

CATANIA DECLARATION

“Euro-mediterranean Area of Higher Education and Research”

Wishing to accomplish the directives set forth by the Barcelona Declaration in 1995 to turn the Euro-mediterranean area in a common space of peace, stability and prosperity through the reinforcement of political dialogue, understanding between cultures and the promotion of a social, cultural and human partnership meant to *develop human resources and encourage exchange between civil societies*.

With the aim of upholding the crucial role of education for the region's stability and for its effective economical, political and social development as established by the Five-year action Plan which entails actions aimed at realizing this objective;

Considering that the Conferences held in Catania in November 2003 and January 2005 have set forth the proposal to create a “Euro-mediterranean Higher Education Area”, laying the basis for a political strategy aimed at coordinating education and training policies of Countries in the Mediterranean basin, so as to offer to the whole area further opportunities of access to knowledge, specifically at higher education level, and more possibilities to study and work in a stimulating multicultural environment;

Taking into consideration the intense bilateral collaboration relationships already existing between Governments, university institutions and research centres of the Euro-mediterranean region and with the aim of promoting their further development;

Acknowledging the necessity to structure the collaboration between High Quality Training Institutions and Centres of Excellence in order to uphold the development of a Euro-Mediterranean research area;

Bearing in mind the opportunities provided by new information and communication technologies that allow to bolster a distance learning and permanent training System in the Mediterranean Area;

Desiring to strengthen the bond with the industrial and productive sectors through cooperation in the scientific and technological fields, also with the intent to facilitate the mobility and employability of students and researchers and to support the economic development of the region;

Taking into consideration the key role human capital has to play and the importance of promoting vocational education and training (VET), also as a tool for occupational policies and for a factual management of migratory fluxes;

Persuaded that the achievement of a Euro-mediterranean area requires steady support, supervision and adjustment to changing needs;

The Higher Education Ministers of the Republic of Algeria, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Republic of France, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Republic of Greece, the Republic of Italy, the Republic of Malta, the Kingdom of Morocco, the Republic of Portugal, the Republic of Slovenia, the Kingdom of Spain, the Republic of Tunisia, the Republic of Turkey.

AGREE TO:

- § Reaffirm the role of education as a key factor for development, social cohesion and prosperity and to establish a basic framework for a partnership in the fields of mutual interest, so as to step up the achievement of the objectives set forth by the Barcelona Conference to “develop human resources and promote better understanding between cultures”;
- § Activate a structured cooperation in order to promote the comparability and readability of higher education systems

in the Euro-mediterranean Area, though preserving each country's individuality;

- § Establish common education and training paths based on a system of transferable credits and on easily readable qualifications and exploitable as well by the labour market, by sharing criteria, evaluation methods and quality assurance schemes in order to facilitate the mobility of students, researchers and professors; these paths will be implemented also through the use of new technologies and of e-learning method;
- § Promote PhD research programmes with a view to encouraging scientific and technical collaboration and to promote competitiveness in the region;
- § Establish Networks of interlinked Universities and well known Centres for high quality Education and Research;
- § Strengthen a distance learning system, by expanding the results attained through the "Med Net'U" project, in order to encourage the widest possible access to education and training in a perspective of lifelong learning;
- § Set off initiatives in the field of vocational education and training (VET) with the aim of developing vocational expertises and diplomas in higher education.

The Ministers commend the will of the European Commission to improve and strengthen EU instruments of cooperation in this field.

The Ministers commit themselves to support, in the fields of their responsibility, the development and implementation of the process leading to the creation of the Euromediterranean Higher Education Area.

The Ministers agree to meet regularly to assess progress and to promote further collaboration through the establishment of a Follow-up Group, in which each participant Country will be

represented, and who will report to the next ministerial meeting to be held in 2008.

Catania, January 29, 2006

THE MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH OF THE REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA	THE MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH OF THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT
H.E. RACHID HARAUBIA	H.E. HANY HELAL

For THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL EDUCATION, HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH OF THE REPUBLIC OF FRANCE	THE MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH OF THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN
M. FLORENT STORA	H.E. KALID TOUKAN

For THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF GREECE <i>The Deputy Minister</i>	THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY AND RESEARCH OF THE REPUBLIC OF ITALY
H.E. SPYROS TALIADOURO	H.E. LETIZIA MORATTI

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AND EMPLOYMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALTA	For THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL EDUCATION, HIGHER EDUCATION, TRAINING AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH OF THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO <i>The Ambassador</i>
H.E. LUIS GALEA	H.E. TAJJEDINE BADDOU

For THE MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF PORTUGAL <i>The General Director</i>	For THE MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA <i>The Secretary of State</i>
M. ANTONIO MORA O DIAS	H.E. JANEZ MOZINA

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE OF THE KINGDOM OF SPAIN	THE MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TUNISIA
H.E. MARIA JOSE SAN SEGUNDO	H.E. LAZHAR BOUOUNI

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY	
H.E. HUSEYIN CELIK	