

## BELGRADE DECLARATION

### on the EU support to the reform of higher education in the countries of Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova

On 18-19 April 2005 an international seminar was held in Belgrade on the "Implications of the Bologna Process for the Development of Higher Education in South – Eastern Europe – Experiences and Dilemmas". The organizers of the seminar were ECERS - European Centre for Ethnic, Regional and Sociological Studies of the University of Maribor and ASO - Austrian Science and Research Liaison Offices Ljubljana and Sofia in co-operation with Faculty of Law of the University of Maribor and Faculty of Law of the University of Belgrade. The participants from universities from Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Slovenia and Serbia and Montenegro, as well as representatives of interested international institutions and agencies, attended the seminar.

The participants of the international seminar established that their universities are making significant efforts in order to improve academic quality in research and education in accordance with the Bologna Declaration from 1999 and the Follow-up Documents from Prague and Berlin, stating that the Higher Education Institutions, within the European Higher Education and Research Area, have to develop transparent and coherent curricula, provide the ECTS for the equal assessment of studies, enable mobility among students and professors, take care of an effective quality assurance and the recognition of study achievements made abroad. They are taking into account also the tenets of the Lisbon Strategy adopted in Lisbon in March 2000, stating that the European Union shall become the most developed knowledge-based economic society in the world.

The process of curriculum reforms has been initiated in order to secure: a. attractive and ambitious university education on all levels, making an effort to reduce brain drain, b. a modernised higher education to cover the need for scientific and professional knowledge, c. efficient teaching and training of university teachers, d. a coherent higher education system all the way from the undergraduate to the doctoral level in accordance with the Bologna Declaration.

The participants put forward for further consideration the following issues:

- It is necessary to spread information on the tenets of the Bologna Process as wide as possible and to develop discussions and consultations on the modes of their implementation.
- The countries that have not yet done so should adopt the adequate legal frame for the implementation of the principles of the Bologna Process.
- It will be commendable to encourage the exchange of teachers and students between the universities in the region and the mutual recognition of diplomas as well.

In order to develop further these positive achievements it will be necessary that the present and future programs of the EU concerning the building up of the European Higher Education Area include also the following proposals, aimed at accelerating the higher education reforms in the countries of Western Balkans and Moldova. The acceptance of these proposals will contribute essentially to the effective implementation of the EU policy towards those countries and thus to their development towards the integration within the EU space.

#### *European Higher Education Area*

1. It is necessary to include the higher education institutions from the countries of Western Balkans and Moldova in the EU programs concerning the mobility and development of higher education (all programs within Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci, up-graded TEMPUS and relevant other programs).
2. The participants supported also the acceptance of the Republic of Moldova at the ministerial conference, which will be held in May 2005 in Bergen, in the Bologna Process, and later its inclusion in the same EU programs as the CARDS countries.

3. Those European universities from non-EU countries should have the opportunity to take part in the building-up of the new generation of the EU programs after 2007, and in the relevant decision making procedures in accordance with the Open Method of Coordination of EU integration.

4. The accession of the countries of the Western Balkans and Moldova to the above mentioned EU programs is also the precondition for the sustainability and follow-up activities concerning the present TEMPUS projects being under implementation in those countries, and hence for the rational and effective use of the granted EU funds.

#### *Integrated EU policy*

1. In order to create an adequate structure for the full adherence of the higher education institutions of the countries of Western Balkans and Moldova to the European Higher Education Area, it will be commendable to elaborate further, for instance PHARE and INTERREG programs and to develop other adequate pre-accession programs supporting the inclusion of those countries in the European Higher Education Area and thus to the EU membership.

2. It should be especially commendable to integrate fully the above-mentioned goals concerning the building up of the European Higher Education Area and the "Integrated EU Policy" in the EU CARDS structure and in the Stabilisation and Accession Agreements as well.

3. Similar support programs should be elaborated for the Republic of Moldova.

#### *Sustainability and Follow-up of TEMPUS*

In addition to the existing three actions available within TEMPUS, it should be commendable to ensure the continuation of the co-operation between the Consortia partners after the completion of the given project. Cooperation within TEMPUS should encompass also short-term activities for the staff and students mobility, such as: summer schools, training courses and similar actions. It will be also commendable to elaborate different types of follow-up grants, aimed at further improvement of successful projects by the Consortia members and for their dissemination at other universities in the partner countries as well.

#### *Simplification of VISA rules*

It is necessary that the EU countries abolish the visa requirements for the academic staff and students from the Western Balkans and Moldova or simplify the visa procedure, in order to put in place efficiently the Bologna principles of academic mobility, interactive work and implementation of the standards of the European Higher Education Area.

#### *Quality culture*

The higher education institutions in the countries of the Western Balkans and Moldova should be urged to further develop mechanisms for transparent quality assurance and rational and efficient use of the EU funding.

#### *Dissemination of the Declaration*

The participants authorised the below listed members of the Scientific Committee of the Seminar to take care, as wide as possible, of the dissemination of this Declaration and of its adequate presentation to the relevant domestic and international authorities and the broader public as well.

Prof. Dr. Silvo Devetak, President of the Scientific Committee, University of Maribor, Slovenia

Prof. Dr. Olga Cvejić Jančić, University of Novi Sad, Serbia and Montenegro

Prof. Dr. Maria Edlinger, Karl-Franzens-University of Graz, Austria

Prof. Dr. Gvozden Flego, University of Zagreb, Croatia

Prof. Dr. Sašo Georgievski, University St. Cyril and Methodius of Skopje, Macedonia

Prof. Dr. Ivan Ilchev, University of Sofia, Bulgaria

Prof. Dr. Šime Ivanjko, University of Maribor, Slovenia

Prof. Dr. Fikret Karčić, University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Doc. Dr. Maja Kostić-Mandić, University of Montenegro, Serbia and Montenegro

Prof. Dr. Miroslav Lazić, University of Niš, Serbia and Montenegro  
Prof. Dr. Radu Motica, West University Timișoara, Romania  
Prof. Dr. Dejan Popović, University of Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro  
Olesea Sirbu, PhD candidate, International Institute of Management, Chisinau, Moldova  
Prof. Dr. Emilija Stanković, University of Kragujevac, Assistant Minister of Education of the Republic of Serbia  
Prof. Dr. Halil Sykja, University of Tirana, Albania  
Prof. Dr. Dragica Vujadinović, University of Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro  
Doc. Dr. Miodrag Jovanović, Managing Secretary, University of Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro

Belgrade, 19 April 2005