



Ministry of Education, Culture and
Science of the Netherlands



Ministry of Education
of the Republic of Moldova

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AG3 Dealing with Non-Implementation: Working Paper I

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is a unique international collaboration on Higher Education, where 48 countries, with different political, cultural and academic traditions cooperate on the basis of open dialogue, shared goals and common commitments. Although membership is voluntary, the convergence and reform of the higher education system in all EHEA countries, and as such the entire concept of the EHEA, relies on the implementation of a common set of commitments: structural reforms and shared tools, which have been agreed to and adopted at a political level in all member countries. Furthermore, the EHEA is grounded in a number of shared fundamental values, including a commitment to academic freedom, free mobility by students and staff, institutional autonomy and the full and equal participation of higher education students and staff in institutional governance.

The EHEA has come a long way in reforming the higher education system of its member countries. Nonetheless, implementation of the structural reforms is uneven and the tools are sometimes used incorrectly. These problems with implementation, which can be extensive, threaten the integrity of the Bologna Process and undermine the functioning, credibility and ultimately the existence of the EHEA.

As a result, the Ministers at their meeting in Yerevan in May 2015 asked the BFUG to submit proposals for addressing the issue of non-implementation of key commitments in time for their next meeting in Paris 2018. Advisory Group 3, dealing with non-implementation, has been given the task to develop those proposals.

AG3 met in Brussels on January 14th 2016, and collectively agreed to focus on three key elements of the Bologna Process which it identified as the core of the commitments all countries signed up to when joining the EHEA. These in no way represent all EHEA tools, reforms and common values, but they are central to the Bologna Process, and as the foundations of the EHEA they allow recognition and mobility across the whole EHEA to function. Furthermore, their correct implementation is a necessary prerequisite to any higher education system that embraces the fundamental values of the Bologna Process.

In order to move the process of dealing with non-implementation forward, AG3 proposes to concentrate its work on these three commitments, and wishes the BFUG to endorse their mandate to do so, while acknowledging the fact that problems with implementation may, and will, also lie elsewhere.

The three key commitments AG3 has identified as the focus for further work until 2018:

- *A Three-Cycle System compatible with the QF-EHEA and scaled by ECTS:*
Programmes are structured according to the three cycle-system of the Bologna model and scaled by the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Qualifications achieved in each cycle are defined in a National Qualification Framework (NQF) which is



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compatible with the Qualification Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA)

- Compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC): Cross-border recognition practices are in compliance with the Lisbon Recognition convention, including promoting through the national information centres or otherwise, the use of the UNESCO/Council of Europe Diploma Supplement or any other comparable document by the higher education institutions of the Parties
- Quality Assurance in conformity with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG): Institutions granting degrees assure the quality of their programmes leading to degrees within the three-cycle system following the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG 2015). External quality assurance (be it at programme or institutional level) is performed by Agencies that have demonstrably complied with the standards and guidelines stipulated in the current ESG. This is best ensured where only those agencies registered on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) are allowed to operate in the country.