

IL SOTTOSEGRETARIO DI STATO

Sen. Avv. Maria Grazia Siliquini

Prot. 666/MGS/pb.fmc

Rome, 24/10/2002

Italian Presidency of The Adriatic-Ionian Initiative

Third meeting of the Round Table on Education and Inter-university Cooperation

"Building the European Higher Education Area A further step forward"

To all the National Representatives

The Italian Ministry for Education, Higher Education and Research (MIUR) is organizing the third meeting of the Round Table on "Education and Inter-university Cooperation", under the Italian Presidency of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative. The meeting will be held on the 11th (afternoon) and 12th (morning) of December 2002 in Rome, in our Ministry premises of Piazza J. Kennedy 20.

The Italian Presidency intends to move forward in the wake of the results of the former Greek Presidency. These results leaded to a call for a high priority engagement in inter-university cooperation as a basic factor in fostering relationships among the AII participating countries based on common historical and cultural roots. We are grateful to the former Greek Presidency, because we think that those conclusions fully reflect the spirit of the Ancona Declaration and of the Split Joint Statement. We are firmly convinced that we have to rediscover, through the enhancement of the inter-university cooperation in the Region, the original vocation of Universities to be places open to dialogue and confrontation, where different cultures meet, therefore representing the first institutions to be committed to foster a process of peace and development.

The Italian Presidency set up its Action Plan starting from the achievements of the Greek Presidency. In particular, we intend to focus on two of the four priority themes identified by the Steering Committee which are related to the principles of the Bologna Process.

This for many reasons:

• Italy considers the Adriatic-Ionian Region as a privileged area for financing interuniversity cooperation. Part of the funds that this Ministry earmarked in the past and will allocate in the future for such kind of collaboration among Universities refers explicitly to the Ancona Declaration. Furthermore, one of the prerequisites foreseen



Sen. Avv. Maria Grazia Siliquini

for financing University joint programmes is the implementation of the principles of the Bologna Process.

- The inclusion of all SEE (South Est Europe) countries in a European Area of Higher Education is one of the underlying premises of all measures proposed by the Graz Process.
- The Task Force Education of the Enhanced Graz Process, in the meeting of the Working Group Higher Education (Vienna, 21 March 2002), considering the European-wide Bologna Process as an important incentive for the Higher Education reform process in SEE, identified five areas in which regional cooperation should be increased, in view of ensuring closer integration of the SAP (Stabilisation and Association Process) Countries with the Bologna Process:
- Legislation
- University structures
- Quality Assurance
- ECTS (European Credit Transfer System)
- Transparency

The objective is to ensure that all SEE countries are fully included in the process of creating the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), as foreseen at the 1999 Bologna Conference.

All these preliminary considerations being said, the Italian Presidency of the AII intends to focus the work of its first Round Table "Education and Inter-university cooperation" on a presentation of some aspects of the Italian reform of the Higher Education system, with particular reference to the autonomy of Universities, stressing on the practise of ECTS and of Integrated Curricula and on the internal evaluation system of Universities. In other words, we are going to focus on the aspects of transparency, compatibility and quality assurance. After every presentation we foresee a debate, in order to obtain an interactive confrontation which can be very useful and fruitful for future collaborations. The aim is to design a map of the main areas of convergence among the HE systems of the different countries, stressing on reforms and changes in progress or still in debate and thus coming to an overview of the significant experiences of all the participants, in order to identify steps which can lead to more convergence in future.

Following this direction, the AII can clearly demonstrate its full complementarity and its strong sinergy with the SAP and the Stability Pact, and its well defined identity towards other initiatives as TEMPUS III and CARDS programmes.



IL SOTTOSEGRETARIO DI STATO

Sen. Avv. Maria Grazia Siliquini

We are convinced that the AII is a powerful tool able to forge a climate of mutual trust in the region, helping all of us to attain a new awareness of our common roots and to nurture the habit of cooperation among our HE Institutions. By succeding in this common effort and commitment, it will be possible to entrench a solid system of mutual changes in a way which makes forward the process of inter-university cooperation irreversible.

Further details about the meeting will be sent to all the participants very soon. Looking forward to meeting you in Rome,

Sen. Avv. Maria Grazia Siliquini Under Secretary of State to the Ministry for Education, Higher Education and Research

Chair of the Round Table