

Assessing and improving the international attractiveness of the EHEA

The Communiqués of the Bologna Process, the 2007 strategy “European Higher Education in a Global Setting” as well as the 2012 Mobility Strategy for the EHEA “Mobility for better learning” set out the objective of **enhancing the attractiveness of Europe** as a destination for **students from other parts of the world**. Due to demographic changes this will become even more important in the near future. Europe’s higher education system must be successful in the global competition for the brightest and most skilled prospective students as they will enable us to realise our potential for innovation and to feed and further develop our knowledge societies.

The strength of the EHEA rests on the voluntary cooperation of 47 countries to create a **common higher education area** and the **active participation of all stakeholders** involved in higher education. According to a 2006 study from ACA, the three biggest strengths of European higher education are **quality, tradition and internationally compatible degrees**. Nevertheless, the EHEA is still not seen as one higher education area but rather as **several national higher education systems**. International **marketing** is mostly undertaken and financed by member countries and thus focuses on the **national strengths in higher education** and not on the EHEA as a whole.¹

The BFuG asked the working group on mobility and internationalisation to **examine options of assessing and improving the international attractiveness of the EHEA** inter alia by examining whether a **target on mobility into the EHEA** was feasible and to be recommended.

To enhance the international attractiveness of the EHEA, the WG should at first **analyse which indicators could be used to assess its current attractiveness**. The following indicators may be taken into consideration:

- The **number/percentage of students in the EHEA** who have obtained their prior qualification outside the EHEA
- The **number/percentage of first-year-students in the EHEA** who have obtained their prior qualification outside the EHEA
- **Study success/drop-out rate** of students who have obtained their prior qualification outside the EHEA
- The **stay rates of students** who have obtained their prior qualification outside the EHEA after their graduation
- The **number of study programmes in English or other widely spoken language** as well as **short courses** (e.g. summer courses) in the EHEA
- The **number (and quality) of cooperations of HEIs in the EHEA with HEIs outside the EHEA**
- **Relative share of students which the EHEA attracts of all incoming students from around the world**

Having decided on indicators which could be used to measure the attractiveness of the EHEA, including the availability of respective data, the WG should **propose recommendations on how to improve the attractiveness of the EHEA** to the BFuG. The recommendations may include the following aspects:

¹ Cf. Overview of current marketing initiatives by HEI and National Agencies within the EHEA, Focusing on „Marketing the EHEA“, Report prepared by DAAD for the IPN WG in 2011.

To invite member countries to

- improve **information on and marketing of higher education in the EHEA** and to encourage their **national agencies or responsible departments in the ministries to actively promote the EHEA, in particular its**
 - High quality education and quality assurance of study programmes
 - Transparent grading system
 - Diversity and multiculturalism while offering a comparable and internationally recognised structure of degrees
 - Social dimension
 - Student support systems
- Intensify **policy dialogue** (e.g. Bologna Policy Forum) about study opportunities in the EHEA and promote mobility into the EHEA
- Enhance **incoming mobility** as well as the **number of first-year students who have obtained their prior qualification outside the EHA** and establish a **target on incoming mobility**
- **Offer attractive and flexible ways of staying and working in the EHEA** after graduation (visa, access to the labour market etc.)
- **Dismantle obstacles regarding visa, financing etc.** for young people from outside the EHEA wishing to study in the EHEA

To invite Higher education institutions to

- Devise plans for enhancing **study success**
- Enhance **guidance and counselling** for international students **before, during and after their studies**
- Provide **more study programmes in English or other widely spoken languages as well as short courses (e.g. summer schools)**
- Establish and use more efficient **alumni networks**

The following questions may be helpful for the group's discussion:

- Which indicators could be used to assess the attractiveness of the EHEA?
- What makes the EHEA attractive for students who have obtained their prior qualification outside the EHEA?
- How could the attractiveness of the EHEA be improved?
- Would a target on mobility into the EHEA be feasible and to be recommended?