



THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

JOINT DECLARATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY NETWORKS

The Achievements of Networks

The **Coimbra, Compostela, Santander, and UNICA networks** have played a significant role in the development of European education on several levels. Our networks are characterised by having a flexible structure as well as strong formal and informal links between their constituent parts. We have achieved and continue successfully to fulfil a number of functions that cannot be easily replicated elsewhere. Amongst our achievements we have:

- created strong pan-European and global channels of communication and thus real cooperation between universities, and between universities and other municipal, regional, national, European and international stakeholders in education;
- acted as a forum for debate by organising numerous events to discuss and develop innovations to advance European education;
- made major contributions to numerous European Commission programmes (Socrates, Alfa, Tempus, etc.);
- promoted practical student, staff and curriculum mobility;
- supported academic collaboration enabling and enhancing core activities in teaching, learning and research;
- disseminated and exchanged information and good practice between members.

In achieving all this, our networks have helped to embed many European education reforms. Indeed, it is in this role, of having the capacity to translate educational innovations, that we excel. There is currently a danger that many of the necessary changes resulting from the Bologna process are not being translated into practical modifications at the institutional level. There is some evidence that there is a gap emerging between the European vision and the reality

on the ground, within higher education institutions.

It is the view of the **Coimbra, Compostela, Santander, and UNICA networks**, that their potential and technical expertise to embed educational reforms is currently not being fully exploited. Similarly, networks are under-used as pilots for the testing and development of new initiatives.

Statement

The Coimbra, Compostela, Santander, and UNICA networks representing 176 universities urge the Ministers of higher education at the Berlin summit to:

- *encourage the identification and expression of the common values, principles and ethos that underpin and define European higher education as something distinctive, valuable and meaningful. Networks are in a unique position to contribute to this process;*
- *note that the successful creation of the European higher education area depends on the embedding of the Bologna reforms at the level of the institution and that university networks should play a fundamental role in this quality enhancement process, i.e. promoting international best practice and sharing good governance and standards. In addition, networks are well placed to promote and develop all forms of mobility under the new Bologna realities;*
- *support the university networks as an effective means of 'tuning institutions', i.e. to help make internal structural, curricula and institutional reforms as they adjust to the Bologna process. The networks are in a unique position to undertake this activity and can speedily spread information and good practice using their existing channels of communication and links.*

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