

EHEA Paris 2018 May 25

Dr Sijbolt Noorda, President Magna Charta Observatory

## **Regular assessment of academic values is crucial to EHEA**

Ladies & Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues,

To this final session of the 2018 EHEA conference I would like to contribute two observations.

1.

The Magna Charta Observatory has noted with great pleasure that at the EHEA Paris conference the 1988 declaration on fundamental university values has been evocated many times.

30 years ago hundreds of European rectors gathered in Bologna signed the Magna Charta Universitatum. Europe then was about to be re-united. Universities were prepared to play a major role in the new Europe. They felt this could only be done well on the basis of a well-protected international practice of core values like academic freedom and autonomy.

It is good and reassuring to see that also today these values are being recognized as the foundation of our European project in Higher Education. Not as a selfish privilege for universities but as it was phrased in 1988: 'to meet the needs of the world around', to better serve societies and future generations.

2.

My second observation starts with David Crozier's last slide yesterday on the implementation of the Bologna Process. This slide was about values and its first line read 'difficult to assess in BPIR'.

Difficult to assess. Imagine we would say the same about quality. As a matter of fact we did 30 years ago. Many of us then said 'quality is important but difficult to assess'. Yet in the past 30 years we've built a robust practice of quality assurance based on standards and guidelines, and regularly assessed by peer review.

So why is it that we accept that values are difficult to assess?

Values do matter. Students and scholars deserve protection at home as well as abroad. Universities should be granted autonomy and be protected. We should stand united in combatting academic fraud and corruption.

Values do matter and so we should assess our practices, measure that we are living these values, and clearly state whenever and wherever we fail to do so.

Our community of 48 countries embraces core values. Very well and quite important. Our community should then also measure and assess actual practices. Of course this will not always be easy and sometimes painful. Yet at MCO we strongly believe it can be done and should be done.

We cannot put a blind eye to institutions and countries in our community of 48 that fail to guarantee core values and that fail to protect students and scholars. In doing so the very ideals and qualities of the Bologna Process are put at risk.

It may be the elephant in the room that a robust practice of monitoring and assessment in terms of values is still wanting. Yet we need this just like we did in terms of quality assurance. If we succeed in doing this well we'll certainly enhance confidence and trust in our HE community and further strengthen our position in today's global realities.

We at the Magna Charta Observatory are certainly ready to be mandated to do whatever we can to make this happen: a community of 48 countries where autonomy and academic freedom and integrity are not only being celebrated but

also practised. Everywhere, without exception.

Thank you.