

Further tasks set out for development of higher education

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Bologna Follow-up Group gathered in Riga this week and discussed admission of new member states to the Bologna Process, as well as agreed on agenda of the next Ministerial Conference. 86 participants from 42 countries participated in the meeting organised under the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the EU.

The main tasks on agenda of the meeting in Riga were preparation for the Ministerial Conference to be held on 14-15 May in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, and approval of the Ministerial Communiqué, which would define tasks for the member countries for the next period until 2018 when the next Ministerial Conference will be held.

Protracted economic and social crisis in Europe, high unemployment rates, marginalization of youth, demographic decline, increased immigration, inter-regional conflicts and political extremism are negations that the higher education can tackle by giving new knowledge and enhancing new social achievements. Increasing mobility of students and lecturers facilitate mutual understanding and overall level of knowledge. Technological development plays an increasingly prominent role in higher education.

In years to come, tasks of the Bologna Process member states will be to enhance the quality and relevance of learning and teaching, to connect learning achievements with employment opportunities and to implement necessary structural reforms.

The Meeting participants also suggested considering during the Ministerial Conference admission of Belarus to the Bologna Process under condition that Belarus implements concrete reforms of the higher education within three-year period.

The Bologna Declaration signed 15 years ago briefly outlined the progress of 29 countries towards a single European educational area — a region within the intellectual baggage of its inhabitants is entitled to travel and the higher education obtained in one country is understood and recognised elsewhere. The number of member states since 1999 has been constantly rising currently reaching 47.

To assess the results of the previous stage, as well as to approve work programme for the next period, the ministers of countries involved in the Bologna Process meet every three years. Between the Ministerial Conferences developments in the Bologna Process are monitored by the Bologna Follow-up Group.

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