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ETUCE – European Trade Union Committee for Education
Education International - European Region

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ETUCE Position on the Future of the Bologna Process

Endorsed by HERSC, and adopted by ETUCE Committee on 15 October 2024

The Bologna Process celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2024. ETUCE's Higher Education and Research Standing Committee (HERSC) outlined European-level demands towards the 47 ministers of the Bologna Process meeting attending the Tirana Ministerial Conference (May 2024). These demands underlined the importance of supporting academics in the Bologna Process, and 20 ETUCE member organisations joined this Call setting out their specific national priorities.

ETUCE, representing higher education and research trade unions in 52 European countries demand the following key improvements in the Bologna Process during the next mandate (2024-27) and into the future by requesting its member countries and the Bologna Follow-Up Group to:

1. Continue respecting the role of stakeholders and their contributions to the Bologna Process;
2. Acknowledge academics as core actors of higher education and research and provide them effective support in order to ensure that their professional knowledge improve the quality of all aspects of higher education and research, and reach societal goals through higher education and research;
3. Acknowledge the trade unions representing academics as equal partners in the Bologna Process as decisions of the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) largely address the work of academics and have direct and indirect impact on their workload, working conditions and contractual situation and the future of their profession;
4. Continue encouraging the member countries of the Bologna Process to respect academic freedom, institutional autonomy and all other fundamental values of the Bologna Process, including public responsibility and student and staff participation;
5. Strengthen the monitoring framework of the implementation of the Communiqués, including their annexes in particular the EHEA Statements on Fundamental Values (2024) and Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA (2020); with appropriate reporting from the ministries and relevant stakeholders and social partners on the improvements on students' and staff's lives;

6. Make continuous efforts to implement the Rome Communiqué (2020) and the Tirana Communiqué (2024) with special focus on improving the working conditions and the contractual situation of academic staff, ensuring compliance with the principles of collegiality and collegial decision-making (paragraphs 31 and 32 of the 1997 UNESCO Recommendation) and the participation of student and staff in higher education governance and enhancing social dialogue with education trade unions in order to meet the goals of the Bologna Process;
7. Improve focus on the public responsibility for higher education, especially the national responsibility to provide sustainable public funding for higher education, ensure the security of employment for academics and guarantee adequate and attractive working conditions for them;
8. Establish a democratically governed permanent secretariat for the Bologna Process which supports equally member countries and the stakeholders to meet the Bologna objectives, ensuring also voting rights to the representatives of the trade unions of academic staff;
9. Simplify the work of the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) by establishing fewer and/or relevant working, advisory and peer learning groups and by holding events with concrete outcomes on enhancing the implementation of the priorities of the Bologna Process that enable greater involvement of national representatives of stakeholders, including trade unions for academics;
10. Request the member countries to include at least one representative of a trade union of academics in their national delegation to the upcoming ministerial conferences the same way they include students and rectors-