of the ECTS system. The Diploma Supplement issued with a joint degree should clearly describe all parts of the degree, and it should clearly indicate the institutions and/or study programmes at which the different parts of the degree have been earned.

8.3 Recommendations from the Bologna Follow-up Group

The BFUG has recommended that Ministers urge participating countries that have not already done so to ratify the Convention without delay. Ministers may call on all participating countries to implement its principles.

The BFUG has also recommended that Ministers in Bergen express support for the subsidiary texts to the Lisbon Recognition Convention, thus including the Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees as part of the framework for the EHEA.

9. NATIONAL REPORTS 2004 – 2005

9.1. A common outline

Leading up to the Berlin Conference in September 2003, the members of the Bologna Process were asked to present country reports. It was suggested that the reports should be organised along the six action lines of the process from the Bologna Declaration and the three from the Prague Communiqué. All reports are available at <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/>. They are different in length and contents, ranging from 1 to 33 pages. The level of detail varies, with some pitched at the level of individual institutions, while others focus on the national picture. Due to the absence of a common framework, it is not possible to conduct any comparative analysis.

The BFUG decided that national reports should also be produced before Bergen. The National Reports offer the opportunity for the participating countries to present information which complements the other data sources. It has been asked that the respondents should give information on planned reforms as well as on what has already been accomplished. Given the goal to use the National Reports for further deliberations, these reports should have a special focus on the challenges of the process.

To ensure that the National Reports would have the same basic structure, it was recommended that they should be organised under a standard set of headlines. Many of the 2003 National Reports were organised according to the Bologna action lines. However, in the Berlin Communiqué, Ministers also stressed items of special concern, transversal to the action lines, under different headlines. Furthermore, given the need to co-ordinate with other tasks assigned by the Ministers in Berlin, the proposed headlines for the 2005 National Reports derive mostly from the Berlin Communiqué.

In order to avoid duplicated efforts, the Working Group on Stocktaking included a number of questions in the template for National Reports. The answers to these questions were fed back into the stocktaking process.

This document on National Reports (document BFUG B3 6 revised) is sent to the BFUG for electronic consultation. Any comments should be sent to the Secretariat before 28 June 2004. Any necessary adjustments following the electronic consultation will be done by the Chair and the Secretariat.

9.2. The broad picture given by the National Reports

(In preparation)

10. NEW MEMBERS

The criteria for admission of new members to the Bologna Process at the Ministerial Conference in Bergen was set by the Berlin Communiqué:

Countries party to the European Cultural Convention shall be eligible for membership of the European Higher Education Area provided that they at the same time declare their willingness to pursue and implement the objectives of the Bologna Process in their own systems of higher education. Their applications should contain information on how they will implement the principles and objectives of the declaration.

10.1. Procedures and requirements

As applicant countries sought guidance on the procedures and requirements for membership of the Bologna Process, a document explaining the requirements and procedures was developed by the BFUG Secretariat and decided by the BFUG Board in June 2004. The document was made available to interested parties at the Bologna-Bergen web site.

The purpose of this document was to meet the objective in a fair and transparent manner. It also consolidated both principles and action lines of the Bologna Process into a single document. The document made it clear that although the ten action lines are the main focus of Member States, it is equally important to note the underlying principles of the Bologna Process. The realisation of the European Higher Education Area can only be achieved by incorporating these principles within the higher education system of each country:

- International mobility of students and staff;
- Autonomous universities;
- Student participation in the governance of higher education;
- Public responsibility for higher education;
- The social dimension of the Bologna Process
(also described as a transversal action line).

Applicant States were requested to confirm their respect for these principles in their applications. Regarding the ten action lines, interested parties were referred to the BFUG Work Programme 2003-2005. The deadline for applications was set to 31 December 2004.

As all members of the Bologna Process were asked to produce a national report before the Bergen Ministerial Conference, potential members were asked to produce a report in a similar format, with a special focus on the three intermediate priorities.

Regarding procedures for application, it was made known that the decision to accept new members to the Bologna Process would be taken by the next Ministerial Conference. The role of the BFUG would be to make a recommendation, having satisfied itself of the credentials and commitment of the applicants.

Potential members were asked send an application for membership to the Minister responsible for Higher Education in the Host Country for the next Ministerial Conference, with a copy to the BFUG Chair. The application, which should be signed by the (national) Minister responsible for higher education, should declare their commitment to pursue and implement the principles and objectives of the Bologna Process in their own systems of higher education.

10.2. Applications

By the deadline 31 December 2004, the following states had applied for participation (membership) in the Bologna Process: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova and Ukraine. All applications were in accordance with the prescribed procedure. After the deadline, also Kosovo applied for membership.

10.2.1. Applicants party to the European Cultural Convention

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine are all party to the European Cultural Convention. All five countries have ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

Ukraine started its preparation for joining the Bologna Process before Berlin. Considerable changes have since then been made in legislation to adapt to the Bologna Process and a number of seminars relating to the Bologna Process have been organised in cooperation with international partners, notably the Council of Europe, UNESCO-CEPES and the EUA. An international seminar in May 2004 gave a strong support to the Ukrainian efforts.

Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia made their intentions known to join the Bologna Process at Council of Europe Ministerial Conference for South Caucasus in May 2004. Since then they have been working actively to adjust their legislation to the Bologna Process and further seminars have been/ will be organised in each country in cooperation with Council of Europe.

Moldova announced its intention to join the Bologna Process in June 2004 and have since then worked actively to prepare for participation, adjusting legislation in active dialogue with the National Rectors' Conference, organising seminars in cooperation with Council of Europe.

For all five countries, Bologna has been a model for much-needed reforms in their higher education systems. For all countries, the Bologna Process also means a bridge to Europe. All countries have sent reports giving the information asked for in a satisfactory manner. The necessary national framework for Bologna participation is in place.

There are weak points in all applicant countries, notably old-fashioned teaching methods and possibly uneven standards due to weak national economies. Weak economies also have implications for the social dimension. Quality and quality assurance must be further developed. However, this does not differ from the situation before Berlin, where countries facing similar challenges were welcomed to the Bologna Process.

10.2.2. Applicants not party to the European Cultural Convention

Kazakhstan is not within the group of states that have ratified the European Cultural Convention. According to the criteria set down in the Berlin Communiqué, Kazakhstan is therefore not eligible for membership in the EHEA. However, as Kazakhstan is reforming its higher education system along the general lines of the Bologna Process, its interest in the Process is understandable. Inviting representatives from Kazakhstan authorities and institutions to Bologna Seminars should not constitute any problem. It may simply be left to the organisers. Inviting Kazakhstan to participate as observer to the Bergen Ministerial Conference is being considered by the host country.

International negotiations on the future status of *Kosovo* may start in 2005. Hopefully an agreement will be reached, but it is not for the BFUG to stipulate what may be the outcome. In the present situation, Kosovo is not eligible for direct membership in the Bologna Process as it is not a state that has ratified the European Cultural Convention. With assistance from the Council of Europe, the EUA and other organisations, the higher education system in Kosovo has been reformed along the lines of the Bologna Process. For higher education in Kosovo, cooperation with European partners is very much needed for further development.

10.3. Recommendations from the Bologna Follow-up Group

In its meeting in March 2005, the BFUG considered the applications and reports received and decided to advise Ministers in Bergen to welcome Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine as participating countries (members) in the Bologna Process if no reservation were made by participating countries before the next BFUG meeting.

(Await BFUG meeting 12-13 April)

11. 2010 AND BEYOND (*preliminary text*)

Building on achievements so far in the Bologna Process, the European Higher Education Area will be founded on the following structural elements:

- Within the overarching framework for the EHEA, all participating countries will have a national framework of qualifications based on three cycles in higher education, where the levels have a double function: to prepare the student for the labour market and for further competence building. Each level builds on the preceding level, and the qualification obtained will give access to higher levels.
- All participating countries will have national quality assurance arrangements implementing an agreed set of standards and guidelines for the EHEA.
- All higher education institutions in participating countries will recognise degrees and periods of studies according to the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

As first laid down in the Bologna declaration, the rationale behind the Bologna process has been to promote European citizens' lasting employability and the international competitiveness of the European higher education system. The Prague Summit has added a further dimension by supporting the idea that higher education should be considered a public good and that it will remain a public responsibility.

Built on these fundamental objectives the European Higher Education Area will encompass the following principles:

- Public responsibility for higher education;
- Institutional autonomy;
- Participation of students and staff in the governance of higher education institutions.

From an EU perspective, the Bologna process fits into the broader agenda defined by the Lisbon agenda and by the Barcelona summit stating that the European education and training systems should become a "world quality reference". In areas like quality assurance, recognition of degrees and study periods abroad as well the establishment of a European Qualifications Framework the European Commission plays both a supportive and a complementary role. In other policy areas the two directives on the mobility of students and researchers promote mobility across European higher education.

However, the Bologna process has its own identity as can be seen from the perception of the process outside Europe. This also means that the Bologna process should be able and willing to share its discoveries and experiences with those countries in geographical proximity that are willing to engage in quality assurance, qualifications frameworks and descriptors, or curricula for a changed degree structure. In line with the organising principle of the Bologna process providing this type of assistance and in a more general way giving information is a communal effort made by all participants. In order to make European higher education attractive in other regions of the world it is important to support universities that encourage quality in Europe and the perception of that quality outside Europe.

11.1 The governance of the Bologna Process

The Bologna Process started off as inter-governmental cooperation, the Bologna Declaration having been signed by 29 ministers of education. However, from its very inception onwards the Bologna process has heavily relied on the participation of the academic community and of the student representatives. The Bologna process is thus based on cooperation and trust between the partners.

Moreover, the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO have been associated in the shaping and in the implementation of the Process. The European Commission has increasingly contributed to organising and supporting various action lines and seminars through its programmes.

The Bologna Process is thus a voluntary cooperation between different national systems overseen by the Bologna Follow-up Group and associating the various partners. There is no legally binding provision except for the Lisbon Recognition Convention, the arrangement being based on mutual trust.

Participating countries have adapted their legislation to the principles and objectives of the Bologna Process, and higher education institutions are committed to implementing them. The European Higher Education Area consists of 40/45 individual systems

However, developments in higher education will not stop in 2010. As the EHEA should be seen as a common framework for the time *after* 2010, Ministers may ask the Follow-up Group to explore solutions adapted to the goals of the Bologna Process and report back to the next Ministerial Conference.