

**EUA Statement to the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve
Ministerial meeting, 28/29 April 2009
From EUA President, Professor Jean-Marc Rapp**

1. EUA's CONTRIBUTION TO THE BOLOGNA PROCESS 2007 - 2009

EUA represents 34 European Rectors' Conferences and almost 800 individual research based higher education institutions across the 46 Bologna countries.

Our role in the Bologna Process is to ensure that the voice of universities is heard, and also to support our members in implementing the reforms in line with their respective missions and profiles.

In the two years since the London Ministerial meeting the EUA has:

- Followed up on Ministers' request for EUA to support the sharing of experience on innovative doctoral programmes by **establishing the EUA Council for Doctoral Education** that already has almost 150 members and by **gathering substantial experience on career opportunities for young researchers in industry** through an EC funded project (**DOC-CAREERS**) that involved in depth discussions and interviews with representatives of major companies;
- Followed up on the major findings of the Trends V Report especially the need **"to develop capacity to respond strategically to the lifelong learning agenda"** - through the preparation of the **"European Universities Charter on Lifelong Learning"** (that is referenced in the draft Communiqué);
- **Finalised comparative studies** on the overarching priorities set out by my predecessor, Georg Winckler, in London in 2007, namely the **autonomy and funding of European universities**;
- **Consulted its 34 National Rectors Conferences on their** priorities for the next decade, and published a series of institutional case studies (as a special supplement of the Bologna Handbook);
- **Launched the TRENDS VI Report** to which over 800 European universities and other higher education institutions have already contributed – a report that will look back over the last decade of reforms and will be published in early 2010; **a preliminary study on Master degrees in Europe is already available**;
- Organised from 18-21 March 2009 the Fifth Convention of European Higher Education Institutions that brought together over 500 university leaders and

partners to discuss “European strategies for European universities – Facing Global Challenges”.

II. THE PRAGUE DECLARATION: “EUROPE’S UNIVERSITIES LOOKING FORWARD WITH CONFIDENCE”

In Prague we discussed not only the future of the European Higher Education Area but the present financial and economic crisis and its impact. For this reason the first part of our Declaration – that has been distributed to delegations - **is a message to political leaders** with proposals for immediate measures to address the crisis. The second part of the Declaration sets out a long-term strategic agenda for universities.

EUA believes that **to underpin the continued dynamic development of the European Higher Education and Research Areas a Europe wide stimulus package is necessary**. As a sign of forward thinking, commitment and solidarity EUA urges: investing urgently to avoid losing the present generation of young researchers; tapping unused potential in our populations by increasing lifelong learning commitments, and investing in the upgrading of university facilities and campus infrastructure.

Looking to the longer term we see our successful future development in:

- 1) **Commitment to our core missions taking account of the challenges facing us in the 21st century, through:**
 - Widening opportunities for participation in, and successful completion of higher education;
 - Improving researcher careers;
 - Providing relevant and innovative study programmes and
 - Continuing to develop distinctive institutional research profiles.

- 2) **Underlining the necessary preconditions for fulfilling these tasks which are:**
 - Strengthened autonomy to better serve society and
 - increased and diversified income streams for financial sustainability

- 3) **Irrespective of institutional mission making sure that all universities:**
 - Enhance quality and improve transparency
 - Promote internationalization
 - Increase and improve the quality of mobility, and
 - Develop partnerships for strengthening their various missions

Taking forward these elements will enable universities – each in the context of their own particular mission and profiles - to consolidate and shape the future development of the European Higher Education Area.

III: EUA's PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT DECADE

In addition to the crucial issues of autonomy and funding there are five issues that I would like to underline as we look to the future:

- 1) **The importance of the consolidation and communication of the already significant achievements of the Bologna process:** attention must be paid to following up 'unfinished business' the implementation of the whole package of reforms, and to ensure that sustainable qualitative change – rather than superficial structural changes only - is embedded in institutional and also subject specific cultures. This requires **re-engaging with the overall purposes of the reform**, reiterating the importance of public responsibility for our European higher education systems and the shared objective of improving the teaching and learning process in our institutions, in the interests of the growing number of Europe's citizens we wish to welcome in our institutions. At the same time we **all need to join forces in communicating more broadly to society the purposes and the implications of these far-reaching reforms**. Engaging in a broader debate with employers, students, parents and other stakeholders will enhance trust and confidence in the reforms at all levels.
- 2) **Putting the lifelong learning agenda at the centre of our preoccupations in the future:** so as to enable all those who can benefit from higher education to do so; and as a means of responding to the demographic transformation of Europe, and to the speed of globalization and technological change, with its impact on society and labour markets. The challenge is to find ways to open up a wider range of educational services to new learners and to returning learners, and to ensuring continuing opportunities for learners throughout their lives. As we have underlined in our European Universities Charter on Lifelong Learning, universities cannot do this alone, it requires commitment and action from governments, and from a range of local partners, for progress to be made.
- 3) **Maintaining quality at the heart of the Bologna reforms. Institutions must properly assume their primary responsibility for quality by enhancing their internal quality and by improving the articulation between internal quality culture and external accountability.** This means, for example, involving academic staff at all levels, working hard on identifying and implementing a learning-outcomes approach and **improving transparency** by providing clear and accurate information to different publics. This will make the growing diversity of missions, profiles and activities of higher education institutions in Europe more transparent. While this is of major importance to each and every university, a major study on diversity that we will publish shortly – that looks at diversity and

government policies to promote diversity in five European countries – **shows that institutional efforts, however efficient they may be, cannot be successful unless national policies in Europe also provide incentives to promote diversity:** the behaviour of higher education institutions is still large conditioned by policies decided at national level - our study shows that these differ considerably from country to country. Thus, the discussion on diversity at national and institutional level still has a long way to go, and we look forward to continuing this discussion in the years to come.

- 4) **More European cooperation is crucial to reaching our shared objective of a truly European Higher Education Area.** This means reinforcing the common values, principles, goals and instruments of the Bologna process, but also developing **more common European reference points as a necessary precondition for increasing the mobility of students and researchers.** This is a major challenge given the predominantly national organisation and funding of higher education and research. However, the success of ERASMUS and of the Marie Curie Programme, of the Bologna process over the last decade, and the strong beginnings of the ERC, demonstrate how European 'public goods' have set new horizons in higher education and research in Europe. **So let us together do more to strengthen the European dimension of our work in the coming decade.**
- 5) **Finally, the future can only be built on the unique partnership model 'invented' by the Bologna process:** Bologna has been successful and is of increasing interest all over the world not only for what has been done but also because of how it has been done. The involvement of the entire academic community is essential for the long term sustainability of the reforms on the ground. As implementation becomes the key issue, and moves deeper and deeper into institutions making the European Higher Education Area work in practice will depend increasingly on the continued success of this partnership – this is my final message to all those gathered in Leuven 10 years after the historic 1999 Bologna meeting.

Leuven, 28 April 2009