

1 ¹In the last 25 years, we, the Ministers responsible for higher education, jointly with students, higher
2 education institutions, and staff, have grown closer and together built the European Higher Education Area
3 (EHEA). In our Ministerial Conference in Rome in 2020, we agreed on a shared vision for building a more
4 inclusive, innovative and interconnected EHEA.² We meet here in Tirana to assess the progress made and
5 decide on the next steps to fully achieve it by 2030. The implementation of agreed commitments will require
6 continuous momentum and participation of all relevant stakeholders, to ensure that all those who wish to
7 can access and be supported in completing a quality higher education, based on our fundamental values.

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

15 Particularly, within our region, the unprovoked aggression in Ukraine has brought about the need for
16 international support for Ukrainian higher education, and has proven the importance of continually
17 maintaining and defending the values of the EHEA. **We stand strongly with Ukraine and decide to maintain
18 the suspension of the rights of participation of the Russian Federation and Belarus in the EHEA.**³

19 **Fundamental values**

20 Higher education can only fully develop its missions 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
23 commit 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
26 learning, teaching, research, governance, outreach, and any other tasks related to the missions of higher
27 education.
- 28 ● We further understand **institutional autonomy** as the will and ability of higher education institutions to
29 fulfil their missions without undue interference and to set and implement their own priorities and
30 policies concerning organisation, finance, staffing and academic affairs.
- 31 ● **Participation of students and staff in higher education governance** encompasses their right to organise
32 autonomously, in accordance with the principle of partnership and collegiality, without pressure or
33 undue interference; to elect and be elected in open, free and fair elections; have their views represented
34 and taken into account; initiate and participate in all debates and decision-making in all governing
35 bodies; and, through their representative organisations, be duly involved in issues concerning the
36 governance and further development of the relevant higher education institutions and system.

¹ Yellow highlighting = Ministers' Tirana Commitments, copied into last section.

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.

- 37 ● **Public responsibility for higher education** denotes a set of duties, mainly exercised at the level of the
38 national higher education system, which public authorities must fulfil as part of their overall
39 responsibility for the education sector and society as a whole.
40 ● **Public responsibility of higher education** denotes the obligations of the higher education community to
41 the broader society of which the higher education community is a part.

42 We adopt the statements on the fundamental values annexed to this Communiqué.⁴ While each value is
43 essential, all six of them need to be implemented as a coherent whole. As a reliable monitoring of their
44 implementation within all our education systems is required, we welcome the work on creating a technical
45 monitoring framework, and we ask the BFUG to report back to us at our 2027 Ministerial Conference.

46 Key commitments

47 In Paris in 2018, we determined three key commitments to be preconditions for the successful development
48 and innovation of the EHEA, and today we reconfirm our long-standing engagement to:

- 49 ● implement a three-cycle system of programmes and degrees,⁵ based on learning outcomes and the
50 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), compatible with the overarching
51 qualifications framework of the EHEA (QF-EHEA);
52 ● support the recognition of qualifications throughout the EHEA by implementing the *Convention on
53 the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region* (Lisbon
54 Recognition Convention) and its principles, with a view to achieving automatic recognition in EHEA;
55 and
56 ● promote a quality culture in higher education, fostered by fit-for-purpose quality assurance
57 processes in line with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher
58 Education Area* (ESG).

59 The Bologna Process Implementation Report confirms and illustrates the still incomplete and uneven
60 implementation of these key commitments, but also the important contribution of the Thematic Peer Groups
61 under the umbrella of the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group in improving the situation.
62 Therefore, we commit to ensuring that we have, or will devise, and publish appropriate action plans to
63 address any remaining implementation gaps and to promoting knowledge-sharing activities related to EHEA.
64 In order to support the implementation of ECTS and learning outcomes, we invite the BFUG to revise the
65 ECTS Users' Guide 2015 by 2027.

66 The application of the ESG promotes trust and transparency between higher education systems, and
67 facilitates accountability and enhancement. In order to keep them in line with developments, challenges and
68 expectations, we invite the authors⁶ of the ESG to propose a revised version by 2026, to be adopted by us at
69 our 2027 conference, as well as an adjustment, where required, of the European Approach for Quality
70 Assurance of Joint Programmes. We will also promote more robust and transparent quality assurance of
71 transnational education delivered worldwide, in line with the ESG, to protect the interests of students.

72 Furthermore, we are committed to countering diploma and accreditation mills, fraudulent qualifications and
73 academic cheating services, made more accessible through developments in the digital field. We ask the

⁴ See ANNEX 1.

⁵ Including a short-cycle fully integrated in the QF-EHEA, when delivered.

⁶ The primary authors are ENQA, ESU, EUA and EURASHE - the E4 Group, in cooperation with Business Europe, EI and EQAR.

74 BFUG to make good use of the work of the ETINED platform⁷ and the ENIC-NARICs to address these challenges
75 and protect academic integrity.

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

79 An inclusive EHEA

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

83 The adoption of the *Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the*
84 *EHEA (PaGs SD)*⁸ in the 2020 Rome Communiqué was an important step in this direction, but more is needed
85 to ensure adequate implementation. **We commit to measuring progress in their implementation, and ask the**
86 **BFUG to report back on this in 2027.** Furthermore, **we endorse the document *Indicators and Descriptors for***
87 ***the Principles of the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA*⁹ as the first comprehensive and**
88 **consolidated framework for the social dimension in the EHEA. Simultaneously, we promote the improvement**
89 **of data collection, through participation in related initiatives, such as Eurostudent.**

90 Students' well-being has to be understood in the broad sense, including physical, psychological, social and
91 economic aspects, which are often interrelated. The rising cost of living and other socio-economic challenges
92 have impacted the mental health of students. **We commit to tackling these challenges that students face,**
93 **together with stakeholders and communities,** by ensuring accessible student support services, inclusive
94 learning environments (including digital ones), gender equality¹⁰, as well as measures to support students in
95 covering indirect costs of study.

96 Globally, the number of refugees and displaced individuals seeking shelter has been increasing. Europe is one
97 of the safe destinations, and higher education plays a key role in their integration into our societies. In order
98 to support refugees and make best use of their skills and potential, **we will intensify our efforts to ensure the**
99 **recognition of their qualifications and to remove barriers to their enrolment in higher education,** including
100 through the use of the guidelines developed by the ENIC-NARICs, of the *European Qualification Passport for*
101 *Refugees (EQPR)* by the Council of Europe, and of the *2017 Recommendation on Recognition of Qualifications*
102 *Held by Refugees, Displaced Persons and Persons in a Refugee-like Situation* of the Lisbon Convention
103 Committee.

104 An innovative EHEA

105 The EHEA also needs to respond to ongoing change, due to societal, economic, geopolitical, environmental
106 and technological developments. As the world is in rapid change, this has important consequences for higher
107 education. The **green and digital twin transitions** require unprecedented innovation with new technologies,

⁷ Council of Europe Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education (ETINED).

⁸ https://ehea.info/Upload/Rome_Ministerial_Communique_Annex_II.pdf

⁹ CHECK exact title & link

¹⁰ The EHEA Ministers in this respect take note of the Statement of Hungary of 30 May 2024.

108 processes and practices to drive positive change, as well as more advanced and widespread levels of
109 knowledge and skills, nurturing awareness, engagement and responsibility of learners.

110 The response will require sustainable funding for higher education, enhancement and adjustment of existing
111 policies and instruments, and the development of new ones. This includes new modalities of education
112 provision, such as **micro-credentials**, the enhanced use of **joint programmes**, and support for the
113 entrepreneurial and innovation capacities of higher education institutions. **We will support them in**
114 **strengthening their contribution to society and the local community, responding to the Sustainable**
115 **Development Goals (SDG) and the green transition in the area of higher education, to the ongoing**
116 **digitalisation and the combination of physical and online learning and teaching. We will also continue to**
117 **work on fostering synergies with the European Education Area (EEA) and the European Research Area**
118 **(ERA).**

119 **Lifelong learning** is increasing in society and is a need for all those requiring or desiring new competences to
120 increase their professional, personal or civic potential. Learning paths need to be flexible, properly delivered,
121 described, quality assured, and recognised. They should promote inclusion, upskilling and reskilling, and be
122 aligned with the requirements of learners, changing societies and labour markets. This also includes the
123 recognition of prior learning, and new forms of education provision, such as micro-credentials. **We commit**
124 **to fostering such flexible learning paths, including by supporting both: Academically focused and applied and**
125 **professionally oriented programmes.**

126 Students need access to high-quality, learner-centred and innovative **learning and teaching**, in line with their
127 needs and interests, in order to develop competences needed to tackle global challenges. This requires the
128 acquisition of transversal and future-proof skills and equipping students with creative and critical thinking as
129 well as civic competencies, in order to support their active participation in a democratic society and a rapidly
130 changing labour market. Amidst these developments, **we need to ensure student-centred learning is a reality**
131 **for all students**, empowering individual learners through research-based learning, effective support and
132 guidance and cross-disciplinary teaching approaches. Therefore, **we ask the BFUG to follow-up on the**
133 **implementation of student-centred learning in the next working cycle.**

134 We acknowledge the crucial role of teaching staff in supporting high-quality, learner-centred and innovative
135 learning and teaching. Teaching should be valued on equal footing with research and other professional tasks,
136 including transnational cooperation and community engagement. To ensure this, institutions need to offer
137 adequate and attractive working conditions, staff development opportunities, and assessment and career
138 progression based on adequate criteria and metrics.

139 **Artificial intelligence (AI)** already impacts learning, teaching, and research. Therefore, we emphasise the
140 importance of analysing the opportunities, risks and challenges: The use of AI must avoid biases by ensuring
141 human decision-making, maintain data ethics and privacy, and ensure adapted assessment methods that
142 protect academic integrity. Students and staff should be supported to understand and responsibly use AI. As
143 ethical considerations in their deployment are imperative, **we encourage the development of policies**
144 **promoting the ethical use of AI in learning and teaching, as well as in research practice, to ensure**
145 **transparency, fairness, student and staff participation and well-being. We ask the BFUG to initiate an analysis**
146 **of how AI is impacting the implementation of the key commitments and the use of Bologna Process tools.**

147 **An interconnected EHEA**

148 We reaffirm our commitment to enabling all learners to acquire international and intercultural competences.
149 As the hallmark of an **interconnected EHEA** is seamless mobility of students and staff, we will reinforce our
150 efforts to identify and remove barriers and promote physical mobility, also in order to achieve the
151 longstanding benchmark of 20% of mobile students. Furthermore, we will support measures for achieving a
152 greener, more inclusive, and more balanced mobility.

153 While all students and staff should have the opportunity to benefit from physical mobility, we will support
154 higher education institutions in their exploration of practices and benefits of virtual exchanges, and in
155 fostering the internationalisation of the curricula.

156 In this regard, we welcome the ongoing developments in deepening and institutionalising transnational
157 cooperation, supported by the Erasmus+ programme, underpinned by and with respect for the Bologna tools
158 and commitments. Initiatives on various levels, including the European Universities alliances, create new
159 opportunities for our academic communities, and should include participation of students and staff in all
160 decision-making processes. We commit to supporting transnational cooperation, including for joint
161 programmes and joint degrees, through better implementation of the key commitments and by removing
162 undue barriers, while taking note of the developments that may lead to a European Degree.

163 We commit to making automatic recognition of qualifications and learning periods abroad a reality for all
164 students and graduates, welcome the revision of the European Area of Recognition (EAR) Manual and will
165 continue to promote the use of transparency tools, such as DEQAR, where possible and appropriate.

166 We welcome the adoption of the Global Policy Forum Statement and ask the BFUG and its working structures
167 to continue the dialogue and collaboration with macro regions on various levels and with appropriate
168 interlocutors, including but not restricted to reciprocal referencing of qualifications frameworks and credit
169 systems, ratification and implementation of the UNESCO *Global Convention on the Recognition of*
170 *Qualifications concerning Higher Education*, as well as the various *regional recognition conventions*, and
171 alignment and mutual understanding of quality assurance principles.

172 We recognise the need for all EHEA countries to disseminate knowledge and engage in dialogue and
173 collaboration on ongoing work, in order to ensure a more effective linkage between the policy level and the
174 higher education community. This may include promoting measures on various levels, such as international
175 and national networks of experts for the Bologna Process, supporting their implementation and cooperation
176 across borders and with the BFUG.

177 **Outlook**

178 For our 2027 Ministerial Conference, we mandate the BFUG to ensure that policy commitments aiming at
179 creating an inclusive innovative and interconnected EHEA by 2030 are properly monitored, including through
180 a Bologna Process Implementation Report that assesses key developments. We also ask the BFUG to submit
181 proposals for the main priorities for the next decade, in close cooperation with higher education institutions,
182 staff and students.

183 We welcome that **San Marino, the most recent member of the EHEA**, has largely implemented the agreed
184 roadmap accompanying its accession to the EHEA and we encourage San Marino to continue to address the
185 few remaining items identified.

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

188 Tirana Commitments

- 189 > We are resolved to speed up efforts to make an inclusive, innovative and interconnected EHEA a
190 reality by 2030.
- 191 > We stand strongly with Ukraine and decide to maintain the suspension of the rights of participation
192 of the Russian Federation and Belarus in the EHEA.
- 193 > We reaffirm our commitment to protect, promote, and uphold academic freedom and adopt the
194 statements on the fundamental values annexed¹¹ to this Communiqué. We welcome the work on
195 creating a technical monitoring framework, and we ask the BFUG to report back to us at our 2027
196 Ministerial Conference.
- 197 > We commit to ensuring that we have, or will devise, and publish appropriate action plans to address
198 any remaining implementation gaps and to promoting knowledge-sharing activities related to EHEA.
199 We mandate the BFUG to initiate a discussion on the fitness-for-purpose of the key commitments
200 and their possible further development, as well as of other commitments that we should consider
201 key to ensuring the better functioning of the EHEA.
- 202 > Furthermore,
 - 203 > we invite the BFUG to revise the ECTS Users' Guide 2015 by 2027.
 - 204 > We invite the authors¹² of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the
205 European Higher Education Area (ESG) to propose a revised version by 2026, to be adopted
206 by us at our 2027 conference, as well as an adjustment, where required, of the European
207 Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes.
 - 208 > We will also promote more robust and transparent quality assurance of transnational
209 education delivered worldwide, in line with the ESG. We are committed to countering
210 diploma and accreditation mills, fraudulent qualifications and academic cheating services,
211 made more accessible through developments in the digital field. We ask the BFUG to make
212 good use of the work of the ETINED platform and the ENIC-NARICs to address these
213 challenges and protect academic integrity.
- 214 > We endorse the document *Indicators and Descriptors for the Principles of the Social Dimension of*
215 *Higher Education in the EHEA*¹³ (IADs SD). We commit to measuring progress in the implementation
216 of the principles of the social dimension and ask the BFUG to report back on this in 2027.
217 Simultaneously, we promote the improvement of data collection, through participation in related
218 initiatives, such as Eurostudent.
- 219 > We commit to tackling socio-economic challenges that students face, together with stakeholders and
220 communities. We will intensify our efforts to ensure the recognition of qualifications held by refugees
221 and to remove barriers to their enrolment in higher education.
- 222 > We will support higher education institutions in strengthening their contribution to society and the
223 local community, responding to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the green transition
224 in the area of higher education, to the ongoing digitalisation and the combination of physical and
225 online learning and teaching. We will also continue to work on fostering synergies with the European
226 Education Area (EEA) and the European Research Area (ERA).

¹¹ See ANNEX 1.

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

¹³ [Link](#)

- 227 > We commit to fostering flexible learning paths, including by supporting both: Academically focused
 228 and applied and professionally oriented programmes. We need to ensure student-centred learning
 229 is a reality for all students, and ask the BFUG to follow-up on the implementation of student-centred
 230 learning in the next working cycle.
- 231 > We encourage the development of policies promoting the ethical use of AI in learning and teaching,
 232 as well as in research practice, to ensure transparency, fairness, student and staff participation and
 233 well-being, and we ask the BFUG to initiate an analysis of how AI is impacting the implementation of
 234 the key commitments and the use of Bologna Process tools.
- 235 > We reaffirm our commitment to enabling all learners to acquire international and intercultural
 236 competence, and we will reinforce our efforts to identify and remove barriers and promote physical
 237 mobility, also in order to achieve the longstanding benchmark of 20% of mobile students.
 238 Furthermore, we will support measures for achieving a greener, more inclusive, and more balanced
 239 mobility.
- 240 > We will support higher education institutions in their exploration of practices and benefits of virtual
 241 exchanges, and in fostering the internationalisation of the curricula. We commit to supporting
 242 transnational cooperation, including for joint programmes and joint degrees, through better
 243 implementation of the key commitments and by removing undue barriers.
- 244 > We commit to making automatic recognition of qualifications and learning periods abroad a reality
 245 for all students and graduates, welcome the revision of the European Area of Recognition (EAR)
 246 Manual and will continue to promote the use of transparency tools, such as DEQAR, where possible
 247 and appropriate.
- 248 > We welcome the adoption of the Global Policy Forum Statement and ask the BFUG and its working
 249 structures to continue the dialogue and collaboration with macro regions on various levels and with
 250 appropriate interlocutors,
- 251 > We mandate the BFUG to ensure that policy commitments aiming at creating an inclusive innovative
 252 and interconnected EHEA by 2030 are properly monitored, including through a Bologna Process
 253 Implementation Report that assesses key developments.
- 254 > We also ask the BFUG to submit proposals for the main priorities for the next decade, in close
 255 cooperation with higher education institutions, staff and students.
- 256 > [TF on Rules of Procedure: Related decisions]¹⁴.

257 ANNEXES

258 “EHEA Statements on Fundamental Values”

¹⁴ TF RoP Proposal: “After almost three decades, we wish to put the European Higher Education Area on a firmer footing.

We therefore:

- adopt the Rules of Procedure for the EHEA and invite the BFUG to adopt Rules of procedure of for its own work in due course;
- decide to modify the arrangements for the EHEA Secretariat according to the principles and the schedule set out in the Roadmap (Appendix X), so that the Secretariat can operate for at least two working periods and engage staff from different EHEA countries.
- agree that the financial support for and the governance of the Secretariat shall be shared among the members of the EHEA. We mandate the BFUG to ensure that the new secretariat arrangements are effective as of 1 July 2027 and are thoroughly reviewed after the completion of the 2030-33 work programme.