

Draft Statement of the Global Policy Forum as of 4 March 2024

1 As Ministers responsible for higher education, heads of delegation, representatives of students,
2 organisations and institutions participating in the EHEA Global Policy Forum, we reaffirm our conviction that
3 higher education must expand its ability to address present and future challenges to global peace,
4 development, wellbeing, and democracy.

5 In their 2020 Rome Communiqué, the EHEA Ministers for Higher Education committed to “developing a more
6 innovative, inclusive and interconnected European Higher Education Area (EHEA)”. Higher Education is a
7 foundation for inclusive, equitable and democratic societies. We all aspire to a world that recognizes that
8 quality education for all is a basic human right and where, for all human beings, the global target to “Ensure
9 inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” becomes a
10 reality, in line with the United Nation Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4).

11 In the lead up to the Forum, the EHEA Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue has exchanged
12 information and views with partners in different world regions, on topics of common interest. Conversations,
13 colloquia, seminars and conferences have provided multiple opportunities to share information about
14 similarities and differences between our higher education systems, and to explore together the challenges
15 we face.

16 We aim, through multilateral cooperation, to foster mobility, to strengthen respect for fundamental values
17 of higher education (such as academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and student and staff participation
18 in higher education governance)¹, to improve the quality, relevance and inclusiveness of higher education;
19 and to contribute to lasting peace. Our shared objectives, and the ever greater connectedness of our higher
20 education institutions, provide a strong foundation for dialogue and inter-regional and global cooperation.

21 International mobility, of both students and staff, fosters intercultural and international understanding.
22 Physical mobility remains a powerful tool, while innovative blended mobility experiences and virtual
23 international learning environments are increasingly important, and open up new opportunities. We commit
24 to working to align tools for mobility and recognition of foreign qualifications and learning periods abroad in
25 ways that consolidate trust, and improve compatibility, cooperation and transparency between macro
26 regions.

27 We aim to improve our institutions’ capacity to retain learners and equip them with the competences they
28 will need for employment and for their personal and civic lives, including awareness of and commitment to
29 the principles of sustainability. We also commit to supporting higher education institutions in deepening their
30 engagement with their communities, stakeholders and the labour market.

31 **Moving forward**

32 We see positive potential for all our countries, institutions and organisations in continuing to work together
33 to:

- 34 • Foster innovation in learning and teaching, including digitally supported learning and teaching, and
35 opening up to new skills, including transversal skills, and ensuring their link to employability, while
36 addressing the ongoing issues of unequal access and retention.
- 37 • Promote student-centered learning that takes place in a research-rich learning and teaching
38 environment, and the implications of this for the flexibility of study programmes and lifelong learning
39 pathways, including forms of non-formal and informal education.
- 40 • Further facilitate access to higher education by underrepresented and disadvantaged groups,
41 including refugees, and strengthen the links between higher education and other systems such as
42 VET to reach untapped talent.
- 43 • Further develop all forms of reciprocal mobility of people and knowledge, both in and across regions,
44 as one of the most important keys to global understanding and to excellence in higher education,
45 balancing incoming and outgoing mobility.

¹ Possible note referring to the definitions adopted in the Tirana Communiqué

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- Make learning credits comparable and transferable according to compatible standards and overarching frameworks, building transparency and understanding at global level, and providing secure and interoperable modes of digitalization of data on qualifications and learning achievement.
 - Reach a common understanding of the ethical principles and values of international academic cooperation by sharing, on an equal footing, our experiences, practices and lessons learned on global issues such as equity, inclusion and access to quality education, effective quality assurance practices and principles, and attractive academic careers.
 - Develop joint approaches to the handling of, adaptation to and, as much as possible, shaping of technological developments, most notably artificial intelligence and, along with this, deal with the challenge of disinformation.
 - Promote the development of training and education in environmental and climate change.

57 We consider the entry into force of the UNESCO *Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education*, a landmark achievement, and call for its ratification. Building on pre-existing regional conventions, it is an important step towards reaching SDG 4. To benefit fully from this achievement, we commit to working towards a shared understanding and, where possible, comparability between national and regional qualifications frameworks, qualifications reference frameworks, and quality assurance systems and mechanisms developed in different world regions.

63 **Continuing Dialogue**

64 We take up our responsibilities towards our countries and peoples, in order to realise the potential of higher education to find shared solutions to the world's challenges. We want to support present and future generations in learning to think and act ethically, creatively and critically, enabling them to address and resolve the challenges of the future. Key to this is that higher education plays its pivotal role in the realization of all the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Increased cooperation within and among regions will strengthen our ability to elaborate and implement innovative and inclusive solutions, respecting the resource limitations of our planet.

71 We invite all participants of the EHEA Global Policy Forum to continue to promote global policy dialogue and to identify, region by region, the themes where synergies can be found between the EHEA and with global organizations such as UNESCO and OECD, and with intergovernmental processes as well as with ongoing transnational projects regarding recognition, quality assurance and qualification frameworks.

75 We recognize that each region has its own priorities and see that such diversity enriches our dialogue. We are committed to continuing to build bridges between EHEA working structures and all parties interested in deepening dialogue on (but not limited to) the above mentioned topics.

78 The next EHEA Global Policy Forum will be held in 2027 in *[to be decided]*.