

## **EURASHE Highlights - Fall of 2024 and the “fresh start” in 2025**

### **Introductory words from EURASHE President Hannes Raffaseder**

Dear BFUG Colleagues,

As we move forward in the post-Tirana Ministerial Conference period and into a new phase of the Bologna Process under the leadership of Romania and Moldova until 2027, I would like to thank you for your continued cooperation in building a stronger EHEA. We are entering this new Bologna period at a time of significant global shifts, where recent political developments are reshaping the world around us. In this context, Europe must define its path to maintain and strengthen its competitiveness—including in higher education. More than ever, we need a higher education area that is integrated, innovative, and responsive to society’s needs.

Despite ongoing geopolitical uncertainty, implementation challenges, and the risk of disinvestment in higher education and research, we cannot afford to scale back our ambitions. Instead, we must continue demonstrating the essential role of knowledge and skills in driving Europe’s economic and social resilience. EURASHE joins the calls for increasing Erasmus and Horizon funds to ensure that Europe remains at the forefront of global talent and innovation.

In the past months, we have deepened our dialogue with applied-oriented higher education institutions and reinforced our engagement in shaping EHEA policies. To support the implementation of key priorities, we have also applied for several projects within the EHEA call. These initiatives focus on strengthening lifelong learning strategies, enhancing cooperation on learning and teaching, and addressing challenges in qualifications frameworks and recognition—critical elements for ensuring that European higher education remains both competitive and accessible.



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One of EURASHE's key priorities in the upcoming period is to work closely with countries and partners to support higher education's role in economic transitions, including the green and digital agendas. We also aim to explore how micro-credentials can bolster lifelong learning, improve access to higher education for diverse student groups, and strengthen the link between higher education, innovation, and the world of work.

In line with the BFUG's intention to streamline the agenda for 2024–2027, we look forward to discussing the next work programme. Unlike in previous cycles, there seems to be a consensus that Learning and Teaching (L&T) should be embedded across all BFUG structures rather than assigned to a stand-alone Working Group. This will ensure a stronger presence of this key topic and foster broader engagement from across the EHEA.

EURASHE urges countries to fully implement the key commitments, as challenges to mobility between different EQF levels and countries remain. For instance, despite the inclusion of short-cycle higher education in the EHEA since the 2018 Paris Communiqué, students seeking to continue their education across borders still face recognition barriers. Beyond integration, higher education must be more active in addressing Europe's social and territorial inequalities. To maintain public trust, we must demonstrate higher education's accountability to society. We therefore call for strong commitments to fulfilling the Tirana Communiqué's goals, particularly in fostering competencies for the digital and green transitions and strengthening higher education's local and regional impact.

The upcoming BFUG meeting in Warsaw on 24–25 February 2025 will be an essential milestone in our continued work together. I want to thank all outgoing and incoming co-chairs for their dedication. While I am unable to join you in person, I send my best wishes from Austria.

## EURASHE Strategic Priorities

The EURASHE strategy for 2023-2025 aims to make the Association a reference point for a wide range of policymakers and higher education institutions who seek to harness the power of Professional Higher Education (PHE) to address the green and digital transitions. The thematic priorities are shown in the figure below. Three horizontal subjects (Skills, Quality in HE and Applied Research) are complemented by two overarching concerns, namely to promote both local engagement and transnational cooperation.

### LOCAL AND REGIONAL IMPACT

Mapping, regional development and impact, membership, local engagement.

#### Skills for the Future

Lifelong learning, employability, qualification frameworks, recognition of prior learning.

#### Quality Assurance

Accreditation, transparency tools, rankings, labels, European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).

#### Research and Innovation

Universities of applied sciences, innovation, regional development, knowledge transfer.

### TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION

European Universities initiative, alliances, mobility, Erasmus+

In 2024, EURASHE dedicated its Annual Conference to the priority of transnational cooperation, building on the momentum of the European Universities Initiative. In 2025, the Annual Conference is taking place at the Polytechnic University of Portalegre (PT) under the theme "Place, Knowledge, Skills. In the most recent Erasmus+ call, several alliances were awarded funding that focus specifically on applied education and research. Furthermore, EURASHE is pleased that a Community of Practice has been established with the support of Erasmus+ funding, and that we can contribute as an associate partner.



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Applied universities are close to the world of work and regional skills ecosystems. Therefore EURASHE is involved in the Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) initiative, both as a beneficiary in one of the Erasmus+ supported CoVEs and in working groups set up by the European Commission and the European Training Foundation. While under the same section of the Erasmus+ Programme, and despite calls in the European Strategy for Universities, much more could be done to integrate these two EEA flagship initiatives.

## **EURASHE Communities of Practice**

The EURASHE Communities of Practice were established in 2022 to develop the three horizontal priorities of the 2023-2025 strategy (Skills, Quality of Higher Education, and Applied Research). To enhance their impact and provide greater value to EURASHE members, the rules of procedure have been updated. Participation in the Communities of Practice is open to EURASHE members, ensuring a more focused and engaged collaboration. The Communities operate through regular exchanges, virtual cooperation, and online meetings, fostering knowledge sharing and strategic discussions among members.

## **EURASHE Annual Conference**

EURASHE Annual Conferences attract a diversity of delegates – heads of institutions, higher education practitioners, policymakers, academics and students – from the higher education community across Europe and beyond its borders. They are widely recognised as a communication platform for education experts and professionals and characterised by an innovative and refreshing approach. Each year, the conference theme explores a new issue relevant to applied higher education, i.e. skills, transnational cooperation, or regional development.

In 2025, the Annual Conference is taking place at the Polytechnic University of Portalegre (PT) under the theme “Place, Knowledge, Skills: Applied universities driving regional competitiveness”. It proposes to analyse European competitiveness through a sustainable and inclusive approach, ensuring that the growth of the European Union happens evenly and leaving no one behind.

## Forthcoming EURASHE Position papers

EURASHE recently contributed to an informal consultation with the cabinet of the Commission Executive Vice President, Roaxana Minzatu related to the **Union of Skills**. This will be followed by forthcoming reactions to the **Competitiveness Compass** and ongoing progress towards establishing a **European Label and European Degree**.

## Forthcoming and recently started EURASHE Projects

[List of EURASHE Projects can be found here](#)