



Recommendation 1540 (2001)¹

Higher education in South-Eastern Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Higher education provides an opportunity for interaction between national identities and the promotion of common interests, for the benefit of students, society and, more generally, future generations.
2. The Bologna Process is becoming increasingly established as the guiding strategy for higher education policy and reform in Europe, following the principles of the two European documents adopted: the Sorbonne Declaration and the Bologna Declaration.
3. The Sorbonne Declaration, signed by the education ministers of France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom on 25 May 1998, marked out a reference framework for making diplomas more easily identifiable and increasing student mobility and employment potential.
4. The Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999, signed by the education ministers of twenty-nine European countries, is a key document on higher education in Europe based on the following principles:
 - 4.1. a Europe of knowledge as an irreplaceable factor for social and human growth and as an indispensable component of the consolidation and enrichment of European citizenship;
 - 4.2. the importance of education and educational co-operation in the development and strengthening of stable, peaceful and democratic societies;
 - 4.3. increasing the international competitiveness of the European system of higher education;
 - 4.4. the adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, thereby increasing the employability of higher education graduates;
 - 4.5. the adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles, both of which should lead to adequate levels of qualification for entering the labour market;
 - 4.6. the establishment of a credit system to promote student mobility;
 - 4.7. the promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance;
 - 4.8. the promotion of the necessary European dimension in higher education.
5. The ministerial meeting of the Bologna countries (18 and 19 May 2001), preceded by and building on the outcomes of the Academic Convention in Salamanca (28 and 29 March 2001) and the Student Convention in Gothenburg (24 and 25 March 2001), brought the Bologna Process forward by:
 - 5.1. emphasising more strongly the importance of quality assurance, and the link between quality assurance and the recognition of qualifications;
 - 5.2. insisting on the importance of lifelong learning in the European Higher Education Area;
 - 5.3. underlining that higher education must be considered a public and private good benefiting society, the state and the individuals concerned;

1. Assembly debate on 28 September 2001 (32nd Sitting) (see [Doc. 9189](#), report of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education, rapporteur: Mr Baciú). Text adopted by the Assembly on 28 September 2001 (32nd Sitting).



- 5.4. underlining the importance of student participation in explicitly referring to students as full members of the academic community and as competent, active and constructive partners in the establishment and shaping of the European Higher Education Area;
- 5.5. a semantic shift from wishing to make European higher education more competitive to making it more attractive.
6. The Assembly reiterates that, in the countries of South-eastern Europe, higher education is crucial in establishing and consolidating stability, peace and democracy in the region, all the more so given the current situation. It is also critical for the economic, social and cultural development of these countries.
7. Recalling its work on history teaching, the Assembly emphasises that teaching of the human sciences in higher education must be directed towards mutual understanding and tolerance and shared democratic values. Such an approach is particularly necessary in the training of future teachers at all levels.
8. The Assembly recognises that the promotion of student mobility, while positive, can also lead to an undesirable brain drain.
9. The Assembly recalls that the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe provides, within the framework of its first working table, for several activities in the education field, including the system of higher education in the region.
10. The Assembly notes that, in addition to the Council of Europe, other international institutions have already stated their intention to support and contribute to the Stability Pact, notably the European Union, Unesco (in particular the European Centre for Higher Education, CEPES, in Bucharest) and the United Nations.
11. On several occasions over the last ten years, the Assembly has examined the situation of higher education in South-eastern Europe, pursuing ongoing activities in conjunction with the Education Committee (CC-ED) and the Higher Education and Research Committee (CC-HER) in the field of legislative and structural reform.
12. The Assembly warmly welcomes the signing of the Framework Agreement in Skopje on 13 August 2001 and urges both major language communities of “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” to find a satisfactory solution to the issue of higher education provision in the two major languages of the country based on that agreement.
13. Bearing in mind the importance of higher education for South-eastern Europe and the need to contribute to the implementation of the Stability Pact’s objectives, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:
 - 13.1. call on member states from South-eastern Europe to take practical steps to join the Bologna Process, and in particular to:
 - a. strengthen their national higher education systems, with assistance from the Council of Europe, so as to secure their economic, social and cultural development;
 - b. strengthen the central role of universities in developing regional and European cultural dimensions;
 - c. set up a higher education system with two main levels of study below doctoral studies, both of which would qualify graduates for access to the labour market or for the continuation of their studies;
 - d. introduce a system of credits based on the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS);
 - e. introduce the “Diploma Supplement” – a joint project of the European Commission, Council of Europe and Unesco to facilitate the comparison and recognition of qualifications;
 - f. adopt a system of easily identifiable and comparable degrees, with reference to the Council of Europe/Unesco Lisbon Recognition Convention;
 - g. draw up and implement programmes aimed at increasing mobility among the region’s academics and students as a means of developing trust and promoting knowledge of, and respect for, different ethnic cultures in this part of Europe;
 - h. co-operate closely within the CEEPUS (Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies) programme framework to foster mobility among academics and students and the mutual recognition of qualifications;

- i.* support any lifelong learning projects in higher education in order to encourage retraining of those who have lost their jobs as a result of economic or structural reorganisation or change;
- j.* support legislative reforms in their countries aimed at establishing a transparent, easy-to-use and universally applicable scientific assessment procedure for the higher education system, at gradually bringing higher education and research closer together and at facilitating co-operation between university, industry and business;
- k.* accordingly support the introduction of effective, independent social sciences that are able to contribute to true democratic citizenship;
- l.* work in close collaboration with the Council of Europe to assist the setting up of a regional network of European studies for democratic citizenship as an appropriate framework for teaching and for the practice of democracy;
- m.* study the implications of student mobility, including the brain drain, for countries of South-eastern Europe;
- n.* facilitate equal access to institutions of higher education for students belonging to minorities;

13.2. call on European Union member states to step up co-operation with the network of universities in South-eastern Europe through various transnational programmes (such as CEEPUS, Leonardo and Socrates);

13.3. encourage international financial institutions to support projects for reorganisation and legislative reform of higher education infrastructure and functioning in the region.