

15 May 2015**HRK comments on today's conference of European education ministers in Yerevan**

"Today's statement by European ministers supports the position of German universities," said Prof. Dr. Holger Burckhart, HRK Vice-President for teaching, learning, teacher education, and lifelong learning. The conference reached an agreement on the focal areas in which to continue developing a common European Higher Education Area over the coming years.

The key points of the communiqué agreed during the two-day conference include the expansion of the student-centred approach in teaching, the creation of flexible and transparent learning paths and the promotion of a higher education sector that increases graduate employability in fast-evolving labour markets. "German universities have carved out the right path in terms of didactic innovations, the linking of theory and practice and the strengthening of problem-solving skills in graduates – the Yerevan conference has confirmed us in this view," said Burckhart. He welcomed the calls for more inclusion in higher education and more mobility, particularly for teacher education students.

"We regard it as an important signal that the communiqué does not call for a greater 'educational' element in the doctoral phase as a 'third cycle of study', as was the case in earlier drafts. The HRK has successfully countered this together with its counterparts from France, Poland, Switzerland and the UK."

The HRK also welcomes the appeal in the communiqué to make greater use of the possibilities of digital teaching and learning. The Ars Legendi Prize 2015, announced in partnership with the Stifterverband (Donors' Association for the Promotion of Sciences and Humanities in Germany), will serve to honour teaching staff who excel in this area.

The HRK is pleased to note that the communiqué points out what has been achieved so far, particularly the fact that the type of collective self-management of the process through a continuous dialogue between governments, the European Commission, the Council of Europe, universities, students and social partners is being recognised and imitated all over the world. At the same time, the statement acknowledges more clearly than before that some countries are lagging behind to a greater or lesser degree in the implementation of reforms and that more effort is required in this respect.

The work period until the next ministerial conference in France in 2018 will be a busy one, stressed Prof. Burckhart. "As we approach the end of the second decade of the Bologna Process, the participating countries will need to think about the future of the process. I personally believe that European states must continue to cooperate intensively on higher education. Within the Bologna Process, institutionalised forms of cooperation have developed that we must continue to utilise."

The Bologna Process began on 19 June 1999 in Bologna when the joint declaration on the European Higher Education Area was approved by the ministers responsible for higher education from 29 European states. At the ministerial conferences which take place every two to three years, ministers from what is now 48 participating countries discuss the status of implementation and amend the objectives in response to social and political developments.

More information about the conference is available at:
<http://bologna-yerevan2015.ehea.info/pages/view/home>