

## Enhancing Students' Contribution to Bologna Implementation (ESCBI)

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### European Student Summit 2010 (ESS2010)

### Statement towards the Anniversary Bologna Ministerial Conference in Budapest and Vienna

The European Students' Union, representing 11 million students, believes that the Bologna process has reached some of its goals, but is far from attaining the aim of building a functional European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010. A follow up to the Lisbon Strategy has recently been launched under the flagship of 'Europe 2020'. In both processes we stand at a critical point. Unless concrete and immediate action is taken, the tension between the two processes will increase, obstructing both from reaching their distinct aims. The Bologna Process should be the foundation for EU initiatives on Higher Education, thereby avoiding the creation of parallel conflicting agendas.

The Bologna process has created both a spirit of exchange between stakeholders and raised awareness of the ideal of student participation throughout Europe. Stakeholder participation is a fundamental factor in the quality-enhancement of higher education provision within the EHEA.

#### ***Bologna challenges***

##### **Á la carte implementation**

The implementation of some of the action lines has been superficial and incorrect. Others in some national contexts have not been implemented at all. All Bologna action lines must be implemented concurrently, in order to avoid the creation of a dysfunctional and socially unjust EHEA. The current situation shows that if this does not occur, the result will be detrimental for the students and the entire academic community invested in the engagement of the Bologna Process.

The Bologna Process has been the scapegoat for ill-advised reforms under the guise of the implementation of action lines, when in fact those reforms only suited the priorities of the national governments. An example of this can be seen in some national contexts, where tuition fees have been implemented or student participation has been reduced, under the pretext of the Bologna Process. Consequently there is great confusion over what is actually 'Bologna'. Due to this, there is no doubt that further implementation is unlikely to be broadly supported by the students, staff and leaders of higher education institutions.

##### **A Viennese Waltz in search of rhythm**

Each of the 46 Bologna countries had different starting points and priorities for the implementation process, resulting in disparity between the signatory states. *Bologna with Student Eyes* surveys show that in not one Bologna signatory have all of the action lines been correctly implemented. National Bologna agendas can endanger the realisation of Bologna goals, hindering the effective engagement of other countries in Bologna implementation due to a genuine loss of belief in the process.

*ESU – The European Students' Union - is the umbrella organisation of 45 national unions of students from 37 countries, and through these members represents over 11 million students. The aim of ESU is to articulate and promote the educational, social, economic and cultural interests of students at a European level towards all relevant bodies and in particular the European Union, Bologna Follow-Up Group, Council of Europe and UNESCO.*

Collectively the EHEA states ought to be concentrating on the achievement of a European dimension through true implementation of the Bologna Process, rather than increasing the attractiveness of individual countries for foreign students. It is only this cooperation that will result in higher education institutions reaching their targets and maintaining their societal value as a whole.

### **Higher Education: A right, a public good and a public responsibility**

Addressing higher education as a competitive market creates significant barriers to realising the Bologna social dimension goal. The student body entering, participating in and completing higher education, at all levels, should reflect the diversity of national populations. This makes the social dimension one of our main priorities and a significant Bologna challenge for the next decade. ESU believes that overcoming this challenge would result in a quality higher education for all, reached through the full implementation of national strategies, with consolidated internal and external quality assurance systems.

### **Mobility**

For the past 10 years, the Bologna Process has been a driver for academically meaningful mobility. In spite of this, several problems persist. For both personal and professional development, mobility is an enriching experience for students and academic staff and should not merely be a national tool for economic interests. ESU restates its commitment to the increase and diversification of the mobile student population. We urge governments to remove obstacles currently in place, so that 20% of graduates are mobile within the EHEA by 2020.

### **Student-centred learning**

Student-centred learning has to be at the heart of the future Bologna Process implementation. From curricula reform, to innovative pedagogies and from student support to student participation, quality assured support is imperative for the realisation of the full potential of each student. Accomplishing this paradigm shift is the actual finish line of the Bologna Process in students' eyes.

### ***The Student voice***

Students have always been constructively critical and active partners in the creation of a European Higher Education Area. The Bologna Process would not be the same today without student participation. Moreover, recent student protests have shown that the Bologna Process is far from reaching its intended goals. We, as European student representatives, stand in solidarity with all students fighting for a student-centred European Higher Education Area. What we celebrate in Vienna is the student contribution to the Bologna Process, but ESU believes that much remains to be done before students are able to reap the benefits of the Bologna Process. We urge ministers responsible for higher education to commit to:

1. Supporting the aims of the Bologna Process, whilst not allowing for further confusion regarding the main goals and tools of the process. This is especially important when looking at the parallel agendas being launched at the same time as the EHEA, such as the EU2020.
2. Holistic, In-depth and financially supported continued implementation of all Bologna action lines, with a special focus on the social dimension, mobility and student-centred learning.
3. Inter-governmental solidarity, to overcome the ill-effects of the 'two-speed' Bologna implementation, rather than an excessive focus on the individual promotion of national higher education systems.
4. Full student participation in all decision-making structures at national, regional and institutional levels.

It is only through the full commitment of both governments and stakeholders that we can hope for the establishment of an European Higher Education Area, representing more in ten years' time than just the memory of a celebration.

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