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**New building blocks of the Bologna Process: implementing a common
understanding of fundamental values – NewFAV 2**

Fundamental Values of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)

Public Responsibility of Higher Education

PLA, Bucharest 24th February

What are **fundamental values**?

Academic freedom

Freedom to research, teach, learn, and disseminate knowledge without fear.

Academic integrity

Commitment to honesty, transparency, and ethical standards in all activities.

Institutional autonomy

Ability of institutions to govern independently whilst accountable to society.

Student and staff participation

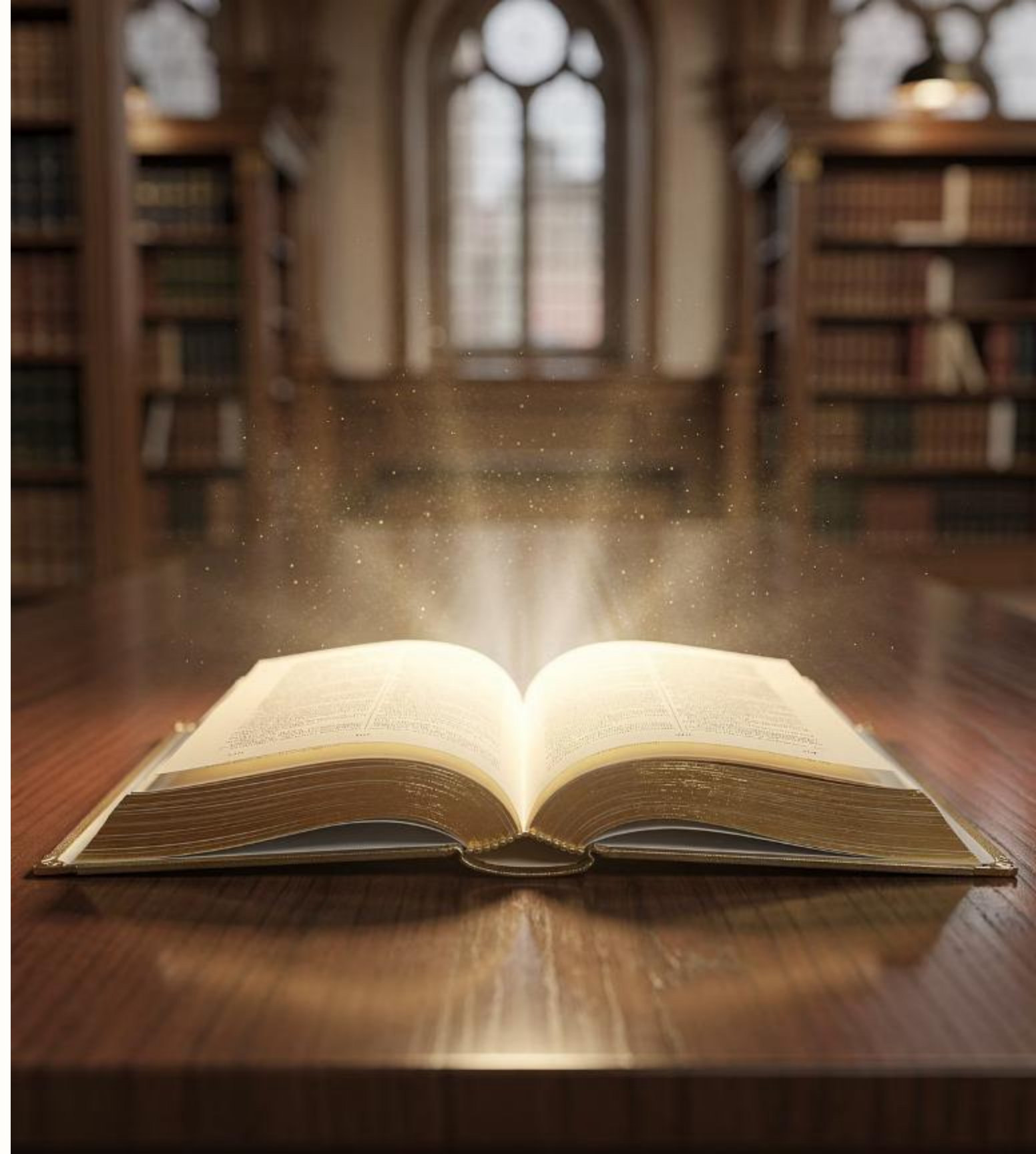
Inclusive governance ensuring voices are heard without reprisal.

Public responsibility for higher education

Obligations of authorities to support equitable higher education systems.

Public responsibility of higher education

Duties of higher education institutions to contribute to societal good.



How were the values defined? (1)

Before 2018

1

- Values were largely taken for granted in the first decade and a half of the EHEA
- In policy development, they were overshadowed by structural reforms like qualifications frameworks and quality assurance as well as areas like mobility
- Evolved into a central pillar of the EHEA from 2015 onward, amid geopolitical challenges and democratic backsliding in Europe

2

2018 Paris Ministerial Communiqué

- Marked an important shift by agreeing on the six fundamental values of the EHEA
- These values are: academic freedom, academic integrity, institutional autonomy, student and staff participation in governance, public responsibility for higher education, and public responsibility of higher education
- Positioned values as "bedrock" of EHEA, prompting calls for systematic monitoring and implementation

How were the values defined? (2)

2020 Rome Ministerial Communiqué

1

- Adopted a Statement on academic freedom, developed via BFUG consultations with experts and stakeholders
- Provided shared EHEA definition of academic freedom: freedoms to learn, teach, research, and disseminate knowledge without reprisal
- Framed within ethical standards, institutional autonomy, and democratic imperatives; first step in operationalising values

2

2024 Tirana Ministerial Communiqué

- Extended the Rome approach with EHEA Statements on fundamental values, complementing prior definitions
- Spelled out a shared understanding of all fundamental values.
- Emphasised interconnections between all six values; committed members to protection, promotion, and holistic monitoring

The process of defining fundamental values

Multi-stakeholder consultations involving academics, students (e.g., ESU), institutions (e.g., EUA), government representatives, and experts:

01

Consultations with experts in the field

02

Drafting by researchers

03

Consultations with stakeholders

04

Progressive drafting based on consultations within the Working Group* that included government representatives and stakeholders

05

BFUG endorsement

Section III – short description of fundamental values

Public responsibility of higher education – highlights

Definition (EHEA, 2024)

The obligation of the **higher education community to the broader society of which the higher education community is a part** (to share knowledge, engage civically, and address global challenges ethically).

Implications for students

Develop civic skills; participate in outreach; pursue ethical careers.

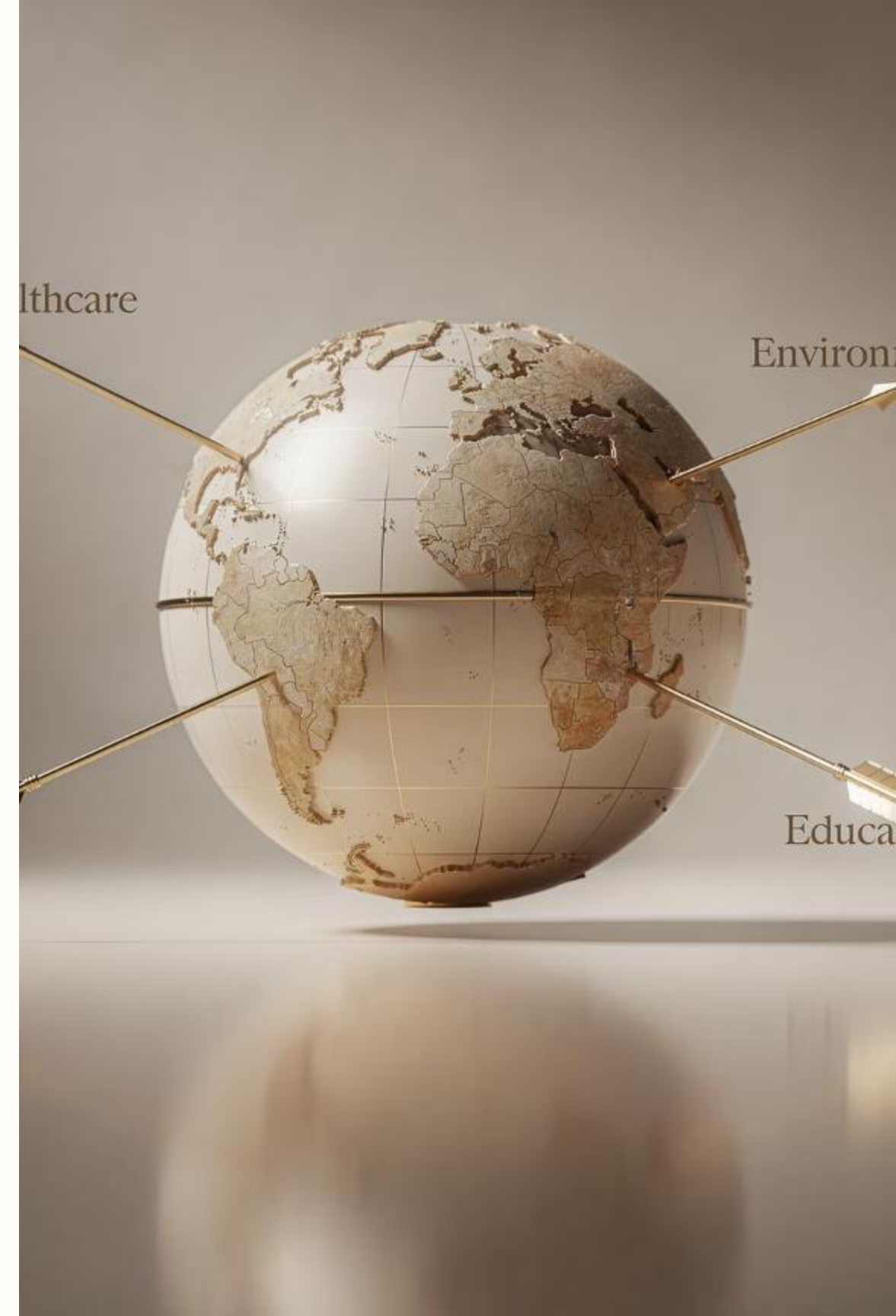
Implications for staff

Disseminate research publicly; foster inclusive environments; tackle societal issues.

How to uphold it

Join community projects; promote transparency; integrate ethics in curricula.

Explanation: Higher education must give back to society, advancing democracy and sustainability through ethical, impactful engagement.



Public responsibility OF higher education

Core concept

Public responsibility of higher education denotes the obligations of the higher education community to the broader society of which it is a part.

Role in governance

Whilst public authorities have final responsibility for regulatory frameworks, **higher education institutions should engage in the design and implementation of these frameworks.**

The community

This community encompasses all staff and students, institutional leaders, and members of higher education organisations (e.g., university, student, and staff associations).

Self-regulation

Through its own actions, internal regulation, and policies, the **higher education community must ensure that the fundamental values of higher education are respected, furthered, and implemented.**

Core academic mission and knowledge as a **public good**

Pursuit of truth

The higher education community should **pursue truth and the production, transmission, dissemination, curation, and use of knowledge as a public good.**

Upholding standards

It must **uphold and develop the standards of teaching, learning, and research** within and across academic disciplines.

Societal contribution

The community **should contribute to the development of society** on the basis of scholarship and research as well as teaching and learning.

Informing the public

The higher education community **should continuously inform broader society** of its work and results.

Engagement and **problem solving**



Responding to challenges

The community must **engage with and respond to the aspirations and challenges of the world** and to the communities they serve.



Problem identification

It should **engage in the identification, analysis, and understanding of the problems** that confront broader society and individual constituencies.



Designing solutions

The higher education community **should participate in designing solutions** to these problems and provide expertise to meet these challenges, in accordance with its own standards and values.

Public sphere engagement

It should **engage in and with the public sphere**, including in public debate, to ensure that societies are developed and governed on the basis of factual knowledge as well as critical and constructive thinking.

Improving opportunities

The community **should work with society to help improve opportunities** for all members of society, in accordance with the democratic and social missions of higher education.

Ethics, access, and internal **governance**



Culture of integrity

The higher education community should seek to foster and disseminate, and should itself be guided by, a culture of democracy, solidarity, and integrity.



Risk information

It should **provide information publicly about societal risks** related to action or inaction, provided such risks can be **determined on the basis of research and scholarship**.



Policy integrity

The higher education community should design and pursue its policies and activities in ways that are consistent with **fairness, non-discrimination, and transparency**.



Access and equity

It must **offer access to higher education to qualified candidates** without regard to their economic, social, ethnic, or other background.



Student support

The community must provide support in order to enable those admitted **to complete their studies with success**.

Addressing global challenges



Major challenges

Major challenges of modern societies (including those relating to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, sustainable development, planetary survival, issues of war and peace, democracy, fairness and non-discrimination) **cannot be met without a strong contribution** by the higher education community.

Contribution methods

This contribution is achieved through **research, learning and teaching, societal outreach, and innovation and technology transfer.**

Graduate preparation

The higher education community should equip its graduates with general, specialised, and **ethical knowledge.**

Developing agency

The higher education community must also support graduates in developing the ability to act and to decide what action to take and what action to refrain from taking.

Two sides of the coin: public responsibility FOR and OF higher education

Public responsibility FOR higher education (Obligations of public authorities)



Who is responsible?

Primarily public authorities at the national, regional, and local levels.



Duties of public authorities

Establishing funding, legal, and quality assurance frameworks for the entire system.



Primary goal: System viability

Ensuring all qualified candidates have equal opportunity and safeguarding institutional autonomy.



Public responsibility OF higher education (The University's obligations)

Who is responsible?

The entire higher education community: staff, students, leaders, and their organizations.



Obligations of the higher education community

Pursuing knowledge as a public good and engaging in debate to solve societal problems.



Primary goal: Contribution to society

Benefiting humanity and contributing to sustainability, democracy, and global challenges.



Public responsibility OF higher education

MISSION & VALUES

Uphold academic & democratic values

Foster a culture of democracy, fairness, non-discrimination, transparency, and ethics.

Treat knowledge as a public good

Pursue truth and develop high standards in teaching, learning, and research.

Ensure equitable & fair access

Provide access and support to all qualified candidates, regardless of their background.

SOCIETAL ENGAGEMENT & IMPACT

Address society's greatest challenges

Contribute expertise to meet the major challenges our societies are facing, including the backlash against democracy, social and economic inequity and sustainability.

Engage in public debate & discourse

Help ensure society is developed and governed on the basis of academic knowledge and understanding and critical analysis.

Empower graduates for ethical action

Equip students with the knowledge and ability to make informed, ethical decisions and a commitment to engaging in public space.





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Thank you!

- Cezar Mihai Haj
- co-chair of the Fundamental Values Working Group