

## **ESU – European Students' Union**

Rue de la Sablonnière 20  
1000 Brussels  
Belgium  
T : +32-2-502 23 62  
F : +32-2-706 48 26  
E : secretariat@esu-online.org



### **Press Release**

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## **From rhetoric to action: Student report calls for Ministers to step up a gear on Bologna Process implementation**

A major new report released today highlights an urgent need for greater action if the biggest ever reform programme of European higher education is to be a success. The Bologna With Student Eyes 2009 report, released today by the European Students' Union (ESU), clearly shows the failure of European governments and higher education institutions to translate commitments into tangible action on the most critical action lines of the Bologna Process.

Since 1999, countries from across Europe have engaged in the Bologna Process, the most comprehensive overhaul of higher education in history. The aim of the Process is to create a European Higher Education Area by 2010 that ensures a quality, equitable and accessible learning environment for all students across Europe.

With Ministers from each of the 46 Bologna countries about to converge on Belgium next week<sup>1</sup>, the report provides a timely reflection on the current state of the Process from the perspective of those it is designed to assist, and crucially, the only independent review of Bologna implementation carried out this year.

Key among its conclusions is that, while progress has been made on implementing 'structural' reforms such as the 3-cycle system (bachelor, masters, doctorat), content reforms such as those relating to mobility, the social dimension and student participation have been largely neglected, leaving a huge hole at the centre of the Process. The report reveals that ten years on, European students are still facing huge barriers to their learning in terms, for example, of socio-economic background, gender and family situation, tend not to be regarded as equal partners in educational and decision-making structures, and are largely unable to take advantage of mobility opportunities to study abroad.

Consequently, the Bologna Process is in grave danger of being revealed as a superficial redesign of higher education structures in Europe rather than a transformation of the whole academic and learning paradigm. Delivering the Bologna vision requires a radical change of approach, and the report highlights the imperatives to be addressed in the forthcoming Ministerial: developing national action plans for implementation, delivering on the commitments made in terms of the social dimension, setting and achieving a concrete mobility target, and increasing access, equity and participation at all levels of learning. The report also serves to send a strong message to Europe's education ministers not to attempt a 'cover-up' of implementation inadequacies by finding new and superficial attractions to draw attention away from the core components of Bologna at next week's ministerial conference.

Ligia Deca, ESU Chairperson, commented, "Ministers are likely to promote rankings or the classification of higher education institutions as a new initiative in order to add fresh blood to the Process after ten years. But this is a diversion from where the focus needs to be. The Bologna Process needs to be revitalised in its second decade, and Bologna With Student Eyes 2009 provides a clear roadmap for doing so and for achieving the goal of a European Higher Education Area by 2020."

"Only in this way will students once more come to have faith in a Process where, so far, delivery has failed to keep pace with political promises," she adds.

**ENDS**

The full BWSE report will be available on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 1pm, at the official launch event in Brussels, and shortly thereafter online on our website.

For more information, please contact [frances@esu-online.org](mailto:frances@esu-online.org), or call 0473 669 894

<sup>1</sup> The Ministerial Conference of the Bologna Process will take place on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> April in the Belgian cities of Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve.