

**FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION - BOLOGNA PROCESS RESEARCHERS'  
CONFERENCE (FOHE-BPRC)  
SECOND EDITION  
24 – 26 November 2014, Bucharest, Romania**

## **Background**

The Bologna Process has led to the launch in 2010 of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by the ministers responsible for higher education in 47 countries of Europe. The launch of EHEA in itself represents a significant achievement. However, the implementation of the Bologna Process has not been perfect. Although its achievements are notable and had clearly influenced the shape of the current higher education landscape, the ministers have recognized that adjustments and further work are necessary to consolidate the European Higher Education Area and advance its aims as a voluntary, trans-national project, in an ever-intensifying international context. More generally, national and global challenges have transformed the more traditional societal expectations vis-à-vis higher education, which pushes governments across Europe to reform their higher education and research systems in order to ensure their relevance. The Bologna Process and EHEA often represent a relevant framework of reference for such reforms in European countries.

As part of its involvement in European-level higher education policy making, Romania provided the Secretariat of the 2012 Bologna Ministerial Conference and was in charge of organizing the Bologna International Policy Forum along with the Ministerial Conference. In preparation for these meetings, Romania also organized and held the first edition of the “Future of Higher Education – Bologna Process Researchers’ Conference” (FOHE – BPRC) on 17-19 October 2011, in Bucharest.

The conclusions of the Researchers’ Conference were presented at the 2012 Bucharest Ministerial Conference. These conclusions were at the crossroads between policy making and research, and thus extremely appropriate to add food for thought for the Bologna Process and for higher education reforms in general. The participants in the conference warmly welcomed this initiative and recommended creating a tradition of dialogue between researchers and policy makers prior to major policy events such as the Bologna Ministerial Conferences.

Therefore, the second edition of the “Future of Higher Education - Bologna Process Researchers’ Conference” (FOHE-BPRC2) is being planned, which will be focusing on aspects pertaining to the status of the theoretic research activities on the Bologna Process, on providing insight regarding actual developments related to the Bologna Process and their effects “in the field”, in particular regarding the efforts made to define and refine the framework under which international norms could be operationalized at the national and institutional level.

Although the first steps have been taken with the first edition of the event in 2011, academic efforts to provide a comprehensive Bologna Process repository (including official documents and research materials) are still required. Thus, the 2014 edition of the Bologna Process Researchers’ Conference is dedicated to continuing the collection of evidence and research-based policymaking and further narrowing the gap between policy and research within the EHEA and broader global contexts.

The conference will enable discussions on key issues between researchers, various direct higher education actors, decision-makers, and the wider public.

### **Target groups:**

Following the trend set in 2011, the second edition of the Conference wishes to bring together higher education researchers, leading academics, students and policy makers that have either conducted research activities surrounding the Bologna Process/ European Higher Education Area (EHEA) or are simply interested in the history and evolution of the process, as well as its possible future. The conference is open to all those that have been involved in the establishment of the EHEA, as well as to those involved in international level higher education policy making, especially those that will submit a paper for the conference and will be selected by the Editorial Board, hence being invited to defend their reaction paper during the conference parallel sessions.

## Conference themes

The joint contributions of policy makers, different experts and researchers are expected to make positive inroads for the policy agenda of EHEA and would constitute a valuable contribution into the May 2015 Ministerial Conference and Bologna Policy Forum in Yerevan, Armenia. Experts and policy makers are invited to explore the convergence and interaction of specific issues within research papers presented during the conference. Upon selection by the Editorial Board based on the abstracts presented, the submitted papers will become part of a two-volume of proceedings, edited by an international publisher. All the papers should fit under one (or more) of the nine sub-themes suggested by the organizers. Each of them is allocated to members of the Editorial Board as thematic coordinators and is briefly described in the following paragraphs.

The nine main themes suggested for the conference are:

1. Internationalisation
2. Financing and Governance
3. Excellence and diversification of higher education institutions' missions
4. Student Centred Learning / Teaching and Learning
5. Social dimension/ Equity
6. Education, Research and Innovation
7. Quality Assurance
8. EHEA at the crossroads: the Bologna Process and the future higher education
9. Evidence-based policies in HE: data analytics, impact assessment and reporting

## 1. Internationalisation

Since its beginnings, the Bologna Process was meant to strengthen the competitiveness and attractiveness of the European Higher Education by fostering the students' mobility and creating the framework for the international dimension of higher education. These two themes were both very high on the agenda of the Bologna Process Ministerial Conference held in Bucharest, Romania, in 2012. Discussions on these subjects resulted in adopting a "*Mobility for better learning*"<sup>1</sup> Strategy – as annex to the Ministerial Communiqué –, thus agreeing that all member countries will develop and implement their own internationalization and mobility strategies with concrete aims and measurable mobility targets, contributing to the achievement of the EHEA objectives.

Converging with this document, the European Commission has launched in 2013 "*The European higher education in the world*"<sup>2</sup> strategy that aims to promote mobility and cooperation between the member states and the non-EU countries. According to this policy document, "a comprehensive internationalisation strategy should cover key areas grouped into the following three categories:

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/%281%29/2012%20EHEA%20Mobility%20Strategy.pdf>;

<sup>2</sup> <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/NOT/?uri=CELEX:52013DC0499>;

international student and staff mobility; the internationalisation and improvement of curricula and digital learning; and strategic cooperation, partnerships and capacity building. These categories should not be seen as isolated but as integrated elements of a comprehensive strategy.” (EU Communication, 2013)

Giving the particular interest manifested by the EHEA member states for these subjects, we invite researchers to send us their contributions analyzing good practices, introducing comparative research or new theoretical insights into these topics, either for the institutional level or for national level.

## **2. Financing and governance**

EHEA member states are starting to recover from the financial crisis that had global effects, and thus use this opportunity to strengthen higher education governing structures and financing processes. Moreover, the Bucharest Ministerial Communiqué (2012) has reaffirmed the commitment of the European Ministers of Education to support a sustainable educational system by assuring the highest possible level of public funding for education, while encouraging HEIs to intensify their attempts to draw upon other appropriate financing sources. EHEA Ministers also committed to intensify the policy dialogue on both financing and governance of higher education.

In this context, we invite researchers to write papers on case studies or compare cases regarding:

- different financing systems within the EHEA and beyond;
- governance principles and policies both at institutional level and systemic, national level;
- strategic allocation of budgetary resources;
- efficiency in the delivery of public services.

As well, papers could also analyse and discuss different case studies regarding the impact of institutional policies in matters such as programs selection / educational paths or diversification of funding streams.

## **3. Excellence and diversification of higher education institutions’ missions**

During the last few years the universities felt an growing pressure coming from the society to better address its’ needs and answer to the needs of the community that the institution serves, thus contributing to the development and consolidation of the knowledge society. One way to better address these requirements is to diversify the spectrum of HEIs missions in such a way that they better reflect their goals and in line with the existing challenges.

Moreover, the U-Multirank initiative raised the debate about heading for excellence versus increasing access to education. Although diverse ranking systems all over the world are being used as excellence measurement instruments, they are still controversial. In response to some of the expressed concerns, U-Multirank has been designed as a multidimensional, user-driven new approach to international ranking that follows five elements of the higher education: (1) teaching and learning, (2) research, (3) knowledge transfer, (4) international orientation and (5) regional engagement, thus providing a solution for the complaints previously raised against other ranking systems.

However, there are voices considering “that system-wide excellence in student learning is attainable at reasonable cost, using education policies differing from conventional market-oriented reform strategies prevalent in many other countries”<sup>3</sup>.

Therefore, we invite researchers to register papers presenting their view over excellence in higher education, feasibility studies of rankings, case studies or comparative cases on various measures aimed to foster excellence and increase diversification in higher education.

#### **4. Student Centred Learning / Teaching and Learning**

Student centered learning became a political aim since the 2009 leuven/ Louvain la Neuve EHEA Ministerial Conference, when this concept was defined for the first time in the political context of the EHEA. Considering the interest of the EHEA in this topic, its open character and the fact that teaching and learning are essential processes on which higher education systems are grounded, the organizers decided to ask for more contributions on these subjects. Potential authors are invited to write papers on any of the following themes, thus enriching the knowledge base in line with the current ‘hot topics’ linked to SCL and teaching and learning:

- Usage of technology in Teaching and Learning (e.g. flipped classroom etc.);
- MOOCs/SPOCs/hybrids etc.;
- integrating research into teaching, case study, real problem, etc. and/or other forms of engaged, active, student-centered learning;
- how students learn - new advances in how students mind works during learning - achieving deep learning, etc.;
- assessment of learning outcomes;
- Quality Assurance in teaching and learning;
- institutional research and Teaching and Learning.

#### **5. Social dimension/ Equity**

Political commitments within the Bologna Process have underlined the need to develop the social dimension of higher education and to decrease inequalities by widening participation for under-representative groups of students. Since 2001, this policy field was operationalized in political commitments regarding equity, access and completion of studies in higher education, through recommendations for setting quantifiable objectives at national level, adopting government strategies, as well as clear targets for widening access and participation.

The research papers could, therefore, focus on:

- widening access to higher education and increasing graduation rates;
- access, participation and success of under-represented groups in higher education;
- national strategies, plans and targets in the field of social dimension;
- financing and cost-sharing;
- student support services;
- academic related services as counselling and orientation, flexible learning paths, alternative access routes, including the recognition of prior learning for enhancing social dimension.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.nedu.fi/UpFiles/201311/2013110466716017.pdf>;

The authors are invited to submit comparative research on measures implemented by different higher education systems or higher education institutions, offer examples of good practice and study the impact of different policies in the sphere of social dimension.

## **6. Education, Research and Innovation**

The Bucharest Ministerial Conference in 2012 has underlined the importance to promote quality, transparency, employability and mobility in the third cycle, ensuring that the third cycle contributes to bridging the EHEA and the European Research Area (ERA). An ad hoc working group on the third cycle has analyzed the achievements of institutional, national and European policies on innovation of programmes, on employability, on internationalization and mobility and drew recommendations on further improvements, in line with the Salzburg recommendations and the European Commission “Principles for Innovative Doctoral training”. In addition, many European countries are implementing reforms aimed at empowering Doctorate holders and young researches to realize their full potential, on the basis of the competencies achieved, and contribute to societal and economic innovation.

Therefore, we invite the researchers to write papers sharing their view upon:

- trends and good-practices at the institutional level in the implementation of European policies (meaning Salzburg, Principles for Innovative Doct Training, Bologna Ministerial recommendations) on the third cycle;
- instruments and activities leading to the development of the third cycle as the nexus between higher education, research and innovation, and, consequently, between the EHEA, the European Research Area and wider international policies in the field, of research and innovation;
- strategies and practices to develop competences based Doctoral programmes and to empower Doctorate holders”.

## **7. Quality Assurance**

One of the purposes of the Bologna Declaration (1999) was to encourage European cooperation in quality assurance of the higher education, with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies. Quality assurance has been a priority for the Bologna Process, but its mechanisms are not perceived as an end in themselves. Their ultimate goal is to enhance the quality of teaching and research and, in this respect quality assurance agencies act as a support for institutions in their continuing development and, equally, have a key role as protectors of the public interest.

Nevertheless, since 2005 the Ministers of Education adopted *the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)* and this document has ever since governed and directed the way the quality assurance systems worked across EHEA. At the EHEA Ministerial Conference that took place in Bucharest in 2012, the European Ministers of higher education decided that the time has come to revise the ESG, according to the results of the first phase of the Bologna Process, and gave the responsibility to an extended E4 Group. Moreover, the OECD project *Feasibility Study for the Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes* brought to attention the question of quality assurance of the teaching and learning process. Therefore, we invite researchers to write and submit papers addressing this dimension from the perspective of the challenges faced by the quality assurance systems to integrate the governmental priorities, the main goals of the academic communities, as well as needs of the society at large (e.g. through the signals received from the labour force market).

## **8. EHEA at the crossroads: BP and the future higher education**

After 15 years from signing the Bologna Declaration and starting to build the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) as a framework for raising the attractiveness and competitiveness of the European higher education system by settling common values, principles and using comparable instruments, it is now, once again the moment to reflect upon the effectiveness and political relevance of the public policies designed in this period, as well as of their impacts.

After the 2012 Ministerial Conference in Bucharest, the second phase of EHEA consolidation has started. However, it has been perceived that the momentum of the Bologna Process has diminished, thus making it less attractive for new states to join the EHEA as well as for the member states to get involved in implementing commonly agreed commitments. Therefore, organizers invite the authors to envision the future of European level policy making in general, and the EHEA and the Bologna Process in particular, by submitting papers tackling the current challenges faced by inter-governmental processes of this kind:

- not all member states within various regional and international political cooperation initiatives advance in the same rhythm, thus making the scenery extremely different across the covered higher education area;
- the core issues that the EHEA or other initiatives should cover in the future;
- instruments for know-how transfer and ensuring capacity of change.

## **9. Evidence-based policies in higher education: data analytics, impact assessment and reporting**

The EHEA relies on increasingly detailed pictures of how commonly agreed policies and action lines have been translated at national and institutional level. Contributions analyzing the existing reporting tools are most welcome. In addition, recent trends such as massification of higher education, have contributed to growing the governmental interest in establishing evidence-based policy mechanisms to ensure quality and accountability in higher education. Rigorous evidence-based policies in higher education seem to be the future and the key solution to current challenges faced by governance. In this context, organisers invite authors to analyse and present in their papers concrete case studies of evidence-based policy-making and derived impact assessments (ex-ante or ex-post).

*The above-mentioned issues have only an exemplifying purpose. They are also meant to flag the possible limits of the panel's scope and are subject to further amendments according to the concept envisaged by the thematic coordinator.*

### **The Scientific Committee**

In order to ensure the scientific coherence and vision of the event, a Scientific Committee (SC) has been set-up with some twenty high-level higher education and research policy experts. Remus Pricopie, the Romanian Minister of National Education, chairs the Scientific Committee (a full list of members is annexed).

### **The Editorial Board**

Each of the nine thematic tracks of the conference described above will be led by specific thematic coordinator(s) as follows:

<b>No.</b>	<b>Thematic Responsible</b>	<b>Role</b>
1	Hans de Wit, Ligia Deca	Internationalisation
2	Liviu Matei, Cezar Haj	Financing and governance

3	Jan Sadlak	Excellence and diversification of higher education institutions' missions
4	Manja Klemencic	Student Centred Learning / Teaching and Learning
5	Alex Usher	Social dimension/ Equity
6	Marzia Foroni	Education, Research and Innovation
7	Hanne Smidt	Quality Assurance
8	Sjur Bergan	EHEA at the crossroads: BP and the future higher education
9	Jamil Salmi	Evidence-based policies in HE: data analytics, impact assessment and reporting

Each coordinator will invite researchers to draft articles and select the most relevant four to five articles for participation in the conference. For each BPRC theme, the Editorial Board will select the relevant articles for presentation during the conference, as well as a number of potential reactions. Following an extensive peer-reviewing exercise, these final papers will be included in the two volumes of proceedings.

### **The General Rapporteur**

The General Rapporteur of the FOHE-BPRC will be Liviu Matei, Senior Vice-President at the Central European University. He will also Chair the Editorial Board.

### **Timeline for the papers**

The following organisational and editorial schedule has been proposed by the organisers:

**23 June 2014: publishing the call for papers and providing the guidelines for authors**

**23 June – 18 July 2014: deadline for registering the paper abstracts**

*The paper abstracts should be sent via e-mail by the researchers to [fohe@uefiscdi.ro](mailto:fohe@uefiscdi.ro).*

**19 July – 31 July 2014: evaluation of abstracts:** *The members of the Editorial Board will carefully analyse the abstracts fitting them under the specific sub-theme and provide suggestions for their development into full articles. The abstracts will be sent to the participants who are to draft their reaction papers.*

**1 August 2014 – 15 September 2014: drafting the research paper:** *The authors will be asked to finalise the papers in question, while taking into account the possible recommendations coming from the thematic coordinators. The authors will send their papers to the organizers, via e-mail **until 15<sup>th</sup> September 2014**. Specific guidelines for authors will be provided by the organisers.*

**16 September 2014 – 15 October 2014: feedback on the received papers:** *The Editorial Board will analyse the final papers (forwarded by the organizers) and provide feedback along with potential suggestions of improvement (if necessary). The articles will be sent back to the authors for integration of the received feedback.*

**16 October – 15 November 2014: first revision of papers:** *The authors will improve / adjust the papers accordingly, based on the feedback received, providing the final paper to the organizers (also via e-mail **until the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2014**).*

**15 November 2014:** *All final papers to be sent to the thematic coordinators and to potential respondents).*

**24 – 26 November 2014:** **The Future of Higher Education - Bologna Process Researchers' Conference, second edition (FOHE-BPRC2 2014)**

**26 November 2014 – 15 January 2015: final revision of papers:** *The authors will revise the papers according to the feedback received during the conference and send them to the thematic coordinators for a final approval.*

**15 January – 1 February 2015:** checking of the articles by the thematic coordinators and editing/proofreading.

**1 – 15 February 2015:** *layouting*

**15 February 2015:** *deadline for sending the final manuscript for publication.*

#### **Practical details**

No participation fees will be required from the BPRC participants. Accommodation and conference means will be covered by the organizers. A number of grants covering the travel costs of the first author of selected papers will be awarded, upon motivated request, in case of financial difficulties.

#### **Deliverables**

The FOHE-BPRC papers will be published in two volumes of Outcome of Proceedings, by an international publisher and will be distributed to decision-makers, as well as the participants in the Yerevan Ministerial Conference (2015). Furthermore, an input based on the general report of the conference will be presented at the 2015 Yerevan Ministerial Conference and Bologna Policy Forum.



## **Annex 1: Provisional Conference Programme**

### **Future of Higher Education – Bologna Process Researchers’ Conference**

#### **SECOND EDITION**

**FOHE-BPRC 2014, 24-26 November 2014, National Library, Bucharest, Romania**

#### **Monday, 24 November 2014**

14.00 – 15.00 Registration of the participants and Welcome coffee

15.00 – 16.15 **Plenary Session - Welcome Addresses**

**Remus Pricopie** - Minister of National Education, Romania

**European Commissioner for Education**

**Armen Ashotyan** – Minister of Education and Science, Armenia

**Maria Helena Nazaré** - President of the European University Association

**Dzulkifli Abdul Razak** – President of the International Association of Universities

16.15 – 16.30 **Introduction to the conference**

Adrian CURAJ, General Director, UEFISCDI

16.30 – 17.00 Coffee Break

17.00 – 19.00 **Overview thematic papers presentation (9 thematic areas)**

19.00 Welcome cocktail and Dinner

#### **Tuesday, 25 November 2014**

08.30 – 10.00 Paper presentations and debates I (3 parallel sessions)

10.00 – 10.30 Coffee breaks

10.30 – 12.00 Paper presentations and debates II (3 parallel sessions)

12.00 – 13.00 Lunch

13.00 – 14.30 Paper presentations and debates III (3 parallel sessions)

14.30 – 15.00 Coffee break

15.00 – 16.30 Paper presentations and debates IV (3 parallel sessions)

16.30 – 17.00 Coffee break

17.00 – 18.30 Paper presentations and debates V (3 parallel sessions)

19.30 Dinner

**Wednesday, 26 November 2014**

09.00 – 10:30 Paper presentations and debates VI (3 parallel sessions)

10.30 – 11.00 Coffee break

11.00 – 13.00 Reports from the parallel sessions and debates

Conclusions of the conference (General Rapporteur)

Final debates

13.00 Lunch

\* The overview thematic papers presentation session will include one general paper presentation presented by each thematic coordinator

\*\* Each parallel session will include two/three papers presented by authors and a Q&A session for each paper