

New Zealand Contribution to Bologna Policy Forum

Thank you, Madame la Presidente, and all Ministers of the European Higher Education area for the invitation to take part in this Forum, and congratulations on your achievements to date. The rest of the world looks with some amazement at the extent and nature of the changes you have achieved in just 10 years since the signing of the Bologna Declaration. Would you have dreamt at the time that such progress could be achieved so quickly?

New Zealand's interest in the Bologna Process has developed through two national seminars in 2007 and 2008, where, following the model of the Bologna Process itself, policy makers, academics, academic institutions and students came together to increase the common understanding of what was happening. These Seminars led to a web publication "New Zealand and the Bologna Process", a like to which is available from the Bologna secretariat's web page.

The three cycle Bachelor Master Doctor degree structure already exists in New Zealand. Our particular interest lies in the tools the Bologna process has developed to increase transparency within and between systems. We are interested in the ECTS, (European Credit and Transfer System) – how it is calculated and how it is applied. We are interested in the standards you have developed for academic quality assurance, and the Register of agencies which meet these standards. And we are interested in the qualifications frameworks, all areas in which we have long experience.

We see two areas where we can particularly learn from you. One is in mobility. Many international students come to study in New Zealand, but few of our New Zealand students include periods of mobility in their study programmes. Few have the language and cultural competences and confidence that you have developed among your European students. The second is in managing diversity, and how you use the tools of transparency to maintain the diversity of the various higher education traditions in the Bologna countries.

Once again thank you for the invitation to attend this Forum. We look forward to ongoing dialogue.