

EUI 50th Anniversary | Florence 7 - 9 May 2026

Ministerial Summit and High Council | 7 May 2026

Florence Declaration on Universities and Europe's Future

Florence, 7 May 2026

We, the Ministers and representatives of the Member States of the European University Institute, on the occasion of its 50th anniversary,

In the presence of representatives of European institutions and the academic community,

Recalling the enduring role of universities in shaping Europe's intellectual, democratic, and scientific foundations,

Recognising the fundamental role of the European University Institute – both a research university and intergovernmental organisation – as a bridge between academia, Member States and their societies, and EU institutions,

Agree as follows:

1. Renewing our support to the European University Institute

We commend the European University Institute for five decades of excellence in research, doctoral education, and its contribution to European integration through knowledge.

Established by the Convention setting up the European University Institute, the Institute was entrusted by its founding Member States with a mission to contribute “to the development of Europe's cultural and scientific heritage”. We recognise that the European University Institute has successfully fulfilled and continuously advanced this mission over the past fifty years.

We reaffirm our continued support for its role as a space of academic freedom, intellectual independence and research in support of a strong Europe. The European University Institute remains a vital part of Europe's intellectual infrastructure, engaging with the diversity of national universities of the Member States.

2. Reaffirming the bond between Europe's universities and the societies they serve

We emphasise that Europe's capacity to act strategically depends on institutions that generate reliable knowledge and sustain critical thinking. This, in turn, requires a living relationship of mutual trust between universities and societies.

We recognise that universities are indispensable to democratic resilience, social and technological innovation, and long-term development, and that their mission extends beyond knowledge production to supporting collective sense-making in complex societies.

3. Launching a European debate on the role of universities for Europe's future

We support the launch of a structured European debate on the fundamental role of universities in addressing the major transformations of our time. Europe relies on its universities, as trusted partners that are independent and inclusive, rooted deeply in held shared European values.

We invite governments, European institutions, academia, the private sector, and society at large to engage in this reflection, with a view to informing the next Ministerial Conference of the Bologna Process, to be held in Iași and Chișinău in May 2027.