



Endorsed: 15.03.2013

Terms of Reference

on

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

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| Name of the Working Group Working Group on Structural Reforms (qualifications frameworks, quality assurance, recognition of qualifications, transparency) |
| Contact persons (Proposed Co-Chairs) Sjur Bergan (Council of Europe)-Coordinator Noël Vercruyssen (Belgium/Flemish Community) Friedrich Bechina (Holy See) Bartłomiej Banaszak (Poland) |
| Composition Armenia, Austria, Belgium/French Community Federation Wallonia-Brussels, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Moldova, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, UK, Ukraine, BUSINESSEUROPE, European Commission, Education International, ENQA, EQAR, ESU, EUA, EURASHE. Representatives of sub structures under the Structural Reforms WG should be involved in its work as required. |
| Purpose and/or outcome The Working Group on Structural Reforms is mandated to develop proposals for policy and practice aiming to improve instruments for structural reform (QF, QA, recognition of qualifications, transparency instruments) and the coherence between the main elements of structural reform within the European Higher Education Area as well as to oversee and advise the BFUG on the implementation of structural reforms. The Working Group should consider structural reforms in relation to the major |

purposes of higher education:

- Preparing for employment;
- Preparing for life as active citizens in democratic societies;
- Personal development;
- The development and maintenance of a broad, advanced knowledge base;

as well as the three missions:

- teaching and learning;
- research;
- service to society.

It should further be guided by the following policy considerations:

- Students, employers and society at large want more objective, reliable and high quality information about higher education;
- There is an increasing societal expectation of Higher Education Institutions that they enhance the employability of graduates and provide students with skills relevant to the labour market;
- There is a need to adapt the Bologna goals and instruments for structural reforms to the ever changing context of higher education and of our societies and to the evolving needs within the EHEA;
- There is a need to build trust and confidence in higher education;
- The relationship between the structural reforms developed within the EHEA and their impact on other regions needs to be considered;
- There is a need for a more supportive environment for academic staff and students;
- Higher Education needs to contribute to Lifelong Learning.

Reference to the Bucharest Communiqué

At the European level, in preparation of the Ministerial Conference in 2015 and together with relevant stakeholders, we will...

- Develop a proposal for a revised version of the ESG for adoption;
- Work to ensure that the ECTS Users' Guide fully reflects the state of on-going work on learning outcomes and recognition of prior learning;
- Coordinate the work of ensuring that qualifications frameworks work in practice, emphasising their link to learning outcomes and explore how the QF-EHEA could take account of short cycle qualifications in national contexts;
- Support the work of a pathfinder group of countries exploring ways to achieve the automatic academic recognition of comparable degrees;
- Examine national legislation and practices relating to joint programmes and degrees as a way to dismantle obstacles to cooperation and mobility embedded in national contexts;
- Develop EHEA guidelines for transparency policies and continue to monitor current and developing transparency tools;

At the national level, together with the relevant stakeholders, and especially with higher education institutions, we will:

- Allow EQAR-registered quality assurance agencies to perform their activities across the EHEA, while complying with national requirements;
- Work to enhance employability, lifelong learning, problem-solving and entrepreneurial skills through improved cooperation with employers, especially in the development of educational programmes;
- Ensure that qualifications frameworks, ECTS and Diploma Supplement implementation is based on learning outcomes;
- Invite countries that cannot finalize the implementation of national qualifications frameworks compatible with QF-EHEA by the end of 2012 to redouble their efforts and submit a revised roadmap for this task;
- Review national legislation to fully comply with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and promote the use of the EAR-manual to advance recognition practices;

Specific tasks

- 1) Consider and make recommendations on specific issues of policy and practice related to quality assurance, qualifications frameworks, recognition of qualifications and transparency instruments and their mutual interaction;
- 2) Consider how the development and implementation of learning outcomes impact on and may strengthen the coherence between the policy areas covered by the WG;
- 3) In consultation with the ENIC and NARIC Networks and the Network of national QF correspondents, develop policy proposals aiming to improve the interaction between qualifications frameworks and the recognition of qualifications;
- 4) The EQF Advisory Group and the BFUG working group on Structural Reforms, in co-operation with ENQA and EQAVET, should review and make proposals to strengthen the common principles of quality assurance to be applied across HE and VET.
- 5) Develop policy proposals aiming to improve transparency instruments for describing individual qualifications as well as higher education systems, in particular as concerns the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS. In this, the Working Group should establish cooperation with the institutions and bodies charged with the oversight and implementation of the relevant transparency instruments;
- 6) As appropriate, provide input to the WGs responsible for mobility and internationalization; the social dimension and lifelong learning on the role of structural reforms as well as to the Working Group on implementation in furthering the goals of these groups;
- 7) Consider and make recommendations on the interaction between the structural reforms and transversal issues, i.a. employability and the global dimension;

- 8) Consider and make recommendations concerning third cycle qualifications, the review the ECTS Users' Guide, the Recognition of Prior Learning and the implementation of qualifications frameworks on the basis of proposals by the relevant sub structures.
- 9) Consider and make proposals concerning joint degrees and programmes on the basis of suggestion by a small ad-hoc group reporting to the working groups on Structural Reforms and Mobility and Internationalization.
- 10) Comment, as appropriate, on draft amendments to the European Standards and Guidelines prepared by the Steering Committee (E4 plus EQAR, EI, BUSINESSEUROPE).
- 11) Help identify and set priorities for peer learning activities concerning structural reforms;
- 12) Organize, or stimulate the organization of, Bologna conferences, mini-seminars, peer learning activities and events on issues related to structural reforms;
- 13) Consider developments in relation to EQAR-registered quality assurance agencies operating in countries other than their countries of origin and make policy proposals or recommendations, as appropriate;
- 14) As appropriate, commission research to support its work;
- 15) Maintain contact with and, as needed, oversee the work of any sub groups established to address specific aspects of structural reforms;
- 16) Advise the BFUG on any issues referred to it by the BFUG;
- 17) Submit proposals to the 2015 Ministerial conference, through the BFUG, aiming to improve the coherence of the structural reforms within the EHEA.

Reporting

Minutes of working group meetings will be made available to the BFUG on the protected part of the website (by the Bologna Secretariat).

BFUG should also receive regular reports and updates.

To allow for good communication with the BFUG as a whole and for the necessary consultations, progress reports should be submitted at least two weeks before each BFUG meeting. In between BFUG meetings, updates can be circulated by the Bologna Secretariat via e-mail.

The draft final report/conclusions will be presented and discussed no later than the BFUG meeting in the second half of 2014.

Meeting schedule:

The Working Group will meet once per semester; more often if required, most likely in the preparation of its report to the BFUG.

The co-chairs will aim to meet once between every meeting of the working group.

Any sub-group established by the BFUG under the WG on Structural Reform will meet as required.

Chairs of the sub-groups will be invited to the meetings of the Co-Chairs of the Structural Reforms WG as appropriate.

Liaison with other WGs' and sub structures

- Implementation of the Bologna Process
- Social dimension and lifelong learning
- Mobility and internationalization

The Structural Reforms WG oversees and receives reports from

- The ad-hoc WG on the Third Cycle
- The ad-hoc WG on the revision of the ECTS Users' Guide
- The network of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
- The Network of National Correspondents for Qualifications Frameworks

Additional remarks

Institutions and bodies outside of the BFUG or the framework of the EHEA are responsible for a number of relevant actions and instruments, e.g. the ENIC and NARIC Networks, the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee and the Council of Europe and UNESCO (Lisbon Recognition Convention), the Council of Europe, the European Commission and UNESCO (Diploma Supplement), the European Commission (ECTS); the steering group of E4, EI, BUSINESSEUROPE and EQAR in consultation with the BFUG (European Standards and Guidelines). In these cases, the Working Group should establish close cooperation with the relevant bodies and institutions. It should also maintain close cooperation with the EQF, through the EQF Advisory Group, the European Commission, CEDEFOP and the European Training Foundation.