

Closing remarks for Ministerial Conference

12 March

These two days in Budapest and Vienna have once again shown the strengths of the Bologna Process: it is a voluntary process, led by government authorities who are in charge of their education and training systems at national level, but it is developed and implemented in close cooperation with higher-education institutions, staff, students and other stakeholders.

While the Bologna method works well at European level, we have also heard that this is not always the case at national and institutional levels and that students and staff in some countries consider that they are not adequately consulted in the reform discussions.

The Budapest/Vienna Declaration underlines the importance of this issue and the need to improve communication among all stakeholders and society as a whole.

Also in some other areas we have seen that, in spite of the considerable achievements, a lot remains to be done and we now have a clear agenda for the years to come.

I am thinking in particular of increasing mobility opportunities. This will be one of the main criteria against which the success of the European Higher Education Area will be measured, and so far the Bologna process has failed to live up to its goals in this regard.

In addition, the employability of graduates needs our continued attention. Not enough curricula are elaborated in cooperation with businesses, taking into account the skills that will be needed for tomorrow's jobs.

The Communiqué of Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve called for wider participation in higher education, particularly of underrepresented groups.

This is fully in line with the European benchmark that at least 40% of 30–34 year olds in the EU should have a higher–education degree by 2020.

To achieve this we have to pay close attention to the social dimension of higher education – nobody with the capability to engage in higher education should be kept from doing so for financial or social reasons.

I think that in Budapest yesterday and here in Vienna today we have laid the foundation for a successful first decade of the European Higher Education Area and I want to assure you of the European Commission's continuing support.

Let me close by congratulating and thanking our hosts from Austria and Hungary on this successful conference and for their generous hospitality and I look forward to the Bologna Policy Forum later today.