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External Dimension: International cooperation

"Towards Harmonization of the Higher Education System in Europe: Achievements and difficulties of the Bologna Agreement".

Mexico City, December 5-6, 2005

The event was hosted by the Mexican Ministry of Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública) and the European Presidency (British Council) and was mainly designed to provide representatives of Mexican higher education institutions and the ministry with first-hand information on the implementation of the Bologna objectives in Europe.

It is worth noting the terminology used in the theme of the conference as it in a way reveals how the process is perceived by other regions of the world. Originally the term "Bologna Treaty" was used in the title of the conference. It is often wrongly believed that "Bologna" is a process within the EU, and that it is based on a treaty and not a voluntary process. The term "harmonization" was put in its proper perspective in the course of the conference.

Representatives of the European Commission and the EU Member States Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands and The United Kingdom gave accounts of their respective experience in implementing the objectives of the Bologna Process.

The Director General of University Higher Education gave a presentation on the Mexican experience with Accreditation.

In the discussions with the representatives of higher education institutions from all over Mexico a true interest in increasing the cooperation activities with European Higher Education Institutions became apparent. It seems that the programmes Alban, Alfa, and lately, Erasmus Mundus, have paved the way for more systematic and multilateral academic exchanges rather than the bilateral and often haphazard ones before these European programmes were introduced.

The awareness of the Bologna Process and its impact on the European Higher Education System is rather great in Mexico, as is the understanding that the Bologna process will be essential in setting the stage for the desired closer cooperation between Mexican higher education institutions and European ones.

It is understood that establishing strong and well-functioning academic networks within Mexico will facilitate the search for, and the linking up with partners in Europe, which, ideally will also be higher education networks. It is also understood that more extensive cooperation should be sought in HE teaching and research in order to use the momentum created by the current endeavours to link the European Research Area with the European Higher

Education Area.

On a wider scale and comparable to the Tuning Process in Europe, there are ongoing projects involving higher education institutions in most Latin American countries, which try to compare the national systems in terms of academic credits, qualification and accreditation, etc.

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