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**TIME FOR THE VOICE OF THE UNIVERSITIES TO BE HEARD**

*"Two years ago in Salamanca, we created the European University Association (EUA) to give our universities and rectors conferences a united voice. At Graz, we have articulated our message, and now we have to use our voice."*

Eric Froment, President of the EUA, addressed the nearly 600 assembled higher education leaders and stakeholders at the final session of the Graz Convention of European Higher Education institutions, pointing to EUA's responsibility to take forward the outcomes from Graz and strengthen the Bologna Process.

**Working together in Europe: 2010 and beyond**

In her preliminary conclusions the General Rapporteur, Professor Christina Ullenius, underlined the importance of developing a long-term vision for 2010 and beyond. Pushing forward the Bologna reforms would help consolidate the role of the universities as the motor of a Europe of knowledge. She stressed the contribution the Graz discussions had made to further clarifying our ideas about what it means to be a 'European university' and about the added value of institutions working together at European level.

**Europe in the hands of the universities**

European Commissioner for Research, Philippe Busquin, responded to the conclusions by focusing upon the role of universities in a world where knowledge is Europe's main strength: *"the social and economic responsibility for tomorrow's Europe is in the hands of universities"* said Busquin, who also emphasised the importance of ensuring excellence in the diverse missions of all universities, and of taking action to promote European excellence.

**Bologna as a package of reforms**

Mrs Vivian Reding, European Commissioner for Education and Culture, also delivered a strong message to the Convention, welcoming EUA's role in strengthening the European universities. *"Bologna cannot be implemented à la carte, it has to be done across the board and wholeheartedly"* she said, encouraging Bologna reforms to be implemented in a holistic manner. Reding also called for more funding for higher education if the goals of a Europe of Knowledge are to be fully realised. The Graz declaration will be formally adopted by the EUA Council on 4th July and transmitted to the European Ministers of Education meeting in Berlin in September to define the priorities for the next phase of the Bologna Process.

Further information is available at the EUA and the Graz Convention web sites.

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