



MINISTRY
OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE
OF UKRAINE

1 Draft 5 of the Rome Ministerial Communiqué

2 Introduction

3 We, the Ministers responsible for higher education, meeting in Rome on 19-20 November 2020,
4 celebrate the achievements of the past 21 years since the signing of the Bologna Declaration. We
5 reaffirm our commitment to developing a more inclusive, innovative, interconnected and resilient
6 European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

7 The EHEA is a unique cooperation where public authorities and higher education stakeholders work
8 together to define and achieve shared goals. Thanks to the diversity of our cultures, languages and
9 environments, and to our shared commitment to quality, transparency and mobility, our higher
10 education systems offer Europe and the world unequalled opportunities for learning, teaching and
11 research.

12 Our societies are facing unprecedented challenges connected with the worldwide spread of COVID-
13 19 and its aftermath. The pandemic has shown how interdependent we are, and how vulnerable we
14 can be. It has made evident that we are all part of one world community, where human solidarity is
15 an imperative.

16 Many preexisting challenges have been exacerbated. Higher education, with its experience of
17 transnational and international cooperation and research, must take a leading role in resolving
18 them. Digitalization has allowed our systems to continue to function during the global emergency,
19 although the intensified use of digital means has brought to light a number of challenges

20 We continue to face multiple threats to global peace, health and wellbeing and the questioning of
21 democratic values. We are committed to fighting the social inequities that still limit the achievement
22 of a fully inclusive EHEA [*These paragraphs to be expanded and modified in view of what happens*
23 *in future months*]

24 It is therefore all the more important that we look with determination and optimism towards 2030,
25 confident that we will succeed in fostering more effective cooperation and closer dialogue among
26 our countries, our higher education systems and institutions and with the broader higher education
27 community.

28 [*if approved: Based on our agreed criteria [and possibly an agreed roadmap for implementation] we*
29 *are pleased to welcome San Marino as a new Member of the EHEA.*]

30 Our Vision

31 We envision the EHEA of the future as an area where students, staff and graduates can move freely,
32 study, teach, and do research. **The EHEA of our vision will fully respect the fundamental values of**
33 **higher education and democracy and the rule of law.** It will encourage critical thinking and
34 integrate the opportunities offered by technological development for research-based learning and
35 teaching. It will ensure that our education systems offer all learners equality of opportunities in
36 accordance with their potential and aspirations. We recognize that accomplishing this will require
37 enacting policies and implementing measures in our national frameworks, some of which will go
38 beyond higher education and will entail alignment with wider national economic, financial and social
39 strategies.

40 We commit to fulfilling our vision by 2030, building an inclusive, innovative and interconnected
41 EHEA to underpin a sustainable, cohesive and peaceful Europe:

- 42 - **Inclusive**, because every learner will have equitable access to higher education and will be fully
43 supported in completing their studies and training.
- 44 - **Innovative**, because it will introduce new and better aligned learning, teaching and assessment
45 methods and practices, closely aligned with research.
- 46 - **Interconnected**, because our shared frameworks and tools will continue to facilitate and
47 enhance international dialogue, reform and the mobility of staff and students.

48 During this new decade higher education will be a key actor in **meeting the United Nations’**
49 **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. We commit to supporting our higher education institutions
50 in bringing their educational, research and innovation capacities to bear on these fundamental
51 global objectives.

52 Higher education institutions have the potential to drive major change – improving the knowledge,
53 skills and competences of students and society to tackle sustainability, environmental protection
54 and other crucial challenges. Moving towards climate neutrality is essential for all of us. Higher
55 education must prepare students and graduates for new “green” jobs and activities, enabling them
56 to create and use new technologies, as well as offering up-skilling and reskilling opportunities.

57 Society will continue to rely on higher education in the EHEA, knowing that a robust culture of
58 **academic and scientific integrity** that blocks all forms of academic fraud, distortion of scientific
59 truth, and violation of national and international law is supported by all higher education institutions
60 and all public authorities. **Quality education** will continue to be the hallmark of the EHEA and form
61 the basis for the full achievement of personal and professional capabilities, general wellbeing and
62 prosperity.

63 **Fundamental values**

64 We reaffirm our commitment to promoting and protecting the **fundamental academic values in the**
65 **entire EHEA through intensified political dialogue and cooperation** as an indispensable foundation
66 for quality learning, teaching and research as well as of democratic societies. We commit to
67 upholding institutional autonomy, academic freedom and integrity, participation of students and
68 staff in higher education governance, and public responsibility for and of higher education

69 We ask the BFUG to develop a **framework** for the enhancement of the fundamental values of the
70 EHEA that will foster self-reflection, constructive dialogue and peer-learning across national
71 authorities, HE institutions and organisations, while also making it possible to assess the degree to
72 which these are honoured and implemented in our systems. In the spirit of Magna Charta
73 Universitatum, we adopt the **definition of academic freedom** as freedom of academic staff and
74 students to engage in research, teaching, learning and communication in society without fear of
75 reprisal (**Annex 1**).

76 We reaffirm our commitment to fostering ethics, transparency and integrity in and through
77 education and research and note that the Council of Europe’s Platform on Ethics, Transparency and
78 Integrity in Education (ETINED) offers the possibility for all EHEA members, consultative members
79 and partners to cooperate to reach this goal.

80 [We recommend the implementation, either by national law or by respective institutional
81 regulations, of ombudspersons in higher education institutions within the EHEA, in order to
82 safeguard the rights of students and staff and provide them with independent resources for
83 resolving personal or structural issues in daily life. *To be discussed in the BFUG meeting in June/could*
84 *be included here below in the ‘inclusive EHEA’ section.*]

85 **Building the Future**

86 - **An inclusive EHEA**

87 The **Social Dimension** will remain at the core of the EHEA and will entail providing opportunities for
88 equitable inclusion of individuals from all social groups. Learners with diverse socio-economic,
89 professional, cultural and educational backgrounds must have the possibility and the tools to seek
90 out and avail themselves, at any time of life, of the educational opportunities most useful for them.

91 We commit to reinforcing social inclusion and enhancing quality education by using fully the new
92 opportunities provided by digitalization. At the same time, we recognize that digitalization does not
93 offer 'one size fits all' solutions, and ask the BFUG to propose ways in which all learners can benefit
94 from the novel technologies.

95 We adopt the "**Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education
96 in the EHEA**" (**Annex 2**) and commit to implementing them in our systems. We endorse the
97 broadened definition of social dimension, and will engage in wide-ranging policy dialogue on how
98 to implement the principles and guidelines fully at national level. We will support our higher
99 education institutions in integrating them into their institutional culture and core higher education
100 missions: learning and teaching, research and innovation, knowledge circulation and outreach,
101 institutional governance and management. We will report in 2023 on the concrete steps taken and
102 the related monitoring measures to assure an evidence-based follow-up.

103 - **An innovative EHEA**

104 **Swifter up-dating of knowledge, skills and competences** will be required to respond to the
105 challenges and develop the opportunities that the new decade will bring. Higher education
106 institutions will need to continue to broaden their learning offer and innovate in the ways they
107 achieve this.

108 **Flexibility and openness of learning paths**, both part of the original inspiration for the Bologna
109 Process, are important aspects of **student-centered learning** and are in increasing demand in our
110 societies. In addition to full degree programmes, higher education institutions may want to
111 introduce or enhance their existing offer of **smaller units of learning, including micro-credentials**,
112 which people will require in order to complete or update their cultural, professional, and transversal
113 competences at various stages in their lives. We ask the BFUG to explore how and to what extent
114 these smaller, flexible units can be defined, developed and implemented by our institutions using
115 existing EHEA tools.

116 We [*acknowledge/adopt: to be decided*] the "**Recommendations for national/governmental
117 support/action for the enhancement of Higher Education Learning and Teaching in the EHEA**"
118 (**Annex 3**) to support higher education institutions in the continuing development of student-
119 centered learning and teaching. The recommendations comprise increased support for all learners,
120 and for teaching and non-teaching staff. Academic staff, including junior academics, require stable
121 employment and career opportunities, parity of esteem for teaching and research, attractive
122 working conditions, access to up-to-date staff development, and recognition of their achievements.
123 In all these respects we will foster dialogue and collaboration on learning and teaching in our
124 national systems and at EHEA level.

125 We commit to supporting our higher education institutions in using digital technologies for learning,
126 teaching and assessment, as well as for academic communication and research, and to invest in the
127 **development of digital skills and competences for all**. We commit to supporting the development
128 of openly licensed materials that can be easily shared among higher education stakeholders, who
129 can adapt and repurpose them for their own needs.

130 We support our higher education institutions in intensifying their search for **solutions to the**
131 **challenges our societies face**, in further developing their ability to look ahead, prepare the future
132 generations and give guidance to society, dealing creatively and proactively with new challenges.
133 These range, inter alia, from the climate emergency, to public health issues, social inequality, and
134 use of unsubstantiated information in political debate and decision making.

135 In the future, there will be a **growing need for innovative and critical thinking**, emotional
136 intelligence, leadership, teamwork and problem solving abilities, as well as enterprising attitudes.
137 While innovative technologies and Artificial Intelligence will rapidly increase their importance in our
138 countries, we must ensure that they do not have negative consequences in terms of **ethics and**
139 **human rights**. The **social, human and creative sciences and arts** must continue to play their vital
140 role in giving depth and meaning to our lives and to our societies.

141 - **An interconnected EHEA**

142 **Cooperation and mobility** connect our systems and foster the development of intercultural and
143 linguistic competences, broader knowledge and understanding of our world. Creating direct
144 contacts and synergies among our diverse cultures and higher education systems, mobility of staff
145 and students contributes to the excellence and relevance of higher education in the EHEA, making
146 it attractive and competitive on the global scale. We acknowledge the importance and the benefits
147 of physical mobility for students, doctoral candidates and staff. Notwithstanding the current
148 difficulties related to the pandemic, we reaffirm our target that at least **20% of those graduating in**
149 **the EHEA** should have had a study or training period abroad, and **further commit to enabling all**
150 **learners to acquire international and intercultural competences through internationalization of**
151 **the curricula, and to experience some form of mobility**, whether using physical, digitally enhanced
152 (virtual) or blended formats, or to participate in **innovative international environments** in their
153 home institutions.

154 Digital solutions will facilitate secure, efficient and transparent **exchange of data**. Joint digital
155 approaches to enhance recognition, quality assurance and mobility are needed. We ask the BFUG
156 to map existing and find new solutions to enhance the interoperability of digital systems and the
157 exchange of student and institutional data, in full respect of privacy and security.

158 Deeper cooperation between higher education institutions will help to address the above objectives
159 through joint innovative teaching and research. We will strive to eliminate obstacles to cooperation
160 at national levels and to enable all higher education institutions in the EHEA to benefit from it. The
161 alliances formed under the **European Universities' Initiative** constitute one novel way of exploring
162 deeper and larger scale cooperation, and to detect the obstacles to transnational cooperation.

163 **Implementation**

164 We take note of the results described in the **Bologna Process Implementation Report** on the
165 progress made over the past two decades... [*this part to be completed*]

166 In the 2018 Paris Ministerial Conference we decided to devote special effort to completing
167 implementation of three "**Key Commitments**" essential for the functioning of the EHEA: the
168 Qualifications Frameworks and ECTS, the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the Diploma
169 Supplement, and Quality Assurance according to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance
170 in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

171 We reconfirm our commitment to the full implementation of these measures. We ask the BFUG to
172 continue to employ the **peer support method** to achieve this, and to extend it to further policy

173 areas. We commit to the continued participation of and contribution by our own countries to this
174 effort. [*Here there might be a mention of a Report in the Annexes, as 'background material'*]

175 We commit to completing and further developing the **National Qualifications Frameworks**
176 compatible with the **Overarching Framework of Qualifications of the European Higher Education**
177 **Area (QF-EHEA)** and ask the BFUG to continue to update the criteria for self-certification to include
178 a stronger element of peer review of national reports. We mandate the **Network of QF**
179 **correspondents** to continue its work in the coming work period, contributing to the further
180 development of the QF-EHEA and the self-certification of national qualifications frameworks against
181 it.

182 We will strengthen our efforts to ensure fair and transparent recognition of all qualifications by
183 applying the principles of the **Council of Europe/UNESCO Lisbon Recognition Convention**, including
184 to qualifications and periods of study outside the EHEA, using common assessment criteria and
185 reports, in collaboration with the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee and the ENIC and
186 NARIC Networks.

187 We commit to **automatic recognition** of academic qualifications and periods of study from those
188 EHEA systems that have fully implemented the key commitments, without prejudicing the right of
189 higher education institutions to set specific access criteria. We welcome the Database of External
190 Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR), encouraging the application of agreed and secure systems of
191 digital certification and communication, including blockchain, to facilitate automatic recognition.

192 We commit to reviewing our own legislation, regulations, and practice to ensure fair recognition of
193 qualifications held by refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situations, even
194 when they cannot be fully documented. We welcome the **European Qualifications Passport for**
195 **Refugees** and will support further broadening its use in our systems.

196 We acknowledge the progress made in the development of **quality assurance systems** aligned with
197 the ESG, and we commit to removing the remaining obstacles, including those related to the cross-
198 border operation of EQAR-registered agencies and the application of the European Approach for
199 Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes. We support the development of quality assurance
200 approaches suitable to address innovative learning and teaching, increased flexibility and openness
201 of learning paths, smaller units of learning and enhanced synergisms among higher education
202 institutions. We commit to ensuring that our external quality assurance arrangements cover cross-
203 border higher education with equal standards as for domestic provision.

204 [We commit to further developing cooperation with the **European Research Area** and call for the
205 BFUG to continue to work with the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) to
206 foster better synergies and alignment between education and research and innovation policies.
207 Focus will be on developing research-based learning, enhancing openness and meeting the SDGs.
208 *To be defined with the ERAC*]

209 We commit to the goal of **building a more closely connected and sustainable higher education**
210 **community**, which fosters inclusion, communication, cooperation, and solidarity, essential for the
211 **relevance and excellence of the future EHEA**. To accomplish this, we commit to keeping our
212 national HE sectors informed about and involved in EHEA developments, and to working closely with
213 student and university associations and networks on the development and implementation of
214 national reforms. We ask the BFUG to organize EHEA events such as **transnational seminars,**
215 **workshops and hearings** addressing the wider higher education community (students, academic
216 staff and external stakeholders), to discuss present and future goals and explore collaborative ways
217 to address them.

218 **The EHEA in a global setting**

219 We welcome the adoption of the **UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications**
220 **concerning Higher Education and commit to ratifying it promptly**, in order to facilitate fair
221 recognition of qualifications and periods of study from outside the EHEA, using LRC compliant
222 assessment criteria and reports.

223 We appreciate that the participants in the **Bologna Global Policy Forum** commit with us to
224 encouraging our higher education systems to deploy their resources for the achievement of **the UN**
225 **Sustainable Development Goals** by 2030. We intend to hold other such Fora in conjunction with
226 future EHEA Ministerial Conferences, continuing to explore how to bring our systems into closer
227 dialogue. In order to further develop global policy dialogue and stronger and sustainable
228 cooperation, we mandate the BFUG to propose an outcome-based action plan with the interested
229 countries participating in the **Global Policy Forum**. [*To be adapted according to BFUG discussion and*
230 *the GPF Statement which is now in Draft 3 form*].

231 **Conclusion**

232 We call on the BFUG to address the actions and priorities indicated for the next decade with the
233 overall purpose of creating a **European Higher Education Area that fulfills our vision and achieves**
234 **our goals by 2030**.

235 We gratefully accept the offer by [Albania] to host the next Ministerial Conference of the EHEA and
236 the Bologna Global Policy Forum in [Tirana] on [year and month? tbc]

237 **Annexes**

238 **1. Statement on Academic freedom**

239 **2. Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the**
240 **EHEA**

241 **3. Recommendations for national/governmental support/action for the enhancement of**
242 **Higher Education Learning and Teaching in the EHEA** [*if decided by the BFUG*]

243

244 [*if decided by the BFUG*] Background Documents:

245 Bologna Implementation Report

246 Report on the Consultations

247 Reports of the TPGs]