The European Parliament,

— having regard to Articles 149 and 150 of the EC Treaty,


— having regard to the Communication from the Commission entitled Mobilising the brainpower of Europe: enabling universities to make their full contribution to the Lisbon Strategy (COM(2005)0152),


— having regard to the Eurobarometer survey from March 2007 on ‘Perceptions of Higher Education Reforms’,

— having regard to its position adopted at first reading on 25 September 2007 on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the production and development of statistics on education and lifelong learning (1),

— having regard to the Council Resolution of 23 November 2007 on modernising universities for Europe’s competitiveness in a global knowledge economy,

— having regard to the Presidency Conclusions of the European Council of 13 and 14 March 2008,

— having regard to Rules 45 of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education and the opinion of the Committee on Budgets (A6-0302/2008),

A. whereas the aims of the Bologna process are to establish a European Area of Higher Education by 2010, including higher education reforms, elimination of remaining barriers to the mobility of students and teachers, and the improvement of the quality, attractiveness and competitiveness of higher education in Europe,

B. whereas the mobility of students and the quality of education must remain among the core elements of the Bologna process,

C. whereas student mobility forms new cultural, social and academic values and creates opportunities for personal growth and for enhancing academic standards and employability at national and international levels,

D. whereas student mobility is still beyond the reach of many students, researchers and other staff, especially in the newer Member States, principally because of insufficient grants; whereas the obstacles are well known, and have been indicated repeatedly by many stakeholders involved in the debate,

E. whereas particular attention should be paid to the appropriate funding of students’ learning, living costs and mobility,

F. whereas Parliament has consistently made the mobility of students its budgetary priority and has endeavoured to ensure an appropriate level of funding for Community programmes in the field of education; whereas its firm position on that issue led, despite cuts introduced by the Council on the Commission’s proposal, to an increase in appropriations for the Lifelong Learning and Erasmus Mundus programmes negotiated under the Multi-annual Financial Framework 2007-2013 and recent budgetary procedures,

G. whereas reliable statistical data on student mobility are required in order to observe, compare and evaluate, as well as to develop, adequate policies and measures,

H. whereas recognition of informal and non-formal learning forms the cornerstone of a lifelong learning strategy, and the importance of adult learning in this process also needs to be recognised,

I. whereas the choice to go abroad should not be hindered by any administrative, financial or linguistic barriers,

J. whereas mobility encourages foreign language learning and the improvement of overall communication skills,

K. whereas reform and modernisation of universities in terms of quality, studies structure, innovation and flexibility is urgently needed,

L. whereas the quality of teaching is as important as the quality of research and should be reformed and modernised throughout the European Union, and whereas these two dimensions are closely linked,

M. whereas different national recognition systems constitute a significant obstacle to equal treatment of students and to their progress in the European Higher Education Area and the European labour market,

N. whereas mobility can be hindered by both the failure to give full and proper recognition to courses attended and the lack of equivalence of grades obtained,

O. whereas it is urgent to implement, coordinate and promote a coherent approach among all countries that signed the Bologna Process,

P. whereas the Bologna Process must create a new progressive model of education which guarantees access to training for all, whose principal objective is to transmit knowledge and values, and which creates a sustainable society for the future which is self-aware and free of social imbalances,

1. Considers that an increase in student mobility and the quality of the various educational systems should be a priority in the context of redefining the major goals of the Bologna Process beyond 2010;

2. Stresses that in order to achieve student mobility, actions must be taken across various policy areas; various aspects of mobility go beyond the scope of higher education and concern the scope of social affairs, finance, and immigration and visa policies;

3. Welcomes the efforts of Member States within the framework of intergovernmental cooperation to enhance the quality and competitiveness of education in the Union by, in particular, the promotion of mobility, ensuring recognition of qualifications and quality assurance, particularly in light of the limited room for manoeuvre due to the narrow margins left in Heading 1a of the Financial Framework;

4. Is convinced that the consultation method undertaken by all stakeholders involved in the process should continue: institutions as well as student representatives should closely cooperate in order to tackle the remaining barriers to mobility and problems related to quality and the implementation of the Bologna Process;
5. Points out that in implementing the Bologna Process, particular attention should be devoted to close and intensive cooperation and coordination with the European Research Area;

**Student mobility: Quality and Efficiency**

6. Insists on the urgent need for comparable and reliable statistics on student mobility and the socio-economic profile of students, such as common indicators, criteria and benchmarks, in order to overcome the current lack of data and promote the exchange of good practices;

7. Calls on universities to improve and simplify the information provided online and off-line, both for incoming and outgoing students; calls on universities and Erasmus National Agencies to collaborate with student organisations in order to make available all the necessary information in due time; calls on universities to support student rights, in line with the commitments they have made, by adhering to the Erasmus University Charter;

8. Emphasises that in order for the Bologna Process to fulfil its objectives, reciprocity in terms of the flow of students and scholars is necessary; underlines the disparities in current trends, and in particular the poor mobility towards the Member States which acceded to the EU in 2004 and 2007;

9. Points out the importance of mentoring for the social, cultural and linguistic integration of incoming students;

10. Stresses that an improved command of languages is a considerable asset and one of the reasons for student mobility, and that it is important for intensive language courses to be offered to incoming students, before and/or during Erasmus study periods;

**Higher education reform and modernisation of universities: quality, innovation and flexibility**

11. Calls on universities in the Union to undertake an innovative, far-reaching and methodical curricular reform, since ambitious and high-quality content and restructuring of organisation is crucial for student mobility and for greater flexibility; calls for a ‘mobility study period’ to be introduced into all degree programmes to enable students to go abroad;

12. Calls for emphasis to be given to the need for joint European doctoral programmes promoting doctoral student mobility and for the creation of a framework for a European doctorate;

13. Stresses the essential role of the quality and excellence of teaching, given that the development and ongoing training of qualified teachers in all sectors of studies is crucial for their attractiveness and effectiveness and for achieving the Bologna Process objectives;

14. Reiterates the need for more trans-national dialogue and exchange of information and experiences to facilitate a convergence of teacher education, including primary teacher education, and the effectiveness of continuing professional development;

**Funding and investment in student mobility and the social dimension**

15. Special assistance should be provided to students from disadvantaged groups in society by, for example, proposing inexpensive and decent accommodation, considering that extra support after arrival is often necessary;

16. Proposes the introduction of a harmonised European Student Identity Card, in order to facilitate mobility and to enable students to get discounts for accommodation and living costs;
17. Calls on the Member States and the competent authorities to guarantee an equal and universal access to mobility by simple, flexible and transparent grant-awarding procedures and by additional financial support for high-cost destinations and for those students who need it; considers it essential for students to receive this support before their departure, to avoid placing an excessive financial burden on them;

18. Welcomes the fact that, in the context of the mid-term review of the Multi-annual Financial Framework provided for in the Declaration attached to the Interinstitutional Agreement of 17 May 2006 on budgetary discipline and sound financial management, increasing the financial envelope allocated to the programmes in the field of education and notably for Erasmus grants could be considered, subject to the results of monitoring and evaluation of the programme;

19. Points out that new means of financing student mobility, such as interest-free loans and transferable loans, should be introduced and promoted;

20. Invites European universities to cooperate with the private sector (e.g. economic or business organisations such as chambers of commerce) in order to find new effective mechanisms of co-financing student mobility during each cycle (bachelor-masters-doctorate), thereby improving the quality of educational systems;

21. Suggests a fruitful dialogue and a two-way exchange between companies and universities in order to come up with innovative partnerships and to explore new ways of cooperation;

Quality and full recognition of diplomas

22. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to proceed with the implementation of the European reference frameworks (Bologna Qualifications Framework, European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning, European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance, and the Lisbon Recognition Convention) in order to establish the European High Education Area;

23. Stresses the urgency, therefore, of implementing the comprehensive, unified and effective credit transfer system ECTS, in order that students’ and academics’ qualifications may be easily transferable throughout Europe thanks to a single common framework;

24. Emphasises that the three-cycle degree system (Bachelor degree, Masters Degree and Doctorate) could become more flexible especially by using a ‘4+1’ instead of ‘3+2’ system for the first and second cycles; notes that for some studies this could be more appropriate in order to enable greater mobility and employability of graduates;

25. Calls for internships and other informal and non-formal mobility experience approved by universities to be granted ECTS credits and recognised as an integral part of study curricula;

Bologna Process implementation in all countries concerned

26. Calls on the Member States’ competent authorities and European universities to encourage and foster the exchange of best practices and awareness-raising initiatives;

27. Urges Member States to facilitate visa procedures and to reduce the procedural costs for mobile students, especially those from more easterly Member States and candidate countries, in line with the EU Directives on visas;

28. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.