

## Work Progress of Working Group 2 on implementation: Fostering implementation of agreed key commitments

as of May 2017

Chairs:

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### **Terms of Reference – Outcome/tasks fulfilled by May 2017** (+/- 2,000 characters)

The working group is responsible to provide support to member states for the implementation of agreed goals at national and institutional level. It is mandated to coordinate a programme of actions based on policy dialogue and peer learning and review.

We may distinguish three types of actions:

- Actions organized by members of the working group and directly related to the tasks of the working group;
- Thematic sessions as part of the regular meetings of the working group;
- Actions organized by members of the working group or other countries, organisations or institutions as part of Erasmus + projects or other projects.

We have used the implementation report 2015 as evidence base to identify topics (key commitments) and partners for the reversed peer review and policy dialogue. Representatives of the institutions attend the peer reviews about quality assurance and qualifications frameworks. The stakeholders were also highly involved in the PLA on permeability between the different categories of higher education (articulation between short cycle and the first cycle). Generally spoken the stakeholders have been involved in all the actions that will be included in our report.

The secretariat has disseminated the information regarding the planned activities. We have to admit that the response was relatively disappointing.

Up to now we have collected the reports and conclusions of a broad range of actions and from those reports and conclusions we have drawn three recommendations to be discussed during the Malta BFUG.. We have also concluded on the structure of our final report. We would like also to submit that structure of our draft report for discussion during the Malta BFUG (see annex 3). At the same time it is an invitation to all BFUG members to provide working group 2 with information regarding relevant actions and events that could be included in our report.

### **Terms of Reference – Tasks to be finished until autumn 2017** (+/- 1,000 characters)

Until Autumn 2017 we will further collect information, reports and conclusions from the actions that have been organized by countries, institutions and organisations and that are related to issues and topics concerning the implementation of the key agreed goals.

At the next meeting of the WG in June the WG will focus on developing implementation recommendations and policy proposals based the reports and the conclusions of the events and actions which were aiming at fostering the implementation of the key agreed goals.

At the Autumn meeting of the WG the report will be finalized.

**Additional results** (not aimed at in Terms of Reference) (+/- 1,000 characters)

Structure of the report: see annex

**Proposed input for**

**a) the 2018 Ministerial conference and**

**b) the communiqué** (+/- 2,000 characters)<sup>1</sup>

Draft proposals of recommendations with regard to implementation to be discussed during the meeting of the BFUG in Malta, 24-25 May 2017

1. We recommend to further develop the concept of 'reversed peer review' as an instrument and tool to provide support to the members experiencing difficulties in implementing the agreed goals and enable those countries who wish to go further to do so. The 'reversed peer review' offers plenty of opportunities of an in depth policy dialogue and exchange of good practices and as well as opportunities to involve the academic communities, professional practitioners and stakeholders. The two exercises that took place demonstrate the value of bringing together representatives from public authorities and institutions coming from very different higher education systems to discuss the implementation of quality assurance systems and qualifications frameworks. By bringing together different actors who are responsible for the implementation it could contribute to bridge the gap between *le pays politique et le pays reel*. It gives also the opportunity to the participants to tell their own story and to explain their own context. At the end of the day it will lead to a better understanding of the different approaches and to a better insight in the way the key commitments could be implemented. It offers also an opportunity to learn from each other. The organization of such events requires important human and financial resources.
2. In Yerevan the ministers committed themselves to include short cycle qualifications in the overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA), based on the Dublin descriptors for short cycle qualifications and quality assured according to the ESG, so as to make provision for the recognition of short cycle qualifications in their own systems, also where these do not comprise such qualifications.
  - a. In order to fulfill that commitment we recommend to review the Dublin descriptors and the Qualifications framework for higher education as it was adopted in Bergen without modifying all the Dublin descriptors but by just deleting the wordings phrase 'within the first cycle'. As a consequence the short cycle becomes an autonomous cycle in the qualifications framework for higher education in the EHEA. Those small changes don't imply that the four cycles should be considered as four subsequent cycles. We would like to recommend the use of the following terminology: short cycle, first cycle, second cycle and third cycle. For most of the countries the proposed deletion of the wordings 'within the first cycle' won't have consequences for the finalized self-certifying process or self-referencing process.
  - b. We recommend that the ministers and the higher education institutions should take the necessary measures to ensure that the holders of short cycle higher education degrees can progress to the first cycle by recognizing and validating and transferring the credits when those holders would like to enroll in a first cycle study programme within the national borders or cross border. We recommend also that the ministers and the higher education institutions should take the necessary measures to ensure that holders of

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<sup>1</sup> It is possible to propose input for either the conference or the communiqué or for both.

vocational or professional qualifications at level 5 but which qualifications aren't included in the national qualifications framework for HE can progress to the first cycle study programmes by recognizing and validating and transferring the credits when those holders would like to enroll in a first cycle study programmes within the national borders or cross border. The use of the ECTS credit system or a credit system comparable to the ECTS system, a diploma/certificate supplement, the use of learning outcomes and a system of quality assurance compatible with the ESG could foster the recognition and validation of the learning and those vocational qualifications.

- c. The sector of the short cycle qualifications and the level 5 qualifications is characterized by a huge diversity with regard to:
  - i. The drivers, rationales and purposes;
  - ii. Different types of institutions that have been authorized to offer level 5 qualifications;
  - iii. The name of the degree or qualification or certificate awarded;
  - iv. The student body;
  - v. The learning pathways;
  - vi. The QA system;
  - vii. The use of credits and learning outcomes approach;
  - viii. The transition to the next cycle.

We would like to recommend keeping the diversity of the learning provisions in place. But it is in the interest of the providers of level 5 qualifications and of the holders of level 5 qualifications that the qualifications and the learning could be recognized and validated if the holders would like to progress into the first cycle.

3. In Yerevan the ministers commit themselves to make our higher education more socially inclusive by implementing the EHEA social dimension strategy. There are good examples of countries which have developed a national social dimension strategy. Other countries have put in place a set of measures aiming at realizing the objectives with regard the social dimension without calling it a strategy. Building a more socially inclusive higher education systems requires measures and actions in different areas and a multidimensional approach: the teaching and learning dimension, the curriculum: the design and the delivery of the curriculum, extra-curricular activities, student facilities, transition from secondary to higher education, the transition from HE to the labor market, tuition fees, opportunities for combining working and learning, part-time studies, second chance learning paths, flexible learning paths etc. We would like to make the recommendation that higher education systems and institutions should mainstream and integrate the social dimension in all their purposes, functions, delivery of HE and actions (in order to enhance the quality of HE for all students and to make a meaningful contribution to an equitable society (paraphrasing the new definition of internationalization). Higher education practitioners have to play an important role and therefore we recommend establishing a European thematic network of higher education practitioners to foster an inclusive higher education. We would like to start with some 5 to 6 countries who would like to put some resources in the functioning of the network by organizing some seminars and conferences of HE practitioners (2 seminars each year and 1 conference every two years).

## Annex1

### **Purpose and/or outcome** (from Terms of Reference)

The Working Group on the Implementation is responsible to provide support to member states for the implementation of agreed goals on a national and institutional level. It is mandated to coordinate a programme of actions (such as peer learning, voluntary peer review, conference, seminar, workshop, etc) based on policy dialogue and exchange of good practice; actions proposed and organised by countries, institutions and/or organisations. The Working Group will develop policy proposals based among others on conclusions from events aiming at providing support to countries in achieving the implementation of agreed key commitments within the European Higher Education Area.

The working group will also make full use of the conclusions and recommendations laid down in the "Bologna Process Revisited" document as well as the outcomes of the research work carried out by Higher Education Researchers in general and of the conclusions and recommendations summarising the second Bologna Researchers' conference in particular.

### **Specific tasks** (from Terms of Reference)

- To use the implementation report 2015 as evidence base to identify topics for peer-learning and voluntary peer review actions;
- To contact BFUG countries, with the assistance of the BFUG secretariat, to clarify the needs of peer learning;
- To specify a range of topics in agreement with the BFUG;
- To gather and coordinate actions organized by countries, institutions and organisations;
- To guide and assist countries, institutions and organisations in organizing activities;
- To ensure and foster the involvement of national, European and international stakeholders in the organization of the events, the attendance of the events and /or active participation in drafting common policies;
- To ensure the dissemination of upcoming activities and their emerging results;
- To report back regularly to the BFUG on feedback, results of actions taken, national policy recommendations if needed, and on reflections on the WG concept.

## Annex2

### **Calendar**

#### a) Overview of meetings of WG2

Nr	Date	Place
1st	27/01/2016	Brussels
2nd	03-04/06/2016	Tbilissi
3rd	09-10/11/2016	Nice
4th	20-21/03/2016	Vienna

#### b) Proposals made to the BFUG (in written or at meetings) and results of the discussion in the BFUG (max. 1,000 characters)

In our written report to the BFUG in Bratislava we had included the proposal of the WG to delete the wording 'within the first cycle' in the level descriptors of the short cycle in the Qualifications framework for higher education as it was adopted by the ministers in Bergen, 2015. Excerpt of the minutes of the Bratislava BFUG: Some members expressed their concern because WG2 (Implementation) is not showing the progress ministers would expect, especially not in answering the questions connected with the short cycle (level 5 of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning)

### Annex 3: structure of the draft report

yellow = prefilled by Secretariat, green = defined boxes to be filled by AG/WG