Strasbourg, Brussels, Vatican City, Warsaw, May 5, 2014

**STRUCTURAL REFORMS WORKING GROUP**

Warsaw, May 27 - 28, 2014

**DRAFT REPORT BY THE STRUCTURAL REFORMS WORKING GROUP TO THE BFUG**

Second draft by the Co-Chairs of the Structural Reforms Working Group

**Item X**

**INTRODUCTION**

At its meeting in Gent on December 9 – 10, 2013, the SRWG approved the outline of its report to the BFUG. As discussed, this report will need to be submitted to the BFUG in fall 2014, and the draft report should be completed by October 10. It will be discussed by the BFUG on November 27 – 28, and before that it should be considered by the Board, which will meet in October at a date yet to be determined.

We have so far scheduled three SRWG meetings to develop the report:

* March 10 – 11, Roma
* May 27 – 28, Warszawa
* September 14 – 15, Roma

At the first of these meetings, the SRWG had an extensive and, in our view, very good discussion of the first draft. This second draft seeks to take into consideration the discussion at the meeting on March 10 – 11 and also to develop further some other points.

The first draft of this report included a series of questions for further discussion. This second version takes a different approach and includes tentative recommendations rather than further questions. This is intended to help bring the report forward and is of course not intended to cut off further discussion at this point. While the recommendations are labeled as such, and while to an extent they build on the discussion at the March meeting, they should be understood as draft recommendations for further discussion. It is, however, important that discussion now build on rather than repeat the discussion at the earlier meetings of the group.

As will be recalled, the Bologna Board has underlined that the reports by the Working Groups should identify the key priorities within in their respective mandates and do not necessarily need to cover all items in the Terms of Reference. Therefore, the reports should contain a limited number of key recommendations of political relevance to Ministers. It will also be desirable that Working Groups make it clear which recommendations are intended for the EHEA as a whole and which are intended for (a) specific group(s) of EHEA members, e.g., in the case of the SRWG, those that experience challenges in specific areas of structural reforms.

The SRWG has an extensive mandate and the co-chairs suggest that the main political issues and recommendations be covered in the Executive Summary.

**Appendix First draft of the report by the SRWG to the BFUG**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*To be added when there is something to summarize…*

1. **ABOUT THE REPORT**

**I.1 MANDATE AND MEMBERSHIP**

The EHEA Working Group on Structural Reforms (Structural Reforms Working Group - SWRG) was appointed by the BFUG at its meeting in Nicosia on August 28 – 29. The SRWG is one of four working groups appointed for the 2012 – 15 work program. While each working group – perhaps with the exception of the Implementation WG - has had a broader mandate than previous working groups, it is fair to say that the SRWG has had the broadest mandate of all groups. This is reflected in the four policy areas - quality assurance, qualifications frameworks, the recognition of qualifications, and transparency instruments – included in its mandate as well as in the fact that all except one of the sub-structures appointed for the 2012 – 15 work program came under the responsibility of the SRWG. The substructures

* The *ad hoc* working group on third cycle qualifications
* The *ad hoc* working group on revising the ECTS users’ Guide
* The network of national correspondents for qualifications frameworks
* The network on the recognition of prior learning

have reported to the SRWG and contributed to the present report. The terms of reference of the SRWG and its substructures are reproduced in Appendices 1 – 5.

The main reason why the BFUG decided to appoint only four working groups in the 2012 – 15 program, and to give each one a broad mandate, was a desire to provide a more coherent context and framework for the further development of the European Higher Education Area. This was not least the case for structural reforms, which have been one of the hallmarks of the EHEA. While important reforms have been devised and implemented – at least to a considerable extent - in each of the four policy areas covered by the SRWG there was also a feeling that these reforms had been developed with insufficient attention to the overall effects of structural reforms.

The BFUG therefore decided to appoint a single working group for all areas of structural reform rather than separate groups for each policy area, as in previous work programs. This is reflected in a very broad and detailed mandate as well as in the overwhelming interest expressed by BFUG members and consultative members in the SRWG.

The SRWG has been co-chaired by Sjur Bergan (Council of Europe – coordinator), Bartłomiej Banaszak (Poland), Fr. Friedrich Bechina, FSO (Holy See) and Noël Vercruysse (Flemish Community of Belgium). The BFUG Secretariat, represented by its Head, Gayane Harutyunyan and by Ani Hakobyan, has provided the secretariat for the Group. Some 40 BFUG members and consultative members have participated in the work of the SRWG and the full list of members is provided in Appendix 6. The sub-structures have in part been represented in the SRWG. In addition, the Co-Chairs of the SRWG have met with the co-chairs of the sub-structures on several occasions.

**I.2 STRUCTURE AND EMPHASIS**

In line with the desire to see the four policy areas covered by the SRWG in context, this report emphasizes overarching issues of structural reform. It covers all elements specified in its terms of reference but not in the order listed in the ToR. Since many of the elements of the ToR are specific to a single policy area, this report also seeks to deal with several elements in context. Readers should therefore not expect to find specific chapters or sub-chapters for each item of the ToR. The report underlines that, even if a broad diversity will continue to exist with regard to qualifications frameworks and quality assurance, structural reforms have to be coherent and they need to be implemented properly and timely. The SRWG hopes the proposals it puts forward to the BFUG – and through the BFUG to the Yerevan ministerial conference – will help further this essential goal.

The four sub-structures have all contributed to the report and their contributions have been integrated into the report. Therefore, there will not be specific chapters or sub-chapters on each of the sub-structures.

There was some discussion in the SRWG on whether the report should mainly focus on policy recommendations or also include an overview of the implementation of adopted policy measures in EHEA countries. While there is inevitably a measure of both in the report, the emphasis is on policy recommendations. The main reason for this is that the BFUG appointed a separate working group to report on the implementation of the European Higher Education Area (hereafter: the Implementation WG). Should the SRWG have made the implementation of structural reforms a mainstay of its report, this would have implied either a repetition of information provided by the Implementation WG or requiring EHEA countries to undertake a supplementary reporting exercise to provide information on structural reforms in addition to the quite extensive information requested by the Implementation WG. Neither option seemed advisable, and this was further underscored by the fact that whereas the SRWG was required to submit its draft report in fall 2104, as were two other working groups, the Implementation WG was given a deadline in early 2015 to ensure that the Implementation report a far as possible be based on updated information. A separate reporting exercise by the SRWG would therefore also have been based on less updated information than that of the Implementation WG and the risk of unintended discrepancies between the two would have been very real.

Ideally, the information provided by the Implementation WG would have provided a basis on which the SRWG could consider possible measures to improve implementation in areas where implementation is unsatisfactory. However, given the timetable, this was not possible.

The report, then, aims to develop policy recommendations for how structural reforms should develop as a key part of the European Higher Education Area over the next few years, at least until 2020. The point should perhaps be made that, in the same way that building a European Higher Education Area by 2010 once seemed like a long term, distant goal but shortly thereafter seemed like “only tomorrow”, 2020 will by the time Ministers meet in Yerevan at most be a medium term goal. It may be worth recalling that the Yerevan ministerial conference in 2015 will mark the midterm of the second period of the EHEA, as the Bergen ministerial conference in 2005 marked the mid-term of the first period (1999 – 2010).

The report seeks to balance very extensive terms of reference with the need to focus attention on a limited set of politically pertinent recommendations. It seeks to square this particular circle by highlighting its main political recommendation in the executive summary, which will also give readers a fair idea of the main thrust of the report, and then by supporting the main recommendations by more developed treatment of main issues as well as by putting forward a set of more technical recommendations in the main body of the report, which the RSWG assumes will have a narrower but more specialist readership. The report will not give separate consideration to each and every element of its terms of Reference but will seek to cross reference to the ToR whenever possible and meaningful.

For each of the issues addressed in this report, the SRWG aims to cover:

***Concept***

What is the concept covered? Is the concept clear or is there a need for the EHEA, at the competent level (Ministers, BFUG, Working Group, as the case may be) to clarify the concept?

***Description***

A brief description of the issue and how it relates to structural reform, as well as of the level(s) (EHEA, regional, national, institutional) concerned.

***Issue***

What is the direct issue that needs to be addressed? What is the problem and why is it a part of the report?

***Solution(s)/Recommendation(s)***

What does the SRWG recommend in response to the issue? This may not only be an issue of “what?” but also of “who?”, “how?” and “by when?”

**I.3 TARGET GROUPS FOR THIS REPORT**

The main target group for this report is higher education policy makers. Since structural reforms mainly concern education *systems*, most recommendations are directed at the public authorities responsible for those systems. Nevertheless, as we underline strongly in the report, structures will not work unless they are implemented and uneven implementation of seemingly coherent structures could even undo important aspects of the European Higher Education Area. Therefore, leaders and policy makers at higher education institutions and in higher education organizations, including those of students and staff, are also important target groups for this report. While the SRWG has no illusions that the report will reach a broad public, we hope its main recommendations will reach practitioners through implementation projects activities in EHEA member states.

**I.4 RELATIONSHIP TO THE OTHER EHEA WORKING GROUPS AND ACTIVITIES**

In keeping with its ToR, the SRWG and its co-chairs have cooperated with the other EHEA working groups. They have in particular consulted with the co-chairs of the Implementation WG but has also maintained contracts with the co-chairs of the WGs on internationalization and mobility and the social dimension and lifelong learning.

At the proposal of the SRWG and the WG on internationalization and mobility, the BFUG appointed an *ad hoc* group[[1]](#footnote-1) to make proposals concerning the quality assurance of joint programs and degrees. The SRWG discussed the proposal by this *ad hoc* group at two of its meetings and, with the WG on Internationalization and Mobility, recommended that the BFUG considers adoption of the proposal. The report by this *ad hoc* group was considered by the BFUG at its meeting on April 9 – 10, 2014. The BFUG gave its consent to the principles outlined in the report and asked from some further clarification on specific points.

Two important activities of structural reforms were explicitly *not* included in the ToR of the SRWG. The revision of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in higher education (ESG) was conducted by a working group appointed by the E 4 Group and overseen by a steering group that also included Business Europe, Education International and EQAR. Members of the SRWG who are also members of the BFUG contributed to the thematic session on the ESG organized at the BFUG meeting in Vilnius in November 2013 and the SRWG held an in-depth discussion of the revised ESG at its meeting in December 2013. Complete with reference to further discussion in the SRWG.

Proposals for the automatic recognition of qualifications have, as stipulated in the Bucharest Communiqué, been developed by a “pathfinder group” appointed and chaired by the European Commission. The SRWG has received oral information on the work of this group.

**I.5 STRUCTURAL REFORMS IN THE EHEA: BASIS AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

Structural reforms have been a – perhaps *the* – main feature of the development of the European Higher Education Area and the EHEA has adopted important standards:

* For *quality assurance*, the European Standards and Guidelines[[2]](#footnote-2) were adopted by Ministers in 2005, whereas the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)[[3]](#footnote-3) was established in 2008;
* For *qualifications frameworks*, the overarching framework of qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA)[[4]](#footnote-4) was adopted by Ministers in 2005 and Ministers at the same time made a commitment to developing their respective national frameworks and to self-certify them against the QF-EHEA – originally by 2010 and later by 2012. While not formally part of the EHEA, the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF)[[5]](#footnote-5), adopted by the European Union in 2008, is clearly highly relevant and excellent cooperation has been established between the QF-EHEA and the EQF.
* For *recognition*, the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention)[[6]](#footnote-6) was adopted in 1997, came into force in 1999 and is the only legally binding standard of the EHEA;
* For *transparency instruments*, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS; a Commission instrument) and the Diploma Supplement[[7]](#footnote-7) (DS; developed jointly by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO and a part of both the Lisbon Recognition Convention and Europass) were developed in other contexts but play key roles in the EHEA. The commitment made by Ministers in 2003 to deliver the DS automatically, free of charge and in a widely spoken European language sadly remains one of the unfulfilled commitments of the EHEA. The BFUG has been also given a mandate to continue monitoring a number of other transparency tools which have been developed by different actors, also outside the realm of the Bologna Process.

All four policy areas have also been the subject of reports and suggestions presented to Ministerial conferences. For the 2012 ministerial conferences, these were:

* On qualifications frameworks, a [report by the working group](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/%281%29/Qualifications%20Frameworks%20Working%20Group%20Report.pdf).
* On recognition, a [report by the working group](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/%281%29/Recognition%20WG%20Report.pdf) as well as a report by [the network on the recognition of prior learning](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/%281%29/RPL%20Network%20Report.pdf).
* On transparency instruments, [a report by the working group](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/%281%29/brosura_v1_v12_vp_120419_text.pdf).
* Quality assurance was not the subject of a specific working group but the [report by ENQA](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/%281%29/ENQA_report_EHEA_ministers_FINAL.pdf) and the [message by EQAR](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/%281%29/T_120425_EQAR_MessageToBucharestMinisterial_web.pdf) focused on the topic.

The SRWG is well aware of the fact that higher education worldwide is undergoing many changes and that many of those changes will have a (structural) impact on European higher education systems. On line education provision such as MOOCs may be the most obvious example, even if there are differing opinions on the impact and sustainability of MOOCs. The present report cannot explore the impact of these changes, in part because the SRWG terms of reference are both extensive and specific and in part because many of these developments are still in the making. However, the EHEA needs to follow developments closely also in the 2015 – 18 work period and Ministers or the BFUG may wish to reflect on what the impact of some of the developments may be on the very concept of an education system.

While the development of a European Research Area (ERA) is formally not a part of the Bologna Process, it is clearly of great importance to European higher education, which encompasses research as well as teaching and learning and service to society. For the 28 members of the EHEA that are also members of the European Union, the development of the ERA is particularly important as they are formally a part of the ERA framework. The ERA is, however, of great importance also the EHEA members that are not EU countries. The structures developed within the European Higher Education Area must also be suited to furthering the goals of the European Research Area.

1. **POLITICAL CONTEXT**

**II.1 STRUCTURES FOR WHAT PURPOSES?**

Higher education in Europe as well as each higher education systems face the challenges of:

* making the most of the skills and abilities of all members of societies throughout their lives as well as of providing all individuals with the opportunity to develop their abilities and aspirations to the full;
* sustaining excellent teaching and learning, research and scholarship, and community service and engagement: quality, efficiency, effectiveness and equity;
* creating environments in which those skills and knowledge are translated into innovative solutions to the complex problems our societies face (e.g. health, poverty, energy, food, migration, cities, sustainable employment, commitment to public space);
* building and maintaining trust and confidence: in public authorities, between members of society, between countries and cultures, and between individuals and societal institutions,

The European Higher Education Area was established through implementation of the principles[[8]](#footnote-8) of the Bologna Process. By drawing on their common strengths, values, and their diverse experiences as well as by acknowledging each other’s specificities, the EHEA offers a unique opportunity for European countries to develop an attractive higher education that enable all students and citizens to acquire international and intercultural knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes through high-quality education. Within this framework a distinction could be made between:

* subject-specific knowledge, understanding and skills;
* generic skills and attitudes: personal skills and attitudes, intercultural understanding, skills and attitudes, linguistic skills and responsible world citizenship.

The EHEA increases the capacity of national higher education institutions and national higher education systems provide their graduates with the competences and attitudes needed to face the global challenges.

The EHEA should enable higher education institutions, staff and students to make their full contribution to

* the transfer, transmission and advancement of knowledge and understanding,
* the growth of wealth and prosperity of all citizens,
* innovation in all sectors of society,
* a better understanding of the global grand challenges,
* sustainable development,

through

* a reinforcement of European cooperation: joint study programs, joint research projects, joint cross-border community engagement projects, joint change projects, …
* mobility of students and staff,
* a reinforcement of international cooperation,
* easy recognition of qualifications across the EHEA.

Given the globalization of our social, cultural, economic, technological and political environment, the quality and the performance of each higher education system depend not only of the intrinsic strengths but also on the strengths and vitality of the institutions and higher education systems elsewhere. Our institutions and our systems continue to be enriched by the flow of talents and ideas from abroad.

Structural reforms have been the hallmark of the European Higher Education Area and have gained considerable visibility. Even if structural reforms have been unevenly developed among policy areas and countries, the “Bologna structural reforms” have been a relative success.

The European Higher Education Area has, however, perhaps been less successful in spelling out the rationale for its structural reform and in making clear the values on which they rest and that they seek to further. The SRWG therefore feels it is important to put its report and recommendations within a broader political and policy context.

This report, then, articulates the view that structural reforms are means to achieve political and policy goals. Structures cannot be ends in themselves. The political and policy goals of the European Higher Education Area have been spelled out in the Declarations and Communiqués adopted by Ministers from 1999 through 2012.

The European Higher Education Area aims to allow students, staff, and graduates to move as freely as possible between all the countries and education system making up the EHEA and to do so while maintaining the full value of their qualifications for access to further studies, on the European labor market and, more broadly, in the context of lifelong learning. Education structures should contribute to this goal even if structural reforms alone are insufficient to bring. Education structures should contribute to this goal even if structural reforms alone are insufficient to bring about the EHEA.

The European Higher Education Area aims to facilitate cooperation between systems, institutions, and individual staff and students throughout the EHEA and to make European higher education known and appreciated throughout the world as European and not only as the sum of individual higher education systems. The EHEA is a framework that underlines what we have in common as Europeans while also providing individual systems and institutions to draw on their particular strengths and traditions. The EHEA, therefore, provides for variation within an overall framework that ensures coherence. Education structures should contribute to this goal even if structural reforms alone are insufficient to bring about the EHEA.

The European Higher Education Area is a framework for the development of common policies as well as for mutual learning. Members of the EHEA should be open about successful as well as less successful experiences within their own systems as well as about the reasons for success or failures. Structural reforms should contribute to this goal even if structural reforms alone are insufficient to bring about the EHEA.

The need for a coherent view of structural reform as well as to place structural reforms in a broader policy context was also underlined in the SRWG mandate:

“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.”

**II.2 FUNDING AND RESPONSIBILITY**

The fact that the EHEA is a framework for voluntary cooperation also has financial consequences. The EHEA is organized on the principle that overall policy goals are agreed at European level and implemented within the framework of national higher education systems, in which higher education institutions and organizations of course play a key role.

There is, therefore, no “Bologna budget” at the level of the EHEA. Even if the European Commission provides substantial funding for EHEA-related projects and activities, the implementation of the structural reforms of the EHEA depends essentially on national funding as well as on the funding of each institution. Both are vulnerable to the financial crisis that many EHEA countries have been experiencing over the past few years and are in many cases still experiencing.

The SRWG does not believe that establishing a “Bologna budget” would be a realistic option in the current circumstances and any such initiative would at any rate be well beyond the SRQWG mandate. The SRWG nevertheless feels compelled to point at the implementation of structural reform, and hence the development of the EHEA, is constrained by limitations on public finances and that these are unevenly spread across the EHEA. Any measures that would assist the countries most affected by the financial crisis or by weak public finances more broadly could therefore also help the implementation of structural reforms.

1. **OVERARCHING ISSUES - DEVELOPING A COHERENT APPROACH TO STRUCTURAL REFORMS**

An important reason why the SRWG was established was, as mentioned, a desire on the part of the BFUG to see the structural reforms at the heart of the development of the EHEA as a coherent whole as well as a concern that structural reforms had so far been developed piecemeal and possibly even at cross purposes.

While structural reform has taken on great importance in the development of the EHEA, and while there has been an implicit understanding that structural reforms are necessary to make European higher education better, more attractive and more “fit for purpose”, there has been little explicit discussion of what purposes higher education reforms should seek to further even if some reference to the multiple purposes of higher education can be found in successive communiqués, at least from the 2007 London Communiqué[[9]](#footnote-9). Higher education in Europe needs structures that enable it to contribute in the best possible way to all its major purposes.

As pointed out in the terms of reference of the SRWG (ToR no. 6), higher education structures also have an impact on other policy areas. As two obvious examples, education systems may, through their structures and regulations, make it easier for students to move within and between systems and to access various levels of higher education entirely or partly on the basis of non-formal qualifications – or they may impede such movement and access. Juxtaposing information from different parts of the 2012 Implementation report, for example, we see that the countries in which alternative learning paths are the least developed within the respective national systems are also the countries most likely to experience a sharp drop in the number of people of “classical student age” and whose institutions will hence face the most difficulties in recruiting students from within their own countries in the years to come unless alternative learning paths are developed and recognize that facilitate access to and completion of higher education for people from groups that are today underrepresented in higher education[[10]](#footnote-10). These include, but are not limited to, mature students; students who need to combine study and work, often also family obligations; students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds; students from certain immigrant groups; students from socio-cultural backgrounds in which education is not valued; and various combinations of these. Likewise, quality assurance, qualifications frameworks, recognition and transparency instruments all have the potential of making mobility easier – or more difficult.

**III.1 A European transparency framework**

One of the key overarching challenges is communication. The authorities responsible for coordinating communication must be identified and communication about structural reforms must be coherent. Recognition is in part about communicating to respective authorities responsible for the recognition; quality assurance is in part about reassuring certain stakeholders, including the general public, that higher education is of the required quality and that quality is being assured. For qualifications frameworks to be accepted and used, their functions and advantages must be communicated and understood. In order to be coherent, public authorities need an overarching communication strategy as much as technical strategy.

Both coherence and communication would be helped by a common ‘academic’/’transparency’ infrastructure that would make it clear how the structures of higher education in Europe interact and fit together. Such an infrastructure – which could be labeled a “European transparency framework” – would help students understand how they could move around more freely within the European Higher Education Area and have their qualifications recognized without losing the real value of those qualifications when crossing national borders. It would help employers ensure that they recruit people with the requisite qualifications of the requisite quality regardless of where, within the EHEA, those qualifications have been earned. It would help policy makers ensure that their own education system is in tune with those of their EHEA partners. Not least, it would help reassure the general public that higher education in their own countries are of the same quality as that of their partner countries and that qualification earned in one country may be used in others.

A European transparency area would include the following key elements as the academic infrastructure connecting the different structural elements:

* A common understanding of the purposes of higher education
* QF-EHEA (Dublin descriptors, and a reference to the EQF will also be needed)
* National Qualifications frameworks, referenced to the QF-EHEA and/ or the EQF (the fact that higher education is confronted with two QF may lead to some confusion)
* Subject specific learning outcomes, to complement the generic learning outcomes included in the national and overarching QFs;
* Program specifications (a program is an approved curriculum constructed individual units/modules): including
  + Units or modules
  + Modes of delivery: contact hours/e-learning
  + Assessment methods that enable achievement of the learning outcomes to be demonstrated
  + Profile: more professionally oriented or more academically oriented (Teaching-Research Nexus)
  + Language(s) of instruction
  + Student support
  + Equal opportunities for disabled/disadvantaged students
  + ECTS: work load expressed in credits
  + Diploma Supplement
  + Opportunities for mobility and/or work placements
  + Employability of graduates, with an emphasis on the situation of graduates on the labor market and their professional career
  + qualification obtained including possible professional qualifications
  + the values and rights associated with qualifications
* Quality Assurance: the revised ESG as well as a reference to EQAR and the principle that quality assurance may be carried out by non-national agencies as long as they are certified as operating in accordance with the ESG;
* Quality Assurance: national quality assurance frameworks or quality codes: criteria used that enable quality to be demonstrated
* Quality Assurance: outcomes of external quality assurance

Furthermore we need a common understanding of learning outcomes:

* Knowledge and understanding
* Generic competences
* Subject specific competences
* Indication of level

There needs to be a clear link between the learning outcomes and the assessment methods used, and a common European approach for quality assurance of joint programs is needed.

***Recommendation***

*The proposals put forward by the SRWG, whether they concern transversal issues or specific policy areas, aim to develop such a European transparency area. Can we make specific recommendations under this point?*

**III.2 Learning outcomes** (ToR no. 2)

Learning outcomes are commonly understood as describing what learners know, understand and are able to do on the background of a given qualification. The SRWG believes that attitudes – i.e. ethical standards; not only what a learner is able to do but also what (s)he is willing to do – should be a part of our understanding of learning outcomes.

Learning outcomes are an important transversal element for the four main policy areas. They represent a shift in focus from procedural considerations to considerations of what learners know, understand and are able to do on the basis of a qualification as well as of the attitudes they have developed in the course of their education[[11]](#footnote-11). They also support implementation of the student-centered learning approach in teaching and learning processes, in which teach­ers, students and institutions need to continuously reflect on their teaching, learning and infrastructural systems in order to improve the learning experience of students and ensure that the intended learning outcomes of a given course or educational component are achieved in a way that stimulates critical thinking and transferable skills.

Ideally, learning outcomes should be linked to qualifications frameworks. They should be obtained in programs that have been quality assured, and these programs should in themselves be an important part of the internal quality development in higher education institutions. Learning outcomes that are described and assessed in transparent ways should be a key building block of the EHEA. At the same time, it is clear that – like automatic recognition - this is very much a goal for the future and that much work is still required for learning outcomes to become a key element of policy and practice in all parts of the EHEA.

While some countries have come far in developing, describing, using and assessing learning outcomes and have made them a feature of all or most higher education programs and degrees, in other countries, the concept of learning outcomes is still insufficiently understood by most members of the higher education community. Differences are not only between countries: there may also be differences between academic disciplines in the extent to which learning outcomes have been developed and implemented. The issue is particularly difficult because it touches on fundamental aspects of higher education culture and practice and a change of description does not automatically entail change of practice.

If, as is clearly the intention, learning outcomes become a key feature of the European Higher Education Area as an important component of higher education programs and qualifications that are a part of national qualifications frameworks and that have been quality assured in accordance with the ESG, and that are also described through transparency instruments such as the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS, higher education policy makers and practitioners will have reliable and readily accessible information on:

* the quality of a given qualification, at least in terms of whether it meets the threshold quality standards;
* the level of the qualification, as defined in the national QF and in relation to the QF-EHEA and/or the EQF;
* the workload of the qualification, expressed in ECTS units (or, theoretically, ECTS compatible units, but ECTS is *de facto* the European “currency” for describing workload).

In addition, learning outcomes should provide information on the profile of the qualification.

While developing, describing, using and assessing learning outcomes is objectively a difficult exercise, meeting this challenge is of fundamental importance to the further development of the European Higher Education Area. There is good reason to expect that within a few years, all members of the EHEA will have structures that, if judged on the sole basis of their formal design, will be compatible. Structures are, however, useful only if they are put into practice and this is where the real challenge lies. There is, thus, also good reason to fear that unless a common understanding of learning outcomes is developed, what will look like compatible structures will evolve into incompatible realities through uneven practice and diverse understandings of basic concepts.

This is a major challenge to the EHEA because, while structures may be developed by working groups and adopted by public authorities, practice is developed and implemented by higher education institutions and individual members of the academic community. Even if every member of the academic community of the EHEA would benefit from training on learning outcomes with colleagues from other countries, no public budget could fund such an ambitious goal. Individual institutions will need to take the main responsibility for the development of learning outcomes within their own institution and for the training of their own staff and students. Nevertheless, establishing appropriate ways of exchanging experience across institutional boundaries and national borders is essential.

***Recommendations***

* EHEA members experiencing difficulties in developing and implementing a learning outcomes based approach are encouraged to seek the assistance of other members.
* EHEA members should increase their effort to build capacity at grass roots level, i.e. at department and faculty level within institutions, e.g. through professional training in the development and assessment of learning outcomes. This should be an integral part of pedagogical training for new higher education teaching staff and as such should be mandatory for all new staff and also offered to all staff currently employed.
* The BFUG co-chairs and the Bologna Secretariat are requested to contact the competent authorities of EHEA members with an unsatisfactory in the 2015 EHEA Implementation report by the end of 2015 with offers of assistance and to report back on the outcomes of such assistance in time for the 2018 ministerial conference.

**III.3 Employability** (ToR no. 7)

Employment and employability are among the key concerns of European governments as well as of most citizens. Both governments and citizens expect education, including higher education, to play a lead role in addressing Europe’s employment needs. As the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué makes clear:

With labour markets increasingly relying on higher skill levels and transversal competences, higher education should equip students with the advanced knowledge, skills and competences they need throughout their professional lives. Employability empowers the individual to fully seize the opportunities in changing labour markets.

A distinction needs to be made between employment and employability. Employment means exercising a remunerated professional activity or, colloquially, “holding a job”. Employability means having the potential to be employed (which includes the potential for self-employment) or, colloquially, of “getting a job”. Higher education cannot guarantee employment. It can, however, significantly improve an individual’s employability.

Employability, then, may be understood as the competences and personal characteristics that will make an individual sustainably successful on the labor market. It comprises subject-specific, methodological, social and individual competences which enable a graduate to successfully take up and pursue a profession or an employment and empower him or her to life-long learning. It implies providing graduates with the competences needed to get a meaningful first employment as well as to develop further professionally in the course of their career. It is also important to underline that employability is a process of learning and not a final product to be delivered by education institutions. Someone who is employable on graduation may not be so a decade or two later is he or she has not continued to learn and to develop professionally and personally.

It is an underlying assumption, supported by evidence from Eurostat, that higher education degrees overall make it easier for the holders to be meaningfully employed. At the same time, it must be recognized that no qualification will make an individual suitable for all kinds of employment and some highly qualified individuals may, by the nature of their qualifications, be qualified for employment only in highly specialized occupations. The great majority of higher education graduates should, however, be prepared, through their higher education studies, for employment in broad sectors of what is likely to be a fast-moving labor market where many higher education graduates will change career track several times in the course of their working lives and also return to higher education to update, further, and complement their qualifications. Such returns shall be stimulated by well implemented structural reform, including three-cycle system.

Like learning outcomes and the global dimension, employability is one of the overarching dimensions of structural reform – as well as of the agenda of the other working groups. In increasingly complex societies, advanced competences will be a prerequisite for most kinds of employment. The further development of Europe’s economy – and beyond that, of European societies – will therefore depend on higher education providing a basis for meaningful employment. Hence, the structures of the EHEA must further this goal, with implications for the quality of education, the framework and structures of qualifications, recognition and transparency.

There is clearly a perception among political decision makers, employers, and a considerable part of the general public that higher education today is insufficiently geared to making its graduates employable. It is therefore important to be clear about what employability means as well as what it does not mean. Employability does *not* mean that employers should determine the contents and teaching methods of study programs, that there could or should be a match between education programs and labor markets, or that higher education institutions should train their students in the routines of everyday work. It *does* mean that higher education institutions should provide their students with knowledge and understanding of the theories and methods of their chosen academic discipline and enable them to apply their knowledge on the job in order to assess and solve problems as well as to develop new knowledge, skills and competences. Higher education graduates should also have acquired relevant soft skills and be able to identify their own training needs. All study programs, regardless of their level or cycle, should comprise practical components such as practice-related/-based teaching and learning, mandatory internships or practice periods, practice-oriented papers or theses, career guidance, information about the situation of graduates on the labor market. They should enhance an outcomes orientation and turn students into critical lifelong-learners. Institutions should describe students’ competences in transparent ways, e.g. by using transparency tools like the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS.

Enhancing the employability of graduates has consequences for quality assurance, the governance of higher education institutions and cooperation with stakeholders. The employability of graduates need to be an element of quality assurance in that quality assessment should comprise the practice-oriented aspects of the study program and ensure that the views of external experts (professional practitioners) and students are taken into account. Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programs to ensure that they respond to the needs of students, employers and society. Tracking the career patterns of graduates is essential to this exercise.

Higher education institutions should continue to develop cooperation with employers. Students need to be included in this cooperation and dialogue so they feel part of it and to ensure that the student perspective is included. Dialogue is also essential to creating confidence.

Lifelong learning is essential to ensuring lifelong employability and must be fully integrated into institutional strategies. Institutions should promote permeability: they should be more open to new target groups like working students and students with vocational qualification, they should increase possibilities for part time studies and for alternating periods of study and of work, and they should improve recognition of qualifications obtained through alternative learning paths, including those gained on the job.

The employability problem concerns graduates of the first cycle (or Bachelor) in a particular way. One can assume that the comparatively low employability value of the first degree concerns above all those countries in which the majority of the first degree holders continue with a second degree (Masters) program immediately after graduation from the first cycle. In countries that have long experience with first cycle qualifications, these seem to have found their place also in the labor market and are not seen simply as preparation for further studies. The quality of cooperation between employers and institutions on the development, delivery and evaluation of study programs, including quality work placements, is also perceived as insufficient. The SRWG acknowledges the fact that enhancing the employability of graduates and providing students with skills relevant to the labor market is often among the national priorities in higher education policies. Therefore, it is essential to demonstrate that furthering this goal depends to large extent on an improved understanding of learning outcomes and proper implementation of EHEA structures with implications for quality assurance, the framework and structures of qualifications, recognition and transparency

At the same time, the interpretation of “employability” must take account of the fact that employment requirements as well as the academic content of qualifications are likely to develop rapidly and that education serves a variety of purposes, including democratic citizenship and personal development. Furthering employability will, in the vast majority of cases, not mean preparing students for a specific occupation or a specific segment of the labor market as it is today. It will imply providing graduates with the competences needed to get a meaningful first employment as well as to develop further professionally in the course of their career. The balance between subject specific and transversal competences, employers’ involvement in the development of study programs and structural changes, the transparent description of competences as well as study programs and education systems and the transferability and comparability of quality assessments are all important to enhancing the employability of higher education graduates.

***Recommendations***

In order to enhance the employability of higher education graduates

1. *Public authorities and higher education institutions* should develop and implement qualifications frameworks and study programs that:

* provide students with knowledge and understanding of the theories and methods of their chosen academic discipline and enable them to apply their knowledge on the job in order to assess and solve problems as well as to develop new knowledge, skills and competences.
* enables students to acquire relevant soft skills and to identify their own training needs.
* regardless of their level or cycle, comprise practical components such as practice-related/-based teaching and learning, mandatory internships or practice periods, practice-oriented papers or theses.
* are supported by career guidance as well as reliable information on career prospects, including regulated professions, and situation of graduates on the labor market.
* enhance an outcomes orientation and turn students into critical lifelong-learners.
* describe students’ competences in transparent ways, e.g. by using transparency tools like the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS.

1. *Public authorities* should ensure that their competence requirements ensure fair access to public employment for holders of first degrees.
2. *Quality assurance agencies and higher education institutions* should make the employability of graduates an element of quality assurance.
3. *Higher education institutions* should:

* monitor and periodically review their programs to ensure that they respond to the needs of students, employers and society.
* track the career patterns of graduates.
* continue to develop cooperation with employers and ensure that the views of students are included in this cooperation.
* fully integrate lifelong learning into institutional strategies

**III.4 The use of qualifications frameworks to improve fair recognition** (ToR, no. 3)

Qualifications frameworks describe all qualifications in a given (higher) education system as well as how these qualifications relate to each other and how learners can move between qualifications within the framework. The self-certification and referencing of national frameworks to overarching qualifications frameworks (QF-EHEA and EQF) establish the relationship between qualifications from different national frameworks.

The Lisbon Recognition Convention postulates that foreign qualifications should be recognized unless a substantial difference can be demonstrated between the qualification for which recognition is sought and similar or corresponding qualification in the host country. This is exemplified by paragraph VI.1 on recognition of higher education qualifications; similar wording is found in Articles IV.1 on recognition of qualifications giving access to higher education and V.I on recognition of periods of study:

To the extent that a recognition decision is based on the knowledge and skills certified by the higher education qualification, each Party shall recognize the higher education qualifications conferred in another Party, unless a substantial difference can be shown between the qualification for which recognition is sought and the corresponding qualification in the Party in which recognition is sought.

Qualifications frameworks should provide clear answers to some of the questions credentials evaluators would normally ask about a foreign qualification, notably about quality, level and workload, and should also be helpful in assessing profile and learning outcomes. They should help make it clear what similarities exist between qualifications from different national frameworks and therefore help avoid an overly narrow interpretation of what differences between qualifications may be considered substantial and which may therefore constitute valid grounds for non-recognition, including partial recognition of foreign qualifications.

It is also worth noting that the Lisbon Recognition Convention is in a legal sense restricted to academic recognition, i.e. recognition of foreign qualifications for the purpose of further study. However, the need for fair recognition is equally strong in the case of professional recognition. The principles and provisions of the Lisbon Recognition Convention are also applicable, as a guide to good practice, to recognition of the purpose of access to the labor market.

The Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee adopted a new subsidiary text to the Convention on this topic in June 2013[[12]](#footnote-12). This is the only international standard setting text that stipulates how qualifications frameworks could be used as instruments to further the recognition of qualifications – and hence the Recommendation addresses the coherence and links between two of the policy areas covered by the ToR of the Structural Reforms Working Group.

The Recommendation underlines the need for better links and more direct interaction between the bodies responsible for recognition and those responsible for qualifications frameworks. At least indirectly, it also makes the case for better cooperation between these bodies and those responsible for quality assurance since satisfactory quality assurance provision is a precondition for self-certification and referencing of national qualifications frameworks[[13]](#footnote-13).

In many countries, contacts and cooperation between the bodies responsible for different areas of structural reform is still insufficient. Even though contacts at European level between the different groups and networks working on specific policy areas – such as ENQA and EQAR for quality assurance, the Network of national correspondents for qualifications frameworks of the QF-EHEA and the EQF Advisory Group for qualifications frameworks and the ENIC and NARIC Networks for recognition – have improved significantly over the past few years, there is still scope for considerable improvement. In many countries, further efforts are also required to better incorporate ENICs and NARICs into the national higher education policy environment so that the concerns and expertise of national recognition experts are adequately taken account of.

One important purpose of the self-certification and referencing process is to build trust. This is done in part through the report, which – if done convincingly – will not only state that the national framework in question is compatible with the QF-EHEA and/or the EQF but also demonstrate why this is the case in such a way that readers will reach the same conclusion. In part it is done through the procedure, which should involve the main national stakeholders as well as well reputed international experts. Such trust is essential in facilitating recognition and, conversely, if trust is absent, recognition will become more laborious. It is essential to ensure that while individual qualifications in the NQFs are self-certified and referenced to the overarching frameworks, national authorities do so transparently and do not use the QF-EHEA and EQF to inflate the level or value of individual qualifications in their national systems.

***Recommendations***

*Public authorities* should:

* make full use of qualifications frameworks to further fair recognition, in particular by acknowledging that national qualifications frameworks that have been self-certified against the QF-EHEA and/or referenced against the EQF provide the required information on the quality, level and workload of any given qualification in the relevant framework.
* ensure good cooperation among the competent authorities for recognition, qualifications frameworks and quality assurance and, where needed, review the structure and organization of these bodies at national level.
* better incorporate ENICs and NARICs into the national higher education policy environment.
* ensure that individual qualifications in the NQFs are self-certified and referenced to the overarching frameworks in transparent ways and not use the QF-EHEA and EQF to inflate the level or value of individual qualifications in their national systems.

**III.5 Diversity and transparency: improve transparency instruments for describing individual qualifications as well as higher education systems** (ToR no. 5)

The considerable diversity of structures and provision within the European Higher Education Area, which is one of its strengths, makes transparency a particularly important issue. It is important to present higher education in Europe, including its structures, qualifications frameworks, and quality assurance arrangements, in such a way that those who do not have specialized knowledge of higher education – or of a specific country and its system – can understand it. A part of the challenge is explaining what is often a complex reality in comprehensible ways, without over-simplifying, and another part of the challenge is to explain the relationship between national and European structures.

It is important to underline that it is the responsibility of each EHEA member country to help other countries understand its education system, qualifications frameworks and arrangements for quality assurance. The most authoritative information on any education system is provided by the competent authorities responsible for the system in question. It is essential to the development of the EHEA that all such information be transparent, understandable, reliable, and accurate.

One important challenge is how public authorities could make the information provided on their education systems and their relationship to the EHEA more transparent. How can 47 countries with at least as many education systems make up a coherent European Higher Education Area?

Some instruments have already been developed with the promotion of transparency as an important or even the main objective, such as the Diploma Supplement and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). Qualifications frameworks and quality assurance instruments are also important in promoting transparency. The terms of reference make specific reference to the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS, the latter of which will at least in part be covered by the sub-group on the ECTS Users’ Guide. The European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in higher education provide the basis on which information on quality and quality assurance should be provided.

Quality can only be ensured if higher education and research build on and observe principles of ethics and good conduct. Quality is endangered by fraud and corruption. Many higher education systems and institutions have published arrangements for addressing academic fraud and those that do not yet have such arrangements, need to develop them as a matter of urgency. The Guidelines for an Institutional Code of Ethics in Higher Education developed by the International Association of Universities and the Magna Charta Observatory[[14]](#footnote-14) provide a good starting point for institutions that wish to develop their own guidelines.

Another important issue is the responsibility of public authorities for ensuring that higher education institutions provide reliable and meaningful information to prospective students and their parents, to employers and to others who may want or need reliable information on higher education institutions and programs, including on the value and rights associated with their qualifications. The importance of reliable and sometimes comparable information on graduates’ employment outcomes as a factor determining decisions on choosing certain study programs is growing.

Indisputably untruthful information – such as claiming an institution is accredited if it is not – is most likely covered by national legislation, but there is a considerable “gray” zone in which information provided is incomplete rather than openly untruthful and in which information is phrased in such a way as to give a positive impression of the provider while avoiding untruthful claims. Those who are not higher education specialists will often not understand the “fine print” in the information provided, and they will not have the background needed to ask the right questions about the kind of information that is not provided. For example, even if an institution claims that its qualifications are good value on the labor market, this may apply only to a specific sector of the labor market. If the institutions and its qualifications are not recognized by the competent authority as part of the national education system, its graduates may find that their qualifications do not enable them to enroll in study programs at other institutions or transfer to other parts of the labor market, including regulated professions. Making students, parents, employers, and others aware of the kind of issues with which they may well be confronted and the kind of question they should ask of potential education providers is a major challenge.

In some countries, public authorities seem reluctant to play an active, and proactive, role in providing information on individual institutions and programs and to warn against fraudulent or non-serious providers, possibly because the concept of institutional autonomy is misunderstood to mean that public authorities cannot sound the alarm even in cases of non-serious programs and/or because public authorities are afraid of being taken to court by aggressive if non-serious providers. Both institutions and countries should have published procedures for dealing with student complaints.

A further argument for public authorities to play a role in ensuring that information given by institutions and providers is accurate and reliable, and for drawing public attention to blatant violations, is that the accuracy and reliability of such information also reflects on the countries and education systems concerned, and even on systems to which providers may wrongly claim to belong. If the public perception is that many providers in a given country give untruthful, inaccurate or unreliable information, the reputation of the country and system will suffer. Building trust takes a long time but what has been built up can be undone very rapidly.

The SRWG is also aware of rapid developments concerning various transparency tools aiming at making international comparisons of institutions and national higher education systems. The EUA studies on “Global University Rankings and Their Impact[[15]](#footnote-15)” shows that some countries use global rakings in recognition and internationalization policies, i.e. for purposes for which the Bologna tools were designed. This is another challenge related to the decreasing political focus of and on the EHEA. The EHEA should follow developments concerning U-Multirank proposed by the European Commission, which in contrary to global rankings is based on the concepts of user-drivenness and multidimensionality and seems to attract the attention of numerous institutions from EHEA.

**Recommendations**

*Public authorities* should ensure that information on their higher education systems and qualification frameworks, and on study programs and qualifications belonging to their national systems, be transparent, understandable, reliable, and accurate.

*Public authorities and higher education institutions* should:

* have published arrangements for addressing academic fraud.
* have published procedures for dealing with student complaints.
* ensure that reliable and meaningful information is available for prospective students and their parents, employers and others who may want or need reliable information on higher education institutions and programs, including on the value and rights associated with their qualifications and graduates’ career patterns;

T*he Council of Europe, the European Commission and UNESCO* should:

* review the Diploma Supplement with a view to ensuring it is relevant and up to date and that it takes into account the possibilities for providing up to date information offered by modern information technology;
* ensure the adoption of any revised version of the Diploma Supplement within the framework of the Lisbon Recognition Convention as well as that of the European Union.

**III.6 Global dimension** (ToR no. 7)

While the structural reforms are developed for the EHEA and its member countries, they have global implications both because EHEA members interact with countries outside of the EHEA and because the EHEA has given rise to very considerable interest in other parts of the world. This interest has given rise to the Bologna Policy Fora held end-on with the ministerial conferences in 2009, 2010 and 2012 as well as the suggestion in the 2012 Policy Forum Statement that

Regional exchanges and peer learning should strengthen the political commitments agreed at the Bologna Policy Fora, while also involving practitioners and representatives of the academic communities in a long term policy exchange. We agree that this policy cooperation should focus on specific topics and that it may in particular involve countries or regions which have expressed a particular interest in the topic at hand.

It is important for the EHEA that our structural reforms and the reasons that led to their development are understood in other parts of the world and it is equally important that EHEA members and consultative members are informed about and understand structural issues in other parts of the world. However, in the absence of any specific EHEA funding (although, again, some institutions, in particular the European Commission, do fund EHEA-related projects) and that many countries may be more interested in funding the promotion of their own higher education systems, programs and institutions rather than those of the EHEA as a whole, it has so far been very difficult to make structural reform an effective part of the global dimension of the EHEA.

There are, however, some examples. For the past few years, the annual meetings of the ENIC and NARIC Networks have included discussion with representatives of other UNESCO Regions or of specific countries from outside of the UNESCO Europe Region. In quality assurance, ENQA, EQAR and national quality assurance agencies have presented the ESG in international contexts. The overarching qualifications frameworks of Europe have been met with very great interest in other parts of the world, and the European Training Foundation, the EUA and others have run projects in which the European experiences of qualifications frameworks have been presented in other parts of the world. ASEM, the Asia-Europe Meeting, which has a ministerial strand as well as a strand for leaders of higher education institutions, has made structural reform one of its topics.

Without pretending to present a complete overview, these examples demonstrate the pertinence of the structural reforms of the EHEA in a global context. They also underline the need to continue to develop structural reforms as a part of the global dimension of the EHEA. It is in the interest of the EHEA and its members that our structural reforms and our approaches to and methodology in structural reforms, and we owe it other regions to consider their higher education according to the standards and methods on the basis of which we would like our own higher education to be assessed.

***Recommendations***

*The EHEA should include structural reforms in its cooperation with other parts of the world. To this end:*

*One or more EHEA members or consultative members should initiate conversations with one or more regions on structural reforms and present the results to the 2018 ministerial meeting.*

*The conversation(s) could use a variety of working methods (conferences, seminars, working groups, studies, pilot projects, peer learning activities, others) and the BFUG and/or any substructure dealing with structural reforms should be kept duly informed of, and as appropriate be involved in, the conversation(s).*

*The conversation(s) should take an EHEA perspective rather than the perspective of one or more specific EHEA members and should, as far as possible, cover all areas of structural reform.*

*EHEA members involved in the ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) cooperation in higher education should consider how structural reform could best be included in this cooperation.*

1. **SPECIFIC POLICY AREAS**

In addition to considering the coherence of structural reforms, the SRWG has in its terms of reference been asked to consider specific policy areas. Cross reference to the specific tasks listed in the ToR is provided where relevant. The first of these tasks (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) as well as tasks 14 - 17[[16]](#footnote-16) are relatively general and are therefore covered by the report as a whole.

The SRWG considered and commented on a draft version of the revised European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance in higher education (ToR no. 10) amendments at its meeting on December 9 – 10, 2013. The comments were transmitted to the E 4 Group. This point in the terms of reference will therefore not be commented on further in this report. The SRWG has also been kept informed of and has commented on the work of the pathfinder group on academic recognition.

With the Working Group on Mobility and Internationalization, the SRWG commented on the proposed European Approach to quality assurance of joint degrees and programs developed by an *ad hoc* group appointed by the BFUG on the joint proposal of the SRWG and the WG on Mobility and Internationalization (ToR no. 9). This point in the terms of reference will therefore not be commented on further in this report.

In the following, the issues are listed according to policy area and within each area according to the number of the specific task as listed in the ToR. The order should therefore *not* be read as an indication of relative importance or preference.

**IV.1 Quality assurance**

**IV.1.1 Common principles of quality assurance to be applied across HE and VET** (ToR no. 4)

Quality assurance is well developed in higher education, where the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) – adopted in 2005 and now under revision – provide guidelines for national quality assurance agencies. The European Register for Quality Assurance in higher education (EQAR) includes agencies that operate according other ESG, and membership of ENQA is also based on compliance with the ESG. Quality assurance is a somewhat newer phenomenon in the case of vocational education and training (VET) but common standards have been developed in the EU framework through EQAVET. There is, however, a need to establish closer cooperation between the bodies responsible for quality assurance in higher education and VET in order to further a more coherent approach.

One of the recommendations by the Irish Presidency conference held in Dublin on March 12 – 13, 2013 was that the EQF Advisory Group and the BFUG working group on Structural Reforms, in co-operation with ENQA and EQAVET, review and make proposals to strengthen the common principles of quality assurance to be applied across higher education and vocational education and training. The issue was considered at the joint meeting of the SRWG and the EQF Advisory Group on September 25, 2013 and was also addressed at an EQF Peer learning activity organized by the European Commission in Leuven in November 2013.

The SRWG feels that developing even closer cooperation in quality assurance between the higher education and VET sectors should be encouraged and that common principles should be developed as far as possible. It also recognizes that some aspects of quality assurance may be different for the two sectors.

The EQF Recommendation of 2008, in its Annex III[[17]](#footnote-17), spells out the following Common Principles for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training in the context of the European Qualifications Framework:

When implementing the European Qualifications Framework, quality assurance — which is necessary to ensure accountability and the improvement of higher education and vocational education and training — should be carried out in accordance with the following principles:

* quality assurance policies and procedures should underpin all levels of the European Qualifications Framework,
* quality assurance should be an integral part of the internal management of education and training institutions,
* quality assurance should include regular evaluation of institutions, their programmes or their quality assurance systems by external monitoring bodies or agencies,
* external monitoring bodies or agencies carrying out quality assurance should be subject to regular review,
* quality assurance should include context, input, process and output dimensions, while giving emphasis to outputs and learning outcomes,
* quality assurance systems should include the following elements:
  + clear and measurable objectives and standards, guidelines for implementation, including stakeholder involvement, appropriate resources,
  + consistent evaluation methods, associating self-assessment and external review,
  + feedback mechanisms and procedures for improvement,
  + widely accessible evaluation results,
* quality assurance initiatives at international, national and regional level should be coordinated in order to ensure overview, coherence, synergy and system-wide analysis,
* quality assurance should be a cooperative process across education and training levels and systems, involving all relevant stakeholders, within Member States and across the Community,
* quality assurance orientations at Community level may provide reference points for evaluations and peer learning.

The SRWG considers that these principles are compatible with the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance in higher education, both in their current version and in the revised version submitted to the Yerevan Ministerial conference. It is essential that further work on either framework ensure compatibility between the two. The SRWG also takes not of European Council conclusions of May 2014, which are binding on the 28 EHEA members that are also members of the European Union. They will also constitute a guide to good practice for the EHEA members not formally bound by them, and any measures taken within the EHEA should be compatible with the Council conclusions.

On this basis, ENQA and ECAVET, supported as required by the European Commission and others, are encouraged to clarify the point on which current principles are compatible as well as points that require further joint consideration, to identify areas of potential concern, and to publish a timetable for address any outstanding issues.

***Recommendations***

*The frameworks for quality assurance in higher education and in vocational education and training need to be compatible and this basic principle should guide all further work on both frameworks.*

*EHEA members that are also part of the EQF carry a particular responsibility for ensuring compatibility and should make every effort to ensure that the positions taken by their representatives in the relevant for a of the EJHEA and the EQF be consistent and coherent.*

*Taking due account of the revised ESG as well as of EU regulations, ENQA and ECAVET are encouraged to review the common principles of quality assurance in higher education in vocational education and training. ENQA is requested to the BFUG and/or any substructure dealing with structural reforms duly informed of this work and to report back in due time before the 2018 Ministerial conference.*

**IV.1.2 EQAR-registered quality assurance agencies operating in countries other than their countries of origin** (ToR no. 13)

In the Bucharest Communiqué (2012), ministers agreed to “allow EQAR registered agencies to perform their activities across the EHEA, while complying with national requirements” and, in particular, “to recognise quality assurance decisions of EQAR-registered agencies on joint and double degree programmes”.

EQAR has collected and analyzed information on the extent to which different EHEA countries allow (foreign) EQAR-registered agencies to operate[[18]](#footnote-18) within their jurisdiction. This work is part of the project Recognizing International Quality Assurance Activity (RIQAA), which is co-funded by the European Union’s Lifelong Learning Programme.

As of January 2014, 11 EHEA countries (see Table 1) allow their higher education institutions to be reviewed by any EQAR-registered QA agency *to discharge their obligatory external quality assurance obligations*. Some additional countries (in italics in Table 1, below) use different requirements than EQAR registration for allowing QA agencies from other countries to operate.

Even for the specific case of joint programs (leading to joint, double or multiple degrees) only relatively few countries allow them to be quality assured in a single procedure by one EQAR-registered agency, the result of which is recognized in all countries involved.

The ***existing legal frameworks*** differ in detail: some countries allow all higher education institutions to choose any EQAR-registered agency for all types of external quality assurance obligations they are subject to (A). In some countries, the possibility to choose a quality assurance agency is limited to a certain group of higher education institutions (e.g. full universities) or to certain types of external quality assurance (e.g. only for program accreditation, but not for institutional accreditation; or not for initial accreditation), see (B) in the table. Some countries only recognize reviews by foreign QA agencies for joint degrees, transnational provision or other, specific circumstances (C).

Whereas the formal outcome or (accreditation) decision may be made by the foreign QA agency in some cases (1), the role of the foreign agency might be limited to carrying out a review and producing a report, while the final decision lies with a national QA body, in other cases (2).

**Table 1 Countries allowing higher education institutions belonging to their national education system to undergo quality assurance by foreign EQAR-registered agencies**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **(1) Outcome/decision directly recognized** | **(2) Final decision by national QA body** |
| **(A) All HEI's, all external QA** | LI, RO, *FI* | AL, AM, BE-fl, KAZ *EE, ME, NL* |
| **(B) Some HEI's or some types of external QA only** | AT, *CH* | LT, *PT* |
| **(C) Only joint degrees or specific circumstances** | DK, PL | DE |
| (Missing: no clear information, no clear rules or no operational framework) | | |

At present, there is only limited quantitative data on the number of agencies operating in these countries, and on the number of institutions or programs having been reviewed.

### ***Challenges***

[Please note: The parts indicated as “challenges” and “conclusions” are preliminary suggestions that may need to be reviewed in the light of further information to be gathered by EQAR by fall 2014 and should therefore be considered as “work in progress”. The SRWG may nevertheless wish to consider in particular the (preliminary) conclusions.]

In general, countries seem to impose fewer restrictions in allowing their institutions to be reviewed by a foreign QA agency if the review does not bear direct legal or financial consequences. Where it does, there are sometimes complex restrictions or requirements.

The issue of costs can be an inhibiting factor where a review by the national QA agency is free of charge, while a review by another EQAR-registered agency might be at the higher education institution’s own expense, or where QA agency is by law forbidden to charge fees for any QA activity.

Key challenges observed[[19]](#footnote-19) by quality assurance agencies in their cross-border activities include language barriers; the availability of regulatory documents and standards in English; becoming acquainted with the national context and specifics of the “target” country; difficulties as to what set of standards to apply; and different expectations in terms of content and style of reports, especially where another agency needs to make a decision on their basis.

### ***Recommendations***

*The competent national authorities in each EHEA member should undertake further action, within their respective education systems, to implement the commitments made in the Bucharest Communiqué. In doing so, the competent national authorities should eb guided by the following considerations:*

* *A clear and straight-forward legal framework for the operation of EQAR-registered QA agencies is crucial.*
* *Information on the requirements under which EQAR-registered agencies may operate, the criteria to be used and the responsibilities vis-à-vis the national QA agency should be clear, transparent and available in English.*
* *If an agency is registered in EQAR it has demonstrated that it works in line with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and there should thus be no need for additional scrutiny before it is allowed to operate in any EHEA country.*
* *The European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes will be useful as an agreed set of criteria facilitating the recognition of quality assurance decisions on such programs.*

**IV.2 Qualifications frameworks**

***IV.2.1 The place of short cycle qualifications in the QF-EHEA*** (ToR no. 1 and the 2012 report by the Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks)

When Ministers adopted the QF-EHEA in Bergen in 2005, they acknowledged that countries may include short cycle qualifications within the first cycle in their national frameworks but declined to make specific provision for short cycle qualifications within the QF-EHEA:

We adopt the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA, comprising three cycles (including, within national contexts, the possibility of intermediate qualifications), generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences, and credit ranges in the first and second cycles. (Bergen Communiqué)

This was reiterated as late as in 2009:

Within national contexts, intermediate qualifications within the first cycle can be a means of widening access to higher education. (Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué)

In 2012, Ministers recognized that the diversity of qualifications had evolved in relation to the situation in 2005 by stating:

We further commit to referencing first, second and third cycle qualifications against EQF levels 6, 7 and 8 respectively, or against equivalent levels for countries not bound by the EQF. We will explore how the QF-EHEA could take account of short cycle qualifications (EQF level 5) and encourage countries to use the QF-EHEA for referencing these qualifications in national contexts where they exist. (Bucharest Communiqué)

One important development since 2005 is that short cycle programs have gained prominence in many countries and the EQF, adopted in 2008, includes a level 5, which is normally the level to which short cycle qualifications, whether in higher education or VET, are referenced. While some qualifications referenced against EQF level 5 are not higher education qualifications, many are, and it is worth noting that there are also qualifications at first and second degree level (EQF levels 6 and 7) that are not considered higher education qualifications in the systems to which they belong. It therefore seems incongruent that the QF-EHEA does not acknowledge the widespread existence of short cycle degrees in national systems.

It is also worth underlining that national education systems may include levels other than those included in the overarching frameworks as long as national frameworks are self-certified and referenced against the QF-EHEA and the EQF. For example, while the EQF comprises 8 levels, the number of levels in national frameworks currently ranges from 7 to 12. Therefore, including short cycle qualifications in the QF-EHEA will in no way oblige countries to include such qualifications in their national frameworks but it would give explicit recognition to the fact that many national frameworks do include short cycle qualifications.

***Recommendations***

*At their 2015 meeting, Ministers should decide to include short cycle qualifications in the overarching framework of qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) based on* ISSUE FOR DISCUSSION: the Dublin descriptor***[[20]](#footnote-20)*** for short cycle qualifications, the Dublin descriptor reviewed to take account of the EQF descriptor[[21]](#footnote-21), the EQF descriptor?

***IV.2.2* Referencing of access qualifications** (ToR no. 1 1 and the 2012 report by the Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks)

The referencing of school leaving qualifications giving access to higher education has been identified as a major challenge to the usefulness of the overarching frameworks. This is recognized in the Bucharest Communiqué:

A common understanding of the levels of our qualifications frameworks is essential to recognition for both academic and professional purposes. School leaving qualifications giving access to higher education will be considered as being of European Qualifications Framework (EQF) level 4, or equivalent levels for countries not bound by the EQF, where they are included in National Qualifications Frameworks.

This statement was made in the light of discussions in some countries about whether secondary school leaving qualifications giving access to higher education should be referenced against EQF levels 4 or 5. This is an issue of great importance to the future development of the overarching qualifications frameworks. As pointed out in the 2012 report by the Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks, if some school leaving qualifications are referenced against EQF level 5, and hence as being within the first cycle qualifications of the QF-EHEA, the logical implications would be that school leaving qualifications from countries in which they are referenced against level 4 would not be fully recognized for access and, conversely, that countries referencing their access qualifications against EQF level 5 would expect these to be recognized for credits toward a first degree as they would *de facto* be considered to be at the level of short cycle qualifications.

The SRWG considered making a recommendation on the referencing of access qualifications, since this referencing has clear implications for the QF-EHEA and, beyond that for facilitating – or not – access to higher education throughout the EHEA. However, there now seems to be a constructive dialogue on the issue within the EQF as well as the countries in which the issue is salient in the domestic debate and it is important not to make recommendations that might upset this dialogue.

***Recommendation***

*In view of the ongoing discussions at national level in some EHEA members, the SRWG has chosen to reserve judgment but recommends that the issue be on the structural reforms agenda of the EHEA also beyond 2015.*

**IV.2.3 Third cycle qualifications** (ToR no. 8)

This part of the report should be developed on the basis of suggestions by the sub-group on third cycle qualifications.

**IV.2.4 Implementation of qualifications frameworks** (ToR no. 8)

In April 2014, the Network of National Correspondents for Qualifications Frameworks conducted a small survey among its members on the development of national qualifications frameworks for higher education. 25 countries completed the questionnaire, of which 10 stated that they do not (yet) have a national framework. This means that the commitment made by Ministers to develop national frameworks and prepare them for self-certification by 2012 remains unfulfilled for many countries. In explaining this situation, it should be underlined that developing national higher education frameworks requires a development process within each system and that this development takes time. The development of NQFs are in fact a mirror of the implementation of the structural reforms in higher education and it should be noted that the 10 countries that reported not having their NQFs in place also reported that they plan to develop and self-certify their national frameworks by 2016.

The majority of the 15 countries that reported they had self-certified their national qualifications frameworks for higher education had translated this into legal terms. Countries with longer standing national frameworks (NQFs developed more than10 years ago) reported that the NQF is now an integrated part of study programs, especially through the use of learning outcomes.

Cooperation with and involvement of stakeholders is a key to the successful implementation of NQFs even if difficulties remain. Higher education institutions accept and acknowledge the existence of their NQF even if many ate not strongly committed to it and the business sector is not yet very familiar with it. From a stakeholder’s perspective, the differences and specificities of the two overarching frameworks are not always clear.

Most of the countries that report having an NQF declare that their framework is related to both overarching frameworks. Some express concerns that the EQF perspective can overshadow the specificity of higher education, including in terms of the role of stakeholders (especially higher education institutions) in their implementation. The extent to which national higher education frameworks are open to non-higher education qualifications in a lifelong learning perspective (levels 6, 7 and 8 of the EQF) varies considerably. For half of the responding countries, these levels are only for higher education qualifications, for the other half; they are open to VET qualification either directly within the higher education framework or via a double entry system. In a majority of countries still face challenges in including non-formal qualifications within national higher education frameworks self-certified against the QF-EHEA.

It should be noted that the number of responses to the survey – 25 – mirrors the relatively low participation in the Network. Whereas every member of the EHEA should appoint a national correspondent for qualifications frameworks, only slightly more than one half of EHEA members regularly participate in the work of the Network, in spite of the fact that the survey shows that there is a continued need for mutual support and exchange of experience in order to make the development and implementation of national frameworks a reality throughout the EHEA. There is little reason to assume that the 25 or so active members of the network are the least advanced among EHEA members in the implementation of their national frameworks.

***Recommendations***

* Public authorities should ensure and lead the development and implementation of national qualifications frameworks in such a way that fully values and draws on the contribution of higher education institutions and other stakeholders and that furthers and promotes a learning outcomes approach.
* Student participation in the development and implementation of qualifications frameworks is important to furthering student centered learning.
* To further the comparability and compatibility of self-certified national higher education frameworks, pan-European peer learning activities, exchange of experience and advice, and comparative studies should be promoted.
* Cooperation between the competent authorities for quality assurance, qualification frameworks and recognition should be reinforced in order to ensure that qualifications frameworks as a tool for modernization of higher education systems.

**IV.3 Recognition**

**IV.3.1 Review national legislation to fully comply with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and promote the use of the EAR-manual to advance recognition practices** (ToR no. 1 and the Bucharest Communiqué)

While every member of the EHEA except Greece has now ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention, the implementation of the Convention leaves much to be desired. The analysis of the 2007 national action plans for recognition[[22]](#footnote-22) pointed to a wide range of challenges in providing fair recognition of qualifications, including the fact that many countries had not yet updated their legislation to incorporate the principles of the LRC. Hence, in a number of countries, there was discrepancy between the obligations undertaken by a country through the LRC and the provisions of the same country’s national legislation. The successive stock taking and implementation reports also indicate that this situation has not evolved significantly.

***Recommendation***

*At their 2015 meeting, Ministers should commit to reviewing their national legislation with a view to fully complying with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and report to the Bologna Secretariat by the end of 2016.*

**IV.3.2 Recognition of prior learning** (ToR no. 8)

This part of the report should be developed on the basis of suggestions by the relevant sub-group. It should include reference to the importance of recognition of prior learning in widening access to higher education.

**IV.4 Transparency**

**IV.4.1 Diploma Supplement** (ToR no. 1)

The Diploma Supplement is a transparency instrument under the Lisbon Recognition Convention as well as a part of Europass. It was developed jointly by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO and belongs to the two separate frameworks for decision making just outlined.

There are at least two issues linked to the Diploma Supplement. The first is that in spite of ministers having committed to issuing the Diploma Supplement automatically, free of charge and in a widely spoken language by 2005, 9 years later this is still far from being a reality in the EHEA – and it seems likely this will also be the case in 2015, 10 years after this commitment should have been honored.

The other issue is whether the Diploma Supplement should be reconsidered in the light of developments in European higher education since it was adopted in the late 1990s. These developments include a stronger emphasis on learning outcomes, the development of national qualifications frameworks compatible with the QF-EHEA and/or the EQF, a much stronger emphasis on external quality assurance, including the development (and soon the revision) of the ESG and the establishment of EQAR, and the development of on line information. The SRWG is aware that the Pathfinder Group on automatic recognition will most likely recommend that the Diploma Supplement be reviewed.

As noted, the Diploma Supplement was developed jointly by three international institutions in two different formal settings, and modifying it will be an elaborate process in which, as far as the Lisbon Recognition Convention is concerned, the next opportunity would be the meeting of the Convention Committee in 2016. The procedures for adopting a revised version within the EU system would need to be clarified – it is clear that neither body (the EU or the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee) can adopt a revised Diploma Supplement without the consent of the other.

***Recommendations***

*At their 2015 meeting, Ministers should commit to fulfilling their previous commitment to issue the Diploma Supplement automatically, free of charge and in a widely spoken language in time for this commitment to be verified in the 2018 Implementation report.*

*The Council of Europe, the European Commission, and UNESCO should undertake a joint review of the Diploma Supplement with a view to ensuring it is adapted to the development of higher education since it was a first established, including a stronger emphasis on learning outcomes, the development of qualifications frameworks, a stronger emphasis on external quality assurance, and the greater availability of on line information.*

*The Council of Europe, the European Commission, and UNESCO as well as EHEA members should ensure that any revised Diploma Supplement be adopted in an identical version in the respective institutional framework.s*

**IV.4.2 Review of the ECTS Users’ Guide** (ToR no. 8)

This part of the report should be developed on the basis of suggestions by the sub-group on the Users’ Guide.

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**Help identify and set priorities for peer learning activities** (ToR no. 11) **and organize, or stimulate the organization of, Bologna conferences, mini-seminars, peer learning activities and events on issues related to structural reforms** (ToR no. 12)

As the further development of the EHEA will increasingly require that adopted policies be implemented at national and institutional level, the exchange of good practice will be crucial. As noted above (see Learning Outcomes, ToR no. 2), uneven implementation of common structures may well lead to a situation in which the education structures of the 47 EHEA members are no longer sufficiently coherent to constitute a European Higher Education Area.

Following the discussion of peer learning activities in the BFUG, the SRWG encouraged its members to put forward suggestions for peer learning activities on issues of structural reform. As of January 2014, the following activities had been accepted by the BFUG:

Gayane/Ani: is it possible to provide a list of the structural reforms-relevant activities approved or to be undertaken?

In addition to the activities recognized as “EHEA peer learning activities”, individual members have also organized activities designed to improve good practice. While it is impossible to provide anything like a complete overview of these, some examples are listed [below/in Appendix 7] as an illustration of activities that may also be organized by others:

SRWG members are invited to provide examples, with a brief description of topics and target groups and, if possible, outcomes. The final list presented in the report (possibly as an appendix) should be fairly short and should include activities concerning each major policy areas, ideally also activities concerning more than one policy area or addressing structural reforms as a whole.

**Commission research** (ToR no. 14)

While commissioning research was included as a possible action in the ToR of the SRWG, the Group was unable to do so. In part, this was because the time frame was too limited, but the main reason was the absence of a budget for commissioning research. Under its current arrangements, without a budget to finance activities identified by the BFUG or tis working groups, any research would need to be financed by EHEA members or consultative members from their respective budgets and would therefore need to align with national or institutional priorities.

1. **Structural reforms in the EHEA**

Concluding part to be drafted once we have a better overview of the main recommendations.

**APPENDICES**

1. Terms of reference of the Structural Reforms Working Group
2. Terms of reference of the sub-group on third cycle qualifications
3. Terms of reference of the ad hoc group on the review of the ECTS Users’ Guide
4. Terms of reference of the Network of national correspondents for qualifications frameworks
5. Terms of reference for the Network on the recognition of prior learning
6. Members of the SRWG
7. Examples of Bologna conferences, mini-seminars, peer learning activities and events on issues related to structural reforms

1. Mark Fredericks, Achim Hopbach, Andrejs Rauhvargers, Colin Tück. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Documents/ESG_3rdedition.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <http://www.eqar.eu/index.php?id=32> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/qualification/QF-EHEA-May2005.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/QF/EQF_EN.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/165.htm> (text of the Convention) and <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/reports/Html/165.htm> (Explanatory Report) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <http://www.enic-naric.net/index.aspx?s=n&r=ena&d=ds> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See Pavel Zgaga (2012): “Reconsidering the EHEA principles: Is there a “Bologna Philosophy”?”, in A. Curaj, P. Scott, L. Vlasceanu & L. Wilson (eds.) *European higher education at the crossroads: Between the Bologna Process and national reforms (pp17-38).* Dordrecht Springer. Pavel Zgaga identifies the following Bologna principles:

   * Democracy and democratic values,
   * Academic values,
   * International cooperation in education and research and broadening mobility,
   * Higher education is a public good: it requires public responsibility but,
   * Also the responsibility of higher education,
   * The full range of purposes of higher education may not be forgotten,
   * Comparability and compatibility of degrees structures, quality assurance, recognition of degrees,
   * The social dimension,
   * The global dimension,
   * The European dimension,
   * Partnership between all stakeholders.

   [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. “Our aim is to ensure that our HEIs have the necessary resources to continue to fulfil their full range of purposes. Those purposes include: preparing students for life as active citizens in a democratic society; preparing students for their future careers and enabling their personal development; creating and maintaining a broad, advanced knowledge base; and stimulating research and innovation.” (London Communiqué, para. 1.4). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. This point was made by David Crosier in his presentation to the annual conference of the European Access Network in Strasbourg on June 3 - 5, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Learning outcomes may also be formulated as goals for what students should know, understand, and be able to do – and of the attitudes they should develop – at the end of a learning module, course or study program, on the model “by the end of this learning module/course/study program, students will…”. For the purposes of this report, no distinction will be made between achieved and aspirational learning outcomes. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/Recognition/DGIIEDUHE(2012)14%20Rev09%20FINAL%20-%20LRC%20Supplementary%20Text%20on%20the%20Use%20of%20QFs%20ENGLISH.asp#TopOfPage> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Cf. criterion no. 5 (The national quality assurance system for higher education refer to the national framework of qualifications and are consistent with the Berlin Communiqué and any subsequent communiqué agreed by ministers in the Bologna Process) and procedure no. 2 (The self-certification process shall include the stated agreement of the quality assurance bodies in the country in question recognised through the Bologna Process) of the criteria and procedures for the self-certification of national frameworks against the QF-EHEA, <http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/QF/Bologna_Framework_and_Certification_revised_29_02_08.pdf>. The criteria for referencing national frameworks against the EQF include similar provisions.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. <http://www.iau-aiu.net/sites/all/files/Ethics_Guidelines_FinalDef_08.02.13.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Andrejs Rauhvargers: *Global University Rankings and Their Impact* (Brussels 2011: European University Association), available at <http://www.eua.be/pubs/global_university_rankings_and_their_impact.pdf> and Andrejs Rauhvargers: *Global University Rankings and Their Impact – Report II* (Brussels 2013): European University Association), available at <http://www.eua.be/Libraries/Publications_homepage_list/EUA_Global_University_Rankings_and_Their_Impact_-_Report_II.sflb.ashx>. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. These are:

    1. As appropriate, commission research to support its work;
    2. Maintain contact with and, as needed, oversee the work of any sub groups established to address specific aspects of structural reforms;
    3. Advice the BFUG on any issues referred to it by the BFUG;
    4. Submit proposals to the 2015 Ministerial conference, through the BFUG, aiming to improve the coherence of the structural reforms within the EHEA.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Published in the Official journal of the European Union on May 6, 2008, C 111/7. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. “Operate” here refers to higher education institutions being able to be reviewed by the foreign QA agency *to discharge their obligatory external quality assurance obligations*. Presumably, in no country will higher education institutions be forbidden to undergo voluntary reviews *in addition to the legally required audit, accreditation or evaluation*. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Based on a survey of April 2013, by EQAR in cooperation with the Bertelsmann Stiftung, on publications by QA agencies, and on statements in various seminars. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. <http://paginas.fe.up.pt/~sfeyo/Docs_SFA_Bologna/120_Ref%20Doc_20041018%20%5BJQIG%20Dublin%20Descriptors%5D.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. See the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council

    of 23 April 2008 on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (2008/C 111/01), Annex 2, accessible through http://ec.europa.eu/eqf/documentation\_en.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Rauhvargers, Andrejs and Agnese Rusakova (2010). *Improving recognition in the European Higher Education Area: an analysis of national action plans*Strasbourg Council of Europe Publishing Council of Europe higher education series no.12 [↑](#footnote-ref-22)