



## **The Hanover Statement on The Role of European Networks in the Bologna Process**

On the invitation of the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA), 180 representatives of European higher education institutions convened at the conference “Networks and Networking in European Higher Education” in Hanover/Germany on 1 and 2 September 2003. They discussed the future path of the Bologna Process, and the role of European higher education associations, consortia and networks in this important innovation agenda. The main messages which emerged from these discussions are summarized in the present “Hanover Statement”.

### **Full Support for the Bologna Process**

Participants drew attention to the fact that the Bologna Declaration had in many ways been prepared and made possible by the intense cooperation between European higher education institutions over the past 20 years, particularly in the framework of multi-national European networks. Supported by the education and training programmes of the European Union and, in some cases, of national government and internationalization agencies, European higher education networks had been amongst the pioneers in activities such as student and staff mobility, curricular cooperation, credit transfer, and later in joint European efforts in quality assurance.

Participants confirmed their full support for the Bologna aims. They expressed the hope that the ambitious set of Bologna objectives would be fully realized by the year 2010. They underlined that the process under way must result in genuine system transformation, particularly with regard to the introduction of a two-cycle Bachelor/Master degree architecture, and that attempts at reform by means of a simple re-labelling of old structures must be avoided.

### **Future Involvement of European Networks in the Process**

Recognising the pivotal role of European governments in providing the legal foundation for vigorous change, participants drew attention to the fact that ultimately only the universities and other higher education institutions themselves could guarantee the implementation of the Bologna reforms on the ground. They voiced their unconditional willingness to take over this task.

Given their crucial role in the implementation of the Bologna structures and instruments, participants expected of European governments that they would involve the entirety of European

higher education networks in the future stages of the Bologna Process more closely and systematically still than has been the case in the past. After all, such an enhanced role would be also the logical conclusion from the policies of the governments involved in the Bologna Process on the implication of all groups of civil society in the management of what are ultimately their own affairs

### **Mapping European Networks**

In order to be able to make maximum use of this enhanced role in the future stages of the Bologna Process, participants advocated a project aimed at mapping the present range of Bologna-related policies and activities of European networks, and contrasting them with the needs for higher education's contribution to the next steps in the reform process. This would create the basis for an efficient sharing of tasks among networks, and the avoidance of double effort. Participants voiced their hope that the European governments and the European Commission would contribute the funds necessary for such a project.

### **Strengthening the External Dimension of the Bologna Process**

Participants drew particular attention to the aim of the Bologna Declaration to enhance the competitiveness of European higher education. They underscored that, while such efforts were no doubt strongly desirable from an intra-European perspective, the globalisation of education necessitated in particular a strong role of Europe's higher education institutions in the world-wide arena.

Participants stressed that institutions and especially European networks had already embarked on this path, by forging alliances with counterparts in other world regions, and by making their educational offers and research potential known outside of Europe. They called on governments and on the European Commission to support and reinforce these efforts, by providing them with the means required to showcase their potential elsewhere in the world.

### **Further Reducing Obstacles to Networking and Cooperation in Europe**

Participants underlined the essential role of the Bologna Process in removing many of the obstacles which hindered their cooperative work in the past, and which often still do so today. They recognized that the introduction of a common degree structure, and of credit point systems, quality assurance and accreditation instruments of a type as similar as possible everywhere in Europe, are the right steps to increase commonality and thus improve the conditions for large-scale cooperation on our continent.

At the same time, participants warned that many obstacles will remain, even after the successful implementation of the Bologna Declaration. They therefore concluded that the present Bologna agenda will need to be dynamised, and will need to incorporate further steps towards a common higher education space in Europe. Participants therefore called on national governments to work towards a further convergence of national legal higher education frameworks.

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