

Statement of the First Bologna Global Policy Forum

Rome 25 June 2020

We, the Ministers responsible for Higher Education and heads of delegations of countries, organizations, institutions and stakeholders participating in the First Bologna Global Policy Forum, express our firm conviction that higher education has a vital role in addressing the present and future challenges to world peace and sustainable wellbeing.

We must take up our responsibility towards our countries and peoples, in order to unleash the potential of higher education to find solutions to the world's great existing challenges. We must support present and future generations to think and act ethically, creatively and critically in order to be able to face those of the future. Increased cooperation across regions will strengthen our ability to find innovative solutions.

We appreciate the overall vision for the higher education world elaborated by the EHEA, and accept the imperative of contributing on multiple levels to achieving the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in 2030**.

Evaluating progress

Since the first Bologna Policy Forum was held (Louvain, 2009) we note that there have been both positive and negative changes.

On the one hand, worldwide connection and mobility of staff and students has increased, as have the total numbers of learners in tertiary education. Many world regions and countries have progressed in consolidating and connecting their higher education systems and structures and elaborating further steps forward, as has the EHEA. Cooperation has increased on both the national and institutional levels.

The **UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education** is a landmark achievement towards facilitating all mobile students and learners in countries other than where they began their studies. Built on the basis of six pre-existing regional agreements, it is an important step in achieving the aims of the Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action (2015) for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning".

On the other hand, the world is experiencing a period of upheaval. Fundamental values in the past considered well established are under threat. Despite the growth of the higher education community, its goals of widening inclusion and ensuring equitable access for all, including refugees and migrants have not been achieved. The value of truth, knowledge, and the scientific method, intrinsic to higher education, is questioned. Academic freedom and institutional autonomy, necessary safeguards, are not universally respected.

Moving forward

In order to progress, we underline our commitment to the **social dimension**, understood to mean not only inclusion in terms of access of all components of our societies to higher education, but also Higher Education Institutions' ability to retain learners and to equip them with the competences they will need for meaningful employment and for their personal and civic lives.

To achieve this, we recognize the need for Higher Education Institutions to reach out more effectively to their **communities**, to strengthen cooperation with schools, and to consult more closely with employers on a regular basis to understand better what competences graduates need and how they can be formed, and to foresee and prepare for future needs.

We recognize the positive potential for all our countries in the following priorities for further action:

- Innovative forms of learning and teaching, increasing the shared awareness of the importance of **Student Centered Learning** and its implications, such as **flexibility** in study programs and learning paths in a lifelong learning perspective;
- Further development of **mobility**, including virtual mobility and the joint creation of digital learning environments, as one of the most important keys to global understanding and to excellence in higher education;
- **Inclusion** as a driver for excellence, and a way to open untapped talent, including opening higher education and career opportunities to refugees and other persons in situations of difficulty.

To **achieve this potential**, we must ensure **trust** in the increasingly globalized context of higher education, and cooperate to agree upon and connect the tools to support it.

A major step forward will be to put into closer communication the several **Qualifications Frameworks and Qualifications Reference frameworks and Quality enhancement and Quality assurance standards and procedures**, developed in various world regions, referencing them to one another, thus facilitating student mobility and recognition.

Future policy dialogue and cooperation:

During the Bologna Policy Fora held in past years, we expressed our shared wish to achieve more constant dialogue and cooperation globally on themes of common concern. Most recently, in Paris (June 2018), we asked the Bologna Follow Up Group to facilitate dialogue, and to organize the present Global Policy Forum. This task was entrusted to the Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue, for which we express appreciation.

We confirm the need to further strengthen and better structure our cooperation in the coming decade. Proposals have been made in the past to designate liaison persons from each country participating in the Forum to act as contact points. We again commit to securing the designation of liaison persons and ask the BFUG to develop a coordinating structure to organize regular cooperation, with concrete outcomes based on an action plan, with willing countries, organizations, and institutions, from all world regions.

We appreciate [*the possible proposal*] to recognize the countries, organizations and institutions interested in aligning their systems or parts of them with the Bologna Process reforms, as Bologna Global Policy Partners.

We commit to working more closely together in the coming decade to achieve our agreed priorities and to contribute to meeting the UN Sustainable Development Goals

The next Bologna Global Policy Forum will be held in ???? in ???? 2023.