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REPORT

on the contribution of the European institutions to the consolidation and progress of the Bologna Process
(2011/2180(INI))

Committee on Culture and Education

Rapporteur: Luigi Berlinguer

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the contribution of the European institutions to the consolidation and progress of the Bologna Process (2011/2180(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in particular Article 26 thereof¹,
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and in particular Article 14 thereof,
- having regard to the Sorbonne Joint Declaration, signed on 25 May 1998 in Paris, on harmonisation of the architecture of the European higher education system, by the four Ministers in charge for France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom (Sorbonne Declaration)²,
- having regard to the Joint Declaration signed in Bologna on 19 June 1999 by the Ministers of Education from 29 European countries (Bologna Declaration)³,
- having regard to the Communiqué issued by the Conference of European Ministers responsible for Higher Education on 28-29 April 2009 in Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve⁴,
- having regard to the Budapest-Vienna Declaration of 12 March 2010 adopted by the Education Ministers from 47 countries, which officially launched the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)⁵,
- having regard to Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications⁶,
- having regard to the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 September 2005 to facilitate the issue by the Member States of uniform short-stay visas for researchers from third countries travelling within the Community for the purpose of carrying out scientific research⁷,
- having regard to the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of

¹ http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/frn.pdf

² http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/SORBONNE_DECLARATION1.pdf

³ http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/BOLOGNA_DECLARATION1.pdf

⁴ http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Leuven_Louvain-la-Neuve_Communique%C3%A9_April_2009.pdf

⁵ http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/Budapest-Vienna_Declaration.pdf

⁶ OJ L 255, 30.9.2005, p. 22, Corrigendum OJ L 271, 16.10.2007, p. 18, Corrigendum OJ L 93, 4.4.2008, p. 28.

⁷ OJ L 289, 3.11.2005, p. 23.

15 February 2006 on further European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education¹,

- having regard to the recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF-LLL)²,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ('ET 2020')³,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 26 November 2009 on developing the role of education in a fully-functioning knowledge triangle⁴,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 11 May 2010 on the internationalisation of higher education⁵,
- having regard to the Council recommendation of 28 June 2011 on policies to reduce early school leaving⁶,
- having regard to the Council recommendation of 28 June 2011 entitled 'Youth on the Move – Promoting the learning mobility of young people'⁷,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 10 May 2006 entitled 'Delivering on the modernisation agenda for universities: education, research and innovation' (COM(2006)0208),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 3 March 2010 entitled 'EUROPE 2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth' (COM(2010)2020),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 26 August 2010 on a Digital Agenda for Europe (COM(2010)0245/2),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 20 September 2011 entitled 'Supporting growth and jobs – an agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems' (COM(2011)0567),
- having regard to the report entitled 'Higher Education in Europe 2009: Developments in the Bologna Process' (Eurydice, European Commission, 2009)⁸,
- having regard to the report entitled 'Focus on Higher Education in Europe 2010: The

¹ OJ L 64, 4.3.2006, p. 60.

² OJ C 111, 6.5.2008, p. 1.

³ OJ C 119, 28.5.2009, p. 2.

⁴ OJ C 302, 12.12.2009, p. 3.

⁵ OJ C 135, 26.5.2010, p. 12.

⁶ OJ C 191, 1.7.2011, p. 1.

⁷ OJ C 199, 7.7.2011, p. 1.

⁸ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/099EN.pdf

- Impact of the Bologna Process' (Eurydice, European Commission, 2010)¹,
- having regard to the 2007 Eurobarometer survey on higher education reform among teaching professionals² ,
 - having regard to the 2009 Eurobarometer survey on higher education reform among students³ ,
 - having regard to the Eurostat publication of 16 April 2009 entitled 'The Bologna Process in Higher Education in Europe – Key indicators on the social dimension and mobility'⁴ ,
 - having regard to the Final report of the International Conference on Funding of Higher Education held in Yerevan, Armenia, 8-9 September 2011⁵,
 - having regard to its resolution of 23 September 2008 on the Bologna Process and student mobility⁶,
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education and the opinion of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (A7-0035/2012),
- A. whereas the goals of the Bologna Process – to enable compatible systems of higher education in Europe and to do away with the barriers which still prevent people from moving to another country in order to study or work and make higher education in Europe attractive to as many people as possible, including young people from third countries – are still valid and the continuation of the process, through a dialogue between the different levels of the educational system in order to develop curricula to be built on each preliminary level, is serving the goals of growth based on knowledge and innovation within the Europe 2020 strategy, particularly in the current economic crisis; whereas an assessment is needed in order to establish the evolution of the Process and to take account of the success stories, problems, lack of understanding and opposition encountered;
- B. whereas the role of higher education is to provide a learning environment, open to everyone without discrimination, promoting autonomy, creativity, access to quality education and the broadening of knowledge, and to this end it is essential to guarantee the involvement of the academic community as a whole, particularly students, teachers and researchers, in developing the various stages of university education;
- C. whereas, in view of their threefold function (education, research and innovation), universities have a vital part to play in the future of the Union and the education of its citizens;

¹ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/122EN.pdf

² http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl198_en.pdf

³ http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_260_en.pdf

⁴ http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-78-09-653/EN/KS-78-09-653-EN.PDF

⁵ <http://www.ehea.info/news-details.aspx?ArticleId=253>

⁶ OJ C 8 E, 14.1.2010, p. 18.

- D. whereas the university is a major aspect of European heritage, now almost a thousand years old, whose significance as a force for progress in society cannot be reduced to its contribution to the economy and whose development cannot be made solely contingent on economic needs;
- E. whereas the three-degree structure is applied – in some cases successfully – in most of the Bologna countries, despite the difficulties encountered;
- F. whereas the commitment to push forward the reform should not be pursued via fragmented action and without adequate financial support; whereas the cuts in public spending on education being made in certain Member States are not helping to promote the necessary reforms;
- G. whereas mobility must be available to all and is the cornerstone of the higher education reform; whereas student mobility may ultimately help to foster professional mobility; whereas, however, accessibility for all must also be kept in mind throughout the process;
- H. whereas the Member States need to make further efforts to guarantee the mutual recognition of diplomas, which is crucial for the success of the process;
- I. whereas the social dimension must be strengthened as a necessary condition for the development of the Bologna Process, with the goal of making the right to study economically accessible to all students – especially those from vulnerable groups – in order to create fair access for all and better job opportunities;
- J. whereas universities, public administrations and enterprises must be strongly committed to the issue of employability; whereas the university should provide individuals with the tools and skills required to ensure the full development of their human potential; whereas academic learning should also take into account the needs of the labour market, with the goal of providing students with the skills they need to find a stable, well paid job;
- K. whereas access to education – a fundamental Union value – is a public responsibility of the Member States, the EU institutions and other key actors and the European Union has a key role to play in the establishment of the European Higher Education Area by supporting the Member States' efforts and cooperation in this field; whereas greater coordination of education and degrees – while respecting the principle of subsidiarity – is a precondition for the achievement of the goals of employability and growth in Europe;
- L. whereas the Bologna Process shall not have retroactive effects on students who already started their degree following the pre-Bologna plan;

Relevance of the process

1. Stresses the importance of education as a key area for cooperation with Member States in order to achieve essential EU2020 jobs and growth targets and much needed economic recovery;
2. Calls for a strengthening at EU level of support for the Bologna Process, in particular as regards the mutual recognition of academic qualifications, the harmonisation of academic

standards, the promotion of mobility, the social dimension and employability, active democratic participation, the analysis of implementation of the Bologna principles, and the elimination of administrative obstacles; calls on Member States to reiterate their commitment to the Process by strengthening the system of funding in order to achieve the growth targets set in the Europe 2020 Strategy;

3. Notes that the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is a major achievement from the point of view of creating and fostering genuine European citizenship; considers that it must translate into enhancement of the EHEA through the use of appropriate tools and procedures;
4. Highlights that the Bologna Process and EHEA play a key role in the Europe 2020 strategy and points out that the alliance between teaching and research is crucial inasmuch as it is a distinctive feature of European higher education;
5. Highlights the fact that the priorities set up within the Bologna Process – mobility, recognition, employability – represent the conditions necessary to guarantee that every student enrolled in a European university has the right to quality education, to graduate and to see his qualification recognised in any EU country;

Governance

6. Calls for the development of an effective, bottom-up approach, fully involving all key actors such as universities, trade unions, professional organisations, research institutions, the business sector and, first and foremost, teachers, students, student organisations and university staff;
7. Notes that some European Universities are reluctant to make sufficient efforts to achieve a consolidated EHEA, while being part of the EHEA is the only way for some of them to enhance the competitiveness and quality of the knowledge they produce;
8. Calls for a commitment on the part of universities to new teaching and new professional and lifelong training strategies – making optimum use of new technologies and recognising the importance of complementary forms of learning such as non-formal education – that are focused on the pillars of a learning-centred, student-centred and research-centred university system able to provide critical thinking, creative skills, continuous professional development as well as theoretical and practical knowledge which students will need in their working lives; calls for Member States and the EU to financially support universities in their efforts to change and develop their education practices;
9. Urges that teacher training programmes should be strengthened and expanded, taking account of the possibilities offered by lifelong learning and new technologies;
10. Stresses that the opening of European universities to the needs of the global economy and the further consolidation of the EHEA should be considered as efforts by European universities to help Europe overcome the period of general economic insecurity and to put Europe back on the path of sustainable development and growth;

11. Calls for the development of the universities' 'third mission' to society, which should also be considered in connection with the multidimensional criteria to be devised for the purposes of classification and the recognition of excellence;
12. Calls for increased public investment in higher education, especially aimed at countering the economic crisis with growth based on enhanced skills and knowledge and at responding to higher student demand with improved quality of and access to education and services, particularly scholarships; believes that budget reductions have a negative impact on attempts to strengthen the social dimension of education, which is the principle on which the Bologna Process is founded; calls therefore on the Member States and the EU institutions to develop new, targeted and flexible funding mechanisms – and to promote European-wide grants – with a view to supporting growth, excellence and the particular and diverse vocations of universities; stresses the need to develop a multi-fund approach, defined by clear and effective rules, aimed at coping with the future EU financing model and ensuring the independence of universities;

Consolidation

13. Points out that the Bologna Process and the Erasmus programme have boosted student mobility and have the potential to contribute to enhanced labour mobility; regrets, however, that mobility rates still remain relatively low;
14. Calls on the EU, the Member States and universities to establish mechanisms for providing information and financial and administrative support for all students, academics and staff in order to foster structured mobility flows; welcomes the introduction of the Erasmus programme for postgraduate students and calls for a strengthening of the services of Erasmus as a whole and the new generation of educational programmes through enhanced funding, based on social criteria, the opening of the programme to a larger number of students, genuine and effective credit recognition, enhanced possibilities for including terms abroad as part of the training and greater flexibility of the time frame allowed; insists, nevertheless, that in no case must mobility create discrimination against students with limited financial resources;
15. Takes the view that mobility among university lecturers broadens the education and experience of not only the lecturers themselves, but also, indirectly, of their students, and that it enables them to collaborate in the preparation of study materials;
16. Calls on Member States to fulfil the commitment to full portability of loans and grants, and significantly improve financial support for mobile students that matches the increases in new EU programmes; asks the EU to consider how existing legislation on the rights to freedom of movement can be enhanced through guaranteeing portability of loans and grants;
17. Calls on the EU to take immigration from Africa, Asia, and Latin America more fully into account for the purpose of laying down rules providing for recognition of school qualifications obtained in countries of origin;
18. Asks the EU, in order to guarantee mutual trust and facilitate recognition of academic qualifications through the implementation of EQF in each Member State, to consolidate a

system of quality assurance at both European and Member State level; asks Member States to implement their national quality assurance systems according to the European Standards and Guidelines on Quality Assurance, while respecting the diversity of courses and approaches among universities in terms of content and modes of learning; encourages QA agencies to apply to the European Quality Assurance Register and support their European cooperation and exchange of best practices also through the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA);

19. Draws attention to the different grading scales in the Member States and to the need for appropriate conversion of ECTS points into grades;
20. Urges all the Bologna countries to implement national qualification frameworks linked to the Qualifications Framework of the EHEA and to develop and financially support mutual recognition;
21. Calls for strong financial support for agreements on common core curricula, which guarantee well defined learning outcomes, inter alia by exploring the methodology approach developed by Tuning and through the experience of the ‘Tuning Academy’; calls for particular attention to be paid to the specific nature of humanities curricula, as a stronghold for democracy and a vehicle for the achievement of European cohesion, in order to determine which specific knowledge and skills should be covered by degree courses so as to encourage learning in a form combining measurable general skills (reflected in the ability to use knowledge) and teaching and research as original critical analysis; maintains that, as well as knowledge of the basic material, every programme in every subject should provide cross-cutting key competences such as critical thinking, communication, and entrepreneurial skills;
22. Asks for further support for national and European measures to guarantee equitable inclusion, fair access to study, successful progression and a sustainable support system (e.g. housing, transport expenses, etc.) for all students, as well as targeted support in particular for those who belong to under-represented groups, socially disadvantaged backgrounds and those experiencing financial difficulties, in order to reduce the drop-out rate and ensure that education and training are independent of socio-economic factors which cause disadvantages and that teaching meets individual learning needs; recommends that the process of creating careers advisory centres offering free services to students be accelerated;
23. Highlights the importance of the 2007 London communiqué¹, which made the social dimension of education one of the goals of the Bologna Process, the aim being to ensure equitable access to education regardless of background; regrets the fact that insufficient progress has been made towards achieving this goal, and encourages the Commission to facilitate such progress;
24. Calls on the Commission and Member States to encourage mutual recognition by eliminating the administrative obstacles to this;
25. Draws attention to the particular needs of the Bachelor’s degree, its curricula, its access

¹ http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Declarations/London_Communique18May2007.pdf

paths to Masters programmes, and its employability; stresses in this respect the need for specific actions, such as the development of theory/practice curricula, and for more effective cooperation between universities, Member States and economic and social actors in order to enhance the prospects for future graduates of finding a stable, well-paid job corresponding to their level of qualification; calls, therefore, on universities to develop their provision of apprenticeships and to improve the integration of traineeships in university courses;

26. Emphasises that measures to promote employability, such as lifelong learning, and the development of a broader range of skills suitable for the labour market must be top priorities in order to achieve sustainable growth and prosperity goals; in that connection, strongly supports exchanges of university teachers and students, the university-business dialogue, apprenticeships and the skills passport;
27. Considers that modernisation of the Professional Qualifications Directive (2005/36/EC) will assist professional mobility in Europe and facilitate student mobility by providing assurances that qualifications gained in another Member State will be recognised across the EU;
28. Asks the Member States and the EU institutions to support the transition from the “mono-disciplinary” methodological concept of science that still prevails in European universities towards the “inter-disciplinary” and “trans-disciplinary” concepts;
29. Calls on the Member States and the EU institutions to promote the university-business dialogue and cooperation as a common goal of the consolidated EHEA in order to increase the employability of European university graduates;
30. Points to the need for specific actions and for more effective cooperation between universities and the labour market with a view to developing more relevant curricula, bringing greater consistency to education, and enhancing employability by establishing similar criteria for admission to professions;
31. Stresses the importance of ensuring the availability of a sufficient number of traineeships for students, so as to further facilitate their joining the job market;
32. Calls on national governments and the Commission to develop a system of structured cooperation in order to deliver joint degrees, within clusters of disciplines, with recognition across the EU by improving the performance of, and financial support for, Erasmus Mundus and the future education and training programme and by promoting the creation of a European accreditation scheme of joint programmes;
33. Welcomes the Commission's proposal with reference to an Erasmus Masters Degree Mobility Scheme;
34. Regards academic PhD degrees, including those carried out in collaboration with enterprises, as a key link between higher education and research, and recalls their potential as a key component in the creation of knowledge-based innovation and economic growth; recognises the importance of carrying out PhD degrees in enterprises in terms of integrating individuals with higher degrees into the labour market; welcomes

the Commission's commitment to developing a European Industrial PhD Scheme within the Marie Curie actions;

35. Believes that better cooperation between the EHEA and the European Research Area is a potential source for enhancing Europe's innovativeness and development;
36. Highlights the contribution of the 7th EU Framework Programme for Research, the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme and the European Research Area to facilitating the mobility of EU researchers and unleashing the innovation and competitiveness potential of the EU;
37. Calls for an effective strategy to be set up to support lifelong learning programmes in Europe and for sustainable initiatives that are fully integrated into the institution and promote a lifelong learning culture; calls, likewise, for company-based lifelong learning to be encouraged so that workers have the opportunity to expand their training and skills; calls on higher education institutions and universities to offer more flexibility in programs based on learning outcomes, the recognition of non formal and informal learning, and services to support learning pathways by promoting partnerships among universities, enterprises, and higher vocational training establishments in order to enhance and fill the gap in scientific, humanistic and technical skills;
38. Draws attention to the need to establish the status of pre-Bologna Process students in those countries in which they are disadvantaged in terms of enrolling in Master's programmes;
39. Notes that the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) must be more transparent and offer more accurate comparisons between qualifications and diplomas; encourages the Commission and Member States to utilise an improved ECTS tool in order to facilitate mobility for students and professionals;

European action

40. Welcomes the Commission's proposal to increase significantly the funds devoted to European education and training programmes; calls on the Commission to devote a significant proportion of these funds to supporting the modernisation of higher education and the modernisation of university infrastructures in accordance with the objectives of the Bologna Process and the EU modernisation agenda; encourages the Commission to find solutions that enable access to these programmes also for students experiencing financial difficulties;
41. Calls on the Member States and the EU to determine whether courses of study could include a compulsory training period to be completed at a university in a Member State other than the student's home country;
42. Draws attention to the strong link between the Bologna Process and the Professional Qualifications Directive, and stresses the need for coordination by the Commission in a manner entirely consistent with the Bologna Process; argues that the link can be further strengthened by providing students with all the relevant practical information concerning the recognition of diplomas obtained abroad and the job opportunities which training

abroad opens up;

43. Calls, as part of the revision of the Professional Qualifications Directive and in order to make progress towards a real European Higher Education Area, for a comparison of national minimum training requirements and for more regular exchanges between the Member States, competent authorities and professional bodies;
44. Proposes that the recognition of credits obtained under the Erasmus Programme by partner universities should be a compulsory element for all institutions participating in student exchanges supported by EU funding in order to strengthen the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System;
45. Draws attention to the importance of consistent implementation of the ECTS system; calls on the Commission, Member States and higher education institutions to develop a comparative table that would indicate the number of ECTS credits awarded for courses, in order to enhance consistency and facilitate student and professional mobility; notes the barriers that students face when transferring credits between universities, and believes that these obstacles can discourage students from participating in academic exchanges;
46. Calls for development of an effective strategy for the full harmonisation of academic titles throughout the European Union with possible reverse recognition (including older academic titles) since the establishment of the Bologna Process;
47. Calls on the EU Member States to adopt a final and clear decision on the full mutual recognition of qualifications and diplomas or to establish a roadmap for when this decision will finally be possible;
48. Calls for cooperation among universities to be organised more systematically and strengthened so as to increase the impact on higher education institutions and systems for the benefit of students and staff;
49. Proposes that universities in the signatory states recognise practical traineeships completed as part of the mobility programmes supported by the European Commission;
50. Calls for enhanced transparency of the information provided to students before the beginning of a given exchange regarding the number of credits to be awarded, and invites Member States and higher education institutions to cooperate when assessing the number of credits to be awarded for courses; encourages the development of common platforms in order to provide a core of knowledge and skills defined by professionals and higher education institutions, with the possible goal of achieving the approximation of some diplomas, while safeguarding allowing national specificities, taking the system of automatic recognition of professional qualifications in the EU¹ as an example;
51. Calls for improved networking, coordination and communication between EU universities in order to speed up the recognition of new diplomas, to facilitate the transfer of credits, to improve knowledge and understanding of different systems of education and

¹ Annex V, on recognition on the basis of coordination of the minimum requirements, to Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications.

- training and enable students to better understand the diversity of European programmes;
52. Invites the European Commission, within the new education and training programme, to encourage cooperation, including through financial incentives, on transnational curricula, joint degrees and mutual recognition; advocates increasing the number of ERASMUS placement partnerships in practice;
 53. Draws attention to the existence of numerous institutions dealing with European higher education and research; calls on the European Union to promote ways to co-ordinate them under the same umbrella;
 54. Believes that initiatives should be put in place to help students transfer records from one university to another during their degrees;
 55. Calls on the Member States and the EU to provide updated and comparable data – inter alia on the proportionate representation of vulnerable groups – on the basis of which to monitor the implementation of the EHEA and, to that end, to remove the obstacles and resolve the problems associated with the implementation of the process, and not to penalise those institutions which have not yet implemented the planned reforms; believes that these data should be published every year on a country-by-country and university-by-university basis, making it easier to understand where progress is required;
 56. Encourages universities to harmonise their academic standards by forming partnerships for the exchange of good practices;
 57. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen cooperation and research programmes, and to develop new ones, based on mutual interests with third-country universities, particularly those in conflict zones, in order to allow access to higher education and training for students from these countries, without any discrimination;
 58. Considers the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) created by the Bologna Process to be progressive; calls therefore for a Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education Area to be incorporated into this existing structure and for progress towards the establishment of an effective Higher Education Area for the countries involved in Eastern Partnership cooperation as well as in other inter-state areas inside the EU; calls on the Commission to remove obstacles to the movement of students and teachers, to support the networking of Euro-Mediterranean universities, including EMUNI, and to continue the good practices of the Tempus and Erasmus Mundus programmes;
 59. Points to the need to provide better information about the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by means of a comprehensive, effective and European-wide communication policy aimed at making universities more attractive within and outside Europe;
 60. Calls on the European Commission and the Member States to guarantee the transferability of loans and grants, in particular merit and needs-based scholarships, between all European countries, in order to ensure equal access to mobility opportunities;
 61. Promotes the creation of unified university brands at regional level in order to strengthen

university prestige at international level in accordance with the aims of the Bologna Process;

62. Calls on the EU institutions to set in place mechanisms to support Member States and higher education institutions in implementing Bologna goals, which could be done by regular reporting and by a targeted use of EU programmes, including those involving cooperation with the non-EU countries in the EHEA;
 63. Asks the EU to support the implementation of its Bologna commitments in its policy cooperation with relevant non-EU countries; calls on the Commission and on the European Parliament to play a strong role in leading these efforts;
 64. Trusts that the stocktaking exercise at next year's ministerial meeting in Bucharest will result in a clear roadmap for establishing a fully-functioning European Higher Education Area by the 2020 deadline; insists that cross-sectoral proposals concerning ICT training, vocational and lifelong learning and work placements must be put forward and that these should actively promote both inclusion and smart and sustainable growth, giving the EU a competitive edge in the post-crisis world in terms of job creation, human capital, research, innovation, entrepreneurship and the wider knowledge economy;
 65. Calls on the Commission and EU education ministers to fully utilise the opportunities of their joint participation in the EHEA to take a leading role in achieving the Bologna goals, and on Ministers to underpin their commitments in the Bologna Process with joint commitments at EU level in the Council, supported by the Commission, so that this mutually supportive process continues with an harmonious implementation;
 66. Points out that the 2012 Biannual Ministerial Meeting in Bucharest must take into account the fact that the creation of the EHEA enables the EU and the Member States to make a strong and unified contribution to the Bologna Process on the basis of their shared responsibilities on the issue of higher education, their joint participation in the process, and their shared commitment to action, supported by policy statements by the EU institutions;
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67. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The creation of an open European Higher Education Area has been a major achievement and it represents the wide institutional framework for the implementation of the ambitious process set in motion by the Bologna Process.

Intergovernmental cooperation and the strategies set out by the European Institutions have been the stimulus for a wide, structural reform of the European higher education system. European universities have not only deeply revised and reorganised their teaching activities in the three level framework established by the Bologna Process, but they have also strengthened their social role with activities better suited to the so-called 'Third Mission' of the university system.

It must be noted that the connection between this system and the labour market has not been always successful. Thus, the statement in the Lisbon document ('European universities, despite a reasonably good teaching quality, are unable to express their full potential in order to promote economic growth, social cohesion and the improvement in the quality and quantity of jobs') still holds. This statement is particularly worrying in this period of global economic crisis and requires further attention in view of the EU goal, *'to be the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion'*.

In this respect, the strengthening of the whole Bologna Process is functional to the growth objectives established in Europe 2020 strategy: it is a requirement for the full integration of the internal EU market and an indispensable tool for tackling the challenges provided by the economic and financial crisis.

The first goal of the Bologna Process remains a fundamental requirement: a student enrolled in a European university has the right to graduate and to see his qualification recognised throughout the EU.

Governance

One of the factors that have slowed down progress in terms of results is the top-down nature of the process.

The process was first created by the political will of national governments; only in the second phase did it progressively involve leaders of academic institutions within the EUA, European University Association, and the process has yet to be fully integrated into European Universities, students and families.

A radical change and more complete involvement of all the stakeholders in the management of its goals, and in identifying new measures to support it, are therefore required.

Another aspect of the 'unfinished governance' of the Process is the fragmented actions taken by individual Member States.

The small budget provided for achieving the objectives is one reason for part of that same criticism: the illusion that the Bologna Process could be achieved at no cost.

The current financial crisis is likely to entail a further reduction in financial resources available across the entire Education sector.

The economic context, however, should compel us to encourage acceleration in the process,

and to study new formats and financial frameworks which allow for a more effective implementation of the objectives of growth and excellence of European universities. Alongside the Member States, the European Institutions also play an essential role in the process, especially in the recognition of qualification and mobility policies. At this stage the EHEA is not yet fully developed and it is essential to maximise its potential and address a number of open issues, including government regulation, budgetary constraints, quality control, and national accreditation. The other actors in the Bologna Process (universities, students, teachers, trade unions, business sector) have a crucial responsibility to ensure the process is actually rooted in the social academic body. Poor compliance by some of the European universities with the process guidelines also demonstrates the need to implement new teaching strategies. Increasing attention should be paid to the establishment of a student-centred learning system, where universities and academic staff encourage the students to actively manage their higher education experience.

Bottlenecks

Mobility: Particular importance is attached to mobility as an essential characteristic of the EHEA, as defined in the recent Communication of the European Commission on the modernisation of the EHEA and in the last EP resolution of 2008 on the Bologna Process and student mobility¹, for which Ms Pack was Rapporteur.

Mobility is not only territorial (within and between countries), but also horizontal (between degree cycles) and vertical (within degree cycles).

In order to enhance student mobility flows, we need more incentives at the level of funding policy, and the allocation of more financial resources, quality measures for the recognition of credits, and better transparency and information concerning mobility programmes.

Recognition of qualifications and qualifications framework: The reforms put in place by the Bologna Process comprise a set of tools intended to encourage the recognition of qualifications, such as the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System.

At this stage most of the Bologna countries have not implemented national qualification frameworks linked to the qualifications framework of the EHEA.

In order to be measurable, and to facilitate the comparability and recognition of formal, non-formal, and informal qualifications, these national qualifications should be based on learning outcomes.

In that regard, it will be interesting to consider how further to develop the 2000 ‘Tuning’ project, which was intended to provide a concrete approach to implementing the Bologna Process and to identifying common reference points for generic and subject-specific competences of first and second cycle graduates in a series of subject areas.

Quality assurance: At present, the review of national quality assurance systems is still ongoing in most countries, where universities are working to develop uniform quality assurance systems to be backed up by external evaluation procedures.

The European Quality Assurance Register represents an important achievement, as do other instruments like the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance; national quality

¹ OJ C 8 E, 14.1.2010, p. 18.

assurance measures need to be further adapted in this respect.

It will be necessary to create incentives to encourage countries to join the register and to improve their self-evaluation systems.

In particular a positive approach has been developed in Austria and in Denmark, where any quality assurance agency can operate as long as it has signed up for the register. In this way, any diploma with a quality assurance label should be recognised in all other EHEA countries.

Social dimension: The objective of social cohesion has become a central part of the EHEA, and it represents a condition which must be met for the EHEA to be consolidated. More importance should be attached to equitable access and to the completion of higher education at all levels.

This would require further government support to put in place measures to widen access to students from underrepresented groups and lower socio-economic backgrounds, as well as to immigrants, cultural minorities, and students with disabilities.

Employability and Bachelor degree: The lack of statistics makes it difficult to monitor graduate employment. In particular, employability could be increased also by getting employers involved in the integration of company traineeships as a part of academic curricula. An effective system of recognition at an EU level will also be essential in defining standards of competences and skills for the labour market (both for the public and private sector).

Better cooperation between EHEA and the European Research Area (ERA): The inclusion of the doctorate as a third cycle degree in the Bologna degree structure is the main link between higher education and research.

It is now necessary to change the common perception that the doctorate is exclusively aimed at academic research. Indeed, PhDs have the potential to be a key component in the creation of knowledge-based innovation and economic growth, and can contribute to the progress and diffusion of knowledge and technology.

European action

European-level action to improve results and overcome the unresolved issues is more incisive. The task of modernising and strengthening universities belongs to the Member States, to the European Institutions and to all the other stakeholders (businesses, universities, students). Europe has the means to ensure a more efficient system both through a policy of incentives as well as through links with the European area of research.

Quality assurance: We cannot proceed without mutual recognition of qualifications and mutual trust. The EU should deal with this through a policy of incentives.

Qualification framework: A European Qualifications Framework has been set up for all levels of education. EU Member States must set up their National Framework for LLL.

Core curricula: Emphasis has to be placed on agreements on common core curricula in programmes covering the same subject areas, to be structured in order to guarantee well-defined minimal Learning Outcomes.

Joint degrees: One of most important goals of the EHEA should be to establish and develop a

system of European degrees with recognition everywhere in Europe so that any student who completes university in Europe will obtain a qualification recognised and valid throughout Europe.

Towards the Bucharest Summit

The ministerial conference of the Bologna Process will take place in April 2012. It is of paramount importance that the formulation of the new commitments for the three years that separate us from the next ministerial meeting would not be limited to the establishment of a list of benchmarks, but rather include concrete measures to promote the full realisation of the goals of the Bologna Process in every university and Member State.

28.11.2011

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE INTERNAL MARKET AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

for the Committee on Culture and Education

on the contribution of the European institutions to the consolidation and progress of the Bologna Process
(2011/2180(INI))

Rapporteur: Emma McClarkin

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection calls on the Committee on Culture and Education, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Stresses the importance of education as a key area for cooperation with Member States in order to achieve essential EU2020 jobs and growth targets and much needed economic recovery;
2. Points out that the Bologna process and the Erasmus programme have boosted student mobility and have the potential to contribute to enhanced labour mobility; regrets, however, that mobility rates still remain relatively low; calls, therefore, on the EU, the Member States and higher education institutions to communicate more effectively with one another and with students concerning the options the latter have for mobility, including scholarship opportunities; takes the view, further, that due consideration should be given to stepping up the funding of the Erasmus programme;
3. Considers that the proper establishment of single points of contact for the education sector in the Member States may significantly reduce the uneven and irregular implementation of various aspects of the Bologna process, assist in the modernisation of national higher education policies and make for better cooperation, coordination, liaison and exchanges of best practice among the EU27;
4. Emphasises that measures to promote employability, such as lifelong learning, and the development of a broader range of skills suitable for the labour market must be top

priorities in order to achieve sustainable growth and prosperity goals; in that connection, strongly supports exchanges of university teachers and students, the University-Business dialogue, apprenticeships and the skills passport;

5. Takes the view that mobility among university lecturers broadens the education and experience of not only the lecturers themselves, but also, indirectly, of their students, and that it enables them to collaborate in the preparation of study materials;
6. Highlights the contribution of the 7th EU Framework Programme for Research, the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme and the European Research Area to facilitating the mobility of EU researchers and unleashing the innovation and competitiveness potential of the EU, and calls for closer links to be established between the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area;
7. Calls on the Commission to support and assist Member States throughout the intergovernmental process ahead of the forthcoming conference of Ministers responsible for higher education in Bucharest in April 2012; endorses the approach set out in the recent Commission communication entitled ‘Supporting growth and jobs – an agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems’¹;
8. Trusts that the stocktaking exercise at next year’s ministerial meeting in Bucharest will result in a clear roadmap for establishing a fully-functioning European Higher Education Area by the 2020 deadline; insists that cross-sectoral proposals concerning ICT training, vocational and lifelong learning and work placements must be put forward and that these should actively promote both inclusion and smart and sustainable growth, giving the EU a competitive edge in the post-crisis world in terms of job creation, human capital, research, innovation, entrepreneurship and the wider knowledge economy;
9. Highlights the importance of the 2007 London communiqué, which made the social dimension of education one of the goals of the Bologna Process, the aim being to ensure equitable access to education regardless of background; regrets the fact that insufficient progress has been made towards achieving this goal, and encourages the Commission to facilitate such progress;
10. Draws attention to the strong link between the Bologna process and the Professional Qualifications Directive, and stresses the need for coordination by the Commission in a manner entirely consistent with the Bologna process; argues that the link can be further strengthened by providing students with all the relevant practical information concerning the recognition of diplomas obtained abroad and the job opportunities which training abroad opens up;
11. Calls on the Commission, in keeping with its powers, to evaluate the uneven implementation of the Bologna process and to draw up a scoreboard so that the process becomes a real instrument for facilitating mobility of professionals not only between Member States, but also between the EU and third-country signatories; emphasises that

¹ Commission Communication of 20 September 2011 to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on ‘Supporting growth and jobs – an agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems’ (COM(2011)0567).

any scoreboard dealing with the implementation of the Bologna process should examine the issue in depth, both qualitatively and quantitatively, in order to guide future developments and allow decisions to be made using an evidence-based approach;

12. Calls, as part of the revision of the Professional Qualifications Directive and in order to make progress towards a real European Higher Education Area, for a comparison of national minimum training requirements and for more regular exchanges between the Member States, competent authorities and professional bodies;
13. Calls on the Commission to support Member States in enhancing the transparency of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) so that it can be used as a comparative tool to facilitate the recognition of professional qualifications, and argues that a more skills-based approach could facilitate better comparisons across different sectors; asks the relevant stakeholders to consider the possibility of incorporating periods of training completed as part of higher education in the ECTS;
14. Draws attention to the importance of consistent implementation of the ECTS system; calls on the Commission, Member States and higher education institutions to develop a comparative table that would indicate the number of ECTS credits awarded for courses, in order to enhance consistency and facilitate student and professional mobility; notes the barriers that students face when transferring credits between universities, and believes that these obstacles can discourage students from participating in academic exchanges;
15. Calls for enhanced transparency of the information provided to students before the beginning of a given exchange regarding the number of credits to be awarded, and invites Member States and higher education institutions to cooperate when assessing the number of credits to be awarded for courses; encourages the development of common platforms in order to provide a core of knowledge and skills defined by professionals and higher education institutions, with the possible goal of achieving the approximation of some diplomas, while safeguarding allowing national specificities, taking the system of automatic recognition of professional qualifications in the EU¹ as an example;
16. Calls for improved networking, coordination and communication between EU universities in order to speed up the recognition of new diplomas, to facilitate the transfer of credits, to improve knowledge and understanding of different systems of education and training and enable students to better understand the diversity of European programmes.

¹ Annex V, on recognition on the basis of coordination of the minimum requirements, to Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	22.11.2011
Result of final vote	+: 32 -: 2 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Pablo Arias Echeverría, Adam Bielan, Lara Comi, Anna Maria Corazza Bildt, António Fernando Correia De Campos, Jürgen Creutzmann, Cornelis de Jong, Evelyne Gebhardt, Małgorzata Handzlik, Iliana Ivanova, Eija-Riitta Korhola, Edvard Kožušník, Hans-Peter Mayer, Phil Prendergast, Mitro Repo, Robert Rochefort, Heide Rühle, Matteo Salvini, Christel Schaldemose, Andreas Schwab, Róza Gräfin von Thun und Hohenstein, Emilie Turunen, Bernadette Vergnaud, Barbara Weiler
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Regina Bastos, María Irigoyen Pérez, George Lyon, Emma McClarkin, Konstantinos Poupakis, Sylvana Rapti, Marc Tarabella, Kyriacos Triantaphyllides, Wim van de Camp
Substitute(s) under Rule 187(2) present for the final vote	Ramona Nicole Mănescu

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	24.1.2012
Result of final vote	+: 23 -: 2 0: 1
Members present for the final vote	Maria Badia i Cutchet, Zoltán Bagó, Malika Benarab-Attou, Piotr Borys, Santiago Fisas Ayxela, Lorenzo Fontana, Mary Honeyball, Petra Kammerevert, Morten Løkkegaard, Emma McClarkin, Marek Henryk Migalski, Katarína Neved'alová, Doris Pack, Chrysoula Paliadeli, Marie-Thérèse Sanchez-Schmid, Marco Scurria, Emil Stoyanov, Hannu Takkula, László Tőkés, Helga Trüpel, Gianni Vattimo, Sabine Verheyen, Milan Zver
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Heinz K. Becker, Ivo Belet, Seán Kelly, Iosif Matula, Georgios Papanikolaou, Inês Cristina Zuber
Substitute(s) under Rule 187(2) present for the final vote	Luigi Berlinguer