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SPECIAL EDITION

European
Higher
Education
Area



EHEA
ministerial
conference
YEREVAN 2015



EHEA ministerial conference YEREVAN 2015



European Higher Education Area



REPUBLIC OF
ARMENIA

Armen Ashotyan
Minister
Ministry of Education and Science

Welcome Note

It is my extraordinary honour as the Minister responsible for higher education in Armenia to host the Ninth Bologna Process Ministerial Conference together with the Fourth Bologna Policy Forum on 14-15 May, 2015 in Yerevan and this is really a momentous occasion for our country.

Education has been a treasure of unequalled value to Armenia: in the manuscripts of Agathangelos, the fourth century historian, there is a prove that Terdat, the Armenian King gave orders to train Armenian children in the literary arts and in 405 AD Mesrop Mashtots created Armenian alphabet which became the turning point for opening schools throughout the provinces of Armenia. In the Middle Ages Armenia became famous for its universities.

The foundations of contemporary education were laid down during the first years of the first Armenian Republic and subsequently developed in the Soviet era which allowed the Soviet Armenia to turn into one of the most educated Republics with one hundred per cent literacy of the population. Encompassing pre-school, vocational, secondary vocational and higher education subsystems, it ensured the country's social-economic, cultural and scientific progress. Education was one of the primary focuses for the small Republic which gave world-famous astrophysicists, doctors, artists, musicians.

Since its independence in 1991 Armenia has been actively reforming its higher education system.

The Ministerial events will bring together 47 EHEA delegations, the European Commission, as well as the Bologna Process consultative members and partners. As a result of the 16 years of intensive work the EHEA became a reality and proved that in this globalized and competitive environment education is the key for sustainable development of the European societies.

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the trust and confidence that you placed in Armenia in 2012 by voting to be the host of the next Ministerial Conference. Secondly, I would like to express my huge appreciation for the unwavering support throughout these 3 years.

On behalf of the Government and academic community of Armenia, I'd like to extend our warmest greetings to visiting Ministers, the European Commissioner, Heads of delegations, delegates and all our guests.

Among other issues the 2015 Yerevan Ministerial Conference will attempt to identify the best ways to reinforce the Bologna Process in future and beyond 2020 and simultaneously strengthen the dialogue within and outside the EHEA. I stand by the principle that the EHEA is a platform where the differences of national values and diverse beliefs will facilitate to face the challenges of a new age. The EHEA was and should remain the platform where minorities are integrated members of societies with equal opportunities, and last but not least that EHEA should be accessible to all who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue knowledge, understanding and determination to develop democratic societies that we need. Moreover, looking at the map of the EHEA there are still unrecognised territories where people are not exercising the advantages of the European education. This is an important issue since education should be without any discrimination and should provide solutions to the conflicts as a unique tool for the reconciliation and people to people relations.

We look forward to fruitful discussions and further cooperation. Welcome to hospitable Armenia!



EUROPEAN
COMMISSION

Tibor Navracsics
Commissioner For Education, Culture, Youth And Sport

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

I am a firm believer in the benefits of the Bologna Process. It has brought about a huge transformation in Europe, leading to a complete restructuring of higher education in many countries. By providing different education systems with common structures and principles it has made it much easier to support the free flow of knowledge, students, staff and best practice within Europe and between Europe and other world regions.

Supporting mobility and internationalisation is an objective we share in EU cooperation too, especially through our Erasmus+ programme, which has already

provided some 3 million students with the opportunity to study or train in another European country, with another 2 million set to benefit by 2020. Erasmus and Bologna have been mutually reinforcing - the establishment of the three-cycle structure and the use of the ECTS credit transfer and accumulation system make mobility and recognition easier and spread a shared understanding of what is high quality education.

At the same time, we have to recognise that progress has been uneven, so the full potential of Bologna – for mobility and internationalisation, transmitting and creating knowledge, underpinning economic growth and boosting intercultural understanding and democratic values – has not yet been fulfilled.

But I believe we have the will, and the means, to step up change, to support countries that have not yet reached their goals. What really matters is to ensure that we are all travelling in the same direction and with the same degree of commitment, even if some have further to travel than others.

How can higher education help the societies to meet the challenges they face today?

Society is changing fast these days. It is vital for higher education to be able to evolve quickly also, so that we meet the challenges together.

Recent experience during the economic crisis shows that the employment rate for higher education graduates is overall better than for people with lower qualifications, and that Europe will continue to need more higher education graduates to meet the demands of the labour market. Enabling equal access, based on merit, to higher education of quality and relevance can help more young

B R U S S E L S



people find employment. But graduates should also be better equipped to create their own jobs in the future. More institutions are realising this, and incorporating entrepreneurship and valuable broad skills in their programmes.

Higher education also needs to keep up with new technology. This has huge potential - not only to change pedagogical methods and interaction between the learner and the teacher, but also open up opportunities for new kinds of programmes, institutional organisation and collaborative partnerships between institutions and new players in higher education. However, European higher education has been slow to digest and benefit from the technology revolution. I see a need for a more strategic approach to digital and online learning across higher education systems, and I believe the Bologna process can help lead us in this direction – for example, ensuring that quality and accreditation frameworks promote rather than hinder the opportunities for innovative learning formats.

Lastly, one difficult challenge these days is social exclusion, and the marginalisation of some young people. Higher education has a very important role in helping to equip young people with the social and civic competences that foster positive interaction among citizens from diverse backgrounds. Research and research-based teaching in intercultural and societal matters can assist societies in understanding the conflicts Europe faces today and can give graduates a better basis for understanding the world they live in.

What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

To be perfectly honest, a perfect higher education system will probably never exist, for all sorts of good reasons. But the European Commission's modernisation

agenda for higher education has tried to capture some of the key features. A system that ensures equal access based on merit; that allows for autonomous institutions; that involves students in decision-making, but also wider groups of stakeholders including employers and civil society; that provides high quality education relevant to the labour market and society as a whole; that offers appropriate support, guidance and counselling, that promotes cooperation with the world of work; that supports mobility and internationalization; and that seizes new opportunities for teaching and learning is... a very good starting point for speaking about a perfect education system. Luckily, this is already the starting point for many countries and their education systems in Europe.

What is your expectation from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

I want to leave Yerevan with a clear commitment from all the participants to an even more determined focus on real implementation of the reforms already agreed only by all members of the European Higher Education Area; and a readiness to tackle new issues together – such as the development of new modes of delivery for learning and teaching. I hope we will put in place new working methods to support this agenda. I also want to see a commitment to making the most of the key contribution of universities in creating and sharing knowledge as a basis for tackling some of the wider societal challenges facing our continent.

What comes to your mind when you hear about Armenia?

A country rich in culture and history. A country whose diaspora can make it proud. A dynamic country with great potential for development for its people and its region.



AUSTRIA

Reinhold Mitterlehner
Minister
Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

The Austrian higher education system definitely benefited in many ways: Besides increasing the number of degrees, study programmes and higher education institutions became more international. Especially "Internationalization at Home" ensures internationality through all institutions and supports students, who can't afford to go abroad.

The process itself cracked some decrepit structures in the system or at least questioned them. Study programmes have been reviewed and newly organized. Moreover many institutions took the chance to put more practical experience into the programmes.

Another important benefit for Austrian students is the possibility of a flexible career management. They can finish their Bachelor after three years and start working or just enroll for a Master-programme or study extra-occupationally. The Bologna Process makes the Austrian education system more transparent and comparable and helps developing the mutual recognition of academic degrees, which is very important in terms of increasing mobility. Through mutual recognition and the increasing of comparability of studies it's easier to do a semester abroad, but also to transfer to another higher education institution in the home country.

Since ECTS are intending to ensure that study programmes are not overloaded, students can finish their studies faster.

How can higher education help the societies to meet the challenges they face today?

A really important topic concerning higher education and societies is internationalization. Measures for internationalization support intercultural understanding and create acceptance and tolerance in the social interaction with other cultures, which is quite crucial nowadays, especially in times of economic and financial crises.

In relation to the initiative "Smart specialisation" of the European Commission and the goal of enabling regions to focus on their strengths the following statement is vital: Work of higher-education institutions must be relevant. What they do, and what is expected of them, must be seen as a service to society. Their research must anticipate social needs and the products of their research must be shared effectively



with society through appropriate knowledge-transfer mechanisms.

What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

The perfect higher education System respects the needs of individuals and society in its widest sense. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) act within the legal and strategic governmental framework, promote young academics and have adequate student – academic staff relation-rates.

HEI's are building alliances not only to have international presence in research and teaching, being well linked and networking, but also in order to bundle capabilities. This means also each HEI has its well distinguished profile and mutually agreed-upon priorities, based upon its potentials and strengths.

Individuality and creativity is given space in the study programs since it is essential not only to train skills but also to cultivate personal responsibility and the ability of critical, discrete thinking.

There is a balanced participation of the classes of population in higher education and a good permeability within and between HEI's.

Science, research and teaching have a sufficient public basic funding which allows a good performance of duties and responsibilities as well as an additional (private) competitive funding for excellence.

What is your expectation from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

The Yerevan Ministerial Conference marks the 16th year of the Bologna Process and the 6th year of the building of the European higher Education Area/EHEA. With so many different higher education systems, international

organizations and higher education institutions involved, my expectations may not come as a surprise:

I hope that the Conference will bring about a major stepping up of the consolidation of the EHEA. This means first and foremost that the implementation gap existing between higher education institutions within individual countries and between the members of the EHEA will be closing faster than before.

I also hope for a deeper understanding on the part of all stakeholders of the weight and significance of a European higher education area with unimpeded transnational mobility, fair and transparent recognition, and quality assurance procedures which are governed by the European standards and guidelines.

And last but not least, I would like to see an enhancement of the role of higher education in preparing young people better for their roles in our future, more open and globalized societies.

What comes to your mind when you hear about Armenia?

This mountainous country in the South Caucasus region of Eurasia, though not bigger than Austria's provinces of Tyrol and Styria combined, has developed a unique identity by intertwining cultural influences from West and East.

Numerous archaeological sites next to churches and fortresses as well as the Armenian language and alphabet bear witness to the country's rich cultural heritage.

Mount Ararat, historically a part of Armenia and now belonging to Turkey, is the highest mountain in the region and featured in the Armenian national emblem.

Austria's engagement in Armenia dates from the severe earthquake in 1988 when it provided humanitarian aid. In the field of science and research the bilateral cooperation has been strengthened continuously since then.



FEDERATION
WALLONIA-
BRUSSELS,
BELGIUM

Marcourt Jean-Claude
Vice-president of the Government of the Federation
Wallonia-Brussels, Minister for Higher Education,
Research and Media
Government of the Federation Wallonia-Brussels

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

Since the inception of the Bologna Process in 1999 and even a year before with the adoption of La Sorbonne Declaration, the Federation Wallonia-Brussels has been at the forefront of the further development of the Bologna Process and the establishment of the European Higher Education Area, as well as very proactive in the implementation of the various reforms, actions lines, measures and tools. It has always been of utmost importance for the Federation Wallonia-Brussels to make this cooperation process, not a 'paperwork' exercise but a real motor for the modernization of higher education in Europe. In this perspective, we have

always argued in favour of a systematic involvement of the stakeholders (higher education institutions, teachers, students, employers, etc.) and we have defended a vision of higher education as a public good.

If in the first decades the Bologna Process has pushed the necessary structural reforms in the Federation Wallonia-Brussels – those reforms have been fully implemented since 2004, the Bologna Process and the EHEA have had an essential role in fostering the cooperation between higher education institutions, teachers, researchers, students. Through these common language and shared understanding, our higher education institutions are now stronger in facing the many challenges of our society and can actively play their role in educating our citizens, in fostering the development of innovative solutions and transmitting our common values.

How can higher education help the societies to meet the challenges they face today?

Higher education has a key role to play in our society, in particular facing the challenges of today and tomorrow. In this perspective, higher education institutions should actively fulfill their three main missions, including learning and teaching, research and innovation, and services to the society. It is only when those three missions are considered of equal importance that higher education institutions will be able to answer those challenges, such as the demographic changes, the development of new technologies, the economic and social crisis that we can see in some parts of the world, and lately and more dramatically the rise of new conflicts. Through these missions, higher education institutions should transmit, share, discuss, make concrete

the values and ensure the inclusiveness of the whole society. In the Federation Wallonia-Brussels, many initiatives have been taken lately in this perspective. For example, we have reinforced the democratization of higher education system to enable all citizens, whatever their backgrounds, to have the opportunity to enter, participate in and complete higher education. The last main reform adopted in November 2013, has – amongst many measures – pushed our higher education institutions to cooperate even more closely by putting their resources in common, by co-organizing their curricula, by better answering the needs of the labour market and our society.

What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

I believe in a higher education system that will fulfill its missions for the whole society, and thus will train highly qualified, responsible, critical citizens and enable the graduates to contribute to the development of our democratic, pluralist and inclusive society. Therefore, it is essential to put students, researchers, professors, staff and all higher education actors at the centre of our policies. This is only possible if the institutional autonomy and the pedagogical freedom are guaranteed and fostered through innovative policies and measures.

In this perspective, we should reinforce a highly inclusive higher education system, where all citizens might find an opportunity to benefit from high quality teaching and learning as well as excellence in research.

Last but not least, it is essential to create the conditions enabling higher education institutions to design high quality programmes and produce excellent research. These conditions relate to the capacity offered to these institutions to cooperate between themselves but also with the world outside the academia, to develop their specific profiles based on their strengths, to benefit from sufficient public resources and other resources, to build and implement internalisation strategies and activities, to offer quality service to the academic community, etc.

What is your expectation from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

Although I will not be able to attend the Yerevan Ministerial Conference because of other commitments, I think the Bologna Process is at a cornerstone and therefore the Conference should be an occasion to re-launch our cooperation process and strengthen the

European Higher Education Area for the many challenges ahead. We should in particular consider carefully the implementation of the reforms at grass-roots levels and make sure that the policies and measures we will be developing are consistent with the needs of our higher education institutions.

In this perspective, I believe it is crucial that we reinforce the European dimension of the Bologna Process and make it more meaningful to the academic community but also to the whole society. The fact that after 15 years of cooperation and the introduction of many structural reforms, European citizens still face difficulties to move from one institution to another, from one country to another, because of obstacles in making their qualifications recognized, is a failure for the Bologna Process. Therefore, all ministers should engage themselves to make real steps forward on the idea of building a common area, based on mutual trust.

Furthermore, we should also be looking to the future and be more proactive in the many challenges we are and we will be facing. This is particularly important when looking at the rapid technological developments that should be both pushed by and supporting our higher education institutions. I think that we should explore further how to create real and significant synergies between higher education, research and innovation. This should be explored at all levels: European, national, regional, local and of course institutional.

What comes to your mind when you hear about Armenia?

Unfortunately, my first thought about Armenia is related to the genocide of 1915, that will mark the first manifestation of the barbarism of the human kind in the past century. Hundred years after this tragedy and facing nowadays other terrible situations, we should ensure that the current and future generation can remember the mistakes of the past so to build a better future. The duty of remembrance is therefore essential and I am convinced that our higher education institutions, through the training of students, the research carried out by researchers, the promotion of human rights, human dignity and tolerance, have a crucial role to play.

But Armenia makes me also think about one of the greatest voices of the chanson française, Charles Aznavour. Charles Aznavour has been – and still is – one of the best "ambassador" of the French-speaking culture and the French language while promoting universal messages of solidarity, tolerance and humanity.



BULGARIA

Todor Tanev
Minister
Ministry of Education and Science

in the higher education development, including practical measures to implement these priorities. One year after signing the Bologna Declaration Bulgaria undertook a number of legislative initiatives to ensure a national framework for development of the main principles in this document.

The main changes in the system of higher education in Bulgaria in the context of the Bologna process are:

- introduced a three-cycle system of education: Bachelor - Master - Doctor;
- adopted a classifier of the higher education areas and professional fields, which introduces the generally accepted in the global educational practice areas and fields to which curricula are to be oriented;
- the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency was established in 1996 in order to regulate, monitor and control the quality assurance processes in the higher education;
- mobility - created conditions for active participation of Bulgarian students and academia in European mobility programs;
- credit system - developed and adopted an ordinance to implement a system of accumulation and transfer of credits (2004);
- the Higher Education Act regulates the issuing of European Diploma Supplement;
- adopted National Qualifications Framework

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

Bulgaria is among the 29 countries which on 19 June 1999 signed in Bologna the Joint Declaration on the European Higher Education Area. Almost 16 years later, we can observe that among the challenges we faced, there are many concrete benefits in it in different directions - academic mobility, improving teaching methods, compatibility and comparability of degrees and respectively of diplomas awarded by the Bulgarian universities, etc. The Bulgarian response to the objectives of the Bologna Declaration should be sought in two main areas: legislative initiatives and determine priorities



How can higher education help the societies to meet the challenges they face today?

The Higher education as well as the continuous upgrading of knowledge and skills can meet today's challenges with personal commitment and responsibility of each participant in the educational process - from the state throughout the institution towards the individual.

What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

In my opinion the perfect higher education system is sufficiently flexible and at the same time preserving the best traditions. It is a system, which not only provides

solid academic knowledge, but also real opportunities for the graduates in the labor market.

What is your expectation from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

My main expectation is to have benefits both formal and informal discussions, which will outline the guidelines for development of the European Higher Education Area and will specify the future common goals.

What comes to your mind when you hear about Armenia?

To my mind comes the genius poem "Armenians" by the great Bulgarian poet P. K. Yavorov.



CROATIA

Vedran Mornar
Minister
Ministry of Science, Education and Sports

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

Croatian Higher Education (HE) system has largely benefited from the implementation of the Bologna Process since its inception in the 2005/2006 academic year, although there is a need to maintain a critical stance towards any generalization regarding that assessment based on the threefold reasons. Firstly, there has not been an in-depth, rigorous and fact-based analysis of the achievements and shortcomings of the Bologna Process implementation in the Croatian HE system, meaning we lack a thorough analytical basis for any meaningful and cold-hearted review. Secondly, Bologna Process has not been uniformly implemented across the Croatian

HE institutions, allowing them for an utmost academic autonomy in designing their study programmes and thus opting for one of three possible models for the first and the second cycle (3+2, 4+1, 5+0). Thirdly, first generation of the Bologna Process graduates in Croatia has been severely hit by the impacts of the economic crisis and prolonged recession since the early 2010s that has ravaged the labour market and distorted better integration of HE and labour market spheres, which has been one of the ambitions of the Bologna Process in Croatia. Nevertheless, aside of this context in which Bologna Process has been implemented in Croatia, it has positively impacted HE system through spurring its long-lasting transformation and modernization, by making it more open, transparent and internationally attractive. Moreover, Bologna Process has played leverage role in bringing deep systemic change in the Croatian HE system, aiming to make paradigm shift in the conduct of higher education and has positively shaken-up previously largely self-centred and to a some extent old-fashioned structures and processes. Namely, before inception of the Bologna process, Croatian HE system has been mostly closed entity with the limited international dimension and small mobility of students and academic staff, where the international projects were predominantly result of individual researchers' enthusiasm. Therefore, Bologna process has significantly increased internationalization of the Croatian HE system through fostering greater mobility of students and teaching staff and enabling larger scope of international cooperation. Mobility has been conditioned upon full implementation of the three-cycle structure of the studying programmes, introduction of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and development of the quality

assurance mechanisms that all together has increased transparency and enabled convergence of the Croatian HE system with the education systems within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Mobility, largely supported firstly by the TEMPUS programme and then by the ERASMUS programme, has endowed Croatian students with the possibilities of gaining new skills and knowledge at foreign universities but has also fostered attraction of foreign students to the Croatian HE, at the same time enabling scholarships and visiting fellowships for the Croatian academic staff. Consequently, this cross-fertilization and capacity-building has enhanced competitiveness of the domestic higher education system through exchange of academic know-how and dissemination of didactic tools that would improve methodologies of teaching/lecturing and their outcomes. Finally, increased participation of Croatian HEIs into EU/ international research cooperation (FP, Horizon 2020) has played a vital role in the transmission of knowledge from the global production of knowledge into Croatian context, socializing academic staff with the cutting-edge research trends.

Therefore, in the past years, since Croatia joined the Bologna Process, it became a framework for structural reforms and continuous developments of HE system in Croatia. The challenge ahead of us and the path that I think we need to take now is to concentrate on the implementation of these reforms.

The most important current endeavour in Croatia regarding the Bologna Process deals with the setting-up and implementation of the Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF), which is the cornerstone of the actual Bologna Process enforcement. Namely, CROQF is a reform instrument for regulating the system of qualifications at all levels in Croatia through qualifications standards based on learning outcomes and following the needs of the labour market, individuals and society, essentially aiming to improve quality, relevance and responsiveness of the Croatian education system. Additionally, the CROQF is self-certified against the Qualification Framework of the EHEA, thus enabling an easy recognition of the qualifications acquired in Croatia in the EHEA. Therefore, the CROQF with its focus on the learning outcomes approach should enable actual, organic and full-scale implementation of the Bologna Process in Croatia, whereas it should foster revision of studying programmes and endow students with the more transversal skills as well as with competences relevant to the labour market, ultimately enhancing their

employability. One of the challenges that we need to face in particular in Croatia is to improve employability of the first cycle graduates. We should put more efforts towards making the Bachelor degrees more recognised by the labour market with looking at good practice examples in those countries that have implemented successful structural reforms. Bologna Process has therefore positively impacted Croatian HE system but its true ramifications are only expected to be seen in the time to come, as it remains a great window of opportunity in activating untapped potentials of the Croatian HE and society in general. CROQF is now primarily vehicle of this transition that needs to be long-lasting, continuous and sustainable and hence underpinned by the great organizational and intellectual efforts of all involved stakeholders. Teaching and research community has to implement nothing short of changing the mentality both in rethinking of their curriculum towards the student-centred learning and the stakeholders from the labour market need to enhance their involvement in curriculum design and more structured cooperation with the higher education institutions.

How can higher education help the societies to meet the challenges they face today?

Universities of today are not only the temples of the fundamental research nor applied entrepreneurship, but, with their strong civic engagement, they are one of the pillars of a modern society, tackling the most pressing societal challenges. Nowadays, the higher education plays indispensable role in achieving development, prosperity and cohesion of society and, as such, is pivotal in implementing strategic goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. More concretely, higher education plays that role through being embedded into the knowledge triangle of education, research and innovation, representing stepping stone in the creation and dissemination of knowledge that is further advanced and applied into socio-economic realm in order to foster economic growth, protect environment, natural and societal resources and maintain social cohesion. In another words, higher education represents a powerful intellectual basis through its research infrastructure and integration with the global production of knowledge and research communities, while at the same time it educates and empowers cohorts of students with the research capabilities and critical thinking skills, essentially endowing them with the spirit of intellectual curiosity and work independence that should translate them

into fully-fledged and self-aware researchers, innovators and citizens of tomorrow. Finally, each university exists and functions in the particular local/regional/national environment so through the dissemination of knowledge and operationalization of its ethical pledge of scientific research and education, it activates locally rooted potentials and resources, enabling their synergy with the technological and industrial dynamics at the global scale.

This narrative of higher education in fostering accountable, innovative and interactive teaching and researching, being directly involved with other stakeholders is vividly seen in the blossoming of start-up and spin-off communities in the last few years, where higher education has turned into powerful engine of social entrepreneurship. Leading international magazines such as Time or Forbes regularly portray stories of young 20s and 30s, fresh graduates from the universities that have reached out and turned socially responsible and integrative higher education into reality because they have developed their companies and platforms by using the skills and knowledge gained during higher education. For example, either this involves innovative ways of diagnostic laboratory testing, doing research on medical diseases and using digital technology to improve organization of medical services, improving urban innovation based on new materials and technology, reducing food waste or improving access to clean drinking water by developing wells and water filters, their common denominator is that these solutions were developed in close collaboration with the higher education. What has changed in the meantime is the new generation of youth that is willing to be more socially active, that is aware of global challenges and wants to use its tools, skills and methods, again largely stemming from the higher education, in tackling some of the most pressing societal challenges. In this way, higher education has got significant agent of change and enhanced its perspectives of delivering and protecting public goods, fostering more cost and resource-efficient economic growth and removing administrative and financial barriers that keeps parts of the society outcast and vulnerable (youth, immigrants, unemployed).

In essence, with the globalization and the dawn of information age, higher education has significantly augmented its possibilities in contributing to the better utilization of the societal resources and has developed new solutions to tackle the most pressing issues, now significantly depending upon the creativity, knowledge, skills and self-confidence of its current and recent graduates.

What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

Perfect higher education system in my opinion is the system that effectively contributes to the socio-economic development, meaning it is engaged in stirring economic growth while at the same time it has strong social component and contributes to the social inclusion. In another words, perfect system should comprise both competitiveness and cohesion as they are closely related and intertwined. Higher education should thus, play an important role in fostering competitive growth but at the same time it should yield greater social cohesion through its availability and quality. Each higher education system of course has its own path-dependencies, it is developed within particular socio-cultural milieu and successful concepts cannot be unilaterally applied as no one size fits all. Nevertheless, it is legitimate to consider higher education system as a powerful engine that can galvanize existing resources in the society and spur them towards the path of international competitiveness, sustainable and balanced regional development, increased employability, greater social inclusion and last but not the least – active citizenship.

Having in mind the fact that achievement of the aforementioned goals seeks coordination efforts and synergy across different sectors, I see higher education as an effective vehicle in achieving them by being more inspired, involved and individual. More inspired means that the system should spark passion for education, research and inject pioneering spirit into students that should observe studying not only as a phase in life but as something reassembling their intellectual and mental setting and creating more self-aware, independent and comprehensive personalities.

This approach would demand great endeavours and dedication of the HEIs but of students as well in effectively creating community of teachers and learners. More involved means student-focused teaching and studying in which students would have closer contact with the professors, better advising/tutoring support and basically greater ownership of the educational process through embarking into more independent and project-based work. Finally, more individual means more flexible and tailor-made studying that should respect individual student preferences and replace uniform and rigid structures that hinder creativity and innovation with the “smart modularization” approach which would create better synergy across studying programmes and scientific areas. Consequently, improved teaching methods and research-based learning should spark intellectual curiosity and research passion among students, endow them with the key academic skills and harness their untapped epistemic and innovation potential by playing upon two important strengths: students’ ownership and personal education/research interests.

What is your expectation from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

Yerevan Ministerial Conference will serve an important fora for the evaluation and revision of the Bologna Process based on the stocktaking of its implementation in the 2012-2015 period. Consequently, it will enable sharing of experiences and best-practices among involved political leaders and policy-makers regarding their national implementation and yield the opportunity for better reflection upon the nature of higher education in general and future challenges of the Bologna Process implementation. More precisely, the Conference is likely to critically evaluate shortcomings and bottlenecks in implementing the national qualifications frameworks compatible with the QF-EHEA, evaluate implementation of the “EHEA in Global Setting” Strategy and offer guidelines for further internationalization of the higher education in the post-2015 period. Additionally, Conference should also further encourage development of joint programmes and degrees by agreeing of the ministers for scrutinizing national legislation and practices that currently represent obstacles to the cooperation and mobility. Finally, Conference should also touch upon the general issues of higher education funding, employability of students and life-long learning. Conference also takes place in the aftermath of the

informal meeting of the EU education ministers and adoption of the “Declaration on Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education” on a meeting in Paris on 17 March 2015. The Yerevan Ministerial Conference is a good opportunity to give additional political support towards a dialogue of the main drivers in the European higher education that is to safeguard basic values of democracy, freedom, justice, tolerance and human dignity, the rule of law and equality, pluralism, non-discrimination and solidarity. This conference would therefore echo the need to conceive education that needs to respect diversity and enable discursive space for arguments-based conversation, deliberation and encourage creation of active and responsible citizens. Particular responsibility is here at the teachers’ side that need to encourage acquiring of social and civic competences at the young age, development of critical thinking and sound judgement, building-up of appropriate media literacy in order to resist indoctrination and especially devote their time and attention to the marginalised youth at the brink of social exclusion. Fundamental values should be defended every single day in our neighbourhoods, cities, streets and schools through every-day communication and conduct, especially one involving different cultural and ethnic groups. Teachers play fundamental role is defending those values and reaching out towards marginal groups, likely exposed to the perils of indoctrination and radicalization. Having this in mind, Yerevan Ministerial Conference will recognize the importance of higher education in defending fundamental values and provide them support at the highest political level.

What comes to your mind when you hear about Armenia?

When I hear about Armenia, the first thing that comes to my mind is its rich cultural and historical heritage as this is one of the most ancient countries in the world, with the unique alphabet and first country in the world to adopt Christianity as the official religion as well. Moreover, what comes to my mind and what I can relate to is Armenian large and influential diaspora that is about 70% of the Armenians that live worldwide. So, outside of Armenia and among many famous global personalities of Armenian origin, I can recognize Andree Agassi; former tennis player, Alain Prost; former Formula One driver, Daron Acemoğlu; economist and Garry Kasparov; chess champion.



REPUBLIC OF
CYPRUS

Costas Kadis
Minister
Ministry of Education and Culture

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

The launch of the Bologna Process, as the main tool through which higher education will be modernized in Europe, was one of the biggest successes in European higher education. As a result, Cyprus active participation in the Bologna Process since 2001 has helped our country to modernize its higher education system.

On the Bologna Process structural level, Cyprus has fully achieved the establishment of a three-cycle degree structure. Moreover, the Cypriot higher education institutions are constantly adopting both the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the

Diploma Supplement (DP). Furthermore, the Bologna Process has brought an era of change towards more internal and external Quality Assurance in higher education. The growth of external quality assurance in higher education has been one of the most notable features of the Bologna Process. In this framework, Cyprus attempts to improve quality assurance in higher education through the establishment of the "Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education". The Agency will be the competent authority for enhancing internal and external quality assurance procedures in higher education institutions. The new agency will be responsible for all issues concerning the evaluation of public and private universities, as well as accreditation matters. The Agency will be compliant with the European Standards and Guidelines (E.S.G.) and aims to be eligible for registration in the European Quality Assurance Register (E.Q.A.R.).

The Bologna tools mentioned above increased the transparency and credibility of qualifications awarded by the Cyprus educational institutions of higher education of Cyprus. It also increased both credit and degree mobility of students to and from Cyprus. Cypriot students attend European universities to acquire their degrees or/and participate in European mobility programs, while foreign students do the same with the Cypriot universities. In other words, our participation in the Bologna Process has encouraged the internationalization of our higher education system.

Cyprus participation in the Bologna Process has also assisted our country to have a positive attitude towards cross-border higher education and, consequently, to understand the

opportunities it provides in our effort to attract international scholars and students. Cross-border higher education gave new impetus to the efforts of Cypriot higher education institutions to establish partnerships with other European higher education institutions in order to offer joint and/or double degrees.

Finally, we are intensifying our efforts to increase the participation of underrepresented groups to the point where higher education mirrors the overall societal distribution. For that reason, Cyprus has established various student grants which has widened participation in higher education through the provision of targeted financial and material support to students.

How can higher education help the societies to meet the challenges they face today?

Higher education has a key role in helping societies to meet the challenges they face over time as it cultivates highly educated people. For that reason, universities must design academic programmes which offer the necessary knowledge, competences, skills and attitudes that graduates require to function in a rapidly changing society and world. Higher education also contributes to the intellectual and cultural development of the public as critical citizens, through informed social commentary and critique and public engagement around ideas.

Moreover, higher education forges a critical and democratic citizenship. Our societies need graduates who are not just capable professionals, but also active and sensitive citizens. Higher education has a much wider social value, apart from its role as basic element for economic growth, as it can contribute to the promotion of social and human rights and democracy.

Another role of higher education is to actively engage with the pressing development challenges of our society. More specifically, universities can develop awareness of economic, educational, health and other problems through teaching and learning, while they can confront and contribute to their management and resolution through research.

Higher education also creatively conducts different kinds of rigorous scholarship and rigorous research. Knowledge, science and information play a critical role in every human development.

The aforementioned key roles of higher education are undoubtedly still valid in today's times of economic

crisis. That is the reason why higher education has a fundamental role to play in achieving the 'Europe 2020' objectives of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Nowadays, the quantity and quality of higher education will be the crucial factor in maintaining both European competitiveness and social state. The creation of knowledge societies would be the necessary step to unleash the creativity needed for Europe's future prosperity. In other words, it is essential for Europe to invest in higher education in order that societies meet the challenges they face today.

What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

It is neither easy nor correct to describe a particular higher education system as perfect for all the countries of the world. Every national higher education system should be adjusted to the particularities and specificities of the country where it operates. Nevertheless, certain characteristics should govern every higher education system.

Every country should first and foremost establish a stable and fruitful policy dialogue among its relevant higher education stakeholders. This responsibility lies with the relevant ministries of higher education of each country. The stakeholders should join forces and determine, and adjust if needed, the national strategic plan for higher education and solve any problems that arise from time to time in this field.

The governance of every higher education system should be defined by a regulatory framework within which strategic orientation is combined with autonomy and diversity of higher education institutions. In an open, competitive and changing environment, autonomy is a pre-condition for universities to be able to respond to society's changing needs and to take full account for those responses. Universities should be responsible for setting their specific medium-term priorities and also managing and developing their human resources. Moreover, they should be able to define their curricula and professionally manage their facilities, financial resources, and external communication.

The enhancement of the universities governance is closely connected with their funding. A result-oriented procedure of funding, rather than a resource-oriented, combined with the necessary university autonomy

makes universities more responsible for their own financial viability. Greater autonomy and accountability as well as a high level of university funding result in high achievements in teaching and research excellence.

In parallel, universities can implement better their social dimension policies if proper funding is allocated to them. They should aim at promoting and providing the opportunity for successful participation in higher education to everyone who can benefit from it. This is vital for social justice and economic competitiveness. We all acknowledge that under-representation is closely connected with broader issues of equity and social inclusion, therefore there is a concern with ensuring equality of opportunity for disabled students, mature students, women and men, and all ethnic groups. Widening access to higher education will increase the number of people attending higher education and, consequently, assist them with distinctive skills in critical thinking and the ability to manage complex information, communication and team working. The worth of a national higher education system is enhanced if it is linked internationally in education and research. This aim may be achieved in two basic ways: by offering quality programmes of study in international languages (mainly English) and by promoting the mobility of students, young employees and academic staff. A higher education system that manages to attract foreign students also enriches the education offered to the domestic students.

Quality assurance in higher education is a key issue to every effort to build a qualitative and attractive higher education system. The improvement of educational quality is also related to the internationalization of higher education. The quality of a country's higher education institutions and the range and depth of studies they offer, make those institutions highly attractive to the international academic world, both as study destinations and as partners for joint education and research responsibilities.

Last but not least, a perfect higher education system should give special emphasis to the connection of universities with the labor

market. This will help, on one hand, to reduce youth unemployment and, on the other hand, to provide the companies with skillful and competent workforce. This kind of cooperation between universities and industry, will provide the motives for companies to finance research and, consequently, to promote innovation.

What is your expectation from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

I expect a constructive meeting with my counterparts since we will be given the chance to discuss the latest developments in the European Higher Education Area. Therefore, I firmly believe that we will first reiterate our strong commitment to the Bologna Process and then to determine our next steps regarding the new vision of the European Higher Education Area.

I consider essential our support to a process that provided a framework for common efforts to reform and modernize our higher education systems and achieve remarkable results. The foundations of the European Higher Education Area are now in place, enabling better quality education with greater opportunities for mobility for all. The Bologna Process is a European success story of which we should be proud.

However, there is much more to be done. I fully agree with all those who claim that implementing our structural reforms at institutional level in cooperation with the academic community shall remain our highest priority. We also need to work together to offer high quality teaching and learning to students. For that reason, we may take advantage of the possibilities offered by modern technology and methods and stimulate creativity and entrepreneurship. We also need to find different ways to address the issue of employability in times of economic crisis.

During the Conference, I am going to present the three (3) top priorities regarding Cyprus higher education which are the enhancement of mobility and internationalization of the Cypriot higher education system, the reformation of the funding system of Cypriot public universities and the implementation of structural reforms of the

N I C O S I A



Bologna Process, with special emphasis on presenting our goal to improve quality assurance in Cypriot higher education system through the establishment of the "Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Education" (CYAQAAE).

I will try to enhance my country's relations with other countries in the areas of my portfolio. I will also express our readiness to establish a dialogue in order to sign bilateral agreements in the fields of education, culture and science. Concluding, I expect to enjoy the Armenian hospitality for which I have heard the best.

What comes to your mind when you hear about Armenia?

When I hear about Armenia it firstly comes to my mind the Armenian community of Cyprus. It has a continuous documented presence in Cyprus since 578 A.D. and, consequently, shaped its history together with the other communities of the island. The Armenian-Cypriot community, despite the relatively small number of Armenians living in Cyprus, has also had a significant impact upon the Armenian diaspora and the Armenian nation. According to the 1960 Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus, the Armenians, together with the Maronites and the Latins, are recognized as a "religious group". They have opted to belong to the Greek-Cypriot community and they are represented by an elected Representative in the House of Parliaments.

Currently, Armenians in Cyprus maintain a notable presence of about 3500 on the island (including about 1000 non-Cypriot Armenians), mostly situated in the cities of Nicosia, Larnaca, Limassol and Paphos. There are Armenian elementary schools in the cities of Nicosia, Larnaca and Limassol and a gymnasium in Nicosia. The Melkonian Educational Institute was the most renowned educational institution of Armenian-Cypriots. Founded in 1926, the Melkonian Institute was

open to Armenian students from all over the world and offered a comprehensive secondary school curriculum. Unfortunately, nowadays it has stopped its operation.

The second issue that strengthens our relations is undoubtedly the Armenian Genocide. Cyprus was the first European country (and the second world-wide after Uruguay) to officially recognize the Armenian Genocide in 1975. On the level also of ordinary people, most Cypriots are aware of the great calamity the Armenian nation suffered during 1894 – 1923 and have always been supportive and sympathetic towards Armenians. Cyprus has also built two genocide memorials in Nicosia and Larnaca in respect for the victims.

In return, Armenia has strongly condemned the Turkish invasion in 1974 and the continuous occupation of the north part of the island by the Turkish troops. It also supports the efforts of the Republic of Cyprus for a just, viable and functional solution of the Cyprus problem.

Today, the excellent relations between the two countries are enhanced further by our economic and cultural cooperation. Every year, Cyprus-Armenian Business Forums are held either in Nicosia or in Yerevan, with an aim to further boost trade and investment between the two countries. Armenian companies will be able to expand more effectively into the European Union and Middle East markets in co-operation with Cypriot companies. This co-operation can and should be reciprocal, with Armenia serving as an access route to the Caucasian countries for the business world of Cyprus.

Moreover, the two countries have signed since 1999 a cultural, educational and scientific agreement of mutual cooperation. Concluding, the Armenian community of Cyprus receives a generous funding from the Cypriot government, which enables the organisation of concerts, dance performances, art and photographic exhibitions, as well as literary events.



CZECH
REPUBLIC

Jaromír Veber
Vice-Minister for Higher Education and Research
Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

Bologna Process has, since it began in 1999, made a great progress and Czech Republic has benefited from structural changes it has brought about greatly. Three-cycle degree structure has enabled to increase access to tertiary education significantly, whilst making possible to maintain its quality through diversification of study. Moreover, it developed the possibility for the students to change the study programme upon completion of a degree and thus encouraged interdisciplinarity in a way not possible beforehand. The establishment of qualification frameworks and ECTS had simplified the recognition process of foreign diploma and studies. This

enabled Czech students not only to study in another EU country, but also to live there and work, and vice versa, foreign students to study, live and work in the Czech Republic. It has also further encouraged greater variability of studies and, at the same time, provided basic element for their comparison so important for increasing their quality. Closer collaboration between European higher education institutions has led to a significant increase of mobility of students, researchers and academic staff and thus further facilitated the co-operation in quality assurance amongst the member states and offered the possibility to attract European students to study at the Czech higher education institutions.

How can higher education help the societies to meet the challenges they face today?

At the outset of the 21st century, rising challenges make clear the importance of higher education and its contribution to the amelioration of public well-being. There is no doubt, that the higher education is one of the most important resources for addressing an array of challenges the society is facing today. On the one hand, it is the source to address the challenges such as sustainability of natural resources, technological developments in the health care or finding new solutions for key societal problems. In short, it is the source of innovations. On the other, it provides young people with an ability to adapt to, understand and deal with the increasingly globalized and changing world. It increases society's ability to respond to the changes of labor market and global economy, it instills in students values of the European civilization, encourages them to care and account for their community and, last but not



least, it makes their life richer and more interesting. In short, it is the source of society's well-being.

What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

Higher education system is an irreplaceable part of every developed and modern society. Higher education significantly contributed and continues to contribute to the cultural and economic growth of the society, accepting its share of responsibility for the further sustainable development. The mission of each higher education institution is to fulfill its unique role in building democratic, open, tolerant, cohesive, cultivated and cultural society, as well as the country's competitiveness

and economy based on knowledge and innovation.

What is your expectation from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

I expect assessment of the hitherto development and hope that agreement on the priorities for the next three years of the Bologna Process, and for its further development in general, will be reached. I look forward to share experiences and hear opinions of my colleagues from other countries.

What comes to your mind when you hear about Armenia?

Armenia is known to be one of the oldest centers of the world civilization, with many cultural traditions and beautiful old architecture. It is located in a strategic geopolitical region that is rich on natural resources.

C O P E N H A G E N



DENMARK

Sofie Carsten Nielsen
Minister
Ministry of Higher Education and Science

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

The Danish higher education system went through a large restructuring in the 2000's where the Bologna Process was used actively as part of the inspiration for the new structures implemented. Most recently when a new law for quality assurance was implemented the standard and guidelines for quality assurance document was an important influence. In this way the Danish higher education system we see today is heavily influenced by the basic principles of the Bologna Process.

Furthermore the Bologna Process has helped in setting targets that have inspired the further development of the Danish higher education system. For example the

Bologna target for mobility served as an inspiration for the ambitious Danish goal of 50 % outgoing mobility by 2020 and the setting up of an ambitious Danish strategy for internationalization of the higher education area.

How can higher education help the societies to meet the challenges they face today?

Higher education is the key to solving many of the challenges we face today in Europe. Higher education is needed to secure that we have the knowledge and innovation needed to create economic growth after the economic crisis and the right competences to meet the demands of the job market of the future.

Higher education can also help combat conflicts and extremism by promoting increased knowledge, intercultural understanding and common democratic values obtained through increased mobility and internationalization. Furthermore a higher education system that is more socially inclusive can help combat marginalization.

What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

While perfection is something that is next to impossible to ascertain I think that the best higher education system is a system which enables all talents being put to use and where if you have the ability and will then you can fulfill your potential no matter what background you have.

This should of course happen in a higher education system where quality and relevance are still core values as well as a high level of internationalization. Thus leading to increased growth, welfare and diversity in society as a whole.



What is your expectation from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

I'm looking forward to interesting and enlightening discussions with colleagues from across Europe as well as from Europe's neighboring regions.

I hope that we at the conference will see a fruitful and productivedialogue which results in all countries being able to agree on a communique that will be able to set a clear path for the future work in the Bologna process. A communique which is able to identify the most pressing needs in the continual development of the European Higher Education Area and sets all membership countries on a common path to fulfill these needs.

What comes to your mind when you hear about Armenia?

Most recently what comes to mind are the entertaining and thrilling football matches that have been played between Denmark and Armenia in the latest qualifiers for both the European Championship and the World Cup. I also think many Danes still remember the Armenian striker Yura Movsisyan from his time playing in the Danish football league where he was a strong profile.

I also think of Armenia as a country that is known for its beautiful nature – especially its scenic mountains. And of Armenian brandy which is well known throughout the world.

T A L L I N N



ESTONIA

Indrek Reimand
Deputy Secretary General
Ministry of Education and Research

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

Participation in the Bologna Process has given us an opportunity to be part of and create a common European vision for higher education, to take part in the dialogue on the future and challenges of higher education and to see real change and practical action at the European, national and institutional levels.

It is important to emphasise that the Bologna Process has helped us to promote and implement important reforms, which is often complicated without outside stimulation. After extensive participation in this process, Estonia has built a higher education system in which:

- a trust-based quality assurance system exists

(evaluation of study programme groups and institutional accreditation, EKKA -Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency — is included in the EQAR);

- an 8-level qualification framework was introduced in 2008 (Estonia is one of twenty-two countries that have fulfilled all 10 steps in the implementation of qualifications frameworks). The Framework has self-certified its compatibility with the Qualifications Framework for the EHEA;
- a fair qualifications recognition system exists where EHEA qualifications are treated in the same way as national qualifications;
- all higher education programmes are described through learning outcomes and ECTS and RPL has known for many years;
- all students (also foreign) have equal (based on academic achievements) opportunities to access and complete higher education (students, if required, are supported by grants and scholarship);
- students and academic staff have more and more opportunities to be mobile, and incoming mobility rates are increasing.
- a new degree structure has existed since 2002 (3+2 system).

Building better linkages between higher education programmes and the needs of Estonian society, the labour market and research areas are challenges to be faced by the Estonian higher education system in the future.

How can higher education help societies meet the challenges they face today?

Higher education has an essential role to play in the development of individuals and societies. Nowadays, the expectations on higher education as a tool to solve economic and political crises are quite high. Higher education institutions are in the unique position



of investing in the future of each individual learner and society as a whole: highly educated graduates with enterprising skills have the potential to enhance the economic situation; the link between research and teaching is the key in developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation.

Higher education also has a strong role to play in reducing inequality, and it helps each individual make a meaningful contribution to society.

The aim should be to enhance the international attractiveness of higher education institutions and promote the mobility of students, academic staff and researchers, because higher education could become a bridge to societies with varying degrees of democracy, freedom of expression and cultural and political climates. Young people with international study experience have more understanding and opportunities to use knowledge as a source of strength when entering into dialogue and improving cooperation.

What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

Higher education should play a strong role in fostering social cohesion, by reducing inequality and raising the level of knowledge, skills and competences in society. To this end, the following aspects of the system should be taken into account:

- higher education should be equally accessible to all (based on academic achievement) in order to promote equal opportunities for access, participation and completion;
- high-quality higher education ensures the recognition

of qualifications, encourages the incoming and outward mobility of students, academic staff and researchers;

- higher education programmes (in certain areas) are developed within cooperation between education institutions and employers in order to prepare graduates for employment and to contribute to the wider needs of society and the labour market;
- higher education institutions as providers of knowledge, skills and competences should have a fresh focus and be able to determine ways to help students update their skills throughout their life.

What is your expectation from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

The Yerevan Ministerial Conference should improve cooperation with European Higher Education Area in other regions of the world, offer opportunities to enter into dialogue with EHEA Ministers and indicate important directions and messages for the future of higher education in the European Higher Education Area and with EHEA partners.

What comes to mind when you hear about Armenia?

- Armenia is a mountainous country with rich cultural traditions;
- Charles Aznavour (born Shahnour Varinag Aznavourian) is a famous French and Armenian singer, songwriter, actor, public activist and diplomat;
- The 1988 Armenian earthquake, also known as the Spitak earthquake;
- Famous Armenian food.

H E L S I N K I



FINLAND

Krista Kiuru
Minister of Education, Science and Communications
Ministry of Education and Culture

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

The Bologna Process has been very important and beneficial to Finnish higher education system. It has increased national and international co-operation at all levels. In addition, the process has strengthened willingness for change and thus paved the way for modernisation of higher education. Higher education institutions and students have been active reformers of higher education in the implementation of Bologna reforms in Finland.

How can higher education help the societies to meet the challenges they face today?

I strongly believe that higher education has a key role to play if we are to successfully meet the challenges that our societies are facing. Higher education has diversity

of missions. It can strive for innovation and enhance economic growth but it also prepares students for life as active citizens in a democratic society and supports their personal development. Higher education institutions have unique position as producers, conveyors and utilizers of competence and new knowledge. It is also important to acknowledge that with globalization, the world is developing into an increasingly comprehensive system. Therefore, also the solving of global problems requires international higher education cooperation such as Bologna Process.

What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

I'm not sure if it is possible to establish a perfect higher education system as there is always room for improvement. However, I feel that in a perfect or in a good education system higher education is a public responsibility and the system strives for equity, efficiency and quality. In addition, education policy should also be built on the lifelong learning principle. Providing quality education and equal chances for all is perhaps the most important goal for the future.

What is your expectation from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

Strength of the Bologna Process has been common and shared vision of European higher education area. I expect that in Yerevan Ministerial Conference the Ministers make sure that this commitment and vision is future-proofed. I hope that policy makers are also able to agree on priorities that help us to focus European co-operation for the coming years.

What comes to your mind when you hear about Armenia?

Beautiful mountainous nature and fascinating history at the crossroads of East and West along the famous Silk Route.





FRANCE

Najat Vallaud-Belkacem
Minister
Ministry for National Education, Higher Education and Research

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

Since 1999, the Bologna Process has been the driving force for building up the EHEA which deeply contributed to change and modernize higher education in the «larger Europe» with its 47 States.

In France, key reforms were implemented in connection to the Bologna Process. The most well-known one is the 3-cycle, so-called 'L.M.D.' ('Licence/Master/Doctorat') reform, initiated in 1999 and completed in 2002. On the other hand, the Social modernization law in January 2002 allowed to broaden the recognition of prior learning to the award of degrees. Besides, in 2005, a further step was taken in making it possible for higher education

institutions to award genuine joint degrees. Successive laws on higher education and research, with the latest one in 2013 (July 22nd), embedded our will to provide a greater autonomy to universities with a renewed quality-assurance system: educational freedom and responsibility of institutions for their own programme provisions are strengthened up with the principle of institutional accreditation, in connection to the setting up of the Upper Council for Research and Higher Education Evaluation (HCERES acronym in French: 'Haut Conseil d'Evaluation de la Recherche et de l'Enseignement Supérieur'). Besides, a new reform on doctoral programmes, after the 2006 reform, is currently in the making.

Concerning student support, the French State is making an extraordinary financial effort in order to improve student environment on campuses, and to increase student grants and other social student support as well, with additional 458 million euros from 2013 to 2015, and 137 500 new grant-holders.

Also, after the national strategy for research, we are now in the process of making a national strategy for higher education to be soon officially promoted after a large dialogue with stakeholders.

Therefore, the Bologna Process underpinned by a dialogue- and a partnership-based logic remains, to me, a key driver for modernizing higher education systems and institutions, with the support by stakeholders.

How can higher education help the societies to meet the challenges they face today?

Higher education is decisive to contribute to empower our students, the young and the less young ones, with robust competences and the best assets

for a successful integration into the labour market.

But the events which happened in Paris or Copenhagen at the beginning of this year are showing us how education, higher education, and research as well, as the provider of knowledge transfer, have to be engaged in a constant dialogue with society currently.

We are living in a knowledge society and in a world where techniques and needs change very fast, where knowledge production is not centralized anymore or fully mastered, where new jobs or new competences required are always emerging. In such a constantly changing society, higher education has a key role of co-building, guiding along, anticipating and mediating with citizens.

Therefore, we can see that today, in democratic societies, higher education, with the support from research, is fundamental to contribute to shape critical mindsets of women and men, responsible citizens-to-be, in order to allow everyone to own humanist values and to make them live on a daily basis, in particular with values of dialogue, mutual listening and respect, in a society where freedom of expression, and freedom in a nutshell, are the rule.

What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

In a world forever changing, where technologies enable each one to participate to knowledge building, willing to set criteria for 'perfection' does not seem possible really. In this context, to me, the main quality for a higher education system could be its responsiveness, its ability to re-generate itself, its culture for creativity, its eagerness not to set borders to one-direction-based paths for individuals, but instead, to understand and nurture diversity, in its students, teachers, researchers and its topics for study and learning.

To my understanding, instead of an ideal vision of higher education, we'd rather further encourage guidelines, common values that the members part of the Bologna Process share, in particular, university autonomy, academic freedom. The quality of education and of research underpinning it, the opening up to all, the ability for structures and persons to make various shapes of excellences thrive are key values as well. This is linked in essence, by definition, to a democratic society. We must enable each individual, without discrimination, whatsoever, be it socio-economic, gender-based, or linked to situations of handicap or to backgrounds, to

access knowledge irrigated by the latest researches, to fulfill one's own personal development in the academic- and professionally-oriented courses provided by institutions, and to get competences, together with working methods, which are needed in particular to be able to learn all one's life long and to enjoy a sustainable integration into the labour market. Therefore, France set and agreed on the principle that half of a generation (ie : age group of 17-33 years old) should graduate from higher education in 2020.

One basic value of Europe and of the Bologna Process to be recalled is also the possibility for students to easily move, from one level to another, from one programme to another one, from one country to another, or also, from university to work and the other way round, in order to be able to easily train, reskill or upgrade in a lifelong learning perspective, with the full and fair recognition of one's learning paths, prior learning and degrees.

What is your expectation from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

The Yerevan Ministerial Conference will be essential to enable us, 3 years after Bucharest and on the basis of updated information about the implementation of reforms, to pave the way for new perspectives for our European higher education area. We do have to work for an ambitious and forward-looking vision, really, about what higher education should be like in decades to come, starting from a meaningful stocktaking of the job done.

This is the reason why France applied to organize the next Ministerial Conference, planned in 2018, 20 years after La Sorbonne Statement, and is willing to hold the responsibility, after Armenia, of the Bologna Secretariat over the 2015-2018 period.

Great challenges are awaiting us: deepening reforms, at the grassroots' level, will have to go hand in hand with the digital revolution and its consequences; with a genuine lifelong learning, where higher education institutions must play their role for a truly learning society, based on knowledge, culture of creativity and innovation in diversity; and, last but not least, with the EHEA and the European Research Area (ERA) brought closer to each other, thanks to the doctorate in particular which is one of the links between them.

The Bologna Process, based on cooperation with universities, students, teachers, researchers and on the support by all stakeholders, remains our best asset to



modernize our European higher education, and to make it happen for a genuine European higher education and research area, open and attractive, and always interacting with the rest of the world. This is what France commitment which I'm carrying forward for 2018 means.

What comes to your mind when you hear about Armenia?

As a citizen of the French Republic, as a Minister of the French Republic, I'm spontaneously thinking about the Armenian genocide which hit this people, in the chapter of awful events of history, and whose 100th

commemoration marks this year in 2015, must be a lesson for the future, a path for sustainable peace.

Armenia also brings forward, to us, French people, a special positive meaning: many Armenians made our country richer, through culture to begin with. Therefore, I'm spontaneously thinking to the world-famous composer-singer who is a fabulous musician and word-and-story-teller: Charles Aznavour,

one of the strongest symbols of this living culture and of the French-speaking world. I'm also thinking about two eminent movie-makers from Marseille: Henri Verneuil, who arrived by boat in Marseille in 1924 as a little boy, then named Achod Malakian, and who remains, after he died in 2002, one of our greatest movie-makers; and Robert Guédiguian, movie-producer and movie-director who, after a PhD thesis about the perception of State by workers, makes popular movies alive, mirroring people's concerns.

As a Minister, in particular responsible for higher education and research, my thoughts go spontaneously to the French-Armenian University as well (ie : the 'UFAR' University or 'Université Franco-Arménienne') -, the largest French-speaking university outside France, and which is, with over 900 students and double degrees awarded, one of the best tangible examples of the successful cooperation between our two countries, Armenia and France.



Johanna Wanka
Minister
Federal Ministry of Education and Research

GERMANY

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

Bologna meant a major reform for Germany's higher education system. As for most continental European countries, Germany was not used to the Bachelor and Master structure in its system. The introduction of the Bologna reforms started an open debate on higher education structures and purposes, sometimes also conflictual. Consequently, though, this debate resulted in a constructive reform agenda for Germany, leading to a greater flexibility of learning pathways and a modernisation of curricula in higher education. The reforms set major impulses for boosting the mobility of students and teachers. Today, 300.000 foreign

students study in Germany and more than 130.000 Germans study abroad. This reflects that internationalization became a central part of the profile development of our higher education institutions.

How can higher education help the societies to meet the challenges they face today?

Higher education consists of three pillars: teaching and learning, research and outreach to civil society. It needs to create the knowledge and enlightenment in people to flexibly react towards today's and tomorrow's challenges by safeguarding our core values: the rule of law, democracy, civil and open discourse on the future of our societies in times of uncertainty.

What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

A perfect higher education system does not exist. Approximations are possible, if a higher education system is of high quality, open, flexible, diversified in its offers and institutions, giving students and staff the opportunities to share and create the cutting edge knowledge necessary for the welfare of our societies.

What is your expectation from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

I would like to turn the table: Students expect from European Ministers of higher education that they can study anywhere in the EHEA in an environment of teaching and learning that is underscored by newest cutting edge research and being able to work and live any place of their choosing in Europe. We as Ministers have the task to give our students that possibility. Yerevan will be another step to reach this goal.



What comes to your mind when you hear about Armenia? Germany in education and research for the welfare of our societies. The strong cooperation between Armenia and



GERMANY

Sabine Kunst
Minister for Science, Research and Culture
Brandenburg
Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and
Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of
Germany

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

Germany was one of the initial partners of the Bologna Process because the Bologna-context seemed to be right to enhance an output-oriented approach and to offer solutions in the areas of recognition of degrees, mobility and quality assurance in a globalized world. The European Higher Education Area was the common vision worth to make it become reality in cooperation with the different stakeholders.

And it was the right decision. First of all, in Germany the Bologna Process basically brought reforms on institutional level for the transition to the two-cycle-system. Competencies and learning goals were defined

with a view to the requirements of the employment market and are reviewed within the framework of a well developed accreditation system. Moreover, measures to improve the quality of teaching have been intensified.

Germany has since then created a comprehensive system of quality assurance with both program and system accreditation. The certification of the National Qualifications Framework for the higher education sector was completed.

Following the ratification of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, a legal framework for the recognition of foreign qualifications has been established in order to give universities a wide scope for the assessment of foreign qualifications. Transparency tools are in use and efforts regarding the national mobility strategy oriented on European benchmarks are supported.

In the context of Lifelong Learning, Germany has taken the opportunity to improve the permeability of its higher education system, e.g. by giving access to people with different vocational qualifications. And it is possible to credit knowledge and skills acquired outside the higher education sector towards higher education studies. Higher education institutions have learned to meet the demands and expectations of different groups of students.

After all, the Bologna Process because of its visions has been and will be in the future the framework for national and international dialogue with stakeholders, cross-border peer-learning and multinational projects.

How can higher education help the societies to meet the challenges they face today?

Modern societies are facing profound changes which have an impact on higher



education, such as demographic changes, economic crisis, and new technological developments. A successful higher education system enables young people to obtain the competencies and qualifications to meet the challenges deriving from these developments. Students are and will be prepared for their upcoming challenges not only within the labor market but also in their private live and as citizens in the civil society.

In Yerevan, we will reaffirm the key role of higher education in preparing graduates for employment as well as for life as active citizens in a democratic society, furthering personal development and developing a broad, advanced knowledge base. To resolve conflicts among members of the EHEA and with its neighbours we need knowledge, mutual understanding and the will to conduct dialogue.

What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

I am convinced that there is no such thing as one and only perfect higher education system. Each national political system, each society, each scientific culture and each time will have their own requirements. You know what the theologian Karl Barth said on the church holds also true for the education system: "Ecclesia semper reformanda est." ("The church is always to be reformed.") We have to cope with the tension of national regulations on the one hand and ever growing transnational commitments on the other. Therefore, I am convinced to the same degree that it is worth the effort to engage in this pan-european approach called EHEA in order to become quite competitive and attractive for young people from all over the world. A higher education system in Europe will become quite perfect for our modern world with its huge challenges by implementing our Bologna-commitments and to converge step by step

So there is still a long way to go for opening the higher education system for underrepresented groups, to give support for institutions, students and staff in

the areas of mobility, quality assurance, recognition, internationalization, employability and social dimension. I hope that we will be able to agree on the milestones at the Ministerial Conference in Yerevan.

What is your expectation from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

The BFuG and its working groups have prepared our meeting in Yerevan very well. Therefore, I am quite confident that we will be able to focus on a political debate about where we intend to go and to set priorities for 2020 and beyond. Besides all remaining differences, we have reason to be proud of our joint achievements over the past 16 years and we will reaffirm our strong commitment towards the EHEA. We have named the main obstacles and we will have to discuss how to overcome them. The European Approach for quality assurance for joint programs with joint degrees might be one of these themes. From the view of the German Länder, more and in depth monitoring and more in depth reporting from countries will not solve any problems. Instead, I would appreciate if we could agree on a core-set of criteria.

What comes to your mind when you hear about Armenia?

First of all, I wish to express my gratitude for the Armenian hospitality not only in the context of Bologna-meetings and discussions, but also for opening up our mind for the very interesting history and culture, for impressive landscapes and the policy of your country. We have learnt a lot about Armenia as one of the countries with ancient cultural heritage and with a modern and efficient educational system not only at the tertiary level. One of the highest literacy rates of the world is only one benchmark. And - as there is more to life than the education system - I associate chess with Armenia and I know Armenia is not only one of the leading chess nations but also successful in different other kinds of sport.



HUNGARY

Zoltán Maruzsa
Deputy Minister of State for Higher Education
Ministry of Human Capacities

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

The Bologna Process has paved the way for Hungary to be better connected to the European higher education. Through the adoption of a system based on three main cycles within higher education, and the closely related objective of the adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, Hungarian HE's possibilities to take an active part in European HE have been expanded.

As an important step in this process, the Referencing and Self-Certification Report of the Hungarian Qualifications Framework to the EQF and to the QF EHEA was recently accepted by the EQF AG in Brussels.

How can higher education help the societies to meet the challenges they face today?

The mission of modern tertiary education institutions is to utilize education, research and knowledge for the benefit of the society and the economy. By fulfilling its complex mission, tertiary education serves the community in various ways, but the most essential of the important functions is to facilitate social mobility.

Besides the social effects tertiary education plays a decisive role in the economy. The availability of a tertiary education system of the appropriate size and quality is a key aspect of the economic development of Hungary.

Our objective is to create an institutional network that enables all students to develop their talents, skills and knowledge, and enables them to enter the labour-market after graduation.

What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

We are of the opinion that for Hungary and for now, the key to the country's development is a national tertiary education sector with the appropriate size and quality that is able to meet both social and economic challenges. Therefore, the task for the next decade is to create the best tertiary education system of the region by building on our strengths, opportunities, resources and experience. We would like to develop a system that is based on performance, high quality, competitive knowledge and the shared success of professors and students.

What is your expectation from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

In our expectation, the Yerevan Ministerial Conference will redefine



priorities for 2020 and beyond, as well as the tools and working methods to achieve these goals, and will adopt all the documents, guidelines and programmes serving the above.

What comes to your mind when you hear about Armenia?
As a historian, the first thing that comes to my mind

about Armenia is its very long history, its extremely rich cultural heritage, and its definitive role as the first country to adopt Christianity. Related to this cultural perspective I have to mention that the unique alphabet of the Armenian language fascinates me. My second impression is the dynamic development and the steep economic growth of the country.



Transfer System. Kazakh model for credit system developed on the base of ECTS using the conversion factor.

Within the Program of academic mobility higher education institutions exchange students and teaching staff, invite foreign experts from Europe, USA, Southeast Asia, Russia, etc.

This program is being implemented in Kazakhstan during 4 years through state budget, extra-budgetary funds of HEIs and personal funds of academic mobility participants.

Thus about 2,600 students were trained abroad at the expense of state budget.

Within the program "Attracting foreign scientists to Kazakhstan HEIs" 6925 leading professors were invited from the world's top 500 universities according QS World University Ranking.

All graduates in Kazakhstan receive Diploma Supplement.

Kazakhstan has greatly advanced in the creation of independent system of accreditation.

Accreditation of universities is provided by independent agencies which are members to National Register of Accreditation Agencies. At present, the Register includes 8 foreign and 2 national agencies.

By the beginning of this year 66 universities have passed institutional accreditation in national agencies. Procedure of national accreditation has been passed by 44 HEIs on 321 study programs of higher and postgraduate education. 22 universities on 139 specialties of higher and postgraduate education passed international specialized accreditation.

Kazakhstan scientists and researchers are actively involved in European Research Area through the 7th Framework Programme of the European Union Horizon 2020. The Programme

helps to develop joint scientific projects. Within Horizon 2020 the number of ongoing research programs and projects of universities has been greatly increased.

Kazakhstan is aiming to attract students to the educational policy of HEIs, many universities created Student Ombudsman. In some universities students enable to design educational programs and choose their own learning paths.

At the state level actions are being taken to improve access to higher education for socially vulnerable categories of citizens. One-third of government grants intended for rural youth, orphans and children left without parental care, disabled persons, persons of Kazakh nationality who are not citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In addition to state assistance such students receive grants from universities, social partners and employers.

The second State program of industrial and innovative development began this year in 10 universities. As a result more than 28 thousand highly qualified specialists would be prepared in next 4 years in the field of petrochemicals, machinery, metallurgy, building materials, chemical and food industries.

Supervisory Boards were created in 10 major public universities.

The process of science, education and business integration is developing. In 2014 four leading universities began integration with scientific research institutes, its production bases and experimental farms. As a result, students have access to the educational practices and laboratories, research institutes and researchers teach the latest knowledge maximally close to production process.

Kazakhstan has implemented its own National Qualifications Framework comparable to the European Qualifications Framework. More than 20 sectoral qualifications frameworks and 345 professional standards were developed and approved. Kazakhstan is proceeding to self-certification of NQF.

In 2014 Kazakhstan system of education and science indicators had a positive trend. Performance indicators of the State Program of Development of Education were fulfilled.

The main tasks for higher education in 2015 are related to the social support of students, interaction with the labor market and development of university management system.

How can higher education help the societies to meet the challenges they face today?

Higher education is the most important social institution that functions to meet the needs of society, and therefore is obliged to respond to the current challenges and problems of modern society.

The processes of climate change, energy issues, economic crisis, acceleration of technological progress demand studying, carrying out basic researches, and also technological and social innovations. The higher education together with the world community has to be ready to solve these problems.

The person is a key resource of social and economic modernization of society. Developing Human Capital is fundamental of the innovative economy which is formed in the modern world and in the long term will allow withstanding before global changes and challenges.

New tendencies of world economic development create conditions for formation of new type of the economic environment - knowledge-based economy.

It is important to react in due time to changes in labor market and to adapt the higher education for requirements of the modern economy.

In the conditions of economic instability it is important to provide high-quality educational and research process that meets the needs and requirements of society, to provide academic mobility opportunities, to take steps for commercialization of scientific results by creation business incubators and technological clusters, to expand export of educational services.

Integration of education, science and industry becomes a decisive factor of development and growth of competitiveness of national economy. In 2017 Kazakhstan plans to hold an international exhibition EXPO-2017: Future Energy involving the world's best technologies and scientific developments.

What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

A student personality is a core of perfect higher education system. Student involved in the process of interactive learning. Teacher gives general directions without restricting the learning process by rigid boundaries.

Student-centered learning model improves the quality of education giving benefit for employment of student

REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN

Aslan Sarinzhipov
Minister
Ministry of Education and Science

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

Thanks to the attention and support of our President education system in Kazakhstan is constantly being modernized. Priorities for higher education determined in the State Program for Education Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011 - 2020.

Joining the Bologna Process allows to improve the system of higher education in accordance with international standards and experience of the EHEA countries.

Today three-level system of higher education ("bachelor-master-PhD") is legislatively stipulated.

All universities in Kazakhstan use National Credit



throughout his professional life.

Necessary conditions should be created to ensure employment of graduates. Partnership of HEIs with companies is the integral element of educational process and scientific researches. Students and teachers participate in programs of the academic mobility and cooperate with leading experts of foreign higher education institutions.

The system of the higher education has to use achievements of information technologies, expanding access to training for students from geographically remote regions, and also those who continues training at full labor employment.

Higher educational institutions make investments in training of the teaching staff, develop educational and methodical systems. Each teacher has possibility of carrying out scientific researches and professional development.

Perfect higher education system corresponds with the needs of society and anticipates them implementing the lifelong learning programs.

Integration of education, science and production is a special condition of a perfect higher education system. Higher educational institutions have to look for areas of scientific researches which will help to resolve the issues connected with welfare of the population and to create a strong basis for development of science and technologies.

What is your expectation from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

Within the BFUG Work Plan 2012-2015 EHEA countries have done important work.

In the first half of 2014 Greece and Kazakhstan co-chaired the Bologna Process. Our country had the opportunity to participate directly in the development of the European Higher Education

Area and to organize the BFUG Board meeting.

Kazakhstan has made all possible efforts to work effectively on the implementation of the goals and objectives of the Bucharest Communiqué and contribute to future Yerevan Ministerial Conference in 2015.

We are very grateful to the BFUG Secretariat for their support and fruitful cooperation.

We expect to discover new ideas and routes of Bologna Process development on medium-term prospect at the Ministerial Conference.

Common decisions will allow to synchronize further work in the field of modernization of the Kazakhstan higher education system with the priority areas of Bologna Process.

We hope that the Ministerial Conference will be an important platform for exchanging experiences, discussing current issues and trends in the field of higher education in participating countries.

Improvement of the higher education has to be carried out within world integration processes.

We expect that Yerevan Ministerial Conference will promote further cooperation, expansion of contacts in connection with the Bologna process implementation in different countries.

What comes to your mind when you hear about Armenia?

Armenia is a country rich in monuments of culture and nature. Everyone has ever heard about the legendary Mount Ararat and transparent Lake Sevan, skilled craftsmen of carpet weaving, ancient monasteries, traditional food - churchkhela, lavash.

The people of Kazakhstan and Armenia are united by positive experience of effective cooperation within the former Soviet Union.

Today our countries continue active cooperation. Armenia and Kazakhstan have high potential for development of the bilateral relations, expansion of cooperation within the Customs Union, strengthening of economic relations.



REPUBLIC OF
LATVIA

Mārīte Seile
Minister
Ministry of Education and Science

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

Looking back at the original vision of European Higher Education Area (EHEA) -to ensure EHEA higher education systems' compatibility and comparability in order to promote citizens' mobility, employability and European higher education competitiveness internationally, we can say that Latvia's higher education system has introduced several reforms in order to implement Bologna Process principles with aim that our students and graduates become more internationally competitive, therefore, both individuals and society has benefited. The introduction of Bologna Process principles and a number of common tools promote Latvian students mobility and employment globally.

Like in most central or Eastern European countries, education reforms started after the collapse of the USSR and they have been formed, shaped and speeded up by the Bologna process. Nowadays, Latvia operates a three cycle degree system, recognition of foreign qualifications or periods of study in accordance with the Lisbon Convention, a quality assurance system that is designed in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance, credit point system that is easily compatible with the ECTS, national qualifications framework and learning outcomes which are formulated for each course, module, study programme; recognition of prior learning or professional experience, development of joint study programmes, academic freedom and students' involvement in the processes of higher education and policy making.

At the same time, there are still areas that should be further developed and improved. Currently, one of Latvia's main priorities in higher education is internationalisation, with aim to facilitate mobility of students and academic staff and create flexible higher education that is internationally open and of high quality, as well as development of joint study programmes, especially at doctoral level, improve links with research institutions through creation of doctoral study centres, improve structure and curricula of study programmes in order to harmonize it and ensure credible information.

Quality assurance is one of the main pillars of the European Higher Education Area and one of the priority areas on Latvia's work agenda too. We have invested in creating a system in accordance with the revised Europe an Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance, and we are supporting national quality assurance agency that works in accordance with these standards and guidelines and is internationally competitive.

How can higher education help the societies to meet the challenges they face today?

Higher education plays a crucial role for the overcome today's challenges, both social and economic, and development new society. Higher education institutions are responding to the challenges of the changing world. Although higher education institutions teach skills and transfer knowledge, they also generate new knowledge in order to create knowledge-based society. For more and more people higher education is a key factor for a better job and careers, therefore it improves individuals' life. The economic growth, sustainability, and competitiveness of Latvia is primarily set by capacity of our human resources. Demography is the key factor, which has an impact on the future prospects in any sector including education. Along with intensification of the global competition in higher education and science and simultaneous decrease in the number of potential students in Latvia, the necessity is becoming more topical to make a flexible higher education system that is internationally open, widely available, and qualitative at the same time, namely, the one that is capable to satisfy the demand for specialists having the corresponding qualification in accordance with the needs of Latvian economy development and global education market trends, and that at the same time promotes personal growth and society development.

What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

In the twenty-first century, education is lifelong, and it is a part of our daily lives — a conscious choice and satisfaction; to know more and be able to do more, faster, more accurate; to learn and study with understanding and pleasure, learn from each other regardless of the social, economic, or health status; to learn in the environment that is adjusted to individual requirements using modern teaching aids.

Higher education is becoming increasingly important and focusing solely on employability is not enough anymore. The keyword for tomorrow's university is "development". Higher education does not only respond to labour market, it also creates one. Higher education has the potential of changing the economy by creating new knowledge, new social activities, new social discourse. Higher education is continually changing over the time and higher education institutions have a tendency to change their profiles, by providing new disciplines in order to attract more students and become internationally attractive. In Latvia's national policy it is defined that the main goal of the education development

policy - high-quality and inclusive education for personal development, human welfare, and reaching sustainable national growth. Higher education should be based on such basic principles as:

- Human-oriented education - focuses on personal growth of a person, lifelong development in every stage and sphere of life, thus creating prerequisites for development of each person's enterprising spirit and adaptation ability and achieving social inclusion, employment, and active civic participation;
- Education for sustainable development — education for sustainable development is a lifelong process, in order to be able to understand the local issues, as well as to view them in a global context, respectfully understand other cultures, and create a peaceful and sustainable society and its economic growth.
- Education that promotes knowledge-based society - knowledge, its use, and competencies needed in the labour market and in society in general are rapidly changing in the development process of the modern society. People need to constantly develop their knowledge, skills, and competencies in order to be able to adapt to the new age and social changes more successfully, as well as in order not to lose the job, and be socially and economically active.

Although, it is not possible to explain in one word what a perfect higher education is; rather it is a combination of different aspects mentioned above, we can say that education is a system of knowledge, skills and attitudes that nurtures respect towards others while maintaining respect towards yourself.

What is your expectation from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

Looking forward, it is necessary to strengthen our partnership and continue common work for achieving a common vision. Despite the progress made, there are still areas to address and obstacles to overcome. Progress is not the same in all the countries and many have yet to reach the common goals due to several factors, including political and economic challenges. It's time to look back, analyse the progress achieved and improve implementation. Also, it's time to set up new priorities and assure our political commitment to work in accordance with these priorities.

What comes to your mind when you hear about Armenia?

The mountains of Ararat and Noah's Ark came after the great flood



REPUBLIC OF
LITHUANIA

Dainius Pavalkis
Minister
Ministry of Education and Science

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

First of all, it is very important to note that Bologna Process has given us an opportunity to see our higher education system in a different light. European context highlighted a diversity of approaches and we were able to see our own national system in a wider context. The opportunity to engage in a dialogue with other countries and learn from their experiences became a valuable tool in the process of re-thinking our traditional methods, and identifying their strengths and weaknesses. Being a part of Bologna Process has helped us to implement a lot of new tools that shaped our higher education into what it is today.

Also, Bologna Process has enabled our higher education institutions to successfully compete in both European and international market. Bologna Process is a common European identity that is very distinctive from other regions. Common agreements within EHEA strengthens quality assurance tools and at the same time makes it even more attractive in the international context.

Finally, participation in Bologna Process enabled Lithuanian higher education to become more liberal and student-oriented. It helped us to focus on quality assurance, thus benefitting students, social partners and the whole society in general.

However, it is also important to highlight that the process is not finished, and a further close collaboration is necessary in order to move forward and achieve common goals both on national and international level.

How can higher education help the societies to meet the challenges they face today?

In regard to meeting the challenges of today, the value of higher education is immense, and it cannot be underestimated. In fact, we cannot imagine life without the opportunities for societal and individual development provided by higher education. It enables societies to broaden perspectives, constantly challenges current views in favour of fresh ones, allowing not only to go hand in hand with ever-growing pace of global development but also to actively participate in creating better life for individuals.

There is no doubt that higher education also significantly contributes to the development of societies through research, technological and economic growth. The most obvious societal

V I L N I U S



benefits of higher education include economic growth, longer life expectancy, higher salaries, more active citizenship, as well as lower unemployment rates, as well as lower crimes rates.

What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

A perfect higher education system, in my opinion, should provide an open growing environment for society and individuals, allowing teachers, researchers and students to work together discovering new frontiers and innovative approaches, to reach common societal and personal goals. The perfect higher education thus would allow to individualise learning, teaching and research tools and methods necessary in order to maximise the potential of each stakeholder.

Furthermore, I cannot imagine a perfect higher education system being enclosed in the ivory tower of academic concerns. The fast changing world requires universities to foster close ties with everyday life,

economy and business, benefitting public and private needs of everybody involved.

What is your expectation from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

Yerevan Ministerial Conference will be a very good opportunity to exchange views regarding the new vision, the main challenges and priorities and the best ways to achieve our common goals of the EHEA. It is very topical to discuss fundamental values of higher education in the context of the current political, socio-economic and demographic challenges.

What comes to your mind when you hear about Armenia?

I am fortunate to have had the possibility to visit Armenia seven times. All of these visits bring back only the best memories of your amazing country – mountains, Lake Sevan, delicious food. One of the most impressive memories was the Easter celebration at Echmiadzin Cathedral.

L U X E M B O U R G



for a young university in a small country. Especially the Bologna key objectives "Mobility" and "Recognition of qualifications" are of central value to a small country. Indeed a state, where the borders of its neighbors are reachable within a driving hour, will only be able to achieve international competitiveness if a high mobility rate (of students and staff) is guaranteed. Hence, the reason why Luxembourg is striving to facilitated or automatic portability of qualifications.

How can higher education help the societies to meet the challenges they face today?

Higher education not only helps societies to meet the challenges they face but plays a key role in shaping them. One of the main missions of HE isto strengthen the critical thinking skills and hence consolidate the democratic values in within the society. By supporting student and staff mobility and integrating minorities, HE holds one method to foster open-mindedness and tolerance.

An additional goal of HE is to set the ground for a better employability, task that shouldn't be underestimated in the current labour market situation. Encouraging lifelong learning for citizens of all ages and of various cultural and social backgrounds is one way to respond to the present challenges. (The devise is to train and retrain the society.) Ideally the education system is capable to align its competences to the societal needs and thus to respond quickly to the demands of the world of work.

What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

A perfect higher education system is probably one that manages the complex balancing act of offering excellent



teaching (based on the Bologna ideas) and of promoting high-quality research (based on the EU2020 strategy and the ERA priorities) for the sake of the economy and the society at large, setting the ground for an emancipated well-educated population as well as catalyzing inclusion and integration of minorities. This has been the vision of the University of Luxembourg since its foundation in 2003. To aimat excellence in research and higher education, cross-border academic exchange and cooperative institutional relationships should be strongly anchored in the university systems.

In order to maintain a high quality level, governments should encourage international collaborations/exchanges and enable cross-border evaluations involving all stakeholders, an essential stone in setting the foundation for an authentic trust-based European Higher Education Area.

What is your expectation from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

EHEA goes well beyond the European Union and as such we have to reaffirm theimportance of the European dialogue between EHEA countries and with its neighboring countries.The Bologna process (and its follow-up) is an example of successful European cooperation that should continue to exist. This should be one of the messages of the Yerevan Ministerial

Conference. Furthermore, we should strive to dissolve the discrepancies between countries in the implementation of commonly agreed standards.To achieve this, we should further commit during the Ministerial Conference, to peer-learning activities as working method.

However without diminishing the importance of the technical issues, we have to decide on the ways to tackle the challenges we are currently facing. Those challenges and strategies presented in the "Bologna Process revisited" should be transformed into more concrete actions and timelines. We shall also re-emphasize at the Conference the communication oftheEHEA vision and aims to all stakeholders, includingour societies.

What comes to your mind when you hear about Armenia?

I associate Armenia to Franz Werfel's famous novel "The Forty Days of Musa Dagh". Furthermore the Mount Ararat as the place of landing of Noah's Ark, nowadays on Turkish territory, played a central role in the Armenian history and nation-building process. However, most Western European citizens (including myself) have probably never been directly in touch with the country and its citizens. The Yerevan Ministerial Conference is the perfect occasion to follow up Jean Asselborn's visit to Armenia in 2012 (Luxembourg Minister of Foreign Affairs).



LUXEMBOURG

Hansen Marc
*Secretary of State for Higher Education and Research
Ministry of Higher Education and Research*

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

Although higher education institutions (HEI) existed in Luxembourg before 1999, the University of Luxembourg was founded only after the Bologna process. Luxembourg could therefore start on the right foot, whereas most of the EHEA countries had to fundamentally change their existing national higher education (HE) systems.

Besides being one of the pillars of the university law, the process also ensured the embedding of the University of Luxembourg in a major common European framework. The resulting partnerships with HEI in the Greater Region, in the EHEA countries and in other parts of the world undeniably represent an important network



REPUBLIC OF
MACEDONIA

Abdilaqim Ademi
Minister
Ministry Of Education And Science

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

The different dimensions of the Bologna Process provided many obvious favourable benefits for our higher education system. The most respectful benefits for us are: increasing the number of enrolled and graduated students, increasing teaching and research capacities of the academic staff thanks to the different projects and programmes, facilitation of recognition process, study programmes updating, enhanced collaboration among different stakeholders and integration processes at the university.

How can higher education help the societies to meet the challenges they face today?

The University open to the society needs and its recognized role in socio-economic development are the bases for our higher education policies. In line with that role is the increasing of the trust in academia by quality assurance mechanisms. Help of the higher education to the society is a matter of a very simple rule, as much the knowledge is shared that much it is multiplied.

What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

Higher Education System that is able to anticipate and make the others to believe that such visions will develop the personalities and entire society.

What is your expectation from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

All previous Bologna Ministerial Communiqués were markers for our higher education policies development and besides all difficulties that we were faced during the process of implementation, we have been persistent in achieving the goals putting all our efforts in that process. Now, naturally, from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference we expect a kind of recognition for the efforts and a new way of the Bologna Process. On that way we shall have more precise measurement of the performance that will result with better communication among all stakeholders.

What comes to your mind when you hear about Armenia?

The Armenian flute music, deep, gentle and sensitive as the apricot trees from which the flutes are made.





MALTA

Joseph Caruana
Permanent Secretary
Ministry for Education and Employment

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

The Bologna Process has helped to structure the Maltese higher education system, making it more transparent and widening it to reach more students. In addition, it helped students to become more mobile by having Maltese qualifications recognized in other countries.

How can higher education help the societies to meet the challenges they face today?

Higher education should aim to assist working adults in acquiring further skills and knowledge, instilling core human values, and strengthening social structures for

the benefit of future generations. Higher education programmes which also address the needs of today's industries can help in achieving this vision. This would prepare students better to look for employment in a highly competitive global economy as well as for the challenges they would be facing at the place of work.

Empowerment and motivation are two important factors that lead prospective students towards seeking higher education programmes out of their own initiative. They appreciate the benefits gained from engaging in higher education and seek learning opportunities beyond compulsory schooling. Undeniably, this approach can be further promulgated through the availability of more on-line education resources. This would make higher education more attractive and feasible, especially for working adults who have family responsibilities.

What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

In a perfect setting, a higher education system should simultaneously offer equity and equality to everyone. Equity in higher education leads to accessible and fair education which is understood and recognised by all countries. On the other hand, equality would help all students irrespective of their gender, nationality, race and income to engage in higher education, leading to equal achievements and equal career opportunities. This would help to close the gap between those students who are more advantaged educationally, culturally and economically, and those who are not.

What is your expectation from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

The Yerevan Ministerial Conference



should strive to reach a common understanding across all participating countries on a number of issues related to higher education. A concerning factor is the "functionality" aspect of higher education programmes. Should HE help students in finding a job matching their area of study, or should it promote the intrinsic motivation of a student to further studies out of pure interest in a particular subject.

Another issue that needs to be considered at this conference is the individual's right to learn. This is especially so in countries undergoing political unrest

or any other type of distress which impinge on the availability of higher education programmes as well as the recognition awarded qualifications in other countries. These students need to have their right for education safeguarded and the necessary support should be provided.

What comes to your mind when you hear about Armenia?

It is certainly an interesting country and look forward to learning more about its rich culture and history.



of a democratic society and qualified workforce in the European labour market, as well as that this is delivered in compliance with the new European standards.

Major novelties brought by the new Law on Higher Education include:

- *Integrated university;*
- *Three-cycle system;*
- *Introduction of ECTS;*
- *Introduction of Diploma Supplement;*
- *Council of Higher Education;*
- *Promotion of mobility;*
- *Quality Assurance (internal and external)*

One of the main developments concerning the Bologna Process in Montenegro was the implementation of the ECTS system and issuing Diploma Supplement to students, as practical tools for enhancing international transparency and facilitating academic and professional recognition of qualifications. The Bologna Process has also highlighted the important role of quality assurance system in carrying out institutional accreditation of higher education providers, whether public or private, and in carrying out external evaluation of HEIs. With the introduction of the Bologna Process into our higher education system, the Council for Higher Education, a governmental body responsible for quality assurance, was established for the first time. It functions, among other things, as an accreditation body and conducts accreditation process through its commissions. In accordance with the newly adopted Law on Higher Education, evaluation of an institution is conducted by a foreign accreditation agency for quality assurance within the reaccreditation procedure. It represents one of the benefits of the Bologna Process for Montenegro, bearing in mind that our HE system is small, as well as the confirmation of our openness to full implementation of cross border quality assurance activity. Mobility of staff and students within

Predrag Bošković
Minister
Ministry of Education

MONTENEGRO

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

Montenegro has been involved in the Bologna Process since 2003. In the same year that Montenegro officially became a Bologna signatory country, Montenegrin Law on Higher Education, harmonized with the Bologna principles, was adopted. At the time of creating and adopting the new Law there was only one public higher education institution operating in Montenegro, the University of Montenegro. The overall goal of the Law was to provide higher education institutions in Montenegro with maximum autonomy in their activities, particularly in the academic field, along with minimum mediation of the state, except when required otherwise for the purpose of protecting the public interest. Also, the aim was to enable that the mission of the University becomes educating young people to be qualified citizens

the established European Higher Education Area has been a part of the Bologna Process from the beginning. Given that the Bologna Declaration promotes mobility by overcoming obstacles, as one of the very important aims of the process, and owing to the possibility of credit accumulation and transfer, our students and academic staff are very motivated to use some mobility schemes, scholarships to continue their studies abroad, especially in developed western countries. One of the very evident facts is that with the introduction of Bologna process a considerably increased number of students has been enrolled during the past twelve years, compared to the number of students that had been enrolled in the past.

In order to ensure the full implementation of the Lisbon Convention, ENIC centre, as a major tool for Lisbon Strategy Implementation was established within the Ministry of Education; it maintains constant contact with all the other ENIC/NARIC centres throughout Europe, and exchanges information concerning various education systems, as well as different problems in the recognition process.

How can higher education help the societies to meet the challenges they face today?

One of the characteristics of a contemporary society is the central role of knowledge in the production processes. It makes knowledge a pillar of the wealth and power of nations. Knowing that education is about acquiring skills, but also about acquiring values and attitudes and preparation for the labor market, active participation of higher education institutions in building of democratic society, where education does not have elitism label, is of the essential importance. Education has achieved its full target if it fulfills its primary mission, which, among other things, is reflected in educated people being an active factor of creating a democratic society and enabling personal development of individuals.

Accelerating scientific and technical changes will lead to the need for continuous acquisition of new skills and competences, so it is important that every individual, regardless of their age or professional status, has the ability to acquire new, different and useful skills. HE is to create such kind of learning conditions which will enable the acquisition of skills such as problems solving, entrepreneurship, critical thinking, learning to learn, as key to improving the quality of life for both individuals and society as a whole. The needs of a modern, dynamic society perpetuated the concept of lifelong education as well as learning in different contexts of life, which creates the need for changes in pedagogical and andragogical

approaches and learning strategy.

What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

A perfect higher education system is a system that is fully in line with the needs of highly educated people. Such kind of system would imply education aligned with the needs of society and environment, development and research needs.

What is your expectation from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

As it is well known, funding higher education, building research capacity, internationalization and widening participation and quality are amongst the key issues concerning higher education. All of the Bologna signatories are striving towards build learning environments that better engage and support students. It ultimately leads to improved academic success and development of professional and personal capabilities. As higher education is seen as one of the key drivers of social well-being and economic performance in the knowledge economy, EHEA countries are additionally obliged to ensure trust in each other's higher education systems, inclusive and more accessible paths to under-represented and non-traditional groups of students, such as students from low socio-economic backgrounds, older students and students who may be working alongside their studies, enhanced quality of learning and teaching, removing obstacles for recognition of qualifications and prior learning, intensifying mobility, further development of qualification frameworks, offering more routes into higher education and more flexible study paths. I am sure that our common commitments and intensified work on the achievement of these goals will contribute to further successful development of EHEA.

What comes to your mind when you hear about Armenia?

Montenegro and Armenia are longtime friends, and on this basis, I am convinced that we will build our future cooperation. Our friendship is the best confirmation that the geographical distance is no obstacle for cooperation progress and strengthening of numerous ties between our two countries. In particular, the sympathies and closeness of our peoples have come to the fore through the twinning of our major cities Podgorica and Yerevan. Many generations of Podgorica inhabitants remember close cooperation with Yerevan during the 70s and 80s of the last century, when a great number of our primary and secondary school students visited Armenia. One of the streets in Podgorica carries the name Yerevan Street.



NORWAY

Torbjørn Røe Isaksen
Minister
Ministry of Education and Research

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

I think we have benefitted from the Bologna Process in many ways. For instance, it allows Norway to have a say in the development of European higher education policy, and it provides us with a platform to learn about other countries and systems. We also put a lot of the Bologna elements into practice in the last reform of our higher education system 12 years ago. That has given us a system more in harmony with the rest of Europe.

How can higher education help the societies to meet the challenges they face today?

Higher education plays an essential role in helping

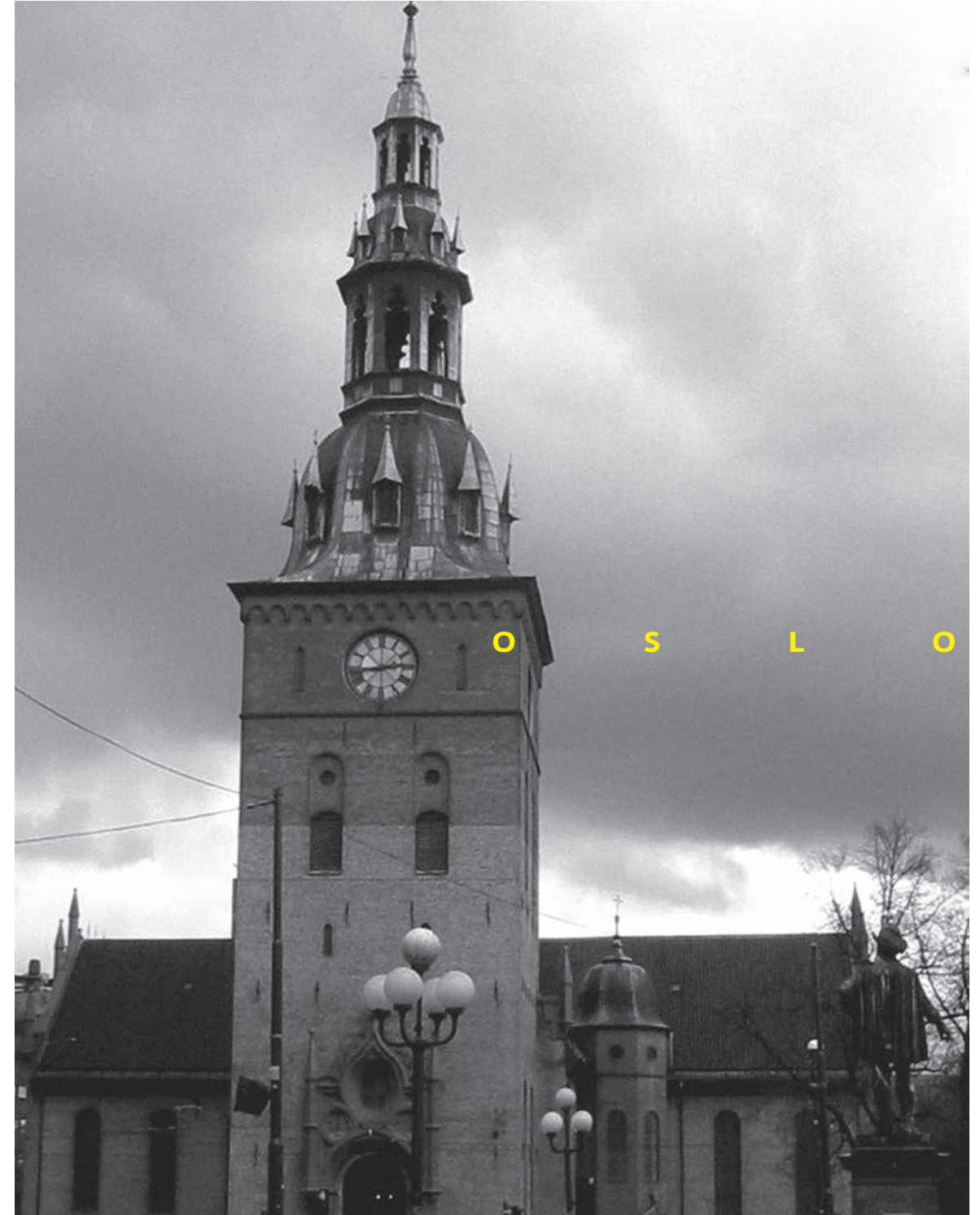
society to face both current and future challenge. If we are going to manage a transition to a greener economy, if we are going to solve the climate crisis, if we are going to find a cure for cancer, then we need innovation. And higher education and research of utmost quality is a prerequisite for innovation – both with regards to educating a competent workforce and coming up with breakthroughs that alter the way we think.

What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

As a conservative, I generally regard attempts at devising a perfect system from scratch with skepticism. I believe that you have to work with the system you've got and implement policies to improve it, step by step. In Norway, we see that we have too many small higher education institutions, and that our resources are spread out too widely. That's why we are currently working to merge some of our institutions. We believe that larger, more solid institutions will be better able to face our future challenges and compete internationally.

What is your expectation from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

First and foremost, I look forward to discussing current issues in higher education with my European colleagues. As members of the Bologna process, we all acknowledge that higher education and research plays a pivotal role in helping us overcome current and future challenges. That gives us a common platform upon which to implement policies that can bring the higher education systems in our countries into closer harmony.



What comes to your mind when you hear about Armenia?

The first thing that comes to mind is that Armenia was the first country to adopt Christianity as its state religion

– and that it is a country with a history that has always fascinated me. That is why I am very much looking forward to visiting Armenia for the first time.



ROMANIA

Sorin Mihai Cîmpeanu
Minister
Ministry of Education and Scientific Research

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

Re: Romania is among the countries that signed in 1999 the Bologna Process. Since then, Romania voluntarily committed to and realized the aligning of the higher education policies to the political objectives promoted by the Bologna Process.

As a result, the higher education system in Romania has undergone a series of fundamental changes in regard to the compatibility of the legislation, promotion of the national public policies, the creation of new institutional structures, regulations and policies at the universities' level, ensuring the quality of education and an increased involvement of the students in the educational process.

How can higher education help the societies to meet the challenges they face today?

Re: The mission of higher education is to generate and transfer knowledge to society by:

a) initial and continuing training at the university level, in order to achieve the personal development, the individual's employability and the need for competences of the socio-economic environment;

b) scientific research, development, innovation and technology transfer through individual and collective creation, in the field of science, engineering science, art, literature, by ensuring the sport and physical performance, development and exploitation and dissemination of results.

Education and training are at the heart of Europe 2020 Strategy and of several other European documents. Tertiary education in particular, as it is stipulated by the EU Agenda for the modernization of the Higher Education in the European states "... plays a crucial role in the progress of the individual and society and in providing of the highly skilled human capital and of the effective citizens that Europe needs to create jobs, growth and prosperity".

In the same time, among the priorities set out in the report of the ET2020 working group on the second cycle, it is mentioned the importance of the developing effective and innovative forms of networking, cooperation and partnership between education and training, and a wide range of stakeholders, including social partners, private companies, research institutions and civil society. Connecting tertiary education to the economy and society is a priority to foster economic and social development and to meet the challenges coming from society.

B U C H A R E S T



What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

Re: A "perfect" higher education sector has to work as an engine of economic growth, to contribute through scientific research to knowledge development, to promote the values of democracy, to ensure the personal development of all students, without any discrimination and thus to contribute to social cohesion.

The strategic framework for the development of tertiary education in Romania in the next period is included in Romania's growth strategy defined in National Competitiveness Strategy 2014-2020 and takes into account the identifying of the needs to solve skills constraints, for a gradual shift to an economy based more on knowledge and, consequently, to an increased demand for highly skilled jobs.

The strategic framework for the development of tertiary education in Romania promotes tertiary sector as the engine of economic growth based on knowledge and high qualifications, which are vital to the continuous development of Romania.

Within the vision for improving the higher education sector in Romania, this particular field will create a large, inclusive group of graduates who can develop the Romanian society and to successfully face the competition in the global economy. Higher education institutions will be able to catalyze creativity and

innovation within the Romanian society at large, and, in particular, it will support industry in the development of goods and services.

What is your expectation from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

Re: Our expectations concerning the Yerevan Ministerial Conference aim at a fruitful exchange of valuable opinions regarding the key elements of the EHEA. At the same time, it would be needed an open discussion on the future challenges of higher education in Europe and in the world, which to lead to a consensus on the future evolution of the Bologna Process.

What comes to your mind when you hear about Armenia?

Re: The first thought when we hear about Armenia is directed to its long lasting and rich cultural heritage. Then, we also think at the Romanian personalities of Armenian ancestry, especially, the famous mathematician, astronomer and politician Spiru Haret, who laid down the foundations of the public education in Romania, in the 19th century, the famous art collector and founder of the Museum Zambaccian, Krikor Zambaccian, the world-known gerontologist, doctor Ana Aslan, as well as the famous jazz musician Harry Tavitian, and the list going on until the present days.



RUSSIAN
FEDERATION

Dmitry Livanov
Minister
Ministry of the Education and Science

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

The Bologna process has had a considerable impact on the system of higher education in the Russian Federation.

The main developments in the Russian higher education system, which are in line with the Bologna process, are:

- the Unified State Examination which serves the dual purpose of the final attestation in secondary education and complies the admission requirements for all prospective students interested in pursuing a higher education degree. It has increased accessibility to higher education for applicants from the remote regions of Russia.

- A three-cycle higher education system: bachelor, master and doctorate, has been implemented. The total number of graduates in Bachelor and Master Programmes is around 90%.

The cross-border cooperation in higher education is significantly increased both in the European and Asian regions. Sustainable collaboration within EHEA and the experience of the Bologna process facilitate further development of higher education.

How can higher education help the societies to meet the challenges they face today?

The Russian Federation, as a member of the European Higher Education Area, shares the goals of increasing accessibility to higher education. Russia still remains one of the countries with the highest number of people having a higher education degree. Russian authorities support higher education, as a basic instrument of bridging the gaps between individuals in the society.

In your opinion, what makes a perfect higher education system?

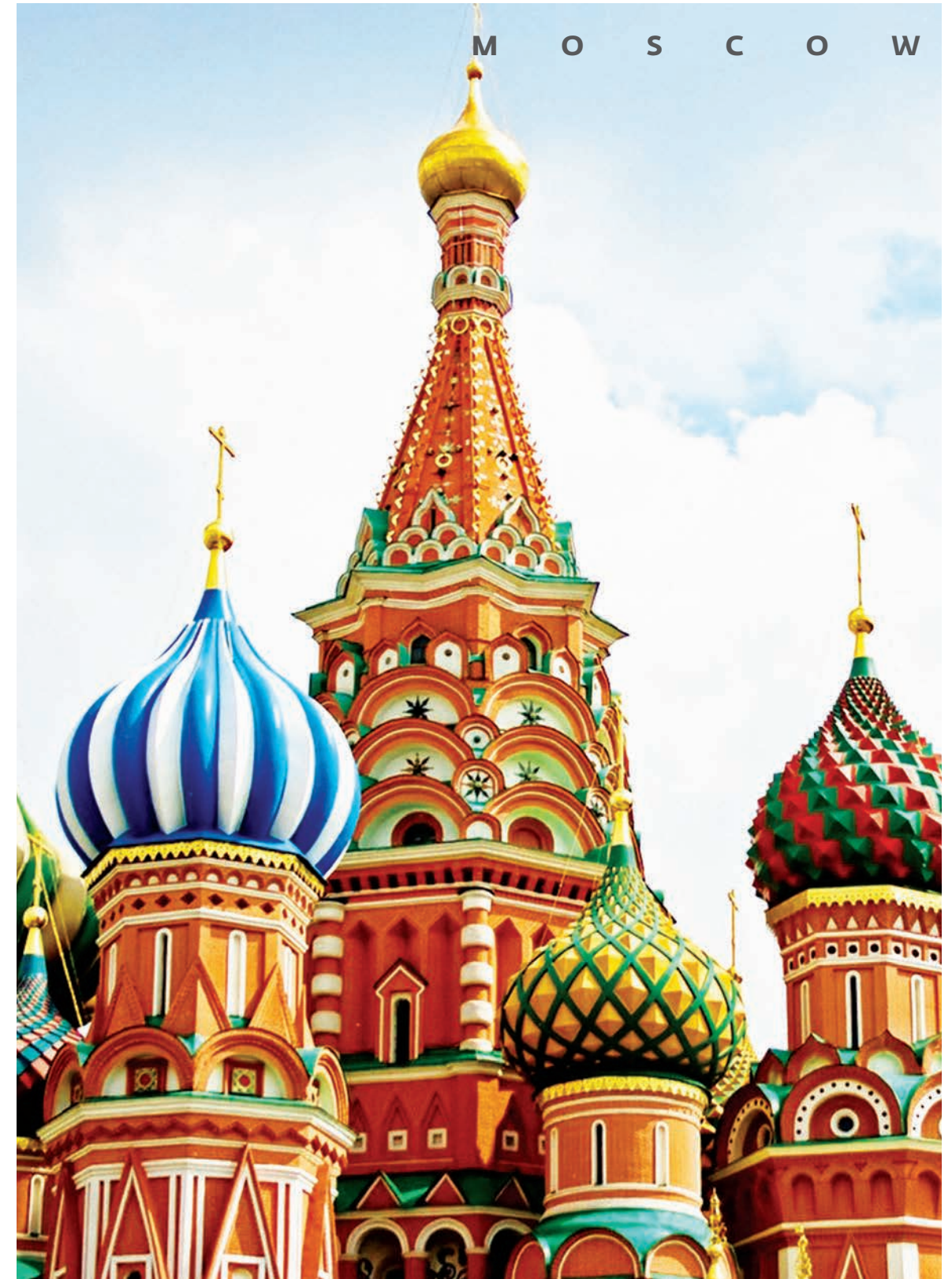
A perfect higher education system is based on the principles of equality and meets social, labor market and personality demands.

What are your expectations from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

An open dialogue with the EHEA countries, which may lead to the definition of new horizons of cooperation in higher education and internationalization.

What comes to your mind when you hear about Armenia?

Hospitality, modern trends, fruitful cooperation, Ararat.



E D I N B U R G H



SCOTLAND

Angela Constance
Minister
Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

Scotland is one of the highest performing countries within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Our focus - to put learners at the centre, to increase choice and flexibility, to promote student mobility and to widen access - fits well with its key themes.

How can higher education help the societies to meet the challenges they face today?

Societies across the globe are facing the challenge of tackling growing economic inequality. Our approach to widening access to higher education aims to ensure that all those in society, whatever their background,

have an equal opportunity to access higher education, which can improve their chances of gaining qualifications required for a successful career and to fulfill their potential. Our new Commission on Widening Access will advise the Scottish Government on how we can realise this ambition of equality of access to higher education. Research is also key to our economic growth and prosperity. Our eight innovation centres – where universities and industry collaborate to drive innovation – have the potential to generate up to £1.5 billion and around 5,000 jobs for the economy through sectors such as energy, aquaculture and construction. This is a prime example of how higher education research can make a contribution to the economy, society, culture, public policy, health, the environment and quality of life beyond academia.

What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

A perfect higher education system is based on the ability to learn, not the ability to pay, ensures that students can access the financial support they need to study whatever their background, and encourages equal representation from all backgrounds and groups in society. A perfect system provides learners with the opportunity to acquire the skills and attributes to both contribute to and benefit from future economic success. It recognises the value of autonomy in universities but also that this autonomy needs to be exercised responsibly.

What is your expectation from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

I expect lively debate on all aspects of the European Higher Education Area including the ways we can cooperate best to achieve our aims. I hope that the non-EHEA guests at the fourth Bologna



Policy Forum will participate fully in the joint plenaries so both groups can share best practice for higher education together. Delegates who might not have visited Armenia before will welcome this opportunity to learn about your country and culture. I hope that the event will help to strengthen the bonds and friendships between Ministers and officials in the EHEA to ensure even better cooperation in future.

What comes to mind when you hear about Armenia?

Before I began this role last November and learned about the conference, my knowledge of Armenia was

somewhat limited (except for Scotland's recent defeat to Armenia in futsal!). Now that I have learned more about your beautiful country, its unique language and its diverse culture, I see a great many things of which the people of Armenia are rightfully proud. From photographs I've seen of the architecture I am struck by some of the similarities between our own historic churches and, in particular, the ornate and skilfully carved stonework and crosses in both Armenia and Scotland. I am also aware that Armenia has had great success in producing chess champions, and that her people are warm and welcoming. I'm sure this conference will be a great success.

B R A T I S L A V A



SLOVAK
REPUBLIC

Juraj Draxler
Minister
Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

We – just like most countries involved – perceive the Bologna System as a set of tools helping internationalize higher education within EHEA in the broadest sense possible and helping intensify the internal cooperation of universities. Thanks to the Bologna System the study content is more transparent as well as education outputs related to the individual education degrees achieved. The introduction of the credit system has supported better comparability within one university, universities in Slovakia as well as universities abroad. Another positive aspect of the system is the fact that after acquiring an

education degree at one study grade it is possible to continue in studying also in another field of study whether within one university or in another country.

How can university education help the society respond to challenges that it is facing nowadays?

The current society is developing in all areas at a quicker rate than ever before. In this context the labour market requirements keep changing. The existing and potential employees are required by enterprises to command of new knowledge and skills. Therefore, it is necessary to provide them with quality education where the highest qualification rate can be expected exactly in case of university education. Currently, the crucial fact for universities is to intensify their cooperation with the entrepreneurial sector, in particular in industry branches being the most relevant ones for the economy of the respective country, and subsequently to reflect the knowledge resulting from this cooperation in preparing their new study programmes or in innovating the existing study programmes. Therefore, there is a challenge consisting of steps to be taken to enhance the rate of success of graduates in finding a job.

In your opinion, what is a perfect higher education system?

A system being open to all citizens regardless of their age, sex, social status enabling to achieve an education degree for the cultural, social, and economic development of their personality and enabling a dignified life in the society.

What are your expectations regarding the Ministerial Conference in Yerevan?

A return to the roots of the Bologna



Process and draft recommendations that will direct higher education to fulfill the current challenges in Europe and worldwide. At the same time, we expect that the implementation will not be a matter of only governments of the involved countries, and that the European Commission, Council of Europe, and UNESCO will keep participating in this process. Moreover, we consider important to ensure that in the coming years

the Bologna Process is not limited by the European countries only.

What crosses your mind when you hear of Armenia?

The Caucasus Mountains, the first country to have adopted Christianity as its official religion, many monasteries, and unique alphabetical writing system.



SPAIN

José Ignacio Wert
Minister
Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

The benefits expected from the integration of the Spanish higher education system into the Bologna Process have been, so far, very positive. However, the objectives originally intended are far from being completely achieved. The direction taken seems to be adequate as long as the process advances towards the common agreed vision of an area of higher education in which students and staff can move freely with full and fair academic and professional recognition of their qualifications and employability of graduates in the whole area is really enhanced.

Spain has already completed most of the structural

reforms needed to participate in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA): 3 cycle structure, ECTS, National Qualifications Framework, Quality Assurance, Diploma Supplement, etc... This is probably not enough if the common framework and tools jointly developed in the Bologna Process are not evenly implemented in the 47 countries, thus, hindering the effective achievement of the common vision.

The completion of the common framework and tools at national and institutional levels is a must for all the Bologna countries to really benefit from the EHEA. The project is now in a turning point where the right decisions and steps need to be taken to make it more relevant to the present societal needs, contributing to the shifting towards a new model of sustainable socioeconomic growth based on knowledge (education, research and innovation) with more and better jobs.

How can higher education help the societies to meet the challenges they face today?

We are moving towards a knowledge-based economy where education, in general, and Higher Education more specifically, are more important than ever. The current economic crisis has proved that unqualified workers have fewer and worse paid job opportunities. We need, therefore, to increase the educational level of our citizens in order to prevent a new crisis. It is also necessary to undertake initiatives so as to confront other critical challenges, such as the underemployment of graduates, the imbalance between job market demand and offer, the promotion of entrepreneurship among the graduate students, etc.



What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

There is not a perfect higher education system as our societies are not perfect, but a good higher education system, aiming for excellence, would be one that:

- provides learners with the cognitive and non-cognitive transversal capabilities, competences and skills that are needed in a modern society to find a job and to become active citizens;
- offers high quality of teaching and learning with special focus on learning outcomes;
- promotes excellence in research, and relevance in the contribution to the innovation needs of the public and private sectors;
- stimulates entrepreneurship aiming at employability;
- is engaged with the needs of the territorial environment including public administrations, business and the civil society;
- pays attention to the new pedagogical innovations and use of new technologies for knowledge delivery.
- follows a student-centered learning approach.

What is your expectation from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

As mentioned before, the EHEA has now reached a crossroad. After 15 years, the Bologna process is not fully implemented and some obstacles for the free movement of students and staff still remain, especially to those issues concerning the recognition of qualifications. This must be the priority for the next years.

We still need to overcome some misunderstandings if not reluctance from some important stakeholders. We need to convince our institutions, higher education staff and students of the need to jointly achieve a common vision and reach the intended objectives. The EHEA should be perceived as a joint undertaking and not as something imposed by the educational authorities.

I do expect confirmation and updating from the EHEA regarding a higher commitment with its original goal:

the free movement of students and staff. Then, we have to put more emphasis in getting an even implementation along the 47 Bologna countries, helping those systems lagging behind in the implementation of the structural reforms needed to make our higher education structures more comparable and compatible, removing barriers to mobility and recognition.

I also expect from my colleagues a significant political commitment to be able to communicate to the higher education stakeholders and to the civil society at large that we are decided to renew our compromise with the EHEA, with the purpose of contributing to the socioeconomic welfare of our societies.

Finally, it will be desirable to achieve an increasing opening of the EHEA to cooperate with other regions of the world, where common higher education areas are under development, in many cases having the EHEA as a reference. For historical and cultural reasons Spanish links with Latin American higher education institutions should be capitalized as well as with the South Mediterranean region that will be the focus area of the Bologna Policy Forum in Yerevan.

What comes to your mind when you hear about Armenia?

The possibility of visiting Armenia, a country that has its roots in one of the oldest world's civilizations, is of high relevance for our common targets. We are also conscious of its rich cultural heritage and we do have in common the special and, perhaps, privileged situation as geographical borders of the EHEA with other continents. Both countries could play an important role in the support of international cooperation with our non-European neighbors, including, of course Latin America at the other side of the Atlantic. Our cooperation with Armenia during these three years, since it took over the BFUG Secretariat, has been excellent. Spain sincerely appreciates the work your country has undertaken in order to make the EHEA a reality.



SWEDEN

Helene Hellmark Knutsson
Minister for Higher Education and Research
Ministry of Education and Research

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

Creating a European area of higher education has been a key driver to raising quality in higher education in Sweden. The Bologna process was one of the main reasons behind a reform of the Swedish higher education structure in 2005. Since then, Swedish higher education is a natural part of the European Higher Education Area. Obstacles to student mobility are much smaller than before and students are increasingly employable. Mutual trust based on a shared approach to quality assurance is fundamental for the development of a common European area of higher education.

How can higher education help the societies to meet the challenges they face today?

Increased knowledge is important for both individuals and societies. That is why we need to make all levels of education a political priority. Higher education and research, with a high level of international cooperation, is crucial for handling the environmental and societal challenges we face today. Increased knowledge drives development in decreasing inequality, fighting climate change and increasing the pace and scope of innovation. We need to invest in higher education and research in order to meet these challenges, short-term as well as long-term.

What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

Our goal is to make higher education of high quality available and accessible all around Sweden. Going into higher education should be a real possibility for everyone, regardless of background. Higher education plays two equally important roles: Providing the job market with skilled labour, and strengthening our democratic societies. I am convinced that higher education and research are mutually reinforcing practices, and both must be given high priority at all levels in our institutions in order to reach excellent quality.

We need to emphasize that higher education is a public good, which benefits individuals and societies alike. Furthermore, an international higher education system should be characterized by mobility and mutual understanding, as well as an acceptance for certain national differences.

S T O C K H O L M



What is your expectation from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

I hope to have fruitful discussions with my European colleagues, and to take further steps in underlining the importance of the European Higher Education Area.

What comes to your mind when you hear about Armenia?

I have not yet had the privilege to visit Armenia. The first thing that comes to mind is that it is a beautiful country, situated quite far away for Sweden.

B E R N



How can higher education help societies to meet the challenges they face today?

To do well in a globalised world, it is essential to have good qualifications – in higher education or vocational training – and to engage in life-long learning. The importance of education, however, is by no means restricted to its economic significance. Tolerant, well-informed and critical members of society are vital for strengthening our democracies and for us to peacefully coexist in our increasingly pluralistic societies.

What is a perfect higher education system in your opinion?

A perfect higher education system is a multi-faceted one. Besides research universities, it includes more practice-oriented institutions training students for specific professional fields (universities of applied sciences) and vocational education and training at tertiary level.

What results do you expect from the Yerevan Ministerial Conference?

The Bologna Process has been a great success so far. Although it runs on a voluntary basis, it has led to a considerable reform of higher education in 47 member countries. Of course, problems still exist, and these need to be addressed. I therefore believe that the Ministerial Conference should send a clear signal and affirm its commitment to solving these issues.

In implementing further the Bologna Reform, it is vital that greater compatibility between higher education systems does not come at the expense of diversity, and that all stakeholders – higher education institutions, staff and students – play a major role in the process.

Mauro Dell'Ambrogio
State Secretary
State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation

How has your higher education system benefitted from the Bologna Process?

In Switzerland, responsibility for implementing the Bologna Reform was given to the higher education institutions themselves. This gave them the opportunity to review their existing curricula and develop new degree courses in an autonomous process. They were thus able to hone their individual profiles and make themselves more attractive. The Swiss higher education system was made more compatible with those in other member countries.



What comes to mind when you think of Armenia?

Armenia is a wonderful country at the crossroads of Asia and Europe, with a great history and a fantastic potential.

SWITZERLAND





About

A R M E N I A

Armenia (Hayastan in Armenian), officially the Republic of Armenia is situated between Europe and Asia, in Transcaucasia occupying 29.800sq/km area. Armenia is divided into 11 regions (Marz). The capital of the country is Yerevan. The population of Armenia is 3.2 million people. The country has a very homogeneous ethnic composition, 97.9% of the population are of ethnic Armenian origin. Among other minorities are Russians, Yezidi, Assyrians, Ukrainians, Greeks, Georgians, and Belarusians. Armenia has very large diasporas, as about 8 million Armenians live around the world.

Culturally, historically and politically, Armenia is considered to be a part of Europe. However, due to its location in the South Caucasus, on the conventional boundary between Europe and Asia, we can say that it's an intercontinental country. Endowed with rich cultural heritage, Armenia is considered to be the first country to officially accept Christianity in the IV century (301).

GEOGRAPHY

Armenia is a country without access to the sea located in the Caucasus, in the southern Caucasus, the north-east of the Armenian Plateau, between the Black and Caspian Seas. The landscape is mainly mountainous, with mountain rivers and few forests, extinct volcanoes, deep canyons, high plateaus, formed from lava, crossed by deep ravines. Most of the country is located at 1800 meters above sea level. The highest point is Mount Aragats (4092m), while the lowest is located in Debed valley (400m). The land is unstable and prone to earthquakes of 3.5 points of magnitude. In 1988 a strong earthquake of 7.5 points shook the north-west of

Armenia causing more than 25,000 deaths.

Armenia is rich in minerals such as gold, silver, copper, iron, molybdenum, construction materials and salt.

LANGUAGE

The official language is Armenian, while Russian and English are also frequently used. Armenian language is a separate branch of Indo-European language family, between groups of Slavic and Greek languages. The Armenian alphabet, created by Mesrop Mashtots in 405 AD, has been used until now, without any changes over the centuries.

RELIGION

Armenia is the first country in the world, which officially adopted Christianity in 301, whereas in the Roman Empire it was adapted 12 years later, in 313, and only in 325 Christianity was given official legitimacy.

The roots of the Armenian Church go back to many centuries, starting from the 1st century. According to historical information, the Armenian Church was founded by two of the twelve apostles of Jesus, Thaddeus and Bartholomew, who preached Christianity in Armenia from 40 to 60. In their honor the official name of the Armenian Church is Armenian Apostolic Church. Armenians also call it Gregorian Church, in honor of St. Gregory the Illuminator, the first patriarch (in Armenian Catholicos) of the Armenian Church. The Armenian Church has 4 hierarchical sees: Holy See of Ejmiadzin, Cilicia, Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Sightseeings of Armenia

Garni Pagan Temple and Geghard Monastery

Temple of Garni is the only surviving monument of the Hellenistic period in Armenia. The temple is dedicated to the God of the sun Mithra and was built in the 2nd half of the 1st c A.D. during the reign of king Trdat I. The temple collapsed during the earthquake of 1679. It was restored in the 1970s, using the surviving fragments and carving the missing ones renewed. The temple is built of basalt stone.

Geghard - According to the Armenian historians as early as in the 4th c there had already been a monastery called Ayrivank (the cave monastery) in this inaccessible corner of the Azat ravine. Later the monastery was renamed Geghard which meant "spear".

Khor Virap & Noravanq & Areni Winery

Noravank (12 – 14 th c) is one of the beautiful places in Armenia. It is built in the heart of the nature, among sharp, red cliffs and the deep gorge. Noravank attracts tourists attention with the stair-like carvings on the facade which leads to the second floor.

Khor Virap Monastery: The monastery of Khor Virap is situated on top of the hill and is one of the sanctuaries of the Armenian Apostolic church and a pilgrimage site. According to church lore this is the location of the municipal jail of the capital of Armenia Artashat, where upon the orders of king Trdat III, they threw Gregory the Illuminator who was accused of professing Christianity. Gregory spent there 13 years.

The village of Areni is, by coincidence or not, not only the location of the oldest proved winery facility in the world, but it is also a village known all over the Armenia for its widespread artisan winemaking. This enduring family winery tradition in Areni, which was strong enough to survive through the communist years, could be explained by the multi – milenium involvement in winemaking, and further diggings in the region or in the village itself, could in the near future reinforce Areni's position as the cradle of wine production.

Tatev Complex (Tatev cable car) – «Stonehenge»

The monastery was founded in the ninth century in place of a tabernacle well-known in ancient times. The strategically advantageous location on a cape formed by a deep river gorge with precipitous rocky slopes favored the construction of a mighty defense complex there. Tatev monuments stand out for high quality of building work. The world's longest 5.7-kilometer ropeway, Wings of Tatev, opened in Armenia on October 16. The 5,700 meters long ropeway got a certificate from the Guinness Book of Records on October 23, 2010.

Armenian «Stonehenge»

In the mountains of nowadays Armenia (in the south, close to town Goris), the first observatory Karahunge was created. It has a history of 7.500 years and scientists believe, that there is a tight connection between the observatory in Armenia and Stonehenge in Britain, since the latter is much younger (about 4000 years) and the name itself is similar to the Armenian name and the second half of the name (hange) does not really mean anything in English.



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