

**Budapest Vienna Declaration  
on the European Higher Education Area**

March 12, 2010

1. We, the Ministers responsible for higher education in the countries participating in the Bologna Process, met in Budapest and Vienna on March 11 and 12, 2010 to launch the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), as envisaged in the Bologna Declaration of 1999.
2. [Based on our agreed criteria for country membership, we welcome Kazakhstan as new participating country of the European Higher Education Area.\*]
3. The Bologna Declaration in 1999 set out a vision for 2010 of an internationally competitive and attractive European Higher Education Area where higher education institutions, supported by strongly committed staff, can fulfil their diverse missions in the knowledge society; and where learners, benefiting from mobility with smooth and fair recognition of their qualifications, can find the best suited educational pathways.
4. Since 1999, 46 [47\*] parties to the European Cultural Convention, have signed up to this vision and have made significant progress towards achieving it. In a unique partnership between public authorities, higher education institutions, students and staff, together with employers, quality assurance agencies, international organisations and European institutions, we have engaged in a series of reforms to build a European Higher Education Area based on trust, cooperation and respect for the diversity of cultures, languages, and higher education systems.
5. The Bologna Process and the resulting European Higher Education Area, being unprecedented examples of regional, cross-border cooperation in higher education, have raised considerable interest in other parts of the world and put European higher education on the global map. We welcome this interest and look forward to intensifying our policy dialogue and cooperation with partners across the world.
6. We have taken note of the outcomes of the independent assessment and the stakeholders' reports. We welcome their affirmation that institutions of higher education, staff and students increasingly identify with the goals of the Bologna Process. The reports, however, also illustrate that the EHEA action lines such as degree and curriculum reform, quality assurance, recognition, mobility and the social dimension are implemented and appreciated to varying degrees. Recent reactions have shown that in a number of countries some of the Bologna reforms have not been properly communicated and implemented and that there are developments that are not in line with the Bologna spirit. We acknowledge that adjustments and continuous work are necessary at European, national, and especially institutional level.
7. We, the Ministers, recognise that there are still many challenges ahead on the way towards the European Higher Education Area as we envisage it. We recommit to the full and proper implementation of the agreed objectives and the agenda for the next decade set by the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué. In close cooperation with higher education institutions, staff, students and other stakeholders, we will step up our efforts to accomplish the reforms already underway to enable students and staff to be mobile, to improve teaching and learning in higher education institutions, to enhance graduate employability, and to provide quality higher education for all. At national level, we also strive to improve communication on and understanding of the Bologna Process among all stakeholders and society as a whole.

8. We, the Ministers, recommit to academic freedom as well as autonomy and accountability of higher education institutions as core values of the European Higher Education Area and underline the role the higher education institutions play in fostering peaceful democratic societies and strengthening social cohesion.

9. We acknowledge the key role of the academic community - teachers, researchers, administrative staff and students - in making the European Higher Education Area a reality, where learners are enabled to acquire knowledge, skills and competence for their careers and lives as democratic citizens as well as providing opportunities for their personal development. We commit ourselves to working towards the better inclusion of higher education staff and students in the implementation and further development of the EHEA. We fully support staff and student participation in decision-making structures at European, national and institutional level.

10. We call upon all actors involved to facilitate an inspiring working and learning environment and to foster student-centred learning as a way of empowering the learner in all forms of education, providing the best solution for a sustainable and flexible academic, professional and personal path. This also requires cooperation of teachers and researchers in international networks.

11. We, the Ministers, reaffirm that higher education is a public responsibility. We commit ourselves, in these difficult economic times, to ensuring that higher education institutions have the necessary resources within a framework established and overseen by public authorities. We are convinced that higher education is a major driver for economic and social development and for innovation in an increasingly knowledge-driven world. We shall therefore increase our efforts on the social dimension in order to provide equal opportunities to quality education, paying particular attention to underrepresented groups.

12. We ask the Bologna Follow-up Group to facilitate the proper and full implementation of the agreed Bologna values and action lines across the European Higher Education Area, especially at national and institutional level, among others by developing additional working methods, such as peer learning, study visits and other information sharing activities. By continuously developing, enhancing and strengthening the European Higher Education Area and its synergies with the European Research Area, Europe will be able to successfully face the challenges of the next decade.

13. Our next Ministerial Meeting to take stock of progress and to drive the agenda forward, will be hosted by Romania in Bucharest on 26-27 April 2012.

*\*to be inserted in case of Kazakhstan's accession.*