

EUROPEAN
HIGHER
EDUCATION AREA



TIRANA EHEA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

29 - 30 MAY 2024

Tirana Communiqué



In the last 25 years, we, the Ministers responsible for higher education, jointly with students, higher education institutions, and staff, have grown closer and together built the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). In our Ministerial Conference in Rome in 2020, we agreed on a shared vision for building a more inclusive, innovative and interconnected EHEA.¹ Four years later, we meet here in Tirana to assess the progress made and decide on the next steps to fully achieve its vision by 2030. The implementation of agreed commitments will require continuous momentum and participation of all members and relevant stakeholders, to ensure that all those who wish to can access and be supported in completing a quality higher education, based on our fundamental values.

The world is facing complex and interrelated geopolitical, social, economic, and ecological challenges, including rising polarisation, and inequalities between peoples, communities, and regions. Higher education as a public good and a transformative power for society plays an irreplaceable role in addressing those challenges and promoting democratic societies.

Higher education institutions should be safe spaces of open-mindedness and diversity, and they should seek to promote, through learning, teaching and research activities, critical mindsets, tolerance, non-violence, science-based dialogue, and the peaceful exchange of different perspectives.

Particularly, within our region, the armed attack against Ukraine by the Russian Federation supported by Belarus in violation of international law has brought about the need for international support for Ukrainian higher education and has proven the importance of continually maintaining and defending the values of the EHEA. We stand strongly with Ukraine and its higher education community and decide to maintain the suspension of the rights of participation of the Russian Federation and Belarus in all structures and activities of the EHEA.²

Fundamental values

Higher education can only fully develop its missions when its fundamental values are respected. While they are now more threatened than they were a decade or even four years ago, we reaffirm our commitment to protect, promote, and uphold academic freedom, as defined in the Rome Communiqué. In addition, we commit to upholding, promoting, and protecting the following values:

- We understand **academic integrity** as a set of behaviours and attitudes in the academic community internalising and furthering compliance with ethical and professional principles and standards in learning, teaching, research, governance, outreach, and any other tasks related to the missions of higher education.
- We further understand **institutional autonomy** as the will and ability of higher education institutions to fulfil their missions without undue interference and to set and implement their own priorities and policies concerning organisation, finance, staffing and academic affairs.
- **Participation of students and staff in higher education governance** encompasses their right to organise autonomously, in accordance with the principle of partnership and collegiality, without pressure or undue interference; to elect and be elected in open, free and fair elections; have their views represented and taken into account; initiate and participate in all debates and decision-making in all governing

¹ https://www.ehea.info/Upload/Rome_Ministerial_Communique.pdf.

² Decision in the BFUG Meeting LXXX on 11 April 2022, <https://www.ehea.info/page-bfug-meeting-80>.

bodies; and, through their representative organisations, be duly involved in issues concerning the governance and further development of the relevant higher education institutions and system.

- **Public responsibility for higher education** denotes a set of duties, mainly exercised at the level of the national higher education system, which public authorities must fulfil as part of their overall responsibility for the education sector and society as a whole.
- **Public responsibility of higher education** denotes the obligations of the higher education community to the broader society of which the higher education community is a part.

We adopt the statements on the fundamental values annexed to this Communiqué.³ While each value is essential, all six of them need to be implemented as a coherent whole. As a reliable monitoring of their implementation within all our education systems is required, we welcome the work on creating a technical monitoring framework, and we ask the BFUG to report back to us at our 2027 Ministerial Conference.

Key commitments

As in Paris in 2018, we today reaffirm our three key commitments to be preconditions for the successful development and innovation of the EHEA, that is to:

- implement a three-cycle system of programmes and degrees,⁴ based on learning outcomes and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), compatible with the overarching qualifications framework of the EHEA (QF-EHEA);
- support the recognition of qualifications throughout the EHEA by implementing the *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region* (Lisbon Recognition Convention) and its principles, while working towards automatic recognition in the EHEA; and
- promote a quality culture in higher education, fostered by fit-for-purpose quality assurance processes in line with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG).

The 2024 Bologna Process Implementation Report confirms and illustrates the still incomplete and uneven implementation of these key commitments, but also the important contribution of the Thematic Peer Groups under the guidance of the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group in improving the situation.

Therefore, we commit to ensuring that we have, or will devise, and will publish appropriate action plans to address any remaining implementation gaps, and to promoting knowledge-sharing activities related to the EHEA.

As the Bologna Process tools have developed throughout the last decade, we mandate the BFUG to work on their future-proof development, dissemination and possible expansion. To support the implementation of the ECTS, including learning outcomes, we invite the BFUG to review the ECTS Users' Guide 2015 by 2027, to strengthen its key features and adapt it to current developments, including micro credentials.

The application of the ESG promotes trust and transparency within and between higher education systems and facilitates accountability and enhancement. To keep them in line with ongoing developments, challenges and expectations, we invite the authors⁵ of the ESG to propose a revised version by 2026 to the BFUG, to be adopted by us at our 2027 Ministerial conference, as well as an adjustment, where required, of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes. We will also promote more robust and transparent

³ See ANNEX 1.

⁴ Including a short-cycle fully integrated in the QF-EHEA, if delivered.

⁵ The primary authors are ENQA, ESU, EUA and EURASHE - the E4 Group, in cooperation with Business Europe, EI and EQAR.

quality assurance of transnational education delivered worldwide, in line with the ESG, to protect the interests of students.

Furthermore, we are committed to countering diploma and accreditation mills, fraudulent qualifications and academic cheating services, made more accessible through developments in the digital field. We ask the BFUG to make good use of the work of the ETINED platform⁶ and the ENIC-NARIC networks to address these challenges and protect academic integrity.

An inclusive EHEA

We reconfirm the importance of **building an inclusive EHEA by 2030**, able to underpin a cohesive, sustainable, and peaceful Europe, where students are fully supported, at all stages of their learning paths, through policies for accessing and completing higher education irrespective of their background or starting point.

The adoption of the *Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA*⁷ in the 2020 Rome Communique was an important step in this direction, but more is needed to ensure their implementation by 2030. We commit to measuring progress in their implementation and ask the BFUG to report back on this in 2027. Furthermore, we endorse the document *Indicators and Descriptors for the Principles of the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA*⁸ as the first comprehensive and consolidated framework for the social dimension in the EHEA. Simultaneously, we promote the improvement of data collection, through participation in related initiatives, such as Eurostudent.

Students' well-being has to be understood in the broad sense, including physical, psychological, social and economic aspects, which are often interrelated. The socio-economic challenges, such as the rising cost of living and difficulty to access student housing, have impacted access to higher education and student life as a whole, particularly the mental health of students. We, together with stakeholders and communities, commit to tackling these challenges, by ensuring accessible student support services, inclusive learning environments (including digital ones), gender equality, as well as measures to support students in covering indirect costs of study.

Globally, the number of refugees and displaced individuals seeking shelter has been increasing, including students and academic staff. Europe is one of the safe destinations, and higher education plays a key role in their integration into our societies. To support refugees and make best use of their skills and potential, we will intensify our efforts to ensure the recognition of their qualifications and to remove barriers to their enrolment in higher education, including through the use of the guidelines developed by the ENIC-NARIC networks, of the *European Qualification Passport for Refugees (EQPR)* by the Council of Europe, and of the *2017 Recommendation on Recognition of Qualifications Held by Refugees, Displaced Persons and Persons in a Refugee-like Situation* adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee.

An innovative EHEA

The EHEA also needs to respond to ongoing change, due to societal, economic, geopolitical, environmental

⁶ Council of Europe Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education (ETINED).

⁷ https://ehea.info/Upload/Rome_Ministerial_Communique_Annex_II.pdf.

⁸ [Link to Indicators and Descriptors for the Principles of the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA.](#)

and technological developments. As the world is in rapid change, this has important consequences for higher education. The **green and digital transitions** require unprecedented innovation with new technologies, processes and practices to drive positive change, as well as more advanced and widespread levels of knowledge and skills, nurturing awareness, engagement and responsibility of learners.

To fulfil its mission and to respond adequately, sustainable funding for higher education, enhancement and adjustment of existing policies and instruments, and the development of new ones are needed. This includes new modalities of education provision, such as **micro-credentials**, the enhanced use of **joint programmes**, and support for the entrepreneurial and innovation capacities of higher education institutions. We will support them in strengthening their contribution to society and their local communities, responding to the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the green transition** in the area of higher education, to the ongoing **digitalisation** and the combination of **physical and online learning and teaching**. We will also ensure **synergies with the European Education Area (EEA) and the European Research Area (ERA)**.

The need for **Lifelong learning** in society is increasing, especially for all those requiring or desiring new competences to enhance their professional, personal or civic potential. Learning paths need to be flexible, properly delivered, quality assured, and recognised. They should promote inclusion, upskilling and reskilling, and be aligned with the requirements of learners, changing societies and labour markets. This also includes the recognition of prior learning, and new forms of education provision, such as micro-credentials. We commit to fostering such **flexible learning paths** in all higher education programmes.

Students need access to **high-quality, learner-centred and innovative learning and teaching**, in line with their needs and interests, to develop competences needed to tackle global challenges. This requires that they develop transversal and future-proof skills, capacity for creative and critical thinking, as well as civic competencies, to support their active participation in a democratic society and a rapidly changing labour market. Amidst these developments, we need to ensure **student-centred learning** is a reality for all students, empowering individual learners through research-based learning, effective support and guidance and cross-disciplinary teaching approaches.

We acknowledge the crucial **role of teaching staff** in supporting high-quality, learner-centred and innovative learning and teaching. Teaching should be valued on equal footing with research and other professional tasks, including transnational cooperation and community engagement. To ensure this, institutions need to offer adequate and attractive working conditions, staff development opportunities, and assessment and career progression based on appropriate criteria and metrics.

Artificial intelligence (AI) impacts our societies and economies, and also learning, teaching, assessment and research. This requires the adaptation of existing, and development of new practices and policies at the level of institutions and systems in due consideration of opportunities, risks, and challenges. In particular, the ethical considerations in the development and deployment of AI are imperative. Its use should be free of biases, ensure the primacy of human decision-making, maintain data ethics and privacy, and protect academic integrity. Students and staff should be supported to understand and use AI responsibly. We commit to supporting the ethical, trustworthy, responsible, and rights-based use of AI in learning and teaching, as well as in research practice, to ensure transparency, fairness, student and staff participation and well-being. We ask the BFUG to consider in its work the wider and longer-term impact of the digital transition on higher education in the EHEA, including AI, and in particular with regard to the key commitments and the use of Bologna Process tools.

An interconnected EHEA

We reaffirm our commitment to enabling all learners to acquire international and intercultural competencies. As the hallmark of an **interconnected EHEA** is seamless **mobility of students and staff**, we will reinforce our efforts to identify and remove barriers and promote physical mobility, to achieve the benchmark of at least 20% of mobile students. We mandate the BFUG to prepare an action plan to stimulate mobility and internationalisation of higher education and to support measures for achieving a greener, more inclusive, and more balanced mobility.

We acknowledge the pivotal role of **seamless and secure data exchange** in enhancing recognition, quality assurance and mobility, and establishing interoperability standards to facilitate student access to mobility opportunities and support services, such as the European Student Card initiative and other initiatives.

While all students and staff should have the opportunity to benefit from physical mobility, we will support higher education institutions in their exploration of practices and benefits of **blended mobility and virtual exchanges**, and in fostering the internationalisation of the curricula. We commit to supporting transnational cooperation, including for joint programmes and joint degrees, through better implementation of the key commitments and by removing undue administrative and legal barriers. In this regard, we welcome the **deepening and institutionalising of transnational cooperation**, supported by the Erasmus+ programme, underpinned by and with respect for the Bologna tools and commitments. Initiatives on various levels, including the European Universities alliances, create new opportunities for our academic communities, and should include participation of students and staff in all decision-making processes. We take note of the European Commission's Communication on a blueprint for a European Degree⁹ and look forward to exploring synergies with the EHEA.

We reaffirm our commitment to making **automatic recognition of qualifications and learning periods abroad** a reality for all students and graduates, welcome the revision of the European Area of Recognition (EAR) Manual and the use of other tools developed by the ENIC-NARIC networks, and will continue to promote the use of quality assurance and transparency tools, such as DEQAR¹⁰.

We welcome the adoption of the **Global Policy Forum Statement** and ask the BFUG and its working structures to continue to develop and strengthen dialogue and collaboration with macro regions on various levels and with appropriate interlocutors. This includes reciprocal referencing of qualifications frameworks and credit systems, ratification and implementation of the UNESCO *Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education*, as well as the second generation *regional recognition conventions*, and alignment and mutual understanding of quality assurance principles.

We recognise the need for all EHEA countries to **disseminate knowledge and engage in dialogue and collaboration on ongoing work**, in order to ensure a more effective linkage between the policy level and the higher education community. This may also include the establishment of international and national expert networks, supporting their implementation and cooperation across borders and with the BFUG.

⁹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a blueprint for a European degree of 27 March 2024 (europa.eu).

¹⁰ The EQAR Database of External Quality Assurance Results.

Outlook

For our 2027 Ministerial Conference, we mandate the BFUG to ensure that the policy commitments aiming at creating by 2030 an **inclusive, innovative, and interconnected EHEA**, mindful of the fundamental values, are properly monitored, including through a Bologna Process Implementation Report that assesses key developments. We also ask the BFUG to submit to us in 2027 proposals for the main priorities for the next decade, in close cooperation with higher education institutions, staff and students.

We welcome that **San Marino, the most recent member of the EHEA**, has largely implemented the agreed roadmap accompanying its accession to the EHEA and we encourage San Marino to continue to address the few remaining items identified.

We gratefully accept the offer by **Romania and the Republic of Moldova to host the next EHEA Ministerial Conference and the EHEA Global Policy Forum in 2027**.

In view of the long-term character of the EHEA, we consider that firmer structural arrangements are now necessary to ensure its consistent, stable development. We, therefore:

- adopt the “**Rules of Procedure for the EHEA**”¹¹ and invite the BFUG to adopt revised Rules of procedure of for its own work in due course;
- mandate the BFUG to **continue working on the possibility of establishing a long-term, independent, internationally staffed Secretariat** to create effective support for the BFUG, and to evaluate the feasibility and sustainability of the related proposals, models, and terms of reference in Spring 2026, to be presented for adoption and implementation at our 2027 Ministerial Conference;
- agree to undertake an **assessment** of the chosen arrangement after two work periods.

Tirana Commitments

- » We are resolved to make an inclusive, innovative and interconnected EHEA a reality by 2030.
- » We stand strongly with Ukraine and its higher education community and decide to maintain the suspension of the rights of participation of the Russian Federation and Belarus in all structures and activities of the EHEA.¹²
- » We reaffirm our commitment to protect, promote, and uphold academic freedom, as defined in the Rome Communiqué. In addition, we commit to upholding, promoting, and protecting the values of academic integrity, institutional autonomy, participation of students and staff in higher education governance, and public responsibility *for* and *of* higher education, and adopt the statements on the fundamental values annexed to this Communiqué. We welcome the work on creating a technical monitoring framework, and we ask the BFUG to report back to us at our 2027 Ministerial Conference.
- » We commit to ensuring that we have, or will devise, and will publish appropriate action plans to address any remaining implementation gaps, and to promoting knowledge-sharing activities related to the EHEA. We mandate the BFUG to work on the key commitments’ future-proof development, dissemination and possible expansion. Furthermore,
 - we invite the BFUG to review the ECTS Users’ Guide 2015 by 2027, to strengthen its key features and adapt it to current developments, including micro credentials;

¹¹ See ANNEX 2.

¹² Decision in the BFUG Meeting LXXX on 11 April 2022, <https://www.ehea.info/page-bfug-meeting-80>.

- we invite the authors¹³ of the ESG to propose a revised version by 2026 to the BFUG, to be adopted by us at our 2027 Ministerial conference, as well as an adjustment, where required, of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes. We will also promote more robust and transparent quality assurance of transnational education delivered worldwide, in line with the ESG, to protect the interests of students;
 - we are committed to countering diploma and accreditation mills, fraudulent qualifications and academic cheating services, made more accessible through developments in the digital field. We ask the BFUG to make good use of the work of the ETINED platform and the ENIC-NARIC networks to address these challenges and protect academic integrity.
- » We commit to measuring progress in the implementation of the *Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA*¹⁴, and ask the BFUG to report back on this in 2027. Furthermore, we endorse the document *Indicators and Descriptors for the Principles of the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA*¹⁵ as the first comprehensive and consolidated framework for the social dimension in the EHEA. Simultaneously, we promote the improvement of data collection, through participation in related initiatives, such as Eurostudent.
- » We, together with stakeholders and communities, commit to tackling the socio-economic challenges, such as the rising cost of living and difficulty to access student housing, that have impacted access to higher education and student life as a whole. We will intensify our efforts to ensure the recognition of qualifications held by refugees and to remove barriers to their enrolment in higher education.
- » We will support higher education institutions in strengthening their contribution to society and their local communities, responding to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the green transition in the area of higher education, to the ongoing digitalisation and the combination of physical and online learning and teaching. We will also ensure synergies with the European Education Area (EEA) and the European Research Area (ERA).
- » We commit to fostering flexible learning paths, which need to be flexible, properly delivered, quality assured, and recognised, in all higher education programmes. This also includes the recognition of prior learning, and new forms of education provision, such as micro-credentials. We need to ensure student-centred learning is a reality for all students.
- » We commit to supporting the ethical, trustworthy, responsible, and rights-based use of AI in learning and teaching, as well as in research practice, to ensure transparency, fairness, student and staff participation and well-being. We ask the BFUG to consider in its work the wider and longer-term impact of the digital transition on higher education in the EHEA, including AI, and in particular with regard to the key commitments and the use of Bologna Process tools.
- » We reaffirm our commitment to enabling all learners to acquire international and intercultural competencies, and we will reinforce our efforts to identify and remove barriers and promote physical mobility, also in order to achieve the benchmark of at least 20% of mobile students. We mandate the BFUG to prepare an action plan to stimulate mobility and internationalisation of higher education and to support measures for achieving a greener, more inclusive, and more balanced mobility.
- » We will support higher education institutions in their exploration of practices and benefits of blended mobility and virtual exchanges, and in fostering the internationalisation of the curricula. We commit

¹³ The primary authors are ENQA, ESU, EUA and EURASHE - the E4 Group, in cooperation with Business Europe, EI and EQAR.

¹⁴ https://ehea.info/Upload/Rome_Ministerial_Communique_Annex_II.pdf.

¹⁵ Link to Indicators and Descriptors for the Principles of the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA.

to supporting transnational cooperation, including for joint programmes and joint degrees, through better implementation of the key commitments and by removing undue administrative and legal barriers.

- » We reaffirm our commitment to making automatic recognition of qualifications and learning periods abroad a reality for all students and graduates, welcome the revision of the European Area of Recognition (EAR) Manual and the use of other tools developed by the ENIC-NARIC networks, and will continue to promote the use of quality assurance and transparency tools, such as DEQAR¹⁶.
- » We welcome the adoption of the Global Policy Forum Statement and ask the BFUG and its working structures to continue to develop and strengthen dialogue and collaboration with macro regions on various levels and with appropriate interlocutors. This includes reciprocal referencing of qualifications frameworks and credit systems, ratification and implementation of the UNESCO *Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education*, as well as the second generation *regional recognition conventions*, and alignment and mutual understanding of quality assurance principles.
- » We mandate the BFUG to ensure that policy commitments aiming at creating by 2030 an inclusive, innovative, and interconnected EHEA, mindful of the fundamental values, are properly monitored, including through a Bologna Process Implementation Report that assesses key developments.
- » We also ask the BFUG to submit to us in 2027 proposals for the main priorities for the next decade, in close cooperation with higher education institutions, staff and students.
- » We adopt the “Rules of Procedure for the EHEA” and invite the BFUG to adopt revised Rules of procedure of for its own work in due course; we mandate the BFUG to continue working on the possibility of establishing a long-term, independent, internationally staffed Secretariat to create effective support for the BFUG, and to evaluate the feasibility and sustainability of the related proposals, models, and terms of reference in Spring 2026, to be presented for adoption and implementation at our 2027 Ministerial Conference; and we agree to undertake an assessment of the chosen arrangement after two work periods.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: *Fundamental Values – Statements.*

Annex 2: *“Rules of Procedure for the EHEA”*

¹⁶ The EQAR Database of External Quality Assurance Results.

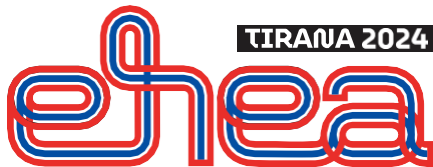


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Annex 1 to the Tirana Communiqué

EHEA STATEMENTS ON FUNDAMENTAL VALUES



INTRODUCTION

The Paris Communiqué specifies the fundamental values of the European Higher Education Area. The Rome Communiqué reconfirms these and also details the shared understanding of one of these: academic freedom.

This document, developed in consultation with a range of experts and stakeholder organisations, complements the Rome Communiqué. Together the documents make explicit the shared understanding of these six values, which are equally important: academic freedom, academic integrity, institutional autonomy, student and staff participation in higher education governance, public responsibility for higher education, and public responsibility of higher education. These values need to be reflected in laws, regulations, and frameworks, and also to be put into practice. Public authorities are responsible for creating conditions conducive to making these values a reality.

The fundamental values of the EHEA constitute a coherent whole and are interconnected. Even if the values often align, they are sometimes in conflict. The way any single value is put into practice can impact the way other values are realised. As a consequence, the EHEA Implementation Report should seek to assess not only the state of each value but also how the fundamental values of the EHEA are put into practice as a whole. The indicators should therefore make it possible to assess the extent to which members of the EHEA respect and practice the values on which the EHEA builds. Countries or education systems cannot be considered to observe the fundamental values of higher education unless they respect all the values. They need to provide an environment which encourages making the values a reality, which gives equal importance to all values and which ensures that they are upheld in equal measure.

Higher education institutions and organisations, students, and staff as well as public authorities are encouraged to make the fundamental values on which the EHEA builds a reality through legislation, policy and practice as well as through self-reflection, constructive dialogue and peer-learning in the implementation of these values across the European Higher Education Area.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity denotes a set of behaviours and attitudes in the academic community internalizing and furthering compliance with ethical and professional principles and standards in learning, teaching, research, governance, outreach and any other tasks related to the missions of higher education. The duties and rights associated with the fulfilment and protection of academic integrity apply to all members of the academic community, who should develop a shared understanding of the concept and be guided by it. This also requires the engagement and development of a culture of collegiality and solidarity, in particular support and encouragement of early career researchers.

Ensuring that the academic community observes ethical standards in higher education, academic integrity underpins societal trust in higher education and research. It is essential to the legitimisation and reputation of higher education and to enable the academic community to inform the public debate on the results, standards and methods of academic research with authenticity and intellectual rigour. Academic integrity plays a major role in ensuring the quality of all types of activity in higher education. It is central in building trust between higher education systems, which is crucial for all forms of international cooperation and mobility. Academic integrity includes but is not limited to honesty, transparency, fairness, trust, responsibility, respect and courage. These qualities underpin an ethical and professional approach in all areas of activities of the academic community, conducted inside or outside the higher education institution. Academic integrity needs to be actively promoted within and across higher education and lead to the development of a culture of integrity, ethics and transparency from the earliest stages of education and research training.

Public authorities, higher education institutions and the academic community share the responsibility for

providing framework conditions that foster academic integrity. This involves establishing transparent regulations, standards and guidelines to be implemented at the level of higher education institutions and providing for independent bodies to monitor the implementation. The frameworks, the measures and the associated sanctions should be proportionate to the intended aim and any violations committed.

To ensure appropriate and fit for purpose processes at institutional and programme level, the reference to the academic integrity policies in learning and teaching, research, in administrative procedures and in institutional governance should be included in quality assurance procedures, and be reviewed by the appropriate internal and external bodies in line with European and national frameworks, including the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESGs).

Special attention needs to be paid to ensure academic integrity in the context of emerging digital technologies, such as the use of artificial intelligence, as well as in the handling of data. Public authorities together with the academic community should adopt recommendations on good educational practice, therein creating and periodically reviewing frameworks and guidelines to ensure they keep pace with developments and, when necessary, setting standards and limits for its use.

Public authorities should establish adequate frameworks and also cooperate at international level, such as within the framework of the Council of Europe, in order to counter and as far as possible eliminate diploma mills, contract cheating practices and other forms of organised misconduct and corruption including in the administrative processes and institutional governance of the academic institutions.

Institutions should consider developing codes of ethics describing issues of integrity and transparency in easily understandable language. These codes of ethics should be co-created with students, academic and administrative staff and should describe the ethical principles, types of individual and organised misconduct, be it in teaching, learning, research or administration, and the appropriate and differentiated measures to take, including sanctions. The codes of ethics should also identify the university bodies responsible for support and guidance in case of violations. To ensure consistency between academic and legal measures, the cases of misconduct which lie outside of the remit of academic sanctions should be described. Higher education institutions should actively promote awareness of the codes of ethics and other relevant standards among target groups. To this end, higher education institutions are responsible for providing staff with relevant training. Academic staff have a special responsibility in adhering to and promoting academic integrity, setting an example from which students can learn. Teachers are responsible for creating a safe learning environment for students where a healthy error and quality culture is developed that recognises that making and identifying shortcomings and errors is an integral part of quality learning, teaching and research. Administrative staff and institutional leaders should ensure fairness and transparency in their work. While it needs to be acknowledged that due to their nature students are members of the academic community still in training, they nonetheless have the same obligation to promote and respect academic integrity as other members of this community. For academic integrity to be successfully fostered, it is important not only to pursue and redress academic misconduct, but also to create an environment that prevents it and that nourishes integrity. Public authorities should ensure that all organisational, cultural, legislative, financial and other measures promote a healthy working environment and error culture, while avoiding regulatory loopholes that allow impunity for academic misconduct.

This includes ensuring adequate and sustainable funding for higher education and creating administrative frameworks that promote collaboration over competition and quality over quantity in academic outputs. Higher education institutions should empower the academic community through proper training, adequate guidance and support for their academic community to develop their understanding of academic integrity and the skills and competences required to apply it.

INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY

Institutional autonomy denotes the will and ability of higher education institutions to fulfil their missions without undue interference and to set and implement their own priorities and policies as concerns organisation, finance, staffing and academic affairs.

Higher education institutions play a central role in democratic societies. Institutional autonomy is a precondition for academic freedom and a prerequisite for higher education institutions to fulfil both their democratic mission and to provide high quality learning, teaching and research for the benefit of society.

Institutional autonomy must be furthered by public authorities as well as the academic community itself. While broader society has legitimate expectations of higher education and the role it can and should play in addressing pressing societal concerns, higher education can fulfill this role only if it enjoys the autonomy to identify longer term developments and challenge established doctrines.

Public authorities should ensure the conditions required to make institutional autonomy a reality. It is incumbent on them to enable higher education institutions to fulfill their missions without undue interference. Governance frameworks and arrangements should safeguard institutional autonomy and the self-governance of academic institutions. Public authorities should ensure quality learning, teaching, research and dissemination.

The different dimensions of autonomy – organisational, financial, staffing and academic autonomy – co-exist with and need to be balanced against the public responsibility for higher education and the public responsibility of higher education towards society.

Higher education institutions need to be able and willing to define their leadership and governance models. This organisational autonomy also entails the autonomy to set an institution's priorities and strategic direction. It should ensure participatory rights for the different members of the academic community. Bodies representing the interests of staff and students should be able to function freely, contribute to institutional policies, further the interests of their constituents and help protect them against discrimination, harassment or intimidation. Public as well as institutional regulations and policy must ensure campus integrity and prevent the use of force and reprisals against academic staff and students, which would constitute a violation of the fundamental values of the European Higher Education Area.

Higher education institutions must be funded adequately to fulfill their missions. They should be able to decide freely on their internal financial affairs and allocate their funding according to their needs and priorities. They should be able to exercise their financial autonomy independently from external actors, in compliance with general rules for transparency and financial accountability. Regardless of their role in funding an institution, public authorities as well as private funders and donors should provide such funding within a framework that ensures that institutions are able to establish and implement institutional priorities and policies. In such a setting, neither additional funds granted on a competitive basis and/or earmarked for pre-defined purposes nor legal regulation of tuition fees shall be considered an infringement of an institution's financial autonomy. Within a framework of public responsibility, adequate and sustainable public funding remains the main pre-condition to guarantee institutional autonomy.

Higher education institutions should be able to hire, promote and retain staff for academic, technical and administrative positions. In exercising their staffing autonomy, higher education institutions should ensure fairness, transparency and non-discrimination. The policies and practice of higher education institutions as well as public authorities should respect and uphold the legal rights and academic freedom of their staff.

Higher education institutions must enjoy academic autonomy in order to ensure that the individual members of the academic community can exercise their academic freedom. As part of their academic autonomy, higher education institutions must be able to decide e.g. on admissions, curriculum design and the introduction

and termination of programmes. Academic autonomy also includes the capacity to decide on areas, scope, aims and methods of research in accordance with the law, academic standards and good research practice, as well as the values of academic integrity.

Arrangements for ensuring and assessing public responsibility and accountability should be consistent with institutional autonomy. This applies especially to funding provided by public authorities, but also to fundamental values as well as human rights in general. Irrespective of enjoying a high degree of autonomy, higher education institutions are accountable for their decisions. At the same time, accountability and responsibility should not serve as a pretext for undue or excessive interventions by public authorities or other actors.

STUDENT AND STAFF PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION GOVERNANCE

The participation of students and staff in higher education governance encompasses their right to organise autonomously, in accordance with the principle of partnership and collegiality, without pressure or undue interference; elect and be elected in open, free and fair elections; have their views represented and taken into account; initiate and participate in all debates in all governing bodies; and through their representative organisations, be duly consulted on issues concerning the governance and further development of the relevant higher education institutions and system.

The implementation of a partnership model of higher education governance is necessary to make all stakeholders in higher education accountable and responsible. Student and staff participation strengthens higher education governance. It enhances the sense of ownership and community and of common responsibility for the development of high quality, socially responsible higher education.

Regardless of the various governance models throughout the EHEA, student and staff participation in higher education governance should be applied to all systems and institutions within the EHEA, whether public or private, for profit or not-for-profit, and at all levels of governance – transnational, European, national, regional, institutional, and sub-institutional. Student and staff participation in higher education governance may take different forms, depending on national and institutional structures and practices.

At all levels and regardless of specific governance arrangements, higher education leaders have a responsibility to create an environment conducive to purposeful and mutually beneficial relations between stakeholders. The dialogue between all relevant stakeholders should be rooted in clear and transparent regulations, provisions and procedures and be based on mutual trust, recognition and cooperation.

The freedom of students and staff to express their views on their institution's policies and priorities as well as the policies of public authorities for the higher education system and the institutions that constitute it, without fear of reprisal, and that both higher education institutions and systems have a responsibility to listen to the critical voices and take them into account is an inseparable element of academic freedom.

Measures to further meaningful engagement of students and staff in higher education governance need to take into account the diverse socio-economic conditions of different student and staff members and in particular focus on early career academics and students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. Student and staff participation in higher education governance is strongly connected to their material conditions, and higher education can thrive only once public authorities as well as higher education institutions provide them with stable learning and working conditions. This comprises academic staff at all stages of their career in all the varieties of the current contractual modalities within higher education systems – full time, part time, fixed term and “on demand” staff.

At the system and transnational levels, democratic higher education governance requires public authorities to commit to its principles and practice, adopt the required provisions in the pertinent laws, and otherwise respect autonomy and participation. Staff and student representatives and their organisations need to be consulted on and to be in a position to influence decisions.

While at the level of higher education systems, several kinds of decision may ultimately fall within the competence of elected public representatives in parliament or by public authorities whose mandate emanates from elected public representatives, these should consult with the democratically elected and representative student and staff organisations. In contexts where policies are developed outside of frameworks with legislative or other governance responsibilities, such as the EHEA, duly elected student and staff representatives should be part of all policy discussions, following the good practice example of the Bologna Follow-Up Group. In all contexts, duly elected student and staff representatives should be consulted on all issues put before the governing bodies. These may include but are not limited to the freedom to learn, the organisation and content of education, curriculum design and quality assurance, equitable access to higher education, strategic objectives and governance designs, financial matters, academic staff recruitment and retention, secure employment conditions, freedom from threats, retaliation, dismissal, or other sanctions in relation to the content of their research, teaching or stated professional views.

Successful higher education governance requires the participation of a variety of stakeholders including institutional leaders, students and academic and administrative staff as well as cooperation with external stakeholders. Such participation and cooperation are essential to fulfilling the main missions of higher education and to ensuring the long-term success of our shared goals and commitments in the EHEA. It should be taken into account when recognising higher education institutions as a part of any given national education system and be included in the quality assurance criteria.

A partnership principle of collegiality requires participation continuously at the various stages of decision-making and decision-taking processes, including setting agendas, drafting decisions, voting and veto, implementation and monitoring. The elections of student and staff representatives at all levels of higher education governance should be organised freely and autonomously, be representative and adhere to democratic principles to be legitimate. Institutions as well as student and staff organisations should seek to stimulate participation in student and staff elections as well as encourage participation of students and staff and engage in the life of the institution with a view to enhancing its democratic legitimacy and representativity. Student and staff organisations should respect democratic principles and processes in their own elections and governance and join forces with institutions and systems in encouraging participation of students and staff. Higher education institutions and systems should provide support, including financial and other resources, for sustainable representation of students and staff and ensuring the independence of representatives and their organisations. Student and staff representatives remain accountable to their constituencies.

PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Public responsibility for higher education denotes a set of duties that public authorities must fulfill as part of their overall responsibility for the education sector and society as a whole. Public responsibility for higher education is mainly exercised at the level of the national higher education system. It includes political, public policy, regulatory and legal obligations, including with regard to funding, and is in its details defined by each EHEA member in accordance with the principles that have been agreed jointly through the EHEA and other relevant contexts. It is exercised with due regard to the other fundamental values of the EHEA and involves the responsibility to help safeguard all the fundamental values of higher education. It includes the core responsibility for the proper functioning of the higher education system, for the benefit of the broader society and individual development, as well as to the members of the higher education community.

While in most EHEA member states the public responsibility for higher education is mainly exercised at national level, this responsibility (or parts thereof) may also be exercised at regional and local level. Increasingly, there is also a justified perception of public responsibility for higher education being exercised at supra-national level, also in accordance with commonly agreed principles.

Public authorities, at their respective levels, have the primary responsibility for putting in place supportive regulatory frameworks that enable higher education institutions to effectively pursue their educational, research and outreach missions. Public responsibility may be exercised through legislation and other regulations but also through other means such as policies or funding.

Public authorities should exercise this responsibility in consultation with the higher education community and other stakeholders. They should specifically ensure that legal and regulatory frameworks foster and enable institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and self-governance by the higher education community. Public authorities should consult and seek input from the higher education sector, internal university constituencies, and relevant external stakeholders regarding the configuration and substance of these frameworks. They should, however, assume exclusive responsibility to ensure that the frameworks within which higher education is conducted are put in place and function adequately, including the legal framework, the qualifications framework of the higher education system, frameworks for quality assurance, the recognition of foreign qualifications, information on higher education provision, the funding frameworks, and the frameworks for the social dimension of higher education.

Public authorities should assume leading responsibility for ensuring that all qualified candidates enjoy effective equal opportunities to undertake and complete higher education, irrespective of their background. They should assume a substantial responsibility for financing and ensuring provision of higher education. All higher education within an education system should be provided and funded within the framework established by the competent public authorities, regardless of whether the provision and funding are public or private¹. Public authorities should further all major purposes of higher education: preparation for the labour market, preparation for life as active citizens of democratic societies, personal development, and the development and maintenance of a broad and advanced knowledge base².

PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Public responsibility of higher education denotes the obligations of the higher education community to the broader society of which the higher education community is a part.

While public authorities have final responsibility for the relevant regulatory and policy frameworks at all levels, higher education institutions should engage in the design and implementation of these frameworks. More directly, however, public responsibility of higher education denotes the obligations of the higher education community to the broader society of which the higher education community is a part. The higher education community encompasses all staff and students as well as institutional leaders, and the members of higher education organisations (e.g. university, student, and staff associations).

Through its own actions, internal regulation and policies, the higher education community should ensure that the fundamental values of higher education are respected, furthered, and implemented. It should pursue truth and the production, transmission, dissemination, curation, and use of knowledge as a public good by upholding and developing the standards of teaching, learning, and research within and across academic disciplines.

¹ Cf Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the public responsibility for higher education and research, para. 7. Recommendations by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers have been accepted by all EHEA member States except the three that are parties to the European Cultural Convention without being Council of Europe members. While Russia is no longer a member of the Council of Europe, it was at the time the Recommendation was adopted.

² Cf Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the public responsibility for higher education and research, para. 5.

The higher education community should continuously inform broader society of its work and results. It should engage in the identification, analysis, and understanding of the problems that confront broader society and individual constituencies. The higher education community should also participate in designing solutions to these problems and provide expertise to meet these challenges, in accordance with its own standards and values.

The higher education community should seek to foster and disseminate, and should itself be guided by, a culture of democracy, solidarity, and ethics. It should provide information publicly about societal risks related to action or inaction, when such risks can be determined on the basis of research and scholarship. The higher education community should design and pursue its policies and activities in ways that are consistent with fairness, non-discrimination, and transparency. It should offer access to higher education to qualified candidates without regard to their economic, social, ethnic, or other background and provide support in order to enable those admitted to complete their studies with success.

Major challenges of modern societies, including those relating to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and sustainable development more broadly, the survival of our planet, issues of war and peace, democracy, and living together cannot be met without a strong contribution by the higher education community through research, learning and teaching, societal outreach and innovation and technology transfer. In the words of the Magna Charta Universitatum (2020), universities acknowledge that they have a responsibility to engage with and respond to the aspirations and challenges of the world and to the communities they serve, to benefit humanity and contribute to sustainability. The higher education community should therefore contribute to the development of society on the basis of scholarship and research as well as teaching and learning.

The higher education community should engage in and with the public sphere, including in public debate, to ensure that our societies be developed and governed on the basis of factual knowledge as well as critical and constructive thinking. It should work with the society of which it is part, including with its local community, to help improve opportunities for all members of society, in accordance with the democratic and social missions of higher education.

The higher education community should equip its graduates with general, specialized and ethical knowledge, understanding, support them in developing the ability to act and to decide what action to take and what action to refrain from taking.



TIRANA EHEA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

29 - 30 MAY 2024

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TIRANA EHEA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

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Annex 2 to the Tirana Communiqué



Rules of Procedures for the European Higher Education Area

The Rules of Procedures for the European Higher Education Area consist of two parts:

Part 1 sets out the Rules of Procedure for the European Higher Education Area (RoP-EHEA), which provide the overall framework. Any change of these rules shall be subject to the decision of Ministers. The RoP-EHEA shall come into force when adopted by Ministers.

Part 2 will set out the Rules of Procedure of the Bologna Follow-up Group and its sub-structures (RoP-BFUG). It can be subject to changes, decided by BFUG, as far as these are in full compliance with the RoP-EHEA (Part 1). Otherwise, such changes require change in the RoP-EHEA and endorsement by Ministers. The RoP-EHEA shall prevail over the RoP-BFUG.

The present document comprises this first part, the Rules of Procedure (RoP-EHEA), by which the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) will be governed, as adopted at the Tirana Ministerial Conference, on 30 May 2024.

The part 2 (RoP-BFUG) will be on the agenda for approval by the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG), following the 2024 Tirana Ministerial Conference.

PART 1 RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA - RoP-EHEA

We, the Ministers responsible for higher education of the States, which are members of the European Higher Education Area, meeting in Tirana on 29 and 30 May 2024;

Considering that over its 25 years of existence, the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area have provided a successful and unique model for coordinated policy reform, taken forward through cooperation between public authorities, higher education institutions, students and staff, respecting the roles and prerogatives of each;

Reaffirming our continued commitment to the European Higher Education Area through cooperation on and coordination of higher education reform and policy development across Europe with the participation of public authorities, higher education institutions, students, and staff through their representative organisations; as well as cooperation with international institutions and governmental and non-governmental organisations with competence in higher education;

Reaffirming that the aim of the European Higher Education Area is to enhance the quality of higher education as well as academic mobility and cooperation;

Reaffirming that the aim of the European Higher Education Area is to strengthen the role of higher education, in and its contribution to our societies, to make them more inclusive, sustainable and resilient, to maintain and strengthen a culture of democracy and human rights, and to build peaceful relations marked by mutual confidence across Europe, and with global partners;

Reaffirming that through its policies and practice, the European Higher Education Area fosters and consolidates the fundamental values of higher education: academic freedom, academic integrity, institutional autonomy, participation of students and staff in higher education governance, and public responsibility for and of higher education;

Considering that at its present stage of development, the European Higher Education Area requires an enhanced framework to fulfil its ambitious mission and achieve the changes that our higher education sectors but also our societies require;

ADOPT these Rules of Procedure for the European Higher Education Area. Its provisions apply to the Ministerial Conferences, the Bologna Follow-up Group and its working structures, including the Secretariat of the European Higher Education Area.

I GUIDING PRINCIPLES

I.1 A process built on European cooperation

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is a voluntary intergovernmental process, built on the Bologna Process, through which its members and consultative members jointly develop policies and soft-law commitments. These are adopted by the competent public authorities of its member States and implemented within each education system, in collaboration and consultation with the representatives of the higher education community, institutions, students and staff. These Rules of Procedure are to guide the operations of the EHEA in the light of established policies, processes and practices.

I.2 Policies and instruments

Ministers identify the policy areas and measures through the declarations and Communiqués they adopt at their regular Ministerial Conferences or in any other setting they may find appropriate for decision making. They may decide to establish frameworks, standards, guidelines, and other mechanisms to further and ensure implementation through coordination, cooperation and mutual support at European level.

I.3 The Bologna Follow-up Group

Between Ministerial Conferences, the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG), where all members and consultative members are represented, develops, adopts and implements the work programme of the EHEA, in accordance with the priorities set by Ministers.

I.4 Co- and Vice-Chairs

The EHEA and its structures are chaired by two Co-Chairs appointed for a period of six months, normally from 1 January to 30 June and from 1 July to 31 December. One Co-Chair represents a European Union member State and the other a non-European Union member State of the EHEA.

The order of the European Union Co-Chairs shall normally follow the order of Presidencies of the Council of the European Union. The order of the non-European Union Co-Chairs normally follows the names of the States in English alphabetical order. For both, the order may nevertheless be modified by the BFUG in agreement with the States members concerned.

The Vice-Chair of the European Higher Education Area represents the State member hosting the forthcoming Ministerial Conference and holds office for the period between two Ministerial Conferences and during the Ministerial Conference organised by the respective member State.

I.5 Ethics

The EHEA shall be developed, maintained and governed in accordance with its fundamental values and in observation of high ethical standards. The BFUG shall develop a specific Code of Ethics for its own work and its working structures, including the Secretariat.

I.6 Implementation of agreed policies

All members commit to act in good faith and as such do their utmost, within their respective education systems and contexts, to further the implementation of policies and decisions adopted by Ministers.

II MEMBERSHIP

The EHEA has members and consultative members, as listed in Annex 1.

II.1 Members

States party to the European Cultural Convention are eligible for membership of the EHEA provided they demonstrate their willingness to pursue and implement the objectives and commitments of the Bologna Process in their higher education systems¹. The European Commission is equally a member of the EHEA.

II.2 Consultative members

European level representative organisations with a legitimate interest in and commitment to, higher education, and intergovernmental organisations representative of public authorities with competence in higher education policy at European level, are eligible for consultative membership of the EHEA.

II.3 EHEA partners

The BFUG may grant organisations that do not fulfil the criteria for consultative membership an association with the EHEA, as EHEA partners. They are invited to Ministerial Conferences and can be invited to the BFUG meetings as determined by the RoP-BFUG. Any decision to grant EHEA partner status shall be

¹ Cf Berlin Communiqué.

communicated to Ministers and shall be considered in Annex 2 to these RoP- EHEA, which lists the EHEA partners.

II.4 European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education

The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) was established under the Bologna Process, with a mandate to establish a register of quality assurance agencies that operate in substantial compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG). It may participate in the BFUG and its structures, without voting rights.

III ACCESSION, WITHDRAWAL AND EXCLUSION

III.1 Accession

Ministers have the exclusive competence to accept new members and consultative members of the EHEA, usually at the regular Ministerial Conference. Applications for membership and consultative membership are to be submitted to the BFUG and will be examined in accordance with the provisions detailed in the RoP-BFUG.

Any member, consultative member or EHEA partner may withdraw from the EHEA upon notification in writing to the BFUG Co-Chairs, duly signed by its appropriate authority, and addressed to the Secretariat of the EHEA. Withdrawal will be effective one month after the receipt of the notification by the Secretariat.

III.2 Suspension and exclusion

Ministers or the BFUG may decide to suspend a member or consultative member, from some or all activities of the EHEA, should it pursue policies or actions that significantly contradict the commitments of the EHEA, constitute a significant violation of its values or confirm an explicit publicly expressed intention to do so. Ministers have the exclusive competence to exclude a member or a consultative member. Under the same criteria, the BFUG may suspend or exclude an EHEA partner.

IV GOVERNING BODIES

IV.1 Governing bodies of the European Higher Education Area

The EHEA has the following governance bodies:

The Ministerial Conference;

The BFUG, with its Board, the two Co-Chairs, and the Vice Chair.

IV.2 The Ministerial Conference

Role and composition

The Ministerial Conference is the highest decision-making authority of the EHEA. It is composed of Ministers responsible for higher education of the State members of the EHEA or their representatives, and of representatives of the highest possible rank with competence in higher education policy of the European Commission and of the consultative members. Delegations representing countries/education systems also include a leader of a higher education institution and a democratically elected student representative.

Process and schedule

The Ministerial Conference meets in regular session at least every three years, and as far as possible in physical presence. Extraordinary meetings are held by decision of the BFUG Co-Chairs or when requested in writing by at least one third of the Ministers and duly authorised representatives of the European Commission and the consultative members.

Competences and tasks

The Ministerial Conference sets its own agenda and takes decisions as appropriate. It has exclusive competence in matters concerning:

- Determining the major goals and priorities of the EHEA.
- The adoption of declarations and Communiqués.
- The adoption of standards, guidelines, and other instruments, which have been formally agreed and are therefore considered as binding on the EHEA and its members.
- The admission or exclusion of members and consultative members of the EHEA.
- The decision on the host and venue of Ministerial Conferences and the Global Policy Fora.
- Any modification of the RoP-EHEA.

IV.3 The Bologna Follow-up Group

The BFUG oversees and directs the development of the EHEA between Ministerial Conferences, ensures the implementation of commitments adopted by Ministers, develops its work programme on this basis and prepares issues for discussion and decision by Ministers. It is made up of duly authorised representatives, with competence in higher education policy matters, of the members and consultative members of the EHEA. The BFUG, its Board, its Co-Chairs and Vice-Chair, the EHEA Secretariat and its other working structures conduct their work in accordance with the RoP-EHEA, and the RoP-BFUG, that it adopted itself.

The BFUG Board is an advisory committee of the BFUG to support it in its activities, including the preparation of its meetings, to enhance efficiency in the management of the EHEA, and ensure its continuity. As such, the responsibilities of the Board consist of coordinating and monitoring the effective implementation of the work programme.

The members of the Board are the present, outgoing, and incoming BFUG Co-Chairs, the BFUG Vice-Chair, the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the European University Association, the European Students' Union, and the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education. One of the Co-Chairs of each of the BFUG working structures according to the work plan of the respective period is invited to participate in Board meetings, without decision-making competence.

IV.4 Working language

The working language of the EHEA is English. The host of the Ministerial Conference may, at its discretion, enable the use of other languages.

V. DECISION MAKING

V.1 Consensus

At all levels, decisions concerning the EHEA are to be made by consensus.

V.2 Voting

Decisions are to be reached primarily by consensus, but in exceptional circumstances, mainly on procedural issues, the BFUG Co-Chairs may decide to take a decision by vote. Votes are limited to the members of the EHEA. Each member has two votes and indicates to the Co-Chairs who will cast the votes on its behalf. There shall be no vote in absence (by proxy). But where a delegation is made up of more than one legal constituent, one of these may vote on behalf of the other constituent provided the latter expressly authorises it to do so by indicating this to the Co-Chairs.

In physical and online meetings, votes are cast publicly, unless at least one delegation requests a secret ballot, with due controls ensuring that only those entitled to cast a vote are able to do so. When voting in presence is not possible, voting may take place by correspondence (letter, email or another electronic means), to be organised by the Secretariat. In this case, the vote cannot be taken by secret ballot.

V.3 Voting regime

If, in exceptional circumstances and in spite of the best efforts of the BFUG Co-Chairs, no consensus can be achieved, decisions can be taken by vote. Votes shall be decided by a majority of the valid votes cast. On matters concerning the following, decisions nevertheless require two thirds of the valid votes cast:

- Adoption of the priorities of the EHEA.
- Adoption of standards, guidelines, instruments and goals.
- The admission, suspension and exclusion of members or consultative members.
- Modifications of the RoP-EHEA.

There shall be no voting on the adoption of the Communiqué.

The quorum shall be two thirds of the members entitled to vote. If no quorum is reached, voting takes place at the following ordinary session or, if the matter needs to be decided sooner, at an extraordinary session, held in physical presence, or online, to be called with a notice of a minimum of two weeks, or by correspondence. No quorum will then be set.

VI GLOBAL POLICY FORUM

Throughout its work, the BFUG seeks to establish dialogue on policies and actions of common concern with partners in other regions.

A Global Policy Forum, which invites international government representatives and organisations is organised, usually in conjunction with Ministerial Conferences. The international partners should be involved in the preparation of the Forum and of the statement that it is to adopt. Invitations should be agreed by the BFUG, which shall consult the host of the Ministerial Conference.

VII EHEA SECRETARIAT

The Secretariat provides neutral, administrative and operational support to the Ministerial Conference, the BFUG and its Board, chairs and working structures. It operates under the authority of the BFUG, is fully accountable to it, and independent of the country or organisation within which it is located.

It should be appropriately equipped, in terms of staff and resources, and sustainable, especially regarding its funding model, and should be strictly non-profit. The Secretariat should be able to accept secondments from EHEA members or consultative members.

Further details are laid down in the RoP-BFUG.

VIII FINAL PROVISIONS

VIII.1 Adoption and modification of Rules of Procedure for the European Higher Education Area

The present Rules of Procedure for the EHEA were adopted at the Ministerial Conference of the EHEA in Tirana, taking place on 29 and 30 May 2024. They may subsequently be modified by the Ministers.

VIII.2 Safeguarding and dissemination of the Rules to members and consultative members

The Rules of Procedure for the EHEA are made public on the EHEA website. The EHEA Secretariat provides the competent authorities of all members and consultative members with a certified copy.

Annexes

Annex 1 EHEA members and consultative members

The countries, institutions and organisations listed below have been accepted as members or consultative members. Membership of the EHEA is governed by Article II of the RoP-EHEA.

Members
Albania
Andorra
Armenia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Belarus (suspended from participation in the EHEA work programme and representation in all EHEA governing bodies as of 12 April 2022)
Belgium Flemish Community
Belgium French Community
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Bulgaria
Croatia
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
European Commission
Finland
France
Georgia
Germany
Greece
Holy See
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Italy
Kazakhstan
Latvia
Liechtenstein
Lithuania
Luxembourg

Malta
Moldova
Montenegro
Netherlands
North Macedonia
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Russian Federation (suspended from participation in the EHEA work programme and representation in all EHEA governing bodies as of 12 April 2022)
San Marino
Serbia
Slovak Republic
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Türkiye
United Kingdom
United Kingdom (Scotland)
Ukraine

Consultative Members
BusinessEurope
Council of Europe
Education International
European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)
European Students' Union (ESU)
European University Association (EUA)
European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE)
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

As an independent institution established by the EHEA, participating without voting rights with similar status as consultative members
European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)

EAnnex 2 EHEA Partners

Partners
Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC)
European Association for International Education (EAIE)
Council of European Professional and Managerial Staff (EUROCADRES)
European Council for Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers (EURODOC)
EUROSCIENCE

Annex 3 Working structures of the BFUG

As stated in Article V RoP-BFUG, the BFUG may establish Working Groups and other structures, in order to fulfil its tasks. The following table lists the most common types of working structures and their functions. It does not exclude different uses of existing, and development of new types of working structures.

Approach	Description	Example
Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Usually a group with more than 10 members □ Open to participation of all BFUG members and consultative members □ Established to conduct work on core tasks, and to contribute to policy development □ Some are standing WGs, or continue over several working cycles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Group on Monitoring • Working Group on Social Dimension • Working Group on Values
Coordination Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Oversees and coordinates activities, also in collaboration with parties or stakeholders who are not BFUG members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BFUG Coordination Group of Implementation of key commitments (BICG) • Coordination Group on Global Dialogue
Advisory Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Accompanies a verification process and/or elaborates a document for the BFUG, to advise Ministers for decision taking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory group Support of the Belarus Roadmap • Advisory group for the Social Dimension • Advisory group for Learning and Teaching in its 2018-2020 work programme.
Task Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Established to explore or fulfil certain limited and concretely described tasks □ Limited in duration □ May be limited in participation, to ensure expertise on the issues and fast results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task Force on Knowledge Sharing • Task Force for the revision of the Rules of Procedure • A Task Force is also established to assist aspiring members and consultative members • Task Force on Fundamental Values in the 2018–2020 work programme
Support to the Roadmap of new members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Established to assist a new member or consultative member during its first period of membership □ Participants are representative of the new member, and of the BFUG, selected due to their individual and institutional capacity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There have been two Roadmap groups, for Belarus in 2015-2018 (Advisory Group), and for San Marino (Working Group), in 2021-2024

Thematic Peer Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Established to enable mutual learning and enhance implementation of key commitments at national level □ Usually requires the creation of action plans from members in order to pursue objectives related to the implementation of the key commitments □ Possible involvement of experts and stakeholders next to the BFUG delegates. 	
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Annex 4 Procedure and criteria for membership

I. Requirements for membership of the EHEA

Applicant countries are requested to confirm their adherence to the following principles and objectives:

- International mobility of students and staff
- Autonomous higher education institutions
- Academic freedom and integrity
- Student participation in the governance of higher education
- Public responsibility for higher education
- The social dimension of higher education

The application has to be complemented by a report, detailing the higher education policies of the country in the light of the Bologna Process and outlining how the principles and objectives of the Bologna Process have been and/or will be implemented. The Report should cover the following topics:

- General information on the higher education system and partnership with stakeholders
- Degree system
 - Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle
 - Stage of implementation of the third cycle
 - Relationship between higher education and research
 - Access and admission to the next cycle
 - Employability of graduates/cooperation with employers
 - Implementation of the national qualifications framework
- National implementation of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG)
 - Review of the QA system with respect to the ESG and national support for implementation
 - Internal quality assurance in higher education institutions
 - Stage of development of external quality assurance system
 - Level of student participation

- Level of international participation
- Recognition of degrees and study periods
 - Stage of implementation of the Diploma Supplement
 - National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
 - Stage of implementation of the ECTS
- Lifelong learning
 - Recognition of prior learning
 - Flexible learning paths
- Joint Degrees
 - Establishment and recognition of Joint Degrees
 - Removing obstacles to student and staff mobility
 - Portability of loans and grants
- The Attractiveness of the EHEA and cooperation with other parts of the world
 - Implementation of strategy
- Future challenges
 - Main challenges for higher education
- Social dimension of higher education
 - Current state of affairs
 - Progress towards a more inclusive higher education system (strategy for the future)
 - Information on the national responsibility for the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the national strategies.

The application has to be signed by the (national) Minister responsible for higher education, submitted by a given deadline, and be complemented by the required national report.

When an application is received, a confirmation of receipt is sent to the applicant country; the BFUG Chairs, assisted by the Bologna Secretariat, verify that the application satisfies the prescribed procedures.

The BFUG (with support from Co-chairs, Vice-Chair, Secretariat, Council of Europe and/or the BFUG Board) assesses the application with the accompanying national report on the basis of the criteria for admission described above and agrees on the recommendation to be given to the Ministers.

II. Requirements for consultative membership and EHEA partners

The criteria for consultative membership are defined as follows:

- Added value to the Bologna Process

Any new consultative member or EHEA partner should provide added value to the Process, meaning that their contribution should have a European scope and be relevant to the work of the BFUG. Additional criteria on added value for new consultative members: their contribution cannot be easily covered by an existing

consultative member and cooperation with the BFUG cannot be better covered at another level.

- Relevance of the stakeholder group

Organisations should have higher education as a central field of interest. The stakeholder group should be relevant to the principles, action lines and goals of the Bologna Process. Organisations that may contribute to stronger links between higher education and the labour market are relevant to the Process. Organisations that may contribute to stronger links between higher education and other educational fields may also be relevant. Organisations representing special professions do not fit with the BFUG, which deals with general principles of, and structures in, higher education.

- Representativeness

A new consultative member or EHEA partner should not be a sub-organisation of a member or consultative member of the Bologna Follow-up Group. Additional criteria on representativeness for new consultative members: be the most representative organisation in its field of interest, be a European organisation or a European branch of an organisation, accept organisations from all the EHEA member States as full members, have full members from no less than 50% of the Bologna countries and have full members from EHEA member States outside the EU/EEA and EU candidate countries.

- Organisational form

Either be a non-governmental organisation (NGO) or an inter-governmental organisation. Additional criteria on organisational form for new consultative members: its mandate should reflect its relevance to the Bologna Process and its right to give an opinion on behalf of its members on matters relating to the Bologna Process.

Organisations wishing to become consultative members or EHEA partners need to send an application to the EHEA Secretariat, documenting that they satisfy the listed criteria. The Secretariat then puts the request on the agenda of the BFUG that in turn will assess the application. The decision is taken by the Ministerial Conference for consultative members and by the BFUG for EHEA partners.



TIRANA EHEA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

29 - 30 MAY 2024

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Global Policy Forum Statement



Global Policy Forum Statement as adopted on 30 May 2024

As Ministers responsible for higher education, and representatives of students, higher education institutions and organizations participating in the EHEA Global Policy Forum, we reaffirm our conviction that higher education must expand its ability to address present and future challenges to global peace, just and inclusive social and economic development, wellbeing, and democracy.

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

In the lead up to the Forum, the EHEA Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue has exchanged information and engaged in dialogue on topics of common interest with partners in different world regions. Conferences, seminars, and colloquia have provided multiple opportunities to share knowledge about our higher education systems, and to explore together the challenges we face.

Global multilateral higher education dialogue and collaboration at the level of governments and institutions can foster mobility, strengthen respect for fundamental values of higher education (such as academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and student and staff participation in higher education governance)¹, improve the quality, relevance and inclusiveness of higher education; and contribute to social justice and lasting peace. Our shared objectives and the ever-greater connectedness of our higher education institutions can provide a strong foundation for meaningful cooperation.

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

We aim to improve our institutions’ capacity to enable learners to develop the competences they will need for employment and for their personal and civic lives, including awareness of and commitment to the principles of sustainability. We also commit to supporting higher education institutions in deepening their engagement with their stakeholders, including local communities and employers.

Moving forward

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

- Foster innovation in learning and teaching, including digitally supported learning and teaching, opening up to new skills, including transversal skills, and ensuring their link to employability and citizenship, while addressing the ongoing issues of unequal access and retention.
- Promote student-centred learning that takes place in a research-informed learning and teaching environment, and the implications of this for the flexibility of study programmes and life-

¹ See the Tirana Communiqué

long learning pathways, including forms of non-formal and informal education.

- Further facilitate access to higher education by underrepresented and disadvantaged groups, including refugees and migrants, and strengthen the links between higher education and other systems such as VET to reach untapped talent.
- Promote the development of training and education in environmental and climate change.
- Further develop all forms of reciprocal mobility of people and knowledge, both in and across regions, as one of the most important keys to global understanding and to excellence in higher education, balancing incoming and outgoing mobility.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

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 greater exchange of knowledge about our higher education systems, policies and instruments and, where possible, compatibility between national and regional qualifications frameworks, and the quality assurance systems and mechanisms developed in different world regions.

Continuing Dialogue

We take up our responsibilities towards our countries and peoples in order to realise the potential of higher education to find solutions to the world's challenges. We want to enable present and future generations to think and act ethically, creatively and critically, to address and resolve the challenges they will encounter.

We invite all participants in the EHEA Global Policy Forum to continue to engage in global policy dialogue and to identify the themes where synergies can be found between regions, and with global organizations such as UNESCO and OECD, be it at the intergovernmental level, or in transnational exchange and collaboration between higher education institutions and organisations.

The next EHEA Global Policy Forum will be held in Iași/Chișinău.



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