



Bologna Process Symposium

1-2 October 2025

Bucharest, Romania

Erasmus+
Enriching lives, opening minds.



Centralised Support
to the Network
of Higher Education
Reform Experts

Cover Pictures By: Background: ismaeljs - Freepik.com

Inside the Circle: EmilyStock - Freepik.com

SPHERE 2025 Annual Conference & Bologna Process Symposium

Programme Overview

1 Oct	Morning	Arrival
	Afternoon	Bologna Process Symposium
		<i>Dinner</i>
2 Oct	Morning	Bologna Process Symposium
		<i>Lunch</i>
	Afternoon	SPHERE Annual Conference
		<i>Dinner</i>
3 Oct	Morning	SPHERE Annual Conference
	Afternoon	<i>Cultural visit / off</i>

Venue

Hall, 2nd floor, Central Library.

National University of Science and Technology POLITEHNICA Bucharest (POLITEHNICA Bucharest)
Splaiul Independenței 313, District 6
Bucharest 060042, Romania

Introduction | About SPHERE

Centralised Support to the Network of Higher Education Reform Experts ([SPHERE](#)) is an initiative of the European Commission (EC) and its European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), managed on its behalf by [Obreal](#) (Coordinator) and the [European University Association](#) (EUA). The Higher Education Reform Experts (HERE) come from universities, ministries, national higher education agencies, student unions, and other relevant organisations, officially nominated by the countries in European Neighbourhood regions (Southern Mediterranean, Western Balkans, Eastern Europe, Central Asia). HEREs are coordinated by National Erasmus Plus Offices (NEOs). The SPHERE Team organises seminars, study visits and other training events for this network, including the present conferences, in consideration of the countries' needs and European Union higher education policies and developments.

The European Higher Education Area and its reforms are one of the recurrent topics in SPHERE. Therefore, in 2025, the SPHERE Annual Conference is in conjunction with a Symposium on the Bologna Process, involving representatives of the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG), and its working structures. In addition, the BFUG Working Group on Global Policy Dialogue (WG GPD) has organised its meeting to precede the Symposium, creating both alignment and added value.

Bologna Process Symposium (1-2 October)

The Bologna Process Symposium involves 60-70 participants, including HERE and NEO representatives, as well as representatives from the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) and its working structures.

The Symposium will

- explore both the **mission and methods of the Bologna Process**.
- delve into specific **topics of high relevance to HEREs**.
- showcase the experience of HERE countries and institutions with the Bologna Process and its reforms (also reflecting on outcomes of some of the national events).

The goal is to promote peer learning on higher education policy reform and implementation, in consideration of its impact on HEIs and their members, in respect of the Bologna Process, its achievements, challenges and lessons learnt.

SPHERE frequently addresses the Bologna Process, as

- its reforms are of **core relevance for the European Education Area and many of its initiatives, also as the European Commission - a member of the BFUG** - plays a key role in shaping and supporting the Bologna Process. The Bologna Process and EU higher education policies share major reforms and reform goals.
- about half of the HERE countries are **members of the Bologna Process**.
- In some of the countries outside of the EHEA, higher education systems or individual institutions **align with the Bologna Process reforms**.

- systems and institutions that have no immediate relationship with the Bologna Process **engage with similar themes and challenges** and hence, are interested in learning from its experiences.
- the Bologna Process sets an example for **regional collaboration on higher education reform**.

In this regard, SPHERE provides frequent updates on the Bologna Process and on EHEA developments, in the course of its conferences, in seminars, etc.

Under the current SPHERE cycle 2022-2025, each Higher Education Reform Expert (HERE) country is scheduled to organize **a Bologna Process-related event as part of their national or regional activities** (May to December 2025). These events will also feed into this symposium.

Programme | Bologna Symposium

(Bucharest time)

1 October 2025

Room: Hall, 2nd floor, Central Library.

12:00 | Welcome lunch and registration (Room: Hall, 2nd floor, Central Library).

13:30 | **Opening welcome by**

- *Mihnea Cosmin Costoiu*. Rector, University Politehnica of Bucharest
- *Antoaneta Irikova*. DG EAC European Commission (online)
- *SPHERE team*

14:00 | **Session 1: Panel on Bologna Process: achievements, challenges, perspectives**

This session focusses on the current work of the Bologna Process and its future goals, but also reviews some of its past achievements. A presentation on achievements and challenges (Eurydice) focuses on a few examples (mobility, recognition, social dimension). The panel discusses these issues and relates them to the changing ways of working in the Bologna Process.

Presentation: *David Crosier*. EURYDICE: Achievements and challenges (online)

Panel:

- *David Crosier*. EURYDICE (online)
- *Cristina Ghitulica*. BFUG Vice-chair, ENQA, Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
- *Ligia Deca*. National University of Political Studies and Public Administration of Bucharest, Romania
- *Horia Onita*. BFUG Secretariat,
- *Michael Gaebel*. SPHERE Team (chair)

15:00 | *Break*

15:30 | **Session 2: Experiences with the Bologna Process in HERE countries**

This session provides a space for reflection on how Higher Education Reform Experts (HEREs) and their institutions are engaging with the Bologna Process and related reforms. The SPHERE team opens with a short overview of recent trends in HERE countries, drawing on outcomes from Technical Assistance Missions (TAMs) and national Bologna events.

Panel:

- *Lilia Parhomenco. Ministry of Moldova, on internationalisation*
- *Dana Abdrasheva. HERE Kazakhstan*
- *Chafic Mokbel. HERE Lebanon*
- *Natia Zedginidze. HERE Georgia*
- *Elizabeth Colucci. SPHERE Team (chair)*

Panel discussion with HEREs on:

- 1) The national Bologna events: Themes and main take-aways
 - 2) Impact of the Bologna Process on national higher education systems and institutions
 - 3) What needs to be enhanced or changed?
-

17:00 | **Spotlight on the University Politehnica of Bucharest & close of the day**

- *Ciprian Dobre. Vice-Rector for Digital Transformation and Master Studies*
-

18:00 | *Bus to restaurant*

19:00 | *Dinner offered by the SPHERE Team | Restaurant Hanu' lui Manuc Str. Franceză 62-64, București*

2 October 2025

8:30 | *Registration*

9:00 | **Session 3: The EHEA in a global context**

The session examines how the Bologna Process engages with countries beyond the EHEA. This has been a discussion matter in the BFUG since 2005, leading to the establishment of the Global Bologna

Policy fora, which since 2009 have been held alongside the Ministerial Conferences. Motivations for the Global Dimension include raising the EHEA's visibility, preventing isolation, sharing the EHEA reforms and fostering mutual learning on the issues they address, promoting global connectivity (including links to the SDGs), and supporting collaboration with other regional reform processes. Recent efforts have emphasised exchanges with Africa and Asia on shared higher education challenges. The presence of the members of the Global Dialogue Groups and colleagues from HERE countries inside and outside the EHEA is expected to make for a rich discussion.

Fishbowl setup:

- 6–8 participants (representatives from Global Dialogue Groups, HERE countries inside and outside the EHEA) seated in the inner circle.
- The remaining participants sit in an outer circle, observing and ready to join the discussion when a seat becomes available.

Moderator: *Elizabeth Colucci, SPHERE Team*, introduces topics, and manages transitions between inner and outer circles.

- Inner circle:
 - *Leila Loupis. Programme Specialist, Higher Education Sector. UNESCO*
 - *Elisa Petrucci. CIMEA, Italy*
 - *Luis Miranda. ENQA*
 - *Cristina Ghitulica. BFUG Vice-chair, ENQA, Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (also re reflection on the Projects [In-Global Project](#) and Support for the CG Global Policy Dialogue)*

3 HEREs share their engagement and lessons learned with the Bologna Process:

- *Rachid Hamdi. HERE Algeria*
- *Rauza Mendaliyeva. HERE Kazakhstan*
- *Svetlana Sirmbard. HERE Kyrgyzstan*

10:30 | *Break*

11:00 | **Session 4: Successful European instruments, and their timely renewal**

The Bologna Process has some established instruments, which are commonly known and used across the EHEA. But these instruments are not static, and over time require an update. This session discusses two concrete examples.

Presentation of each topic followed by discussion with the audience

The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG)

Speaker: [Maria Kelo](#). EUA

Chair: [Luis Miranda](#). ENQA

One area where the Bologna Process has been successful is quality assurance (QA), for at least two reasons: first, it has helped to promote and establish over the past decades' national agencies and higher education institutional QA. Secondly, it established through the Bologna Process and the ESG a common point of reference, against which countries and institutions develop their own diverse processes and approaches. Established in 2005, the ESG were revised in 2015, and are now once again up for revision. The presentation will concern the ESG and the Bologna Process, but address tasks and challenges that are relevant for QA globally.

Followed by Q&A

The revision of the ECTS Users' Guide

Speaker: [Camille Odent](#). DG EAC

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) predates the Bologna Process. Created by the European Union in the 1980s, it was first time-defined to enable student mobility exchanges, as a common currency for students to transfer credits earned during a study semester or year abroad back to their home institutions. Later, it became also an accumulation system, based also on learning outcomes, and used beyond mobility for defining degrees, for curriculum design, and for assessing students' progress in learning.

From the very beginning, the Bologna Process has referenced ECTS in its reforms, in requiring countries to "use ECTS or another compatible system". At the Ministerial Conference in Yerevan, in 2015, the newly revised ECTS Users' Guide became formally adopted "as an official EHEA document". The Tirana Ministerial Communique (2024) announced a further revision of the Guide, to ensure that ECTS can take into consideration the changes that take place in higher education, with regards to digital developments and its use beyond actual student learning, as well as in new learning formats, such as micro-credentials.

Followed by Q&A and discussion with the audience

What makes the success of an instrument: Reflection on policy rules, principles, standards and participation

Discussion with presenters, experts and audience

12:45 | **Closing with main takeaways**

13:00 | *Lunch*

End of the SPHERE Bologna Symposium

