

**BOLOGNA POLICY FORUM  
EXPLANATORY NOTE FOR THE DEBATE  
Louvain-la-Neuve, 29 April 2009**

Ten years ago, on 19 June 1999, the European Ministers for Higher Education convened in Bologna to sign the Bologna Declaration, which in the subsequent years has led to the creation of the European Higher Education Area. In these past years the higher education landscape in Europe has undergone a substantial change.

The Bologna Process of creating the European Higher Education Area has attracted wide attention across the world and is generally perceived as a successful example of regional cooperation in full respect of the differences between individual countries. It has contributed to both European integration and positioning of the European Higher Education Area in the global context. Its transparency instruments, like the Qualifications Framework, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), the Diploma Supplement and the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance have inspired other regions of the world. But the uniqueness of the process lies probably in its light-weight operational structure that facilitates the involvement of the different stakeholders - governments as well as the academic community (higher education institutions, students and staff), quality assurance bodies and employers – in the decision-making process and in outlining the framework for implementation.

On 28-29 April 2009 the European Ministers in charge of higher education meet again in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium) to take stock of the achievements of the Bologna Process of the last ten years and to set joint strategic goals for the next decade.

Close cooperation with other parts of the world will be crucial for the future development of the European Higher Education Area. European Ministers are therefore pleased to see that an increasing number of countries around the world have expressed their interest in a dialogue with Bologna member countries on how worldwide cooperation in higher education can be enhanced.

In order to facilitate this global dialogue, a Bologna Policy Forum will be organised for the first time between Ministers of the 46 Bologna countries and colleagues from different parts of the world.

This Bologna Policy Forum will take place in the morning of 29 April 2009 at the University of Louvain-la-Neuve in the framework of the Bologna Ministerial Conference.

The debate will be structured along the following lines.

(1) Question to the invited Ministers from different world regions

- What could be the interest and relevance of the Bologna Process to your country?

(2) Question to the European Ministers

- How could the dialogue with the higher education policy makers across the world, e.g. at this Bologna Policy Forum, enrich your work in the framework of the Bologna Process?

(3) Questions to all Ministers

- How could the mutual dialogue, involving higher education institutions, students, staff and other stakeholders, be organised in the future?
- What actions could be taken to ensure the global sharing of knowledge in order to stimulate collaboration and innovation across the world?

**Annex:** Copy of Bologna Policy Forum invitation letter  
(sent to higher education ministers from 20 non-EHEA countries)



O N D E R  
N O S S I M  
L T U U R  
N E T J E M  
S C H A P



Re: invitation to Ministerial Bologna Policy Forum, Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium), 29 April 2009

Dear Colleague,

Ten years ago, on 19 June 1999, the European Ministers for Higher Education convened in Bologna to sign the Bologna Declaration, which in the subsequent years has led to the creation of the European Higher Education Area.

In these past years the higher education landscape in Europe has undergone a substantial change.

The Bologna Process has attracted wide attention across the world and is generally perceived as a successful example of regional cooperation in full respect of the differences between individual countries.

In 2009 the Benelux (Belgium-Netherlands-Luxembourg) countries will invite European Ministers in charge of higher education to meet again to take stock of the achievements of the Bologna Process of the last decade.

We note with great satisfaction that an increasing number of countries around the world have shown their interest to be involved in a dialogue with Bologna member countries on how worldwide cooperation in higher education can be enhanced. At the same time there is growing interest among European countries to develop closer links with higher education systems around the world.

In order to facilitate this global dialogue a Bologna Policy Forum will be organised for the first time between Ministers of the 46 Bologna countries and colleagues from different parts of the world.

This Bologna Policy Forum will take place in the morning of 29 April 2009 at the University of Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium) in the framework of the Bologna Ministerial Conference.

We envisage the discussions to focus on mainly three topics:

- (1) What could be the interest and relevance of the Bologna Process to your country?
- (2) How can our dialogue, involving higher education institutions, students, staff and other stakeholders, be organised in the future?
- (3) What actions can be taken to ensure the global sharing of knowledge in order to stimulate collaboration and innovation across the world?

Also on behalf of the Czech Republic, currently holding the Presidency of the European Union and of the Bologna Process, we would cordially like to invite you to participate in this Bologna Policy Forum. Up to two accompanying experts, preferably from the academic community, are also welcome to join your delegation.

We would also like to extend an invitation to the formal dinner to be held at the Abbaye de la Ramée on the evening of 28 April 2009.

We would highly appreciate your presence at both events and kindly ask you to confirm your participation by 1 March 2009 with the Bologna Secretariat (e-mail : [secr@bologna2009benelux.org](mailto:secr@bologna2009benelux.org), tel. +32 2 553 98 09, fax +32 2 553 98 85), who will be glad to provide further information on the programme and to assist your delegation with the final registration.

More information on the Bologna Process is available on the website:  
[www.Bologna2009Benelux.org](http://www.Bologna2009Benelux.org).

Looking forward to meeting you in April, we remain,

Yours sincerely,

François BILTGEN  
*Minister for Culture,  
Higher Education and Research  
Luxembourg*

Marie-Dominique SIMONET  
*Vice President, Minister for Higher  
Education, Scientific Research and  
International Relations  
French Community - Belgium*

Ronald PLASTERK  
*Minister of Education,  
Culture and Science  
The Netherlands*

Frank VANDENBROUCKE  
*Vice President, Minister for Work,  
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