

1 A quarter of a century ago, 29 ministers committed to a vision: To align their higher education systems making
2 them compatible and structurally similar as to enable seamless **mobility** for students and staff across countries,
3 while preserving the rich diversity of cultures, languages and pedagogical traditions. They were convinced, as
4 we are still convinced today, that mobility – understood as the personal experience of moving to another
5 country to look at and learn about the world from different perspectives – is among the most powerful means
6 for ensuring international understanding and collaboration, research excellence, mutual trust, social cohesion
7 and, last but not least, peace.

8 In the last 25 years, jointly with stakeholders representing students, academic staff and higher education
9 institutions, we have taken on new and challenging commitments, as both the context and our own higher
10 education community have grown and changed. Not only are we closer, we have grown, encompassing nearly
11 50 countries in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). In this context, we note with satisfaction that **San**
12 **Marino, the newest member of the EHEA**, has largely implemented the agreed roadmap accompanying its
13 accession to the EHEA and **we encourage San Marino to continue to address the few remaining concerns**
14 **identified.**

15 In our Ministerial Conference in Rome, we agreed on our shared vision for building a more inclusive, innovative
16 and interconnected EHEA by 2030^[FN]. We are resolved to make this vision a reality, while at the same time we
17 recognize that important parts of our vision have not yet been realized, and implementation of agreed
18 commitments requires continual momentum and participation of relevant stakeholders in order to be fully
19 accomplished. A peaceful and prosperous world, where all those who wish to could access and be supported
20 in completing a quality higher education, guaranteed by compliance with our fundamental values, still eludes
21 us. Particularly, within our region, the unprovoked aggression in Ukraine, upon which we mandated the BFUG
22 to decide^[FN] to suspend the rights of participation of the Russian Federation and Belarus, has proven the
23 importance of continually maintaining and defending these values of EHEA. The world is facing overlapping
24 social, economic, ecological and political challenges, including rising polarisation, and inequalities. Higher
25 education as a public good and a transformative power for society plays an irreplaceable role in solving those
26 challenges and promoting democratic societies, and EHEA must be conducive to this pursuit.

27 **Fundamental values**

28 While the respect of its fundamental values is a necessary condition for higher education to achieve its
29 missions, they are now more threatened than they were a decade ago. We affirm our understanding of
30 **academic freedom** as defined in the Rome Communiqué. Furthermore,

- 31 ● we understand **academic integrity** as a set of behaviours and attitudes in the academic community
32 internalising and furthering compliance with ethical and professional principles and standards in learning,
33 teaching, research, governance, outreach and any other tasks related to the missions of higher education.
- 34 ● We further understand **institutional autonomy** as the will and ability of higher education institutions to
35 fulfil their missions without undue interference and to set and implement their own priorities and policies
36 **concerning** organisation, finance, staffing and academic affairs.

- 37 ● **Participation of students and staff in higher education governance** encompasses their right to organise
38 autonomously, in accordance with the principle of partnership and collegiality, without pressure or undue
39 interference; to elect and be elected in open, free and fair elections; have their views represented and
40 taken into account; initiate and participate in all debates and decision-making in all governing bodies; and
41 through their representative organisations, be duly involved on issues concerning the governance and
42 further development of the relevant higher education institutions and system.
- 43 ● **Public responsibility for higher education** denotes a set of duties, mainly exercised at the level of the
44 national higher education system, that public authorities must fulfil as part of their overall responsibility
45 for the education sector and society as a whole.
- 46 ● **Public responsibility of higher education** denotes the obligations of the higher education community to
47 the broader society of which the higher education community is a part.

48 We adopt the statements on the fundamental values annexed ^[FN] to this Communiqué. We underscore that
49 while each value is essential, all six values need to be implemented as a coherent whole. To make the
50 fundamental academic values a cornerstone of the EHEA, we ask the BFUG to continue its work to protect and
51 further our fundamental values. As a reliable monitoring of their implementation within all our education
52 systems is required, we welcome the work of the Fundamental Values Working Group on creating a technical
53 monitoring framework, and we ask the BFUG to pilot it and report back to us at our 2027 conference.

54 Key commitments

55 To facilitate **mobility** of students and staff, we decided:

- 56 ● to implement a three-cycle system of programmes and degrees, based on learning outcomes and the
57 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), compatible with the overarching framework of the EHEA (QF-
58 EHEA),
- 59 ● to support the recognition of qualifications throughout the EHEA by implementing the *Convention on*
60 *the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region* (Lisbon
61 Recognition Convention) and its principles, and
- 62 ● to commit to and promote a Quality Culture in Higher education, fostered by fit-for-purpose quality
63 assurance processes in line with the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the*
64 *European Higher Education Area* (ESG).

65 In this respect, the application of the ESG has been promoting trust and transparency between higher
66 education systems, and facilitating accountability and enhancement. In order to keep them in line with
67 developments, challenges and expectations, we invite the authors ^[FN] of the ESG, to propose a revised version
68 by 2026, to be adopted by us at our 2027 conference, as well as an adjustment, where required, of the
69 European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes.

70 We are devoted to acting jointly in order to counter the increasing risk of diploma mills and fraudulent
71 qualifications, made more accessible through developments in the digital field. In this regard, we will promote
72 more robust quality assurance of transnational education and ask the BFUG to work in synergy with the ETINED
73 platform ^[FN] and the ENIC-NARICs.

74 We acknowledge that the implementation of these most basic and key commitments and tools is still uneven,
75 notwithstanding the concerted attempts of peer learning in various groups under the umbrella of the Bologna
76 Implementation Coordination Group (BICG) since its creation in 2018. We recognize the difficulty of
77 transforming the important work of those Thematic Peer Groups (TPGs) into changes at the normative level.
78 **To close the implementation gap of these basic and other commitments made, we agree that after each**
79 **Ministerial Conference we will individually devise concrete publishable implementation plans, around which to**
80 **coordinate our countries' actions.**

81 **An inclusive EHEA**

82 We commit today again to **building an inclusive EHEA by 2030**, able to underpin a cohesive, sustainable, and
83 peaceful Europe, where students are fully supported, at all stages of life, through tailored policies for accessing
84 and completing higher education irrespective of any background or starting point.

85 We are recognising progress in the implementation of the *Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social*
86 *Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA*^[FN], after their approval through the 2020 Rome Communiqué, with
87 yet significant steps needed to ensure adequate implementation. We acknowledge the stark and prolonged
88 impact that the COVID-19 pandemic and economic challenges are still having, not only on higher education
89 systems, but also on the cost of living and the mental health of students and staff. We commit to tackle these
90 challenges together with stakeholders by promoting accessible student support services, inclusive learning
91 environments, including digital ones, **gender equality/equality between women and men**, as well as measures
92 to support covering indirect costs of study. **We will actively collaborate with communities and society at large**
93 **to collectively address the growing challenges around us in order to find appropriate solutions.**

94 Recent years have seen an increase in the number of refugees and displaced individuals seeking shelter in
95 Europe, and higher education plays a key role in their integration within our societies. In order to support
96 refugees and make best use of their skills and potential, we will speed up efforts to ensure the recognition of
97 their qualifications, including through the use of the *European Qualification Passport for Refugees* and the 2017
98 *Recommendation on Recognition of Qualifications Held by Refugees, Displaced Persons and Persons in a*
99 *Refugee-like Situation*.

100 To further foster diversity, equity and inclusion, we **welcome** the newly developed indicators and descriptors
101 for the principles of the social dimension in the EHEA. These tools enable customised implementation based
102 on the specific requirements of higher education systems, by flexibly adapting them to create tailored policies.
103 Therefore, **we endorse the document *Indicators and Descriptors for the Principles of the Social Dimension of***
104 ***Higher Education in the EHEA***^[FN], representing the first comprehensive and consolidated framework for the
105 social dimension in the EHEA. We are committed to measuring progress in the implementation of the principles
106 of the social dimension and **ask the BFUG to report back on this in 2027**. Simultaneously, **we will promote the**
107 **improvement of data collection practices and European monitoring of the social dimension**, encouraging to
108 take part in initiatives in that regard, such as Eurostudent.

109 **An innovative EHEA**

110 The announcement of the EHEA in 2010, rather than becoming the finishing line as originally foreseen, has
111 been the starting point for a continuous dynamic higher policy process. Beyond the vital key commitments,

112 we see a higher education world in rapid development. Students need to be delivered with high-quality,
113 learner-centred and innovative **learning and teaching**, in line with their needs and desires, in order to adapt to
114 these developments. This requires the acquisition of transversal and future-proof skills and equipping students
115 with critical thinking, in order to prepare them for a democratic society and a resilient and competitive labour
116 market. Amidst these developments, we need to ensure student-centred learning is a reality for all students,
117 empowering individual learners through effective support and guidance and cross- disciplinary approaches.

118 The EHEA needs to respond to ongoing change, due to societal, economic, political, environmental and
119 technical developments. This will require enhancement and adjustment of existing, and the development of
120 new, policies and instruments, also in view of new ways of education provision, such as **micro-credentials**, the
121 enhanced use of **joint programmes**, the response to the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the green**
122 **transition** in the area of higher education, the ongoing **digitalisation** and the combination of physical and
123 **online learning and teaching**. We, therefore, ask the BFUG to address in the next work plan how to support
124 higher education's role in the green transition as well as in the digital transition.

125 **Artificial intelligence** already impacts on the experience of learning, teaching and research in ways that we are
126 only beginning to understand. Therefore, we emphasise the importance of analysing the repercussions,
127 avoiding biases by ensuring human decision-making, maintaining data ethics and privacy, adapting assessment
128 methods to protect academic integrity, and the imperative of ethical considerations in their deployment. We
129 affirm our commitment to encourage development of policies by higher education institutions promoting the
130 ethical use of AI in learning and teaching, as well as in research practice, ensuring transparency, fairness,
131 student and staff participation and well-being.

132 **Lifelong learning** is becoming the new normal for all those requiring or desiring new competences to increase
133 their professional, personal or civic potential. We commit to fostering flexible learning paths, including
134 recognition of prior learning and new forms of education provision, such as micro-credentials – properly
135 delivered, described, quality assured and recognized – which can make possible continuing academic,
136 professional and practical acquisition of knowledge and competences, promote inclusion, upskilling and
137 reskilling, and are better aligned with the requirements of learners, changing societies and labour markets.

138 **An interconnected EHEA**

139 The hallmark of an **interconnected EHEA** is seamless mobility of students and staff. We will revamp our efforts
140 to remove barriers and promote physical mobility, also in order to achieve the longstanding benchmark of 20%
141 of mobile students.^[FN] We will support measures for greener and more inclusive mobility, including through
142 using blended formats, while making use of digital tools to enhance the internationalisation of our
143 higher education institutions also through virtual cooperation. We commit to making automatic recognition of
144 qualifications and learning periods abroad a reality for all students and graduates, and to **promoting the use of**
145 **DEQAR as a transparency tool.**

146 We welcome the ongoing developments in deepening and institutionalising transnational cooperation, such as
147 by the European Universities Alliances, underpinned by Bologna tools and commitments, which create new
148 opportunities for our academic communities. In order to unlock the existing potential, we commit to

149 supporting transnational cooperation by removing undue barriers higher education institutions are facing in
150 the creation of joint programmes.

151 We welcome the adoption of the Global Policy Forum Statement and ask the BFUG to continue the outreach
152 beyond the EHEA on various levels, including but not restricted to reciprocal referencing of Qualifications
153 Frameworks and credit systems, ratification and implementation of the UNESCO *Global and Regional*
154 *conventions on recognition of higher education qualifications*, and increasing convergence of Quality Assurance
155 principles. We ask the BFUG to continue and extend its work of promoting dialogue between appropriate
156 international interlocutors and BFUG working structures. [FN]: Further topic: Links ERA-EHEA?

157 We recognise the urgent need to disseminate knowledge and strengthen the dialogue about the ongoing work
158 and new perspectives developed by the BFUG and its working structures, in order to ensure a more effective
159 linkage between the policy level and the higher education community. We indicate as a priority for all EHEA
160 countries the support of national experts, well informed and able to disseminate knowledge about the Bologna
161 Process.

162 Outlook

163 For our 2027 Ministerial Conference, we mandate the BFUG to develop a Bologna Process Implementation
164 Report assessing the main developments, especially the degree to which the EHEA is set to achieve its objective
165 of being inclusive, innovative and interconnected by 2030, and its commitment to upholding fundamental
166 values. We also ask the BFUG to submit proposals for the main priorities for the next decade, in close
167 cooperation with higher education institutions, staff and students. [FN: Governance aspects? TF RoP related decisions.]

168 We note that associating new accessions to the EHEA with a roadmap, and accompanied by a small working
169 group to assist and advise the new member during the work period following its accession, has proved very
170 useful. We, therefore, resolve that further members accessing the EHEA shall be similarly supported in the
171 implementation of their commitments.

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

174 Tirana Commitments

- 175
- 176 > We are resolved to speed efforts to make an inclusive, innovative and interconnected EHEA a reality
177 by 2030.
 - 178 > We ask the BFUG to continue its work to protect and further our fundamental values. We endorse the
179 technical monitoring framework proposed by the Fundamental Values Working Group and ask the
180 BFUG to pilot the implementation of this framework and report back to us at our 2027 conference.
 - 181 > We invite the authors [FN] of the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the*
182 *European Higher Education Area (ESG)*, to propose a revised version by 2026, to be adopted by us at
183 our 2027 conference, as well as an adjustment, where required, of the European Approach for Quality
Assurance of Joint Programmes.

- 184 ➤ We will promote more robust quality assurance of transnational education and ask the BFUG to work
185 in synergy with the ETINED platform and the ENIC-NARICs.
- 186 ➤ We will speed up efforts to ensure the recognition of qualifications held by refugees.
- 187 ➤ We endorse the document *Indicators and Descriptors for the Principles of the Social Dimension of*
188 *Higher Education in the EHEA*¹. We are committed to measuring progress in the implementation of the
189 principles of the social dimension and ask the BFUG to report back on this in 2027. Simultaneously, we
190 will promote the improvement of data collection practices and European monitoring of the social
191 dimension, encouraging to take part in initiatives in that regard, such as Eurostudent.
- 192 ➤ We ask the BFUG to address in the next work plan how to support higher education’s role in the green
193 transition as well as in the digital transition.
- 194 ➤ We affirm our commitment to encourage development of policies by higher education institutions
195 promoting the ethical use of AI in learning and teaching, as well as in research practice, ensuring
196 transparency, fairness, student and staff participation and well-being.
- 197 ➤ We commit to fostering flexible learning paths, including recognition of prior learning and new forms
198 of education provision, such as micro-credentials.
- 199 ➤ We commit to making automatic recognition of qualifications and learning periods abroad a reality for
200 all students and graduates, and to promoting the use of DEQAR as a transparency tool.
- 201 ➤ We commit to supporting transnational cooperation, including by removing undue barriers higher
202 education institutions are facing in the creation of joint programmes.
- 203 ➤ We ask the BFUG to continue and extend its work of promoting dialogue between appropriate
204 international interlocutors and BFUG working structures.
- 205 ➤ [TF on Rules of Procedure outcome].

206 ANNEXES

207 Fundamental Values

208 [Footnotes omitted in this on-screen documents for keeping the line-count;
209 FN “authors” = “The primary authors are ENQA, ESU, EUA and EURASHE - the E4 Group, in cooperation
210 with Business Europe, EI and EQAR.”]

¹ [Link](#)