

EUA L&T FORUM, LISBON 11-13/2/2026

EHEA and EEA policy update

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A tale of two Europes

European Higher Education Area aka Bologna Process

- 50 countries & the European Commission
- Participation of sector representative organisation (EUA, ESU, EURASHE, ENQA)

European Union - European Education Area - EU Member States





2024-2027: What is on the agenda?



- **Mobility and internationalisation**

EU mobility benchmark 23% (including 3 credit mobility and virtual exchanges)

EHEA 2009 benchmark of 20% graduates having an international experience

- **Fundamental values**

Academic Freedom & integrity, institutional autonomy, participation of staff & students.

Are the values respected? De jure / de facto

- **2027 Ministerial Conference & Global Policy Forum**

Bologna Process Implementation Report

Bologna with Student Eyes – EUA's Trends 2027



European QA framework – the ESG

- Since 2005, revised in 2015, second revision by end 2026 → **approval 2027**
- **Written by the stakeholders**, approved by ministers → wide sector acceptance and understanding
- Generic standards → shared framework of trust
- Strong focus on QA of **learning and teaching**
- Supports enhancement while ensuring accountability

A success story of the Bologna Process, **powerful tool to implement policies** and necessary to achieve other commitments (recognition, mobility...)

Stakeholder consultations in 2022-2024

HEI: flexibility, autonomy in implementation, allow for innovation in L&T, smooth international cooperation - **“Less is more”**

QA agencies: clarity, consistency, comparability, less scope for interpretation. Allow for different approaches to QA. **“We need to make it work”**

Students: student-centered learning, diversity and support needs, fundamental values, social dimension... – **the longest wish list! “More is more”**

Ministries: internationalisation, AI, call for respect of national frameworks and diversity

Revision process 2024- 2026/7

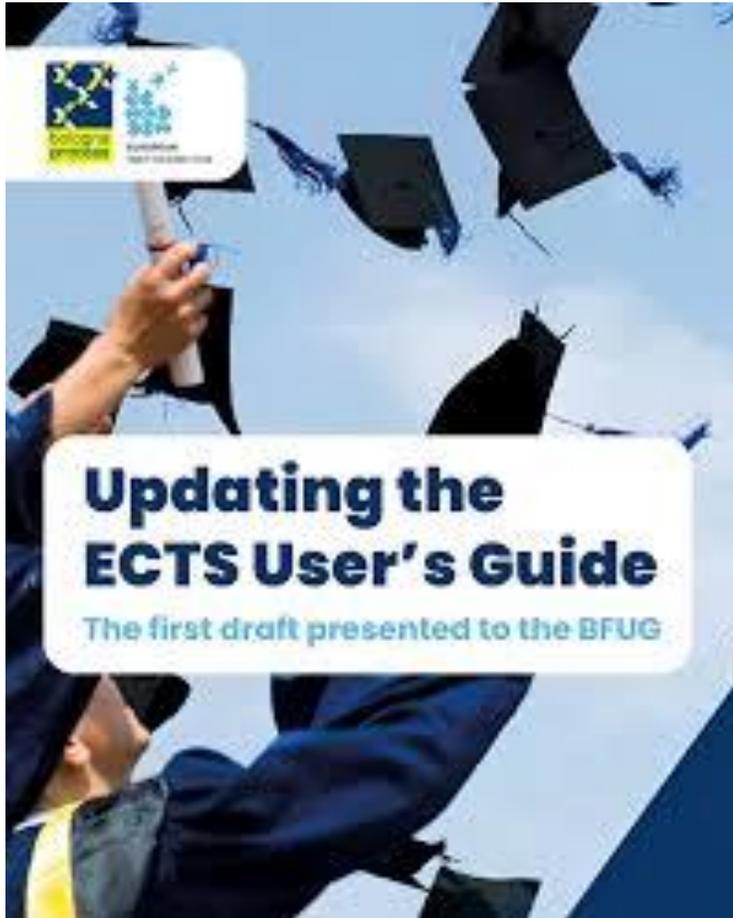
Steering Committee of stakeholder representatives

Wide public consultation

Discussions in the Bologna Follow-Up Group

Approval by BFUG in late 2026

Adoption by Ministerial Conference in May 2027



- ECTS = European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
- Developed as a European Union concept instrument
- Widely used in the EHEA
- Adopted in 2015 by EHEA Ministers (Yerevan Communique)
- Need to adapt to changes (micro-credentials, transnational cooperation, digitalisation ...)
- Open issues
 - Grading
 - ECTS for Vocational Education & Training

<https://ehea.info/page-AG-ECTS-Revision>



Union of Skills March 2025

- EU flagship: “Skills are the key to competitiveness, innovation and inclusion.”
 - Linked to the Competitiveness Compass
 - strengthen Europe’s skills base (Green transition, Digital transformation, Economic competitiveness & resilience)
 - industry orientation: “40% of EU employers report difficulties finding people with the right skills”
- Umbrella:
 - [STEM Education Strategic Plan](#) (March 25)
 - Skill Portability Initiative (ongoing)
 - Attract international talent
- High-level Skills Board



Skills Portability Initiative
call for evidence - by 27 Feb

EUA welcomes the Union of Skills

“empower universities to develop long-term learning capacity and support interdisciplinary collaboration, so that Europe can step up to innovate and transform its economies, all the while strengthening democracy and social cohesion.” 24 April 2025



Importance of HEI for Europe's competitiveness & resilience

- diverse mission of universities
- autonomy must be protected

timely call for European and national investment in skills & education

innovation & transformation need all disciplines (not only STEM)

- narrow focus on labour-market & industry needs

lifelong learning requires a strategic and structured approach: flagship for LLL

continues and enhances existing priorities

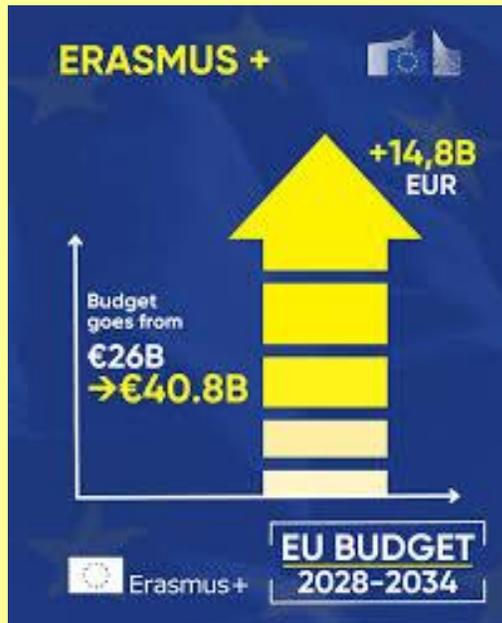
- recognition of learning & qualifications
- inclusion & equity

retain European Education Area as the overarching policy framework



Multiannual Financial Framework proposal & Erasmus+ Legal basis (July 2025)

- 40.8 Bill EUR (intra-European, excluding third country programmes)
- Legal basis not very detailed - no minimum budgets for sectors (HE, VET, school)
- Continuation of the existing E+: mobilities, cooperation incl. alliances, with some changes ...
- renaming actions: cooperation → capacity building
- **New: Scholarships in strategic priority fields (Union of Skills)**
 - ✓ Pilot call 2026: Focus on STEM
 - ✓ 1.25 Mill per grant to HE consortia (for 25 full BA or MA scholarships)
 - ✓ Costly: per student = 25 mobility grants
 - ✓ Where does the funding come from?
- Discussion between the European Commission, European Parliament and Member States



A stronger Europe needs a properly funded Erasmus+

JOINT STATEMENT



7 January

At least €60 billion instead of €40.8

- Price rises & inflation & more and new actions
- Rationale of investing in people through HE crucial for Europe's prosperity, competitiveness & resilience
- Underinvestment undermines EU's own political objectives & wastes public funds



Next week: Statement and comments on the Erasmus+ legal basis

- Budget guarantee for the different education sectors
- Funding synergies (European Competitiveness Fund, Cohesion Funds)
- Do not overload E+ with very specific goals and actions
- Importance of Global Europe – 6 Bill EUR (up from 2.2 bill)

Erasmus+ accession:

- **UK back in 2027**
- **Switzerland ...?**
- **EU accession: Ukraine, Moldova, Montenegro, Albania**

What is the European Degree?

- An EU initiative
- A special kind of **joint programme** by university consortia from different European countries (including but not limited to European University Alliances)
- Specific criteria underlining “**Europeaness**”
 - joint delivery, multilingualism, mobility
- Additional **policy-related criteria (EU priorities)**
 - sustainability, interdisciplinarity, innovation
- A new degree type **within national frameworks**, awarded by national authorities/institutions (not EU!), national QA

Expectations on the European degree

- Establishment of joint programmes is very complicated, time-consuming, and expensive
- Need to address and eliminate those obstacles (over 50 from QA to thickness of certificate paper)
- Bologna Process tools exist but implementation is uneven
- Commission aims to go “faster and deeper” in transnational cooperation

Beyond red tape

The Proof



- Enhanced student mobility & recognition
- Transnational skills & employability → “21st century skills”
- Visibility for European and international students
- Recognition of European added value
- Contribution to the European Education Area

Decision making and timelines

EU Council 12 May 2025:

Phase 1 (by mid-2026): Finalisation of the European Degree Label

Phase 2 (2026–2028): Rollout and evaluation of the label

Phase 3 (by 2029): Evidence-based decision on ways forward for a European Degree

Challenges:

- A degree requires regulatory changes in most EU countries
- Commission's role is advisory, not legislative → success depends on national uptake and commitment
- Many member states sceptical, even opposed
- Start with a label

Will the label do the trick?



- Voluntary, additional quality **label** awarded to (existing) joint degrees meeting the additional criteria
- Verification by (national) QA agencies (?)
- Faster implementation with lower administrative burden
- **Possibly adds visibility but does not address directly issues with recognition, QA, degree awarding complexities**
- Open questions:
 - Who “owns” and governs the label?
 - Is it a label of excellence (exclusive) or a policy driven label (inclusive)?
 - What concerns and fears (and hopes!) drive member states in their decisions about the European degree?

Upcoming: Competency framework for academic staff

European Commission – via OECD:

- “a European competence framework for academic staff”
- “framework and concise guidelines on its use”

“promote, acknowledge and value diverse academic roles, including innovative and effective teaching and knowledge transfer to society”.

Recommendation of the Council of the European Union of 25 November 2024 on attractive and sustainable careers in higher education (C/2024/7282):

Thank you for your attention

