STATEMENT(S) 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. A country or education system 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 engage in self-reflection, constructive dialogue and peer-learning in the implementation of these values across the European Higher Education Area.

STATEMENT ON PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY OF AND FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

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 private[1].

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 base[2].

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[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.

Public responsibility *of* higher education

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 organizations (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.

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.

STATEMENT ON INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY

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 deliver on their missions and should 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 precondition 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.

STATEMENT ON STUDENT AND STAFF PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION GOVERNANCE

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.

Student and staff participation in higher education governance encompasses their right to:

- organise autonomously without pressure or undue interference from public authorities, governing bodies or other stakeholders;
- elect and to be elected to the relevant governing bodies in open, free and fair elections and without any discrimination;
- have their views represented and taken into account;
- have the right to initiate debates and table proposals in all governing bodies and participate in the discussion of and decision on them,

- be heard and have a vote on the internal organisation and administration of higher education institutions and all issues of higher education governance, and
- through their representative organisations, be duly consulted on issues concerning the governance and further development of the relevant higher education system.

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 should 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.

EHEA STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity designates the duty of the academic community to internalise and comply 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.. Academic integrity is an ethical and professional imperative that needs to be considered by the individual member of the academic community, but which also requires policies, regulations and processes at institutional and system level, which needs to be monitored, and which also needs to be reconsidered over time.

By ensuring compliance with ethical standards in higher education, academic integrity ensures trust in higher education and research, within the institution, the wider academic community, and also in society. This is essential for the legitimacy 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 is essential to building trust within and between higher education systems and institutions, which is the basis for quality and crucial for all forms of international cooperation and mobility.

Academic integrity includes but is not limited to honesty, transparency, fairness, the search for truth, trust, responsibility, respect, courage, collegiality and solidarity. 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, and requires supporting measures, especially for early stage researchers. Academic integrity should be ensured within and across higher education, thus maintaining of a culture of integrity, ethics and transparency from the earliest stages of education and research training.

Public authorities, funding organisations, higher education and research 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 institutional level and providing for appropriate mechanisms, including the possibility to establish independent bodies to monitor and enhance compliance. 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 European Standards and Guidelines on Quality Assurance (ESGs).

Special attention needs to be paid to ensuring academic integrity in the context of emerging digital technologies, such as the use of artificial intelligence and generative models in education, 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, with due respect to academic freedom, 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 organized misconduct and corruption including in the administrative processes and institutional governance of the academic institutions.

Institutions, funding organisations or other suitable academic bodies should develop a variety of ways to foster a culture of academic integrity in co-creation with students and academic and administrative staff. This may include the formulation of clear expectations regarding academic integrity that apply to all members of the academic community, including the development of Codes of Ethics. The main aim would be to ensure a clear understanding of standards for academic integrity and the consequences for violations, including the identification of procedures and bodies responsible. Such mechanisms, including ones for support and guidance, should be actively promoted within higher education institutions as well

as externally and also be used as a source for regular training workshops and seminars for staff and students.

The leadership has the primary responsibility to establish and ensure structures and processes to uphold academic integrity. Academic staff have a special responsibility in adhering to and promoting academic integrity, setting an example for colleagues and students. Teachers are responsible for creating a safe learning environment for students that encourages critical thinking and recognises mistakes and error as an integral part of quality learning, teaching and research. Administrative staff and institutional leaders have the responsibility to ensure fairness and transparency in their work. Students, while still in education, have the same obligation to promote and respect academic integrity as all other members of the academic 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.

Adequate and sustainable funding for higher education and research and creating administrative frameworks that promote collaboration over competition and quality over quantity in academic outputs are necessary framework conditions for academic integrity, as well as proper training, adequate guidance and support for the academic community to develop its understanding of academic integrity and the skills and competences required to apply it.