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Bologna Follow Up Group

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**FROM LEUVEN/LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE TO
BUDAPEST AND WIEN: THE
CONTRIBUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF
EUROPE TO THE BOLOGNA PROCESS**

Directorate General IV: Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport
(Directorate of School, Out-of-School and Higher Education/Higher Education and
Research Division)

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INTRODUCTION

The present document gives an overview of the Council of Europe's contribution to the Bologna Process between the Ministerial meetings in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve and Budapest/Wien.

The Council of Europe contributions to the Bologna Process have focused on:

- i) active participation in the BFUG and Board as well as in Bologna working groups;
- ii) take responsibility for coordinating the sharing of experience in the elaboration of national qualifications frameworks compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA, inter alia by chairing and providing the Secretariat for the Bologna Coordination Group on Qualifications Frameworks and participating in the work of the EQF Advisory Board;
- iii) recognition policy, including the role of the Lisbon Recognition Convention as the only legally binding text of the Bologna Process;
- iv) specific policy areas of relevance to the Bologna Process as well as to the basic values of the Council of Europe, in particular the public responsibility for higher education and research, the responsibility of higher education for democratic culture, higher education governance and quality assurance;
- v) bilateral and regional activities assisting newer member states with the implementation of "Bologna inspired" policies at national level. These activities have in particular focused on countries that acceded to the Bologna process in 2003 and 2005.

The Council of Europe intends to continue to contribute to the Bologna Process along these lines. For the 2009 – 2012 work program, the Council has indicated an interest in participating in the working groups on qualifications frameworks (as chair), on the recognition of qualifications, on transparency instruments and on the EHEA in a global context.

QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS

The role of the Council of Europe is to facilitate the sharing of experience so that the competent national authorities can benefit from relevant experience from other countries to the extent that the national authorities see fit to do so. This is in keeping with the London Communiqué:

We note that some initial progress has been made towards the implementation of national qualifications frameworks, but that much more effort is required. We commit ourselves to fully implementing such national

qualifications frameworks, certified against the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA, by 2010. Recognising that this is a challenging task, we ask the Council of Europe to support the sharing of experience in the elaboration of national qualifications frameworks. We emphasise that qualification frameworks should be designed so as to encourage greater mobility of students and teachers and improve employability.

as well as with the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué:

The development of national qualifications frameworks is an important step towards the implementation of lifelong learning. We aim at having them implemented and prepared for self-certification against the overarching Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area by 2012. This will require continued coordination at the level of the EHEA and with the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. Within national contexts, intermediate qualifications within the first cycle can be a means of widening access to higher education. (para. 12).

A separate document on QF coordination is submitted to the BFUG. If the BFUG decides to appoint a working group, the Council of Europe is willing to chair and provide the Secretariat for this group.

We aim to organize a meeting of all national QF correspondents in Strasbourg on November 9 – 10, 2009 followed by a meeting of the new Working Group on November 10 in the afternoon. It is intended that the network of national correspondents meet once or twice a year, as the need may be, and that the Working Group meet as needed. At least one more meeting will most likely be needed before the 2010 Ministerial meeting, but the timeline for the group's work is the 2012 Ministerial conference.

The Council of Europe will also continue to contribute to the work of the EQF Advisory Board, which currently includes membership of a working group on sectoral qualifications framework, an issue that is also highly relevant to the QF-EHEA.

RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS

The Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention is the only legally binding text of the Bologna Process. As of September 15, 2009, 43 Bologna members have ratified the Convention, while 3 members have yet to do so¹. The total number of ratifications –

¹ A constantly updated list of ratifications and signatures may be found at <http://conventions.coe.int/>; search for ETS 165. The three “Bologna countries” that have yet to ratify the Convention, as of September 15, 2009, are Greece, Italy and Spain. Of these, Italy and Spain have signed but not yet ratified the Convention.

including non-members of the Bologna Process – is now 49. The development of policy and practice in recognition is furthered by the ENIC and NARIC Networks, which are served jointly by the Council of Europe, UNESCO/CEPES and the European Commission.

The Council of Europe will continue to play a leading role in recognition policy, in close cooperation with UNESCO and the European Commission. Recognition issues in the Bologna Process will remain high on the agenda of the ENIC and NARIC Networks, which – through their connection to other UNESCO regions – will also play an important role in facilitating recognition between qualifications from the EHEA and those from other areas of the world, and the Networks have established a working group to address this topic, for which the Council of Europe provides the secretariat.

The ENIC and NARIC Networks will continue to consider the impact of qualifications frameworks on the recognition of qualifications, and qualifications frameworks will be an element in developing the understanding of the concept of substantial differences. The Council of Europe, the European Commission and UNESCO/CEPES will coorganize a seminar on qualifications frameworks for ENICs and NARICs in late November 2009, end on with the autumn meeting of the NARIC Network.

STEERING COMMITTEE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

The Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research (CDESR) is a pan-European forum in which delegations of the 49 States party to the European Cultural Convention – 46 of which are also members of the Bologna Process - are made up of academic as well as government representatives. In addition, important intergovernmental institutions as well as non-governmental organizations active in higher education policy have observer status with the CDESR, which is one of the main pan-European fora for higher education policies.

The CDESR will consider a new project on the role of public authorities in furthering institutional autonomy, and a feasibility study will be submitted to the CDESR Bureau on December 8 – 9, 2009 and then to the CDESR plenary session on March 25 – 26, 2010.

PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

The Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly is made up of representatives of the national parliaments of the Council's 47 member states. It is expected that the Parliamentary Assembly will consider a draft report on the contribution of the Council of Europe to the European Higher Education Area at a meeting of its Standing Committee on November 20, 2009. The Rapporteur is the Rt Hon Andrew McIntosh (United Kingdom). In accordance with Council of Europe practice, a recommendation by the Parliamentary Assembly will express the view of the Assembly and will be submitted to

the Committee of Ministers, which is likely to seek the view of the CDESR before replying to the Recommendation.

WORK WITH SPECIFIC COUNTRIES OR REGIONS

Within the Bologna Process, the Council of Europe has been given specific responsibility for cooperation with the newer members of the Process, and the Council has played an important role in developing the Bologna Process into a truly European Higher Education Area.

At present, the Council of Europe is in particular engaged in two major projects for the reform of higher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Serbia, respectively. Both projects have been undertaken at the request of the competent public authorities of the countries concerned, and both focus on quality assurance, qualifications frameworks and recognition. Both projects also have an element on the development of policies, standards and, where required, legislation. The current phase of the project in Bosnia and Herzegovina was launched in February 2009 and builds on the results of previous projects. The project in Serbia was launched in September 2007 and is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2009, with a final conference foreseen for December 15 in Beograd.

Jointly with the Slovenian authorities and as a part of the program of the Slovenian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe, the Council of Europe will organize a ministerial conference for the Western Balkans in Ljubljana on October 20 – 21, 2009. The main purpose of this conference is to take stock of the implementation of the key policies of the EHEA in the region and to assist in the preparation of the 2010 ministerial conference.

In June 2010, the second meeting of the regional network on qualifications framework for South East Europe was held in Ljubljana, also in close cooperation with the Slovenian authorities and as a part of the program of the Slovenian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe.

PUBLICATIONS

The Council of Europe Higher Education Series² is by now well established. Several of the volumes published since December 2004 address key issues in the Bologna Process, and we will aim to continue to contribute to the EHEA also through the Higher Education Series.

Volume 11 in the series, *Intercultural Dialogue on Campus* (Sjur Bergan and Jean-Philippe Restoueix, editors) was published before summer, while three further volumes are at different stages of preparation.

² http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/Resources/HEseries_en.asp

WEB SITE

The Council of Europe's higher education web site presents an up to date overview of the Council's activities as well as of higher education policies in Europe. It can be accessed at http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/Default_en.asp.