

NEWS FROM THE EU AND THE EHEA

An update on European higher education policies

Michael Gaebel
Thérèse Zhang

#EUALearnTeach

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Two parallel initiatives: competition – synergy?

European Education Area

- Announced in 2017, launched in 2020
- 27 EU member states
- Other countries can participate in some actions & activities – but no formal role
- An initiative by the European Union (EU)
- EU - limited competence: "supporting, coordinating or complementary actions" (e.g. Erasmus+, European University Strategy ...)
- All education sectors
- Harmonized and inclusive education system
- Quality, accessibility and mobility of education and training for all citizens

European Higher Education Area

- Started in 1998/9 – EHEA declared in 2010
- Higher education
- Coordination of national policy reforms, shared instruments
- intergovernmental process
- 2020: 49 countries
- European Commission is one of the members
- Consultative members: EUA, EURASHE, ESU, ETUCE/Education international, Business Europe, ENQA, CoE, UNESCO

- High overlap in participation
- Shared instruments: degree cycles, ECTS, ESG, more coordination between EQF – EHEA-QF

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA)



Coordination of HE reforms

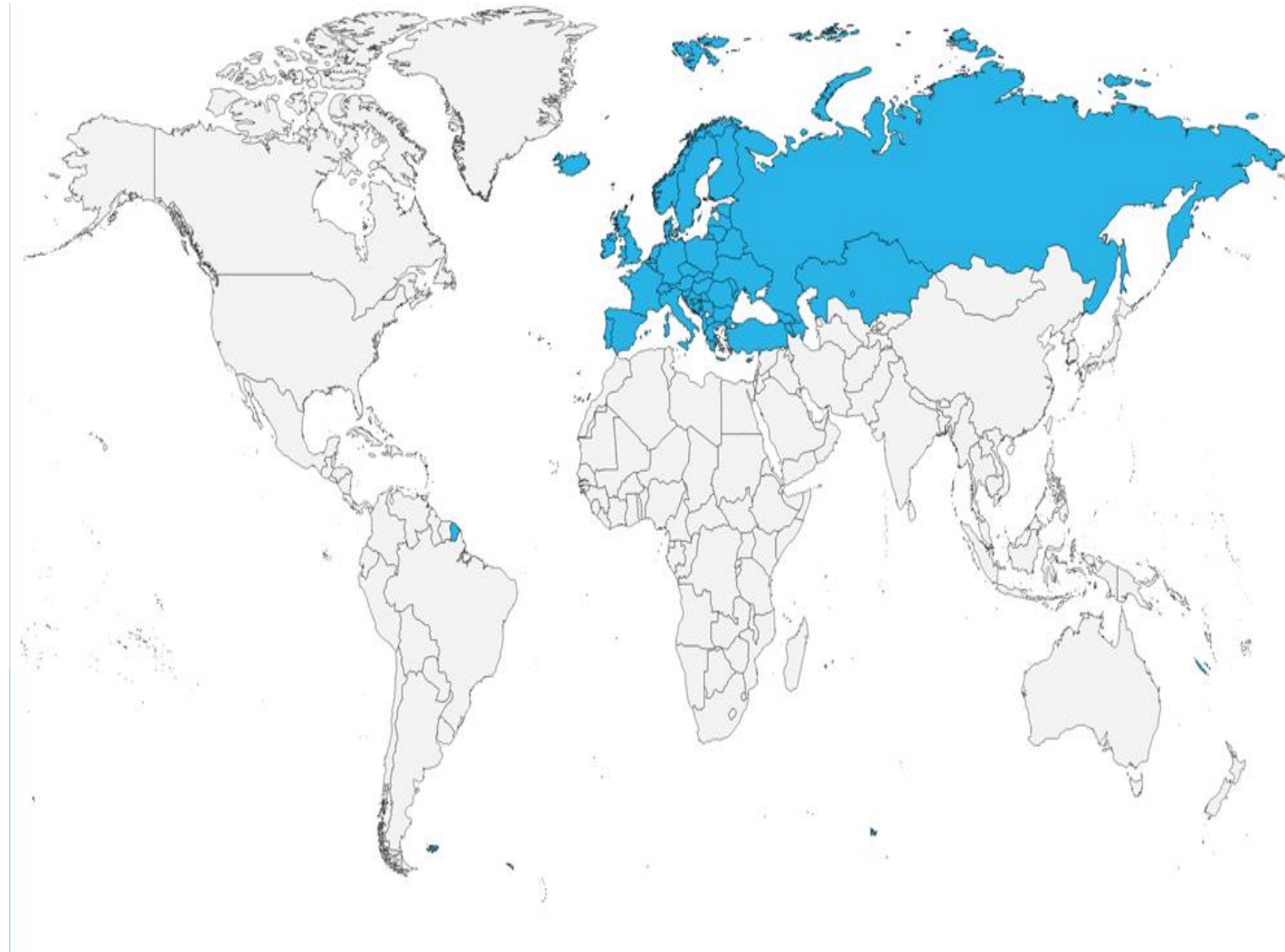
- ✓ Intergovernmental process - 49 countries & European Commission
- ✓ Rotating secretariat
- ✓ Greater compatibility of HE systems, mobility and collaboration
- ✓ Joint goals - national responsibility for reforms

Key commitments:

- ✓ 3-cycle degree system / EHEA Qualifications framework
- ✓ Quality assurance
- ✓ Recognition / Lisbon Recognition Convention

More explicit emphasis on fundamental values:

- ✓ Academic freedom and integrity
- ✓ Institutional autonomy
- ✓ Participation of staffs and students in HE governance
- ✓ Public responsibility for HE



Role of “Consultative members” in the Bologna Process

Higher education
institutions

- EUA, EURASHE,

Students

- ESU

HE staff & teachers

- ETUCE - Education
International

Quality assurance
agencies

- ENQA

Employers

- BusinessEurope

Council of Europe

- & UNESCO

EQAR

- EHEA institution

Why this is important

- Full and steady participation (no voting rights ...)
- Active contribution - can shape, initiate and co-lead

The example of EUA

- Proactively contributing to BFUG and all working structures
- Dialogue and cooperation activities with partners and members, beyond Europe
- Activities on development of policies and practices related to the BP
- Facilitating exchanges of practices and peer learning
- Membership consultations & data collection

Impact and success



The European
Higher Education Area
in 2024

Bologna Process
Implementation Report



- **Higher education reform: progress, but no perfection**
 - ✓ Quality assurance: towards a shared European understanding
 - ✓ Recognition of degrees and study periods – support to implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
 - ✓ Social Dimension: 2020 Principles and Guidelines
- **Ability to take up new topics**
 - ✓ Learning and teaching
 - ✓ Values
- **Shift from “governmental reforms only” towards “transformation through support to the sector”**
- **Learning process**
 - ✓ Data and assessment of progress improved: Bologna Process Implementation Report
 - ✓ Enhance reform implementation by improving working methods (peer-learning, joint projects among ministries and with stakeholder organisations)
 - ✓ From top-down structural reforms to peer learning
 - ✓ Growing awareness of participatory approaches – involving the sector
- **Resilience of the Process**
 - ✓ Continued under Covid-19
 - ✓ Conflict on political academic values

2021-2024

Value statements

- Academic freedom & integrity
- Autonomy
- Responsibility for and of higher education
- Participation of staff and students

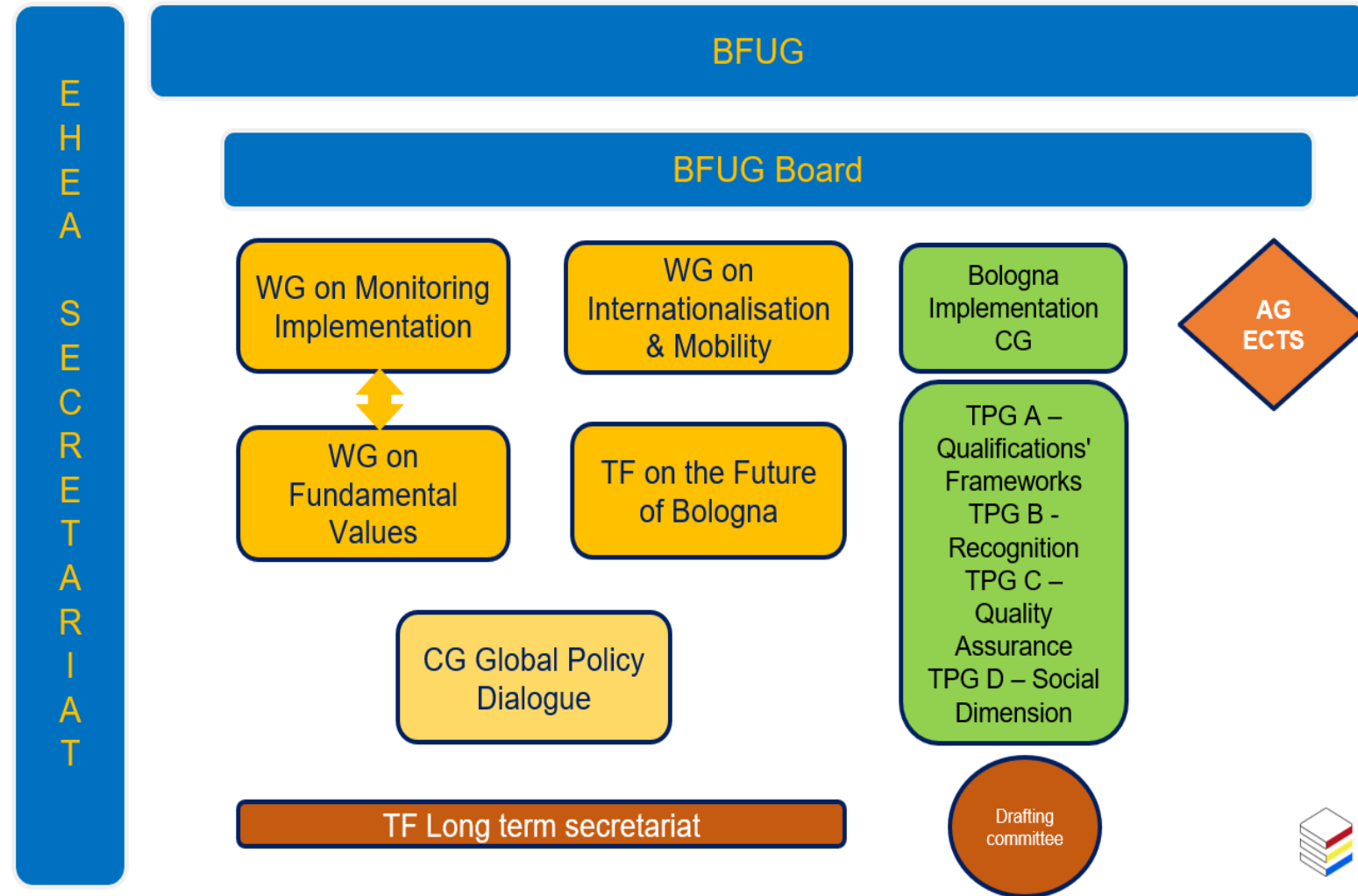
Tool kit for making higher institutions more inclusive

- Principles and Guidelines for the Social Dimension (2020)
- Indicators and explanatories

2024-2007

- Revision of Standards & Guidelines for QA in the EHEA (ESG)
- Revision of the ECTS users guide
- WG mobility & internationalisation
- Potentially: establishment of a longterm Secretariat

2024-2027 Work Programme



The European Union

- **Shared competence for research, internal market, social policy**
 - ✓ Development of human capital, job creation; minimum social standards, cohesion, consumer protection, contribution to a knowledge economy etc.
- **“Limited” competence in HE : supports, coordinates, and supplements** national actions through various policies and programmes (**Article 165 TFEU**)
 - ✓ Supports the development of HE policies in Member States
 - ✓ Supports mobility and transnational cooperation
 - ✓ Supports the Bologna Process (the European Commission is a member)
 - ✓ Funding programmes (currently mid-term-reviewed): Erasmus, Horizon

The European Education Area

- ✓ European University alliances (2017-2018)
- ✓ Automatic recognition of school leaving diplomas and mobility periods abroad
- ✓ European Strategy for Universities (2022)
- ✓ Higher Education Package (launched in 2024)



Working methods and structures of the EEA – the strategic framework

- **The essential structure** of member states (government officials) , key stakeholders and social partners
- **Working groups** composed of experts nominated by member states and key stakeholders (7 in total, until 2025)
- **Peer learning activities** hosted by member states to showcase good practice and explore a particular issue with other countries
- **Peer reviews and peer counselling** bringing together experienced peers from a small number of national administrations to provide advice on designing or implementing a policy as a response to a specific national challenge

→ To “share” and to “inspire” but also to support finding solutions to common challenges



Flagship initiatives

Policy processes + calls

All flagships are under priority area 1 – European dimension:

- Expand the European Universities Initiative to 60 alliances with more than 500 institutions by mid-2024
- Pathway towards European degree → label piloting to be concluded
 - Minimise additional workload (combine with existing QA processes)
 - Questions about added value
 - EC: expect this to be a step towards a full degree within national QF
- Legal statute for transnational university alliances
- Scale-up the European Student Card

The Higher Education Package in April 2024:

- Council recommendation on quality assurance and recognition
- Communication from the Commission on building blocks for the European Degree
- Council conclusions on attractive academic careers

The new European Commission 2024-2029





Roxana Mînzatu

Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness

Executive Vice-President in charge of (i.a.):

European Education Area
European Universities alliances
European Degree & legal statute
Erasmus+
Skills, Lifelong Learning

Input to Competitiveness Compass



Ekaterina Zaharieva

Startups, Research and Innovation

Commissioner in charge of (i.a.):

European Research Area Act and European Innovation Act
FP 10

European Universities alliances in innovation ecosystems
Strategies for European Research Infrastructure and for
European Life Sciences

European AI Research Council
Research Security

International R&I cooperation

Input to Competitiveness Compass

The new Von der Leyen Commission

- **Competitiveness**
 - Enhanced focus on Europe's economic competitiveness & growth in a global context
 - Reports of Draghi, and Heitor
 - Competitiveness Compass
- **Union of Skills (5 March – start of consultation)**
 - Basic skills (young people & adults)
 - VET strategy
 - STEM Strategy
 - Portability of skills
 - All underpinned by lifelong learning
 - Continuation & enhancement of the European alliances/
European degree

COMPETITIVENESS COMPASS



2028 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)

- Consultation now [open](#) until May
- First proposal by June 2025 – including for Erasmus+ and Research FP
- Currently, ideas and assumptions
 - Will there be a Competitiveness Fund? Possibly, but how will it operate?
 - Implications for the Research Framework and Erasmus+ (incl. international collaboration)
- Overall economic and political situation
 - Priorities on economic development & defence

EUA's perspective

- Important to keep EEA and EHEA aligned
- EUI
 - Overall **positive and supportive** narrative towards universities
 - New momentum for transnational cooperation (→ **EU added value**),
 - Attention to existing and persisting obstacles in EHEA implementation
- New EU tools (incl. European degree/label will **need to prove fitness for purpose** and be developed with stakeholders and member states, not to create extra bureaucracy
- Union of Skills: an opportunity for lifelong learning?
- MFF: pressure to prove European investment in research & education as a priority for competitiveness

EHEA & EEA Relevance for institutions

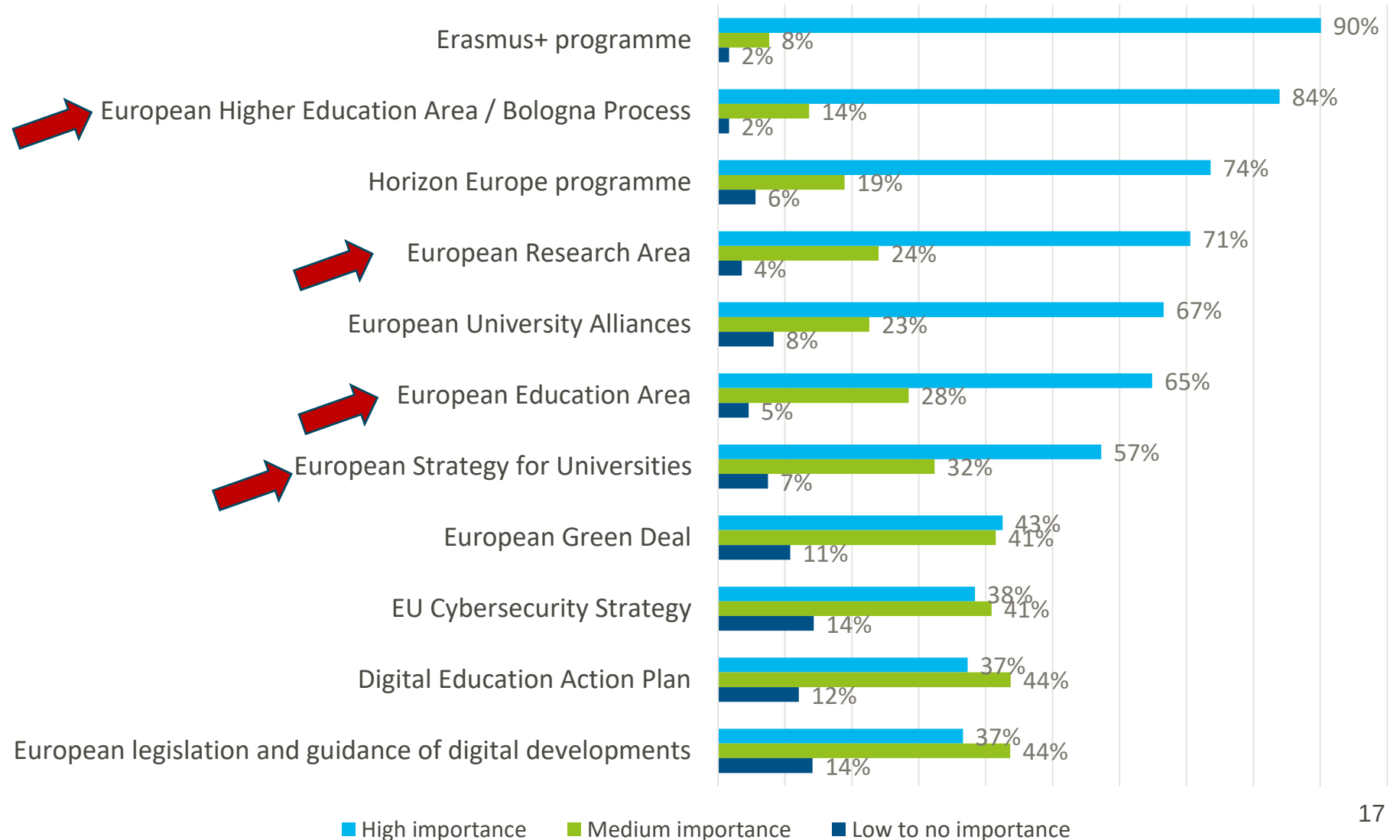
Trends 2024

Survey to HEIs in May – July 2023

N = 484

“What level of importance do the following European strategies, initiatives and funding programmes have for your institution?”

Importance of European strategies, initiatives and funding programmes



Points for discussion

- Imperative for all of us: Information sharing & active contribution to policy making
 - ✓ Response to consultations of the EU, and publishing of responses
 - ✓ EUA & other European networks, alliances
 - ✓ Members of the European Parliament
 - ✓ National Ministries, WG etc.
 - ✓ National rectors' conferences
 - ✓ Bringing topics to the agenda – probably easier in the EHEA
- Need to work together – in challenging times

Thank you for your attention

