



Recommendation 1620 (2003)¹

Council of Europe contribution to the higher education area

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Bologna Process, the most important and wide-ranging reform of higher education in Europe since 1968, was launched in June 1999 when the education ministers from twenty-nine European countries signed the Bologna Declaration, aimed at establishing a European higher education area by 2010.

2. In 2001, the ministers responsible for higher education in the “Bologna” countries met in Prague to take stock of the progress made and to establish guidelines and priorities for implementing the process in the years ahead. They reasserted their commitment to achieving the goal of establishing a European higher education area by 2010. At the same time, the number of participating countries was increased to thirty-three.

3. The Bologna Declaration and the Prague Communiqué set as goals the adoption of a system of easily identifiable and comparable degrees, essentially based on two main cycles, the promotion of mobility, European co-operation in quality assurance and the enhancement of the attractiveness of the European higher education area.

4. The Parliamentary Assembly welcomes the Council of Europe’s contribution to the Bologna Process through its involvement in the process follow-up arrangements, its role as a link between the states in the process and the other States Parties to the European Cultural Convention and its higher education programme.

5. In this connection, the Council of Europe/Unesco Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (the Lisbon Recognition Convention) adopted in 1997, which has now been signed by forty-three states and ratified by thirty-three, is particularly important, because recognition issues play a key role in the implementation of the European higher education area.

6. With a view to the next meeting of the ministers responsible for higher education in Berlin in September 2003, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

study the means of enabling the Council of Europe to continue and step up its contribution to the establishment of the European higher education area, in particular:

- a. *by further developing its activities concerning the recognition of qualifications with regard to the Bologna Process, notably the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention;*
- b. *by analysing the links between the recognition of qualifications and quality assurance in higher education;*
- c. *by considering the issue of good governance in higher education, focusing especially on student involvement;*
- d. *by underlining the fundamental role of research in universities and the need to link the European higher education area with the European Research Area mentioned in [Recommendation 1541 \(2001\)](#) on young scientists in Europe;*
- e. *by safeguarding cultural diversity, regional education powers and the autonomy of universities;*

1. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 8 September 2003 (see [Doc. 9880](#), report of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education, rapporteur: Mr Varela i Serra).



- f. *by studying the role of the Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research as a link between the signatories of the Bologna Declaration and non-signatories and between ministry and academic representatives, as well as the student representatives with observer status on the committee;*
- g. *call on all European states in the Bologna Process to ratify the Lisbon Recognition Convention as an essential means of facilitating the establishment of the European higher education area;*
- h. *urge all member states that have not yet done so to base their higher education policies and reforms on the guidelines and priorities of the Bologna Process;*
- i. *study the possibility of also involving states that are not signatories to the European Cultural Convention, such as the countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean;*
- j. *initiate discussion on the definition of public authorities' responsibilities in higher education and research and on governance in higher education.*