

**Bologna Ministerial Anniversary Conference 2nd Bologna Policy Forum
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Speech of the Secretary of State of Science, Technology and Higher Education of Portugal
Manuel Heitor

Mr. President,
Madame Commissioner,
Dear Colleagues, students, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by acknowledging and thanking the organisers of this meeting, the Bologna Follow-up Group and, most especially our hosts, the Hungarian and Austrian Governments.

Portugal is among the countries that fully integrated the Bologna process in association with an **overall reform of higher education**. The progress achieved so far has been immense but the momentum has to be maintained.

Let me take this opportunity to give you some new information regarding the Portuguese Higher Education, which may be relevant to you all. Recently, a national contract for the development of Higher Education has been **collectively signed** between the government and all public universities and polytechnics. This contract entails an increase of public investment in higher education by roughly 10% underlining the commitment of the Portuguese government and higher education institutions to increase the qualification of the Portuguese population by setting the goal of graduating 100.000 people in addition to the current graduation levels by 2013.

In this context, we need to further pave the conditions that allow students to determine their own **learning paths and trajectories**. In enabling these learning paths, the promotion of faculty and student mobility is of the essence. But also of the essence is facilitating these trajectories, and in this, much is still to be learned from institutions and practices in place across institutions in our different countries and regions. By this, we mean that at a stage where the Bologna implementation process is all but concluded, a greater attention to the **substance** of our objectives is needed, never losing sight of key strategic objectives.

1. First, we need to promote lifelong learning and increase the number of **adult learners** in higher education by removing barriers to their entrance and success with due attention to its social and economic roots. This certainly requires **increasingly diversified systems of tertiary education**, leading to greater differences in the learning and teaching systems in professionally-oriented and science-driven programs;
2. Second, we need to **reduce drop-out (failure) rates** in higher education and increase the participation of higher education 1st and 2nd cycle students in research activities.
3. Third, we need to foster institutions that take absolute care of emerging scientific and technological developments, but also to pay attention to **societal changes** and the continuous alterations of the **labour market**.
4. But we need also to look **beyond** our own institutions of higher education and monitor the **employability of students** along the various education cycles. And we must continue to foster evidence based, project and experimental work, as well as to focus our attention on the **transferable skills** students should acquire.

In summary, we need to go beyond the structure of higher education and gradually concentrate our efforts in measuring and taking stock of the diversity and evolution of concrete **student-centred parameters**. In order to do this, we need to identify “good practices” through the use of case studies across institutions, focusing on institutional arrangements (including the use of “space”), curricular and extra-curricular activities, courses contents and student activities, and then disseminate them not only among the bologna countries, but across the world, showing that the European Higher Education Area is a place of innovative and quality-driven teaching and learning.

Naturally, our initial objectives should continue to be pressed, namely the harmonization of quality assurance systems. Also critical, is the continuous modernisation of higher education and its role in the fulfilment of **learning societies** and the urgent need **to increase the number of qualified human resources in Europe**.

Many thanks for your attention.

Manuel Heitor