



# TIRANA EHEA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE AND GLOBAL POLICY FORUM

29-30 MAY 2024

Parallel Sessions



## Contents

Item VII: Parallel sessions .....	3
1. Topic I: Good Practices and Challenges to Implementation of the Bologna Process Key Commitments .....	3
2. Topic II: Encouraging Transnational Cooperation and Tools to Foster EHEA Mobility	4
3. Topic III: Digital and Green Skills for the European Workforce: The Role of HE in Preparing for Future/ New Professions, Including the Responsible Use of AI in Research and Education.....	4
4. Topic IV: Good Practices and Challenges to Implementation of the Principles on the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA.....	7
Item IV Forum Third Session – Four Parallel Sessions .....	8
1. Session 1: The Berlin Process as One of the Good Practice Examples of Regional Cooperation in Implementing the Bologna Process.....	8
2. Session 2: Opportunities and Challenges for Recognition of Academic Qualifications: The Lisbon Recognition Convention in the Context of the Global Convention and Other Regional Conventions on Recognition .....	9
3. Session 3: Mobility and Internationalization as Instruments to Build Bridges Among Macro Regions .....	10
4. Session 4: Quality Assurance of Higher Education: Global Perspectives and Strategies	10

## Item VII: Parallel sessions

May 29, 2024 12:00-13:00

**Parallel session composition:** Introduction (5 min); Panel (25 min); Discussions (30 min)

### 1. *Topic I: Good Practices and Challenges to Implementation of the Bologna Process* *Key Commitments*

**Moderator:** Helga Posset, Austria.

**Good practices** – Input from 3 TPGs elevator pitches (3 min each)

Jordi Lombart, Andorra (TPG A)

Chiara Finocchietti, ENIC-NARIC Bureau, Italy (TPG B)

Cristina Ghitulica, Romania (TPG C)

**Panel:**

- Eliza Stefanova, Bulgaria, President National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency
- Balázs Hankó, Minister of State for Innovation, Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training, Hungary
- Peter Ondreicka, GD Higher Education, Slovakia
- Jens Brandenburg, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister of Education and Research, Germany
- Kseanela Sotirofski Rector, Alexander Moisiu University, Durres Albania
- Tanguy Guibert, ESU

**Rapporteur:** Ivana Radonova, Bulgaria

#### Introduction

The Tirana Communiqué includes a declaration of the pressing need for commitment by all EHEA countries, to work harder and better towards making the Bologna Area “work”. Our session targets the “Key Commitments” (KC) - the remit of the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG) and its three Thematic Peer Groups (TPG) - looking at the state of affairs with regard to the implementation of what the EHEA ministers have repeatedly committed to. We will quickly summarize what has been accomplished since the Ministerial Conference in Paris (2018), but wish to focus on what still needs to be done, on how to ensure the complete and functional implementation of the “KCs”.

Why are the KCs, as defined in Paris, repeated in the Rome Communiqué, and again spelled out in Tirana 2024, so important? Why are they designated “Key”? It is because they are the most basic and long-standing commitments made by the “bologna” Ministers. They constitute the structural elements that can make our higher education systems fully compatible, while retaining the richness that comes from our diversity.

The objective of the session is to remind everyone that many of the challenges faced by our higher education institutions today could be addressed more effectively if all our countries had implemented the KCs thoroughly and compatibly.

First, co-chairs and members of the three TPGs will present highlights of what they have accomplished through cooperation and peer support.

Then, our panellists will reflect on how to foster better understanding of, and ensure fuller compliance with, the Key Commitments in order finally to “close the implementation gap”. How can we heighten awareness of the need for coherent action, and build consent for the Tirana commitments regarding the KCs, including each country’s devising and publishing an action plan?

## ***2. Topic II: Encouraging Transnational Cooperation and Tools to Foster EHEA Mobility***

**Moderator:** Sophia Eriksson Waterschoot, Director, European Commission

**Panel:**

- Dan Perciun, Minister of Education and Research, Moldova
- Ligia Deca, Minister of Education, Romania  
Ana Kapaj, Deputy Minister of the Ministry for Education and Sports, Albania
- Pia Ahrenkilde Hansen, Director-General of Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission
- José Pingarron, Secretary General, Spain
- Borhene Chakroun, Director of the Division for Policies and Lifelong Learning Systems, UNESCO

**Rapporteur:** Belgium Flemish and French Communities

### **Background and purpose**

Increased transnational cooperation and mobility are at the very core of the Bologna process. Coherence to higher education systems within the EHEA and the Bologna key commitments are therefore key to achieve this. As the Bologna implementation report shows, there is still a way to go to secure full implementation of the commitments across EHEA, although there is progress.

At this session, we seek to highlight and discuss recent policy developments among EHEA members, to foster increased mobility and transnational cooperation considering the mobility target. In the EU, the European Universities initiative, and the recent higher education package with the European degree at its core set out to take transnational cooperation to the next level. We would like to discuss different policies and initiatives across EHEA that can help reaching our joint target - where are the synergies, and best practice, and what can we learn from each other?

## ***3. Topic III: Digital and Green Skills for the European Workforce: The Role of HE in Preparing for Future/ New Professions, Including the Responsible Use of AI in Research and Education***

**Moderator:** Villano Qiriazzi, Head of Education Department, Council of Europe

**Panel:**

- Jakob von Weizsäcker, Minister of Finance and for Science, State of Saarland in Germany
- Idris Isayev, Deputy Minister of Education, Azerbaijan
- Elina Laavi, Secretary of State, Finland
- Urban Kodrič, Director General of the Directorate for Higher Education, Slovenia
- Jon Altuna, Vice-President, EURASHE, Mondragon University
- Sagat Yermerkbayev, First Vice-Rector, Kazakh National Technical and Research University, Kazakhstan
- Vanessa Debiais-Sainton, Head of Higher Education Unit, European Commission
- Mirela Muça, Director of NASRI, Albania

**Rapporteur:** John Edwards, EURASHE

### ***Background and Purpose***

The Tirana Communiqué issues a clear call to action for an innovative EHEA to respond to ongoing change brought about by societal, economic, geopolitical, environmental, and technological advancements. The world is changing rapidly, which has significant implications for higher education. The green and digital twin transitions necessitate extraordinary innovation with new technologies, processes, and practices to promote positive transformation, as well as more sophisticated and ubiquitous levels of knowledge and skills that foster student awareness, involvement, and responsibility.

Digital transformation, driven by Artificial Intelligence (AI), has drastically impacted the educational landscape, bringing innovative and personalised learning environments that promote flexibility and lifelong learning. This change necessitates a thorough understanding of digital technology's underlying functions and implications. Education systems are increasingly emphasising on digital skills in order to provide students with crucial digital literacies like critical thinking and problem solving. These abilities are essential for effectively engaging in society and upholding principles of democracy.

However, incorporating AI into education raises a number of obstacles, including potential biases, privacy concerns, and the amplification of the digital divide. High cybersecurity and data protection obligations are required to protect sensitive learner data and maintain privacy rights. Furthermore, there is an urgent need for successful collaboration between the public, private, and civil sectors to set evidence-based standards for digital educational applications, ensuring that pedagogical tools are both effective and ethically built.

As AI reshapes existing educational approaches, it creates both new opportunities and challenges. Higher education institutions (HEIs), governments, and educational leaders must negotiate these shifts carefully in order to fully realise AI's potential while also addressing its ethical, operational, and societal repercussions.

### ***What are the implications for higher education?***

AI's impact on higher education requires **comprehensive governance** structures to accommodate its multidimensional nature. This includes developing explicit AI usage policies that comply with international regulations, advocating ethical norms, and encouraging openness in AI applications. Furthermore, creating a collaborative atmosphere in which AI's function in education is constantly evaluated and modified is critical.

**Public authorities in charge of higher education** face significant responsibilities under new regulatory frameworks such as the European Union's AI Act and the upcoming Council of Europe Framework Convention on AI and Human Rights, Democracy, and the Rule of Law. To ensure that AI systems meet the criteria for accuracy, robustness, transparency and cybersecurity, as well as deal in an appropriate way with access, admission, assessment implications of AI, authorities must ensure that higher education institutions (HEIs) have strong risk management systems and data governance. They must also assist HEIs in building AI literacy and ethical AI usage frameworks that will improve both education and governance.

**Leadership at higher education institutions** must handle several crucial areas influenced by AI. The incorporation of AI presents operational issues, particularly in matching AI with current educational systems and managing ethical consequences such as data protection and academic credibility. Leadership must develop a culture of constant innovation in business models and educational methods.

AI's integration into **teaching and learning environments** has the potential to personalise and improve educational delivery. However, this presents issues such as guaranteeing equitable access to AI resources and upholding academic integrity. To maintain the integrity of educational evaluations, educators must be able to use AI tools responsibly and create AI-resistant exams.

Higher education institutions have an important role in educating students for the changing employment market, especially in industries powered by digital and AI technology. It is vital to close the **digital skills gap** by incorporating comprehensive AI and digital literacy programmes into all levels of education.

**Integrating digital and green skills** into study programmes is crucial as these competencies are vital for the sustainable development of the workforce and for addressing global issues such as climate change and technological advancements. Professional and applied higher education will be a centre for the reskilling and upskilling of the current and future society.

The European Union through the actions linked within the European Skills Agenda also highlighted several critical areas for development such as importance of recognising lifelong learning and training as fundamental rights, sustainable investment and continuing initiatives to develop skills. It also stresses the need to enhance skills in governance and adopt strategies to attract global talent and advocates for incentives that encourage upskilling and reskilling, which are closely aligned with the job market's needs.

Furthermore, skills provision should be adapted to regional needs, underlying the important role of applied universities and the need for place-based education strategies.

#### ***4. Topic IV: Good Practices and Challenges to Implementation of the Principles on the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA***

##### **Moderators and presenters:**

- Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt, Eurydice, Croatia
- Horia Onița, European Students' Union ESU

##### **Panelists:**

- Manuel Bouard, Deputy Director for European and International Affairs, Ministry for Higher Education and Research of France
- Elmar Pichl, Director General for Higher Education, Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research of Austria
- Josep M. Garrell, President of the European University Association
- Loredana Maravić, Head of the Sector for the Development of Higher Education, Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia

##### **Background information:**

The Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) continued its efforts to enhance the social dimension of higher education within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) during the period 2021-2024, culminating in the adoption of the ['Indicators and Descriptors for the Principles of the Social Dimension in the EHEA'](#) in 2024. Building on the ['Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA'](#) from the 2020 Rome Communiqué, this document introduces actionable tools to help public authorities and higher education institutions implement and monitor social dimension policies, fostering equity and inclusion across the EHEA.

The 'Indicators and Descriptors' document is a key achievement of the BFUG Working Group on Social Dimension from 2021 to 2024. This document highlights that principles, guidelines, indicators, and descriptors form a comprehensive framework for the social dimension in higher education within the EHEA. The framework empowers public authorities and higher education institutions in the EHEA to formulate system-wide and institutional policies, strategies, and action plans to strengthen the social dimension.

##### **Objectives of the session:**

1. To present the key results of the BFUG work on strengthening the social dimension of higher education in the EHEA from 2021 to 2024 and to explain linkages with the BFUG work on the same topic from 2018 to 2020.
2. To assess opportunities and challenges in the implementation of principles, guidelines, indicators, and descriptors for the social dimension in EHEA member states and higher education institutions through a panel discussion with heads of delegations.

3. To foster peer learning on the implementation of the principles of the social dimension in EHEA member states.

## **Tirana Ministerial Conference and Global Policy Forum**

### **Thursday, 30 May 2024**

#### **Item IV Forum Third Session – Four Parallel Sessions**

May 30, 2024, 12:00 – 13:00

Four Parallel Sessions on the Implementation of the Bologna Process

#### ***1. Session 1: The Berlin Process as One of the Good Practice Examples of Regional Cooperation in Implementing the Bologna Process***

***Moderator:*** Odeta Barbullushi

***Panel:***

- Ana Kapaj, Deputy Minister of Education and Sports, Albania
- Arbërie Nagavci, Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, Kosovo\*
- Andjela Jaksic Stojanovic, Minister of Education, Science and Innovation, Montenegro
- Jeton Shaqiri, Minister of Education and Science, North Macedonia
- Jens Brandenburg, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister of Education and Research, Germany

***Rapporteur:*** Anila Papparisto, Albania

#### **Introduction by Moderator: Odeta Barbullushi**

Welcome and Introduction: Overview of the Berlin Process and its relevance to the Bologna Process.

Objectives of the Session: Highlight the aims of discussing regional cooperation and the implementation of the Bologna Process through the Berlin Process.

#### **Panelist Presentations**

1. Ana Kapaj, Deputy Minister of Education and Sports, Albania
  - **Albania's Experience:** Successes and challenges in implementing the Berlin Process.
  - **Impact on Higher Education:** Specific examples of improvements and ongoing projects.
2. Arbërie Nagavci, Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, Kosovo\*
  - **Kosova's Participation:** Achievements and areas needing further development.



- **Regional Collaboration:** How Kosova\* collaborates with neighboring countries through the Berlin Process.
- 3. Andjela Jaksic Stojanovic, Minister of Education, Science and Innovation, Montenegro
  - **Montenegro's Perspective:** Key initiatives and their outcomes.
  - **Future Plans:** Upcoming projects and priorities.
- 4. Jeton Shaqiri, Minister of Education and Science, North Macedonia
  - **North Macedonia's Integration:** Steps taken to align with the Bologna Process.
  - **Success Stories:** Notable successes and best practices.
- 5. Jens Brandenburg, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister of Education and Research, Germany
  - **Germany's Contribution:** How Germany has supported the Berlin Process.
  - **Insights and Recommendations:** Lessons learned and recommendations for other regions.

## ***2. Session 2: Opportunities and Challenges for Recognition of Academic Qualifications: The Lisbon Recognition Convention in the Context of the Global Convention and Other Regional Conventions on Recognition***

**Moderator:** Catherine Dreyer, Council of Europe

### ***Panel:***

- Francesc Pedró, Director of UNESCO-IESALC
- Luca Lantero, President of the Lisbon Convention Committee Director-General of CIMEA, Italy
- Gonzalo Baroni Boces, President of the Buenos Aires Convention Committee and Director of Education at the Ministry of Education and Culture, Uruguay
- Lamine Guèye, President of the Addis Convention Committee and Executive Secretary of the National Quality Assurance Authority for Higher Education, Research and Innovation, Senegal
- Dolly Seow-Ganesan, President of the Tokyo Convention Committee, Manager of Qualifications Recognition Services, New Zealand

**Rapporteur:** Chiara Finochietti, ENIC-NARIC Bureau, Italy

### ***Background and Purpose***

The [Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education](#), adopted in 2019, is the first United Nations treaty in higher education with a global scope. It has 28 States Parties, the vast majority of which are also States Parties to one or more “second-generation” regional recognition conventions and host 25% of the world’s 6.4 million internationally mobile students.

The Global Convention is implemented in complementarity with the five “second generation” [regional recognition conventions](#), which continue to facilitate recognition, mobility and inter-

university cooperation within their regions. These vary in their age and adherence, with the Lisbon Convention for Europe and North America being the oldest and in many ways a model for other regions. The Council of Europe and UNESCO jointly serve as the Secretariat to this convention.

The panel will shed light on developments on recognition at the global and regional levels, with particular focus on Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, and how these are relevant to EHEA countries. It aims to explore the implications of these and opportunities for synergies with the Lisbon Recognition Convention. This is particularly important in light of growing enrollments (254 million) and student mobility (6.4 million, 50% studying outside their regions), which have doubled and tripled, respectively, in the last two decades.

### ***3. Session 3: Mobility and Internationalization as Instruments to Build Bridges Among Macro Regions***

***Moderator:*** Liesbeth Hens, Belgium Flemish Community

***Panel:***

- Representative of the European Commission, Directorate for Education, Youth, Sport & Culture, European Commission
- Maria Nilsson, State Secretary, Ministry of Education and Research, Sweden
- Farhod Ahrorov, Deputy Director, Samarkand branch of Tashkent State University of Economics, Uzbekistan
- Peter Kwasi Kodjie, Secretary General - All Africa Students Union, AASU
- Romyen Kosaikanont, SEAMEO Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development

***Rapporteur:*** Horia Onita, ESU

***Aim of the session:*** discuss the importance of building bridges among EHEA and other regions of the world in the current geopolitical context; discuss the impact of mobility/internationalization in building long lasting cooperation between regions.

### ***4. Session 4: Quality Assurance of Higher Education: Global Perspectives and Strategies***

***Moderator:*** Cristina Ghitulica, Romania

***Panel:***

- Anna Gover, Director, European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)

- Olusola Oyewole, Secretary General, Association of African Universities (AAU)
- Félix García Lausín, Director-Coordinator of the Ibero-American Knowledge Space, Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB)
- Reka Tozsa, Director of Education Department, Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)

**Rapporteur:** Xhiliola Bixheku, Albania

Regional quality assurance frameworks are in development in many areas around the world. Harmonisation of quality assurance principles and processes provides significant benefits in terms of promoting trust among higher education systems, supporting recognition, mobility and international partnerships both within and between world regions. Ensuring success of these regional frameworks relies on a dual approach of having stakeholder ownership and buy-in as well as political level endorsement.

In the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG) have provided a common basis for internal and external quality assurance since the adoption of the first version in 2005. The ASEAN region published the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework (AQAF) in 2013, which also includes a section on national qualifications frameworks. In Africa, the African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ASG-QA) were developed in 2018, based on existing national and regional quality assurance criteria. Work is also underway to establish a continental agency that would establish a list of agencies that are compliant with these standards, similar to the function of EQAR in the EHEA. In 2019, the Ibero-American Quality Assurance System of Higher Education (SIACES) launched the Principles of Good Practice for the work of quality assurance agencies. There is strong alignment between the basic principles and key criteria of these frameworks, while each one also reflects regional priorities as well as contextual, cultural and historical specificities.

This session will explore regional priorities, current developments, and perspectives for the future in relation to regional frameworks for quality assurance and international collaboration in this area. Inputs from the speakers, representing different regions, will be followed by discussion with the participants on challenges and success factors for implementation.

