



**Resolution 1906 (2012)<sup>1</sup>**

Final version

## **The consolidation and international openness of the European Higher Education Area**

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly reaffirms its support for the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) as a guarantor of sustainable social development based on knowledge and research. It welcomes the significant role that the Council of Europe plays in this process as well as the continued efforts of member States to set up an effective system of higher education in Europe that meets the challenges of the 21st century.
2. However, the Assembly considers that further action is required to consolidate the EHEA and make it more open and attractive. Europe has a lot to offer, but also a lot to learn from other regions of the world and there is a need to take due account of the global context and the influence it has on higher education in Europe.
3. Higher education should provide students with competencies that enable them to enter sustainable employment, become active citizens in democratic societies and be capable of rising to the challenges they will be faced with in life. Europe should remain a place where talent and knowledge are retained, developed and valued, and where excellence in higher education and research attracts students from diverse origins and backgrounds. Teachers and researchers need to be better prepared for greater international co-operation.
4. Effectiveness of international co-operation depends on academic mobility. Yet many governments have a policy of reducing immigration and seem unwilling to make exceptions for academic mobility. The stated goals of the EHEA and national immigration policy need to be reconciled. This matter is particularly important since almost half of the EHEA member States are not part of the Schengen Area.
5. Greater bilateral and multilateral co-operation between EHEA and non-EHEA countries on a larger policy development level and on the level of individual institutions should be encouraged.
6. The Assembly reiterates its support for the principles that determine EHEA membership, such as commitment to academic freedom, institutional autonomy and student participation, and calls upon the public authorities of countries wishing to enhance co-operation with EHEA members, or wishing to become a member of the EHEA, to ensure respect for these fundamental values through their policies and practice, and to resist any attempt to restrict or control academic freedom through government interference.
7. The successful implementation and functioning of the EHEA depends on the active participation and support of all stakeholders in the Bologna Process. Governments, higher education institutions and student associations are represented in the Process, while national parliaments are not yet part of it. The latter must be fully involved in the Process. In addition, the Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament should be represented at the Bologna Process ministerial conferences.

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1. Assembly debate on 5 October 2012 (36th Sitting) (see [Doc. 13009](#), report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: Mr Huseynov). Text adopted by the Assembly on 5 October 2012 (36th Sitting). See also [Recommendation 2005 \(2012\)](#).



8. National parliaments should provide all the necessary political support to ensure implementation of the EHEA. Policy making in this area should be aimed at widening the geographical space of countries sharing the goals of the Bologna Process, and making the EHEA more open and more attractive to global co-operation initiatives. In addition, stronger parliamentary involvement should help gain support from interior and foreign affairs ministers in charge of defining immigration policies both domestically and at European level, to enhance academic mobility.
9. The Assembly therefore asks the member States of the Council of Europe to:
  - 9.1. ensure that the Council of Europe remains an active partner in the Bologna Process and that it contributes, through the External Dimension of the Process, to co-operation with other countries;
  - 9.2. continue to support the development of the EHEA and ensure coherent implementation of the Bologna objectives throughout the EHEA, and in particular:
    - 9.2.1. carry out the structural reforms which are still required (including review of legislation and national regulations, and the completion of the qualifications frameworks), encouraging involvement of all stakeholders;
    - 9.2.2. seek greater co-ordination and provide mutual support to reduce differences in implementation paces;
    - 9.2.3. consider the possibility of providing scholarships or flat rate contributions per student to top up the investment by those students who cannot afford to get access to higher education by their own means, ensuring, at the same time, strict oversight of the distribution of scholarships;
  - 9.3. foster mobility and exchanges of students, teachers, researchers and university managers, and to this effect:
    - 9.3.1. take measures to further reduce administrative barriers to international mobility, such as those which obstruct the granting of visas, of social security coverage and of residence and work permits for staff;
    - 9.3.2. ensure proper recognition of qualifications acquired abroad upon return following a mobility scheme;
    - 9.3.3. provide adequate funding and ensure access to such funding through mobility schemes at European level;
  - 9.4. implement the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and take measures to improve compatibility and comparability of degrees, and in particular:
    - 9.4.1. harmonise the ECTS points in substance, including clear and standard credit measurement in terms of student workload and unambiguous linkage to learning outcomes;
    - 9.4.2. implement the Europass Diploma Supplement scheme;
  - 9.5. encourage the effective implementation of the principles and provisions of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (ETS No. 165) and intensify co-operation with countries seeking accession;
  - 9.6. develop communication and disseminate all relevant information on the EHEA both externally and internally;
  - 9.7. strengthen co-operation and partnership with countries outside the EHEA, encouraging the exchange of new ideas and the sharing of good practice.