



**REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SPORT AND YOUTH**

**Welcome Speech by the Minister of Education, Sport and Youth
of the Republic of Cyprus, Dr Athena Michaelidou, at the
Meeting of Directors General for Higher Education
Filoxenia Conference Center, Lefkosia (Nicosia), Cyprus
20 May 2026, 09:30 a.m.**

Distinguished Directors General,
Esteemed Representatives of the European Commission,
Colleagues, Partners, and Friends,

It is my great honour and pleasure to welcome you all to Cyprus for the Meeting of the Directors General for Higher Education of the European Union. As Cyprus holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, we are proud to host this important meeting in Nicosia at the Filoxenia Conference Center at a time when Higher Education stands at the heart of Europe's strategic priorities.

Your presence here today reflects not only your commitment to Higher Education but also our shared responsibility to shape the future of Europe through knowledge, innovation, and cooperation.

Over the coming days, we are called to reflect, to exchange, and to act upon key issues that will define the evolution of the European Higher Education Area. The strategic priorities of our Presidency reflect this commitment, focusing on strengthening internationalisation and sustainable cross-border institutional collaboration, while advancing work towards a Joint European Degree Framework.

In an era of rapid technological and societal transformation, we place particular emphasis on the Union of Skills initiative. We aim to strengthen mobility in Higher Education while promoting upskilling and reskilling to better align Higher Education with evolving labour market needs. By fostering a culture of lifelong learning, we ensure that our graduates are not only academically proficient but also equipped to respond to the green and digital transitions shaping our societies.

Furthermore, we are committed to inclusion and equitable access, ensuring that the European Higher Education Area remains a platform of opportunity for all, regardless of background. We firmly believe that academic excellence flourishes when diverse voices are empowered to contribute to our shared intellectual landscape.

In Cyprus, Higher Education is at the heart of reform. We follow a strategic plan and promote action to upgrade and ensure quality in Higher Education in Cyprus.

This gathering of Directors General for Higher Education provides a valuable platform for open dialogue, exchange of best practices, and the development of shared solutions. There is clear convergence among Member States on key priorities, alongside a shared recognition of the challenges ahead.

Let us seize this opportunity to deepen our cooperation, strengthen our partnerships, and move forward with determination.

Before concluding, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who contributed to the organisation of this meeting, including the staff of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth and especially the Director of the Department of Higher Education and her team, our colleagues at the Secretariat of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU, our European partners, and all stakeholders involved.

It is a privilege for Cyprus to host you. We are confident that this meeting will contribute meaningfully to the advancement of Higher Education in Europe and to the strengthening of our shared European vision.

I wish you all a productive and inspiring meeting.

Thank you