

Concept note: *Reversed peer review*

1. General remarks

Reversed peer review is a possible tool which can be used in the context of the collegial support for countries experiencing challenges in implementation of key commitments and for experience-sharing purposes.

The Reversed peer review gives an opportunity to participant countries to:

- (a) Open a dialogue on policy 'learning' and share experience on implementation of the Bologna policy and related instruments in specific contexts
- (b) Employ Reversed peer review as a tool to support knowledge transfer
- (c) Identify Best practices to come up with recommendations to tackle specific challenges in implementation

Most of the EHEA countries (EU member countries) have experienced a peer review which is used in the framework of the European Semester. The Employment Committee¹ hosts the peer review sessions during which representatives of EU member countries are interviewed by their peers from other countries. Countries are reviewed on the issues which are addressed in the recent country-specific recommendations (CSRs). The reviewed countries should present the policy measures and reforms implemented in response to the CSRs. CSRs often address educational topics.

The philosophy behind the reversed peer review is slightly different. Following the findings from the Implementation Report 2015 countries are clustered according to identified difficulties in implementation of the three key commitments:

- a Three-Cycle System compatible with the QF-EHEA and scaled by ECTS
- compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC)
- Quality Assurance in conformity with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)

A volunteering country being relatively successful in implementation of a particular aspect of the Bologna Process shall invite selected clustered countries for a review of its own system. For example, a country which is marked dark green in all scorecard indicators concerning the three-cycle system shall invite a country or a group of countries facing particular challenges in implementation with regard to the three-cycle systems. Such a way of dealing with peer review exercise reflects very well the intergovernmental nature of the Bologna Process.

2. Main steps in the framework of peer review:

¹<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=115>

- 1) The reviewed country prepares a short self-assessment report/note on the implementation of a particular commitment, including timing, regulations, challenges in implementation on the grass-root levels, etc.
- 2) The interviewing countries prepare a set of questions which are important from their perspective. They should also describe shortly the actual situation in their country as regard the commitment being the subject of the review.
- 3) The peer review session should address the questions (reviewed country should prepare answers beforehand) as well as follow-up questions asked by interviewing countries. There should be also enough room for the interviewing countries to present their situation and their ambitions.
- 4) A final report of a PR event, which specifies major findings and general recommendations for interviewing countries, is prepared in collaboration among interviewing and reviewed countries.

3. Organisational framework

There are three possible organisational frameworks for the reversed peer review:

- 1) In the framework of the meeting of WG2. The meetings of the WG2 in the course of 2017 can serve as a room for reversed peer review. Additional half-day meeting (or one session) can be dedicated to a review of a country being successful in implementation by WG members facing challenges and/or are interested in the case. The initiative shall be taken by the WG co-chairs or a country (or group of countries) facing challenges or a country which volunteers to be reviewed. The initiative should be taken at least 3 months before a peer review session.
- 2) In the framework of an event. Organisers of an event listed as supporting implementation of the Bologna commitments may offer a room for a reversed peer review session. The initiative shall be taken by hosts of an event or a country (or group of countries) facing challenges or a country which volunteers to be reviewed.
- 3) A site visit to the reviewed country. A reviewed country invites the selected/volunteering countries for a site visit. Except from interview with the experts such framework gives a possibility of meeting representatives of particular stakeholders and asks more in-depth/follow-up questions. The initiative shall be taken by a host country.

4. Who are the peers?

Peers are policy makers and experts representing the ministries and/or relevant semi-governmental agencies. It is encouraged to involve representatives of national stakeholders in the exercise. Especially, the peer review with a site visit should involve representatives of stakeholders from a reviewed country.

5. Financing

There are two possible approaches to financing a reversed peer review:

- 1) Participation in the events/WG meetings is financed in the ordinary way by sending institutions. Some costs (e.g. meals) can be covered by hosting institutions.
- 2) The voluntary peer review shall be partly funded in the framework of the Erasmus projects (supporting EHEA implementation) depending on content-related and financial arrangements of a project.