

1 A quarter of a century ago, 29 ministers committed to a vision: To align their higher education systems making
2 them compatible and structurally similar as to enable seamless **mobility** for students and staff across
3 countries, while preserving the rich diversity of cultures, languages and pedagogical traditions. They were
4 convinced, as we are still convinced today, that mobility – understood as the personal experience of moving
5 to another country to look at and learn about the world from different perspectives – is among the most
6 powerful means for ensuring international understanding and collaboration, research excellence, mutual
7 trust, social cohesion and, last but not least, peace.

8 In the last 25 years, jointly with stakeholders representing students, academic staff and higher education
9 institutions, we have taken on new and challenging commitments, as both the context and our own higher
10 education community have grown and changed. Not only are we closer, we have grown, encompassing nearly
11 50 countries in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). In this context, we note with satisfaction that
12 **San Marino, the newest member of the EHEA**, has largely¹ implemented the agreed roadmap accompanying
13 its accession to the EHEA and **we encourage San Marino to continue to address the few remaining concerns**
14 **identified.**

15 In our Ministerial Conference in Rome, we agreed on our shared vision for building a more inclusive,
16 innovative and interconnected EHEA by 2030². We are resolved to make this vision a reality, while at the
17 same time we recognize that important parts of our vision have not yet been realized, and implementation
18 of agreed commitments requires continual momentum and participation of relevant stakeholders in order
19 to be fully accomplished. A peaceful and prosperous world, where all those who wish to could access and be
20 supported in completing a quality higher education, guaranteed by compliance with our fundamental values,
21 still eludes us. Particularly, within our region, the unprovoked aggression in Ukraine, upon which we
22 mandated the BFUG to decide³ to suspend the rights of participation of the Russian Federation and Belarus,
23 has proven the importance of continually maintaining and defending these values of EHEA. The world is facing
24 overlapping social, economic, ecological and political challenges, including rising polarisation, and
25 inequalities. Higher education as a public good and a transformative power for society plays an irreplaceable
26 role in solving those challenges and promoting democratic societies, and EHEA must be conducive to this
27 pursuit.

28 **Fundamental values**

29 While the respect of its fundamental values is a necessary condition for higher education to achieve its
30 missions, they are now more threatened than they were a decade ago. We affirm our understanding of
31 **academic freedom** as defined in the Rome Communiqué. Furthermore,

- 32 ● we understand **academic integrity** as a set of behaviours and attitudes in the academic community
33 internalising and furthering compliance with ethical and professional principles and standards in
34 learning, teaching, research, governance, outreach and any other tasks related to the missions of higher
35 education.
- 36 ● We further understand **institutional autonomy** as the will and ability of higher education institutions to
37 fulfil their missions without undue interference and to set and implement their own priorities and
38 policies **concerning** organisation, finance, staffing and academic affairs.

¹ Yellow highlighting = input WG and/or BFUG decision needed. Green highlighting = technical comments, not final.

² https://www.ehea.info/Upload/Rome_Ministerial_Communique.pdf

³ Decision in the BFUG Meeting LXXX on 11 April 2022, BFUG_FR_AZ_80_Minutes of Meeting, p. 6.

- 39 ● **Participation of students and staff in higher education governance** encompasses their right to organise
40 autonomously, in accordance with the principle of partnership and collegiality, without pressure or
41 undue interference; to elect and be elected in open, free and fair elections; have their views represented
42 and taken into account; initiate and participate in all debates and decision-making in all governing
43 bodies; and through their representative organisations, be duly involved on issues concerning the
44 governance and further development of the relevant higher education institutions and system.
- 45 ● **Public responsibility for higher education** denotes a set of duties, mainly exercised at the level of the
46 national higher education system, that public authorities must fulfil as part of their overall responsibility
47 for the education sector and society as a whole.
- 48 ● **Public responsibility of higher education** denotes the obligations of the higher education community to
49 the broader society of which the higher education community is a part.

50 We adopt the statements on the fundamental values annexed⁴ to this Communiqué. We underscore that
51 while each value is essential, all six values need to be implemented as a coherent whole. To make the
52 fundamental academic values a cornerstone of the EHEA, we ask the BFUG to continue its work to protect
53 and further our fundamental values. As a reliable monitoring of their implementation within all our education
54 systems is required, we welcome the work of the Fundamental Values Working Group on creating a technical
55 monitoring framework, and we ask the BFUG to pilot it and report back to us at our 2027 conference.

56 Key commitments

57 To facilitate **mobility** of students and staff, we decided:

- 58 ● to implement a three-cycle system of programmes and degrees, based on learning outcomes and the
59 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), compatible with the overarching framework of the EHEA
60 (QF-EHEA),
- 61 ● to support the recognition of qualifications throughout the EHEA by implementing the *Convention*
62 *on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region* (Lisbon
63 Recognition Convention) and its principles, and
- 64 ● to commit to and promote a Quality Culture in Higher education, fostered by fit-for-purpose quality
65 assurance processes in line with the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the*
66 *European Higher Education Area* (ESG).

67 In this respect, the application of the ESG has been promoting trust and transparency between higher
68 education systems, and facilitating accountability and enhancement. In order to keep them in line with
69 developments, challenges and expectations, we invite the authors⁵ of the ESG, to propose a revised version
70 by 2026, to be adopted by us at our 2027 conference, as well as an adjustment, where required, of the
71 European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes.

72 We are devoted to acting jointly in order to counter the increasing risk of diploma mills and fraudulent
73 qualifications, made more accessible through developments in the digital field. In this regard, we will
74 promote more robust quality assurance of transnational education and ask the BFUG to work in synergy with
75 the ETINED platform⁶ and the ENIC-NARICs.

⁴ See ANNEX 1.

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).

76 We acknowledge that the implementation of these most basic and key commitments and tools is still uneven,
77 notwithstanding the concerted attempts of peer learning in various groups under the umbrella of the Bologna
78 Implementation Coordination Group (BICG) since its creation in 2018. We recognize the difficulty of
79 transforming the important work of those Thematic Peer Groups (TPGs) into changes at the normative level.
80 To close the implementation gap of these basic and other commitments made, we agree that after each
81 Ministerial Conference we will individually devise concrete publishable implementation plans, around which
82 to coordinate our countries' actions.

83 An inclusive EHEA

84 We commit today again to **building an inclusive EHEA by 2030**, able to underpin a cohesive, sustainable, and
85 peaceful Europe, where students are fully supported, at all stages of life, through tailored policies for
86 accessing and completing higher education irrespective of any background or starting point.

87 We are recognising progress in the implementation of the *Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social*
88 *Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA*⁷, after their approval through the 2020 Rome Communiqué, with
89 yet significant steps needed to ensure adequate implementation. We acknowledge the stark and prolonged
90 impact that the COVID-19 pandemic and economic challenges are still having, not only on higher education
91 systems, but also on the cost of living and the mental health of students and staff. We commit to tackle these
92 challenges together with stakeholders by promoting accessible student support services, inclusive learning
93 environments, including digital ones, **gender equality/equality between women and men**, as well as
94 measures to support covering indirect costs of study. **We will actively collaborate with communities and**
95 **society at large to collectively address the growing challenges around us in order to find appropriate**
96 **solutions.**

97 Recent years have seen an increase in the number of refugees and displaced individuals seeking shelter in
98 Europe, and higher education plays a key role in their integration within our societies. In order to support
99 refugees and make best use of their skills and potential, we will speed up efforts to ensure the recognition
100 of their qualifications, including through the use of the *European Qualification Passport for Refugees* and the
101 *2019 Recommendation on Recognition of Qualifications Held by Refugees, Displaced Persons and Persons in*
102 *a Refugee-like Situation*.

103 To further foster diversity, equity and inclusion, we **welcome** the newly developed indicators and descriptors
104 for the principles of the social dimension in the EHEA. These tools enable customised implementation based
105 on the specific requirements of higher education systems, by flexibly adapting them to create tailored
106 policies. Therefore, **we endorse the document *Indicators and Descriptors for the Principles of the Social***
107 ***Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA***⁸, representing the first comprehensive and consolidated
108 framework for the social dimension in the EHEA. We are committed to measuring progress in the
109 implementation of the principles of the social dimension and **ask the BFUG to report back on this in 2027.**
110 Simultaneously, **we will promote the improvement of data collection practices and European monitoring of**
111 **the social dimension**, encouraging to take part in initiatives in that regard, such as Eurostudent.

112 An innovative EHEA

113 The announcement of the EHEA in 2010, rather than becoming the finishing line as originally foreseen, has
114 been the starting point for a continuous dynamic higher policy process. Beyond the vital key commitments,

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

⁸ Exact title & link

115 we see a higher education world in rapid development. Students need to be delivered with high-quality,
116 learner-centred and innovative **learning and teaching**, in line with their needs and desires, in order to adapt
117 to these developments. This requires the acquisition of transversal and future-proof skills and equipping
118 students with critical thinking, in order to prepare them for a democratic society and a resilient and
119 competitive labour market. Amidst these developments, we need to ensure student-centred learning is a
120 reality for all students, empowering individual learners through effective support and guidance and cross-
121 disciplinary approaches.

122 The EHEA needs to respond to ongoing change, due to societal, economic, political, environmental and
123 technical developments. This will require enhancement and adjustment of existing, and the development of
124 new, policies and instruments, also in view of new ways of education provision, such as **micro-credentials**,
125 the enhanced use of **joint programmes**, the response to the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the**
126 **green transition** in the area of higher education, the ongoing **digitalisation** and the combination of physical
127 and **online learning and teaching**. We, therefore, ask the BFUG to address in the next work plan how to
128 support higher education's role in the green transition as well as in the digital transition.

129 **Artificial intelligence** already impacts on the experience of learning, teaching and research in ways that we
130 are only beginning to understand. Therefore, we emphasise the importance of analysing the repercussions,
131 avoiding biases by ensuring human decision-making, maintaining data ethics and privacy, adapting
132 assessment methods to protect academic integrity, and the imperative of ethical considerations in their
133 deployment. We affirm our commitment to encourage development of policies by higher education
134 institutions promoting the ethical use of AI in learning and teaching, as well as in research practice, ensuring
135 transparency, fairness, student and staff participation and well-being.

136 **Lifelong learning** is becoming the new normal for all those requiring or desiring new competences to increase
137 their professional, personal or civic potential. We commit to fostering flexible learning paths, including
138 recognition of prior learning and new forms of education provision, such as micro-credentials – properly
139 delivered, described, quality assured and recognized – which can make possible continuing academic,
140 professional and practical acquisition of knowledge and competences, promote inclusion, upskilling and
141 reskilling, and are better aligned with the requirements of learners, changing societies and labour markets.

142 **An interconnected EHEA**

143 The hallmark of an **interconnected EHEA** is seamless mobility of students and staff. We will revamp our
144 efforts to remove barriers and promote physical mobility, also in order to achieve the longstanding
145 benchmark of 20% of mobile students⁹. We will support measures for greener and more inclusive mobility,
146 including through using blended formats, while making use of digital tools to enhance the internationalisation
147 of our higher education institutions also through virtual cooperation. We commit to making automatic
148 recognition of qualifications and learning periods abroad a reality for all students and graduates, and to
149 **promoting the use of DEQAR as a transparency tool.**

150 We welcome the ongoing developments in deepening and institutionalising transnational cooperation, such
151 as by the European Universities Alliances, underpinned by Bologna tools and commitments, which create
152 new opportunities for our academic communities. In order to unlock the existing potential, we commit to

⁹ 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

153 supporting transnational cooperation by removing undue barriers higher education institutions are facing in
154 the creation of joint programmes.

155 We welcome the adoption of the Global Policy Forum Statement and ask the BFUG to continue the outreach
156 beyond the EHEA on various levels, including but not restricted to reciprocal referencing of Qualifications
157 Frameworks and credit systems, ratification and implementation of the UNESCO *Global and Regional*
158 *conventions on recognition of higher education qualifications*, and increasing convergence of Quality
159 Assurance principles. We ask the BFUG to continue and extend its work of promoting dialogue between
160 appropriate international interlocutors and BFUG working structures.¹⁰

161 We recognise the urgent need to disseminate knowledge and strengthen the dialogue about the ongoing
162 work and new perspectives developed by the BFUG and its working structures, in order to ensure a more
163 effective linkage between the policy level and the higher education community. We indicate as a priority for
164 all EHEA countries the support of national experts, well informed and able to disseminate knowledge about
165 the Bologna Process.

166 Outlook

167 For our 2027 Ministerial Conference, we mandate the BFUG to develop a Bologna Process Implementation
168 Report assessing the main developments, especially the degree to which the EHEA is set to achieve its
169 objective of being inclusive, innovative and interconnected by 2030, and its commitment to upholding
170 fundamental values. We also ask the BFUG to submit proposals for the main priorities for the next decade,
171 in close cooperation with higher education institutions, staff and students.¹¹

172 We note that associating new accessions to the EHEA with a roadmap, and accompanied by a small working
173 group to assist and advise the new member during the work period following its accession, has proved very
174 useful. We, therefore, resolve that further members accessing the EHEA shall be similarly supported in the
175 implementation of their commitments.

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

178 Tirana Commitments

- 179
- 180 ➤ We are resolved to speed efforts to make an inclusive, innovative and interconnected EHEA a reality
181 by 2030.
 - 182 ➤ We ask the BFUG to continue its work to protect and further our fundamental values. We endorse
183 the technical monitoring framework proposed by the Fundamental Values Working Group and ask
184 the BFUG to pilot the implementation of this framework and report back to us at our 2027
185 conference.
 - 186 ➤ We invite the authors¹² of the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the*
187 *European Higher Education Area* (ESG), to propose a revised version by 2026, to be adopted by us at
188 our 2027 conference, as well as an adjustment, where required, of the European Approach for
Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes.

¹⁰ Further topic: Links ERA-EHEA?

¹¹ Governance aspects? TF RoP related decisions.

¹² The primary authors are ENQA, ESU, EUA and EURASHE - the E4 Group, in cooperation with Business Europe, EI and EQAR.

- 189 > We will promote more robust quality assurance of transnational education and ask the BFUG to work
190 in synergy with the ETINED platform and the ENIC-NARICs.
- 191 > We will speed up efforts to ensure the recognition of qualifications held by refugees.
- 192 > We endorse the document *Indicators and Descriptors for the Principles of the Social Dimension of*
193 *Higher Education in the EHEA*¹³. We are committed to measuring progress in the implementation of
194 the principles of the social dimension and ask the BFUG to report back on this in 2027.
195 Simultaneously, we will promote the improvement of data collection practices and European
196 monitoring of the social dimension, encouraging to take part in initiatives in that regard, such as
197 Eurostudent.
- 198 > We ask the BFUG to address in the next work plan how to support higher education's role in the
199 green transition as well as in the digital transition.
- 200 > We affirm our commitment to encourage development of policies by higher education institutions
201 promoting the ethical use of AI in learning and teaching, as well as in research practice, ensuring
202 transparency, fairness, student and staff participation and well-being.
- 203 > We commit to fostering flexible learning paths, including recognition of prior learning and new forms
204 of education provision, such as micro-credentials.
- 205 > We commit to making automatic recognition of qualifications and learning periods abroad a reality
206 for all students and graduates, and to promoting the use of DEQAR as a transparency tool.
- 207 > We commit to supporting transnational cooperation, including by removing undue barriers higher
208 education institutions are facing in the creation of joint programmes.
- 209 > We ask the BFUG to continue and extend its work of promoting dialogue between appropriate
210 international interlocutors and BFUG working structures.
- 211 > [TF on Rules of Procedure outcome].

212 ANNEXES

213 Fundamental Values

¹³ [Link](#)