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**EHEA WORKING GROUP ON STRUCTURAL REFORM**

**Membership**

The working group is chaired by Bartłomiej Banaszak (Poland), Fr. Friedrich Bechina (Holy See), Sjur Bergan (Council of Europe) and Noël Vercruysse (Belgium/Flemish Community), with Sjur Bergan as facilitator. Gayane Harutyunyan and Ani Hakobyan provide Secretariat support.

Armenia, Austria, Belgium (French Community), Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Moldova, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, European Commission, BusinessEurope, Education International, ENQA, EQAR, EURASHE, ESU, and EUA are members of the group, making it perhaps the largest of the four working groups in the 2012 – 15 program.

**First meeting**

The Working Group held its first meeting on December 13 -14, 2012, hosted by the Flemish Community of Belgium, in Brussels. This first meeting reviewed the state of affairs in each policy area covered by the mandate of the group – quality assurance, qualifications frameworks, recognition of qualifications and transparency instruments – and identified the most salient issues for its future work. It will aim to develop policy proposals as well as assess implementation of each policy area but its main emphasis will be on the interaction between and coherence of the four policy areas as well as their interlinkages with transversal issues, i.a. employability and global dimension.

While a part of the first meeting was conducted in thematic working groups for each policy area, the group will aim to work transversally. It will therefore seek to avoid establishing sub-groups for each policy area and will aim to define transversal topics for much of its work.

The working group reviewed its terms of reference and made suggestions for amendments. The revised terms of reference will be submitted to the BFUG for adoption at its meeting in Dublin (March 14 – 15, 2013) and are also submitted separately to the Bologna Board for consideration.

**Issue for specific consideration by the Board/BFUG**

* The outcomes of the discussions at the first meeting are largely reflected in the suggested terms of reference. The Working Group would nevertheless like to draw the attention of the Board and the BFUG to two issues:
  + the recognition of prior learning which is important to the further development of the EHEA as well as to the role of higher education in furthering lifelong learning. This issue could be addressed by either the Working Group on the Social Dimension and Lifelong Learning or by the one on Structural Reforms. It has not been included in the draft ToR of the Structural Reforms WG as we believe the Board and the BFUG should clarify which Working Group it wishes to take responsibility for this issue, so as to avoid overlap.
  + the issue of joint programmes and degrees which is a significant tool in furthering goals of the EHEA Mobility Strategy. However the issue of dismantling obstacles to cooperation in the framework of joint programmes clearly refers to the policy areas dealt with by the Structural Working Group. It was been reported to the Structural Working Group that this issue had not been included in the Terms of Reference of the Mobility and Internationalization WG.
* At its meeting in Dublin, the BFUG should then add the recognition of prior learning as well as joint programmes and degrees to the ToR of the Working Group that it wishes to consider this issue.

**Further schedule**

The Working Group aims to meet at least once, sometimes possibly twice, between every meeting of the BFUG. The next meetings will be held on May 22 -23 and September 24 – 25, 2013. For the latter, the possibility of a half day joint session with the EQF Advisory Group is being explored.

The four co-chairs work closely together and aim to meet once between every meeting of the working group. Their next meeting will be held in Strasbourg on February 22, 2013.

# Terms of Reference

# on

# Structural Reforms (Qualifications Frameworks, Recognition, Quality Assurance and Transparency)

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| **Name of the Working Group**  Working Group on Structural Reforms (qualifications frameworks, quality assurance, recognition of qualifications, transparency) |
| **Contact persons (Proposed Co-Chairs)**  Sjur Bergan (Council of Europe)-Coordinator  Noël Vercruysse (Belgium/Flemish Community)  Friedrich Bechina (Holy See)  Bartłomiej Banaszak (Poland) |
| **Composition**  Armenia, Austria, Belgium/French Community Federation Wallonia-Brussels, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Moldova, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Turkey, UK, Ukraine, BUSINESSEUROPE, European Commission, Education International;, ENQA, EQAR, ESU, EUA, EURASHE |
| **Purpose and/or outcome**  The Working Group on Structural Reforms is mandated to develop proposals for policy and practice aiming to improve instruments for structural reform (QF, QA, recognition of qualifications, transparency instruments) and the coherence between the main elements of structural reform within the European Higher Education Area as well as to oversee and advice the BFUG on the implementation of structural reforms.  The Working Group should consider structural reforms in relation to the major purposes of higher education:   * Preparing for employment; * Preparing for life as active citizens in democratic societies; * Personal development; * The development and maintenance of a broad, advanced knowledge base;   as well as the three missions:   * teaching and learning; * research; * service to society.   It should further be guided by the following policy considerations:   * Students, employers and society at large want more objective, reliable and high quality information about higher education; * There is an increasing societal expectation of Higher Education Institutions that they enhance the employability of graduates and provide students with skills relevant to the labour market; * There is a need to adapt the Bologna goals and instruments for structural reforms to the ever changing context of higher education and of our societies and to the evolving needs within the EHEA; * There is a need to build trust and confidence in higher education; * The relationship between the structural reforms developed within the EHEA and their impact on other regions needs to be considered; * There is a need for a more supportive environment for academic staff and students; * Higher Education needs to contribute to Lifelong Learning. |
| **Reference to the Bucharest Communiqué**  *At the European level, in preparation of the Ministerial Conference in 2015 and together with relevant stakeholders, we will…*   * Develop a proposal for a revised version of the ESG for adoption; * Work to ensure that the ECTS Users’ Guide fully reflects the state of on-going work on learning outcomes and recognition of prior learning; * Coordinate the work of ensuring that qualifications frameworks work in practice, emphasising their link to learning outcomes and explore how the QF-EHEA could take account of short cycle qualifications in national contexts; * Support the work of a pathfinder group of countries exploring ways to achieve the automatic academic recognition of comparable degrees; * Examine national legislation and practices relating to joint programmes and degrees as a way to dismantle obstacles to cooperation and mobility embedded in national contexts; * Develop EHEA guidelines for transparency policies and continue to monitor current and developing transparency tools;   *At the national level, together with the relevant stakeholders, and especially with higher education institutions, we will:*   * Allow EQAR-registered quality assurance agencies to perform their activities across the EHEA, while complying with national requirements; * Work to enhance employability, lifelong learning, problem-solving and entrepreneurial skills through improved cooperation with employers, especially in the development of educational programmes; * Ensure that qualifications frameworks, ECTS and Diploma Supplement implementation is based on learning outcomes; * Invite countries that cannot finalize the implementation of national qualifications frameworks compatible with QF-EHEA by the end of 2012 to redouble their efforts and submit a revised roadmap for this task; * Review national legislation to fully comply with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and promote the use of the EAR-manual to advance recognition practices; |
| **Specific tasks**   1. Consider and make recommendations on specific issues of policy and practice related to quality assurance, qualifications frameworks, recognition of qualifications and transparency instruments and their mutual interaction; 2. Consider how the development and implementation of learning outcomes impact on and may strengthen the coherence between the policy areas covered by the WG; 3. In consultation with the ENIC and NARIC Networks and the Network of national QF correspondents, develop policy proposals aiming to improve the interaction between qualifications frameworks and the recognition of qualifications; 4. Develop policy proposals aiming to improve transparency instruments for describing individual qualifications as well as higher education systems, in particular as concerns the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS. In this, the Working Group should establish cooperation with the institutions and bodies charged with the oversight and implementation of the relevant transparency instruments; 5. As appropriate, provide input to the WGs responsible for mobility and internationalization; the social dimension and lifelong learning on the role of structural reforms as well as to the Working Group on implementation in furthering the goals of these groups; 6. Consider and make recommendations on the interaction between the structural reforms and transversal issues, i.a. employability and the global dimension; 7. Comment, as appropriate, on draft amendments to the European Standards and Guidelines prepared by the Steering Committee (E4 plus EQAR, EI, BUSINESSEUROPE). 8. Organize, or stimulate the organization of, Bologna conferences, mini-seminars, peer learning activities and events on issues related to structural reforms; 9. Consider developments in relation to EQAR-registered quality assurance agencies operating in countries other than their countries of origin and make policy proposals or recommendations, as appropriate; 10. As appropriate, commission research to support its work; 11. Maintain contact with and, as needed, oversee the work of any sub groups established to address specific aspects of structural reforms; 12. Advice the BFUG on any issues referred to it by the BFUG; 13. Submit proposals to the 2015 Ministerial conference, through the BFUG, aiming to improve the coherence of the structural reforms within the EHEA. |
| **Reporting**  Minutes of working group meetings will be made available to the BFUG on the protected part of the website (by the Bologna Secretariat).  BFUG should also receive regular reports and updates.  To allow for good communication with the BFUG as a whole and for the necessary consultations, progress reports should be submitted at least two weeks before each BFUG meeting. In between BFUG meetings, updates can be circulated by the Bologna Secretariat via e-mail.  **The draft final report/conclusions will be presented and discussed no later than the BFUG meeting in the second half of 2014.** |
| **Meeting schedule:**  The Working Group will meet once per semester; more often if required, most likely in the preparation of its report to the BFUG.  The co-chairs will aim to meet once between every meeting of the working group.  Any sub-group established by the BFUG under the WG on Structural Reform will meet as required. |
| **Liaison with other WGs’ and networks’ activities**   * Implementation of the Bologna Process * Social dimension and lifelong learning * Mobility and internationalization |
| **Additional remarks**  Institutions and bodies outside of the BFUG or the framework of the EHEA are responsible for a number of relevant actions and instruments, e.g. the ENIC and NARIC Networks, the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee and the Council of Europe and UNESCO (Lisbon Recognition Convention), the Council of Europe, the European Commission and UNESCO (Diploma Supplement), the European Commission (ECTS); the steering group of E4, EI, BUSINESSEUROPE and EQAR in consultation with the BFUG (European Standards and Guidelines). In these cases, the Working Group should establish close cooperation with the relevant bodies and institutions. It should also maintain close cooperation with the EQF, through the EQF Advisory Group, the European Commission, CEDEFOP and the European Training Foundation. |