



Commission rolls out plans for a European degree

Brussels, 27 March 2024

Today, the Commission is presenting [three initiatives](#) to advance transnational cooperation between higher education institutions, with the ultimate goal of creating a European degree. A voluntary European degree would benefit students and the higher education community by boosting learning mobility within the EU and by enhancing students' transversal skills. It would help meet labour market demand and make graduates more attractive for future employers while, at the same time, attracting students from around the world and boosting European competitiveness.

The three initiatives tackle the legal and administrative barriers to partner universities setting up competitive joint degree programmes at Bachelor, Master or Doctoral levels. The proposals build on universities' institutional autonomy and academic freedom. They fully respect the competences of Member States and regional governments in the area of higher education.

Today's package comprises a Communication on a blueprint for a European degree and two proposals for Council recommendations to support the higher education sector: one to improve quality assurance processes and automatic recognition of qualifications in higher education, and the other to make academic careers more attractive and sustainable.

A blueprint for a European degree

The blueprint for a European degree presented today paves the way for a new type of joint programme, delivered on a voluntary basis at national, regional, or institutional level, and based on a common set of criteria agreed at European level.

Such a European degree would cut red tape and allow higher education institutions from different countries to cooperate seamlessly across borders and set up joint programmes.

The Communication proposes a concrete cooperation path between EU Member States and the higher education sector towards the creation of a European degree recognised automatically across the EU. In view of the diversity of the European higher education systems across Europe, the Commission proposes a gradual approach for Member States towards a European degree, with **two possible entry points**:

- **A preparatory European label:** a label would provide a strong European branding. It would be given to joint degree programmes which meet the proposed European criteria: students receive a European degree label certificate together with their joint degree.
- **A European degree:** this new type of qualification would be based on the common criteria and be anchored in national legislation. It would be awarded either jointly by several universities from different countries or possibly by a European legal entity established by such universities: students receive a 'European degree' that is automatically recognised.

The Commission will facilitate and support Member States in the work towards the European degree through a number of concrete actions, including a **European degree policy lab** supported by Erasmus+ programme, to be set up in 2025, aiming to engage Member States and the higher education community to develop guidelines towards a European degree.

In 2025, the Commission plans to launch 'European degree pathway projects' within Erasmus+ programme to provide financial incentives for Member States, together with their accreditation and quality assurance agencies, universities, students, economic and social partners, to engage in the pathway towards a European degree.

Simpler and better quality assurance and automatic recognition of university degrees

The Commission's proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European quality assurance and recognition system in higher education invites Member States and higher education institutions to simplify and improve their quality assurance processes and practices. These are necessary conditions

for accountability and trust - and to improve universities' performances. Member States are invited to take measures to allow higher education institutions to adapt the programmes offered more quickly to societal needs.

This Recommendation would endorse innovative pedagogical offers and ensure that higher education institutions can create transnational programmes that are quality assured and automatically recognised across the EU. The European degree will depend on strong quality assurance and automatic recognition.

Valuing the diverse roles of academic staff equally

The proposed Council Recommendation on attractive and sustainable careers in higher education aims to give staff involved in cross-border work in education and innovative teaching methods the recognition and reward they deserve. It makes recommendations to ensure that national higher education systems address the uneven recognition of the diverse roles staff take on in addition to research, such as teaching and investing in mainstreaming sustainable development. It also encourages Member States to promote transnational education activities.

Next Steps

The package will be discussed with the Council of the EU and key stakeholders in higher education in the coming months. The Commission invites the Council, Member States, universities, students, and economic and social partners to work jointly to make the European degree a reality.

Background

In September 2020, the [Commission Communication on Achieving the European Education Area by 2025](#) identified the need to facilitate the delivery of joint degree programmes of higher education alliances. It was endorsed by the Council the following year.

Today's package was announced by President **von der Leyen** in her State of the Union speech 2023 and is part of the Commission's 2024 Work Programme.

The blueprint for a European degree builds on six Erasmus+ pilot projects involving more than 140 higher education institutions from across the EU.

For More Information

[Dedicated website on the European degree](#)

[Factsheet on a European degree](#)

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Quotes:

"Education is a key building block of our European way of life and a promise to our younger generations. Our universities provide graduates with strategic skills for their future and serve as beacons of a European brand of academic excellence. A European degree is the next step and will empower our universities to work together, for the benefit of students, teachers, employers and Europe's competitiveness."

Margaritis Schinas, Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life - 27/03/2024

"With the blueprint for a European degree, we respond to the needs of our students, of our universities and their staff, of the future employers of today's students - and indeed, of Europe as a whole. Our vision is to make European higher education even more competitive and interconnected. And to secure Europe's place in the global race for talent."

Iliana Ivanova, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth - 27/03/2024

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