

IFUT calls for adherence to Eurowide ‘Bologna Process’ to ensure standards in Higher Education

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The Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) has called on Minister for Education, Richard Bruton, to ensure implementation of the European-wide Bologna Process, to ensure adequate funding, compatibility, academic freedom and working conditions in higher education.

IFUT General Secretary, Joan Donegan, said that while European Education Ministers signed a Communique on May 24th last focusing on defending the ‘fundamental values’ of education, there is widespread evidence of a continuing deterioration of the supporting environment for both academics and students in third-level institutions, at home and in the EU.

“Employees in the higher education and research continue to face threats to academic freedom. Teachers and researchers in the sector suffer from deteriorating working and living conditions, including staffing restrictions, inadequate pay, precarious work and continued cuts,” she said.

The Bologna Process is a collective effort of public authorities, universities, teachers, and students, together with stakeholder associations, employers, quality assurance agencies, international organisations and institutions including the European Commission, to ensure compatibility and adequate standards among widely differing education and training systems. It encompasses 45 countries on a Euro-wide basis.

IFUT has served for the past three years as a member of the Bologna Advisory Group on Outreach.

Joan Donegan said that four key priorities must be facilitated and promoted through the Bologna process. These include:

- Better protection of academic freedom as one of the fundamental values of the Bologna process
- greater core public investment in higher education and research
- ensuring a supportive working environment for staff, including improved job security and working conditions
- Better recognition of teaching in higher education.

“The Minister for Education should reaffirm Ireland’s full commitment to the principles of the Bologna Process,” Joan Donegan said.

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