

STATEMENT BY MEMBERS AND CONSULTATIVE MEMBERS OF THE BOLOGNA FOLLOW UP GROUP ON CONSEQUENCES OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION INVASION OF UKRAINE

We, the undersigned members and consultative members of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), condemn in the strongest terms the armed attack on Ukraine by the Russian Federation in violation of international law¹.

We recall that the Bologna Process has gathered 49 countries from all parts of Europe in developing the EHEA as an area where students, staff and graduates can move freely to study, teach and do research. The 1999 Bologna Declaration, underlines that the importance of education and educational cooperation in the development and strengthening of stable, peaceful and democratic societies is universally acknowledged as paramount.

As Ministers underlined in their Rome Communiqué of November 2020, “[t]he EHEA of our vision will fully respect the fundamental values of higher education and democracy and the rule of law. It will encourage creativity, critical thinking, free circulation of knowledge and will expand the opportunities offered by technological development for research-based learning and teaching”. As the Rome Communiqué further underlines, the EHEA builds on the fundamental values of institutional autonomy, academic freedom and integrity, participation of students and staff in higher education governance, and public responsibility for and of higher education. Higher education should prepare learners to become active, critical and responsible citizens.

The Russian Federation invasion of Ukraine – an EHEA member since 2005 – disregards the values and goals of the EHEA and fundamentally violates all the obligations and commitments the Russian Federation has undertaken since it joined the EHEA in 2003. It has also undermined the trust that is fundamental to European higher education cooperation. For the Russian Federation to regain the trust of other EHEA members will be a long and difficult process.

We therefore ask EHEA members and consultative members to undertake, where appropriate, the following measures, in accordance with their national legislation and policies, and in accordance with the principles of institutional autonomy:

- offer support for higher education in Ukraine. In the immediate, this may include financial support for Ukrainian institutions, intensifying cooperation and generally ensuring the continued involvement of Ukrainian students and staff in European higher education. In the longer run, it may include assistance in rebuilding destroyed infrastructure at higher education institutions, other recovery support and increased academic exchanges.
- enable Ukrainian students or potential students to continue or access higher education if they have to flee Ukraine or are unable to return. This may include offering places of study, with the necessary finance, as well as providing visas and residence permits

¹ Cf. the decision of 24 February 2022 by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, in which 46 of the 49 members of the EHEA are represented.

and opening borders to refugees. Such assistance should be provided by all member countries of the EHEA, and not only by those who share a border with Ukraine.

- extend such measures beyond the immediate emergency: once accepted in a study programme, students should be allowed to complete the programme even if the situation in Ukraine would make it possible to return earlier.
- offer refuge and provisional work opportunities for academic staff who have to flee Ukraine or who cannot return. The exact arrangements will need to be adapted to the development of the situation in Ukraine.
- extend similar assistance to foreign students and staff who are unable to pursue their studies or work at Ukrainian higher education institutions.
- suspend contact and cooperation with any central government agency of the Russian Federation or any other EHEA country that actively supports the Russian Federation invasion of Ukraine and to ensure that they only engage in cooperation with organizations and institutions from the Russian Federation where these are clearly based on shared European values.
- recognize the courage shown by those members of the Russian Federation civil society who are engaging in protest against the Russian invasion of Ukraine, in spite of great personal risk and ask all members and consultative members of the EHEA to offer support and protection to members of the Russian Federation higher education community taking a public stance against the invasion.

We consider the Russian Federation invasion of Ukraine a fundamental violation of the principles on which we have together built the European Higher Education Area. We therefore ask the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG) to suspend the Russian Federation's rights of participation² in all structures and activities of the EHEA, including the BFUG, working groups, task forces, peer learning groups and similar structures. We ask the BFUG to extend the same measures to Belarus. At the same time, we ask the BFUG to consider further arrangements and support for higher education in Ukraine.

We look forward to the day when we can again welcome the Russian Federation and any other EHEA members affected by such a suspension back to the European higher education community in full respect of the values on which it builds and to which the Russian Federation has committed.

EHEA members

Albania

Andorra

Austria

² Cf. the decision taken by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers on 25 February 2022 with regard to Russia's right of participation in this organization.

Belgium – Flemish Community

Belgium – French Community

Croatia

Cyprus

Czech Republic

Denmark

Estonia

European Commission

Finland

France

Georgia

Germany

Greece

Iceland

Ireland

Italy

Latvia

Liechtenstein

Lithuania

Luxembourg

Malta

Moldova

The Netherlands

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Poland

Portugal

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Slovak Republic

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Spain

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Ukraine

United Kingdom

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Council of Europe

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European Association of Institutions in Higher Education

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