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PARIS COMMUNIQUÉ DRAFT 7.0

We, Ministers responsible for higher education, meeting in Paris on 24 and 25 May 2018, 20 years after the Sorbonne Declaration, are proud of having established, thanks to the Bologna Process, a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in which goals and policies are agreed upon at European level, with the participation of stakeholders, and implemented in national education systems and higher education institutions.

Through the EHEA, we have paved the way for greater student mobility, improved comparability and transparency and increased quality and attractiveness of our higher education systems. As a new space of dialogue and practice, the EHEA has promoted mutual understanding and trust, has enhanced cooperation among our higher education systems, and has become a point of reference for other regions in the world.

Academic freedom and integrity, institutional autonomy, the participation of students and staff in higher education governance and the public responsibility of and for higher education are the backbone of the EHEA. These fundamental values have been tested in recent years in some of our countries. Therefore, we commit to intensifying political dialogue and cooperation to ensure that our fundamental values are promoted and protected through appropriate national policy measures across the EHEA.

Since the Sorbonne and the Bologna Declarations, EHEA has successfully undergone fundamental changes both at systems and institutional level, and while Europe is currently facing important challenges (such as unemployment, social inequalities, migration-related issues, increasing polarisation and radicalisation), higher education can contribute decisively to meeting these challenges by being equally inclusive and providing students and learners opportunities for individual development throughout life, thus enhancing employment prospects and participation as active citizens in democratic societies.

We will therefore develop policies that encourage higher education institutions to contribute to society through their multiple missions and their fostering intercultural understanding, civic engagement, ethical awareness, as well as their enhancing social responsibility and equitable access to higher education.

Progress in implementing reforms

As the 2018 Bologna Process Implementation Report shows, progress has been made while implementation remains uneven, both between policy areas and between countries.

Quality assurance is key for mutual trust and for increasing mobility and smooth recognition across the EHEA. We recognise the progress made in integrating the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” (ESG) into

52 national and institutional practice in a majority of our countries. We commit to removing the
53 remaining obstacles to the full implementation of the 2015 ESG in our national legislations. In
54 order to develop more joint programmes and joint degrees, we will also seek to enable the
55 use of the “European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes” in our higher
56 education systems. We also welcome and promote the use of the Database of External
57 Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR) as a tool to enhance transparency.
58

59 In order to further develop mobility and recognition across the EHEA, we will increase our
60 efforts in ensuring that comparable higher education qualifications obtained in one EHEA
61 country are automatically recognised on the same basis in the others, for the purpose of
62 accessing further higher education studies.
63

64 We will develop policies to fully implement through our national legislations the Lisbon
65 Recognition Convention and its Recommendation on the recognition of qualifications held by
66 refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation. We also urge higher
67 education institutions to develop transparent procedures for the recognition of qualifications,
68 recognition of prior learning and of study periods.
69

70 We approve the proposal for a revised Diploma Supplement and strongly recommend its
71 adoption within the respective frameworks of the Council of Europe, UNESCO and the
72 European Commission. We call on higher education institutions to continue their
73 development of transparency tools based on learning outcomes, and we encourage the
74 higher education and training community, together with the Commission, UNESCO and the
75 Council of Europe, to embark on the digitalisation of the Diploma Supplement, with a
76 commitment by higher education institutions to pursue further student data exchange in a
77 secure, machine-readable and interoperable formats, in line with data protection legislation,
78 in order to promote further student mobility. We also welcome the current “European student
79 card” pilot project with a view to encourage its further development for more and easier
80 student mobility across the EHEA.
81

82 In order to ensure a fair recognition of ECTS-based short cycles across the EHEA, We
83 include short-cycle qualifications as a stand-alone qualification within the overarching
84 qualifications framework for qualifications in the EHEA (QF/EHEA), while it is up to each
85 country to see whether and how to integrate short-cycle qualifications within their own
86 national framework.
87

88 ***Unlocking the full potential of the EHEA: taking implementation forward***

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90 We acknowledge that the Bologna Process-driven reforms across the EHEA require the
91 successful implementation and full ownership of all our mutually-agreed goals and action
92 lines by all our member countries. Fulfilling our commitments depends and relies upon
93 national policy-makers, public authorities at large, institutions, staff, students and other
94 stakeholders.
95

96 In order to unlock the full potential of the EHEA in particular by an improved implementation
97 of the Bologna key commitments, we^[Ac1] adopt a structured peer-review process based on
98 solidarity, cooperation and mutual learning, focusing on three key commitments crucial to
99 reinforce and support quality and exchange inside the EHEA:

- 100 - a three-cycle system compatible with the QF-EHEA,
 - 101 - compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention
 - 102 - and a quality assurance system in substantial compliance with the European
103 Standards and Guidelines.
- 104

105 After Belarus joined the EHEA in 2015 on the basis of an agreed roadmap, and initiated first
106 reforms, *we welcome Belarus' commitment to work with other members to implement the*
107 *proposed Action Plan.*
108

109 We mandate the Bologna follow-up group to implement, coordinate and monitor the adopted
110 peer support approach and to report back to us by 2020 for our next Ministerial
111 conference^[Ac2],^[Ac3]
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113 ***Innovation in Teaching and Learning***

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115 Ensuring and enhancing the relevance and best quality of teaching and learning is the core
116 mission of the European Higher Education Area. Students and graduates must be
117 empowered with the knowledge, skills and competences required in fast-changing societies
118 and labour markets, including the ability to learn all their lives long. Higher education
119 therefore must be more than ever equally inclusive and relevant for all learners, regardless of
120 background, and must fulfil the multiple missions assigned to it: personal development,
121 preparation for meaningful integration into the labour market and the development of a broad
122 knowledge base in a knowledge and innovation based society.
123

124
125 In order to further the continuous enhancement and innovation of teaching and learning
126 across the EHEA, we will develop policies to support and stimulate innovative learning and
127 teaching practices by and at our higher education institutions where institutional leadership
128 has a key role in promoting and supporting this transformation driven together with students
129 and staff, in close cooperation with relevant stakeholders.
130

131 In order to achieve our goals, we will ensure that higher education institutions further develop
132 and fully include the student-centred learning approach in teaching and learning and make
133 full use of the opportunities offered by on line and digital learning in particular in order to
134 increase the digital competences of students and staff.

135 High quality education provides students with both academic and work-based learning
136 experiences and draws on a variety of pedagogical approaches and modes of delivery. We
137 will encourage higher education institutions to providing inter-disciplinary programmes,
138 offering flexible learning paths, developing study programmes combining digital and other
139 learning approaches and to increase social mobility by enabling learners to access and
140 complete higher education. We will remove regulatory obstacles to digital learning, and
141 ensure access to digital technologies to facilitate participation and completion of studies for
142 all students.
143

144 Education and research are mutually reinforcing, and we commit to improving synergies
145 between education and research in all our higher education systems. Students should
146 encounter research or research-like elements at all levels of higher education and get critical
147 and creative mindsets, with the ability to cope with the unknown and find out solutions to any
148 new challenges.
149

150 High quality teaching is essential in fostering high quality education, and we will improve
151 parity of esteem between teaching and research for career development, exploring ways in
152 which high quality teaching will give merit in academic careers in the same way as
153 achievement in research. We will promote institutional, national and European initiatives for
154 the continuous enhancement of teachers' pedagogical competences.
155

156 ***Towards a more ambitious EHEA from 2020***

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158

159 As EHEA has proved its role as a unique framework for higher education co-operation in
160 Europe, we are eager to develop the EHEA even further. In time for our next Ministerial
161 Conference in 2020, we therefore call for more ambitious goals for cross-border cooperation
162 and exchanges for the development of an inclusive and innovative approach of teaching and
163 learning in order to address the challenges faced by our higher education systems.
164

165 We take note of the recent EU initiative of creating networks of European universities in order
166 to foster increased mobility and closer cross-border cooperation in higher education and
167 research. These networks could serve as inspiration for the further work of the European
168 Higher Education Area and the European Research Area. We call on the Bologna follow-up
169 group to develop proposals to establish regular dialogue with structured collaboration
170 between the EHEA and the European Research Area.
171

172 We commit to developing the role of higher education in ensuring a sustainable future for our
173 planet and our societies, as climate change is one of our greatest global challenges and we
174 commit to finding ways in which we, as EHEA Ministers, can fulfill the United Nations
175 Sustainable Development Goals at both global, European and national level
176

177 As agreed upon in the Bologna Policy Forum, we mandate the BFUG to develop a proposal
178 for a global policy dialogue to improve cooperation with other regions and international
179 organisations, and to promote mutual learning and joint initiatives on issues of common
180 interests, such as widening access and ensuring success in higher education, encompassing
181 migration, mobility, social inclusion, the challenges and benefits of digitalisation, quality
182 assurance, fundamental values and the evolution of higher education in a changing society.
183

184 In^[Ac4] order to further the social dimension we will improve access and completion by under-
185 represented groups, *[and we mandate the BFUG to find ways in which knowledge*
186 *development and implementation support may be improved in the field of social dimension*
187 *and lifelong learning.]*
188

189 For our 2020 conference, we mandate the BFUG to develop a Bologna Process
190 Implementation Report assessing the main developments in the EHEA since the Bologna
191 Process began. We also ask the BFUG to submit proposals for the governance of the EHEA,
192 and for the main priorities for the next decade.
193

194 We gratefully accept the invitation by Italy to host the next Ministerial conference of the
195 EHEA and Bologna Policy Forum in 2020.
196

197 **Annex:**

198 ***Policy measures adopted:***

200
201 Proposal for peer-based support for the implementation of the 3 Bologna key
202 commitments^[Ac5]
203 Belarus action plan^[Ac6] – *[after proposal by Belarus at the April BFUG in Sofia]*

204 Short cycle qualifications as a stand-alone qualification level within the overarching
205 Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA)

206 Revised Diploma Supplement, with a recommendation for its adoption in identical
207 form in the respective frameworks of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the
208 Europass.

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