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## Practical Information

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# Explaining the Bologna Process to the Rest of the World

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**T**he Bologna Process is a complex and vast undertaking that involves 40 European countries and, within those countries, literally thousands of higher education institutions and millions of students. With the addition of Russia at the [Berlin Summit](#), the Bologna Process now literally stretches from the Atlantic to the Pacific making it one of the largest reform movements in history. Although most European higher education professionals are familiar with the Bologna Process, many people outside of Europe seem baffled by it. In this issue of *WENR* we have attempted to unravel the mysteries of Bologna and introduce it to a non-European audience.

In the paragraphs and inserts below we have presented a comprehensive overview of what the Bologna Process is (and what it is not) and have provided links to some of the most important documents and position papers written on the subject. Many of these documents are essential to understanding the breadth and scope of the reforms that are currently being carried out across Europe. We have also included information on the Bologna degree structure, a glossary of Bologna terms, and a listing of the key players in the Bologna Process. In addition, we are featuring a status report on where the various countries are in restructuring their education systems in line with the reforms (see insert below).

## Bologna Country Updates

### Status of the Implementation Process

● In an attempt to benchmark progress that has been made towards the goal of establishing a European Higher Education Area by 2010, *WENR* will, over the next three issues, be providing updates on the structural, legislative and institutional changes that have been implemented by each of the signatory countries in its efforts to comply with the reforms called for in the [Bologna Declaration](#).

The main resources used for this project are a combination of Bologna-commissioned papers and reports, and progress reports from the various national ministries of education. In this current issue we are presenting implementation reports for the eight nations of the Baltic and Nordic regions:

- [Denmark](#)
- [Latvia](#)
- [Estonia](#)
- [Lithuania](#)
- [Finland](#)
- [Norway](#)
- [Iceland](#)
- [Sweden](#)

### What is the Bologna Process?

The [Bologna Declaration](#) was issued following a meeting of the European Ministers of Education held in Bologna in 1999, and set into motion a "process" (thus the Bologna Process) aimed at creating a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010. The Ministers of Education have since held subsequent meetings (Prague, 2001 and Berlin, 2003) to receive updates on the progress of the Bologna Process and set new goals that advance its implementation. The next milestone meeting of the Ministers of Education will be held in Bergen, Norway, in 2005.

The objectives set out in the Bologna Declaration are the following:

- Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees.
- Adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles: undergraduate and graduate.
- Establishment of a system of credits — such as in the ECTS system — as proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility.
- Promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement of students, researchers, instructors and staff.
- Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies.
- Promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programs of study, training and research.

Originally there were 29 signatory countries to the Bologna Declaration. Shortly thereafter, Liechtenstein was retroactively added to the list of countries, and in 2001 at the Prague meeting, Croatia, Cyprus and Turkey signed on as well. In September 2003 at the meeting in Berlin, several more countries (Albania, Andorra, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Holy See, Russia, Serbia and Montenegro, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) joined the Bologna Process, bringing the number of participating countries to 40.

*It is important to note that the Bologna Process is not a European Union program like SOCRATES-ERASMUS, TEMPUS or the Leonardo Da Vinci Program, although the EU is certainly one of the principal stakeholders in the European Higher Education Area.*

In sum, the Bologna Process is a commitment by 40 countries across Europe to reform their systems of higher education in an effort to make European qualifications more transparent, more attractive and more competitive in the international student market. The Bologna Process is a colossal undertaking that involves governments, education organizations, higher education institutions, and students. It is scheduled to be completed in 2010.

### Who is Responsible for Implementing the Bologna Process?

The Bologna process will lead to a fundamental restructuring of higher education across Europe. Participating countries have had to change laws governing their higher education institutions, programs and degrees to comply with the Bologna Process. The extent and the pace of these changes are dictated by the political leaders of each country.

A Bologna follow-up group, created after the signing of the Declaration, monitors the progress of the implementation process. The group consists of representatives from all the participating countries and meets several times a year. It organizes and schedules conferences pertaining to the Bologna Process, decides on the reports to be written and the ways in which progress is reported to the ministers.

The responsibility for implementing the goals of the Bologna Declaration rests with the different national governments, academic institutions, student organizations and professional bodies in the participating countries. Experts drawn from the relevant organizations in the various countries develop standards, guidelines and mechanisms that academic institutions can use when they restructure their programs and degrees to conform to the Bologna agreements.

### Countries Participating in the Bologna Process

- Albania \*\*\*
- Andorra \*\*\*
- Austria \*
- Belgium \*
- Bosnia & Herzegovina \*\*\*
- Bulgaria \*\*
- Croatia \*\*\*
- Cyprus \*
- Czech Republic \*\*
- Denmark \*
- Estonia \*
- Finland \*
- France \*
- Germany \*
- Greece \*
- Holy See \*\*\*
- Hungary \*
- Iceland \*\*\*
- Ireland \*
- Italy \*
- Latvia \*
- Liechtenstein \*\*\*
- Lithuania \*
- Luxembourg \*
- Malta \*
- Netherlands \*
- Norway \*\*\*
- Poland \*
- Portugal \*
- Romania \*\*
- Russia \*\*\*
- Slovak Republic \*
- Spain \*
- Serbia & Montenegro \*\*\*
- Slovenia \*
- Sweden \*
- Switzerland \*\*\*
- Turkey \*\*
- Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia \*\*\*
- United Kingdom \*

\* = EU Member States  
 \*\* = Candidates for EU Membership  
 \*\*\* = Non-EU Countries

### Where to go for Resources and Information on the Bologna Process

Most of the information pertaining to the Bologna Process can be found on the Internet and consists of legal documents, background papers and documents submitted by the various parties in connection with the major conferences, and conference communiqués. These documents are essential to understanding the scope and breadth of the educational reform movement that is currently under way in Europe.

Following is a partial listing of the documents that have been published in connection with the Bologna Process:

- [Recognition Issues in the Bologna Process: Follow Up to the Salamanca and Prague Meetings](#)
- [Survey on Master's Degrees and Joint Degrees](#) (September 2002)
- [Student Participation in the Governance of Higher Education in Europe](#)
- [Tertiary Short Cycle Education in Europe](#)
- [Trends I \(in learning structures in higher education\)](#)
- [Trends II \(survey of main reforms from Bologna to Prague\)](#)
- [Trends III \(Bologna four years after\)](#)
- [Tuning Educational Structures in Europe](#)

Many independent organizations that participated in the discussions on Bologna have also produced many important documents on the subject. The following organizations have submitted papers outlining their positions on the Bologna Process:

- **Council of Europe:** [Council of Europe Contribution to the Higher Education Area](#)
- **European University Association (EUA):** [Forward From Berlin: The Role of Universities to 2010 and Beyond](#)
- **European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE):** [Policy Statement on the Bologna Process-- Towards Berlin 2003](#)
- **The National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB):** [ESIB and the Bologna Process-- Creating a European Higher Education Area for and with Students](#)
- **The European Association for International Education (EAIE):** [EAIE Comment on the Bologna Process](#)

For more information on the Bologna Process, please visit the following Web sites:

- **Admissions Officers and Credential Evaluators:** [About the Bologna Process in Short](#)
- **Association of European Universities:** [The Bologna Declaration: An Explanation](#)
- **Civic Education Project:** [An Introduction to the Bologna Process](#)
- **Council of Europe:** [The Bologna Process](#)
- **European Commission:** [The Bologna Process, Next Stop Berlin in 2003](#)

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