

Jane Davidson AM

Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning
Gweinidog dros Addysg a Dysgu Gydol-Oes



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

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To: All Bologna Ministers

18th May 2005

Dear Colleagues,

Education has always been given a high priority in Wales with the Welsh people seeing it as a route from poverty and into opportunity. This has also meant that we have always been very outward facing with teachers and lecturers from Wales making an impact around the world, both in relation to our immediate European neighbours and as far afield as Patagonia.

That is no less true now. We are committed to the Bologna process and its overall goal of achieving a strong and effective European Higher Education Area. Welsh institutions are beginning to engage with official Bologna processes and, perhaps more importantly, with partners and associations across Europe. Wales continues to look outwards - learning from other countries and sharing its own strengths and policies with others.

The proposed overarching framework for qualifications in Europe has the potential to enhance transparency of higher education qualifications in the European Higher Education Area. I am pleased that the Qualifications Framework Report of the Bologna Working Group for Qualifications Framework in December 2004 highlighted amongst its examples of good practice, the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) embracing all post-16 and higher education. Wales also welcomes moves to adopt a learning outcomes approach to quality assurance and credit systems. The use of learning outcomes in institutional and national quality assurance arrangements and qualifications frameworks provides a basis for developing a culture of mutual confidence and trust by facilitating meaningful comparisons. Wales would be pleased to co-operate in sharing good practice based on our experience in this area.

The Bologna Process can seem an overwhelming challenge. This conference demonstrates that it is one which we are all striving to meet and that we do so best by learning from each other and working collaboratively towards common goals. Wales has long seen the benefit of student and teacher exchanges and Cardiff University is now one of the leading UK participants in Socrates Erasmus. The Welsh Assembly



BUDDSODDWR I MEWN PŴBL
INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Government is also hugely excited by the cultural, linguistic, and academic opportunities which Europe will derive from the introduction of joint degree (Erasmus Mundus) programmes. This is an area where Swansea University has taken a lead to date but with Cardiff, Bangor and Aberystwyth Universities not far behind. This success provides a sound base for Wales to play an even more prominent part in the Bologna process moving forward.

The Welsh Assembly Government is also pleased to work closely with European partners through its membership of EARLALL, (the European Association of Regional and Local Authorities for Lifelong Learning), a network of 17 European regions that work in partnership on the development of new policies, strategies and methods for lifelong learning. The Association seeks to share knowledge and good practice and to facilitate joint developmental projects and activities between member regions. EARLALL's links with the Commission continue to strengthen and Wales intends to continue to play a prominent role in support of this work going forward.

Wales is committed to being a Learning Country and to achieving social, cultural and economic strength through education. I am privileged to have taken part in this fourth Ministerial summit, which marks the half way point in our goal to create the European Higher Education Area by 2010. The UK benefits from the diversity within its four HE systems, and I am in no doubt that diversity in the broad European framework will also be a source of growing strength. With colleagues from other parts of the UK, we look forward to working with others on these issues and in specific partnerships over the next two years and beyond.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Davidson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'J'.

Jane Davidson AM
Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning