Conference

Public Responsibility for Higher Education and Research

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FINAL REPORT
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Introduction

The Council of Europe’s Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research (CDESR) is a particularly well-suited forum to discuss and examine public responsibility for higher education and research because it brings together representatives of both public authorities and higher education institutions. The conference, organized to examine the question of public responsibility by the Committee, brought together a large number of higher education leaders, representatives of government and of the EU Commission, students and associations. All papers that were presented and discussed were excellent and very rich; the questions they raised and the debate they stimulated were equally so. All references made in this report relate to chapters in the forthcoming conference publication1.

The issue of public responsibility is a timely one and the stakes are high in debating it at this time, because the conference was part of the Bologna Seminars and thus expected to provide input into this process, as it prepares for the next Ministerial meeting in Bergen in 2005. For this reason, the report provides a synthesis of the main points of discussion but includes as well the relevant recommendations that participants endorsed and which, taken collectively, were submitted to the Bologna Follow-Up Group as immediate outcomes from this reflection. The discussions were thought provoking, underlining the complexity and interconnectedness of various policies, measures and questions. They made it clear how the topic of public responsibility for higher education and research crystallizes so much of the current debate on the changes taking place in higher education at the local, national regional and global level and the challenges these changes pose for policy makers and for the higher education and research community.

The objective was to explore the nature, scope and exercise of public responsibility for higher education and research in today’s society and particularly in Europe. It was, and deliberately so, a look only at one side, the public authority side, of the equation and this was clearly recognized and noted. Neither the responsibilities of institutions to society, nor the responsibilities of students and other stakeholders, were examined in order to sharpen the focus but noting that such reflections require equal time and consideration. This is also reflected in the recommendations, where the focus is also exclusively on public authorities’ responsibilities or where additional research and other discussions are needed. Indeed, the list of recommendations, appended to this report, concludes with the following statement:

Building the Knowledge Society that is democratic, inclusive, equitable and competitive is a shared responsibility in which an examination of the responsibilities of public authorities must be completed by an analysis of the public responsibility of all other stakeholders. We urge that such corresponding analysis be undertaken as well.

1 See appendix for the table of contents of the publication
This report is little more than a bird’s eye view of the complex and multiple issues that were covered in detail in the various papers, to which references are made in the report and which will be available in the forthcoming publication. The report first quickly sets out the context or the changing landscape in which higher education and research are evolving in Europe. Second, some of the key messages with regard to the rationale and the ways in which public responsibility can be, is or indeed should be exercised, are presented. For the most part, these messages are also the source of the final recommendations. While there are areas of consensus concerning the areas of public responsibilities, the means or various instruments for exercising such public responsibility and their impact is a very complex matter. At least three different ways of examining these issues or three distinct frameworks for analysis appear possible. Each could serve to structure the on-going work and each is summarized. Following this section, the core and additional public responsibilities are presented very briefly before the challenges and outstanding questions are summarized.

Indeed, there are far more questions than answers in these attempts to define the nature and scope of public responsibility and so highlighting some of the risks and areas for further research is also a worthwhile exercise. Such research is needed to understand better the each of the different public policy instruments and the interaction between them as well as with other forces which also play a role in higher education and research, including the market.

Finally, as indicated earlier, throughout the report, the main recommendations that were endorsed and some additional suggestions that issued from the discussions are integrated into the report as appropriate.

**Context**

In the present juncture, there is an overwhelming agreement on what structures, or most influences the context in which institutions of higher learning and research are evolving today. Some of these features or defining forces are almost universal and affect systems everywhere. Others are specific to Europe. Among those that were brought forth repeatedly, and thus colour the overall approach to the topic of public responsibility are the following:

- Advent of the Knowledge Society means that higher education and research have become sectors of strategic importance – key to national and regional competitiveness and innovation, a vehicle to build or secure social cohesion and institutions for the embedding of democracy.
- In most of Europe a mass higher education is now well and truly established and in the Knowledge Society and even more so in the knowledge-based economy, individual expectations for higher education have risen and are changing, but absolutely not diminishing.
- Higher participation rates have not removed inequities based on socio-economic, racial or ethnic origins of students and significant gaps remain within many countries and between countries in Europe.
higher education and research performance cannot be analysed using only a national framework for its evaluation, but must rather be viewed in a global context, where increasingly there is a global higher education market.

Higher education must compete for a place on the public agenda with other sectors such as health; competition for scarce resources (from both public and private sources) is also increasing competition between institutions of higher education and is leading to greater commercialization and commodification of knowledge.

Growing demand for higher education, less funding for its supply and the availability and capacity of Information and Communications Technologies have contributed to the rise of new providers - national, transnational, public and private, including non and for profit and those employing new delivery means.

New actors, national, regional and even international, both governmental and non-governmental have been added to the higher education landscape and are exerting or expected to exert increasing influence and carry responsibilities on various aspects of higher education and research, such as quality assessment, regulation, information provision, etc.

And, in Europe, in addition or concurrently, the changes and forces that are steering higher education and research are largely influenced by the Bologna Process and the Ministers’ overarching 2010 goals of establishing the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area, all linked, especially since the Berlin Conference in 2003, to the European Union’s objective for Europe to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world.

Key messages

The successive Ministerial summits and Declarations within the Bologna Process, that twice (Prague in 2001 and Berlin in 2003), made specific reference to the idea that ‘higher education should be considered a public good and is and will remain a public responsibility’, provided the overall starting point for the more specific probing for what such statements mean and what such responsibility may entail.

In the rapidly shifting and very complex context, the roles higher education and research are expected to play and the demands that society places on higher education and research are changing. The governance of higher education institutions is hotly debated and the relationship between institutions and the State or the authorities that exercise public responsibility in higher education and research in each country are also in transition. At the same time, demands on the public authorities and on the public purse are also changing and imposing new, lower and perhaps upper limits to the scope of public responsibility and bringing new actors to the table.

Nevertheless, there is a clear sense that throughout Europe, the concept of public responsibility is changing and not just in the higher education sector. For some, public responsibility is under threat; for others it is expanding unduly. Under these
circumstances, all would agree that an open, ongoing and inclusive debate about the scope, the need for and the limits of public responsibility is essential. Most would also agree that the era in which we live is one in which the creation of knowledge and innovation are of unprecedented importance (Blasi, in Bergan/Weber, 2005, forthcoming). It was recommended that:

*in light of their importance in the process of building a Europe of Knowledge, higher education and research be viewed as strategic investments rather than as consumers of resources and that public funding must remain a major source of their support.*

It must be noted that while the initial discussion and presentations of the topic of public responsibility for higher education took on a very economic tone, especially with the careful examination of the concept of ‘public good’, there was also a strong effort to continuously add other dimensions. Nevertheless, a thorough overview of the literature demonstrated the overwhelming presence of economic theory in the examination of this topic and pointed out the paucity of non-economic analysis in this field (Schoenenberger, in Bergan/Weber, 2005, forthcoming). It was also underlined that applying the concept of ‘public good’ in the strictest, and purely economic sense, could actually pose a long-term threat to the viability of higher education and research (Weber, in Bergan/Weber, 2005, forthcoming). Thus clarity of definitions and in-depth reflection of the various aspects and instruments of public policy and responsibility are essential and need to supersede the expediency of using politically correct terms even if those, as in this case, can serve in favour of the objectives pursued, namely retain an important role for public authorities and public finance in higher education. It is to reflect these issues that it was recommended that

*public responsibility for Higher Education and Research, be understood as a multidimensional concept that includes the establishment and maintenance of the required legal infrastructure, elaboration of policy, provision of funds and the further development of the social dimension, to meet current and future needs of the Knowledge Society.*

And that Ministers

*acknowledge that funding, motivating and stimulating the development of higher education and research is as important a part of public responsibility as the exercise of regulation and control.*

Indeed, just as higher education and research play multiple roles in society and in the economy, the nature and scope of public responsibility is complex and has multiple dimensions. It must be underlined though, that these are intrinsically linked. The rationale for public responsibility for higher education and research cannot be divorced from the mission of universities and their responsibilities vis-à-vis students and democratic society as well as the world of work. In this regard, it was recommended that
in keeping with the values of democratic and equitable societies, public authorities ensure that higher education institutions, while exercising increased autonomy, can meet society’s multiple expectations and fulfil their various purposes, which include personal development of learners, preparation for active citizenship in democratic societies, development and dissemination of advanced knowledge and preparation for the labour market.

It was also repeated that no universal model for defining the nature and scope of public responsibility exists and that local and national conditions will each time colour the way it is exercised (Shishlov, in Bergan/ Weber, 2005, forthcoming).

There is overwhelming consensus that higher education and research are a key area of public responsibility and even the strictly economic, and therefore only partial, justification is solid: higher education is an investment of strategic importance. However, in the current circumstances of competing priorities vying for public authorities’ attention, it becomes urgent to strengthen such justification by finding new ways to quantify what in economic terms are called the ‘externalities’, in other words to quantify the benefits that accrue to society as a whole, and go beyond the private returns on the investment in higher education.

In addition, it was pointed out that increasingly important concepts such as ‘social capital’, which refers to social ties, shared values etc. and which form part of a broader objective – social cohesion. These aspects are far more difficult to quantify, yet they are particularly pertinent if the rationale for public intervention in higher education and research is to be based on the contributions made to society’s overall well-being (Schoenenberger, in Bergan/ Weber, 2005, forthcoming). In economic parlance, this leaves the theory of ‘market failure’ as a primary justification for public investment in higher education. Justifying public responsibility through the failure of market forces seems a less than satisfactory manner in which to demonstrate the importance of this key sector. At the same time, getting at the indirect or social benefits that the society and the economy as a whole derive from a strong and independent higher education and research sector is essential to complete the analysis of the rationale for public responsibility.

Yet, this very brief justification for why we need to probe deeper to gain better understanding of the economic and non-economic rationales for public responsibilities in higher education and research system must not ignore that public policy and public institutions can also fall short of expectations and needs. Thus it is appropriate also to note that ‘government failure’ and inefficiency in terms of fairness etc. can exist in HE/R as well. (Weber, in Bergan/ Weber, 2005, forthcoming)

**Frameworks for analysis**

Several frameworks may be used to analyse both the scope and the level of public responsibility for higher education. Given the limits of viewing higher education and research from a purely economic perspective when all of the objectives of higher education are considered, it seems clear that whichever framework is adopted, it must
also integrate political and social considerations at the very least. Determining the appropriate role or type of involvement of public authorities and assessing the effectiveness of various instruments used to exercise public responsibility needs also to be anchored in shared societal values of democracy, human rights, equity etc.

In terms of analyzing the public responsibility for research, first it must be noted that to some extent research presents a different set of challenges from the learning and teaching aspects of higher education. Nevertheless, there is also, perhaps even a stronger rationale for public responsibility in the area of research, with in addition to the social and political considerations, some ethical, security aspects to keep in mind. Furthermore, it can be argued that the very nature of the scientific method of critical and open enquiry defines the space that needs to be occupied by public authorities. (Aaviksoo, in Bergan/ Weber, 2005, forthcoming)

Thus in research, it was recommended that

*In order for universities in the European Higher Education Area to meet society’s requirements for research and respond to public interests, public authorities must provide adequate funds and, together with the research community, design policies to regulate conditions under which private resources can best be used.*

In all of this however, and despite the need for public authorities to play an important role in creating an environment that is conducive to strong development in research and higher education, it must be underlined that public responsibility is not the same as direct public intervention. Finding appropriate instruments, which can build and not obstruct the creation of such an environment is often a particularly difficult balancing act between too little and too much control.

Recognizing that this is a delicate balancing task, it also requires appropriate conditions at the institutions of higher education. They must have sufficient levels of autonomy and adequate governance structures to set priorities, make and implement strategic choices. It was therefore recommended that

*public responsibilities be exercised throughout the European Higher Education Area with due regard for the need of higher education and research institutions and systems to act freely and efficiently in the pursuit of their mission.*

The three frameworks that were put forward to facilitate the analysis of the nature and scope of public responsibility can be summarized and coined as follows:

a) An **instrumental framework**: which looks most particularly at the nature of state or public intervention. It highlights that such exercise of public responsibility can be made through legal or policy instruments; through financial supports and various incentives such as tax breaks and investment opportunities, or by the exercise of moral influence through which public authorities can create an environment conducive to public respect
and trust in higher education and research. (Shishlov, in Bergan/Weber, 2005, forthcoming)

b) The second framework that can be adopted is based on the level of engagement. This means that specific areas of public responsibility are assessed in terms of those where public responsibility is essential and exclusively exercised by public authorities, aspects where such public responsibility is desirable and rests, for the main part, in the hands of public authorities and third, areas or aspects of higher education and research that do not require the intervention of public authorities but where such intervention is important but optional (Shishlov, Bergan, in Bergan/Weber, 2005, forthcoming).

c) The third framework can be called functional and takes, as the starting point, the needs of society: the scope of public responsibility is defined in terms of its purpose. It is exercised to ensure the quantity of higher education and research available in society; it is necessary to guarantee fair distribution of access to higher education and research and ensures the quality of education and research. The concept of ‘quality’, when extended to include research, could also include public responsibility to provide vigilance and oversight to protect public safety and uphold ethical considerations. (Weber, Aaviksoo, in Bergan/Weber, 2005, forthcoming).

As the concept of public responsibility is likely to continue to evolve, it will become increasingly vital to find means to analyse and to assess how best to define the optimal role of public authorities in a variety of contexts. Each of the frameworks that have been articulated, either explicitly or implicitly, offers a different perspective on this discussion and may bring new insights. Collectively they serve as a solid starting point for ongoing research.

**Core Responsibilities**

The establishment of a clear and favourable policy framework in which higher education and research can adequately develop and providing basic funding to support this development, are the two most obvious aspects of public responsibility. Yet, within each of these broad areas, what should be covered in such a policy framework, how binding it ought to be, what mechanisms it should employ and how far it should extend are all questions open to debate. Similarly, the level of public funding and how it might be supplemented by other fiscal measures and mechanisms, or how best to aid individuals or families make bigger contributions to the cost of higher education are the kinds of details, where, as the saying goes, the devil may still be winning the battle. Nevertheless, these are the domains where public responsibility is of utmost importance.

These and other considerations of equitable access and objective or disinterested review with regard to quality of learning and research, were at the heart of many of the presentations and discussions concerning the core public responsibilities for higher education and research. Noting that decreasing public financial support has already led to an increase in private involvement in both teaching and research, whether through the introduction of or rise in tuition fees or through growing sponsorship of research by
industry, it is clear that the number of issues that must be considered when defining the scope of public responsibility has grown. For this reason, it is urgent that whatever approach is taken to redefining the scope and nature of public responsibility in this field, sufficient time is allowed to carefully weigh its short and medium term impact against all the goals being pursued in the European Higher Education Area.

In terms of research, as alternatives or supplements to public funding are explored, it was recommended that

*considering the importance and the potential benefits and risks of research, public authorities ensure that adequate and disinterested oversight is developed and that access to research results be broadened, for example by adopting and supporting Open Access Publishing initiatives.*

More specifically looking at the teaching and learning aspects of higher education, a variety of alternatives exist and are being explored and tested around the world to fill the funding gap left by generally declining public finance. In Europe too the search for ways of financing of higher education takes place against the background of a context where public authorities are either unwilling or unable to meet the need for expansion. A variety of approaches are possible but ultimately the choice is a political one, which can take the form of institutional or individual subsidies, income contingent repayment schemes etc. (Salerno, in Bergan/Weber, 2005, forthcoming). The key issues that are underlining the debate about funding choices are how to uphold the principles of accessibility and equity, yet retain high quality higher education. Research and evidence-based policy making and a long-term vision are essential in this regard and it was also recommended that

*to respond to increased pressure for cost-sharing in higher education, where students and families may be expected to bear a greater share of the direct costs, public authorities stimulate further research and debate on the impact of different instruments such as tuition fees, student grants, bursaries and loans etc, on aspects such as equality of opportunity, system efficiency, social cohesion, long-term impact on public funding etc, as a basis for future action.*

**Additional Aspects of Public Responsibility**

In light of the importance that is assigned to higher education and research as instrument or levers of economic, political and social development in Europe, it is not surprising that the areas of public responsibility appear to be expanding, even as the level of direct support and involvement in terms of funding may be, in many cases, is declining. The exact scope of public responsibility varies from country to country, according to history and tradition and the system of government in place. In most countries though, in addition to the core responsibilities mentioned above, some or all of the following areas would also be considered as part of the public responsibility. Indeed, as the process of building the European Higher Education Area progresses, these additional areas appear to be less and less optional.
a) Employability

Whose responsibility is it to bridge the gaps between higher education and employment? Even if the reply most likely involves both institutions of higher education and public authorities, there are a number of ways in which public authorities have drawn the link between higher education and employability and brought it to the fore during the various stages of the Bologna Process. Perhaps, it is most visible from the full acceptance by both the Ministers and other actors of the need for a coherent European framework of qualifications that will cover vocational training as well as higher education and their commitment towards a more outcome-based view of qualifications. Such a framework and a competency-based approach to qualifications aim to further facilitate movement of graduates within the European labour market. They are also expected to bring greater ease and flexibility for movement within and to and from the higher educational systems. This issue has been given high profile in several ways during the process of building the European Higher Education Area and in several ways has become an integral part of the public responsibility. (Haug, in Bergan/ Weber, 2005, forthcoming) On the one hand this requires that higher education institutions address the issue of employability when designing their programmes and fully integrate the life long learning mission into their plans. On the other hand, and in support of these developments, it is recommended that

With the aim of enhancing sustainable employability of graduates in the European labour market, public authorities ensure that appropriate bridges exist between higher education institutions and the world of work; elements of such bridging include a coherent qualifications framework at the national and European levels, transparent mechanisms for recognition of qualifications and quality assurance, two way information flows between the labour market and higher education, flexible exit, entry and re-entry opportunities.

b) Information provision

As the higher education landscape shifts and changes due to structural reforms brought about by the Bologna Process and the diversification of institutions and programs, a key and growing area of public responsibility is to ensure that learners, employers and others in society are well-informed. This public responsibility though has as much to do with the substance of the information – comparability, accuracy and relevance, as with its availability or accessibility. Indeed what is of concern is the quality and the overall legitimacy of information available on systems, programmes and qualifications in higher education offered by all providers, national and transnational, public and private. The most important users of such trustworthy information are the learners, but employers too need to know what they can expect in terms of outcomes and competencies when hiring graduates of higher education. It was recommended that

avoiding burdensome administrative arrangements and seeking greater transparency, public authorities in the European Higher Education Area adopt a common approach in setting the requirements for the provision of accurate, objective and up-to-date
information on higher education options, including on transnational education providers, that corresponds to the needs of learners as well as other stakeholders, enabling and empowering each to make informed choices at all stages from entry, to employment and including for mobility purposes.

In addition, information that can guide or empower users to ask the right questions and seek appropriate and relevant information is also needed. Finally, ensuring that such data has undergone some kind of objective quality control is also a growing responsibility of public authorities, especially private and commercial interests are increasingly active in higher education. (Almqvist, in Bergan/ Weber, 2005, forthcoming)

c) Regulatory mechanism

Linked to making sound choices and knowing what can be expected from graduates is another priority area of public responsibility, namely quality assurance and quality assessment processes in higher education. These remain of utmost importance when the overall higher education sector is expanding, yet where direct control may be diminishing, new providers are being created or imported and the overall system is becoming both more complex and more prone to change. The processes of quality assessment are an important instrument of regulation and, again, in most countries in Europe and at the regional level, public authorities are examining and debating most appropriate approaches. The United Kingdom, where attention paid to such regulatory mechanisms has perhaps the longest history in Europe, offers some powerful lessons, good practice cases as well as, in the words of Roderick Floud, rich experiences of what to avoid. Overall, the United Kingdom experience suggests quite strongly that such regulation be developed with due regard to a balance between costs and benefits, with due respect for university values and trust in university staff to act as ‘Knights’, rather than ‘Knaves’, which means trust that they generally act in the best interest of the students and the system. Also, quality assessment and regulation needs to build on internal process for promoting quality rather than undermining them and any such regulatory mechanisms needs to be to be guided by the principle of subsidiarity. (Floud, in Bergan/ Weber, 2005, forthcoming). Keeping these lessons in mind, it was recommended that

public authorities establish, as an essential regulatory mechanism in increasingly diversified higher education systems, cost-effective quality assessment mechanisms that are built on trust, give due regard to internal quality development processes, have the right to independent decision-making and abide by agreed-upon principles.

d) Public responsibility and transnational education

The presence of transnational education providers is not felt to the same extent in all countries of Europe, however, the expansion of what is often also called borderless education is creating new challenges and demands for all stakeholders, including public authorities. It is doing so at the local but also at the regional and international levels. Precisely because of its transnational nature, borderless education requires a coordinated
European, if not global response that takes place within a public policy framework. In this area change and innovation is often very rapid and new actors or new alliances are being formed and getting involved in training and education. Both important academic but also commercial interests are driving these developments but decision-makers, as well as higher education leaders, academics, students and even employers have far more questions than answers about the benefits and potential risks of a rapid expansion and diversification of ways and providers delivering higher education. (Adam, in Bergan/Weber, 2005, forthcoming) It is in order to seek some of these responses that it was recommended

*a public debate between national and international stakeholders be promoted in order to develop coordinated policies on the implications of transnational education, keeping in mind the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the UNESCO/Council of Europe Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education as well as the work of OECD and UNESCO to develop guidelines on quality provision in cross border education.*

**Risks, Challenges, Opportunities and Outstanding Questions**

Even if predominantly and firmly embedded within the public sector, most systems of higher education and research, including those in Europe, are increasingly characterized by a mix of public-private aspects, whether it is in knowledge production, provision or funding. Thus the process of defining public responsibility has become an art of finding the balance within these gray zones and blurred boundaries while seeking the most suitable, acceptable and effective means to obtain the desired ends. In addition to a balancing act, it is also a process of negotiation among multiple stakeholders.

Quite clearly, public funding, even if by no means sufficient or exclusive, is critical for higher education and research within the European Higher Education Area. It is however equally important to have the laws guaranteeing institutional autonomy, to have firm policies about non-discriminatory access to higher education on the basis of merit, to have clear policies concerning degree structures, to enact enabling tax laws concerning funding of research, to pass laws determining when and how new institutions can be established and to establish transparent rules concerning recognition, accreditation, and quality assessment of institutions of higher education whether they are domestic or foreign. It is in fact the policy environment that can either be conducive or stifling for the growth and sound development of higher education and research. Such a policy environment can exert a critical steering effect at the level of institutions as well at systemic levels and have important financial implications as well. It is more than evident that each policy instrument and the interplay among them require further analysis and discussion.

Furthermore if the full multiplicity of roles of higher education is factored into the vision of the European Higher Education Area and the collective goals of social cohesion, democracy and equality of opportunity are to be pursued, the policy framework must be widened and expanded. To achieve these far-reaching political goals public authorities
need to create conditions and expectations and provide the support for education based on values. Among these, reasserting democracy as an inner value to the university is most important. (Zgaga, in Bergan/ Weber, 2005, forthcoming) Looking at other values for the EHEA, such as inclusiveness and equity, links to many other sectors of public policy – social, health and increasingly immigration policy and others, are required so that concrete ways can be found to remove barriers for all minority groups. (Pedroso, in Bergan/ Weber, 2005, forthcoming)

A vision and pro-active measures at all levels of the system will be required and the European Ministers who will meet in Bergen in May 2005 are urged to

- affirm their commitment to making equal opportunity in higher education a fundamental building block of the European Higher Education Area and to undertake actions that will allow the development of systemic and institutional responses to enable all individuals to realize their full potential and thus contribute to the shaping of a competitive and coherent Europe of Knowledge.

- acknowledge that funding, motivating and stimulating the development of higher education and research is as important a part of public responsibility as the exercise of regulation and control.

- as the basis for the formulation of a coherent and sustainable public policy in Europe, stimulate a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of various approaches that would lead to increased funds for higher education and research, paying particularly attention to the requirement of meeting equity, effectiveness and efficiency objectives as well as those of quality and autonomy.

Recognizing the funding shifts, how should other policy instruments of public responsibility be adjusted? Who and how will the best policy and regulation infrastructure be designed? How much of a role should rest with public authorities and how much should be left to the market to create the conditions in which autonomous institutions of higher education are empowered and entrepreneurial enough to both compete and cooperate? How can we avoid the worst-case scenario of little public support and over-regulation? What are the best conditions in which institutions can exercise their mission to provide higher education of quality to students and life long learners and to undertake research to advance knowledge and improve the quality of life, in a sustainable manner, for all citizens? And what is the best way to assess whether higher education is fulfilling this mission? Finally how should public authorities regulate these autonomous institutions through accountability and assessment exercises?

What is clearly of universal concern in Europe and elsewhere is that funding and commitment of resources accompany the laws and regulatory mechanisms thus enabling their sound implementation. Goals such as becoming more attractive to the best qualified students and researchers and becoming the most competitive knowledge economy in the
world require commitments of adequate funds and other supports in both higher education and research.

As it was pointed out earlier, the stakes are very high for Europe, for public authorities at the national level, for higher education leadership faculty, researchers and students, for employers and for society at large. All countries and the region as a whole needs a higher education and research system that meet economic and social goals and help all individuals achieve their full potential in society. Meeting such goals requires many instruments and levers to work in harmony rather than in contradiction with one another. The very complexity of these issues, though, makes it difficult as often contradictory objectives push and pull the system in different directions. It is almost always a matter of striking the right balance on a shifting continuum. The importance of the issues though requires full and active participation of all stakeholders in the search for a balanced, collective and negotiated response.

So, in conclusion, it is important to recognize that building the Knowledge Society or the Europe of Knowledge, that is democratic, inclusive, equitable and competitive is a shared responsibility in which an examination of the responsibilities of public authorities must be completed by an analysis of the public responsibility of all other stakeholders.

Appendices
- list of recommendations of the conference
- table of contents of the publication on public responsibility (cover page, inside cover, table of contents, blurb)
Appendix 1

Recommendations addressed to public authorities in States Party to the European Cultural Convention and to the Bologna Follow-up Group

The Conference recommends that:

1. in light of their importance in the process of building a Europe of Knowledge, Higher Education and Research be viewed as strategic investments rather than as consumers of resources and that public funding must remain a major source of their support.

2. public responsibility for Higher Education and Research, be understood as a multidimensional concept that includes the establishment and maintenance of the required legal infrastructure, elaboration of policy, provision of funds and the further development of the social dimension, to meet current and future needs of the Knowledge Society.

3. public responsibilities be exercised throughout the European Higher Education Area with due regard for the need of higher education and research institutions and systems to act freely and efficiently in the pursuit of their mission.

4. in keeping with the values of democratic and equitable societies, public authorities ensure that higher education institutions, while exercising increased autonomy, can meet society’s multiple expectations and fulfil their various purposes, which include personal development of learners, preparation for active citizenship in democratic societies, development and dissemination of advanced knowledge and preparation for the labour market.

5. in order for universities in the European Higher Education Area to meet society’s requirements for research and respond to public interests, public authorities must provide adequate funds and, together with the research community, design policies to regulate conditions under which private resources can best be used.

6. considering the importance and the potential benefits and risks of research, public authorities ensure that adequate and disinterested oversight is developed and that access to research results be broadened, for example by adopting and supporting Open Access Publishing initiatives.

7. to respond to increased pressure for cost-sharing in higher education, where students and families may be expected to bear a greater share of the direct costs, public authorities stimulate further research and debate on the impact of different instruments such as tuition fees, student grants, bursaries and loans etc, on aspects such as equality of opportunity, system efficiency, social cohesion, long-term impact on public funding etc, as a basis for future action.
8. with the aim of enhancing sustainable employability of graduates in the European labour market, public authorities ensure that appropriate bridges exist between higher education institutions and the world of work; elements of such bridging include a coherent qualifications framework at the national and European levels, transparent mechanisms for recognition of qualifications and quality assurance, two way information flows between the labour market and higher education, flexible exit, entry and re-entry opportunities.

9. avoiding burdensome administrative arrangements and seeking greater transparency, public authorities in the European Higher Education Area adopt a common approach in setting the requirements for the provision of accurate, objective and up-to-date information on higher education options, including on transnational education providers, that corresponds to the needs of learners as well as other stakeholders, enabling and empowering each to make informed choices at all stages from entry, to employment and including for mobility purposes.

10. public authorities establish, as an essential regulatory mechanism in increasingly diversified higher education systems, cost-effective quality assessment mechanisms that are built on trust, give due regard to internal quality development processes, have the right to independent decision-making and abide by agreed-upon principles.

11. a public debate between national and international stakeholders be promoted in order to develop coordinated policies on the implications of transnational education, keeping in mind the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the UNESCO/Council of Europe Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education as well as the work of OECD and UNESCO to develop guidelines on quality provision in cross border education.

In particular, the Conference **recommends that Ministers** meeting at the Bergen Ministerial Conference of the Bologna Process, in May 2005,

- affirm their commitment to making equal opportunity in higher education a fundamental building block of the European Higher Education Area and to undertake actions that will allow the development of systemic and institutional responses to enable all individuals to realize their full potential and thus contribute to the shaping of a competitive and coherent Europe of Knowledge.

- acknowledge that funding, motivating and stimulating the development of higher education and research is as important a part of public responsibility as the exercise of regulation and control.
as the basis for the formulation of a coherent and sustainable public policy in Europe, stimulate a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of various approaches that would lead to increased funds for higher education and research, paying particularly attention to the requirement of meeting equity, effectiveness and efficiency objectives as well as those of quality and autonomy.

Building the Knowledge Society that is democratic, inclusive, equitable and competitive is a **shared responsibility** in which an examination of the responsibilities of public authorities must be completed by an analysis of the public responsibility of all other stakeholders. We urge that such corresponding analysis be undertaken as well.
Appendix 2

Table of contents of the publication on public responsibility (cover page, inside cover, table of contents, blurb)

Preface
Gabriele Mazza

A Word from the Editors
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