EHEA Action Plan on Internationalisation and Mobility

Draft 4.0 – October 2026

We the ministers in charge of higher education make the following commitments:

1. We commit to internationalisation of higher education as a core dimension of the EHEA, enabling students and staff to develop intercultural and international competences and strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation within the EHEA and beyond.
2. We promote a holistic, comprehensive and inclusive perspective of internationalisation that integrates physical mobility, virtual exchanges and other at-home activities, both on and off campus, ensuring quality international experiences for all learners.
3. We reaffirm the importance of international collaboration in the EHEA and commit to strengthening the implementation of the Bologna key commitments as a foundation for cross-border cooperation and exchange. We further commit to reducing barriers to joint learning opportunities and transnational education, and to promoting international academic and administrative careers through staff mobility, thereby strengthening institutional capacity.
4. We reaffirm the physical mobility target of 20% outgoing mobile students, highlighting that physical mobility remains a key driver for the acquisition of intercultural and international competences, as well as a catalyst for intercultural understanding and international solidarity.
5. We commit to further removing persistent and undue systemic barriers to learning mobility, recognising that such barriers affect both participation in outgoing mobility and the capacity of higher education systems and institutions to receive and integrate mobile learners and staff.
6. We commit to making learning mobility more inclusive and accessible for students from underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable backgrounds by addressing the financial, social and structural barriers they face and providing targeted support measures that enable their equal participation, so that all learners can acquire international and intercultural competences.
7. We commit to promoting balanced credit and degree mobility by fostering mutually beneficial, reciprocal and sustainable exchanges of students between countries and institutions, within the EHEA and with other world regions. We will strive to strengthen both incoming and outgoing mobility by moving towards more comparable levels of attractiveness, accessibility and affordability of our higher education systems, favouring openness over restrictive measures, while taking into account the capacity of education systems and local contexts.
8. We underline the importance of a sustainable approach to mobility and internationalisation, supporting HEIs to integrate environmental responsibility into policies, practices, and learning across our higher education systems.
9. We commit to strengthening data collection and the measurement of progress in internationalisation and mobility by improving the availability, quality and comparability of data at national and European levels.

Co-funded by the European Union

I. Introduction and Purpose

This Action Plan aims to guide Ministries, Erasmus+ agencies, higher education institutions (HEIs), student organisations, and other relevant stakeholders who share the vision of a more interconnected, inclusive, and innovative EHEA. It promotes the implementation of coherent, coordinated, and effective measures to enhance internationalisation efforts across higher education systems and to stimulate balanced, sustainable and inclusive mobility opportunities. This Action Plan aims to strengthen the EHEA's global engagement and competitiveness, while ensuring that internationalisation remains a driver of quality, innovation, and mutual understanding.

The development of this Action Plan on Internationalisation and Mobility of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is grounded in a long-standing commitment to strengthen internationalisation in general and to strengthen mobility as a core dimension of the Bologna Process in particular. The Bologna key commitments promote internationalisation and mobility by ensuring comparable qualifications, recognised study periods abroad, and quality-assured higher education, making it easier for students and staff to move between countries. Since the Leuven Communiqué (2009), Ministers have endorsed the target that at least 20% of graduates in the EHEA should have undertaken a study or training period abroad. Building on this foundation, the Mobility Strategy for the EHEA adopted in Bucharest (2012) provided a framework to enhance the quality, inclusiveness, and recognition of mobility experiences. The Rome Communiqué (2020) subsequently committed to enable all learners to acquire international and intercultural competences, while the Tirana Communiqué (2024) called for renewed efforts to make mobility more inclusive, balanced and sustainable in response to emerging global challenges.

Against the backdrop of a shared European ambition for more open, connected and globally engaged higher education systems, EU initiatives such as the European Education Area, Erasmus+, European Universities Alliances and the European Degree Label contribute to the EHEA's goals for internationalisation and mobility by promoting cross-border cooperation, joint learning opportunities, mutual recognition and inclusive, high-quality education. While rooted in the EU policy context, these initiatives can also inspire and support wider cooperation across the EHEA, recognising the equal role of non-EU members in advancing mobility, academic exchange and shared educational values.

The context in which this Action Plan was developed has evolved considerably in recent years. Geopolitical tensions, global competition, and shifting demographic trends have reshaped the conditions for cooperation and exchange among countries and HEIs. Simultaneously, varying political and societal responses to international engagement continue to influence attitudes toward openness and mobility. These developments highlight the need for a forward-looking and adaptable approach to internationalisation and mobility, one that safeguards academic cooperation, fosters inclusivity and sustainability, and reinforces the EHEA as a space of trust, solidarity, and shared values.

II. Strategic Vision

Internationalisation and mobility are key drivers for advancing the EHEA. They enable all learners to acquire international and intercultural competences, preparing them to engage in an increasingly interconnected world. Internationalisation and mobility strengthen economic growth, societal cohesion, and global competitiveness by fostering cross-cultural understanding, knowledge exchange, innovation, and a skilled, adaptable workforce. Moreover, internationalisation and mobility promote quality, inclusion, sustainability, employability and the safeguarding of fundamental values within higher education. They contribute to strengthening mutual understanding, cooperation, and innovation across borders, thus reinforcing the EHEA's role as a global reference for open, dynamic, diverse, and value-based higher education cooperation and exchange.

Internationalisation is understood as a comprehensive and intentional process aimed at integrating global, international, and intercultural dimensions into the objectives, content, learning outcomes, and overall learning environment of higher education. It reaches across all levels of HEIs and is reflected in curriculum design, competence development, internationally oriented teaching and learning methods, assessment practices, mobility measures, institutional values and standards, resource allocation, and staff development processes. Crucially, internationalisation also supports the acquisition of transversal and discipline-specific competences that enable students and graduates to act as responsible global citizens and effective change makers in diverse, multicultural, and rapidly evolving contexts. In essence, internationalisation permeates every aspect of higher education and engages all members of the academic community.

The vision for internationalisation and mobility within the EHEA is guided by the following principles:

- **Core educational mission**: Internationalisation and mobility should be embedded visibly and meaningfully in the very core of higher education's teaching, learning, and research missions.
- **Accessibility and inclusion**: Opportunities for international and intercultural experiences should be open to all learners and staff, regardless of their background or personal circumstances, with special attention to underrepresented groups.
- **Environmental and social responsibility**: Internationalisation and mobility must be pursued in ways that are sustainable, ethical, and socially responsible.
- **Diverse formats and approaches**: Internationalisation should occur within and beyond physical mobility, embracing internationalisation at home (IaH), such as internationalisation of the curriculum, and online learning opportunities.
- Internationalisation should be pursued through balanced, reciprocal and co-designed cooperation with other macro-regions.

III. Commitments

The commitments presented in this Action Plan are commitments from EHEA Member States, providing guidance for policy development and coordination. The commitments aim to include implementation perspectives for HEIs and other stakeholders, highlighting practical approaches to foster internationalisation and mobility across the EHEA and beyond.

1. We commit to internationalisation of higher education as a core dimension of the EHEA, enabling students and staff to develop intercultural and international competences and strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation within the EHEA and beyond.

- By 2030 we commit to having in place comprehensive national policies, strategies or equivalent measures for the internationalisation of higher education. These should reflect the diversity of national higher education systems and respect institutional autonomy and academic freedom, while providing a coherent enabling framework for responsible, inclusive and sustainable internationalisation.
- Creating enabling domestic conditions for international cooperation by addressing legal, administrative, and structural barriers within the relevant competences of public authorities and higher education institutions and by improving coherence between higher education, research, innovation, migration, employment and related policy areas.
- Promoting responsible internationalisation in line with the fundamental values of the EHEA and with principles of quality, inclusion, reciprocity, mutual benefit and sustainability, while respecting institutional autonomy and supporting proportionate due diligence by higher education institutions in international cooperation including with regard to ethical considerations, academic and research security, and related risks and opportunities.
- Supporting HEIs in developing coherent internationalisation strategies, policies and practices aligned with their missions, profiles, capacities and long-term objectives, in consultation with their academic communities and relevant partners.
- Ensuring meaningful participation and co-creation throughout the internationalisation policy cycle, through structured dialogue with higher education institutions, students and staff and, where relevant, research and innovation actors, social partners, employers, public authorities and civil society, thereby strengthening the societal relevance of internationalisation, knowledge circulation and mutually beneficial cooperation.
- Ensuring that internationalisation policies are evidence-informed and regularly reviewed with clear objectives and proportionate monitoring arrangements, drawing wherever possible on existing comparable data and avoiding unnecessary administrative burdens on higher education institutions.

2. We promote a holistic, comprehensive and inclusive perspective of internationalisation that integrates physical mobility, virtual exchanges and other at-home activities, both on and off campus, ensuring quality international experiences for all learners.

- We encourage and support HEIs to integrate internationalisation in the curriculum and make the best use of mobility, but also to develop and enhance blended, hybrid and online formats, for example COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning).

- We promote ethical, trustworthy and human-centred approaches to digitalisation and artificial intelligence in virtual exchange and mobility, addressing bias, privacy, transparency and academic integrity, and supporting digital equity.
- In order to support the internationalisation efforts of HEIs and to follow up on our commitment that every student should have a meaningful internationalisation experience, whether through physical mobility or by other means, we will in addition establish an approach for supporting virtual exchanges. For this purpose, we will work jointly with the higher education stakeholders to define and implement formats for virtual exchanges.
- We encourage HEIs to make these experiences explicitly anchored and made visible within the curriculum to ensure that all students have structured opportunities to acquire and demonstrate them.
- We underscore the importance of multilingualism and encourage and facilitate HEIs to expand the number of language learning courses available to students and staff, and expand the number of courses taught in foreign languages.

Table: overview of internationalisation activities

A. International experience without physical mobility (also known as Internationalisation at Home)	• Internationalisation of Curricula
	• International Classroom
	• Internationalisation through LOs, modules designed as such (intentionality embedded)
	• Virtual exchanges (including COIL)
B. International experience with physical mobility	• Blended mobility – as in the EEA benchmark and in the BIP (not to be measured under 20% benchmark if physical mobility part is under 15 ECTS)
	• Short credit mobility (not to be measured under 20% benchmark if under 15 ECTS)
	• Credit mobility (to be measured under 20% benchmark if over 15 ECTS)
	• Degree mobility (to be measured under 20% benchmark)

3. We reaffirm the importance of international collaboration in the EHEA and commit to strengthening the implementation of the Bologna key commitments as a foundation for cross-border cooperation and exchange. We further commit to reducing barriers to joint learning opportunities and transnational education, and to promoting international academic and administrative careers through staff mobility, thereby strengthening institutional capacity.

- We commit to addressing gaps in the implementation of the Bologna key commitments through strengthened national action plans and the effective use of existing Bologna tools and European and international frameworks to facilitate cross-border cooperation, quality assurance, comparability and recognition, including continued progress towards automatic recognition. Continued dialogue with regions outside Europe remains essential and we recognise the contribution of the Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue to advancing these objectives. We also call for strengthened collaboration between the BFUG and non-EHEA members, ensuring coherence with the Roadmap for International Cooperation to 2030 and Beyond and the Global Policy Forum Statement.
- We encourage countries and HEIs to facilitate credit mobility and develop transnational education, including joint, double and multiple degree programmes. We recognise the role of European Universities Alliances in deepening transnational cooperation, fostering joint educational provision and creating opportunities for student and staff mobility. We also emphasise the importance of mutual understanding, information-sharing and cooperation across regional quality assurance systems and networks to support these forms of collaboration.
- We encourage HEIs to embed staff mobility in their human resource management, career development, promotion and appraisal systems, supported by appropriate incentives, accessible information and institutional support. HEIs should promote diverse and inclusive mobility opportunities, including short-term mobility, administrative staff exchanges and structured exchange programmes, and encourage participation in continuing professional development abroad and through transnational programmes. These activities should strengthen sustainable partnerships and build institutional capacity.

4. We reaffirm the <u>physical mobility target of 20%</u> outgoing mobile students, highlighting that physical mobility remains a key driver for the acquisition of intercultural and international competences, as well as a catalyst for intercultural understanding and international solidarity.

- We acknowledge that the Leuven mobility target has not yet been reached and encourage countries to renew efforts in this direction with differentiated approaches across study cycles and types of mobility, acknowledging that mobility patterns and feasibility vary between short, first, second, and third cycles, as well as between credit and degree mobility. We undertake to set national milestones to move towards the Leuven mobility target (based on the current state in each country).
- We underline the important role that physical mobility can have in the acquisition of intercultural and international competences and encourage HEIs and other stakeholders to strengthen the quality and impact of mobility experiences by incorporating attention to each of the mobility phases: before, during and after a mobility experience.
- We encourage HEIs to establish comprehensive support structures for mobility, including welcome centres as single-entry points, access to national language courses, and adequate

housing and welcoming arrangements for international students, while assuring equal treatment and equal access to student support services. This includes support processes and information centres for outgoing students and staff including logistical and administrative, professional, cultural and linguistic preparation.

- We encourage HEIs to structurally and systematically embed mobility and/or flexibility windows in study programmes and develop a consequent and decisive approach towards recognition of learning outcomes abroad and flexible study modules. In addition, establishment of systematic reintegration processes for returning students and staff covering self-reflection and self-recognition of acquired competences, career guidance, and well-being is encouraged.
- We encourage HEIs to develop and provide high-quality, credit-bearing short-term international activities, and integrated curricula that foster inclusion of all students in the process of internationalisation but also raise motivation for long-term mobilities.

5. We commit to further removing persistent and undue systemic barriers to learning mobility, recognising that such barriers affect both participation in outgoing mobility and the capacity of higher education systems and institutions to receive and integrate mobile learners and staff.

- Removing these barriers is essential to widening participation and supporting mutually beneficial cooperation across the EHEA.
- National authorities and higher education institutions should address administrative, financial, recognition, social, and policy and structural barriers through coordinated measures. These categories are interrelated, and their cumulative effects may particularly disadvantage learners from underrepresented backgrounds.
- Measures should address barriers affecting both outgoing and incoming mobility. Removing obstacles to outgoing mobility can widen access to international learning opportunities, while improving conditions for incoming mobility can strengthen the accessibility and capacity of receiving institutions. Inclusion should guide action in both directions, and efforts to promote balanced mobility should support equitable opportunities and sustainable partnerships, taking account of different national and institutional contexts.

<u>Financial barriers</u>

- We commit to improving the adequacy, accessibility and timely provision of financial support for mobility. Measures should address travel and living costs, accommodation deposits and additional costs associated with disability, caring responsibilities or other individual circumstances.
- We will work towards greater portability of grants and loans and promote advance payments and needs-based support so that participation does not depend on students' capacity to finance mobility upfront.

<u>Administrative barriers</u>

- We commit to simplifying and improving the transparency of mobility procedures, including applications, admissions, documentation, grant administration and, in cooperation with competent authorities, visa and residence procedures. We will encourage coordinated support services, accessible information and predictable processing times to reduce uncertainty and administrative burdens for students, staff and institutions.
- We will promote digital accessibility and digital equity by ensuring that online information, application platforms and administrative services are accessible to persons with disabilities,

and by supporting those with limited access to digital devices, connectivity or digital skills. Appropriate assistance and alternative access channels should remain available.

Recognition barriers

- We commit to strengthening transparent, consistent and timely recognition of learning undertaken abroad, building on the applicable Bologna tools and recognition conventions. We will encourage prior agreement on the recognition of learning outcomes, effective implementation of learning agreements, clear decision-making procedures and accessible appeals. Mobility should not result in avoidable loss of credits or delays in academic progression.

Social barriers

- We commit to addressing unequal access to mobility arising from social disadvantage, disability, caring responsibilities, discrimination or insufficient support, as well as linguistic and cultural barriers and factors that may limit motivation or confidence to participate.
- We will promote targeted outreach, accessible services and accommodation, linguistic and intercultural preparation, peer support and appropriate well-being services. Measures should strengthen awareness of mobility opportunities and their benefits, support language learning before and during mobility, foster intercultural understanding and a sense of belonging, and address concerns that may discourage potential participants.
- Measures should support participation, integration and successful completion of mobility experiences, with particular attention to groups underrepresented in each national and institutional context.

Policy and structural barriers

- We commit to reviewing national and institutional rules and arrangements that unnecessarily restrict mobility, while respecting institutional autonomy and academic standards. Priorities include more flexible curricula, mobility windows, better coordination of academic calendars, stronger institutional capacity and more consistent implementation of EHEA commitments.
- We also recognise that the lack of sufficiently disaggregated data limits the identification of participation gaps and the development and evaluation of targeted measures. We will promote the availability, quality and comparability of mobility data, appropriately disaggregated by relevant participant characteristics, study cycle, field of study and type and direction of mobility, while respecting data protection requirements and avoiding disproportionate reporting burdens.
- Cooperation between education authorities and other competent bodies should address obstacles that higher education institutions cannot resolve independently.

6. We commit to making learning mobility more inclusive and accessible for students from underrepresented, disadvantaged and vulnerable backgrounds by addressing the financial, social and structural barriers they face and providing targeted support measures that enable their equal participation, so that all learners can acquire international and intercultural competences.

- As part of the national internationalisation policies, strategies or equivalent measures referred to under Commitment 1, we commit to including specific objectives and measures for inclusive mobility and, where appropriate, targets and indicators for the participation in mobility of underrepresented student groups, as identified in each national context, and to monitoring their participation. These should be coherent with our national approaches to

the social dimension and with the Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA (Rome, 2020) and their indicators and descriptors (Tirana, 2024). In cooperation with competent authorities, where relevant, we will ensure needs-based support schemes, including dedicated equity funding and financial top-ups so that physical mobility remains financially feasible for all.

- We encourage HEIs to integrate mobility and internationalisation into their institutional strategies and approaches on inclusion and equity, identifying, in line with their own context, which student groups are underrepresented in mobility, the barriers they face and the measures needed to address them. We also encourage HEIs to raise awareness among teaching and administrative staff about diversity and inclusion in mobility programmes and about the needs of different student groups.
- We encourage HEIs to embed inclusive principles in the design of mobility programmes, ensuring flexible pathways that allow students to combine mobility with their ongoing studies at the home institution, accessibility for students with disabilities, including physically accessible campuses and suitable accommodation, and barrier-free information. We also support practical solutions to housing challenges, including accessible accommodation platforms, exchange arrangements where feasible, and welcoming environments that bring domestic and international students together.
- We encourage HEIs to promote equal participation through proactive outreach to students with fewer opportunities, alongside tailored support measures such as peer mentoring and buddy systems, and dedicated advisory and onboarding services.

7. We commit to promoting balanced credit and degree mobility by fostering mutually beneficial, reciprocal and sustainable exchanges of students between countries and institutions, within the EHEA and with other world regions. We will strive to strengthen both incoming and outgoing mobility by moving towards more comparable levels of attractiveness, accessibility and affordability of our higher education systems, favouring openness over restrictive measures, while taking into account the capacity of education systems and local contexts.

- We aim to maximise the societal and academic benefits of learning mobility, strengthen international cooperation and foster brain circulation, while mitigating potential negative effects such as brain drain or undue pressure on local resources. We understand balance in both quantitative and qualitative terms: it does not require equal numbers of incoming and outgoing students and it respects the balance each higher education system seeks between incoming and outgoing mobility. We recognise that mobility dynamics differ within the EHEA, between EU and non-EU EHEA countries, and between the EHEA and other world regions.
- We encourage HEIs, which have an overview of both their incoming and outgoing credit-mobile students, to monitor their credit mobility flows and to pursue greater balance and reciprocity through their partnerships, inter-institutional agreements and internationalisation strategies.
- As degree mobility flows are shaped mainly at system level, we will address the factors behind asymmetric flows by improving the accessibility, attractiveness and affordability of our higher education systems, including by facilitating visa and residence procedures for incoming students and staff in cooperation with competent authorities, so that international students are more evenly spread across the EHEA. We will also strengthen information, guidance and support for students wishing to undertake a full degree abroad.
- We recognise that the language of instruction is a key driver of learning mobility flows and, with due respect for institutional autonomy, we will support moving towards more

comparable levels of provision of courses and degree programmes taught in foreign languages across the EHEA.

- We encourage HEIs to develop institutional partnerships, within the EHEA and with other world regions, that support balanced and reciprocal mobility pathways, aligned with national and regional mobility goals, while recognising the specific challenges such partnerships may face in achieving balance. National "Study in" initiatives and information services can support these efforts, both by attracting incoming students and by informing students considering mobility abroad.

8. We underline the importance of a sustainable approach to mobility and internationalisation, supporting HEIs to integrate environmental responsibility into policies, practices, and learning across our higher education systems.

- Our ambition for sustainable mobility is not a substitute for, or a constraint on, our ambition for physical mobility. In line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we promote and support sustainable mobility by introducing or expanding green funding instruments (e.g. incentives for low-emission travel), prioritising rail and other low-emission transport, and encouraging environmentally responsible practices throughout the mobility period, including in accommodation, campus infrastructure, digitalisation, resource use, and daily living, while ensuring equitable access for all students and avoiding unintended barriers to participation.
- We also encourage the development of systematic national and institutional approaches to sustainable mobility. We will promote green mobility through public visibility tools (e.g. certification, Erasmus+ Accreditation for HE integration) and support HEIs in embedding sustainability across their operations, campuses, and internationalisation strategies. We encourage national recognition or award schemes that make holistic sustainable mobility approaches visible and shareable across the EHEA.
- We will strengthen the role of education in sustainability by integrating sustainability across curricula and offering sustainability awareness training for outbound students, while encouraging institutions to adopt a holistic approach to becoming more sustainable beyond mobility alone.

9. We commit to strengthening data collection and the measurement of progress in internationalisation and mobility by improving the availability, quality and comparability of data at national and European levels.

- We will build on existing internationally agreed statistical frameworks, using the UNESCO-UIS/OECD/Eurostat (UOE) Joint Data Collection as the statistical basis for mobility indicators where applicable. Additional common indicators should address policy dimensions not adequately covered by existing data, while avoiding duplication and disproportionate reporting burdens.
- We will promote clear indicators and monitoring frameworks linked to the implementation of this Action Plan. These should support the assessment of progress against national milestones and contribute, where appropriate, to the Bologna Process Implementation Report and peer learning activities.
- We will support research and analysis and use monitoring findings to inform the regular evaluation and adaptation of national strategies, policies and implementation measures.
- We will encourage the assessment of the contribution of internationalisation activities to the acquisition of international and intercultural learning outcomes, using appropriate quantitative and qualitative methods.

- We will monitor and analyse incoming and outgoing mobility flows by field of study, study cycle, geographical origin and destination, and type of mobility, drawing on existing data wherever possible.

IV. Implementation and Monitoring

- We will translate the commitments of this Action Plan into national policies, strategies and action plans, identifying context-specific barriers and linking them to concrete measures, responsible actors and milestones for the 2027–2030 Bologna cycle.
- Implementation and progress will be monitored through relevant indicators in the Bologna Process Implementation Report (BPIR), drawing on existing data wherever possible and combining evidence on participation and equity with information on administrative processes, financial support, recognition and participants' experiences.
- Peer Learning Activities and thematic exchanges should complement this monitoring by facilitating the exchange of experiences and good practices, supporting evidence-informed policy development and continuous improvement across the EHEA.