Report on the Conference

"The Future of Higher Education: Sharing knowledge and supporting implementation for a stronger Bologna Process"

Executive summary

The EHEA Secretariat held the conference 'The Future of Higher Education: Sharing knowledge and supporting implementation for a stronger Bologna Process' at the Sheraton Hotel in Bucharest on 16 and 17 September 2026. The Conference, in its first edition, was organised in a dual-track format with the Bologna Process Researchers' Conference, which reached its sixth edition and was first organised by the previous Romanian EHEA Secretariat 15 years ago.

Opened by the ministers of higher education of Romania and the Republic of Moldova, whose countries will jointly host the 2027 Ministerial Conference and Global Policy Forum, the Conferences aimed to discuss the implementation of the Bologna Process and future trends for higher education and the EHEA, and to bring research and practical experience to bear on Bologna Process policy.

Over 170 participants (BFUG delegates, researchers, higher education institutions, student unions, quality assurance agencies, ENIC-NARIC centres etc) from 43 countries attended both both Conferences.

In preparation of the Conference, the Secretariat commissioned the background study 'Bologna Impact and Future Trends', lead by Ligia Deca, as a common evidence base for the two days. For each theme, the study asked what ministers committed to, what was measured and what changed on the ground, and read the answers against the 2010 independent assessment of the Bologna Process. It was presented on the first day, before the thematic sessions, and contributed to the key messages shaped in the Conference. The final session was designed to bring its messages together with those of the sessions, the Researchers' Conference and the EduGlobal discussions. The study is also meant to inform the Task Force on the Future of Bologna and the Drafting Committee of the Iași–Chișinău Communiqué.

From the 'Sharing knowledge and supporting implementation for a stronger Bologna Process' Conference, the following key messages emerged:

- **Implementation remains the priority.** The bottleneck is in ownership and governance more than vision. National action plans and thematic peer groups should work as one cycle of diagnosis, peer learning, plan and review, and the added value of Bologna commitments needs to be explained better to institutions and students.

- **AI and digitalisation cut across all commitments,** but the EHEA has not yet adopted a common position on them at system level. Whether they become a commitment of their own or a cross-cutting reading of existing ones remains an open choice for the BFUG.
- **On fundamental values, legal frameworks are generally more advanced than practice.** The preliminary findings of the first monitoring exercise show that most systems legislate on all six values, that promotion is uneven and that the main pressures relate to funding and governance. Coherence with the instruments of the EEA and the ERA was a recurring theme in the discussion.
- **The community engaged in the Bologna Process at national level should be broadened.** National-level organisations of students and staff would benefit from a more structured place in the process.
- **Recognition and quality assurance** remain the EHEA's main points of contact with the rest of the world.

Participants identified several follow-up options as matters for political decision, among them whether to retire or merge commitments and whether to set additional targets.

1. Background and objectives

The Conference was convened at the point where the 2024–2027 BFUG Work Programme starts to deliver the main expected results and the 2027 Communiqué enters a drafting stage. The Conference therefore aimed to present the results achieved so far to the wider EHEA community and to test how Bologna commitments reach institutions and students, so as to feed into ongoing work.

In the Rome Communiqué (2020), ministers committed to keeping national higher education sectors informed about and involved in EHEA developments. They asked the BFUG to organise seminars, workshops and hearings with the wider higher education community. In the Tirana Communiqué (2024), ministers asked the BFUG to:

- close implementation gaps, including through published national action plans (NAPs);
- submit in 2027 proposals for the main priorities of the decade beyond 2030.

In summary, the Conference aimed to:

1. take stock of the mechanisms that carry Bologna commitments from the European level to national systems and institutions, including peer learning, thematic peer groups (TPGs) and NAPs;
2. identify where implementation stalls, involving consultative members and national stakeholders;
3. present the revised ESG, ECTS Users' Guide and Action Plan on Internationalisation and Mobility to a wider audience before adoption;
4. gather input for the Task Force on the Future of Bologna (TF FoB) and the Drafting Committee of the Iași–Chișinău Communiqué;
5. connect research evidence and policy by holding the Conference jointly with the Bologna Process Researchers' Conference (BPRC).

2. Organisation and format

The Conference was financed under the EU-funded project *Support for the 2024–2027 Moldovan-Romanian EHEA Secretariat: Delivering together for a renewed Bologna Process* (EHEA-SEC-4-BP). The Task Force on the Future of Bologna (TF FoB) met the next morning, 18 September, at the UEFISCDI headquarters.

Design of the programme

The sequence of sessions followed one line of argument:

- Day 1 asked how Bologna commitments are implemented. It started with the mechanisms at national and institutional level (Session 1), moved to the bottlenecks as the consultative members and stakeholders see them (Session 2), then to the two instruments built to address those bottlenecks, national action plans and thematic peer groups (Session 3). It ended with the revised tools to be adopted in 2027 (Session 4).
- Day 2 turned to the future. It opened with the global and digital context in the EduGlobal sessions, and continued with fundamental values (Session 5), the future-proofing of the key commitments (Session 6) and the preparation of the 2027 Ministerial Conference (Session 7).

Most sessions combined a moderated panel of four to five speakers with discussion from the floor. Sessions 4 and 6 started with short presentations, by the authors of the revised tools and by the TF FoB.

The BPRC sessions went in parallel, with a separate report on the BPRC submitted for information. 29 accepted papers were presented at the Conference, falling into four streams: fundamental values (9 papers), digitalisation and AI (5), internationalisation (5), and other topics (9, including a panel on the European Universities Alliances).

3. Participants: profile and statistics

In total, 170 participants from 43 countries (35 EHEA members and 8 non-EHEA members) attended the Conferences.

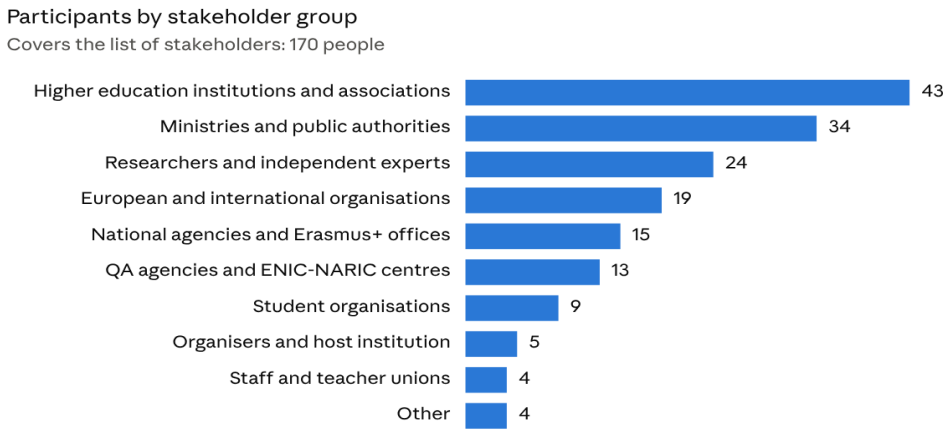

Figure 1 – Number of participants by stakeholder group

Higher education institutions and their associations formed the largest group (43 of the 170 participants), followed by ministries and public authorities (34) and researchers and independent experts (24). The 19 participants from European and international organisations included the European Commission, UNESCO, the OECD and the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), together with European associations and networks. The remaining groups were national agencies and Erasmus+ offices (15), quality assurance agencies and ENIC-NARIC centres (13), student organisations (9), the organisers and the host institution (5), staff and teacher unions (4) and others (4).

Where participants came from

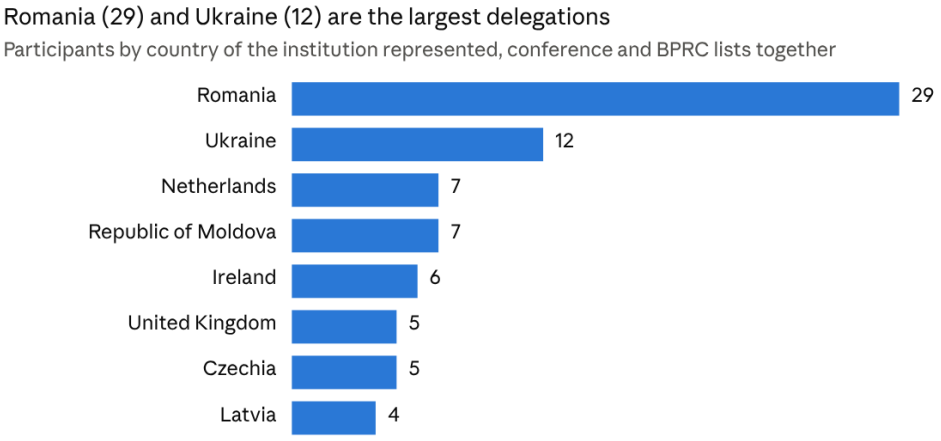

Figure 2 – Number of participants by country

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4. Themes and sessions

The programme moved from implementation to the future of the Bologna Process in four thematic blocks, framed by an opening and a final look-ahead session:

- **Framing.** Why the conference was held, the state of play of the Work Programme, and the evidence of the background study on what the Bologna Process has achieved and what remains unfinished.
- **A. Delivering the commitments** (Sessions 1–3). How commitments reach institutions, where they stall, and what the national action plans and thematic peer groups add.
- **B. Equipping the EHEA with fit-for-purpose tools** (Sessions 4 and 6). The revised tools that ministers are expected to adopt in 2027, and whether the key commitments and tools are fit for the next decade.
- **C. Values and the wider European policy space** (Session 5). How the EHEA, the European Education Area (EEA) and the European Research Area (ERA) work together to protect fundamental values.
- **D. Look-ahead** (Session 7). The messages for ministers and the road to the Iași–Chișinău Communiqué.

Session	Block	Question the session addressed
Welcome by the ministers of Romania and the Republic of Moldova	Framing	—
Growing momentum: the road to the Iași–Chișinău Ministerial Conference	Framing	Where does the Work Programme stand, and why is this conference needed now?
The impact of the Bologna Process: key commitments, evolving needs and trends (background study)	Framing	What has the Bologna Process achieved, and what is unfinished?
Session 1: Supporting implementation at national and institutional levels	A	What happens between a commitment agreed at EHEA level and a change inside a university?
Session 2: Clearing bottlenecks in implementing Bologna reforms	A	Where do consultative members and stakeholders see the gaps in making the mechanisms work?
Session 3: National action plans and thematic peer groups	A	Are the two instruments two halves of one mechanism, or do they compete for attention?
Session 4: Presenting the new Bologna tools	B	What do the revised ESG, ECTS Users' Guide and Action Plan change, and what is expected of institutions?

Session	Block	Question the session addressed
EduGlobal 1: Vision on the future of higher education	D	What is the global vision for the future of higher education?
EduGlobal 2: Digitalisation in higher education	D	What does the EHEA have to decide on digitalisation and AI?
EduGlobal 3: Common challenges across the globe	D	Which solutions work across regions, and which need tailoring?
Session 5: Fundamental values, synergies between the EHEA, EEA and ERA	C	Do more European instruments strengthen the protection of values, or divide responsibility?
Session 6: Fulfilling the Tirana mandate, future-proofing the key commitments	B	Are the three key commitments still the right ones, and are the tools ready for AI and digital credentials?
Session 7: Preparing for the 2027 Ministerial Conference and Global Policy Forum	Look-ahead	What should ministers hear, and which issues raised at the conference may call for further attention beyond the Work Programme?

The BPRC panels ran in parallel to Session 1 and to the Day 1 afternoon sessions, in four rooms: Internationalisation and the Bologna Process; Fundamental Values in the EHEA; AI and Digital Transformation; and Models, Mechanisms and Practices

Four cross-cutting themes recur across the blocks and in the conclusions:

- the gap between commitments adopted by ministers and what institutions and students experience;
- the pressure on the Bologna agenda from the digital transition and AI;
- the protection of fundamental values, and the coherence between the EHEA and the European Union's instruments;
- the opening of the EHEA to other world regions.

5. Main discussions by session

This section reports the main ideas, topics and messages of each session. Each subsection gives the aim and format of the session, the main ideas raised, the points on which speakers converged, the questions left open and, where relevant, what the session means for the BFUG.

5.1 Opening, state of play and background study

Format. The conference opened with a short address by the hosts, welcome addresses by the ministers of Romania and the Republic of Moldova, and a round of questions from the floor. The EHEA Secretariat then presented the state of play of the BFUG Work Programme, and Ms Ligia Deca presented the background study *Bologna Impact and Future Trends*.

Messages from the opening

- *The Bologna Process relies on mutual trust.* Reforms are voluntary, and recognition works because systems largely share a view of what a university is for. The opening presented the fundamental values as central to the EHEA rather than as an addition to its instruments. The EHEA now operates alongside the European Universities Alliances and the ERA, and the coherence of these frameworks is best tested through the experience of a student or researcher moving across policies covered by all three.
- *The focus is on making the Bologna Process more effective.* The Romanian minister set out six priorities for 2027 from a national perspective: accelerate implementation and reduce remaining differences between systems; protect fundamental values and strengthen the social dimension; keep the common tools reliable while adapting them to flexible pathways, micro-credentials, joint programmes and lifelong learning; respond to digitalisation and AI while safeguarding quality, integrity and human responsibility; prepare learners for the labour market and democratic citizenship; and strengthen the contribution of higher education to societal challenges.
- *AI and digitalisation were identified as a priority.* Asked which single commitment the 2027 Communiqué should contain, both ministers named AI and digitalisation, and one of them noted that the sense of urgency within the EHEA could still be strengthened.
- *Cooperation supports competitiveness.* In reply to a question on a possible internal market for higher education, the ministers spoke of removing barriers between systems and of coordination as a way for European systems to remain competitive in a rapidly changing global environment, without centralisation. Mobility was presented as a way to foster the democratic values shared across the EHEA.
- *The social dimension requires funding as well as political commitment.* Access for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and with disabilities depends on funding, and AI may widen existing gaps. Both ministers described national measures, including social scholarships.
- *The EHEA should remain cohesive across EU and non-EU members.* The joint hosting by Romania and the Republic of Moldova was presented as a signal of solidarity between EU and non-EU members, with a call to preserve the cohesion of the EHEA as a whole.

State of play of the Work Programme. The Secretariat reviewed the working structures and their deliverables for the 2027 Ministerial Conference: the Bologna Process Implementation Report (first results in autumn 2026) and the first monitoring report on the six fundamental values; the Action Plan on Internationalisation and Mobility and a note on terminology; the draft Global Policy Statement and Post-2030 Roadmap for international cooperation; the work of the four thematic peer groups (TPGs) under the BICG; the revised ECTS Users' Guide, ESG and European Approach on the QA of Joint Programmes; and the report of the TF FoB.

The Secretariat also noted that save-the-date messages for the Ministerial Conference and Global Policy Forum had been sent to EHEA members, to more than 60 countries from other world regions and to more than 40 organisations. The opening addresses recalled that the long-term Secretariat, hosted by Romania, is due to start its work in July 2027.

Background study: main findings. The study asked, for each theme, what ministers committed to, what was measured and what changed on the ground, and read the answers against the 2010 independent assessment of the Bologna Process. It is an 85-page report, prepared to inform the conference and support the TF FoB and the Drafting Committee, alongside other inputs. The study highlights that:

- *Commitments accumulate and are rarely retired.* Each Communiqué since 2018 has added annexes and appendices (four in Paris, three in Rome, two in Tirana), so the stock of live commitments continues to grow. Annexes tend to be monitored less than the Communiqué text.
- *The degree of convergence achieved is notable for a voluntary framework.* Most EHEA countries meet the EHEA key commitments. The study links this to five conditions: a precise technical definition, a designated instrument, a monitoring routine with country-level visibility, a specialist community and open ground with little entrenched practice. Most of what remains on the agenda does not have these conditions.
- *The unfinished agenda has two layers.* Gaps open since 2010: the social dimension, the 20% mobility benchmark, learning outcomes at curriculum level and divergent readings of "substantial difference" in recognition. Newer gaps: AI and digitalisation, lifelong learning and recognition of prior learning, micro-credentials, the EHEA–ERA link and permeability between higher education and VET.
- *AI is relevant to every commitment.* Student use is widespread (95% of UK undergraduates in 2025/26), but only 14% of institutions report being fully equipped with an AI policy. The EU AI Act places binding obligations on high-risk uses, including admission and assessment, from December 2027. The revised ESG and ECTS Users' Guide mainstream AI with human oversight, and the study notes that the voluntary, multi-stakeholder governance now emerging internationally resembles the Bologna approach.
- *Lifelong learners are now a structural part of the student population.* A quarter of European institutions report declining bachelor enrolment, and only one in five uses recognition of prior learning for admission. The study proposes to make the existing tools carry this agenda (micro-credentials in qualifications frameworks, recognition of prior learning as an indicator, the ECTS Users' Guide as a bridge to VET) and not to restate the commitment.
- *Consultations show consensus on substance but not on instruments.* The consultation rounds since 2018 confirm the same seven themes, with AI the only

new entrant, and the only agreed quantitative target remains the 20% mobility benchmark. The bottleneck is implementation governance, not vision, a finding repeated by the 2010 assessment and the 2024 Task Force on Enhancing Knowledge Sharing. Only around 20% of national student unions report feeling adequately consulted, a limited number of EHEA members have a national forum linking BFUG delegates with stakeholders, and turnover among BFUG representatives can affect institutional memory.

- *Not every trend falls within the remit of the Bologna Process.* The study separates trends the EHEA can address (tools, lifelong learning, values monitoring), trends where it is one venue among several (geopolitical change in internationalisation, engagement with other world regions, binding AI regulation) and trends primarily addressed in other policy frameworks (public funding, demography, development assistance, the green transition).

The study proposed five priorities (AI and digitalisation; lifelong learning as a system; accountability in the social dimension; interconnection with the ERA and VET; governance, ownership and implementation culture) and eight recommendations, listed in Annex E, for the consideration of the Task Force on the Future of Bologna. It closes by proposing a high-level forum around the 2029–2030 anniversary of the Bologna Process that would bring ministers of higher education together with ministers of finance, employment and research, and heads of government.

Implications for the BFUG. A fourth consultation round on the future of Bologna is proposed for autumn 2026, with results to be presented and discussed at the BFUG meeting in Dublin.

5.2 Session 1: Supporting implementation at national and institutional levels

Aim and format. Countries report on the results of implementation but rarely on the conditions that produced them. The session asked what happens between a commitment agreed at EHEA level and a change inside a university, and what works. Five practitioners from ministries, a national agency and an expert body (Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Ukraine) answered a common set of questions, followed by discussion with the floor.

Main ideas

- *Implementation passes through several levels.* An EHEA commitment becomes national law or policy, then funding and incentives, then an institutional strategy, then a faculty or programme change. It moves down only if someone answers, at each level, why the change matters, what has to change and who does the work. In practice, change is driven significantly by deans or directors of studies rather than by rectors.
- *Countries reporting good results tend to have stable national structures.* Examples were a national Bologna follow-up group or committee with students, staff and institutions around the table; Bologna experts, promoters or service units; an annual national Bologna conference (up to 300 participants in one case); and nomination of national representatives to each BFUG working structure, which gives ownership. A hub that supports institutions, and an EU-funded peer support project in which institutions apply

with a specific challenge and receive two to three years of expert support, were presented as tailor-made complements.

- *Legislation, funding and quality assurance are the main levers.* Where an instrument is written into law (three cycles, ECTS, quality assurance), it reaches every institution. Commitments that cannot be regulated become options that each university may or may not take up. Speakers described incentives to bridge the gap: a share of institutional funding at risk if there is no social dimension strategy; four-year performance contracts with the state; funding priorities for Erasmus+ capacity-building projects; and national data collection (for example on mobility) that lets institutions benchmark themselves.
- *Ownership and consultation matter more than the instrument.* In the example of a national social dimension strategy, a top-level political commitment, a named responsible unit, a year of consultation with the whole community (85 written comments) and concrete follow-up produced a degree of agreement that had not been anticipated.
- *Momentum can decline once the major structural reforms are completed.* In some systems, ministries and institutions considered around 2010–12 that the reforms were largely complete, and institutions now give higher priority to funding concerns. Speakers observed that the Bologna Process is perceived as less engaging by some institutional leaders and has limited visibility among young people. Two things restored interest: the European Universities Alliances, which make recognition and quality assurance matter to institutional leaders, and the revision of the instruments (ESG, ECTS Users' Guide). One speaker argued that the benefit of the instruments should be emphasised rather than the name of the process.
- *The instruments that mattered most differ by context.* Speakers named the ESG, learning outcomes, the Diploma Supplement, and the three-cycle structure with ECTS as the most visible outcomes of the Bologna Process. One speaker argued that the qualifications frameworks should be revised to reflect current needs; one that no new instruments are needed, except possibly for the social dimension.
- *A proposal to reconsider the bachelor-master structure in one region of an EHEA country* was reported as having revived the debate on what the framework gives (incoming students and researchers, quality assurance, student-centred learning).

Points raised from the floor. Student representatives asked whether other countries would adopt national BFUG structures that include students; the panel said students already sit in the national bodies in several countries. Participants raised the risk of a culture of compliance without ownership and the need for political commitment and funding; friction between national qualifications frameworks and joint degrees in the European Universities Alliances, and the legal obstacles to issuing a joint degree; the growth of private providers and the need for appropriate quality oversight; the view of lifelong learning as a public responsibility whoever pays; whether the loss of engagement after 2010 was contingent or structural; and how countries outside the EHEA that apply Bologna instruments, such as Tunisia, can take part. The panel pointed to the Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue and the Global Policy Forum as the entry point.

Convergence was achieved on the following: implementation depends on national structures with clear ownership and a mix of legal, financial and peer-support levers; the

instruments are sound but need to be updated and kept visible; a better account of their benefit for institutions, staff and students is needed.

Open questions remained on: how to engage institutions that regard the Bologna reforms as completed; How to treat the commitments that cannot be regulated; What to do about the national qualifications frameworks and joint degrees; How to ensure appropriate oversight of private providers; How to involve non-EHEA countries that apply Bologna instruments.

5.3 Session 2: Clearing bottlenecks in implementing Bologna reforms

Aim and format. Session 1 asked ministries what mechanisms exist. This session asked the consultative members where the gaps persist in making those mechanisms work. The panel brought together EUA, ENQA, ESU, EURASHE and EQAR, and used the question of the study as its starting point: is the bottleneck governance or vision?

Main ideas

- *The main challenge lies in motivation and shared understanding rather than in design.* Panelists agreed that the tools are valuable and that the community of practice is strong. What is missing is a clear account of the benefit of the reforms for institutions, staff and students. Commitments accumulate while older ones, such as automatic recognition, are not yet fully implemented, which can cause frustration. Each actor makes a cost-benefit calculation, and the aim must be to make the benefit side visible. One speaker argued that the question is not whether there is a vision but whether the commitments adopted every two or three years lead to resources and action back home. ESU used student participation as a test case: student representatives were present from only five countries in the Conference, and two of them had their travel funded by their national authorities.
- *Information from the BFUG does not always reach the national level.* A study by the previous Task Force on Enhancing Knowledge Sharing found that a coordinated national approach was lacking in most countries (the national action plans responded to this), vulnerability to changes in political circumstances, and limited links between the Bologna Process and institutional practice. A delegate attends a working group, writes a report for the ministry and the information does not always travel further, while the involvement of students and institutional staff in the working structures was considered insufficient.
- *The community engaged in the Bologna Process could be broader.* Employers and the world of work, other ministries (employment for qualifications frameworks; finance, housing and transport for the social dimension) and the wider public are not yet sufficiently involved. Panelists said not everything can be solved by the EHEA, or by higher education, and that the vision should include lifelong learning, future careers and the link between ECTS and VET.
- *The same requirement may be a constraint for one actor and an enabler for another.* Quality assurance was the example: a constraint on institutions, a precondition for recognition and cooperation. The response lies largely in communication. After each Communiqué, someone must explain why commitments remain on the list, why new ones are added and why they need to be agreed at European level. Several speakers described this as an exercise in explanation.

- *Implementation requires follow-up after adoption.* The national action plans are the "plan" of a plan-do-check-act cycle. Panellsts asked for the "do" and "check": a national implementation report before each ministerial conference (as one country does), a verification of commitments already reported as fulfilled, to see whether they are experienced in every institution and by every student, and greater visibility of the consequences of acting and of not acting.
- *A practical point on process.* Member states could confirm at the ministerial conference which working structures they will join, instead of afterwards.

Points raised from the floor: A member of the TF FoB asked whether the future of the Bologna Process lies in fine-tuning or in more radical steps. The answers differed:

- development of European higher education policy should stay within the Bologna framework, whose legitimacy and inclusiveness are its strength;
- higher education institutions must deliver on European policy objectives, above all competitiveness (skills and employment outcomes) and the response to growing skepticism towards European integration, which requires valuing every type of education and adding a territorial dimension to the social dimension;
- the future should include stronger protection of fundamental values, more attention to the social dimension and a response to AI and digitalisation, with room for ambition;
- the Bologna Process must stay a transformative process that communicates constantly with all stakeholders, but it is a means in the service of higher education and should not be confused with it.

Convergence was found on the following: The gap lies between adoption and experience; Communication, ownership and the involvement of practitioners and students beyond national delegations are the remedies most often named; Not every problem is for the Bologna Process to solve.

Open questions remained on: Whether a reform on the scale of 1999 remains possible; how to measure whether commitments reach daily practice; How to bring employers and other ministries around the table.

5.4 Session 3: National action plans and thematic peer groups

Aim and format. The session looked at the two mechanisms created to close the implementation gap. The thematic peer groups (TPGs) were set up after the Paris Communiqué (2018). They are voluntary and work through peer learning, study visits, workshops and staff exchanges, coordinated by the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG). The national action plans (NAPs) were introduced in Tirana in 2024. They are expected from every country, with actions, outcomes, a timeline and reporting, and are published on the EHEA website.

Thematic peer groups

- *They were designed as a supportive, peer-based mechanism.* Peer-to-peer support, a safe environment and sustainability were named as the BICG's founding principles. Study visits and peer learning activities were singled out as the most valued format.

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- *Reach is uneven.* Participation is strongest among countries that already have the expertise, and participation is lower among those that could benefit most. Panelists did not regard this as a shortcoming. They proposed to put the experience of committed countries to targeted use: connect a country in need with two or three peers that solved the problem, in three steps (a model procedure, a peer visit, an implementation roadmap), alongside the plenary meetings of the groups.
- *Impact is hard to attribute.* Implementation reports show progress every year, but not whether the TPGs caused it. A country's need is also a matter of political will, and delegates do not always hold decision-making responsibility. Groups of 30 to 40 members may be too large for in-depth work. A co-chair added that countries which have already implemented a commitment need a reason to stay in the group, and that groups face a trade-off between implementing existing commitments and discussing new developments.
- *Representation and resources limit the work.* Countries are asked to send both a subject expert and a policy expert and to make sure information flows back to the ministry. Capacity is scarce: one delegate said that the TPGs depend on projects and volunteers, that projects are funded before the NAPs are written, and that a group can realistically take on no more than three priorities in a three-year cycle. Others asked for continuity of topics from one cycle to the next and for a way to disseminate TPG recommendations beyond the website. Staff exchanges were presented as a good way to meet concrete needs, with exchanges linked to the NAP and the commitments.

National action plans

- *Purpose.* The plans translate commitments into actions that someone is accountable for, allow the BFUG to ask what happened between Tirana and Iași–Chișinău, and should remain valid beyond changes of government. They are meant to start from the gaps shown in the Bologna Process Implementation Report.
- *Awareness remains limited.* A show of hands suggested that national plans are not widely known, and few participants outside the BICG knew whether their country had one.
- *Added value for national policy.* Speakers said the plans largely reflect priorities already identified nationally. Their value is that they bring recognition, qualifications frameworks, micro-credentials, quality assurance, the social dimension and flexible learning into one map, show that these files are interlinked, and give existing policy a deadline, an owner, a European reference point and visibility. A plan cannot by itself substitute for political commitment. In the drafting process, a ministry usually wrote the text and consulted an existing group of institutions, students and agencies. In one case, preparing the plans in several jurisdictions of one country led them to review each other's work.
- *The plans can go beyond the key commitments.* Fundamental values, mobility and the use of student surveys were given as examples of what countries have included, and the BFUG could recognise such actions.
- *Not all plans have been submitted yet.* Two speakers said that their own countries had not yet submitted a plan, and one called for feedback on the plans submitted

Joining up the two instruments

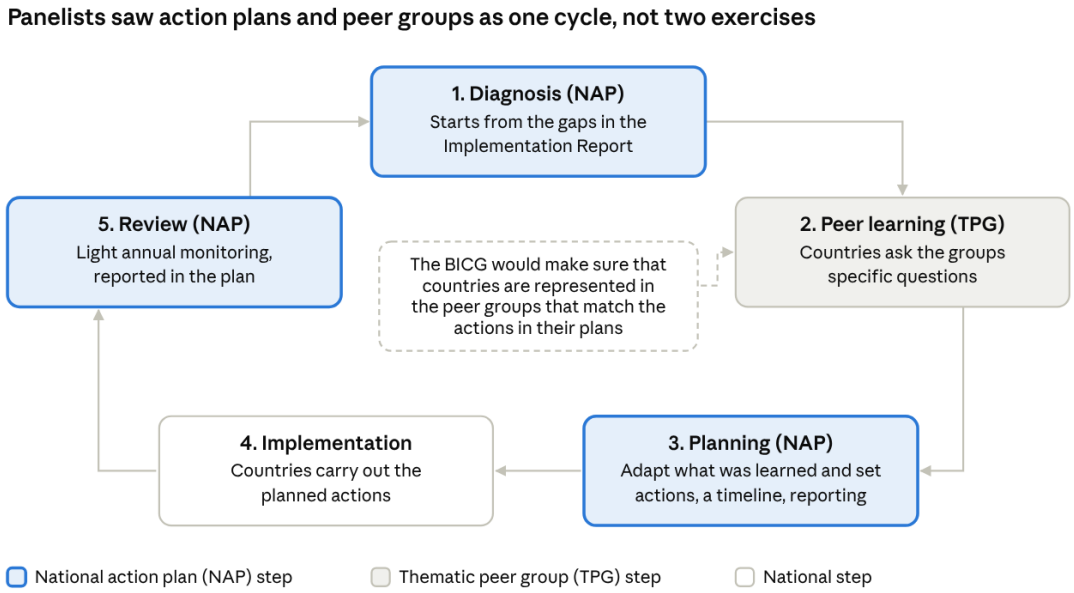

Figure 3 – The link between TPGs and national action plans

The cycle described by panellists in Session 3: the NAP expresses the demand, the TPG provides learning and support.

- *A single cycle linking both instruments.* Panellsts described a cycle of diagnosis, peer learning, planning, implementation and review. The NAP expresses the demand and the TPG provides the learning and support. Countries would ask the TPGs specific questions, adapt what they learn and report back in their plan, with light annual monitoring. The BICG would make sure that countries are represented in the TPGs that match the actions in their plans.
- *Both instruments should continue for another cycle.* One round of plans is not sufficient to assess them. Panelists asked for better timing, with the NAPs and the TPG work plans, and the Erasmus+ umbrella projects, prepared in the same sequence. Most wanted to keep the TPGs on the key commitments as the foundation rather than creating TPGs on an ad hoc basis from the plans, but to allow work on lifelong learning, fundamental values or internationalisation to draw on the NAPs.
- *Peer review of plans.* Suggestions were a voluntary and light mechanism, modelled on the voluntary social dimension policy reviews, clusters of neighbouring countries and a pilot through a project. Other speakers doubted that peer review could work without close knowledge of national context, time and resources. The proposal to ask only the countries with the largest implementation gaps to prepare plans was not supported, since all countries have areas for improvement.
- *Risks.* If the evaluation of plans is perceived as punitive, countries may opt for less ambitious actions. Numerical goals risk becoming statistical targets. Several speakers said that reform fatigue is a concern and that the Communiqué should be easy to read and build on strengths.

Convergence was reached on the following: Both instruments should continue and be linked, the NAP as the diagnosis and the TPG as the support; depth of implementation matters more than a longer list; the plans have value as a map and a commitment, even where they record what was already planned.

Open questions remained on: who reviews the plans, and with what consequences; how to reach the countries that most need support; how to pay for peer learning on a regular basis.; how to measure the contribution of the TPGs.

5.5 Session 4: Presenting the new Bologna tools

Aim and format. The session gave institutions, students, researchers and national practitioners the first opportunity to hear all three revised tools together, before the BFUG meeting in Dublin. It was held in plenary and not in three parallel groups, so that everyone heard the three presentations, each followed by questions. The ESG revision was presented by the President of ENQA, for the ESG review committee. The ECTS Users' Guide was presented by the European Commission, which chaired the advisory group. The Action Plan on Internationalisation and Mobility was presented by two co-chairs of the working group. Because of the late hour, the revised European Approach for the Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes was not presented and will need another occasion.

Revised ESG: "evolution, not revolution"

- *Principles of the revision.* The text is meant to remain valid for about ten years and avoids passing references. The standards are written more plainly, and the guidelines now show examples of how a standard can be applied in different national contexts instead of explaining why it exists. The ESG remain standards for quality assurance, not standards for the quality of education.
- *What is new.* Quality assurance should lead to improvement, and this is now stated. Other additions are the societal mission of higher education, international cooperation, the use of AI (in the introduction, in learning and teaching, and in external procedures, with human judgement preserved), digital and physical infrastructure, all staff and not only teachers, and support for students to take an active role. The standards on programme design and monitoring are merged. In external quality assurance, all standards must be covered by the combination of procedures rather than by each procedure. Site visits are in person by default and conducted by peer reviewers, reports include recommendations and a factual accuracy check, and appeals go to a different body. The independence of agencies now has its three dimensions in the standard, and the notion of third-party influence is widened.
- *Timeline.* The text is at its third draft and the BFUG's written comments have been received. The final version goes to the BFUG in Dublin and to ministers in May 2027.
- *Fundamental values: the main point of debate.* Participants from the research and values community argued that the ESG should treat academic freedom, institutional autonomy, academic integrity and the other values as part of what quality means, with at least a requirement that institutions have policies and measures to promote them. The review committee replied that the values are named in the introduction and in the standard on internal quality assurance, and that the ESG are not designed to serve as a

monitoring framework for values, which would be a separate exercise. The co-chair of the Working Group on Fundamental Values agreed that nobody proposes to bring the hundreds of data points of the monitoring framework into quality assurance, but said that a few straightforward elements could be included, for example an academic integrity policy, the role of collegial bodies in academic freedom, and student and staff participation, which already is part of quality assurance. He described this as a balancing act.

- *Other points.* One participant asked whether standards that do not set quality of education can support mutual recognition of degrees. The committee answered that quality assurance procedures that apply the ESG, with student-centred learning, transparency and internal quality assurance, are the basis for recognition. Another urged openness to other quality assurance models, such as accompanying agencies, and to other regions that look to the ESG, and warned against excessive technicality: the aim is deeper implementation, not a longer list of requirements.

Revised ECTS Users' Guide

- *Process.* The Guide dates from 2015. The advisory group started with a study of how ECTS is used, based on a survey of staff and students, desk research and focus groups, and the 2015 Guide was found to be used only to a limited extent in practice. The BFUG was updated at each meeting, and 13 BFUG members commented on the draft over the summer. A fourth draft goes to the Board in Podgorica and to the BFUG in Dublin, for ministers in May 2027. The text runs to about 90 pages including annexes and is meant to be user-friendly, with a communication plan that includes digital formats, layout and training.
- *Main changes.* The introduction, principles and scope are rewritten. Credits are presented as a currency for lifelong learning, with clearer rules on allocation, award, accumulation, mobility and recognition. There is new guidance on the design and delivery of learning opportunities, including micro-credentials in line with the Council Recommendation.
- *Grade transparency.* A standardised description of grade distribution in transcripts and Diploma Supplements, kept optional in some cases, gave rise to extensive debate. Conversion of grades was recognised as a culturally bound issue, which was also pending for joint degrees and the European Universities Alliances.
- *Who may award credits.* The draft allows providers other than higher education institutions to award credits, while recognition remains with institutions. A participant asked what happens if a government were to open the system fully. The answer was that the rationale in the text should persuade, and that work remained to build full consensus among members.

Action Plan on Internationalisation and Mobility

- *Mandate and vision.* The Tirana mandate is broader than mobility: international and intercultural competences for all learners, removal of barriers, the 20% benchmark, greener, more inclusive and balanced mobility, blended mobility and virtual exchange, internationalisation of curricula and transnational cooperation. The working group reads the 20% benchmark as a pointer to the goal that all learners have an international experience. The plan offers a positive agenda of open, value-based cooperation.

- *Draft commitments.* They cover internationalisation as a cornerstone of European and global cooperation, in a holistic sense (at home, in the classroom, in the curriculum, staff mobility); international collaboration; learning mobility, with the 20% benchmark kept and realistic national milestones; the removal of barriers, listed in categories (financial, social, cultural, practical, administrative, legal); inclusive and balanced mobility; and evidence-informed policy with comparable data. The group did not adopt the different target set in the EU's Europe on the Move and considered that tackling the barriers matters more than the difference between the two benchmarks (20% and 23%). A note on terminology replaces "virtual mobility" with "virtual exchange" and distinguishes quantitative and qualitative readings of balanced mobility.
- *Follow-up.* Follow-up to the 2012 Mobility Strategy weakened after adoption, so the group is considering what should follow the 2027 Conference. Ministers are to adopt the plan in May 2027, and the working group was due to meet again two weeks after the conference.
- *Participants at the Conference asked for* a more prominent role for funding and public responsibility; targets for balanced and inclusive mobility (no definition of balanced mobility yet; the EU has a target for inclusive mobility; several target groups would need several targets); a breakdown by cycle, since doctoral mobility is far above 20% in many countries; references to the the effects of research security on openness; the social dimension of mobility, because Erasmus+ covers extra costs and not living costs; staff mobility, including administrative and technical staff, and training for staff of international offices; quality and student-centred mobility with guidance before, during and after, since an international experience does not by itself build intercultural competence; fair partnerships with other regions and the risk of brain drain; and data on persistence and completion.

Convergence. The revisions are an evolution of tools that are widely valued. They should be clear, usable by practitioners and open to other regions, and they integrate AI.

Open questions. How far the ESG reflect fundamental values. Who may award credits. Grade transparency. Whether to set targets for balanced and inclusive mobility and how to address funding in the Action Plan. How to keep the Action Plan alive after 2027.

5.6 Session 5: Fundamental values, synergies between the EHEA, the EEA and the ERA (17 September, 14:30–16:00)

Aim and format. The plenary session looked at the first EHEA-wide monitoring exercise on the six fundamental values and at how EHEA work relates to the instruments of the European Education Area (EEA) and the European Research Area (ERA). The Rome Communiqué (2020) adopted a statement on academic freedom. The Tirana Communiqué (2024) adopted statements on the other five values, stated that each value is essential but all must be implemented as a coherent whole, welcomed the technical monitoring framework and asked the BFUG to report back in 2027. The session opened with a presentation of draft findings by the Working Group on Fundamental Values, followed by a panel of the European Commission, the Magna Charta Observatory, a staff trade union federation and the student union. It was moderated by a ministry representative from Sweden. Fundamental values was also one of the four streams of the Researchers' Conference, and researchers who had submitted papers were invited to take part.

The monitoring exercise in figures

Item	Figure
Coverage	49 higher education systems in 47 EHEA member states. Belarus and the Russian Federation remain suspended and are not included.
Evidence	Five streams, triangulated for every system: BPIR 2027 items; a survey of public authorities; a national stakeholder survey (student unions, staff trade unions, rectors' conferences); an open public consultation; and external evidence such as the Academic Freedom Index, the EUA Autonomy Scorecard, Scholars at Risk and the European Parliament's Academic Freedom Monitor.
Public authorities	47 systems reviewed and validated their returns.
Stakeholder organisations	93 responses across 40 systems.
Public consultation	1,563 responses from 38 systems.
Method	Law (de jure) and practice (de facto) are kept apart by design. Common reference date 30 June 2026. Returns were pre-filled by national operators and validated in several layers.

Draft findings

- *Legal frameworks and practice do not always coincide.* The legal record is broad and relatively static, while practice is more varied and, in some systems, under pressure. The gap runs within systems that legislate, not only between systems that do and do not.
- *Public responsibility is the most fully legislated.* Both public-responsibility values are legislated almost everywhere, in line with the Tirana statements. The other values are recognised in most systems but fully protected in fewer.
- *Promotion is uneven.* Half systems have no measure promoting academic freedom or institutional autonomy. Quality assurance is the most common channel for promotion: present everywhere, but limited in what it captures.
- *Reforms have focused on responsibilities more than on freedoms.* Documented reforms are concentrated in funding laws, qualifications frameworks and access, and rarely touch academic freedom or autonomy provisions.
- *Pressures coexist with positive developments.* Funding pressure leads, followed by governance centralisation and external influence, precarity, self-censorship, generative AI and demographic decline. A majority of systems name funding as a source of pressure on four or more values, and most report pressures affecting at least five of the six.

The Working Group's answer to the question whether the six are implemented as a coherent whole was that systems do not choose between values, since nearly every system legislates on all six, but that depth differs and variation appears at the stage of promotion. The six hold together in law more than in practice, so coherence is now primarily a matter of practice rather than of legislation.

Discussions. The presentation set the three frameworks side by side: the EHEA with 49 systems, voluntary commitments reaching well beyond the EU and a common monitoring framework; the EEA with the European Strategy for Universities (2022), the Commission's Guiding Principles for protecting fundamental academic values (2026), the European Universities alliances and the European Degree Label; and the ERA with the Bonn Declaration on Freedom of Scientific Research (2020), the academic freedom commitment in the Horizon Europe Regulation and the guidelines on tackling foreign interference. It named four places where they already reinforce each other: shared definitions (the Guiding Principles are built on the six EHEA definitions and were considered by both the EEA and the EHEA working groups); shared evidence (EU-level monitors feed the EHEA exercise); shared investment (the EHEA exercise runs on Erasmus+, and Erasmus+ and the alliances appear in national returns as opening academic space); and convergence in national law, which increasingly refers to both EHEA and EU documents. The message was one of complementarity rather than duplication: the EHEA defines and monitors across 49 systems, while EU instruments add policy, funding and, where applicable, legal means.

The discussions looked into whether more European instruments make protection stronger or only divide responsibility; where the EHEA, EEA and ERA frameworks genuinely reinforce each other and where they only coexist, and what role the Guiding Principles will have; what role voluntary commitments can play where tensions arise between public authorities and institutions, and whether the greater risk today is external pressure on institutions or erosion from within; how the tension between institutional autonomy and academic freedom should be handled, and what erosion is most critical from the staff perspective; whether the commitments on student and staff participation are translated in practice, and what the European level could do; and what the 2027 Communiqué should say that the Tirana Communiqué did not.

Proposals from the panel included continuing monitoring on the same framework, holistic and covering all six values, and reporting back to the following Ministerial Conference; invest where the gap is, in the instruments that capture practice: inventories, fulfilment questions and external evidence checks; broaden the range of voices consulted, including early-career researchers, doctoral candidates and administrative staff, with a shorter and modular consultation; keep coherence with the EEA, the ERA and international initiatives through shared definitions, shared evidence and complementary leverage.

Open questions. Whether and how the ESG should reflect the values, which Session 4 had already raised (section 5.5). How to move from describing the legal record to measuring practice, and how this would be financed. Whether the growing number of European instruments strengthens protection or blurs responsibility. How the Communiqué should respond to pressures that, according to the draft findings, are most often associated with funding and governance arrangements.

5.7 Session 6: Fulfilling the Tirana mandate, future-proofing the key commitments (17 September, 16:15–17:30)

Aim and format. Beyond the revision of the ECTS Users' Guide, the ESG and the European Approach, the Tirana Communiqué asked the BFUG to work on the future-proof development, dissemination and possible expansion of the Bologna tools, and to consider the longer-term effects of the digital transition, including AI, on the key commitments. The session brought these strands together. It opened with a 15-minute presentation by the Flemish co-chair of the Task Force on the Future of Bologna, who then moderated a panel made up of the co-chairs of Thematic Peer Groups A (qualifications frameworks) and B (recognition), the President of ENQA as former co-chair of TPG C (quality assurance), the ESU President, and UNESCO as BFUG consultative member and co-chair of the Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue. It ran immediately before the final session, so that its conclusions would carry into the conference's overall messages.

Task Force on the Future of Bologna. The Task Force's mandate is to prepare and convert BFUG debates into recommendations for post-2027. Its work programme for 2024–2027 has three discussion topics: lifelong learning, links between the EHEA and vocational education and training, and synergies between the EHEA and the ERA. Its working principle is dialogue and alignment before new instruments.

- *Progress and gaps.* Quoting the 2024 Bologna Process Implementation Report, the presentation noted that fewer than 90% of first- and second-cycle programmes align with the agreed ECTS workload, that 31 systems implement all five principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, that 18 report system-level automatic recognition, and that median public spending on tertiary education was about 1% of GDP in 2020, down from 1.2% in 2015. The conclusion was that a shared architecture requires sustained implementation effort.
- *Two horizons.* "Now": finish the commitments, by making national action plans public and actionable, resourcing implementation capacity alongside ambition, and protecting fundamental values in practice. "Next": future-proof the system, through human-centred AI for learning, research and operations, lifelong learning for demographic change, and student conditions treated as a core element of the system. Existing Bologna tools should be used before new ones are developed.
- *Terminology.* The presentation pointed to four overlapping labels for cooperation on joint provision (joint programme, joint degree, the European Degree Label and a possible joint European degree) and argued that common language should reduce friction rather than add to administrative burden.

What the groups reported

- *Qualifications frameworks (TPG A).* Work centres on peer review of self-certification reports, the use of frameworks for automatic recognition, the growth of transnational education, and frameworks as instruments for flexible learning, including the position of micro-credentials and the permeability between vocational, short-cycle and higher education. For the future, the group proposed to strengthen its role as the platform for presenting and discussing self-certification reports and to set out a more structured

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- procedure for presenting, publishing and updating them. It also proposed a review of the Dublin descriptors, which date from 2004 and are unchanged in the Paris Communiqué: the title (from Dublin to EHEA descriptors), their ownership, terminology, current priorities and alignment with the European Qualifications Framework.
- *Recognition (TPG B).* After eight years of peer support, members report that peer learning is the most valuable approach and that it has advanced automatic recognition, digitalisation, national reforms and the recognition of refugees' qualifications with partial or no documentation. Five perspectives were put forward: automatic recognition, with transparency and comparability tools as its condition; lifelong learning and flexible pathways; certification of knowledge and skills through a learning-outcomes approach, which helps where documents are missing and where credentials need to be verified; digitalisation, with its new risks and tools for trust and the effect of AI on learning outcomes; and cooperation with a global outlook, including transnational education.
- *Quality assurance (TPG C).* Working priorities are compliance with the ESG and quality culture, the European Approach, fit-for-purpose cross-border quality assurance, and quality assurance of transnational education, of European Universities alliances and of flexible learning pathways. Proposals for the Communiqué are approval of the revised ESG and European Approach; revision of the 2017 Key Considerations for cross-border quality assurance and a code of conduct for it; attention to transnational education; and the learning-outcomes approach as a transversal matter across all three key commitments.
- *Student perspective.* Priorities for the Communiqué are closing implementation gaps with mechanisms to address them; addressing the erosion and uneven implementation of fundamental values; a more inclusive EHEA, with data on funding, grants, housing and transport and measures on dropout, mental health and non-traditional students; a shared EHEA approach to AI and digitalisation guided by pedagogical principles; recognition tools for refugees and students at risk; mobility, with the 20% target in view; and meaningful student participation at all levels, including in the BFUG and in national bodies.
- *Global policy dialogue (CG GPD).* The group described a shifting centre of gravity: 269 million students worldwide in 2024, more than double the level of 2000, with enrolment and mobility growing fastest outside the EHEA; 93 states party to the global and regional recognition conventions; and only one in five universities with a formal AI policy in 2025. Its messages were that recognition is the connective tissue between regions, that AI, digital credentials, fraud, cross-border provision and refugee recognition are shared transnational problems, and that dialogue should move from consultation to structured co-creation with balanced representation and joint action on academic integrity and diploma mills.

The presentations agreed on a few points. Implementation comes first, and existing tools should be used before new ones are created. AI and digitalisation run through every strand and should not be treated as a separate subject. The learning-outcomes approach connects qualifications, recognition and quality assurance, and lifelong learning and micro-credentials are the test case for the three key commitments. Recognition is the main point of connection between the EHEA and other regions.

5.8 Session 7: Preparing for the 2027 Ministerial Conference and Global Policy Forum and beyond (17 September, 17:30–18:15)

The final plenary brought together the messages of the background study, the five thematic sessions, the Researchers' Conference and the EduGlobal sessions, presented the next steps towards the Iași–Chișinău Communiqué, and heard the views of those leading its drafting. The panel was made up of the BFUG Vice-chair, who co-chairs the Drafting Committee; the current BFUG co-chair from Ireland and the incoming co-chair from Lithuania, both members of the Drafting Committee; and the Director General for International Relations of the Republic of Moldova.

Annexes

Annex A: Final agenda Conference 'Sharing knowledge and supporting implementation for a stronger Bologna Process'

The Future of Higher Education: Sharing knowledge and supporting implementation for a stronger Bologna Process

Bucharest, Romania

Hotel Sheraton (Calea Dorobanți 5-7)

DAY 1 – WEDNESDAY, 16TH OF SEPTEMBER 2026

08:30 – 09:30 Registration of participants. Welcome coffee

09:30 **Start of the event**

09:30 – 10:00 **Welcome address from the hosts and the ministers of higher education of Romania and the Republic of Moldova**

- Mr. Mihai Dimian, Minister of Education and Research of Romania
- Mr. Dan Perciun, Minister of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova

10:00 – 10:20 **Growing momentum: moving towards the Iași - Chișinău EHEA Ministerial Conference (2027)**

- Mr. Horia Onița & Ms. Lilia Parhomenco – EHEA Secretariat

10:20 – 10:45 **The impact of the Bologna Process – key commitments, evolving needs and trends**

- Presentation of the background study by Ms. Ligia Deca, lead author

10:45 – 12:15 **Supporting the implementation of the Bologna Process at national and institutional levels: system-level approaches, peer learning and examples of good practice**

Speakers:

- Mr. David Flores (DAAD, Germany)
- Ms. Maryna Mruga (Ministry representative, Ukraine)
- Ms. Helga Posset (Ministry representative, Austria)
- Ms. Sara Thornton (Ministry representative, France)
- Mr. Robert Wagenaar (International Tuning Academy, Netherlands)

Moderated by Mr. Michael Gaebel (EUA)

12:15 – 12:30 Coffee break

12:30 – 14:00 **Clearing bottlenecks in implementing Bologna reforms: rationales, solutions, paradigms and communication efforts**

Speakers:

- Ms. Elena Cîrlan (ENQA)
- Mr. John Edwards (EURASHE)
- Ms. Maria Kelo (EUA)
- Ms. Daciana Pop (ESU)
- Mr. Aleksandar Susnjar (EQAR)

Moderated by Mr. Romiță Iucu (University of Bucharest)

14:00 – 15:00 Lunch

15:00 – 16:30 **Supporting implementation: the role of national action plans and thematic peer groups**

Speakers:

- Ms. Liesbeth Hens (Ministry representative, Belgium-Flemish Community)
- Mr. Kyriacos Charalambous (Ministry representative, Cyprus)
- Ms. Maija Innola (Ministry representative, Finland)
- Ms. Ivana Radonova (Ministry representative, Bulgaria)

Moderated by Ms. Melanie Rosenbaum (Holy See)

16:30 – 17:00 Coffee break

17:00 – 18:30 **Presenting the new Bologna tools: looking forward to 2027**

Speakers:

- Mr. Arthur Belle & Mr. David Flores (Dutch and German Co-chairs of the WG on Internationalisation and Mobility) – Action Plan on Internationalisation and Mobility
- Ms. Cristina Ghițulică (ENQA) - Standards and Guidelines for the Quality Assurance in the EHEA
- Ms. Camille Odent (European Commission) - ECTS User's Guide

Moderated by Mr. Horia Onița (EHEA Secretariat)

10:45 – 16:30 ***Parallel Bologna Process Researchers' Conference panels presenting and discussing the research papers***

18:30 Dinner

DAY 2 – THURSDAY, 17TH OF SEPTEMBER 2026

08:30 – 09:00 Welcome coffee

09:00 – 14:30 EduGlobal section within the Bologna Process Researchers' Conference (participants at the Conference are invited to attend this slot of the BPRC)

09:00 – 10:00 Vision on the future of higher education - High level intervention from a global perspective

10:00 – 11:30 Digitalisation in higher education: what the EHEA has to decide

11:30 – 11:45 Coffee break

11:45 – 13:15 Common challenges across the globe for the future of higher education. Tailored solutions that work

13:15 – 14:30 Lunch

14:30 – 16:00 **Fundamental values - Synergies between EHEA – EEA – ERA**

Speakers:

- Mr. Cezar Hâj (Romanian Co-chair of the Working Group on Fundamental Values)
- Mr. Andreas Keller (ETUCE)
- Ms. Franziska Knogler (ESU)
- Mr. Liviu Matei (Magna Charta Observatory)
- Ms. Camille Odent (European Commission)

Moderated by Mr. Robin Moberg (Ministry representative, Sweden)

16:00 – 16:15 Coffee break

16:15 – 17:30 **Fulfilling the 2024 Tirana Communique mandate: Future-proofing the Bologna key commitments**

Presentation from Ms. Liesbeth Hens (Flemish Co-Chair of the TF on the Future of Bologna), followed by panel discussion with:

- Ms. Chiara Finnochietti (CIMEA, Italy)
- Ms. Cristina Ghițulică (ENQA)
- Ms. Leila Loupis (UNESCO)
- Ms. Daciana Pop (ESU)
- Ms. Baiba Ramina (AIC, Latvia)

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17:30 – 18:15 **Final session: Preparing for the 2027 EHEA Ministerial Conference and Global Policy Forum and beyond**

Speakers:

- Ms. Luminița Matei (BFUG Vice-chair, Romania)
- Ms. Siobhan Sleeman (BFUG Co-chair, Ireland)
- Ms. Neda Zutautaite (incoming BFUG Co-chair, Lithuania)
- Ms. Lilia Parhomenco (Ministry representative, Republic of Moldova)

Moderated by Mr. Horia Onița, EHEA Secretariat

18:15 Dinner

FRIDAY, 18TH OF SEPTEMBER 2026

09:00 – 13:00 Meeting of the Task Force on the Future of Bologna

UEFISCDI headquarters (30 Frumoasă Street)

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch

The Conference *'The Future of Higher Education: Sharing knowledge and supporting implementation for a stronger Bologna Process'* is organised within the framework of the "Support for the 2024-2027 Moldovan-Romanian EHEA Secretariat: Delivering together for a renewed Bologna Process" (EHEA-SEC-4-BP) project, funded by the European Union.

Annex B: The eight recommendations of the background study

The study proposes the following recommendations for the Iași–Chișinău Communiqué. They are the views of its lead author and are not positions of the BFUG.

1. *An EHEA Statement of Principles on AI in higher education.* Human oversight, academic integrity, equity of access and transparency, anchored in the fundamental values and aligned with the EU AI Act and CETS 225.
2. *Operationalise lifelong learning as a system.* Embed micro-credentials in the QF-EHEA, make recognition of prior learning a monitorable indicator of the Bologna Process Implementation Report, and align ECTS and quality assurance across higher education and vocational education and training.
3. *Convert the social dimension to accountability.* Every national action plan states two to three quantified, nationally chosen equity targets for 2030, plus a minimum common equity data set with Eurostudent and Eurostat.
4. *A standing EHEA–ERA liaison mechanism.* A named BFUG working structure, a counterpart in the ERA Forum, a joint work plan on research-based learning, academic freedom and the Sustainable Development Goals, and a defined reporting rhythm.
5. *Support and resource a long-term EHEA Secretariat.* A stable, jointly financed, multi-annual footing, succeeding the rotating national hosting model that has supported the administration of the Process since 2003.
6. *Institutionalise implementation governance.* The Coordination Group recommended by the Task Force on Enhancing Knowledge Sharing, a minimum consultation standard, resourced Bologna expert networks and hubs, and a consolidation review of commitments with limited follow-up.
7. *A structured Global Policy Forum cooperation offer.* Practitioner-level exchange on AI, digital credentialing and quality assurance, anchored to the UNESCO Global Convention and to models such as HAQAA.
8. *Clarity on the follow-up to fundamental values monitoring.* Match the ambition of values monitoring with a published account of the follow-up when concerns are identified.