



Ministers set out path for European higher education in the coming years

Press release



Higher education reform can help to get Europe back on track and generate sustainable growth and jobs. This is the main message from 47 European ministers responsible for higher education after a two-day summit in Bucharest concluded today. The result is an agreement on the key priorities for higher education in Europe over the next three years.

Political road map for the European Higher Education Area in 2012-2015

The ministers participating in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) met in the Romanian capital to discuss the future of higher education in Europe. They agreed¹ to focus on three main goals in the face of the economic crisis: to provide quality higher education to more students, to better equip students with employable skills, and to increase student mobility.

Vice-minister of Education of Azerbaijan and Co-chair of the EHEA, Gulu Novruzov, said:

“The agreement provides an excellent framework for developing our higher education systems, while at the same time making systems more comparable and compatible across Europe. It sets out important steps that will strengthen the quality of European higher educational offers and enable graduates to meet the challenges of today.”

New European strategy for mobility

The 47 countries adopted a new European strategy to increase mobility with a specific target that at least 20 percent of those graduating in Europe in 2020 should have been on a study or training period abroad.

As Danish minister of Science, Innovation and Higher Education and co-chair of the EHEA, Morten Østergaard, stated:

“Study experiences abroad are essential to foster innovative and adaptable graduates that contribute to economic growth and the development of our societies. It is therefore crucial that we provide the best possible conditions for students to move freely across Europe. With the mobility strategy we are now one step closer to a Europe in which both students and our societies can reap all the benefits of increased mobility”, he says.

Results of the European collaboration on higher education

A report for the Ministerial Conference on Bologna/EHEA reforms shows that the cooperation has achieved remarkable results over the last decade. But further work is still needed.

¹ <http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/%281%29/Bucharest%20Communique%202012.pdf>

The Romanian Minister of Education, Research, Youth and Sports and vice-chair of the EHEA, Catalin Ovidiu Baba, stressed the need to implement the reforms in all countries and at the same time deliver real benefits on the ground. He underlined:

“We should appropriately deal with existing or emerging gaps between our higher education systems and institutions and avoid delays in implementing Bologna objectives which would prevent our increased future pan-European cooperation. While being proud of the existing Bologna achievements, we should also look forward to constantly re-inventing the Bologna Process, particularly by setting up ways of effectively learning from each other”.

European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, Androulla Vassiliou added:

“The economic and financial crisis is a huge challenge for higher education systems across Europe. But it is also an opportunity for all our countries to improve their performance. Future jobs are going to require people with more and better skills. To be competitive on the world stage we need to pursue a common agenda of reforms across Europe to compete in the global knowledge economy. Europe needs more and better graduates. We must ensure that we are drawing on the talents of all our people and equipping graduates with the skills they and employers need to reinvigorate our economies. We must not miss this opportunity.”

About the European Higher Education Area

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is an intergovernmental collaboration on higher education aimed at making educational systems more transparent, comparable and compatible – for instance through the use of ECTS, common degree structures and more. The collaboration was initiated as the Bologna Process in 1999 and re-launched as the European Higher Education Area in 2010. 47 countries and the EU Commission participate in the EHEA together with a number of consultative organisations.

The next Ministerial Conference will take place in Yerevan in 2015.

Read more on the EHEA website <http://www.ehea.info/> and the website of the Ministerial Conference <http://bologna-bucharest2012.ehea.info/>.

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