

1 ¹We, the Ministers responsible for higher education in the member countries of the European Higher
2 Education Area (EHEA), have convened in Tirana on XX-XX May 2024, marking the 25th anniversary of the
3 Bologna Process. The past decades brought 49 countries with different political, cultural and academic
4 traditions together to cooperate within a voluntary intergovernmental process, jointly with important
5 stakeholders representing students, academic staff and higher education institutions. Within the EHEA, we
6 have reiterated our will to make the vision which inspired our predecessors a reality, and we aspire to realise
7 key commitments around higher education, on the basis of open dialogue, shared goals and fostered by a
8 closer collaboration in various sub-structures of the Bologna Process Follow-Up Group (BFUG).

9 To facilitate mobility of students and staff, we promote comparability and permeability of our higher
10 education systems, we are implementing a **three-cycle system** of programmes and degrees, compatible with
11 the overarching framework of the EHEA (QF-EHEA), organised based on learning outcomes and quantified
12 according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), we support the recognition of qualifications
13 throughout the EHEA by implementing the **Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning
14 Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention)** and its principles, and we are
15 committed to a **Quality Culture** in Higher education, fostered by fit for purpose Quality assurance processes
16 **in line with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG).**²

17 Higher education plays a pivotal role for thriving and resilient democratic societies, and social cohesion. By
18 producing and disseminating **education as a fundamental public good** through upholding and developing
19 rigorous standards for the benefit of society, promoting democratic citizenship for students, tackling
20 disinformation and promoting critical thinking in a Quality European higher education system, the academic
21 community is to consistently inform public discourse and offer expertise in addressing and resolving societal
22 challenges. The positive force that higher education is expected to play in facing global and European
23 challenges cannot be overstated.

24 The EHEA **builds** on our shared fundamental values - **academic freedom, academic integrity, institutional
25 autonomy, student and staff participation in higher education governance, public responsibility for and of
26 higher education - which are** a basis and precondition for thriving higher education communities and for
27 achieving higher education's role in society.

28 Developments since our previous conference, including the **unprovoked** Russian **invasion of/attack on**³
29 Ukraine, have underlined the importance of **the values upon which we base the EHEA.** The fundamental
30 values of higher education are **now more threatened than** they were a decade ago.

31 **We reaffirm** our understanding of **academic freedom** as defined in the Rome Communiqué. We understand
32 **academic integrity** as a set of behaviours and attitudes in the academic community internalizing and
33 **furthering** compliance with ethical and professional principles and standards in learning, teaching, research,
34 governance, outreach and any other tasks related to the missions of higher education. **We further understand**
35 **institutional autonomy** as **the will and ability of higher education institutions to fulfil their missions without
36 undue interference and to set and implement their own priorities and policies as concerns organisation,
37 finance, staffing and academic affairs. The participation of students and staff in higher education
38 governance** encompasses their right to organise autonomously, in accordance with the principle of
39 **partnership and collegiality, without pressure or undue interference; elect and be elected in open, free and**

¹ N.B.: This is a concatenation of contributions of the BFUG sub-structures, and some contributions haven't been submitted yet and others are yet to be developed. While attending the contribution of the WGs, the Drafting Committee laid out some ideas in text form that could serve as support for a structured discussion process. The text will, obviously, undergo further revisions for coherence and synergy and be revised after WGs and Board and BFUG feedback.

² Highlighting in green indicates changes in this version 0.1, requested by WGs, in comparison to the version submitted to the Board as Draft 0.0.

³ Highlighting in yellow in general indicates need for discussion and a decision on how to proceed of the BFUG.

40 fair elections; have their views represented and taken into account; initiate and participate in all debates in
41 all governing bodies; and through their representative organisations, be duly consulted on issues concerning
42 the governance and further development of the relevant higher education institutions and system. **Public**
43 **responsibility for higher education** denotes a set of duties that public authorities must fulfil as part of their
44 overall responsibility for the education sector and society as a whole. It is mainly exercised at the level of the
45 national higher education system. **Public responsibility of higher education** denotes the obligations of the
46 higher education community to the broader society of which the higher education community is a part. Our
47 understanding of these values is further outlined in ANNEX 1.

48 We underscore that while each value is essential, all six values need to be implemented as a coherent whole.
49 The way any single value is put into practice impacts the way in which other values are realised.

50 The goal of making the fundamental academic values a cornerstone of the EHEA requires

- 51 - reliable monitoring of the implementation of the fundamental values of higher education within all
- 52 our education systems,
- 53 - peer learning enabling us to learn from each other's experience and
- 54 - action to address instances in which fundamental values are threatened.

55 We therefore ask the BFUG to continue its work to protect and further our fundamental values along all these
56 three lines of action. We further endorse the proposed technical monitoring framework outlined in the
57 appendix to the report by the Fundamental Values Working Group, ask the BFUG to pilot the implementation
58 of this framework and report back to us at our 2027 conference.

59 We reiterate our commitment and pursuit of an **inclusive** EHEA for all, where students are fully supported,
60 at all stages of life, through tailored policies for accessing and completing higher education irrespective of
61 any background or starting point. We are recognising **progress in the implementation of the Principles and**
62 **Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA**, after their approval through
63 the 2020 Rome Communiqué, **as a game-changer in the development of social dimension in EHEA**, with yet
64 significant steps needed to ensure adequate implementation. **We are dedicated to implement the enhanced**
65 **definition of social dimension in EHEA that we agreed upon, understanding that social dimension also**
66 **encompasses the desired inclusive environment in higher education that fosters equity, diversity and is**
67 **responsive to the needs of local communities.**

68 To further foster diversity, equity and inclusion of both students and staff, **we adopt the EHEA Policy**
69 **Framework for Social Dimension (Principles, Guidelines and Indicators on Strengthening the Social**
70 **Dimension in EHEA, ANNEX 2)**, which represents the first comprehensive and consolidated framework for
71 social dimension in EHEA. The framework consists of principles, guidelines, indicators and descriptors **for**
72 **social dimension and will enable public authorities and higher education institutions to create system and**
73 **institutional level policies, strategies and action plans for strengthening social dimension, methodologies for**
74 **monitoring and evaluating their implementation as well as assessing their impact. The indicators and**
75 **descriptors will enable customised implementation based on specific requirements of higher education**
76 **systems, by flexibly adapting them for creating tailored policies.**

77 We commit to integrate the **framework** transversally in our policies **and allocate resources for inclusion and**
78 **equity in higher education. We intention to measure progress in the implementation of the framework and**
79 **ask the BFUG to report back in 2027.** Simultaneously, we will promote the improvement of data collection
80 practices and European monitoring on social dimension, with full support to initiatives such as Eurostudent,
81 and **request from the BFUG to explore further links between social dimension and other tools and**
82 **commitments in higher education.**

83 We acknowledge the stark and prolonged impact that the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequences the
84 Russian invasion of/attack on Ukraine had and are still having, not only on higher education systems, but also
85 on rising inequality, student poverty and cost of living. This has also disproportionately affected students'
86 mental health, as they experience uncertainty, as well as personal and professional hurdles. We commit to
87 tackle these challenges together with stakeholders by promoting accessible student support services and
88 inclusive access to the digital environment, measures to support covering indirect costs of study (housing,
89 transportation, meals and others) through grants and access to psychological counselling. We are devoted to
90 creating policies for fostering inclusive learning environments, irrespective of age, race, ethnicity, disability,
91 caring responsibilities, gender identity or sexual orientation. We will also pay attention to the gender
92 dimension, by further supporting women in STEM.

93 In a fast-paced post-pandemic society, our commitment to build an innovative EHEA by 2030 is more
94 important and timely than ever. To train active citizens in a resilient interconnected society and to adapt to
95 future challenges, students need to be delivered with high-quality, learner-centred and innovative teaching
96 and learning, a cornerstone of EHEA policy. Amidst these developments, we reiterate that we will make our
97 commitment to ensure student-centred learning (SCL), a reality for all students, which requires additional
98 focus from authorities and higher education institutions. We reaffirm our commitment to include student-
99 centred learning in legislation and/or national strategies, ensuring adequate funding and proper support
100 structures for implementation. We encourage higher education institutions to take a proactive approach for
101 adapting to the changing environment through stakeholder participation in curriculum design, flexible
102 learning and cross-disciplinary approaches, ensuring that students are empowered to have autonomy and
103 responsibility for their learning experience including assessment, including at doctoral level. We commit to
104 support policies that bridge the disparity in educational backgrounds, including from migration experiences.

105 We call upon the BFUG to establish a working structure on Student-Centred Learning to bring together
106 institutions from across the EHEA to exchange and learn from each other, to work towards creating a
107 commonly shared, explicit and operational definition of student-centred learning, and to propose concrete
108 actions of how to enhance the implementation. We also emphasise the importance of strengthening teacher
109 support, acknowledging teaching's significance, while respecting professional autonomy and ensuring ample
110 time for effective educational practices and collaboration, fair and transparent career assessments, and we
111 commit to incorporating teacher pedagogical training, integrating equality and inclusion, into the curriculum
112 for doctoral students and early career researchers. We intend to ensure that continuous professional
113 development is accessible to all professionals engaged in education and ensure cooperation with them in
114 defining their development related needs. Measures such as establishing teaching and learning centres are
115 important to offer training and expertise, and mentorship programs can also aid early career educators. We
116 highlight that frameworks should be established to outline educators' development and career paths.
117 Teaching should be as valued as research and its recognition can be manifested through promotions based
118 on teaching quality, incentives for innovative teaching, and support for research on teaching practices, while
119 ensuring stable employment and reasonable teaching loads.

120 We, furthermore, reiterate our commitment to create a more interconnected EHEA. Following the holistic
121 view on the institutions of higher education and on the academic community, we see that exchanges and
122 international cooperation need to lead to the creation of the conditions to realise more internationalised
123 research and education. We call upon the BFUG to develop a transversal approach to internationalised
124 research and education, that takes into account the transversal character of existing and developing
125 transnational initiatives, such as alliances of universities or joint degrees, bridging all dimensions of higher
126 education, recognition, quality assurance, or learning, teaching and research. In this regard, we advocate for
127 the ratification of the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education
128 (Global Convention), and we support and see with interest the developments of the European Universities
129 Initiatives and intend to further facilitate transnational education wherever possible.

130 In this respect, the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG 2015) have been one of
131 the most successful initiatives of the Bologna Process, promoting trust and transparency between higher
132 education systems, facilitating not only degree recognition but also serving as a basis for the accountability
133 of higher education towards the public and the enhancement of quality through quality assurance processes
134 across EHEA. In order to keep the document in line with developments, challenges and expectations, we
135 invite **the primary authors of the ESG (ENQA, ESU, EUA and EURASHE - the E4 Group), together with Business
136 Europe, EI and EQAR,** to propose a revised version by 2026, together with a revised version of the European
137 Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes. While keeping already established **principles,** the
138 revised ESG should promote increased support to international cooperation in higher education, put a
139 stronger emphasis on the links with the social dimension and the fundamental values, and highlight
140 innovative practices and emerging trends such as digitalisation and lifelong learning.

141 **[Insert section on] LIFE-LONG-LEARNING?**

142 **We acknowledge and commit to strengthening the role of professional and applied higher education and its
143 relevance for sustainable regional development and providing educational opportunities for diverse learners.
144 Considering the strong need for skilled citizens and the existing skill shortages in Europe, we shall support
145 European higher education institutions in creating stimulating learning environments to develop skills and
146 knowledge for the unforeseeable future.**

147 **We recognize that regulated professions and professional recognition are an important factor in every
148 national education system, and intend to extend our efforts for facilitating mobility also in this regard.**

149 **We recognise the urgent need, highlighted by the consultations regarding the perception of the Bologna
150 Process, to disseminate knowledge and strengthen the dialogue about the ongoing work and new
151 perspectives developed by the BFUG and its working structures, in order to ensure a more effective linkage
152 between the policy level and the higher education community. We indicate as a priority for all EHEA countries
153 the support of national experts, well informed and able to disseminate knowledge about the Bologna
154 Process, and to underpin the implementation of higher education policies and reforms.**

155 Teaching and learning policies should respect the diversity of learners, and ensure the acquisition of
156 transversal and future-proof skills. In order to live up to the ambitions of the symbiotical environmental,
157 **green transition and the technological-digital transition (twin transition),** we are determined to speed our
158 efforts in our commitment to a greener and more sustainable future for generations to come, which can
159 afford no delay. We will bring together all the higher education stakeholders in our countries to promote and
160 enhance the academic sector's focus on the production of knowledge and solutions on the topic of **climate
161 change and sustainability,** while embedding education for sustainable development transversally in the
162 curricula. We commit to further support the transitions towards sustainability of higher education
163 institutions and to work globally towards achieving the sustainable development goals. We ask the BFUG to
164 **address in the next work plan how to identify and multiply** best practices for supporting higher education's
165 role in the green transition **as well as in the technological-digital transition.**

166 Acknowledging the transformative and innovative power of digitalization and AI in higher education, we
167 emphasise **the importance of analysing the repercussions** and the imperative of ethical considerations in
168 their deployment. The use of AI can support personalised learning activities and resources and increase
169 experiential learning. We affirm our commitment to encourage development of policies by HEIs promoting
170 the ethical use of AI in teaching and learning and in **research** practice. We encourage and will support
171 institutions to provide AI literacy for students and staff and integrate ethical principles into digitalization
172 efforts, ensuring transparency, fairness and inclusivity, and student and staff well-being. This includes
173 engaging with students as partners and with staff on responsible AI use, avoiding biases created by AI by
174 ensuring human decision-making, maintaining data ethics and privacy in learning analytics and in teaching
175 and learning in general, and adapting assessment methods to protect academic integrity. Considering ethics

176 in digitalization and AI adoption in teaching and learning, we commit to engaging in peer learning processes
177 and to addressing the use of AI in order to enhance educational quality, inclusivity, and uphold human rights,
178 while harnessing the potential of digitalization and of AI for positive impact on our societies.

179 We note with satisfaction that San Marino has successfully/at sufficient level implemented the agreed
180 roadmap. Accessing the EHEA with an agreed Roadmap and with the support of a working group of the BFUG
181 has proven to be useful practice. A roadmap gives a new member country a clear indication of the next steps
182 and sets a clear timeline for the reforms. A small working group appointed by the BFUG can cooperate and
183 assist a new member in reforms. Therefore, any new member accessing the EHEA will be supported in the
184 implementation of its commitments with an agreed roadmap and a working group of the BFUG.

185 We recognize that notable progress has been made to foster inter-regional mobility, among others by
186 building more frequent contact and constant productive dialogue with countries beyond the EHEA and with
187 other higher education macro-regions all over the world.

188 We welcome the adoption of the Global Policy Forum Statement and ask the BFUG to continue the outreach
189 beyond the EHEA on various levels, including but not restricted to reciprocal referencing of Qualifications
190 Frameworks and credit systems, ratification and implementation of the UNESCO Global and Regional
191 conventions on recognition of higher education qualifications, and increasing convergence of Quality
192 assurance principles.

193 We ask the CG GPD to continue and extend its work of promoting dialogue between appropriate international
194 interlocutors and BFUG working structures, and to develop appropriate procedures for acknowledging the
195 countries and regions that evidence their desire to become “EHEA Global Dialogue Partners”.

196 For our 2027 Ministerial Conference, we mandate the BFUG to develop a Bologna Process Implementation
197 Report assessing the main developments, including ___ [special reporting focus, FV/SD?]. We also ask the
198 BFUG to submit proposals for the main priorities for the next decade, in close cooperation with higher
199 education institutions, staff and students, and for the governance of the EHEA.

200 We gratefully accept the offer by ___ to host the next EHEA Ministerial conference of the EHEA and the
201 EHEA Global Policy Forum in 2027.

202

203 ANNEXES

204 1. Fundamental Values

205 2. EHEA Policy Framework for Social Dimension (*Principles, Guidelines and Indicators on Strengthening the* 206 *Social Dimension in EHEA*)