*Last updated 01/03//2018*

# PARIS COMMUNIQUÉ

# DRAFT 5.0

***Please note that titles might be amended***

We, Ministers, meeting in Paris on 24 and 25 May 2018, 20 years after the Sorbonne Declaration are proud that we have established with the Bologna Process, involving higher education stakeholders, a European Higher Education Area in which we agree together on common goals and policies for more compatibility of our diverse national education systems.

Through this European Higher Education Area (EHEA) we have paved the way for greater student mobility, improved comparability and transparency and thus increased quality and competitiveness of our European higher education systems. The EHEA has promoted mutual understanding and trust, has enhanced cooperation among our higher education systems, and has become a point of reference for other regions in the world.

We reaffirm our belief in the essential role of the fundamental values of higher education across the EHEA: academic freedom and integrity, institutional autonomy, the meaningful participation of students and staff in higher education governance and public responsibility of and for higher education are key elements for its function and development.

We will ensure that our national policy measures further the fundamental values of higher education across the EHEA and will promote dialogue in particular with cross-border experiences on implementing these fundamental values.

 Furthermore, we recognise the role and responsibility of higher education institutions and we encourage them in their governance systems geared to accountability and quality enhancement and in their contribution to society, fostering intercultural understanding, equitable access, civic engagement, ethical education, and enhancing social responsibility.

* **Achievements since 2015**

***Taking implementation forward:***

Unlocking the full potential of the EHEA depends on the successful implementation of all our mutually agreed goals across the EHEA by all parties: policy makers, public authorities, higher education institutions, staff, students and other stakeholders. Progress has been made over the past years, but implementation which is complex for the full set of reforms is uneven between countries and between policy areas.

Therefore, we reaffirm our commitment to step up and complete implementation in the remaining areas as identified in the “2018 Bologna Process Implementation Report”, and we identify three key Bologna commitments which are crucial to reinforce and support the quality and exchanges inside the EHEA (i) a three-cycle system compatible with the overarching qualifications framework of the EHEA (ii) the compliance of recognition practices with the Lisbon Recognition Convention; and (iii) a quality assurance system and quality practices substantially compliant with the 2015 Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG).

In order to fully implement these three key commitments, we adopt a new approach to support further implementation, based on thematic reversed peer reviews, and ask the Bologna follow-up group to oversee and coordinate this process and report back to us at our next Ministerial conference in 2020, with a view to identifying issues that prove particularly challenging to our education systems and taking account of the reality of cross-border exchanges across the EHEA. In order to make the structured peer review approach a success we shall make the necessary resources available by organizing and hosting such activities.

On the basis of the recommendations of the BFUG on the Belarus roadmap since this country joined the EHEA in 2015, we *[waiting for the final discussion on Belarus]*

We urge higher education institutions to develop transparent and fair procedures for recognition of qualifications, recognition of prior learning and of study periods abroad in line with 2015 ESG.

We will review our national legislation and develop policies to facilitate the recognition of qualifications in line with the Council of Europe/UNESCO Lisbon Recognition Convention, in particular with a view to facilitating lifelong learning, and to implement Article VII of the Convention on the recognition of qualifications held by refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation.

We approve the proposal for a revised Diploma Supplement and commit to working for the adoption of this proposal, in identical form, within the respective frameworks of the Council of Europe and UNESCO and the European Commission. WE encourage higher education institutions to embark on the digitalization of Diploma supplement and student data exchange, with a commitment to collect student data in a secure, machine-readable format, in line with data protection legislation, and in line with the promotion of student mobility.

* **Our vision towards 2020 and beyond**

Since the Sorbonne and the Bologna Declarations, our societies have undergone significant changes. European integration has continued throughout this period, the digital economy and globalization allows unprecedented access to publicly available knowledge and information and induces changes in employer’s demands; enrolment in higher education shows a diversification in the learner population. At the same time, inequalities, youth unemployment are increasing high in many countries, forced mobility, intolerance, populism, polarisation, radicalisation have increased.

Higher education provides opportunities for individual development throughout life and improves for the prospect of employment, and thereby active participation in society. Higher education should therefore be equally accessible to all, irrespective of social, economic or cultural background.

We want higher education to promote effective and active citizenship in a multicultural and inclusive society.

Society is expecting that higher education will be accessible to all, independent of backgrounds, and will develop the innovation skills and graduates attributes needed to contribute to the future development of society, locally and globally and for the changing employment landscape of the XXIst century. There are many other expectations regarding inclusiveness, multi-disciplinarity, student-centred learning, lifelong learning, new pedagogies and teaching and learning innovation, the use of digital technologies in the learning environment, internationalisation of the curriculum, teaching-research nexus, and higher education and sustainable development.

 ***An European approach of teaching and learning innovation***

We acknowledge that the development and transformation of learning and teaching has to be driven first and foremost by the higher education institutions and their members, students and staff, in full respect of academic freedom and institutional autonomy, and in close collaboration with the relevant external stakeholders. In this regard we also welcome the commitment of ESU, EUA, EURASHE, and Education International, to collaborate on development and dissemination of good practices, and contribute to establishing a European Dimension in Learning and Teaching innovation.

We recognise and welcome the opportunities offered by on line and digital learning, also for providing more and better lifelong learning opportunities that are critical for society and economy. We commit to eliminating regulatory obstacles, in particular for developing joint degrees and curricula, for digital learning, and to enhance access and participation, and the provision of more flexible learning paths, among others through the short-cycle.

We will ensure that higher education institutions embrace Open Science and benefit from open access to research data and education resources across the EHEA.

We will seek to improve parity of esteem between teaching and research, including the recognition of teaching in diverse career paths, we also will address learning and teaching in its entirety, considering students, teachers who play a vital role in driving innovation and quality enhancement, as well as other support staff. We acknowledge the key role of the institutional leadership to promote and support education.

We commit to supporting institutions in providing the framework conditions and support for learning and teaching. While projects are a good means to explore learning innovation, they cannot fund the take-up and mainstreaming of established good practices.

In the future work of the Bologna Process, the enhancement of learning and teaching will receive more attention in collaboration with the higher education community, at European and national levels and also in reporting *(2023?)*.

We commit to reinforce synergies between education and research, allowing students to explore research problems at all levels of higher education.

We will support institutions to develop their strategies for learning and teaching innovation and the establishment of better synergies between learning and teaching and research.

Furthermore, we will facilitate exchange and cross-border cooperation on learning and teaching and research and provide added value beyond support to institutional and national initiatives. We therefore commit to increase collaboration between EHEA and the European Research Area while establishing a regular dialog.

***Building a new and regular global dialogue in an internationalized higher education***

We want the EHEA to develop new perspectives for a more systematic and sustainable approach of international cooperation and we call on the BFUG to establish a closer dialogue with other regional or international higher education organizations and to promote international staff and student exchanges, joint teaching programs and research programs.

We fully support the conclusions of the Bologna Policy Statement adopted by the Bologna Policy Forum in Paris, with the shared will:

* to pay more attention on fundamental values in international cooperation;
* to foster interregional academic collaborations aiming at growing exchange of students and staff and developing more joint academic activities and
* to engage in a global policy dialogue around the two themes: widening access and ensuring success in higher education (inclusiveness) and the social responsibility of higher education: the civic role of higher education institutions.

We call for major reflection from the Bologna Follow-up Group on improving the collaboration with other stakeholders including a wider international audience at the international level in order to improve the visibility and attractiveness of the EHEA.

* **Towards 2020: preparing the next phase**

***A more ambitious EHEA***

We agree on new ambitions and a proactive response to changes that will consolidate and unlock the full potential of the EHEA in the future.

In this perspective we strongly support the current reflection about developing bottom up European Universities based on networks of higher education institutions in the EHEA. Such networks will ensure and require genuine cooperation in teaching, learning and research and innovation across the EHEA, in quality assurance based on the 2015 ESG, and also using the European Approach of quality assurance of joint programmes between European higher education institutions in order to contribute to growth, creativity, inclusiveness and societal development. Furthermore, the development of networks of higher education institutions will foster more cross border collaboration, joint programmes and joint degrees, for an increased mobility of staff and students.

We call on the BFUG to finalize a major reflection upon its own governance and structure, in order to identify effective solutions to further develop the EHEA and new priorities to the period beyond 2020 with the aim of improving effectiveness and ownership by including higher education institutions and stakeholders to a larger extent.

We gratefully accept the invitation by Italy to the host the next Ministerial conference of the EHEA and Bologna Policy Forum in 2020.

**Annex:**

* Short cycle as part of EHEA-QF

We hereby establish short cycle qualifications as an integral part of the Overarching Framework of Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area and [ask the BFUG to] adjust the Dublin Descriptors accordingly. We commit to elaborating national frameworks for qualifications compatible with the revised overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA and strongly suggest incorporating short qualifications in the national qualifications frameworks for higher education although it is up to the countries to decide upon such incorporation

* New implementation approach