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**A new reality**

*Across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), higher education institutions are struggling:*

* *with more limited budgets in the aftermath of the economic and financial crisis,*
* *with greater numbers of students from a wider variety of backgrounds,*
* *and with the need to adapt their models of learning and teaching to the opportunities opened by the digital revolution.*

*At the same time, the countries of the EHEA are being confronted not only with open conflicts between them, but with the growing marginalization of many young people, and with radicalization and extremism from within.*

*The Bologna Process of convergence between the higher education systems of 47 countries has made a strong contribution to supporting the quality of higher education in Europe. In so doing, it is strengthening Europe's capacity to deal with the new challenges. But progress has been too uneven across the different countries, with the result that the full potential for enabling mobility and internationalisation, for transmitting and creating new knowledge, for underpinning economic growth and for boosting intercultural understanding and democratic values has not been fulfilled.*

*This must change.*

*Acknowledging this new reality, the Ministers responsible for Higher Education, meeting in Yerevan, pledge to strengthen the Bologna Process, with a new focus on the key challenges of:*

* *More even implementation of the basic principles of the Bologna Process, with support and incentives for countries facing particular challenges;*
* *A new action line on promoting the integration of digital technologies into learning and teaching in higher education, exploiting their potential to further student-centred learning and ensuring that they support academic freedom and the pursuit of curiosity driven knowledge and research;*
* *Maximising the contribution of higher education institutions to furthering the understanding of new territorial conflicts and tensions, promoting intercultural and inter-religious tolerance and so strengthening their capacity to lay the foundations for sustainable societies in Europe based on democratic values and the rule of law.*

*In that light, we will implement the following lines of action, cooperating as countries and working with our stakeholders:*

* **Strengthen our working methods to implement agreed EHEA structural reforms - qualifications frameworks, quality assurance, recognition, credit systems, inter-institutional cooperation on joint programmes – nationally and at institutional level.** We will make greater use of peer-learning and pathfinder groups, backed up by stronger measurement of performance, broader statistical coverage by Eurostat, and more in-depth reporting from member countries. We will provide targeted support to member countries experiencing difficulties in implementing agreed goals, based on policy dialogue and exchange of good practice. We will report back on progress in time for our 2018 conference.
* **Promote digital technologies for pedagogical innovation, improved quality in learning and teaching and more intensive internationalisation**. We will review national legislation to remove unnecessary barriers to technology-enabled learning, share good practices, promote cooperation between existing platforms, and encourage institutions to train and support their academic staff in the use of new pedagogies.
* **Work with our higher education institutions to deepen our knowledge and understanding of the challenges of radicalisation and extremism** which flow from the marginalisation of some sections of our young populations. We will support research and the contribution of our higher education institutions to policy-making, and promote networking and the sharing of knowledge to help our societies counter intolerance and establish a culture of democracy, respect and dialogue. We will provide targeted opportunities for cooperation for staff and student in areas of conflict.

The governance of the EHEA must develop to meet these challenges. We ask the BFUG to review and adapt its governance for the next three year period. Proposals for change beyond that period should include options for establishing a more international Secretariat with a mandate extending beyond the following ministerial conference.

We gratefully accept the invitation by France to host our next meeting in 2018 and to provide the Secretariat of the EHEA from July 2015 through 2108. We welcome the offer by France to include seconded officials from other EHEA members in this Secretariat.

Finally, we welcome [AA, BB] as new members of the European Higher Education Area. We take this opportunity to underline the importance of all members and consultative members participating fully in the work of the BFUG and contributing to the EHEA work programme.

Appendix

### The Ministers also

#### adopt:

* the revised Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)
* the European Approach for Quality Assurance of joint programmes
* the revised ECTS Users’ Guide, making it an official EHEA document

*decide:*

* to include short cycle qualifications in the overarching framework of qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) based on the Dublin descriptorfor short cycle qualifications and quality assured according to the ESG.

#### commit to:

* ensure that qualifications from other EHEA countries are recognised on an equal level with domestic qualifications building on the report by the Pathfinder Group;
* review national legislation so as to fully comply with the Lisbon Recognition Convention, report to the Bologna Secretariat by the end of 2016, and ask the Convention Committee in cooperation with the ENIC and NARIC Networks to prepare an analysis of the reports by the end of 2017, taking due account of the monitoring of the Convention carried out by the Convention Committee
* review national legislation to remove any obstacles to the recognition of prior learning for the purposes of providing access to higher education programs and facilitating the award of qualifications on the basis of prior learning
* review national qualifications frameworks with a view to ensuring that learning paths within the framework provide adequately for the recognition of prior learning;
* make higher education more socially inclusive by taking forward the EHEA social dimension strategy.
* encourage employers to make appropriate use of higher education qualifications, including those of the first cycle, including by ensuring fair access to relevant public employment for holders of first degrees

*ask*:

* the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO to review the Diploma Supplement and to ensure the adoption of the same revised version in both frameworks
* the *Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee* to consider whether a subsidiary text to the Lisbon Recognition Convention might be developed on the recognition of prior learning and, as appropriate, submit a draft text for adoption by 2018
* the European Commission to support further projects to improve the automatic recognition of qualifications at system level.

and *take note* of the outline work programme for 2015 – 18 and ask the BFUG to finalise it in line with the priorities set out this Communiqué.