



CONCLUSIONS

Informal Conference of the Ministers of Education from the new countries in the Bologna Process (Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine)

Strasbourg, 13 December 2006

Ministers of Education from Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine* met at Council of Europe Headquarters in Strasbourg on 12 – 13 December 2006 to take stock of higher education reforms in their respective countries and to prepare jointly for the Ministerial conference of the Bologna Process, to be held in London on 17 – 18 May 2007. The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the Bologna Process and its goal of establishing a European Higher Education Area by 2010.

With a view of stimulating the reform process in higher education in their countries, the Ministers agreed:

- 1) to further promote **quality development** within higher education institutions as well as external quality assurance in line with the European Quality Assurance Standards adopted by Ministers of the Bologna Process in Bergen in 2005. They underlined the need to further strengthen the capacity of their quality assurance bodies;
- 2) to establish **national qualifications frameworks** by 2010, in view of fulfilling their obligation, undertaken in the Bergen Communiqué of 2005, to make these compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the European Higher Education Area and to exchange experiences and cooperation for mutual support as needed and feasible;
- 3) to further develop and implement **curriculum reform** in higher education based on learning outcomes and taking account of the needs of the labour market, and to build on their mutual experience as well as that of other countries in addressing this important issue.
- 4) to pay special attention to the **social dimension** of higher education, look for ways of ensuring equality in access to, progress in and completion of higher education.

* Azerbaijan was prevented from attending the meeting because a new draft Law on Education was being considered by the Cabinet at the same time.

Ministers further recognise the importance of this work in order to **ensure maximum mobility of students and academic staff**. At the same time, they call upon their fellow Ministers of Education in all countries party to the Bologna Process to raise the issue **facilitating the granting of visas**, work and residence permits and social security protection for students and staff engaged in academic mobility. Ministers point to the simplification of visa procedures already undertaken in their countries and will follow regulations and practice in this area with a view to further facilitating academic mobility. Ministers also call for the simplification of the procedures and regulations concerning the recognition of foreign qualifications, and underline the need to fully implement the Lisbon Recognition Convention across the European Higher Education Area. The Ministers underline that the European Higher Education Area cannot be fully implemented unless unnecessary obstacles to mobility are removed.

The work of students and staff to foster the development and dissemination of knowledge and the right of students to education should not suffer because of political disagreements.

While reaffirming their commitment to being full partners in the European Higher Education Area, and to contribute to this pan-European effort, they also recognise the need for cooperation and the exchange of experience among themselves as well as with countries whose experience is particularly relevant for their own situation.

Ministers will encourage the promotion and implementation of the Bologna principles in the framework of the Black Sea countries' cooperation underlining the following areas of importance:

- Recognition of qualifications;
- Joint degrees;
- Mobility of students and staff;
- Quality assurance.