

1 In the last 25 years, we, the Ministers responsible for higher education, jointly with students, academic staff
2 and higher education institutions, have grown closer and together built the European Higher Education Area
3 (EHEA). In our Ministerial Conference in Rome, we agreed on a shared vision for building a more inclusive,
4 innovative and interconnected EHEA by 2030¹. We continue to implement this vision and to ensure it is fully
5 achieved. The implementation of agreed commitments will require continual momentum and participation of
6 all relevant stakeholders, to make sure that all those who wish to can access and be supported in completing
7 a quality higher education, compliant with our fundamental values.

8 The world is facing interrelated and complex social, economic, ecological and political challenges, including
9 rising polarisation, and inequalities between peoples, communities and regions. Higher education as a public
10 good and a transformative power for society plays an irreplaceable role in contributing to solving those
11 challenges and promoting democratic societies. Higher education institutions should be diverse and tolerant
12 spaces, and they should seek to promote, through their research and teaching activities, tolerance, non-
13 violence, science-based dialogue and the peaceful exchange of different perspectives.

14 Particularly, within our region, the unprovoked aggression in Ukraine has brought about the need for
15 international support for Ukrainian higher education, and proven the importance of continually maintaining
16 and defending the values of the EHEA. We stand strong on the side of Ukraine and decide to maintain the
17 suspension of the rights of participation of the Russian Federation and Belarus in all structures and activities
18 of the EHEA.²

19 Fundamental values

20 Higher Education can only develop its missions fully when its fundamental values are respected. While they
21 are now more threatened than they were a decade or even four years ago, we reaffirm our commitment to
22 protect, promote and uphold academic freedom, as defined in the Rome Communiqué. In addition, we commit
23 to upholding, promoting and protecting the following values:

- 24 ● We understand **academic integrity** as a set of behaviours and attitudes in the academic community
25 internalising and furthering compliance with ethical and professional principles and standards in learning,
26 teaching, research, governance, outreach and any other tasks related to the missions of higher education.
- 27 ● We further understand **institutional autonomy** as the will and ability of higher education institutions to
28 fulfil their missions without undue interference and to set and implement their own priorities and policies
29 concerning organisation, finance, staffing and academic affairs.
- 30 ● **Participation of students and staff in higher education governance** encompasses their right to organise
31 autonomously, in accordance with the principle of partnership and collegiality, without pressure or undue
32 interference; to elect and be elected in open, free and fair elections; have their views represented and
33 taken into account; initiate and participate in all debates and decision-making in all governing bodies; and
34 through their representative organisations, be duly involved in issues concerning the governance and
35 further development of the relevant higher education institutions and system.
- 36 ● **Public responsibility for higher education** denotes a set of duties, mainly exercised at the level of the
37 national higher education system, which public authorities must fulfil as part of their overall responsibility
38 for the education sector and society as a whole.
- 39 ● **Public responsibility of higher education** denotes the obligations of the higher education community to
40 the broader society of which the higher education community is a part.

¹ https://www.ehea.info/Upload/Rome_Ministerial_Communique.pdf

² Decision in the BFUG Meeting LXXX on 11 April 2022, BFUG_FR_AZ_80_Minutes of Meeting, p. 6.

41 We adopt the statements on the fundamental values annexed³ to this Communiqué. We underscore that while
42 each value is essential, all six values need to be implemented as a coherent whole. As a reliable monitoring of
43 their implementation within all our education systems is required, we welcome the work on creating a
44 technical monitoring framework, and we ask the BFUG to report back to us at our 2027 Ministerial Conference.

45 Key commitments

46 For the better functioning of the EHEA, we continue committing to:

- 47 ● implementing a three-cycle system⁴ of programmes and degrees, based on learning outcomes and the
48 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), compatible with the overarching qualifications framework of
49 the EHEA (QF-EHEA),
- 50 ● supporting the recognition of qualifications throughout the EHEA by implementing the *Convention on
51 the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region* (Lisbon
52 Recognition Convention) and its principles, and
- 53 ● promoting a Quality Culture in Higher education, fostered by fit-for-purpose quality assurance
54 processes in line with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher
55 Education Area* (ESG).

56 We acknowledge the valuable work and achievements (as shown in the Bologna Process Implementation
57 Report) of the Thematic Peer Groups under the umbrella of the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group.
58 In view of the still incomplete and uneven implementation of the Key Commitments, we commit to ensuring
59 that we have, or will devise, and publish appropriate action plans to address any remaining gaps. In order to
60 support the implementation of ECTS and learning outcomes, we invite the BFUG/European Commission to
61 revise the ECTS Users' Guide 2015 by 2027.

62 The application of the ESG has been promoting trust and transparency between higher education systems, and
63 facilitating accountability and enhancement. In order to keep them in line with developments, challenges and
64 expectations, we invite the authors⁵ of the ESG to propose a revised version by 2026, to be adopted by us at
65 our 2027 conference, as well as an adjustment, where required, of the European Approach for Quality
66 Assurance of Joint Programmes to better meet the needs of transnational cooperation of higher education
67 institutions.

68 We will promote more robust and transparent quality assurance of transnational education delivered
69 worldwide, in line with the ESG, to protect the interests of students. At the same time we are committed to
70 countering diploma and accreditation mills, fraudulent qualifications and academic cheating services, made
71 more accessible through developments in the digital field. We ask the BFUG to work in synergy with the ETINED
72 platform⁶ and the ENIC-NARICS to address this and continue working to protect academic integrity.

73 As the Bologna tools have developed throughout the last decade, we mandate the BFUG to initiate a discussion
74 on the fitness-for-purpose of the key commitments and their possible further development, as well as of other
75 commitments that we should consider key to assure the better functioning of the EHEA.

76 An inclusive EHEA

³ See ANNEX 1.

⁴ Including a short-cycle fully integrated in the QF-EHEA, when delivered

⁵ The primary authors are ENQA, ESU, EUA and EURASHE - the E4 Group, in cooperation with Business Europe, EI and EQAR.

⁶ Council of Europe Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education (ETINED).

77 We reconfirm the importance of **building an inclusive EHEA by 2030**, able to underpin a cohesive, sustainable,
78 and peaceful Europe, where students are fully supported, at all stages of their learning paths, through policies
79 for accessing and completing higher education irrespective of their background or starting point.

80 We recognise progress in the implementation of the *Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social*
81 *Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA*,⁷ after their approval through the 2020 Rome Communiqué, with
82 yet significant steps needed to ensure adequate implementation. Therefore, **we endorse** the document
83 *Indicators and Descriptors for the Principles of the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA*,⁸
84 representing the first comprehensive and consolidated framework for the social dimension in the EHEA. **We**
85 **are committed to measuring progress in the implementation and ask the BFUG to report back on this in 2027.**
86 **Simultaneously, we promote the improvement of data collection, by taking part in initiatives in that regard,**
87 **such as Eurostudent.**

88 We understand the students' well-being in a broad context, and therefore, we advocate its fostering in all
89 physical, sociological and psychological aspects, aiming to avoid any violence of any kind and dimension.
90 Various challenges, such as the socio-economic ones, impact the cost of living and the mental health of
91 students and staff. We commit to tackle these challenges students face, together with stakeholders and
92 communities, by promoting accessible student support services, inclusive learning environments, including
93 digital ones, gender equality,⁹ as well as measures to support covering indirect costs of study.

94 Recent years have seen an increase in the number of refugees and displaced individuals seeking shelter in
95 Europe, and higher education plays a key role in their integration into our societies. In order to support
96 refugees and make best use of their skills and potential, we will speed up efforts to ensure the recognition of
97 their qualifications, including through the use of the guidelines developed by the ENIC-NARIC centres, the
98 *European Qualification Passport for Refugees (EQPR)* and the *2019 Recommendation on Recognition of*
99 *Qualifications Held by Refugees, Displaced Persons and Persons in a Refugee-like Situation*.

100 **An innovative EHEA**

101 Beyond the vital key commitments, we see a higher education world in rapid development. Especially the twin
102 **green and digital transitions** require unprecedented innovation with new technologies, processes and
103 practices, where cultivation of more advanced levels of knowledge and skills in more people, nurturing
104 awareness, enthusiasm and sense of responsibility of learners, drive positive change.

105 Students need access to high-quality, learner-centred and innovative **learning and teaching**, in line with their
106 needs and interests, in order to gain competencies needed to tackle global challenges. This requires the
107 acquisition of transversal and future-proof skills and equipping students with creative and critical thinking, in
108 order to support them in actively participating in a democratic society and a resilient and competitive labour
109 market. Amidst these developments, we need to ensure student-centred learning is a reality for all students,
110 empowering individual learners through research-based learning, effective support and guidance and cross-
111 disciplinary teaching approaches. Therefore, **we ask the BFUG to follow-up on the implementation of student-**
112 **centred learning in the next working cycle.**

113 We acknowledge the crucial role of teaching staff in supporting high-quality, learner-centred and innovative
114 learning and teaching, and we recognise their professional development needs. Teaching should be valued on
115 equal footing with research and other professional tasks, benefit from adequate working conditions and staff
116 development opportunities.

⁷ https://ehca.info/Upload/Rome_Ministerial_Communique_Annex_II.pdf

⁸ CHECK exact title & link

⁹ The EHEA Ministers in this respect take note of the Statement of Hungary of 30 May 2024.

117 The EHEA also needs to respond to ongoing change, due to societal, economic, political, environmental and
118 technological developments. This will require sustainable funding for higher education, enhancement and
119 adjustment of existing policies and instruments, and the development of new ones. This includes new
120 modalities of education provision, such as **micro-credentials**, the enhanced use of **joint programmes**, support
121 for the entrepreneurial and innovation capacities of higher education institutions, strengthening the focus on
122 the **third mission** they have for society, the response to the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the**
123 **green transition** in the area of higher education, the ongoing **digitalisation** and the combination of physical
124 and **online learning and teaching**, and the continued work on fostering **synergies with the European Research**
125 **Area (ERA)**.

126 **Artificial intelligence (AI)** already impacts on the experience of learning, teaching and research. Therefore, we
127 emphasise the importance of analysing the opportunities, risks and challenges, avoiding biases by ensuring
128 human decision-making, maintaining data ethics and privacy, adapting assessment methods to protect
129 academic integrity, support students and staff to understand and be able to responsibly use AI, and the
130 imperative of ethical considerations in their deployment. We encourage the development of policies
131 promoting the ethical use of AI in learning and teaching, as well as in research practice, ensuring transparency,
132 fairness, student and staff participation and well-being. **We ask the BFUG to initiate an analysis of how AI is**
133 **impacting the implementation of the key commitments and the Bologna tools.**

134 **Lifelong learning** is increasing in society and a need for all those requiring or desiring new competences to
135 increase their professional, personal or civic potential. The learning paths need to be flexible, properly
136 delivered, described, quality assured, and recognized. They should promote inclusion, upskilling and reskilling,
137 and be aligned with the requirements of learners, changing societies and labour markets. This also includes
138 the recognition of prior learning, and new forms of education provision, such as micro-credentials. **We commit**
139 **to fostering such flexible learning paths, including by supporting both, academically focused and applied and**
140 **professionally oriented programmes.**

141 **An interconnected EHEA**

142 The hallmark of an **interconnected EHEA** is seamless mobility of students and staff. We will **reinforce** our
143 efforts to remove barriers and promote physical mobility, also in order to achieve the longstanding benchmark
144 of 20% of mobile students¹⁰. **We commit to enabling all learners to acquire international and intercultural**
145 **competences, especially through physical mobility.**

146 While all students and staff should have the opportunity to benefit from physical mobility, the
147 internationalisation of the curricula and participation in innovative international environments in their home
148 institutions play an emerging role. **We will support measures for greener and more inclusive mobility, and**
149 **explore possibilities to make mobility more balanced.**

150 We welcome the ongoing developments in deepening and institutionalising transnational cooperation, such
151 as by the European Universities Alliances or other ERASMUS+ and transnational actions, in synergy
152 with the European Education Area (EEA), underpinned by and in respect of the Bologna tools and
153 commitments, including participation of students and staff in all decision-making bodies of Alliances, which
154 create new opportunities for our academic communities. In order to unlock the existing potential, **we commit**
155 **to supporting transnational cooperation by removing undue barriers higher education institutions are facing**
156 **in the creation of joint programmes, and through better implementation of the key commitments.**

¹⁰ Communiqué of the Ministerial Conference in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve, 28-29 April 2009,
https://www.ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/Leuven_Louvain_la_Neuve_Communique_April_2009_595061.pdf

157 We welcome the revision of the European Area of Recognition (EAR) Manual, and we commit to making
158 automatic recognition of qualifications and learning periods abroad a reality for all students and graduates,
159 and to promoting the use of DEQAR as a transparency tool, where possible and appropriate.

160 We welcome the adoption of the Global Policy Forum Statement and ask the BFUG to continue the outreach
161 beyond the EHEA on various levels, including but not restricted to reciprocal referencing of Qualifications
162 Frameworks and credit systems, ratification and implementation of the UNESCO *Global and Regional*
163 *conventions on recognition of higher education qualifications*, and alignment and mutual understanding of
164 quality assurance principles. We ask the BFUG to continue and extend its work of promoting dialogue between
165 appropriate international interlocutors and BFUG working structures.¹¹

166 We recognise the urgent need to disseminate knowledge and strengthen the dialogue about the ongoing work
167 and new perspectives developed by the BFUG and its working structures, in order to ensure a more effective
168 linkage between the policy level and the higher education community. We indicate as a priority for all EHEA
169 countries to invest in communication at the national level, e.g. by national experts, well informed and able to
170 disseminate knowledge about the Bologna Process.

171 Outlook

172 For our 2027 Ministerial Conference, we mandate the BFUG to develop a Bologna Process Implementation
173 Report assessing the main developments, especially the degree to which the EHEA is set to achieve its objective
174 of being inclusive, innovative and interconnected by 2030, and its commitment to upholding fundamental
175 values. We also ask the BFUG to submit proposals for the main priorities for the next decade, in close
176 cooperation with higher education institutions, staff and students.¹²

177 We welcome that San Marino, the newest member of the EHEA, has largely¹³ implemented the agreed
178 roadmap accompanying its accession to the EHEA and we encourage San Marino to continue to address the
179 few remaining items identified. We note that associating new accessions to the EHEA with a roadmap, and
180 accompanied by a small working group to assist and advise the new member during the work period following
181 its accession, has proved very useful. We, therefore, resolve that further members accessing the EHEA shall be
182 similarly supported in the implementation of their commitments.

183 We gratefully accept the offer by [redacted] to host the next EHEA Ministerial conference of the EHEA and the EHEA
184 Global Policy Forum in 2027.

185 Tirana Commitments

- 186 > We are resolved to speed up efforts to make an inclusive, innovative and interconnected EHEA a reality
187 by 2030.
- 188 > We stand strong on the side of Ukraine and decide to maintain the suspension of the rights of
189 participation of the Russian Federation and Belarus.
- 190 > We adopt the statements on the fundamental values annexed¹⁴ to this Communiqué. We ask the BFUG
191 to continue its work to protect and further our fundamental values. We welcome the work on creating
192 a technical monitoring framework, and we ask the BFUG to report back to us at our 2027 Ministerial
193 Conference.
- 194 > We invite the BFUG/European Commission to revise the ECTS Users' Guide 2015 by 2027.

¹¹ Further topic: Links ERA-EHEA?

¹² Governance aspects? TF RoP related decisions.

¹³ Yellow highlighting = input WG or BFUG decision needed. Green highlighting = technical comments, not final.

¹⁴ See ANNEX 1.

- 195 ➤ We invite the authors¹⁵ of the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the*
196 *European Higher Education Area (ESG)*, to propose a revised version by 2026, to be adopted by us at
197 our 2027 conference, as well as an adjustment, where required, of the European Approach for Quality
198 Assurance of Joint Programmes.
- 199 ➤ We commit to ensuring that we have, or will devise, and publish appropriate action plans to address
200 any remaining implementation gaps regarding the key commitments of the Bologna Process.
- 201 ➤ We will promote more robust and transparent quality assurance of transnational education in line with
202 the ESG and ask the BFUG to work in synergy with the ETINED platform and the ENIC-NARICs.
- 203 ➤ We will speed up efforts to ensure the recognition of qualifications held by refugees.
- 204 ➤ We mandate the BFUG to initiate a discussion on the fitness-for-purpose of the key commitments and
205 their possible further development, as well as of other commitments that we should consider key to
206 assure the better functioning of the EHEA.
- 207 ➤ We endorse the document *Indicators and Descriptors for the Principles of the Social Dimension of*
208 *Higher Education in the EHEA¹⁶ (IADs SD)*. We are committed to measuring progress in the
209 implementation of the principles of the social dimension and ask the BFUG to report back on this in
210 2027. Simultaneously, we will promote the improvement of data collection practices and European
211 monitoring of the social dimension, encouraging to take part in initiatives in that regard, such as
212 Eurostudent.
- 213 ➤ We ask the BFUG to address in the next work plan how to support higher education's role in the green
214 transition as well as in the digital transition.
- 215 ➤ We ask the BFUG to initiate an analysis of how AI is impacting the implementation of the key
216 commitments and the Bologna tools.
- 217 ➤ We ask the BFUG to follow-up on the implementation of student-centred learning in the next working
218 cycle.
- 219 ➤ We commit to fostering such flexible learning paths, including by supporting both, academically
220 focused and applied and professionally oriented programmes.
- 221 ➤ We commit to making automatic recognition of qualifications and learning periods abroad a reality for
222 all students and graduates, and to promoting the use of DEQAR as a transparency tool.
- 223 ➤ We will reinforce our efforts to remove barriers and promote physical mobility, also in order to achieve
224 the longstanding benchmark of 20% of mobile students
- 225 ➤ We commit to supporting transnational cooperation, including by removing undue barriers higher
226 education institutions are facing in the creation of joint programmes.
- 227 ➤ We ask the BFUG to continue and extend its work of promoting dialogue between appropriate
228 international interlocutors and BFUG working structures.
- 229 ➤ [TF on Rules of Procedure outcome].

230 ANNEXES

231 Fundamental Values

¹⁵ The primary authors are ENQA, ESU, EUA and EURASHE - the E4 Group, in cooperation with Business Europe, EI and EQAR.

¹⁶ [Link](#)