



## European University Association

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### Press Communiqué

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## **EUA President on the outcome of the Berlin Ministerial Conference – the active participation and commitment of universities and students will ensure the long term success of the Bologna Process**

Eric Froment, President of the European University Association (EUA), welcomed the outcomes of the Berlin Ministerial Conference on the Bologna Process. He underlined in particular the recognition of the **key role played by universities and students in realising the European Higher Education Area** now that, four years on from the signing of the Bologna Declaration, much of the legislative framework is in place.

The key for the next phase of the process, he continued, must be to **ensure that teachers and students in our universities become aware of the importance of the Bologna reforms** for their everyday work. EUA will make this a priority for the next two years and will work together with ESIB, the National Union of Students in Europe, to make this a reality. This will also be crucial for the new countries that have been admitted to the process, an important step forward from an EUA perspective. EUA, together with its ESIB partners, looks forward to continuing its support to universities and students in these countries.

Eric Froment also pointed to the **linking of the European Higher Education and Research Areas** as a welcome development for Europe's universities. Maintaining the integral link between higher education and research is central to European higher education and a defining feature of Europe's universities. Governments need to build on this interaction if they want to strengthen Europe's research capacity and improve both the competitiveness and attractiveness of Europe. A key element here is the increased emphasis on the importance of doctoral programmes and their inclusion as the third cycle in the Bologna process. Universities have a *unique contribution* to make through their role in research training and their almost exclusive right to awarding PhD degrees. It is Europe's universities that produce the future generations of the young scientists Europe badly needs. This widening of the scope of the Bologna process thus serves to further **demonstrate how essential Europe's universities are to building the European knowledge society**, based on the two pillars of the European Higher education and Research Areas.

One of the key challenges of the coming years will, however, be to **balance the need to increase competitiveness with the strengthening the social dimension of the Bologna Process**. EUA is pleased that Ministers have reaffirmed their commitment to higher education as a public good and a public responsibility and to decreasing the obstacles to mobility. EUA will work towards these goals in the next two years with its members and in close collaboration with ESIB, but at the same time underlines that meeting these goals and maintaining these principles will require considerable public investment in the system from all partners.

The Communiqué also draws attention to the importance of working together in order to ensure that the new degree structures are fully accepted by employers in all sectors. This is essential for all our universities and their graduates and EUA looks forward to playing its full role in this process. Much discussion is needed to make sure that employability is defined in

a broad sense and reflected in curricula and this is another area where EUA and ESIB will continue their cooperation.

Another area where partnership is needed is to ensure that **joint degrees** become a true hallmark of the European Higher Education Area. EUA welcomes the governmental commitment to remove legal obstacles to the recognition of joint degrees. Along with the results of the EUA Pilot Project, change in this area will certainly give further impetus to this key tool for heightening the European dimension, and the attractiveness, of the EHEA.

All these reforms need **strong institutions**, as stated in the Communiqué. This means not only a focus on good governance and high quality at institutional or even at national level but also **the introduction of a strong and recognisable European dimension**. Promoting and constantly improving the quality of European higher education is at the heart of the Bologna process and this also means the introduction of a real European dimension to quality assurance. EUA welcomes the inclusion of the institutions and students - the key stakeholders in the process - in all initiatives to push forward European cooperation in this crucial area. "We will concentrate the energy and resources that it takes to ensure the close follow-up of this process on behalf of our members in the months to come" said Eric Froment at the close of the joint press conference that closed the Ministerial Conference.

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