

1 A quarter of a century ago, 29 Ministers committed to a vision: That their higher education systems could
2 become compatible, and sufficiently similar in some structural ways to make possible the free and
3 unconfined **mobility** of students and staff, from one of their countries to another, while preserving their
4 fecund diversity of cultures, languages and pedagogical traditions. They were convinced, as we are still
5 convinced today, that mobility – understood as the personal experience of moving to another country to look
6 at and learn about the world from different perspectives – is among the most powerful means for ensuring
7 international understanding and collaboration, research excellence, mutual trust, social cohesion and, last
8 but not least, peace.

9 In the last 25 years, jointly with stakeholders representing students, academic staff and higher education
10 institutions, we have taken on new and challenging commitments, as both the context and our own higher
11 education community have grown and changed. Not only are we closer, we have grown, encompassing nearly
12 50 countries in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). In this context, we note with satisfaction that
13 **San Marino, the newest member of the EHEA**, has **successfully/at sufficient level¹** implemented the agreed
14 roadmap.

15 In our Ministerial Conference in Rome, we agreed on our shared vision for building **a more inclusive,**
16 **innovative and interconnected EHEA by 2030**. We are resolved to make this vision a reality, while at the
17 same time we recognize that important parts of our vision have not yet been realized, and implementation
18 of agreed commitments requires continual momentum and participation of relevant stakeholders in order
19 to be fully accomplished. A peaceful and prosperous world, where all those who wish to could access and be
20 supported in completing a quality higher education, guaranteed by compliance with our fundamental values,
21 still eludes us. Particularly, within our region, the unprovoked aggression in Ukraine, upon which the BFUG
22 decided² 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
33 learning, teaching, research, governance, outreach and any other tasks related to the missions of higher
34 education.
- 35 ● We further understand **institutional autonomy** as the will and ability of higher education institutions to
36 fulfil their missions without undue interference and to set and implement their own priorities and
37 policies **concerning** organisation, finance, staffing and academic affairs.
- 38 ● **Participation of students and staff in higher education governance** encompasses their right to organise
39 autonomously, in accordance with the principle of partnership and collegiality, without pressure or
40 undue interference; to elect and be elected in open, free and fair elections; have their views represented

¹ Yellow highlighting = input WG or BFUG decision needed. Green highlighting = technical comment.

² Decision in the BFUG Meeting LXXX on 11 April 2022, BFUG_FR_AZ_80_Minutes of Meeting, p. 6.

- 41 and taken into account; initiate and participate in all debates and decision-making in all governing
42 bodies; and through their representative organisations, be duly involved on issues concerning the
43 governance and further development of the relevant higher education institutions and system.
- 44 ● **Public responsibility for higher education** denotes a set of duties, mainly exercised at the level of the
45 national higher education system, that public authorities must fulfil as part of their overall responsibility
46 for the education sector and society as a whole.
 - 47 ● **Public responsibility of higher education** denotes the **accountability** of the higher education community
48 to the broader society of which the higher education community is a part.³

49 We underscore that while each value is essential, all six values need to be implemented as a coherent whole.
50 To make the fundamental academic values a cornerstone of the EHEA, we ask the BFUG to continue its work
51 to protect and further our fundamental values. As a reliable monitoring of their implementation within all
52 our education systems is required, **we endorse the technical monitoring framework proposed by the**
53 **Fundamental Values Working Group and ask the BFUG to pilot the implementation of this framework and**
54 **report back to us at our 2027 conference.**

55 **Key commitments**

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

63 In this respect, the application of the ESG has been promoting trust and transparency between higher
64 education systems, and facilitating accountability and enhancement. In order to keep them in line with
65 developments, challenges and expectations, we invite the authors⁴ of the ESG, to propose a revised version
66 by 2026, as well as to adjust, where required, the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint
67 Programmes.

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

72 We acknowledge that the implementation of these most basic and key commitments and tools is still uneven,
73 notwithstanding the concerted attempts of peer learning in various groups under the umbrella of the Bologna
74 Implementation Coordination Group (BICG) since its creation in 2018. We recognize the difficulty of
75 transforming the important work of those Thematic Peer Learning Groups into changes at the normative
76 level.⁵

³ Our understanding of these values is further outlined in **ANNEX 1.**

⁴ The primary authors are ENQA, ESU, EUA and EURASHE - the E4 Group, in cooperation with Business Europe, EI and EQAR.

⁵ **Pending further decisions by the BFUG.**

77 An inclusive EHEA

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

81 We are recognising progress in the implementation of the *Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social*
82 *Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA (PAGs SD)*, after their approval through the 2020 Rome
83 Communiqué, with yet significant steps needed to ensure adequate implementation. We acknowledge the
84 stark and prolonged impact that the COVID-19 pandemic and economic challenges are still having, not only
85 on higher education systems, but also on the cost of living and the mental health of students and staff. We
86 commit to tackle these challenges together with stakeholders by promoting accessible student support
87 services, inclusive learning environments, including digital ones, gender equality as well as measures to
88 support covering indirect costs of study.

89 Recent years have seen an increase in the number of refugees and displaced individuals seeking shelter in
90 Europe, and higher education plays a key role in their integration within our societies. In order to support
91 refugees and make best use of their skills and potential, we will speed up efforts to ensure the recognition
92 of their qualifications, including through the use of the *European Qualification Passport for Refugees* and the
93 *2019 Recommendation on Recognition of Qualifications Held by Refugees, Displaced Persons and Persons in*
94 *a Refugee-like Situation*.

95 To further foster diversity, equity and inclusion, we **welcome** the *Indicators and Descriptors for the Social*
96 *Dimension in the EHEA⁶ (IADs SD)*, which represent the first comprehensive and consolidated framework for
97 social dimension. They will enable customised implementation based on specific requirements of higher
98 education systems, by flexibly adapting them for creating tailored policies. We intend to measure progress
99 in the implementation of the **PAGs SD** and ask the BFUG to report back in 2027. Simultaneously, we will
100 promote the improvement of data collection practices and European monitoring on social dimension, with
101 full support to initiatives such as Eurostudent.

102 An innovative EHEA

103 The announcement of the EHEA in 2010, rather than becoming the finishing line as originally foreseen, has
104 been the starting point for a continuous dynamic higher policy process. Beyond the vital key commitments,
105 we see a higher education world in rapid development. Students need to be delivered with high-quality,
106 learner-centred and innovative **learning and teaching**, in line with their needs and desires, in order to adapt
107 to these developments. This requires the acquisition of transversal and future-proof skills and equipping
108 students with critical thinking, in order to prepare them for a democratic society and a resilient and
109 competitive labour market. Amidst these developments, we need to ensure student-centred learning is a
110 reality for all students, empowering individual learners through effective support and guidance and cross-
111 disciplinary approaches.

112 The EHEA needs to respond to ongoing change, due to societal, economic, political, environmental and
113 technical developments. This will require enhancement and adjustment of existing, and the development of
114 new, policies and instruments, also in view of new ways of education provision, such as **micro-credentials**,
115 the enhanced use of **joint programmes**, the response to the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the**

⁶ **Link to be added.** Suggestion for renaming, due to overlap of current foreseen title "Principles, Guidelines and Indicators on social dimension in the EHEA" with the title of the document adopted in 2020.

116 **green transition** in the area of higher education, the ongoing **digitalisation** and the combination of physical
117 and **online learning and teaching**. We, therefore, ask the BFUG to address in the next work plan how to
118 support higher education’s role in the green transition as well as in the digital transition.

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

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

132 **An interconnected EHEA**

133 The hallmark of an **interconnected EHEA** is seamless mobility of students and staff. We will revamp our
134 efforts to remove barriers and promote physical mobility in order to achieve the longstanding benchmark of
135 20% of mobile students. We will support measures for greener and more inclusive mobility, including through
136 using blended formats, while making use of digital tools to enhance the internationalisation of our higher
137 education institutions also through virtual cooperation. We commit to making automatic recognition of
138 qualifications and learning periods abroad a reality for all students and graduates, and to promoting the use
139 of DEQAR as a transparency tool.

140 We welcome the ongoing developments in deepening and institutionalising transnational cooperation, such
141 as by the European Universities Alliances, underpinned by Bologna tools and commitments, which create
142 new opportunities for our academic communities. In order to unlock the existing potential, we commit to
143 supporting transnational cooperation by removing undue barriers higher education institutions are facing in
144 the creation of joint programmes.

145 We welcome the adoption of the Global Policy Forum Statement and ask the BFUG to continue the outreach
146 beyond the EHEA on various levels, including but not restricted to reciprocal referencing of Qualifications
147 Frameworks and credit systems, ratification and implementation of the UNESCO *Global and Regional*
148 *conventions on recognition of higher education qualifications*, and increasing convergence of Quality
149 Assurance principles. **We ask the BFUG to continue and extend its work of promoting dialogue between**
150 **appropriate international interlocutors and BFUG working structures.⁷**

151 We recognise the urgent need to disseminate knowledge and strengthen the dialogue about the ongoing
152 work and new perspectives developed by the BFUG and its working structures, in order to ensure a more
153 effective linkage between the policy level and the higher education community. We indicate as a priority for

⁷ Further topic: Links ERA-EHEA?

154 all EHEA countries the support of national experts, well informed and able to disseminate knowledge about
155 the Bologna Process.

156 Outlook

157 For our 2027 Ministerial Conference, we mandate the BFUG to develop a Bologna Process Implementation
158 Report assessing the main developments, especially the degree to which the EHEA is set to achieve its
159 objective of being inclusive, innovative and interconnected by 2030, and its commitment to upholding
160 fundamental values. We also ask the BFUG to submit proposals for the main priorities for the next decade,
161 in close cooperation with higher education institutions, staff and students.⁸

162 For new members to the EHEA, accessing with an agreed Roadmap and with the support of a working group
163 of the BFUG, which can cooperate and assist a new member in reforms, has proven to be useful practice. A
164 roadmap gives a new member country a clear indication of the next steps and sets a clear timeline for the
165 reforms, and, therefore, any new member accessing the EHEA will be supported in the implementation of its
166 commitments with such an agreed roadmap and a Roadmap group of the BFUG.

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

169 Tirana Commitments⁹

- 170 ➤ We are resolved to speed efforts to make an inclusive, innovative and interconnected EHEA a reality by
171 2030.
- 172 ➤ We ask the BFUG to continue its work to protect and further our fundamental values. We endorse the
173 technical monitoring framework proposed by the Fundamental Values Working Group and ask the BFUG
174 to pilot the implementation of this framework and report back to us at our 2027 conference.
- 175 ➤ We invite the authors¹⁰ of the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European*
176 *Higher Education Area* (ESG), to propose a revised version by 2026, as well as to adjust, where required,
177 the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes.
- 178 ➤ We will promote more robust quality assurance of transnational education and ask the BFUG to work in
179 synergy with ETINED and the ENIC-NARICs.
- 180 ➤ We will speed up efforts to ensure the recognition of qualifications held by refugees.
- 181 ➤ We welcome the *Indicators and Descriptors for the Social Dimension in the EHEA¹¹ (IADs SD)*. We intend
182 to measure progress in the implementation of the PAGs SD and ask the BFUG to report back in 2027.
183 Simultaneously, we will promote the improvement of data collection practices and European monitoring
184 on social dimension
- 185 ➤ We ask the BFUG to address in the next work plan how to support higher education's role in the green
186 transition as well as in the digital transition.
- 187 ➤ We affirm our commitment to encourage development of policies by higher education institutions
188 promoting the ethical use of AI in learning and teaching, as well as in research practice, ensuring
189 transparency, fairness, student and staff participation and well-being.

⁸ Governance aspects? TF RoP related decisions.

⁹ Wrap-up, was "annexed" in Yerevan Communiqué but could be either part of text or beginning of Annexes.

¹⁰ The primary authors are ENQA, ESU, EUA and EURASHE - the E4 Group, in cooperation with Business Europe, EI and EQAR.

¹¹ As above, link to be added. Suggestion for renaming, due to overlap of current foreseen title "Principles, Guidelines and Indicators on social dimension in the EHEA" with the title of the document adopted in 2020.

- 190 ➤ We commit to fostering flexible learning paths, including recognition of prior learning and new forms of
191 education provision, such as micro-credentials.
- 192 ➤ We commit to making automatic recognition of qualifications and learning periods abroad a reality for
193 all students and graduates, and to promoting the use of DEQAR as a transparency tool.
- 194 ➤ We commit to supporting transnational cooperation by removing undue barriers higher education
195 institutions are facing in the creation of joint programmes.
- 196 ➤ We ask the BFUG to continue and extend its work of promoting dialogue between appropriate
197 international interlocutors and BFUG working structures.
- 198 ➤ [TF on Rules of Procedure outcome].

199 ANNEXES

200 Fundamental Values