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INVITATION TO THE BRUGES CONFERENCE

FROM BOLOGNA TO BRUGES AND FAR BEYOND

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

BRUGES, DECEMBER 1ST - 4TH 2008

The Bologna Process: together on the pathways to one European higher education area!

With the Bologna Declaration as starting point, a partnership of 46 countries wants to create one European higher education area towards 2010. All the Ministerial Communiqués indicate that “Bologna” is not just about putting degrees and curricula on one line. A new higher education area also offers the possibility to integrate student mobility and equal opportunities in the standards of qualitative education.

The ministerial conference Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve 2009

The Bologna Process finds its thriving spirits in biennial ministerial conferences, of which the next in series will be organized in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve, April 2009. Main topic on the agenda is the future of the Bologna Process beyond 2010, also in terms of social dimension, mobility and equal opportunities. Discussing these themes is a unique chance to focus on studying with disabilities in higher education.

The memorandum and the Bruges conference

This ministerial conference in 2009 is an excellent opportunity to highlight two dimensions, namely stimulating the national policy regarding studying with disabilities in higher education and raising the participation in international exchange programmes for students with disabilities.

In order to inspire the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué regarding these topics, a conference will be organized from December 1st – 4th in Bruges (Belgium). The output of the event will be a memorandum, which will be prepared in advance of the event, and handed over to the policy makers present in Bruges, after final consensus.





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The objective is to have all Bologna partner countries present. Therefore, the conference organisers call upon the cooperation of the members of the Bologna Follow-up Group to nominate a national contact point that could take care of forming a delegation at the conference.

A well-founded memorandum leans on the three cornerstones of policy, everyday practice and knowledge through experience. Therefore, we aim at delegations consisting of maximum four people, working as a policy maker, as a professional in the support of students with disabilities and/or a student/staff member with a disability. These delegations will be nominated by the end of September at the latest, by the national contact point. They will contribute to the memorandum and attend the Bruges conference in December.

However delegations of four people are the most preferable, it is still important that each country is represented by at least one participant.

The start-up phase of the memorandum starts in June 2008 with the nomination of one contact person per country. At the end of June, a questionnaire will be presented to all 46 countries. The objective of this questionnaire is to get an overview of what the situation is like for students with disabilities in that country. We would like to have the results at the end of August, so that all participants get feedback in September – October. In November, a preparatory version of the memorandum will be drawn up.

The four-day conference will then be the closing part in the story. During the opening session, speakers from Flanders and abroad will shed a light on how the memorandum came into being. The following two days will give the time and space to discuss the content and adjust when necessary. During the closing session, the memorandum will be approved by all participants and handed over to the policy makers present, so that it can be spread and taken to the ministerial conference in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve in April 2009. It goes without saying that an event like this will receive the attention it deserves, both nationally and internationally.

The Bruges conference – organised by an international network

The Bruges conference is an event that finds its breeding ground in the partnership of six national professional support umbrella structures and the European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education. They are working closely together on the programme and the content of the event. Each of them has a long tradition in the support of students with disabilities and wants to contribute with its own experience to this event. That way, the Bruges conference will truly be a European initiative, both on the side of the participating countries as well as on the side of the organising partners.

The six partners in the network are

- *Slovenia (Društvo študentov invalidov Slovenije (The Slovene Association of Disabled Students)),*
- *United Kingdom (SKILL),*
- *Ireland (AHEAD),*
- *Netherlands (handicap + studie),*
- *Sweden (the National Network for Coordinators for Students with Disabilities in Higher Education) and*
- *Flemish Community of Belgium (University College West Flanders as coordinating institution of the Flemish Support Centre for Studying and Working with Disabilities in Higher Education)*

University College West Flanders - host of the Bruges conference

University College West Flanders will be the host of the event. It has been an advocate for equal opportunities for students with disabilities for many years now. It provides support of high qualitative standards both in the own institution as well as in the whole of Flanders. During the years, the University College has gained a lot of competence in the field of studying with disabilities and belongs to the national and international networks.



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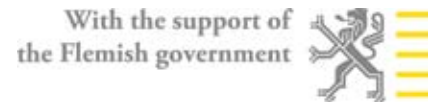


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Support

For the organisation of the conference, University College West Flanders can count on the support of the BFUG, the Flemish Department of Education and Training, the Association of the University and University Colleges Ghent, City of Bruges and Province West Flanders.

Met de steun van



Practical information

Period

December 1st - 4th 2008

Location

Bruges, Hotel Novotel Brugge Centrum

Rooms will be available, rates between 78 - 105 euro

http://www.accorhotels.com/accorhotels/fichehotel/gb/nov/1033/fiche_hotel.shtml

Registration fee

The national contact point will nominate the delegations. As we highly value the participation of as many countries as possible, one free registration for the event will be granted to every country. Every other participant per country pays a registration fee of 250 euro. The purpose is to welcome at least one person per country, and if possible a full delegation of four persons.

This registration fee comprises participation in the event, conference folder, lunches and coffee breaks, social programme.

More information on the Bruges conference will soon be available on the website <http://www.howest.be/bruges>

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