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Statement of the Fifth Bologna Policy Forum (version 00)

We, the Ministers and xxxxx, strongly support the continuing role that the EHEA will play in a globalised world where Education, and particularly Higher Education and Research, are so central to future prosperity, peace and progress. The increasing pace of internationalisation and globalisation have impacted on all countries around the world and have brought significant benefits. However there are currently difficult challenges confronting our societies such as migration, unemployment, skills mismatches and instability. In many of our countries there has been a backlash against internationalization and globalization with the rise of populist politics and nationalism and a questioning of the benefits of international and global forces. We believe that the EHEA can provide a framework and opportunity for dialogue and co-operation, support socially just change, defend academic freedom and help to counter inward-looking and populist tendencies.

Universities and Colleges* have been one of the key drivers of internationalisation through staff and student mobility, the early adoption of digitalization, the development of transnational education, international research partnerships and collaboration on reaching solutions to global challenges. The network of academic relationships that have developed between EHEA and non EHEA countries has also helped to shape societies and their values. This is important at a time when many countries are facing political instability and negativity against the perceived consequences of internationalization.

The EHEA encompasses a very wide geographical area and has a significant collaborations with most of the regions in the world and following discussions since the last BPF we believe that it should continue to engage globally. Our experience is that the EHEA model, based on voluntary exchanges and mutual adjustment among members, has proved to be practical and workable and is still an appealing one for other regions. The fundamental frameworks of quality assurance and the mutual recognition of qualifications continue to be the building blocks for international collaboration and student mobility programmes. We believe that the international activity of the EHEA should be forward looking and intellectually path breaking, it should be a 'thought leader' and innovator in the areas of pedagogy.

Our future priorities include exploring new ways of teaching and learning, the benefits and challenges of the digital revolution, and links between teaching and research.

The scope of the EHEA has continued to grow and good progress has been made since the Yerevan Ministerial meeting in increasing mobility and in sharing good practice in academic governance, teaching and learning and quality enhancement. We need to keep working to ensure that there is more consistent implementation of practice across the EHEA in the interoperability of degree cycles, credit transfers and prior learning.

We affirm that the EHEA is committed to collaborate with international partners on issues of common concern in Higher Education in order to be a positive force for change. There is an important role for the EHEA to play in the international arena as a value driven network, a

47 beacon of good practice and a framework for common policy dialogue on issues of global
48 concern. For non-EHEA countries interacting with the EHEA signified a shared agreement on
49 values and principles, such as university autonomy and good governance, the freedom to study
50 teach and research and student participation. These principles are integral features of a 21st
51 century education sector that supports equality and equity of access. For the EHEA working
52 with other regional groupings brings new insights and perspectives about educational
53 improvements and their implementation. We believe that therefore that the EHEA continues to
54 provide a space for dialogue and the co-construction of new ideas.

55
56 We recommend the development of a more systematic and sustainable approach of
57 international cooperation based on closer dialogue between the EHEA and other regional or
58 international higher education organizations. We understand the diversity across our regions
59 but coming together to understand the different domestic social and political contexts of higher
60 education and to situate our experiences within the wider geopolitics of Higher education will
61 lead to productive outcomes. It is important for the EHEA to listen to and learn from the world
62 and engage on common problems. On a global level these include mobility and migration, social
63 inclusion, youth unemployment, the challenges and benefits of digitalisation, cross border
64 education, quality assurance and the status and autonomy of universities.

65
66 This policy dialogue at the BPF will initiate a new more sustained approach and will focus on
67 two areas of common concern – social inclusion and widening access to Higher Education and
68 the role of HEIs in civil society. These topics were chosen following discussions between the
69 EHEA and other regional groupings and international partners as issues of common concern. It
70 is clear that although the percentage of the population attending Higher Education is growing in
71 most countries social inclusion and widening access to HE is a still challenge for most countries
72 across the world. Increasingly there is a focus not just on ‘fair access’ but also on retention,
73 progression, successful completion and good labour market and social outcomes for different
74 groups of students. Recent research shows that the most disadvantaged students are the least
75 likely to participate in international and in programme mobility. In some cases qualified
76 migrants and refugees are excluded from participating in HE. The second topic focusses on the
77 responsibility of higher education to society. There is a growing recognition that contemporary
78 social challenges demand collective solutions that require both local and global engagement.
79 Many countries are recognising the wider social, cultural and civic role that higher education
80 institutions can or should play in their communities At a time when inequality, xenophobia,
81 political extremism and populism are on the rise, the civic role of higher education institutions
82 is seen by many EHEA countries as a way of building social cohesion by providing students with
83 values, skills and aptitudes that promote civic participation, social inclusion, sustainability and
84 global citizenship.

85
86 The Paris Bologna Policy Forum will initiate an inter-cultural dialogue on these topics by
87 bringing together leading policy makers, international organisations and experts to understand
88 and share experience and identify future goals in round table discussions. Work will continue
89 between 2018 and 2020 with two international workshops on Inclusive Higher Education and
90 the Social and Civic role of Universities. (The BFUG is asked to invite countries to bid to host the
91 workshops).

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93 * :“Universities” should be understood as standing for “Higher education institutions”

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