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Bologna Process

Mobility

Pro.Mo.Austria+

Recognition

Quality of Teaching

Lifelong Learning

Pro.Mo.Austria

European Higher Education Area

National Stakeholder

Social Dimension

REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GOALS AND PRIORITIES
OF THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA IN AUSTRIA

EHEA IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

 Federal Ministry
Republic of Austria
Education, Science
and Research



EUROPEAN
Higher Education Area



Erasmus+

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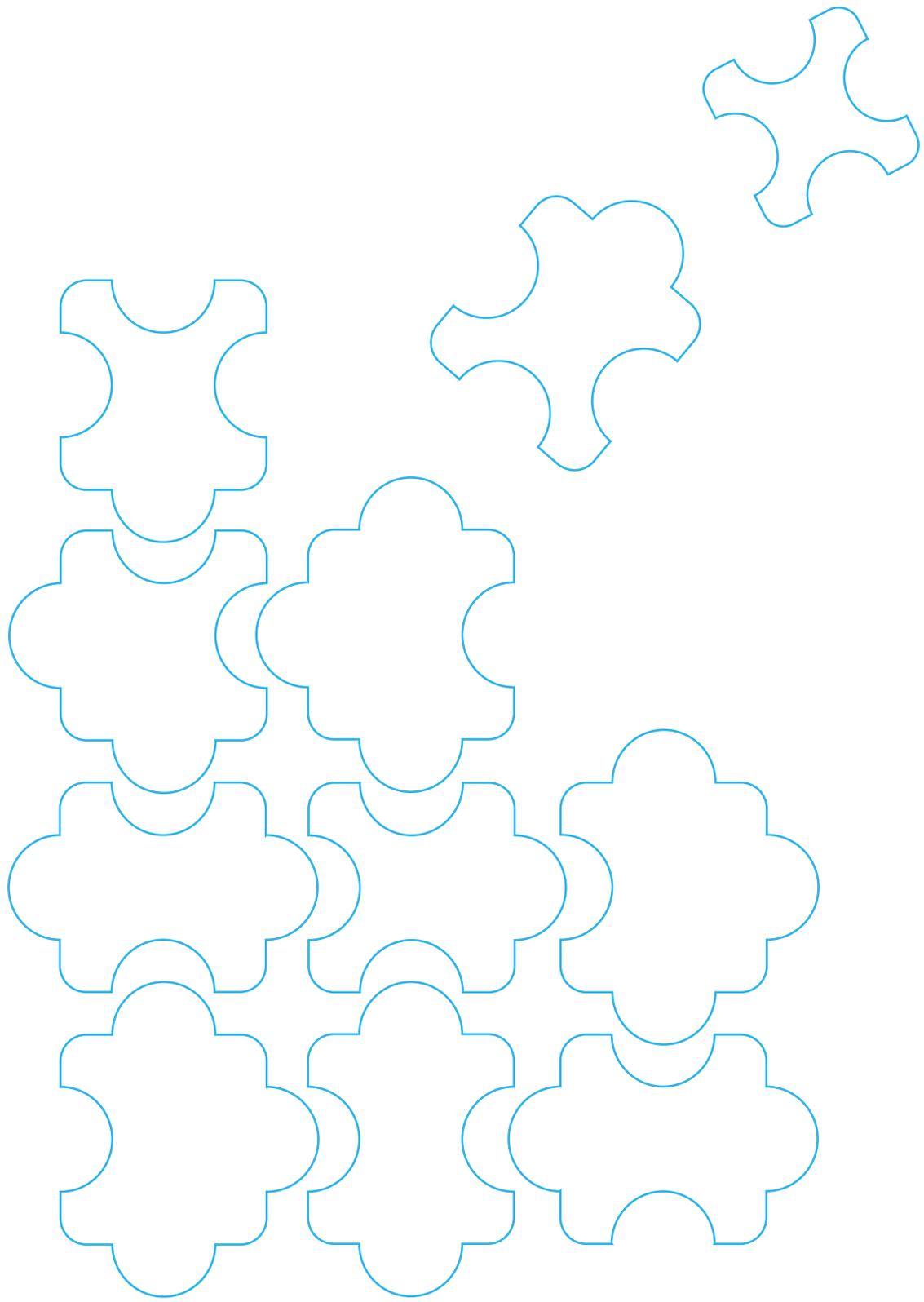
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REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GOALS AND PRIORITIES
OF THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA IN AUSTRIA

EHEA IMPLEMENTATION REPORT



Preface

The Bologna Process is still, nearly twenty years after its initiation by the signing of the Bologna Declaration, an important driving force behind national and international higher education policy.

It embodies the idea of a common European Higher Education Area that connects tertiary education sectors across national borders. Greater and better opportunities for transnational cooperation and increased mobility not only provide great personal enrichment for students and teachers, they represent a significant contribution to the consolidation of a united Europe, one that stretches even beyond the EU's borders and draws its strength, amongst other things, from this plurality of cultures.

The original group of 29 signatory countries in 1999 has since expanded to number 48 countries. They agree to voluntarily implement, in accordance with conditions in each respective country, a harmonisation of study programmes and completion qualifications, improved mobility of students and teachers, and therefore a continually developing, lively space for teaching and research higher education. The target of this reform process is not uniformity, but instead the promotion of a sustainable convergence of systems through intense dialogue in the spirit of transparency.



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New chapters will be added to the existing history of success in the European Higher Education Area in the coming years: more than ever before, higher education, science and research represent the most important instruments at hand for taking sustainable, responsible action in the face of current and future societal challenges.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Heinz Faßmann". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Univ.- Prof. Dr. Heinz Faßmann
Federal Minister of Education, Science and Research

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Abbreviations

AK	Austrian Chamber of Labour	ECHE	Erasmus Charter for Higher Education
AL	Action line	ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
AQ Austria	Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria	EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ASVG	General Social Insurance Act	ENIC	European Network of Information Centres
AuBG	Austrian Recognition and Evaluation Act	ESU	European Students' Union
BFUG	Bologna Follow-Up Group	EU	European Union
BGBI	Federal Law Gazette	EUA	European Universities Association
BiDokVFH	Bildungsdokumentationsverordnung-Fachhochschulen	FHK	Association of Austrian Universities of Applied Sciences
BMBWF	Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research	GÖD	Public Service Union Austria
CuKo	Curriculum Commission	GUEP	Austrian National Development Plan for Public Universities
DAAD	German Academic Exchange Service	HEREs	Higher Education Reform Experts
DS	Diploma Supplement	HG	Teacher Education Act 2005
EAIE	European Association for International Education	HMS	Higher Education Mobility Strategy
EC	European Commission	ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education

IV	Federation of Austrian Industries	PLA	Peer learning activity
KA	Key Action	Pro.Mo.Austria	Promoting Mobility. Addressing the Challenges in Austria
LLL:2020	Strategy for Lifelong Learning in Austria	Pro.Mo.Austria+	Promoting Mobility. Fostering EHEA Commitments in Austria
MSCA	Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions	RÖPH	Rectors' Conference of Austrian University Colleges of Teacher Education
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centres	RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
NQR	National Quali cations Framework	UAS	University of Applied Sciences
NUFFIC	Netherlands Universities' Foundation for International Cooperation	UG	Universities Act 2002
OeAD-GmbH	Austrian Exchange Service	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
OEPIGUni	Austrian permanent indicators working group "universities"	uniko	Universities Austria
ÖGB	Austrian Trade Union Federation	WKO	Austrian Federal Economic Chambers
ÖH	Austrian National Union of Students		
ÖPUK	Association of Austrian Private Universities		
PBS	Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research's student psychological counselling centres		



01



INTRODUCTION

01

INTRODUCTION

On 25 May 2018 it will have been 20 years since the ministers of education representing France, Italy, Great Britain and Germany signed the ‘Joint Declaration of Harmonisation of the Architecture of the European Higher Education System’ at the Sorbonne in Paris. This document provided the impetus that led to the Bologna Declaration just one year later. Twenty years to the day, in May 2018, ministers of higher education representing the now 48 member states of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) will gather once again at the Sorbonne to discuss targets and priorities for the EHEA in the coming two-year period.

Austrian higher education policy has, since the signing of the Bologna Declaration, aligned itself with the communiqués adopted by the ministerial conferences, which form the basis for implementing the EHEA. The EHEA’s full potential can only be achieved through the consistent pursuit of the adopted targets and priorities, in particular the three-cycle study programme architecture in accordance with the European Qualifications Framework, continued adherence to the Lisbon Recognition Convention and quality assurance in line with European standards and guidelines.

To this end, the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) uses the European Commission’s call for ‘Support to the implementation of EHEA (European Higher Education Area) reforms’ within the context of the Erasmus+ programme, specifically Key Action 3 – Policy Support, to support the implementation of targets and priorities related to the EHEA. Both of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research’s applications submitted in response to this call were assessed as excellent by

the EC in a Europe-wide competition and awarded grants: ‘Promoting Mobility. Addressing the Challenges in Austria – Pro.Mo.Austria’¹ (Duration 2014 – 16) and ‘Pro.Mo.Austria+ // Promoting Mobility. Fostering EHEA Commitments in Austria’² (Duration: 2016 – 18). The respective project budgets were awarded additional funding by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research. The priorities (mobility, recognition, the social dimension and quality of teaching in higher education) and related measures (seminars, workshops, advisory discussions, publications, etc.) with respect to these above-named projects are addressed in the first section of this report.

Transnational physical mobility has always been a matter of importance for the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research and the higher education institutions, particularly considering that mobility was a key motivator in the founding of the joint EHEA in 1999. Over 20% of Austrian graduates completed a study abroad period, which means that Austria has already met the European benchmark for educational mobility for 2020 as established in the ‘EU Council Conclusions on Learning Mobility in Higher Education’ (2011)³. Nevertheless the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research has identified additional potential for increased student mobility, not least based on the findings of the 2015 student social survey. This prompted the ministry to devise a Higher Education Mobility Strategy (HMS), which was published in 2016. It aims to promote the quantitative and, in particular, qualitative improvement of transnational physical mobility in the higher education sector. This report includes an interim report on this strategy and discusses next steps.

¹ Henceforth “Pro.Mo.Austria”

² Henceforth “Pro.Mo.Austria+”

³ By 2020, a minimum average of 20% of higher education graduates in the EU should complete a study abroad period or period of training abroad (including internships) equivalent to a minimum of 15 ECTS credits or a minimum stay of 3 months.

The Lisbon Recognition Convention has been adopted into law and is considered by all stakeholders, including the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, to be legally binding for higher education institutions. One additional development in this respect has been the creation of a legal basis for the assessment and recognition of the qualifications of individuals entitled to asylum and individuals granted subsidiary protection in cases in which formal documentary evidence is incomplete or unavailable. In this context, the recognition of and credit for non-formal and informal prior learning has played an ever more important role and has received additional impetus in the publication of the Austrian validation strategy in November 2017. The EHEA Social Dimension Strategy of April 2015 encouraged EHEA member states to develop their own national strategies on the social dimension. The Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research responded to this prompt by crafting, in a broadly conceived participatory process, a National Strategy on the Social Dimension in Higher Education, which was published at the beginning of 2017. Participation in education and training at all levels should simultaneously improve prospects for social, economic and political participation and integration.

The final priority addressed in this report is related to the quality of teaching in higher education. The Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research proceeds here from the understanding that teaching is a key component and core activity of each and every higher education institution; the department is therefore committed to increasing the value of teaching, a target that has consistently been included in European strategy papers. Significant steps taken to this end in Austria include the 'Ars Docendi State Award for Excellence in Teaching' and the 'Good Teaching Atlas'. The second part of this report addresses collaboration amongst national stakeholders towards optimal implementation of the EHEA targets and priorities in the Austrian context. The former Federal Ministry for Science and Research created the Austrian Bologna Follow-Up Group (national BFUG) as a means of collaboratively incorporating

Europe-wide concepts into national policies and measures. The BFUG promotes dialogue amongst interest groups representing students and the higher education institutions and social partners and other stakeholders from the national higher education sector and encourages the development of an Austrian perspective on current issues with respect to the European Higher Education Area.

A diverse array of additional institutions and implementation measures round out the national strategy for implementing the spirit and letter of the Bologna Process. OeAD-GmbH, the Austrian agency for international mobility and cooperation in education, science and research, supports and assists in a variety of implementation measures. It coordinates the advisory meetings of the 'Team of EHEA national experts' at the respective higher education institutions. These also contribute their expertise within the context of the above-named Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research-ERASMUS+ projects in the form of events, seminars and workshops, amongst others. The Bologna coordinators at Austrian higher education institutions act as service points internally in their respective institution and as information hubs for subjects related to implementing the Bologna Process.

This report has, for the first time, been translated into English to provide a broader public – including that in other EHEA member states – with pertinent information regarding the Austrian approach to implementing EHEA targets and priorities and the collaborative efforts undertaken by a variety of stakeholders in the country.



A woman with glasses and a colorful beaded necklace is writing in a notebook at a conference table. She is wearing a name tag that says "ccad". The background shows other people seated at tables in a conference room. The entire image has a blue tint.

02

PRO.MO.AUSTRIA (+)

Implementation of the European Higher Education Area in Austria: Two Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research Erasmus+ projects accompany the national implementation of the Bologna Process

The EC is emphasising new priorities in the restructuring of calls accompanying Erasmus+ (2014–2020). The calls under Key Action 3 – ‘Policy Support’¹ for the ‘Support to the implementation of EHEA reforms’ are aimed exclusively at all Ministries of Education and Science. These raise the political profile of the Bologna Process and enable Erasmus+ countries to forge ahead more determinedly in implementing the EHEA through a grant from the EC combined with additional national funding.

One significant difference from the previous arrangement is that from this point forward, the choice of projects and the related approval of grants by the EC takes place in a Europe-wide competition with other applicant countries. The contents of both existing calls were fully in alignment with the priorities identified in the Bucharest Communiqué 2012 and the Yerevan Communiqué 2015 and the thematic priorities included in the Bologna Implementation Report. This report showcased, in narrative form and with the use of a graphic traffic lights system, the progress that had been

made in a number of areas, such as the ECTS grading scale, mobility activities, Bologna study architecture, the Lisbon Recognition Convention, and the integration of students into the organisational structures of higher education institutions. Whilst a national team of Bologna experts was still desirable, it was no longer an obligatory part of the application.

In assembling the project applications for 2014 and 2016, the guidelines from this report and the two communiqués were combined with strategic objectives identified by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research and suggestions advanced by the relevant interest groups, uniko (Universities Austria), FHK (Association of Austrian Universities of Applied Sciences), RÖPH (Conference of Rectors of Austrian University Colleges of Teacher Education), ÖPUK (Association of Austrian Private Universities) and ÖH (Austrian National Union of Students). Both of the following subsequently successful projects were submitted:

¹ The aim of Erasmus+ support for policy reform is to further improve European education systems. Key priorities identified within the framework of these calls include transnational collaborative projects, promotion of cross-sector cooperation, and closer harmonisation of higher education institutions and policy, amongst others. Calls for proposals related to the Erasmus+ initiative to support policy reform are published on an irregular basis and are based on the relevant and current strategic objectives in European educational policy.

- 1) Promoting Mobility. Addressing the Challenges in Austria – Pro.Mo.Austria (2014–16)
- 2) Pro.Mo.Austria+ // Promoting Mobility. Fostering EHEA Commitments in Austria (2016–18).

Promoting Mobility. Addressing the Challenges in Austria – Pro.Mo.Austria

(Duration 2014–16)

The ‘Pro.Mo.Austria – Promoting Mobility. Addressing the Challenges in Austria’ project aimed to identify existing deficiencies in the Austrian higher education system and to collaborate with all stakeholders to create a common understanding conducive to undertaking the required reforms of higher education stated in the existing needs assessments and the 2012 Bologna Implementation Report.

The following key priorities were identified:

The implementation and use of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the associated recognition and formulation of learning outcomes in accordance with appropriate standards within the European Higher Education Area. Stakeholders in the higher education sector gained confidence in using these instruments by means of specialist seminars, shared learning activities (following the publication of the ECTS Users’ Guide 2015) and consultations. Both topics prioritise quality within the framework of mobility. Confidence in the use of transparency instruments, the Diploma Supplement (DS) in particular, was further promulgated by means of a variety of activities.

Closely connected with the priorities described above is the subject of recognition, which is relevant well beyond the tertiary sector. Concrete project initiatives raised awareness about the recognition of prior learning and non-traditional pathways into higher education and promoted sharing of the practices that institutions use in applying these concepts, all of which contribute to higher education policy discourse.

Curriculum design played an essential role in addition to strategic concerns related to higher education. A specialist seminar aimed to support higher education institutions in the development of and quality assurance related to double and joint degree programmes. Practical manuals related to these programmes that already exist in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) were shared to provide a basis for sustainable and successful collaboration.

External evaluators from the European Commission awarded the ‘Pro.Mo.Austria’ project 90 out of 100 possible points in the areas of topical relevance, project quality and schedule, the composition of the project team, and its sustainable effect on higher education policy.

Pro.Mo.Austria+ // Promoting Mobility. Fostering EHEA Commitments in Austria

(Duration 2016–18)

This project built on the successes of the prior project from 2014–2016 and numbered among a total of 18 submitted project proposals that were assessed as excellent by the European Commission. The implementation of both this project and the previous one involved the AQ Austria quality assurance and accreditation agency – two experts participate in working meetings and events to guarantee the process remains transparent and to ensure ongoing adherence to the targets and measures included in the project application. AQ Austria’s interim and final reports are composed of analyses of event evaluations and qualitative interviews with individuals who are regularly involved in the project or activities that fall within its scope or who can provide relevant expertise. The reports address and steer the ongoing project’s direction and also serve to provide input in terms of content and format for the coming years. This form of external monitoring is unique amongst the European countries participating in the project and, as a symbol of the ongoing critical engagement with the Bologna Process, it has been given the highest possible rating by the executive agency.

The 2016 – 2018 working programme offers a wide range of seminars, trainings and conferences to help support Austrian higher education institutions in implementing the EHEA, including a total of eight consultation visits by the team of national EHEA experts, all of which are guided by the findings of the Bologna Implementation Report 2015, the priorities identified in the Yerevan Communiqué (2015) and – in the interest of maintaining a target group oriented approach – recommendations provided by Austrian higher education institutions. The EHEA's core target – mobility – is reflected in three measures: the publication of 'Crossing Borders: Characteristics and value of high-quality international mobility in higher education' ('Grenzen überschreiten: Facetten und Mehrwert von qualitativvoller Auslands-mobilität in der Hochschulbildung'), a specialist seminar on mobility windows (see also Chap. 3/ AL-2a) and a special analysis of the 2015 student social survey on 'The mobility behaviour of students at public universities'.

In addition, the topic of 'fair and transparent recognition' was addressed in two ways and with additional know-how from the EHEA: The Peer Learning Activity (PLA) 'The Lisbon Recognition Convention: Fairness in Admissions and Recognition?' (see also Chap. 3) was documented by a member of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Bureau from Denmark, Alan Bruun Pederson.

The Bologna Day 2018 dedicated to the 'Recognition of prior learning experiences: Strategies – recommendations – models' showcased practical examples from Sweden and Germany.

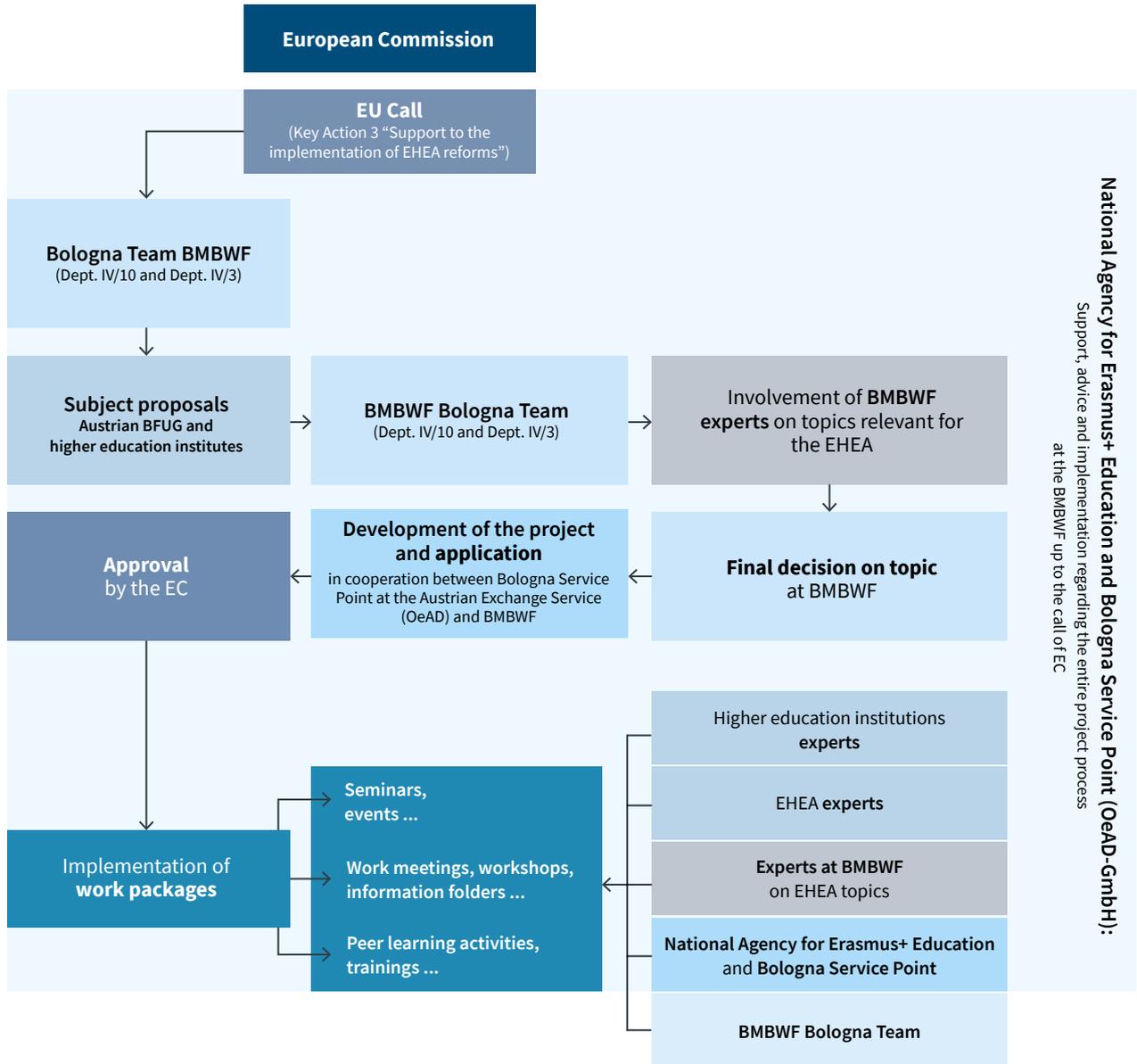
The thematic focus of the EC's call provided an opportunity for numerous specialist areas within the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research to become involved in the conception and implementation of the 2016 – 2018 project. The thematic range was considerably broadened as a result. The EHEA target 'enhancing the quality and relevance of learning and teaching', which has been firmly established from the start, was given much prominence with a four-part series of events (see also Chap. 3), 'University teachers in dialogue'. It provides a platform for the winners of the

Austrian 'Ars Docendi State Award for Excellence in Teaching' and is meant to accompany the 'Good Teaching Atlas' website². Two accompanying measures are included under the priority 'Social dimension' (see also 3.3) that support the implementation of the 'National strategy on the social dimension in higher education': the international Peer Learning Activity 'Mainstreaming Social Dimension in the EHEA: Strategies, Tools, Raising Awareness' and the closely related 'Bologna Day 2017: Towards More Integrative Access and Wider Participation: National Strategy on the Social Dimension in Higher Education'.

The figure above, 'The Bologna network as illustrated with reference to an Erasmus+ project' demonstrates the Austrian approach in response to the Erasmus+ call 'Policy Support to the Implementation of EHEA reforms'. Proposals in response to an Erasmus+ call for applications must be submitted within a few months of the call's publication, which requires responding parties to work swiftly. Concrete preferences (subjects and formats) are assembled in consultation with the national Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG); these are compared to the priorities in each specialist department related to aspects highlighted by the Bologna programme (e.g. innovative teaching, the social dimension, mobility, recognition of qualifications). Taking into account the relevant sources noted in the call (Bologna Communiqués and Bologna Process Implementation Reports), Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research Departments IV/10 and IV/3 assemble an application in conjunction with the Bologna Service Point (OeAD GmbH) and the National Agency Erasmus+ Education. This application describes in concrete terms the work that will be undertaken over two years, i.e. specific topics that will be addressed in particular formats (e.g. conference, publication, workshop, consultations), which should have measurable outcomes. The inclusion of Austrian multipliers, stakeholders, and practitioners plays as important a role in the practical design as does the involvement of experts from the European Higher Education Area. An openness to peer learning beyond the higher education sector and across national borders is a basic prerequisite for both projects' success.

² <http://www.gutelehre.at>

The Bologna network as illustrated with reference to an Erasmus+ project





03

**NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE EHEA'S
GOALS AND PRIORITIES**

03

NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EHEA'S GOALS AND PRIORITIES

Higher Education Mobility – interim report for 2018 on the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research Higher Education Mobility Strategy

The Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (formerly the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy) published the BMWFW Higher Education Mobility Strategy for promoting transnational mobility at Austrian universities, universities of applied sciences and private universities (HMS) in 2016. Recognising that a number of diverse measures already existed at Austrian higher education institutions, it intended to describe the current situation and, building on that, provide recommendations particularly with respect to improving the quality of mobility amongst students, teachers, and non-academic staff and develop relevant measures for ongoing support in this area. Furthermore, quantitative goals were set with respect to students' outgoing credit mobility and teaching staff's outgoing mobility. From the perspective of the Bologna Process, Austria's Higher Education Mobility Strategy is making a valuable contribution in shaping the EHEA.

Section 4 of the HMS stipulates the creation of a 'preliminary interim report on the status of implementation with respect to the HMS' for 2018. This is provided in the following pages.

Implementing measures to improve the quality of mobility in higher education – Action lines

AL-1

Presentation of a mobility strategy as a component of each university's internationalisation strategy

Successfully promoting mobility in higher education requires commitment from all levels, faculties, and departments of an institution. Since this is an initiative that cuts across all levels of an institution, it must harmonise with each university's profile in terms of teaching, research, administration, staff development, quality management, and financial organisation as it is developed and implemented. The (further) development of an internationalisation strategy (with an incorporated mobility strategy) is already part

of the universities' performance agreements for 2016–2018. The relevant developments are considered in the context of the Intellectual Capital Reports, which allows for an assessment of whether universities have been making sufficient progress in internationalisation and with the associated promotion of mobility. In addition, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research has offered to hold bilateral discussions related to the HMS. Several universities have taken advantage of this offer, which has resulted in discussions that proved incredibly constructive for both parties.

The Austrian National Development Plan for Public Universities (GUEP) 2019–2024 reiterates the stipulation that universities create and further develop internationalisation strategies, including mobility strategies. This topic will therefore continue to be an aspect covered by the performance agreements.

The universities of applied sciences are equally subject to these requirements, as the (further) development of an internationalisation strategy (including a mobility strategy) has been firmly established in the Development and Funding Plan for Universities of Applied Sciences 2017/18. The emphasis in promoting the sustainable expansion and improvement of internationalisation and mobility in the subsequent period 2018/19 focuses on transnational physical mobility and internationalisation at home.

AL-2a

In terms of curriculum design, a so-called 'mobility window' should be included as an integral component of a course of study – in accordance with the requirements for each particular course

Ideally mobility windows integrate study abroad periods into a curriculum in a flexible manner without jeopardising a student's ability to finish within the prescribed time and without the student losing the ability to apply the time to the chosen course of study. Thanks to their structure in terms of time and their subject-specific nature and the clearly regulated recognition of coursework and learning

conducted abroad, mobility windows are a practical way to gain international experience in spite of the curricular density that have resulted from the often insufficient implementation of the Bologna Process.

The amendment to the 2002 Universities Act dated 1 October 2017, Federal Law Gazette I No. 129/2017, clarified the formulation and establishment of provisions for mobility windows. The former sections 54(3a) and (11) of the University Act have been replaced by section 58(9), whereby 'the bachelors and masters programmes are to be designed in such a way that academic study may be undertaken at foreign post-secondary education institutions. It is important, however, there is no negative impact on the time it takes to complete the degree.'

System Goal 7 (Improvements in internationalisation and mobility) of the Austrian National Development Plan for Public Universities 2019–2024 stipulates 'the creation of a range of studies with structured mobility windows as a fundamental basis for student mobility'. This topic will therefore continue to feature as a component of performance agreements.

The specific inclusion of the 'creation of mobility windows in curricula' in the Development and Funding Plan for Universities of Applied Sciences 2018–19 similarly aims to increase and improve student mobility in both qualitative and quantitative terms.

In the interest of supporting universities and universities of applied sciences in designing mobility windows as a component of curriculum development, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research collaborated with OeAD-GmbH to organise a specialist seminar on 14 December 2017 at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna entitled 'Mobility Windows: Why and how? Success stories and ongoing debates about types of mobility windows', (see Chap. 2). European and Austrian model curricula from a variety of higher education sectors were presented and the underlying strategies, conceptions and implementations of mobility windows were highlighted. In addition to actors from the 'mobility sector' itself,

curriculum developers, student representatives, Bologna coordinators, and other individuals responsible for regularly scheduled teaching provision and course organisation at universities, universities of applied sciences, and university colleges of teacher education also took part in this discussion on the strategic value of mobility windows, mobility windows as an instrument in the internationalisation of the entire higher education institution, and other aspects and outcomes of short-term study abroad programmes. In light of the planned inclusion of university colleges of teacher education in the continued implementation and further development of the Higher Education Mobility Strategy, the leadership of these institutions were included in a special roundtable discussion specifically aimed at the 'Teacher Training NEW' initiative. Representatives from the relevant Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research specialist departments also took part in this discussion entitled 'Consideration of types of mobility at the primary and secondary levels'.

The specialist seminar was made possible with the support of the Erasmus+ project 'Pro.Mo.Austria+'.

AL-2b

Learning outcomes-based approach to curriculum development and implementation as a sign of quality in all study programmes/plans

The subject 'Learning outcomes – What has already been taken up in teaching and the world of education?' was chosen for Bologna Day 2016 specifically with the increased awareness of the learning outcomes-based approach to curriculum design and implementation in mind. On 30 March 2016, 140 participants from across Austria met at the University of Vienna to discuss key issues related to an approach based on learning outcomes. Among other things, the discussion touched on how to ensure that teaching staff and students are aware of an approach based on learning outcomes, harmonising learning outcomes at the programme level with those at the classroom level, and the creation of clear connections between the defined learning outcomes and the relevant performance measures and/or principles of assessment. It was demonstrated more generally that the higher education institution as a whole is

responsible for contributing to high quality teaching, learning and assessment through a learning outcomes-based approach to curriculum design and implementation. Bologna Day 2016 was financed from the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research national funding within the framework of the Erasmus+ project 'Pro.Mo.Austria' subsidised by the European Commission (see Chap 2).

Since 2016, the use of learning outcomes has been included in the criteria used in choosing the winners of the 'Ars Docendi – state award for excellence in teaching' at Austria's higher education institutions.

The sustainable implementation of learning outcomes will remain a focus in the negotiations related to the performance agreements for 2019–21.

AL-3

Funding study abroad – Development of measures/instruments that would enable currently non-mobile individuals to study abroad

One of the central concerns when deciding to study abroad is how to pay for it. With Erasmus+, the European Commission and the member states provide funding from their budgets to support students, teachers, and non-academic staff in these endeavours. To that end, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research guaranteed additional national funding necessary to improve the quantitative mobility of students, teachers, and non-academic staff in 2017. Furthermore, a guarantee of this additional national funding for Erasmus+ has been incorporated into the Austrian federal government's agenda for 2017–2022.

It is often challenging for students at art colleges to arrange study abroad through the ERASMUS+ framework because their programmes make it difficult to fulfil the three-month minimum stay requirement. There is an emphasis on providing shorter-term mobility options for those studying fine arts (e. g. participation in concerts, exhibitions). For this reason, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research suggested related to performance agreements with arts colleges for the period 2019–2021 that concrete steps

towards promoting the mobility of art students be defined, with attention paid particularly to shorter-term instances of mobility.

A study commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research on mobility grants (for a complete study programme abroad) has shown that an overwhelming number of scholarship holders do not return. Given this finding, plans to expand the list of destination countries for mobility grants to include Canada and the US have been shelved.

There are plans to conduct another study of this type after an appropriate interval.

AL-4

Social Dimension – Development and implementation of targeted measures towards improving the inclusion of underrepresented groups in terms of mobility

The HMS encourages the integration of mobility-specific aspects in the development of a 'National strategy on the social dimension in higher education'. It was published in February 2017 and stipulates measures for developing and testing forms of mobility that focus specifically on the social dimension, expanding internationalisation at home (e. g. embedding language and intercultural competences in curricula), and increasing participation in mobility programmes amongst students whose parents did not possess the requisite qualifications for attending university to at least 18% by 2025. Future iterations of the HMS will place more emphasis on this target group.

AL-5

Improving knowledge management, particularly the knowledge base with respect to mobility-promoting measures at all levels

The UG amendment on university funding stipulates in section 141 paragraph 3 UG that universities are allowed access to personally identifying data that has been collected in accordance with section 9 paragraph 6 of the Education

Documentation Act (BidokG) when a student leaves a higher education institution. As such, data associated with stays abroad related to a student's course of study ('UStat-2') will in future be available to universities for internal management purposes. This not only satisfies a request universities have been making for some time now, but will simultaneously lead to an improvement in data quality in this respect. In addition, OEPIGuni (Austrian permanent indicators working group 'Universities') is currently working on further developing the Intellectual Capital Reports' key figures on mobility – students outgoing/incoming. The intent is also to allow for a more comprehensive statistical overview of mobilities in comparison with existing measurement methodologies. This also includes discussion between Universities Austria (uniko) and the Association of Austrian Universities of Applied Sciences (FHK) related to establishing a definition of 'study abroad periods as part of the study programme' that is applicable to both universities and university colleges of teacher education – and eventually, after relevant consultation, for teacher training colleges too. These discussions will emphasise, among other things, the compatibility of these proposed definitions with European benchmark definitions related to study abroad periods as part of the student's study programme.

AL-5

Expansion of the Federal Act on Documentation in the Educational System (BiDokVFH) as related to the collection of data regarding outgoing students' host countries and the expansion of data collection related to private universities in the mobility sector.

In order to provide a fuller picture of student mobility at Austrian universities and universities of applied sciences, more data must be collected with respect to the host countries of outgoing students at universities of applied sciences and with respect to mobility at private universities. To this end, work is currently being undertaken to optimise data collection regarding mobility at universities of applied sciences – with recourse to synergies from the planned data warehouse at OeAD-GmbH. In the case of private universities, information will be collected in future by means of the 'UStat-2' form from Statistics Austria.

AL-5**Collection and publication of best practice examples with respect to peer learning to promote high-quality mobility among students and teaching staff**

In addition to the adaptation of the parameters related to higher education mobility, a brochure entitled 'Crossing borders: characteristics and value of high-quality international mobility in higher education' has been produced by OeAD-GmbH and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research with assistance from Austrian higher education institutions. It is meant to be a reference tool for students, teaching staff, early career researchers, and non-academic staff as well as for management at higher education institutions that provides examples of best practice for study abroad and reflections on intercultural experiences in host countries. The manual is relevant to higher education institutions that have already successfully managed mobility programmes, collaborative projects, and 'internationalisation at home' initiatives as well as those who are looking to expand their engagement in these areas. The document provides suggestions and topical examples and is meant to inspire discussion. Management at all Austrian higher education institutions have received free copies for distribution within their institutions. 'Crossing borders' was produced with funding from the Erasmus+ project 'Pro. Mo.Austria+' (see Chap. 2).

AL-6**Increasing the provision of joint, double, and multiple degree programmes**

Well-functioning partnerships and networks with higher education institutions (and organisations) abroad are one of the most important prerequisites for high-quality mobility. Mutual familiarity and trust are of fundamental importance particularly with regard to quality assurance, which requires that these contacts be maintained and nurtured. In addition to mobility in the form of set programmes (or as a so-called 'free mover'), joint, double, and multiple degree programmes offer the opportunity to study in an international context and receive the appropriate degrees in recognition of this. The ongoing expansion of the existing

provision of joint, double, and multiple degree programmes through 2021 is a fundamental aspect of the initiatives to support internationalisation and mobility embedded in System Goal 7 of the Austrian National Development Plan for Public Universities 2019–2024. The Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research has provided the stimulus funding 'Austria Mundus+' for several years now to support Austrian higher education institutions' applications for joint masters degree programmes within the framework of the EU's ERASMUS+ programme. Based on the suggestion of universities and universities of applied sciences themselves, the administrative framework was revised for the 2017 application round such that the call for proposals was published in the summer (as opposed to the autumn), with submission deadlines extended to allow for the preparation of more refined project proposals. Also for the first time in the 2017 application round, private universities were invited to submit proposals.

AL-6**Increased exchange with higher education institutions on issues related to mobility**

The focus on 'International Mobility and Quality – Trends, Characteristics, Challenges' was specifically chosen for the 2017 OeAD/Erasmus+ higher education institutions conference in order to promote exchange about experiences and improve networking not only amongst higher education institutions themselves, but also between these and national agencies such as OeAD-GmbH.

Moreover, Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research staff have engaged in informal discussions with representatives of universities and universities of applied sciences at a diverse array of events. Issues and suggestions that were raised in these exchanges will feed into the ongoing development of the HMS.

AL-7**Quality assurance and quality assurance instruments. Updating recommendations from the national Bologna**

Follow-Up Group on the 'modular design of curricula and the use of the ECTS assessment table' in the context of the ECTS Users' Guide 2015

The European Commission's ECTS guidelines underwent a fundamental revision as part of the European Bologna Follow-Up Group's 2012–2015 agenda, which was then approved by the ministers of education who met at the higher education conference in Yerevan in May 2015. This new 2015 version of the ECTS guidelines prompted a revision of the 'Recommendations on the modular design of curricula and the use of the ECTS assessment table' produced by the national Bologna Follow-Up Group (national BFUG) in 2010. The Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research asked Günter Wageneder, University of Salzburg, and Regine Kadgien, Vorarlberg University of Applied Sciences, to produce an appropriate document on behalf of Universities Austria (uniko) and the Association of Austrian Universities of Applied Sciences (FHK). Their recommendation was particularly focused on ensuring maximum efficiency in the practical application of the ECTS. The national BFUG adopted the document, 'Recommendations of the Austrian Bologna Follow-Up Group Regarding the Implementation of the European Commission's ECTS Guidelines (Version 2015)', at its meeting on 18 May 2017 and approved its publication. This document is to be regarded as a supplementary commentary related to conditions in Austria and is aimed at clarifying these issues with respect to Austria alone. It additionally provides good examples of the application of the ECTS guidelines. It was sent to the management of all Austrian universities and universities of applied sciences and is available online¹ on the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research's website.

AL-7

Quality assurance and quality assurance instruments. Increasing the number of institutions that have implemented the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (Charter & Code)

The individual principles contained in the Charter and Code have been implemented successfully by higher education institutions, as is evident from development plans, statutes of individual higher education institutions, the collective

agreement, and university gazettes. The human resource strategies developed at the level of the European Union for implementing the Charter & Code, however, have received minimal notice. It has been and remains difficult to communicate the value inherent in implementing these measures since Austrian higher education institutions are using different instruments for staff development and because the additional task associated with the human resource strategy is often regarded as a burden. The Charter & Code and the human resource strategy have received prominent attention within the context of the Bulgarian EU council presidency.

AL-8

Monitoring. Tracking early stage researchers in the context of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)

Ongoing studies have been commissioned related to the negotiations for the follow-up 'Research Framework Programme 9' (FP9). These are meant to provide basic and essential data and information about the MSCA and help to shape future negotiating positions. The Horizon 2020 Interim Evaluation produced a very positive assessment of the MSCA in spite of the fact that data related to sustainability was deemed to be insufficiently developed. The subject of tracking therefore remains a focus with respect to the MSCA.

The European Commission's draft of 'FP9' is expected to be released in May 2018. It is anticipated that the MSCA and ERASMUS+ will remain separate and attention will be directed more pronouncedly to the existing and future synergetic effects of the two programmes.

AL-9

Awareness of the value of mobility through the display of skills and abilities that can be gained at various levels from mobility experiences, with a focus on individuals who are not yet mobile

Improving the quality of mobility in higher education is also a matter of, among other things, raising awareness and demonstrating the value of high-quality mobility – for stu-

¹ https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Bologna/ECTS/BFUG_Empfehlung_zu_ECTS-Leitfaden_2015_final.pdf

dents, teachers, early stage researchers, and non-academic staff as well as for the higher education institution itself. The publication described above under AL-5, 'Crossing borders: Characteristics and value of high-quality international mobility in higher education', includes examples of best practice in terms of high-quality mobility at Austrian universities and universities of applied sciences that vividly demonstrate this value. The brochure additionally offers specialist contributions by well-regarded Austrian experts that discuss the value and positive effects of mobility and internationalisation from a variety of standpoints. It is intended to be a reference tool for universities and other higher education institutions that have managed successful mobility and collaborative efforts for years, as well as for those that see potential for improvement.

AL-9

Incorporating teachers' experiences from professional stays abroad into teaching activities

Since the 2017 selection round for the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research's 'Ars Docendi State Award for Excellence in Teaching', 'Incorporating higher education internationalisation concepts into the classroom' has become one of the prize's five thematic categories. One way to do this is to incorporate not only the mobility experiences of students, but also those of teaching staff into the classroom. Emphasis is placed on raising awareness of the value of stays abroad and the promotion of intercultural competences and a variety of teaching and learning cultures.

AL-10

Optimisation of information provision and the distribution of information with respect to mobility-promoting measures for outgoing/incoming students

OeAD-GmbH is the first point of contact in Austria when it comes to information about higher education mobility for both outgoing and incoming students. The OeAD-GmbH website underwent a complete redesigning in 2017 to make information more easily accessible and visible. The site's bundled categories 'To Austria', 'Outgoing', 'Expertise', and

'Projects' provide 'one-stop info points' for website visitors – answers to questions about studying, grants, entering and staying in the country, preparing for study abroad periods, teaching abroad, and mobility and cooperative programmes, such as Erasmus+.

The OeAD website 'Study in Austria' was also completely redesigned along higher education marketing lines and, under the banner 'Highlight your Future. Study in Austria', provides essential information to students from all over the world who are interested in studying in Austria regarding how to choose a study programme, enter the country, what living costs to expect or how to find accommodations, and much, much more. 'Study in Austria' also provides a means for Austrian higher education institutions to promote themselves and particular study programmes that may be particularly relevant for international students.

At the same time, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research has developed the 'Studiversum' website to serve as an Austrian portal for students (including prospective students). The site provides clearly arranged and formulated information related to programme choice, study, jobs, housing, grants/funding in addition to studying abroad. The website provides a wealth of links that connect it to a network of all of the relevant sites throughout Austria.

Furthermore, in order to improve the provision of information regarding opportunities to spend time abroad as part of one's studies, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research has begun including information about support for this type of activity in the preliminary tutorials that students attend when they first arrive. The Universities Act's amendment dated 1 August 2017, Federal Law Gazette I No. 129/2017, in section 60 – Admission to Higher Education (1b)(1)(k) stipulates that orientation sessions shall be provided in which 'the students are to be informed in a suitable manner about [...] study abroad'. The next Universities of Applied Science Development and Funding Plan for 2018/19 will suggest 'better supporting the mobility of students (including in terms of quality) through the provision of more information about study abroad opportunities right at the start of their studies'. The Austrian National Union of

Students, as the institution charged with organising these events, is separately called upon to contribute to this initiative in the context of its 'tutorial project'.

In addition to these measures related to improving the accessibility of general information relevant to mobility, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research has also stipulated that there should be certain improvements in the social integration of incoming students as well as returning students. The focus here was particularly on the services offered by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research's student Psychological Counselling Centers (PBS), which already provide some support services that are, because few are familiar with them, under-utilised. Therefore there are now articles on the PBS's ² website specifically for incoming students ('Coming to a new country'³) and for students returning from abroad ('Zurück aus dem Ausland – fremd in der Heimat: Strategien zur Rückkehr. Der Eigenkulturschock'⁴ – 'Back from abroad – Foreign in your own home: Strategies for your return') which aims to ensure these students access any services they may require during this process.

In order to increase awareness more broadly about PBS among possibly interested parties and the public more generally, PBS representatives were invited to give a presentation at Bologna Day in March 2017. Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research staff also organised a 'knowledge brunch' on the topic in September 2017. Furthermore, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research newsletter 'EHEA-update' provided information about PBS's services in an article in its October 2017 issue, and a link to the PBS website was included in the newsletter's list of permanent links.

AL-12

Use of the pan-European RESAVER pension fund by Austrian higher education institutions

Implementation in this case is progressing very slowly. Austrian higher education institutions currently experience no sense of urgency in using RESAVER since pension insurance is already a component of the second pillar of retirement

provisions. Current consortium members are Italy, Hungary, and the Netherlands; Hungary is the only member state that is currently paying into the scheme. The members of the consortium hope to gain an additional six member countries by 2020.

RESAVER is especially interesting for early stage researchers and artists. Non-university research institutes in particular have shown increasing interest. Consideration is being given at the level of the EU to providing the MSCA with a RESAVER process.

AL-13

Improved promotion of a welcoming environment at higher education institutions through concrete measures and consistent implementation of the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy (now the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research) 'Action plan for a competitive research area'

The subjects of the action plan are specified in the performance agreements with the universities. Implementation is progressing, if very slowly. Since there is a close relationship between the action plan and the ERA Roadmap, the expected deadline for implementation of the relevant measures is 2020.

AL-14

Transfer and recognition of credits obtained abroad and professional transfer and recognition of practical teaching, lecture, and research activities

In the interest of transparency and the commensurability of the outcomes of recognition procedures in connection with student mobility, original plans called for a task force charged with developing a solution for Austria as a whole in which decisions regarding the recognition of qualifications would be taken as part of an anonymised process. There are similar processes already in existence at several individual Austrian universities and other higher education institutions, but these are only applicable within the institutions themselves. At national level, it currently seems reasonable

² www.studentenberatung.at

³ www.studentenberatung.at/en/coming-to-a-new-country/

⁴ www.studentenberatung.at/studienbewaeltigung/zurueck-aus-dem-ausland/

to await the developments in connection with the strategy for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Austria published in November 2017 since it is anticipated that tools for decision-making with respect to the recognition of qualifications will be developed in the course of its implementation. These will primarily be concerned with facilitating the transfer of credit for skills obtained in a non-formal or informal manner, but these tools might also be applied to the transfer and recognition of credits obtained abroad.

The relevance of these practical activities undertaken during a stay abroad by teaching staff for their future careers is included under System Goal 3 of the Austrian National Development Plan for Public Universities (GUEP) 2019–24, 'Improving the quality of university teaching'.

AL-15

Awareness/evaluation of the skills and abilities gained during mobility experiences, with a particular focus on the application of these to one's academic/professional career (e. g. graduate tracking)

The European Commission began the 'Pilot European Graduate Survey' (Eurograduate) project within the context of its 2017 agenda for Erasmus+ to track the professional careers of graduates. The collected information can be used in higher education management and by higher education institutions in developing curricula and in information about study programmes and advising. Austria has expressed interest in this project to the European Commission and received a commitment to be the first country to take part in it at the first meeting of the Advisory Board.

In addition, questions will be asked as part of the 2019 student social survey to assess the role of study abroad in graduate's career choices.

AL-15

Improved reintegration of students returning from study abroad

As mentioned under AL-10, a Federal Ministry of Education,

Science and Research initiative resulted in the production of a special article directed at students returning from study abroad which aims to ensure these students access any services they may require during this process. The article is available on the Psychological Counseling Centers' website ('Zurück aus dem Ausland – fremd in der Heimat: Strategien zur Rückkehr. Der Eigenkulturschock'⁵).

AL-15

Improving international graduates' access to and integration in the Austrian labour market in terms of the economic value added by these individuals' know-how/expertise/knowledge, abilities and skills gained at Austrian higher education institutions

AL-15

Observing graduates' mobility post-higher education

Information about graduates' mobility after their time at higher education institutions in Austria is of considerable relevance to Austrian higher education policy in terms of the economic value added through the skills and competences gained at Austrian higher education institutions. A study conducted by Statistics Austria at the behest of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (formerly the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy) in 2016 to assess the paths taken by graduates of a public Austrian university collected information about type of study, educational field and citizenship, among other data points. German citizens left Austria at the highest rate upon completing their bachelors or masters degree or diploma (BA: up to 71.8%; MA: up to 68.4%, Diploma: up to 65%), whereas it was non-EU citizens who most frequently left Austria after having received a doctoral degree (up to 74.9%).

A heterogeneous picture emerges when the proportion of graduates who leave Austria organised by educational field is considered: around 75% (and up to 79.6%) of German citizens in each graduating cohort in health and social work leave Austria after completing their degree (primarily

⁵ <http://www.studentenberatung.at/studienbewaeltigung/zurueck-aus-dem-ausland/>

graduates in medicine), whereas German graduates in STEM fields tend to remain in Austria at rates above average (up to 59.5% leave).

In the pure natural sciences (e. g. physics, chemistry and geology), non-EU citizens tend to leave Austria at high rates (up to 80.4%), whereas German citizens tend to leave at a rate that is more average (up to 62.9%).

EU citizens in the fields 'engineering, manufacturing and building trades' tend to leave at high rates (not including Austria or Germany, up to 59.3%) compared to German citizens, who leave at rates up to 57.5%.

A study of added value commissioned by the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy (now the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research) and Universities Austria (uniko) at the end of 2016 found that foreign students at Austrian universities make a considerable contribution to added value: students from abroad produce additional economic activity in the form of expenditures towards living costs and consumption. After all, they represent 28% of the 300,000 or so people studying at universities. Their expenditures contribute an additional EUR 850 million to the economy.⁶ This impact is particularly important because, in contrast to Austrian students, who would be contributing to the economy even if they were not students, foreign students' expenditures represent an entirely 'additional' contribution to the Austrian economy. The rate at which non-EU citizens leave Austria increases proportionally to the level of qualification received. Whereas the rate of non-EU citizen bachelors graduates who leave Austria is around 20%, the rate among doctoral graduates is more than 50%. This indicates that more effort must be made to keep graduates – whether of bachelors, masters or doctorate programmes – in Austria.

This is precisely what the 'Red-White-Red-Card' aims to do, the development of which was secured by a Council of Ministers decision on 25 October 2016, which contains the following points: bachelors and doctoral degrees as well as 'Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)' degrees are to be included in the category 'graduates'. All bachelors, masters, doctorate, and Ph.D. graduates need only demonstrate a salary equiv-

alent of at least 45% of the maximum contribution basis as stipulated by the General Social Insurance Act. Those looking for employment now have twelve months to do so (including the application period), and a special residence permit was created. Furthermore, the points scheme with respect to age and language ability was aligned with the 2010 agreement with employer and employee federations. Bachelors and masters students are allowed to work up to 20 hours per week. The Red-White-Red-Card's validity was extended to two years. These changes were adopted into law with the passage of Federal Law Gazette I No. 145/2017 on 18 October 2017.

AL-16

Promoting 'Internationalisation at home' at Austrian higher education institutions

From the perspective of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, 'internationalisation at home' is as fundamental a component of a higher education mobility strategy as physical mobility. On the one hand, the student social survey, last conducted in 2015, demonstrates that only a portion of students in Austria will, or are able to, be mobile, and on the other, globalisation and global challenges demand that students receive a more thoroughly internationally oriented education. Both of these factors can be addressed by 'internationalisation at home', insofar as attention is paid to ensuring that all students are incorporated. 'Internationalisation at home' requires commitment at all levels of the higher education institution, from institutional management, teachers, research, the advancement and appreciation of the arts, and general administration. Universities and other higher education institutions already have numerous measures in place, such as appropriately designed curricula, foreign-language courses, international campuses, joint degree programmes, summer schools, international teaching staff and international classes, etc. Nevertheless, awareness and recognition of the necessity and value of 'internationalisation at home' must be improved and secured throughout each respective university or any other higher education institution. Therefore the OeAD-GmbH, at the request of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, took the first step by organ-

⁶ Wirtschaftliche und gesellschaftliche Effekte von Universitäten. Österreichische Universitätenkonferenz in Kooperation mit dem BMBWF, 2017, S.16.

ising the annual ERASMUS+ higher education conference in 2016 around the theme 'Internationalisation at home'. A large number of initiatives at universities and universities of applied sciences were presented with the intention of providing insight into the various possible means of realising 'internationalisation at home'.

The Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research intends to increase focus on this area in the ongoing development of the HMS.

The HMS's Quantitative Targets

The time period covered by this interim report (2016 through January 2018) is too limited to accurately assess the effects of measures taken in response to the HMS's quantitative targets. A longer time frame is needed to evaluate these measures aimed at improving figures related to higher education mobility.

Readers are instead referred to the University Report 2017, Chap. 9.2 – Mobility amongst students and university staff. Absolute figures for outgoing student mobility in the context of a supported mobility programme between the 2013/14 and 2016/17 academic years improved by 9%.⁷ Looking instead at the data related to graduate mobility, it turns out that 22.3% of Austrian citizens who completed their higher education course incorporated a study abroad period into their programme in the 2015/16 academic year⁸ (compared to 24.7% in the 2013/14 academic year and 23.4% in the 2014/15 academic year). This downward trend

is due in particular to the rapid rise in the number of graduates of bachelor's programmes, whose low rates of mobility have reduced the total figures such that there appears to be a decline. If one goes a step further and looks at study abroad periods not in connection with the course most recently completed, but in terms of the entirety of a graduate's time spent in higher education, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research's separate analysis has established that a total of 27% of graduates have completed a study abroad period.⁹

In line with the targets included in the Austrian federal government's working programme for 2013–2018 related to increasing the number of students from Austria studying abroad as part of the EU's Erasmus+ programme, the 100,000th Austrian Erasmus+ student left to study abroad ahead of the predicted timeline, in autumn 2017. The government programme for 2017–2022 also plans for continued growth in mobility amongst students and teachers. Related items can be found too in the Austrian National Development Plan for Public Universities 2019–2024 and in the Development and Funding Plan for Universities of Applied Sciences 2017–2018, and they will be included in the next Development and Funding Plan for Universities of Applied Sciences 2018/19.

The imperfect calculation methods that universities have long used to assess short-term staff mobility (fewer than 5 days) amongst teachers, scientists and artists were adapted. This mobility activity abroad has been captured since 2016, which has resulted in a more differentiated picture that is closer to reality. Thus a total number of 6,715 individual scientists and staff in the arts completed one or more stays abroad during the 2015/16 academic year¹⁰.

⁷ University Report 2017, Table 9.2.1-1

⁸ The University Report's percentage figure reflects only home (Austria) students.

⁹ University Report 2017, Section 9.2.1 Student Mobility. Graduates who have completed study abroad periods, p. 265

¹⁰ University Report 2017, Table 9.2.2-1

Conclusion and Outlook

This interim report describes the current state of affairs with respect to HMS targets and measures. It does not address all topics in detail, leaving some aspects relevant to the further development of the HMS and the additional implementation period up to 2025 open for discussion.

Nevertheless, at this point it can be said with confidence that the subject of 'higher education mobility' among relevant actors has received measurably more attention thanks to the HMS and is accordingly now firmly embedded in the most important strategic documents in Austrian higher education policy and in the Austrian National Development Plan for Public Universities, the Development and Funding Plan for Universities of Applied Sciences and, finally, in the Austrian federal government's working programme.

Implementing these specifically defined measures requires equally targeted engagement with those aspects related to mobility that have already been raised as well as a general commitment to the HMS. This has been newly realised

in some areas and noticeably improved in others. These effects are evident at higher education institutions and in the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research. Thus the HMS's approach towards crafting a strategy that is directed, on the one hand, at Austrian higher education institutions and, on the other, at science and research policy has been fruitful in any event.

University colleges of teacher education have also now been included in the HMS in future implementation plans in conjunction with the new federal government's assignment of departmental responsibilities and the Federal Ministry Act 2018.

The UMS intends to produce a special edition of the Austrian EHEA Implementation Report (formerly Bologna Monitoring Report) in 2020.

Recognition

National laws related to the Lisbon Recognition Convention

The Lisbon Recognition Convention, Federal Law Gazette III No. 71/1999 has been adopted into law and is legally valid with direct effect. Since the legal sources are not identical to national laws, a line item comparison is recommended to prevent inconsistencies within the broader legal framework and to avoid related complications in applying these laws. Amendments to study regulations must pay heed to the Lisbon Recognition Convention's key principles. Thus in accordance with section 78 (1) of the Universities Act 2002 (Universities Act, Federal Law Gazette I No. 120/2002) in its currently valid form, examinations conducted by universities in EU or EEA member states must be recognised insofar as these were administered as part of a relevant course of study in the same academic subject and the ECTS credits received for these do not differ significantly from those that would be granted by the host university. This regulation further refines the definition of the basic concept of 'substantial differences' as used in the Lisbon Recognition Convention. The interpretation of this regulation, which out of necessity includes a number of ambiguous legal formulations in order to cover all possible cases, is left up to autonomous higher education institutions.

To simplify decisions taken by European higher education institutions with respect to recognising qualifications, the European Bologna Follow-up Group has, in collaboration with the network of National Academic Recognition Information Centres, crafted two versions of a 'Recognition Manual' (one for the advisory activities undertaken by ENICs and NARICs, and one for decisions by higher education institutions). These do not constitute a statutory provision, but are meant as an aid in the ongoing practice of

recognising qualifications. Its 23 chapters address all of the significant issues related to recognition and provide essential information, experiences from everyday practice, recommendations for typical cases and additional sources of information. The Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research shares the important task with uniko, the FHK and the Austrian National Union of Students of publicising this manual in the context of informational and training events and demonstrating its use for the responsible bodies.

The construction of a recognition database for the Austrian higher education sector is planned for the near future, in collaboration with the partners already named, to simplify decisions with respect to admission and recognition and to ensure greater transparency in the recognition process.

The Federal Act on the Simplification of Procedures for the Recognition and Assessment of Foreign Educational and Professional Qualifications (Austrian Recognition and Assessment Act – AuBG, Federal Law Gazette I No. 55/2016) not only provides general regulations towards simplifying the recognition of educational qualifications from non-EU member states, but also provides the legal basis for assessing and recognising the qualifications presented by persons entitled to asylum and persons with subsidiary protection status in cases in which formal evidence is unavailable. The recommendations described in Chap. 21 of the EHEA manual for higher education institutions are in this way put into practice.

Section 56 of the Teacher Education Act (HG) provides the legal basis for the recognition of university colleges of teacher education. Applications may be made for the assessment of successfully completed study programmes (or parts thereof) in terms of the duration of the programme and based on the recognition of the respective examinations if the completed study programme (or a component thereof) is comparable to a study programme at a university

college of teacher education. Pertinent professional experience may be considered in assessing equivalency with the relevant practical components of bachelor's and master's programmes provided by university colleges of teacher education in fulfilment of the training qualifications for teaching in secondary schools (academic and vocational). Even when credit is given for study programmes (or study programme components) completed abroad or for professional experience collected abroad, the individual must at the very least enrol for the final semester at a university college of teacher education.

The peer learning activity 'The Lisbon Recognition Convention – Fairness in Admissions and Recognition' took place in October 2016 in conjunction with the Pro.Mo.Austria+ project. This working meeting addressed the crucial points in the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the resulting issues related to admissions, recognition and the identification of the 'substantial differences' in higher education practice in Austria. Existing examples of good practice and recommendations to be collaboratively formulated played a role in identifying constructive ideas, recommendations for improvement and required next steps to meet the needs of increasing diversity amongst students.

Recognition of non-formal and informal learning

The recognition of and assessing credit for non-formal and informal learning and the related competences and qualifications are addressed by the framework of the Strategy for life-long learning in Austria (LLL:2020) The target for developing a cross-sector strategy for the validation of non-formal and informal learning was reached in autumn 2017. It complies with the Council's recommendations from 2012.

Formal educational qualifications from the primary, secondary, vocational and higher education sectors have traditionally been highly regarded in Austria. This is not least due to the highly distinctive and diverse formal and legally defined opportunities for accessing higher education (university entrance qualification exams, vocational matriculation examination, apprenticeship with school leaving examinations). University entrance is additionally possible with a completed professional apprenticeship, including relevant professional experience.

Even though competences acquired through informal means – e.g. at the workplace, in one's free time or in the course of volunteer work – have not yet received sufficient attention or recognition, the concept of life-long learning outside of institutionalised and formalised learning spaces has gained a significant degree of attention in Austria. Attention is being paid not only to formal means of knowledge transfer, but also to a range of individual learning pathways.

With its Strategy LLL:2020, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research is pursuing the following targets over the long term:

- Promotion of broader societal awareness of the importance of competences regardless of the learning context
- Removal of barriers to education and simplifying entry into the educational and training system and acquiring educational qualifications later in life
- Improving the openness of the Austrian education system
- Increasing the appreciation of competences gained in non-formal or informal contexts

- Establishment and institutionalisation of validation as a core component of the Austrian education system
- Promotion of learning outcome-based design and quality assurance

A collection of measures including all of the relevant stakeholders has been identified as the most appropriate means for implementing and achieving the respective targets in the higher education sector for improving and expanding mutual trust between education sectors and educational providers. This spectrum includes projects, cross-sector working and governance groups in education (Austrian Higher Education Conference) and consideration of targets in the relevant governance documents and processes (Austrian National Development Plan for Public Universities, performance agreements with universities, Development and Funding Plan for Universities of Applied Sciences).

Timeline of activities:

- 2013/2014: **Simulation projects** with respect to the validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes in all education sectors
- 2015: Broad consultations regarding the cornerstones of the **validation strategy**, with scientific supervision and analysis of the findings provided by the Danube University Krems, published by Edition Donau-Universität Krems (Krems)¹¹.
- 2016 – 2017: Cross-sector preparation of the validation strategy and its publication¹²
- Associated projects since 2016: **AQ-Austria Project** 'Recognition and assessment of competences acquired through non-formal and informal means. Draft of recommendations for applying earlier learning experiences', AQ-Austria follow-up project 'Recognition and assessment of competences acquired through non-formal and informal means – Implementation at higher education institutions'¹³

- 2016: **Specialist seminar** on the topic of 'Recognition of Prior Learning – Taking stock of the current debates and initiatives', held in the context of Pro.Mo.Austria in Innsbruck
- 2017: Priorities at the annual **meeting of AQ Austria**¹⁴
- 2018: **Bologna Day** on the topic of 'Recognising prior learning experiences: Strategies – recommendations – models', as part of Pro.Mo.Austria+ in Eisenstadt

The European Qualifications Framework for life-long learning offers learners new opportunities to compare qualifications from various national qualifications systems and learning contexts on the basis of the corresponding learning outcomes regardless of the various learning and work contexts and whether these were acquired through formal, non-formal or informal learning.

Focus during the development of the Federal Act on the **National Qualifications Framework** (NQR Act) was on the classification of formal qualifications. Since the focus in most EU member states is solely on classifying the formal education system, Austrian stakeholders likewise assigned priority to classifying these formal qualifications. The NQR Act describes and classifies non-formal qualifications and sets appropriate signposts to direct future strategic development on the part of working groups established by the NQR governance group. Criteria and a catalogue of tasks were assembled for the NQR service points, which were proposed by the NQR Act and which will serve as a new structural element within the NQR process responsible for issuing requests to the NQR coordination point when a non-formal qualification requires classification. The NQR manual is currently being updated. In the first phase, these service points will function for a term of three years, after which the process will undergo evaluation.

¹¹ www.donau-uni.ac.at/imperia/md/content/department/migrationglobalisierung/forschung/schriftenreihe/pfeffer_2016_konsultation_validierung.pdf

¹² <https://bildung.bmbwf.gv.at/euint/eubildung/vnfil.html>

¹³ www.aq.ac.at

¹⁴ www.aq.ac.at

The Social Dimension

The social dimension in higher education has been established as one of several reform efforts in the higher education policy mainstream. Ministers responsible for higher education elevated the social dimension to one of their four priorities for the 2018 working period at the Bologna Ministerial Conference in Yerevan in 2015.

***Making our systems more inclusive** is an essential aim for the EHEA as our populations become more and more diversified, [...]. We will enhance the social dimension of higher education, improve gender balance and widen opportunities for access and completion, including international mobility, for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.¹⁵*

This priority was concretely featured in the commitment 'Widening Participation for Equity and Growth' with the intent 'to make our higher education more socially inclusive by implementing the EHEA social dimension strategy'. The EHEA social dimension strategy encourages the member states to develop national strategies or concrete measures to improve the social dimension in the higher education sector in the interests of progressing towards the shared target that students at all levels of higher education (entry, participation, completion) reflect the demographics of the wider population.¹⁶

Based on the results of the Yerevan Conference in May 2015, the Austrian minister for science announced the development of a national strategy at the Forum Alpbach. With measures towards improving non-traditional access to higher education and easing the combination of work and study, the government programme for 2013–2018 already contains¹⁷ appropriate goals being pursued through the outcome-oriented budgeting of the Ministry for Science, Research and Economy and the departmental planning

documents, including the Austrian National Development Plan for Public Universities 2016–2021.

Thanks to student social surveys conducted since the 1970s, Austria possesses ample information about the social status of students, which regularly informs higher education policy measures, such as student grants or information and advisory services. Around 40% of students come from households where neither parent has a 'Matura', i.e. passed the school leaving examination. According to the EUROSTUDENT (2015) comparison, Austria is one of the countries (alongside Norway, the Netherlands and Switzerland) where the composition of the student body is relatively representative of the resident population. However, given that individuals with academically qualified parents are around 2.38 times more likely to undertake university-level education than are those whose parents have no academic qualifications¹⁸, the influence of parental education levels on the educational behaviour of young people is evident, as is an unintentional selectivity in the education system.

In dialogue with higher education institutions, social partners and advisory bodies, the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy formulated in 2016 its National strategy on the social dimension in higher education: Towards more inclusive access and wider participation.¹⁹ This one-year strategy process involved a series of nine events on various key topics related to the social dimension with around 800 people participating. More than 40 stakeholders submitted written responses during the consultation phase before the strategy paper was written. The national strategy on the social dimension of higher education 'Towards more inclusive access and wider participation' was then presented by the minister for science.²⁰ Implementation began with Bologna Day 2017 in March 2017 with significant involve-

¹⁵ Jerewan Communiqué. http://media.ehea.info/file/2015_Yerevan/70/7/YerevanCommuniqueFinal_613707.pdf

¹⁶ Widening Participation for Equity and Growth. A Strategy for the Development of the Social Dimension and Lifelong Learning in the European Higher Education Area to 2020; http://media.ehea.info/file/2015_Yerevan/71/5/Widening_Participation_for_Equity_and_Growth_A_Strategy_for_the_Development_of_the_SD_and_LLL_in_the_EHEA_to_2020_613715.pdf

¹⁷ These targets were already identified in the London Communiqué 2007 and were included in 2013 in the 'Conclusions of the Council of the European Commission on the Social Dimension in Higher Education'.

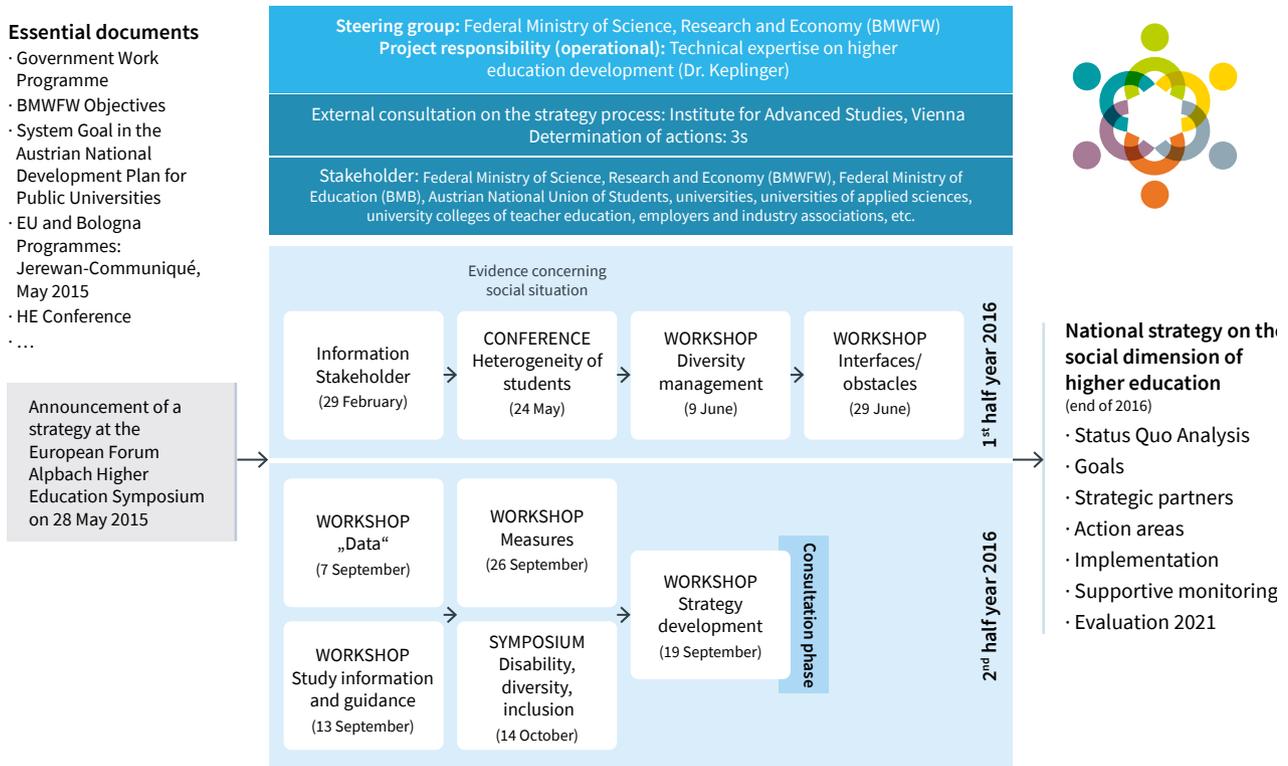
¹⁸ Federal Chancellery (2013): Work programme of the Austrian Federal Government, 2013–2018, p. 45

¹⁹ Studierenden-Sozialerhebung (Social Survey of Students) 2015, volume 1: p. 49 www.sozialerhebung.at

²⁰ www.bmbwf.gv.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Nationale_Strategie/BF_Strategien_kern_gesamt_2_Endversion.pdf

Strategy Development Process

National strategy on the social dimension of higher education – towards more inclusive access and wider participation



ment on the part of representatives from higher education institutions.

Implementation of the plan outlined in this first full strategy document on this topic with respect to developments in the Austrian higher education sector is intended to last through 2025. To respond effectively to current social and economic trends, opportunities must be provided and talents and ideas in education and training across all social groups must be engaged, thus maximising the fulfilment of abilities, knowledge, skills and qualifications. This supports higher education institutions across the entire spectrum of their activities and, with respect to the social dimension,

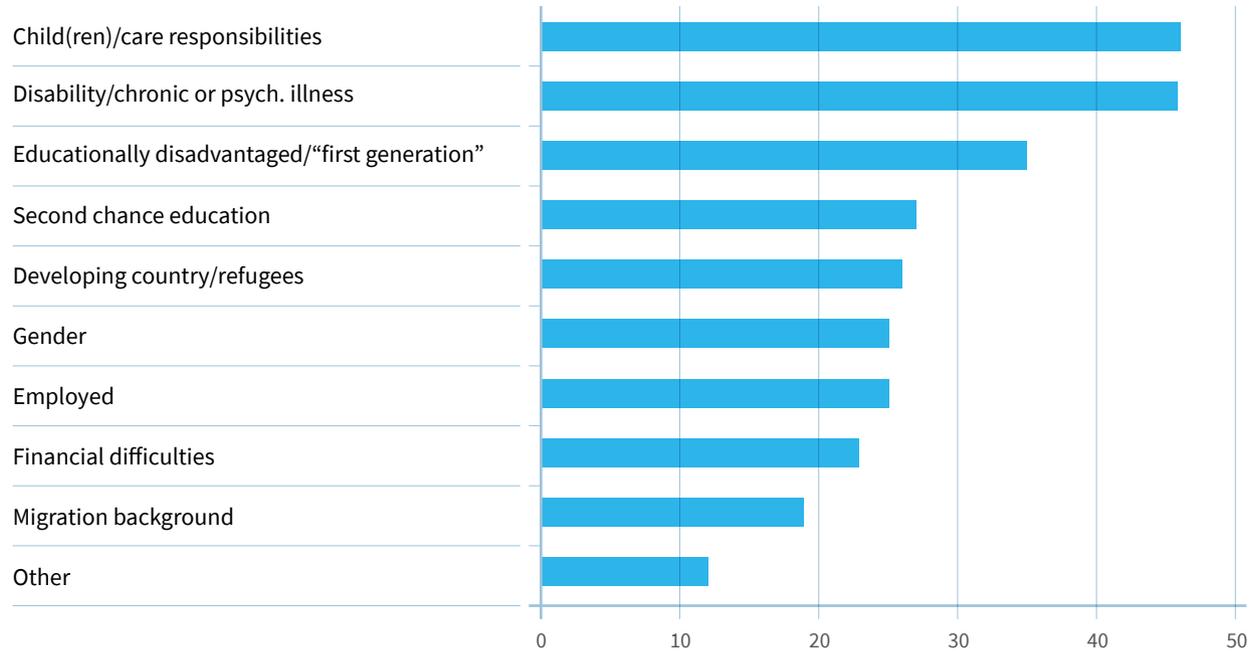
particularly in terms of teaching and student learning and recognition of their social responsibility (Third Mission).

A survey²¹ of existing measures aimed at supporting the social dimension at higher education institutions within the framework of strategy development revealed that there is an assortment of relevant projects at universities, universities of applied sciences, university colleges of teacher education and private universities and that associated institutions (Austrian National Union of Students, ministries, Chambers of Labour, Federal Economic Chambers, Public Employment Service) also undertake a number of activities related to the social dimension. The following figure illus-

²¹ Wulz, Janine, Nindl, Sigrid (2016): Studie zu Maßnahmen zur sozialen Dimension in der Hochschulbildung

Number of measures by target group, in the narrower sense of the social dimension

(Assignment to multiple categories possible)



Source: 3s presentation based on online survey (n=246)

trates which target groups are most frequently addressed by the respective institutions.

These types of projects ought to be expanded, new measures created with a focus on the whole student lifecycle and efforts to ensure that this is strategically and structurally embedded in higher education institutions' development plans, with quality assurance and effectiveness testing also receiving support.

The 'National Strategy on the Social Dimension in Higher Education' lays out three broad target dimensions, each with three action lines and concrete measures that are to be implemented by 2025.

Target dimension I: More inclusive access

- AL 1: Improve the quality and availability of information
- AL 2: Outreach activities and diversity-sensitive course guidance
- AL 3: Recognition and validation of non-formal and informal skills

Target dimension II: Avoid dropout and improve academic success

- AL 4: Simplify entry into higher education
- AL 5: Structures of study programmes and quality of teaching
- AL 6: Increase the compatibility of studies with other areas of life

Target dimension III: Create basic parameters and optimise the regulation of higher education policy

- AL 7: System-related issues in higher education
- AL 8: Integrate the social dimension into strategic planning for higher education and create appropriate governance structures
- AL 9: Further develop the Student Support Scheme

Target dimension I 'More inclusive access' addresses the quality and accessibility of information and advisory services and outreach activities in particular in order to ensure heterogeneity in higher education access. The recognition and validation of non-formal and informal skills is meant to simplify access and redesign these processes to be more effective.

Target dimension II 'Avoid dropout and improve academic success' is related to the organisation of study programmes (including improving the compatibility between studying and other aspects of a student's life), entry into higher education (creating a welcoming environment, amongst other things) and the quality of teaching with the aim of improving awareness and appreciation of heterogeneity and diversity.

'Create basic parameters and optimise the regulation of higher education policy' in target dimension III addresses system-related issues in higher education (i.e. the further development of study regulations and monitoring the ability to complete study programmes on schedule, improving target achievement with respect to entry into higher education and the review of higher education funding's effect on the social dimension), the creation of appropriate governance structures at higher education institutions (e.g. integration of the social dimension in higher education institutions' strategy considerations) and student grants,

which have been much improved thanks to the Amendment of the²² Student Support Act 2017.

In order to be able to document progress towards achieving the overall objectives of the 'National Strategy on the Social Dimension of Higher Education', nine quantitative goals will be defined by 2025 – largely in relation to educational residents²³ – which are particularly concerned with access for underrepresented groups in the higher education system. Essential data for analysis of the social dimension, such as the educational background of the students' parents, is (not least because of its personal sensitivity) only available either from Statistics Austria (in particular UStat 1) or via surveys (e.g. the Social Survey of Students), and cannot therefore be integrated into the processes for monitoring course admissions and progress (student tracking) at the individual level in each higher education institution. This issue along with any potential analysis of additional diversity characteristics must be resolved as part of the efforts to implement the strategy, so that evidence can subsequently be provided that all students who begin a course of study also graduate wherever possible.

The 'National strategy on the social dimension in higher education' demands creativity on the part of all stakeholders. The Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research drives implementation in all higher education sectors forward in equal measure. By means of the performance agreements, the ministry provides support to universities in ways that are fully in line with their principles and differing profiles, in integrating the social dimension in higher education into their respective strategies and governance structures, and in organising teaching and study programmes such that they are more reflective of heterogeneity and more socially inclusive, making these universities more welcoming to additional groups of potential students (and groups with special needs). With respect to universities of applied sciences, the social dimension has been integrated into the Development and Funding Plan for Universities of Applied Sciences (from 2019 onwards) and in the UAS expansion plans. With respect to the higher education system in general, it is particularly clear that implementing the strategy on the social dimension in higher education is a task that cuts clear across all aspects of the organisation,

²² Student Support Act 1992 – StudFG, Federal Law Gazette II No. 305/1992, last amended by Federal Law Gazette I No. 77/2017 and Federal Law Gazette I No. 142/2017)

²³ Educational residents are defined as individuals who have completed their schooling in Austria or acquired their qualification for higher education in Austria. Because Austria has no influence over the social composition of students coming from abroad to study in Austria, the definition of this group is pertinent.

Overview: Quantitative goals and areas of responsibility

Quantitative goals through to 2025	Responsibility
1a Reduce the recruitment quota/probability factor for admission to higher education to 2.25 (2020), and 2.10 (2025)	Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF), higher education institutions
1b Decrease the discrepancy in the probability factors between public universities and universities of applied sciences	BMBWF, higher education (HE) institutions
1c Include private universities and university colleges of teacher education in the calculation of probability factors, adapt target values	BMBWF
2 Increase the number of non-traditional admissions (educational residents) to higher education to 5,300	BMBWF, HE institutions, employers and industry associations, Austrian National Union of Students (ÖH)
3a Minimum percentage of 10% men or women in any field of education at any higher education institution (excluding doctoral study)	BMBWF, HE institutions, ÖH, education advisers
3b Halve the number of fields of studies at each higher education institution where men or women comprise less than 30%	BMBWF, HE institutions, ÖH, education advisers
4 Increase the entry rates to higher education of second generation migrant students to 30%	BMBWF, Hochschulen, employers and industry associations, ÖH, education advisers
5 Increase the entry rates to higher education in all federal states to at least 42% by 2025 and towards the Austrian average with reference to the entire education and vocational training system	BMBWF, regional governments, HE institutions, employers and industry associations, ÖH, education advisers
6 Increase participation in study programmes abroad by students whose parents have no university entrance qualifications, to at least 18%	BMBWF, HE institutions, ÖH
7 Increase the number of extra-occupational study places at universities of applied sciences to 50%	BMBWF, universities of applied sciences
8 Increase the number of self-supporting students receiving maintenance grants to 15,000	BMBWF, HE institutions, ÖH, education advisers
9 Sustained increase in the percentage of student admissions from homes where neither parent has a university degree on medical and dental courses towards an eventual target of 50%	BMBWF, HE institutions

from being integrated in all future measures in terms of social dimension mainstreaming and, at the same time, playing a role in the assessment of existing regulations in terms of their positive or negative effects. This is accompanied by the provision of additional information, ongoing advocacy and consistent supportive monitoring (including improvement of data and information structures) and the interim evaluation planned for 2021.

Additional concrete steps in the implementation strategy include Bologna Day 2018 and conducting the student social survey 2019, the questionnaire format of which takes into consideration the need for information on the social dimension. Bologna Day 2018 is dedicated to the topic 'Recognition and validation of non-formal and informal skills' (target dimension 1, AL-3). A networking conference ahead of the 2019 student social survey is planned for autumn 2018 with stakeholders from the higher education sector.

As part of Austria's EU Council presidency, a specialist conference is planned for September 2018 in Vienna on a set of topics related to diverse student populations, flexible learning processes and demands made on higher education institutions and higher education governance.

Quantitative targets, strategy excerpt:

1.

Reducing the underrepresentation of students whose parents²⁴ have no Matura school leaving certificate.

The recruitment quota correlates the composition of the domestic student body beginning degree programmes, in terms of the father's formal educational background, with the corresponding groups within the domestic population. According to this the probability that students from an 'educated' family home will enter higher education is 2.38 times higher than for students from an 'educationally disadvantaged' family home. The aim is to reduce the probability factor for entering higher education to 2.25²⁵ by 2020 and to 2.1 by 2025. In the case of students from an 'educated' family home, the probability that these will study at a public university is significantly higher than for universities of applied sciences, which is why the difference in the recruitment quotas between public universities and universities of applied sciences ought to be reduced, while at the same time reducing the underrepresentation.²⁶

2.

Increase the number of non-traditional admissions to higher education.

At public universities, universities of applied sciences and university colleges of teacher education, around 9% of educational residents were admitted for the 2014/15 academic year with a qualification for higher education (Studienberechtigungsprüfung), a vocational matriculation examination (Berufsreifeprüfung), an external Matura or without a school leaving qualification. This amounted to just under 4,000 people. By 2025 this group is set to grow by a third, to 5,300 student admissions. This also corresponds in part with one of the objectives of the outcome orientation of the Ministry of Education.²⁷

²⁴ Measured by the formal educational attainment of the father. Statements about the development of recruitment rates/probability factors are sounder when based on the father's education. With regard to the mother's education, the developments in the parents' generation were very dynamic, which is why the indicator would be influenced more strongly by changes in education in the parents' generation.

²⁵ See Budget appropriation 2017, Subdivision 31, Science and research, Objective 1 / Figure 31.1.5; see also the Social Survey of Students 2015. No up-to-date data is available at this time.

²⁶ As soon as UStat 1 is implemented at university colleges of teacher education and private universities, it will be possible to adapt the definition and level of the target value.

²⁷ Increase share of new entrants at HE institutions (universities, universities of applied science, university colleges of teacher education) with the vocational matriculation examination (Berufsreifeprüfung). See Budget appropriation 2017, Subdivision 30, Education, Objective 1 / Figure 30.1.5.

Recruitment quota/probability factor for admission to higher education

	2013	2014	2015	Target for 2020	Target for 2025
Public Universities	2.95	2.80	2.68		
Universities of applied sciences	1.89	1.86	1.81		
Public universities and universities of applied sciences	2.60	2.48	2.38	2.25	2.10

The probability factor of 2.38 (2014/15 academic year) means that students whose fathers have a Matura school leaving certificate ('educated family home') are 2.38 times more likely to enter higher education than students from an 'educationally disadvantaged family home'. In absolute figures this equates to 44.1 new students per 1,000 'educated' men in the parental generation and 18.5 new students per 1,000 'educationally disadvantaged' men in the parental generation.

Data source: Statistics Austria (Microcensus), Ustat 1, calculation by the Institute of Advanced Studies, Vienna

Non-traditional admissions to higher education (educational residents)

Academic years		2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2025/26
Universities	Number	1,581	1,675	1,624	1,797	
	Percentage	5.8%	6.2%	6.3%	6.7%	
Universities of applied sciences	Number	1,381	1,534	1,664	1,620	
	Percentage	14.2%	14.8%	15.2%	14.3%	
Univ. colleges of teacher education	Number	630	699	590	561	
	Percentage	12.2%	13.8%	12.3%	12.7%	
Total	Number	3,592	3,908	3,878	3,978	5,300
	Percentage	8.6%	9.2%	9.3%	9.3%	

In the 2014/15 academic year the proportion of non-traditional admissions in full-time courses at universities of applied sciences was 11.2%, and 20.8% of those studying part-time while employed. Non-traditional admissions include students with a qualifying exam for higher education (Studienberechtigungsprüfung), vocational matriculation examination (Berufsmatriculation), and an external 'Matura' without a school leaving qualification.

Source: Higher education statistics (Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy, Statistics Austria), calculation by the Institute of Advanced Studies, Vienna

3.**More equal gender balance in all fields of education.**

By 2025 each field of education (based on International Standard Classification of Education 3-digit classifications; 97²⁸) at each HE institution should have a minimum of 10% women or men in each student cohort. This affects six bachelor's degree programmes and seven master's programmes at public universities, and 16 each of bachelor's and master's degrees at universities of applied sciences. The goal in the medium term is to increase the proportion to a minimum of 30% male or female students for each field of higher education.²⁹ The number of subjects which have not yet achieved this quota must therefore be halved by 2025 (currently 58 BA and 68 MA degrees at public universities).

4.**Increase the entry rate of (educational resident) students with a migrant background to higher education.**

The entry rate of (educational resident) second generation migrant students to higher education (i.e. student born in Austria, parents born abroad) was 18% in 2011/12, 22% in 2014/15, and should increase to 30% by 2025 (values based on estimates from the Social Survey of Students).³⁰ As a result of planned inclusion of the characteristic 'migrant background' in the Ustat 1 survey by Statistics Austria, it will in future be possible to present this target value on the basis of a full survey.

5.**Reduce regional differences in access to higher education.**

Higher education entry rates, as an estimate of how many people begin a degree level course 'at some point in their life', vary significantly across Austria by state of origin and gender; the percentage currently fluctuates between 36% of any year-group cohort in Vorarlberg and 63% in Vienna.³¹ In terms of the entire educational and vocational training system the higher education entry rate should be at least 42% in all federal states by 2025, or efforts should be under way to increase this to reach the Austrian average.

6.**Increase participation in mobility programmes by students from 'educationally disadvantaged' social groups.**

Of those students (summer semester 2015) whose parents have no Matura school leaving certificate, 14% have completed a semester or practical work experience abroad, while for students whose parents have a Matura the proportion is 21%. Participation in study programmes abroad by students whose parents have no higher education entrance qualifications should therefore be increased to at least 18% by 2025.³²

7.**Increase extra-occupational/vocational training study places at universities of applied sciences to 50% by 2020**

(based on the 'Strategy for Lifelong Learning in Austria', LLL:2020).³³

²⁸ Excepting doctoral students, since this would require a longer period of time.

²⁹ Gender ratios among beginning students fluctuate too much each year in smaller degree programmes, which means they are not suitable as target values. In the long term the aim is to achieve balanced gender ratios among graduates, so a focus on students in a transition phase seems to be a relevant performance indicator.

³⁰ Zaussinger, Unger et al. (2016): Studierenden-Sozialerhebung (Social Survey of Students) 2015, Volume 1, p. 42.

³¹ See Zaussinger, Unger et al. (2016): Studierenden-Sozialerhebung (Social Survey of Students) 2015, Volume 1, p. 82.

³² Data source: Social Survey of Students 2015; see Zaussinger, Unger et al. (2016): supplementary report, 'Internationale Mobilität der Studierenden' (International Student Mobility), p. 20. As an alternative to this indicator, we are investigating using data from the combination of UStat 2 (survey of study-related stays abroad upon completion of studies) with UStat 1 (the feasibility and validity of data must be reviewed).

³³ Strategy for Lifelong Learning in Austria, LLL:2020, p. 31.

8.**Increase the number of maintenance grants available through the Student Support Scheme.**

12,973 'self-supporting' students received a maintenance grant in 2015/16. By 2025 this number should rise to around 15,000. Bis 2025 soll die Anzahl an Personen auf rund 15.000 ansteigen.

9.**Increase the percentage of student admissions to medicine and dentistry from non-academic family homes**

40.7% of student admissions to medicine and dentistry courses came from a non-academic family home in the 2014/15 academic year. This proportion should be developed towards 50% by 2025.

Higher education entry rate (domestic students) by federal state of origin and gender, (including first year students) 2014/15 academic year

	Percentage of domestic new entrants in Austrian population (all age groups), academic year 2014/15			Target for 2025
	Women	Men	Total	Total
Burgenland	61%	42%	51%	
Lower Austria	56%	40%	48%	
Vienna	68%	57%	63%	
Carinthia	60%	38%	49%	
Styria	49%	35%	42%	
Upper Austria	51%	33%	42%	
Salzburg	52%	40%	46%	
Tyrol	46%	35%	41%	42%
Vorarlberg	40%	32%	36%	42%
Total	55%	40%	47%	

Domestic Admissions to bachelor's degrees and diploma courses (not including incoming mobility students) in the 2014/15 academic year. University colleges of teacher education, not including the summer semester 2015.

Source: Higher education statistics (Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy, Statistics Austria), population statistics (Statistics Austria), calculation by the Institute of Advanced Studies, Vienna

Medicine and dentistry, domestic regular student admissions, by the father's highest level of educational qualification

Educational attainment of students' fathers in %	Acad. year 2008/09	Acad. year 2009/10	Acad. year 2010/11	Acad. year 2011/12	Acad. year 2012/13	Acad. year 2013/14	Acad. year 2014/15	Winter Semester 2015
Compulsory schooling	3.0	5.4	5.6	3.3	4.2	2.8	4.0	4.2
Intermediate schooling	24.1	28.0	23.7	25.8	23.7	22.9	23.3	23.0
Higher schooling	17.2	14.2	18.2	18.0	16.6	16.5	13.4	15.2
University / higher education	55.7	52.4	52.4	52.9	55.5	57.8	59.3	57.7

Source: Statistics Austria, Ustat 1, calculated by the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy

Approved maintenance grants for self-supporting students for each academic year

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2025/26
Public and private universities	7,688	7,829	7,904	7,898	7,957	8,237	
Universities of applied sciences	3,627	3,925	4,118	4,220	4,483	4,736	
Total for universities + universities of applied sciences	11,315	11,754	12,022	12,118	12,440	12,973	15,000

Source: Austrian Study Grant Authority, cited by Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy (2016), Materialien zur sozialen Lage der Studierenden (Evidence on students' social situation), p. 16

Quality in higher education teaching

Teaching is the core mission of higher education institutions and is, in conjunction with research and with the advancement and appreciation of the arts, an integral aspect of a university's role in society. This work is fundamentally defined by a rich diversity of scientific and artistic theories, methodologies and scholarly consensus.

Promotion of teaching and teaching quality in the Austrian National Development Plan for Public Universities

As a strategic planning framework for the public universities, the Austrian National Development Plan for Public Universities (2019–2024) aims to help regulate the optimisation of the Austrian higher education system and to formulate some possible courses of action for higher education in universities. The Development Plan for Public Universities identifies a number of starting points for improving and reinforcing quality in teaching:

- Improving the way material is conveyed (didactic approach) and course organisation with an eye to digitalisation, a student-centred approach and examination systems and with appropriate attention paid to teaching skills when qualifying and appointing teachers and in the provision of education and training for university staff.
- Develop the distinctive research connotation for all university courses, particularly MA degrees
- Curriculum development with respect to each higher education institution's profile and with particular attention paid to sustainable development goals and aspects such as employability, entrepreneurship, personal development, responsible science, citizen science and qualitative development of the international aspects of courses and teaching

- Transparency of the quality cycles for quality-driven further development in teaching
- Integrate consideration of heterogeneity and inclusion into higher education teaching and the quality assessment of teaching
- Form a nationally-offered range of studies and teaching partnerships, particularly for those disciplines that are less popular

The implementation of the Development Plan for Public Universities is most directly effected through the performance agreements concluded between the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research and the universities, in which universities define their targets and plans for the three year planning period.

The Good Teaching Atlas with numerous examples of quality in higher education teaching

The Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research has implemented a number of initiatives over the past several years intended to highlight the value of teaching and to raise awareness of good practice. To provide examples of good practice in areas of teaching that have been found particularly challenging, a working group at the 2013 Austrian Higher Education Conference decided to conduct a survey of higher education institutions. It is clear from a review of the submitted examples that numerous initiatives aimed at improving the quality of teaching can be found at higher education institutions, but there is no widespread awareness of these. During the course of consultations about what to do with these numerous and valuable examples, the working group came up with the idea of a platform that would provide interested parties at higher education institutions a public means of becoming involved with initiatives that are dedicated to improving the quality of teaching. Numerous examples have been made available at www.gutelehre.at since 2015 and new ones continue to be added. These examples are grouped in some 15 categories (e. g. incentives for good teaching, teaching methods, course organisation, support for students, new media, continuing education for teachers).

Ars Docendi – State Award for Excellence in Teaching

The Ars Docendi – State Award for Excellence in Teaching was awarded to public universities for the first time in 2013 and expanded to include universities of applied sciences and private universities in 2014. Since 2015 the prize has been awarded in a single process to individuals from universities, universities of applied sciences and private universities. The award ceremony builds on numerous initiatives and teaching prizes that are organised by individual universities and universities of applied sciences for their respective teaching staff.

The prize was awarded in the following categories in 2018:

- Digital aspects in teaching and learning in combination with traditional forms of knowledge transmission (e. g. the use of digital forms of teaching and learning to improve student-centred forms of teaching, the use of digital media and formats)
- Concepts and examples related to forms of cooperative learning and work that incorporates aspects outside of higher education institutions and the higher education sectors (e. g. staggered class meetings, exchange amongst higher education institutions regarding teaching methodologies)
- Research-led and artist-led teaching, particularly the promotion of critical thinking, dialogic teaching, methodological competence
- Incorporating concepts related to higher education internationalisation into teaching (e. g. through ‘teaching the otherness’, learning outcomes and examination methodologies with respect to cultural diversity, internationalisation at home, embedding mobility experiences in teaching)
- Exceptional supervision of scholarly and artistic theses (e. g. personal supervision, accompanying or specialised course on scientific or scholarly methodologies)

Dialogue on teaching in higher education

A series of events titled 'Dialogue on teaching in higher education' was organised as part of the Pro.Mo.Austria+ project and in conjunction with the Bologna Service Point at the Austrian Exchange Service (OeAD). This was conceived of as an opportunity to engage in personal exchange about teaching experiences related to selected topics. Those who participated represented all higher education sectors and are involved in the conception and provision of teaching and quality assurance related to it. This discussion, conducted on the basis of concrete examples drawn from practice, promotes networking and learning from one another.

The opening event was dedicated to the topic 'The Value of Teaching – Incentivising continuing education in higher education teaching' (25 April 2017 in Vienna). It addressed measures and incentives for designing continuing education opportunities related to higher education teaching methodologies that would be attractive to teachers. The relevance of higher education teaching methodologies to one's career was also addressed. Participants from across the higher education sectors discussed the conditions necessary for applying material gained from continuing education in teaching methodologies to their own teaching activities.

The second event (26 June 2017, Vienna) was dedicated to 'competence-based testing'. Representatives from all sectors engaged in an open discussion with attendees about testing formats that successfully embody a competence-based approach. Particular attention was paid to how competences could be retained over the long term. Participants also discussed how competence-based testing can be coordinated and supported within higher education institutions.

A third dialogue took place under the title 'Digitalisation and digital competences in university teaching' on 21 November 2017 in Graz. The agenda for the discussion included means of acquiring digital competences, including the question of which skills take priority. Opportunities to use digital media in teaching (e. g. e-tutoring, e-moderation) were examined with reference to practical experience at higher education institutions and there was discussion of how teaching staff can best work together with potential digital media.

The final event in this series is scheduled for spring 2018 on the topic 'Research-led teaching and learning through research'.



04

ÜBER DEN UMGANG MIT
HETEROGENITÄT IN
GROßLEHRVERANSTALTUNGEN



Stefan Oppel
Institut für Innovationsmanagement - Communications Engineering
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THE STAKEHOLDERS

04

THE STAKEHOLDERS

The Austrian BFUG (Bologna Follow-up Group) in collaboration with European BFUG

Relevant stakeholders have been involved in the implementation of Bologna Process targets in Austria from the outset and to the greatest extent possible. The national BFUG guarantees their representation and draws expertise from a variety of institutions and interest groups.

One of the national BFUG's essential tasks is formulating an Austrian position with respect to the issues that are currently receiving the most attention at the European level. In addition, this stakeholder group, in collaboration with experts responsible for the process's national implementation, discusses and crafts responses to any matters having to do with the Austrian higher education sector that are brought to its attention.

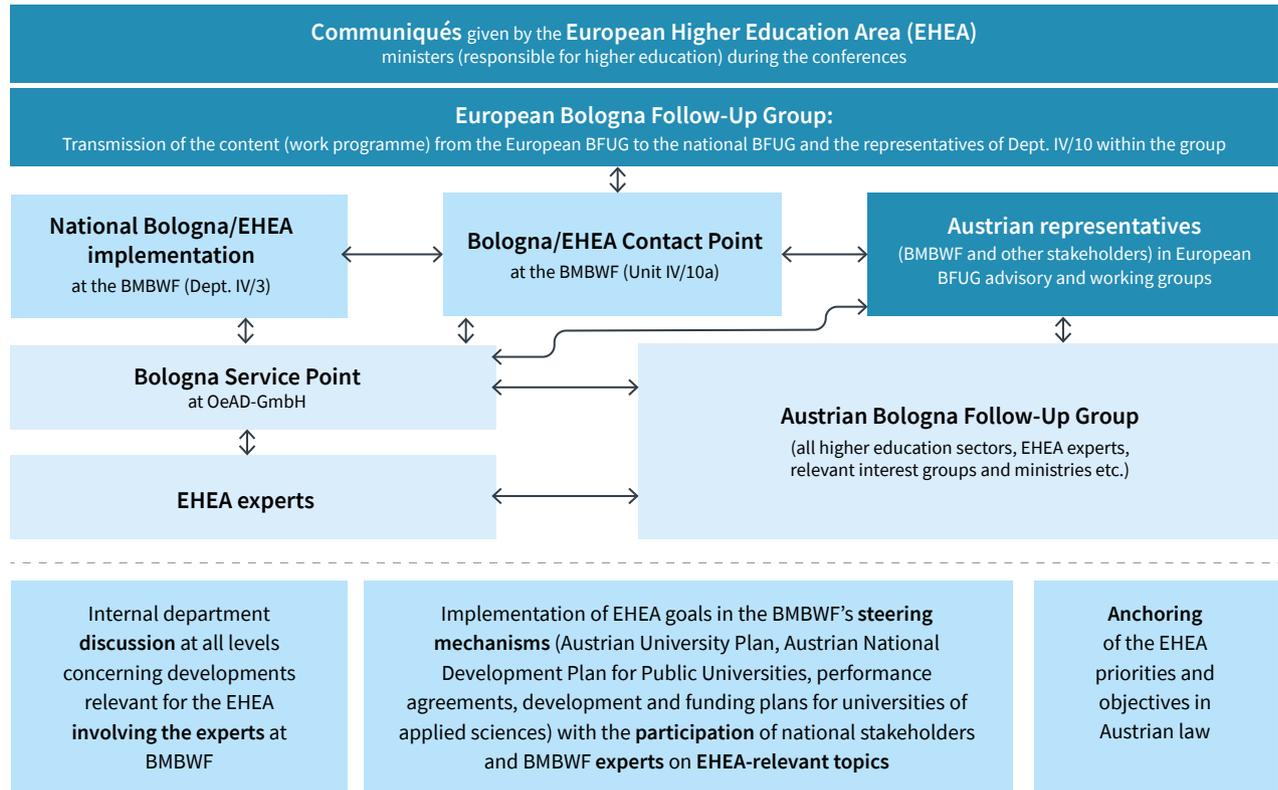
The Austrian Bologna contact point in the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung) – Dept. IV/10 in its capacity as the interface between actors at the national and European levels and in cooperation with Dept. IV/3, which guides and manages the national implementation of the Bologna Process. The Bologna Service Point at the OeAD-

GmbH (see Chap. 4) contributes to this overall arrangement by serving as a comprehensive and independent advice and information point for the entire Austrian higher education sector.

Most importantly, individual members of the national BFUG are responsible for contributing to the group's discussions, deliberations and decision-making processes by presenting the viewpoints of the stakeholder groups and organisations they represent. At the same time, they are charged with channelling the flow of information about Europe-wide developments to the groups and organisations they represent, thereby further supporting the implementation of the Bologna objectives.

The communiqués sent out (every three or two years) by the conferences of ministers (responsible for higher education) serve to define and guide EHEA (European Higher Education Area) policy in terms of targets and priorities. The European BFUG, which functions as a policy governance group on the level of the EHEA, organises conferences and provides follow-up and other working programmes in

The EHEA/Bologna Network



the interim period between these conferences. It is comprised of representatives from all countries that participate in the EHEA, the EC (European Commission), European students' representative councils and an array of other relevant interest groups. The group is jointly chaired by the country holding the EU Council presidency at that time and a non-EU member of the EHEA, alternating every six months in alphabetical order.

Austria will chair the European BFUG in September 2018 alongside Switzerland.

The European BFUG's board lays the groundwork; its chair is chosen in the same manner as that of the European BFUG as a whole and it is comprised of representatives from the EU Council presidency troika, the troika of non-EU EHEA

members in the chairing committee, the EC and student representative councils and interest groups.

The Bologna Secretariat (currently France, with Italy assuming the role in July 2018) is responsible for administering the agenda's implementation and is appointed by the host country of the next ministerial conference.

Following the meeting of ministers, the European BFUG compiles an agenda based on the current Bologna Implementation Report for the subsequent two-to-three-year period, in which the shortcomings identified in the report are prioritised in future implementation plans. The subject-specific working and advisory groups, including relevant networks, are tasked with addressing specific selected issues and with developing approaches for moving forward.

In addition to the relevant federal ministries, members of the national BFUG include representatives from the following institutions and interest groups:

Universities Austria (uniko): uniko promotes internal coordination amongst the 21 public universities in Austria, represents these in national and international bodies and is the public voice for the universities as a whole. It additionally provides administrative functions for the Federation of Universities.

Association of Austrian Universities of Applied Sciences (FHK): The FHK represents the interests of its members nationally and internationally. Amongst other responsibilities, it ensures the sector is represented on relevant bodies (BFUG, EHEA Expert Teams, etc.). It keeps its members informed about the latest developments in the EHEA and organises topical events.

Association of Austrian Private Universities (ÖPUK): ÖPUK serves as a platform for the twelve private universities currently accredited in Austria to exchange information and is responsible for representing the private universities' interests and promoting their image and reputation in Austria. It represents the educational and research interests of its members in interactions with partners nationally and internationally.

Rectors' Conference of Austrian Public University Colleges of Teacher Education (RÖPH): This organisation is devoted to issues related to the training of all teachers in the compulsory education sector, vocational schools and in schools for intermediate and higher vocational education and is responsible for life-long learning and continuing education for teachers and others working in the education sector in all Austrian states. It therefore assumes a central role in the implementation of the Bologna Process.

Austrian National Union of Students (ÖH): The Austrian National Union of Students federal body of Representatives is the legal representative of all students at Austrian universities, universities of applied sciences and university colleges of teacher education. It provides students with a wide

array of services and represents their interests in dealings with ministries and other actors in the higher education and research sectors. The Austrian National Union of Students (ÖH) belongs to the European Students' Union (ESU). It has an EHEA expert and organises events on issues related to the Bologna Process.

Bologna Contact Point in the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research: As the bridge between the national and European levels within the EHEA, the Austria Bologna Contact Point in the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research – Dept. IV/10 provides support in implementing EHEA priorities at Austrian higher education institutions.

ENIC NARIC AUSTRIA: ENIC NARIC AUSTRIA, the national information centre for the recognition of academic qualifications, is responsible for handling all questions related to the international recognition of academic qualifications and titles. It belongs to two international networks: ENIC (founded by the European Council and UNESCO) and NARIC (founded by the EU). ENIC NARIC AUSTRIA is the official point of contact for all cross-border issues related to the recognition of qualifications in the higher education sector.

National Agency Erasmus+ Education at OeAD-GmbH: The national agency advises, guides and supports cooperative education initiatives in Europe. Its services cover all ages and education levels. OeAD-GmbH offers information tailored to specific target groups and organises events and consultations for educational institutions that are interested in the further development and implementation of Bologna targets.

Austrian Bologna Service Point at OeAD-GmbH: The Austrian Bologna Service Point at the National Agency for the Erasmus+ Programme operates as the independent, cross-sector advisory and information point for the entire Austrian higher education sector. It organises events, facilitates networking amongst various actors and maintains know-how and organisational expertise related to Bologna initiatives.

National Experts for EHEA (formerly Bologna Experts):

EHEA experts provide advice, support and guidance for Austrian higher education institutions in the implementation of EHEA targets and priorities, and plays a role in the content design and organisation of national events related to the EHEA context (see section 2.2 and 2.3).

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria (AQ Austria):

AQ Austria was founded in conjunction with the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education, which took effect on 1 March 2012. In accordance with the legal mandate, it is legally binding for the entirety of the Austrian higher education sector (with the exception of university colleges of teacher education). Its responsibilities include, amongst others, the development and implementation of external quality assurance measures in accordance with national and international standards, the accreditation of higher education institutions and study programmes, the certification of higher education institutions, conducting studies and systems analyses, evaluations and projects, providing information and advice related to issues of quality assurance and development, and international cooperation in the field of quality assurance.

Regional governments: The knowledge-based economy and research play an ever increasing role in securing and sustaining the dynamic development of states and communities. The regional governments maintain an intensive and successful relationship with universities, universities of applied sciences and private universities (no current representative has been nominated).

Federation of Austrian Industries (IV): In representing the interests of its own members, the IV works to strengthen Austria's association in Europe and internationally with education and innovation, and therefore make Austria an attractive location for manufacturing and for work. It has been included from the very beginning in the strategic design of the Bologna Process.

The Chamber of Labour (AK): As a legally recognised interest group, the Federal Chamber of Labour and the nine state chambers represent and promote the social, econom-

ic, professional and cultural interests of employees. The AK is primarily involved with the EHEA in representing its members' interests at the policy level, but it also provides its own members with relevant services.

Chamber of Agriculture: The Chamber of Agriculture's most important core activities, aside from representing its members' interests, are offering a comprehensive array of educational and advisory services and providing assistance with securing subsidies. The Chamber of Agriculture sends representatives to all of the bodies relevant to the Bologna Process.

Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB)/Public Service Union Austria (GÖD): An independent trade union movement puts people and labour at the heart of its efforts to protect all employees and workers. The Public Service Union Austria (GÖD) promotes Bologna-relevant activities in the areas of training, life-long learning and continuing education, in adult education and in youth welfare.

Austrian Federal Economic Chambers (WKO): As the legal representative of the Austrian business community, the WKO ensures that its member companies are able to flourish and develop in line with the market. It advises those institutions directly involved in the Bologna Process and keeps the business community up to date on the latest changes coming out of the process.

The Austrian BFUG meets two to three times per year, usually to prepare for European BFUG meetings. In addition to engaging with national concerns relevant to the Bologna process, the forum discusses other topics that are instead dealt with on the European level and to which individual Bologna countries contribute. It furthermore formulates an Austrian position on these issues. The Austrian Bologna Contact Point represents these resulting positions in the European BFUG.

The national team of experts on the EHEA

Two reforms initiated at the policy level over the past 20 years have had a profound effect on the shifts in the organisation of higher education and therefore on the development of teaching and learning processes:

- a) the governance reforms at higher education institutions, including the recognition that learning requires organisation, which were inspired by the new public management approach and
- b) The Bologna Process¹

There is no question that the Bologna Process has had both positive and negative effects on particular aspects of courses of study (multi-cycle nature, guidance by learning outcomes, ECTS as a means of describing workload, diploma supplements, internationalisation, etc.). Nevertheless, media reports, widely held national conceptions and ‘Bologna myths’ contribute to an oversimplification of individual aspects or display a tendency to cast matters in a negative light.

There are significant challenges facing the involved parties in conveying what the creation of a European Higher Education Area really means as a whole and in deconstructing the established norms in higher education. Persuasive, experienced and perceptive individuals are needed to push for the scrutinising of organisational and communications processes within higher education institutions, to open new doors, to take note of solutions other institutions have devised and encourage a dialogue amongst equals. The national experts on the EHEA, formerly referred to as Bologna experts, have served to connect these initiatives since 2005.

Terms and nomination of national experts for the EHEA

Until the end of 2013, the former national agency for life-long learning was able to apply every two years for co-financing for a national Bologna experts team as part of an Erasmus call for proposals. At that time there were 31 national teams in Erasmus countries comprised of 330 individuals. Bologna experts worked at a national level and within the European Union but also cooperated with expert colleagues from non-Erasmus countries, such as the Higher Education Reform Experts (HEREs) from Eastern Europe, Central Asia and North Africa. This regular exchange among experts contributed towards the growth of an international knowledge alliance with respect to higher education reform and development. The resulting network provided opportunities for exchange through training seminars and an online platform.

The ‘National Teams of Bologna Experts’ call was more closely aligned with current priorities and the implementation of the Bologna Process as of Erasmus+ 2014–2020. In order to raise the call’s political profile, it has been addressed since 2014 solely to Erasmus+ countries’ education ministries and titled ‘Erasmus+ Programme – Key Action 3 – ‘Policy Support’ for the ‘Support to the implementation of EHEA reforms’.²

The involvement of a national team of EHEA/Bologna experts in all of the Erasmus+ countries preparing a proposal is no longer a requirement in applying for co-financing for projects related to implementing the Bologna agendas. Nevertheless 15 countries currently maintain national expert teams, in which 146 individuals take part. Thanks to maintaining its expert team, Austria too has an excellent

¹ Peer Pasternack; Sebastian Schneider; Peggy Trautwein; Steffen Zierold: Illumination of a Black box. The organisational context for teaching quality at higher education institutions (HoF Working Report 103). Institute for University Research at Martin Luther University. Halle-Wittenberg 2017, 103 pages.

² Die Leitaktion 3 (Key Action 3) „Erasmus+ Politikunterstützung“ (Policy Support) gilt als neues Instrument zur Unterstützung europäischer Reformprozesse und zur Realisierung europäischer politischer Schwerpunktsetzungen.



Bologna Day 2016: Learning outcomes – What has already been taken up in teaching and the world of education?
EHEA experts (ltr) Susanne Linhofer (University College of Teacher Education Styria), Christa Schnabl (University of Vienna), Gabriele Abermann (Salzburg University of Applied Sciences)

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communications network and, as a result, has built a strong relationship of trust with the country's higher education institutions. Most recently, the team added five members and was expanded to include representation from the private universities to better engage in national and Europe-wide peer learning activities and consultations, amongst other reasons.

The term for national EHEA experts³ is linked to the time period of the Erasmus+ project proposed by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, with coordination provided by OeAD-GmbH and the National Agency for Erasmus+ Education, in response to the 'Erasmus+ Programme – KA3 [Policy] Support to the Implementation of EHEA reforms' call (also see Chap. 2). The first step following the publication of a call for proposals by the Executive Agency of the EC is to identify, with reference to the relevant

documentation related to the European higher education area (communiqués, recommendations, Austrian EHEA implementation report), national deficiencies in terms of Bologna-related issues which should in turn receive more pronounced emphasis in the subsequent years. The relevant interest groups – uniko, FHK, RÖPH, ÖPUK and Austrian National Union of Students (ÖH) – are asked to nominate individuals active in higher education who can serve for a period of around 18–24 months alongside national EHEA experts and who cover the priorities to be addressed.

³ <https://oead.at/de/projekte/promoaustria-2016-2018>

Since the end of 2015, the following individuals have taken part or are currently taking part on the national EHEA expert team in the project “Promoting Mobility. Addressing the Challenges in Austria – Pro.Mo.Austria” and the follow-up project “Pro.Mo.Austria+ // Promoting Mobility. Fostering EHEA Commitments in Austria” (in alphabetical order):

The criteria used in selecting the above-named individuals include experience, innovation, communication skills and exibility, geographical considerations and a balanced representation of higher education sectors. The following section will provide a brief overview of the wide array of activities these experts undertake.

EHEA expert team

(in alphabetical order)

Name	Position	Institute	Term	Nominated by
Gabriele Abermann	Lecturer, formerly Vice-Rector and Head of the International Office	Salzburg University of Applied Sciences	Project 2014–2016 and 2016–2018	FHK
Regine Kadgien (née Bolter)	Programme Director, Computer Science	FH Vorarlberg, University of Applied Sciences	Project 2014–2016 and 2016–2018	FHK
Thomas Geißler	Student	University of Leoben	Project 2014–2016	ÖH
Berta Leeb	Student expert	Private University of Education, Diocese of Linz	Project 2014–2016 and 2016–2018	RÖPH
Susanne Linhofer	Vice-Rector	University of Teacher Education Styria	Project 2014–2016 and 2016–2018	RÖPH
Heidi Posch	Lecturer and head of the Institute for Diversity and International Office	University of Vienna	Project 2016–2018	ÖH
Andreas Potucek	Student expert	Vienna University of Technology	Project 2016–2018	ÖH
Christina Raab	Student expert	University of Innsbruck	Project 2014–2016 and 2016–2018	uniko
Christa Schnabl	Bologna Expert	University	Project 2014–2016	uniko
Günter Wageneder	Vice-Rector for Educational Affairs	University of Salzburg	Project 2016–2018	
Christian Werner		Private University Schloss Seeburg	Project 2016–2018	ÖPUK

National experts as advisory and independent partner contacts

At the request of the higher education institutions themselves, a total of 14 half-day, on-site consultations involving two national EHEA experts have taken place since 2015. Interest in this format has not abated, given its appeal in terms of the low threshold in applying to the National Agency for Erasmus+ Education, a setting that is as informal as possible and built on mutual trust, and the prompt provision of comprehensive documentation, including recommendations:

‘These consultations were characterised by professional preparation on the part of Austrian Exchange Service (OeAD) and professional guidance on the part of the experts. Participants found it particularly helpful that external expertise not only provides for a transfer of knowledge, but is also recognised and accepted in a different way from the expertise provided within the organisation.

These consultations have not only stimulated engagement with and discussion of Bologna-related topics, but they have also helped to reveal the connections amongst various Bologna-related issues and their complexity as well as to make transparent all of the various positions that can be taken with respect to these issues. Finally, individual sessions also helped to improve the position of institutions’ own Bologna coordinators.

Many Bologna instruments could be improved and further developed relatively quickly in conjunction with these consultations, including in particular the diploma supplement, course descriptions and information made available on higher education institutions’ websites. The experts’ helpful reports provide fundamental assistance in this.

Participants were unanimous in wanting a follow-up to the consultation. There were more varied opinions, however, regarding the length of time after the first visit before this follow-up should take place. In any case, an appropriate meeting should be undertaken or at least offered to higher education institutions.’

Excerpt from the Interim Report on Accompanying Monitoring of the “Pro. Mo.Austria+ // Promoting Mobility. Fostering EHEA Commitments in Austria” project by the quality assurance and accreditation agency, AQ Austria, dated 30 July 2017

Higher education institutions that express interest in a consultation choose a maximum of four Bologna-related topics from a catalogue of options ahead of time that are, from their own perspective, of particular interest. A list of the individuals from the higher education institution who will be attending the informational exchange (e. g. from the rectorate, chairpersons of curriculum commissions, members of the senate, quality management, academic advising, international office) will be sent ahead of time along with an estimation of the current general state of awareness and progress related to the chosen topics. The coordinating office of the National Agency for Erasmus+ Education chooses two experts on the basis of the selected priorities such that the exchange can take place in accordance with the principle of dual control. A qualitative analysis (or ‘screening’) of the diploma supplement is an obligatory item on the agenda.

These consultations are aimed at encouraging the relevant parties to harness the positive value of Bologna instruments (ECTS, diploma supplements, guidance by learning outcomes) to promote further development in the areas of mobility, internationalisation, Bologna study architecture, the social dimension, innovative methods of teaching and learning, recognition and quality assurance.

Additional formats and the respective target groups for consultations, events and trainings

National EHEA experts have contributed to formulating the content and organisation of the four annual events (Bologna Days 2015–2018):

- Bologna Day 2015: ‘Quality in cross-border mobility, Private University of Education, Diocese of Linz’, 160 participants
- Bologna Day 2016: ‘Learning outcomes – what has already been taken up in teaching and the world of education?’, University of Vienna, 140 participants
- Bologna Day 2017: ‘Towards more inclusive access and wider participation: National strategy on the social dimension of higher education’, University of Linz, 175 participants
- Bologna Day 2018: ‘Recognising prior learning experiences: Strategies – recommendations – models’, FH Burgenland University of Applied Sciences, 160 participants

The experts contributed their professional perspectives and often served as moderators at the following specialist seminars held since 2015:

- ‘Thematic Seminar on the European Higher Education Area. Double & Joint Degrees’, University of Graz, 97 participants
- ‘Specialist seminar on the European Higher Education Area: Recognition of prior learning. Taking stock of current debates and initiatives’, University of Innsbruck, 112 participants
- ‘The Lisbon Recognition Convention: Fairness in admissions and recognition’, University of Music and Performing Arts Graz, 35 participants
- ‘Mobility windows: Why and how?’ Success stories and ongoing debates about types of mobility windows’, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna (BOKU), 95 participants

The target audience for these events included students, the relevant ministries, representatives of the higher education sector and AQ Austria. Higher education institutions chose attendees according to the topics being discussed, with representatives sent from international offices, curriculum development, course advising services, quality management, departments of evaluation and recognition of qualifications, university management and, ideally, with regular inclusion of their Bologna coordinators (see the next section).

Thanks to the new thematic prioritising of ‘Good teaching’ in the Pro.Mo.Austria+ project, exchange amongst higher education institutions’ teaching services, chairpersons of curricula commissions, heads of course advising services and members of the senate have grown more substantive since 2017. The four-part format ‘Dialogue on teaching in higher education’ was extremely well received (see Chap. 3):

- 1) ‘Kick-off event: The significance of teaching – Incentives for continuing education for teaching in higher education’, Freyung 3, Vienna, 53 participants
- 2) Part 2: Competency-based testing, Freyung 3, Vienna, 60 participants
- 3) Part 3: Digitalisation and digital competences in university teaching, Graz University of Technology, 70 participants
- 4) Part 4: Research-led teaching – Research-based learning, University of Salzburg, 55 participants

The twelve listed events (with the exception of the consultations) have involved a total of 1,182 individuals since 2015.

The Austrian expert team's efficiency and capacity to quickly and effectively provide targeted advice was recognised and praised in the context of cross-border meetings with, for example, the German Academic Exchange Service DAAD, the EAIE (European Association for International Education) and the Netherlands Universities' Foundation for International Cooperation (NUFFIC). In conjunction with the European Universities Association's (EUA) SPHERE project, which focuses on providing support for development in higher education institutions outside of Europe, the EHEA expert Gabriele Abermann led a workshop over several days in Kyrgyzstan dedicated to the creation of International Offices.

A particular highlight from the past few years has been Regine Kadgien's considerable contribution to the revision of the ECTS Users' guide, which was published in 2015 in three languages and, thanks to the inclusion of numerous examples from actual practice, function as a manual for the practical application of ECTS credits. Regine Kadgien and Günter Wageneder coordinated and edited the 'Recommendations of the Austrian Bologna Follow-Up Group on the Implementation of the European Commission's ECTS Guidelines', which were published in May 2017. These recommendations serve as a supplement to the 2015 ECTS guidelines, providing clarification on certain issues and summarise existing examples and processes related to best practice at Austrian higher education institutions (see Chap. 2/AL-7). The implementation of the 'European Approach for Quality Assurance of joint programmes' is yet another exceptional achievement. Close cooperation amongst the universities, the quality assurance and accreditation agency AQ Austria, EHEA experts, the National Agency for Erasmus+ Education and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research departments concerned with the EHEA agendas played an important role here.

Former 'Bologna experts' (e.g. Eva Werner from the FH IMC Krems, Arthur Mettinger from the University of Vienna and FH Campus Wien, Thomas Geißler from the Austrian National Union of Students (ÖH) and the University of Leoben, Gudrun Salmhofer from the University of Graz and Christa Schnabl from the University of Vienna) have kept their finger on the pulse of things and continue to support the active team from behind the scenes and through networking activities abroad.

But a team of currently eight experts on the EHEA is just one component – if an essential one – of a successful communications and implementation process. This unique model of EHEA Bologna coordinators translates the principles attached to the Bologna Process into tangible actions in higher education institutions, thereby contributing to its broader implementation through cooperation and its effect on higher education institution bodies.

Bologna coordinators as connectors and communications platforms inside higher education institutions

The currently more than 80 Bologna coordinators serve as permanent, i.e. institutionally established, contacts at higher education institutions – insofar as these have an Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE)⁴. They are a unique information hub at higher education institutions in the EHEA, are appointed by management at their respective higher education institution and reflect in their diversity of functions, the broad manner in which the Bologna Process has been conceived. These individuals work full-time, for example, in the rectorate, in curriculum commissions, international offices, in quality management, course advising or in higher education teaching. They are responsible for reviewing information (newsletters, surveys, event advice, etc.) from the Bologna Service Point, attending events related or relevant to the Bologna Process, and conveying and reinforcing the information gleaned from these.

Regular meetings for networking amongst Bologna coordinators take place according to the principle that learning from one another and informal exchange amongst Austrian higher education institutions can contribute to addressing existing practical challenges in implementing EHEA targets and priorities. It was to this end, for example, that a networking meeting of 40 Bologna coordinators took place on the topic of ‘Knowledge transfer of Bologna-related topics to institutional structures in higher education’.

Furthermore, Bologna coordinators regularly volunteer to host Bologna Days or specialist events, contributing to their higher education institution’s public profile in Austria and more widely in the European higher education area.

They keep abreast of know-how related to current national and European Bologna-related reports, subjects, studies or trends thanks to a newsletter produced by the Bologna Service Point exclusively for them, amongst other means.

⁴ https://oead.at/fileadmin/Dokumente/oead.at/KIM/Expertise/Europaeischer_Hochschulraum/Beratung_und_Umsetzung/Factsheet.pdf

Bologna Service Point at OeAD-GmbH

The Bologna Service Point⁵ at OeAD-GmbH is dedicated to encouraging and assisting the Austrian higher education sector in embracing Bologna targets and the EHEA more generally. It serves as a comprehensive and independent service point providing advice and information to the entire Austrian higher education sector. To this end it provides a platform for cross-sector dialogue and exchange in both analogue (with a variety of event formats) and digital (with the ‘BolognaServiceAustria’ Facebook page) forms. The Facebook page⁶ provides updates throughout the week to interested members of the public in Austria and in the EHEA regarding trends in higher education (e. g. with regard to the social dimension in student life, staff-student ratios, mobility barriers), surveys, events, teaching awards, publications and studies.

Both of the above-named platforms are extremely popular and are informed by existing examples of good practice – solution-oriented critiques are always welcome. The Bologna Service Point has been responsible for the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research coordinator of the Erasmus+ Key Action 3 ‘[Policy] Support to the National Higher Education Authority’ since 2014 and provides support to the various activities undertaken by the national EHEA experts.

Because the Bologna Service Point is a practical contact point for concerns and suggestions, it provides support to the Bologna coordinators at Austrian higher education institutions with regard to questions, for example, about the application of the diploma supplements or the ECTS and suggestions of individuals to invite for talks on Bologna-related topics.

Additional responsibilities:

- support for national and European networking activities;
- Meeting organisation and moderation; conception, organisation of so-called ‘WERKstätten’ workshops, seminars and expert workshops; preparation for and follow-up after meetings;
- media monitoring in Austria and neighbouring countries and research: for example, monitoring research outcomes from important research institutions and other Bologna-relevant institutions;
- providing advice and preparing information; for example advice for new Bologna coordinators and preparing information on the current and expected development of the EHEA.

One of the Bologna Service Point’s central tasks is to promote a shared understanding of Bologna targets, thereby making Austria an even more attractive location for university-level students. It is for this reason a member of the national BFUG and also of the European BFUG’s ‘Implementation’ working group.

⁵ <https://oead.at/de/expertise/europaeischer-hochschulraum/beratung-und-umsetzung>

⁶ www.facebook.com/BolognaServiceAustria



05



OUTLOOK

05

OUTLOOK

The second half of 2018 will be challenging and game-changing for Austria on the European level. For the third time, since 1998 and 2006, Austria will assume the presidency of the Council of the European Union. Even if the Council presidency has lost something of its significance since the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon and the resulting introduction of a permanent president of the European Council, these six months are an opportunity for smaller countries in particular to raise their profile and introduce forward-thinking initiatives and provide the respective stimulus.

It is with this in mind that Austria will assume, alongside the non-EU member state Switzerland, the chair of the European BFUG, which will meet on 27 and 28 September 2018 in Vienna. Austria is also looking ahead with anticipation to the EHEA conference in Paris on 23–25 May 2018, where ministers for higher education will adopt a communiqué that will prove to be of significant importance to Austria's EU council presidency. With Austria as chair, the European BFUG will formulate the agenda for 2018–2020 with an eye to the next conference of ministers in Italy and implement

new working and advisory groups on a variety of topics. The final draft of the Bologna Implementation Report 2018, which will also be presented in Paris, has established that a certain stagnation has set in regarding the implementation of targets and priorities in EHEA countries. Taking this situation into account and, at the same time, providing new stimulus to the process, the European BFUG will discuss a more pronounced focus on three of the EHEA's key commitments (three-cycle qualifications architecture, recognition and quality assurance), which will be further reinforced in the form of peer learning processes.

Exciting and challenging years lie ahead for Austria and all of the other member countries of the EHEA. In addition to implementing the above-named three key commitments from the Paris Communiqué, more attention will be paid in future in Austria to the suggestion made by the EC regarding the establishment of 'European universities', which will subsequently have to take into consideration the inclusion of all European countries. The idea of 'European universities' was raised in the draft of the Paris Communiqué.



Bologna Day 2017: Towards more inclusive access and wider participation: National strategy on the social dimension of higher education; ltr: Andreas Janko (Johannes Kepler University Linz), Maria Keplinger (Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research), Regina Aichner (OeAD-GmbH/ Bologna Service Point), Director General for Higher Education Elmar Pichl (Austrian Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy), Karl Ledermüller (Vienna University of Economics and Business)

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The communiqué's priorities include the following:

- adherence to fundamental values and principles with regard to global challenges (prosperity, unemployment, populism, intolerance and radicalisation)
- implementation of the three key commitments so that the EHEA may achieve its full potential
- maintenance and improvement of the relevance and quality of teaching and learning, including the challenges these face in the digital age
- development of the pioneering concept of European universities and the renewed invitation to make better use of the synergies that exist between the EHEA and the European Research Area
- systematic and sustainable collaboration in a global context between the EHEA and other higher education systems

On the **national level**, the Pro.Mo.Austria+ project, which has been referenced in this report, will continue to provide support towards the implementation of the Bologna Process at Austrian higher education institutions. The project's timeframe has been extended to November 2018 and its

purview has been broadened to include certain additional tasks. The Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research plans to submit in response to the call that will probably be published by the EC in August 2018 with respect to the Erasmus+ Key Action 3 another project proposal that will continue to pursue shared targets and priorities in an optimised manner.



06

APPENDIX
(YEREVAN COMMUNIQUE)

06

APPENDIX

(Yerevan Communiqué)

We, the Ministers, meeting in Yerevan on 14–15 May 2015, are proud to recognize that the vision which inspired our predecessors in Bologna has given rise to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), where 47 countries with different political, cultural and academic traditions cooperate on the basis of open dialogue, shared goals and common commitments. Together we are engaged in a process of voluntary convergence and coordinated reform of our higher education systems. This is based on public responsibility for higher education, academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and commitment to integrity. It relies on strong public funding, and is implemented through a common degree structure, a shared understanding of principles and processes for quality assurance and recognition, and a number of common tools.

Thanks to the Bologna reforms, progress has been made in enabling students and graduates to move within the EHEA with recognition of their qualifications and periods of study; study programmes provide graduates with the knowledge, skills and competences either to continue their studies or to enter the European labour market; institutions are becoming increasingly active in an international context; and academics cooperate in joint teaching and research programmes. The EHEA has opened a dialogue with other regions of the world and is considered a model of structured cooperation.

Nonetheless, implementation of the structural reforms is uneven and the tools are sometimes used incorrectly or in bureaucratic and superficial ways. Continuing improvement of our higher education systems and greater involvement of academic communities are necessary to achieve the full potential of the EHEA. We are committed to completing the work, and recognize the need to give new impetus to our cooperation.

Today, the EHEA faces serious challenges. It is confronted with a continuing economic and social crisis, dramatic levels of unemployment, increasing marginalization of young people, demographic changes, new migration patterns, and conflicts within and between countries, as well as extremism and radicalization. On the other hand, greater mobility of students and staff fosters mutual understanding, while rapid development of knowledge and technology, which impacts on societies and economies, plays an increasingly important role in the transformation of higher education and research.

The EHEA has a key role to play in addressing these challenges and maximizing these opportunities through European collaboration and exchange, by pursuing common goals and in dialogue with partners around the globe. We must renew our original vision and consolidate the EHEA structure.

A renewed vision: our priorities

By 2020 we are determined to achieve an EHEA where our common goals are implemented in all member countries to ensure trust in each other's higher education systems; where automatic recognition of qualifications has become a reality so that students and graduates can move easily throughout it; where higher education is contributing effectively to build inclusive societies, founded on democratic values and human rights; and where educational opportunities provide the competences and skills required for European citizenship, innovation and employment. We will support and protect students and staff in exercising their right to academic freedom and ensure their representation as full partners in the governance of autonomous higher education institutions. We will support higher education institutions in enhancing their efforts to promote intercultural understanding, critical thinking, political and religious tolerance, gender equality, and democratic and civic values, in order to strengthen European and global citizenship and lay the foundations for inclusive societies. We will also strengthen the links between the EHEA and the European Research Area.

In the coming years our collective ambition will be to pursue these equally important goals in the new context:

- Enhancing the quality and relevance of learning and teaching is the main mission of the EHEA. We will encourage and support higher education institutions and staff in promoting pedagogical innovation in student-centred learning environments and in fully exploiting the potential benefits of digital technologies for learning and teaching. We will promote a stronger link between teaching, learning and research at all study levels, and provide incentives for institutions, teachers and students to intensify activities that develop creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. Study programmes should enable
- students to develop the competences that can best satisfy personal aspirations and societal needs, through effective learning activities. These should be supported by transparent descriptions of learning outcomes and workload, flexible learning paths and appropriate teaching and assessment methods. It is essential to recognize and support quality teaching, and to provide opportunities for enhancing academics' teaching competences. Moreover, we will actively involve students, as full members of the academic community, as well as other stakeholders, in curriculum design and in quality assurance.
- Fostering the employability of graduates throughout their working lives in rapidly changing labour markets – characterized by technological developments, the emergence of new job profiles, and increasing opportunities for employment and self-employment – is a major goal of the EHEA. We need to ensure that, at the end of each study cycle, graduates possess competences suitable for entry into the labour market which also enable them to develop the new competences they may need for their employability later in throughout their working lives. We will support higher education institutions in exploring diverse measures to reach these goals, e. g. by strengthening their dialogue with employers, implementing programmes with a good balance between theoretical and practical components, fostering the entrepreneurship and innovation skills of students and following graduates' career developments. We will promote international mobility for study and placement as a powerful means to expand the range of competences and the work options for students.
- Making our systems more inclusive is an essential aim for the EHEA as our populations become more and more

diversified, also due to immigration and demographic changes. We undertake to widen participation in higher education and support institutions that provide relevant learning activities in appropriate contexts for different types of learners, including lifelong learning. We will improve permeability and articulation between different education sectors. We will enhance the social dimension of higher education, improve gender balance and widen opportunities for access and completion, including international mobility, for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. We will provide mobility opportunities for students and staff from conflict areas, while working to make it possible for them to return home once conditions allow. We also wish to promote the mobility of teacher education students in view of the important role they will play in educating future generations of Europeans.

- Implementing agreed structural reforms is a prerequisite for the consolidation of the EHEA and, in the long run, for its success. A common degree structure and credit

system, common quality assurance standards and guidelines, cooperation for mobility and joint programmes and degrees are the foundations of the EHEA. We will develop more effective policies for the recognition of credits gained abroad, of qualifications for academic and professional purposes, and of prior learning. Full and coherent implementation of agreed reforms at the national level requires shared ownership and commitment by policy makers and academic communities and stronger involvement of stakeholders. Non-implementation in some countries undermines the functioning and credibility of the whole EHEA. We need more precise measurement of performance as a basis for reporting from member countries. Through policy dialogue and exchange of good practice, we will provide targeted support to member countries experiencing difficulties in implementing the agreed goals and enable those who wish to go further to do so.

The governance and working methods of the EHEA must develop to meet these challenges.

We ask the BFUG to review and simplify its governance and working methods, to involve higher education practitioners in its work programme, and to submit proposals for addressing the issue of non-implementation of key commitments in time for our next meeting.

We gratefully accept the commitment of France to host our next meeting in 2018 and to provide the Secretariat of the EHEA from July 2015 through June 2018.

Ministers welcome the application of Belarus to join the EHEA and in particular its commitment to implement reforms, 16 years after the launch of the Bologna Process, to make its higher education system and practice compatible with those of other EHEA countries. On that basis, Ministers welcome Belarus as a member of the EHEA and look forward to working with the national authorities and stakeholders to implement the reforms identified by the BFUG and included in the agreed road map attached to Belarusian accession. Ministers ask the BFUG to report on the implementation of the roadmap in time for the 2018 ministerial conference.

Finally, we take note with approval of the reports by the working groups on Implementation, Structural reforms, Mobility and internationalization, and the Social dimension and lifelong learning, as well as by the Pathfinder group on automatic recognition. We adopt the measures included in the Appendix and take this opportunity to underline the importance of all members and consultative members participating fully in the work of the BFUG and contributing to the EHEA work programme.

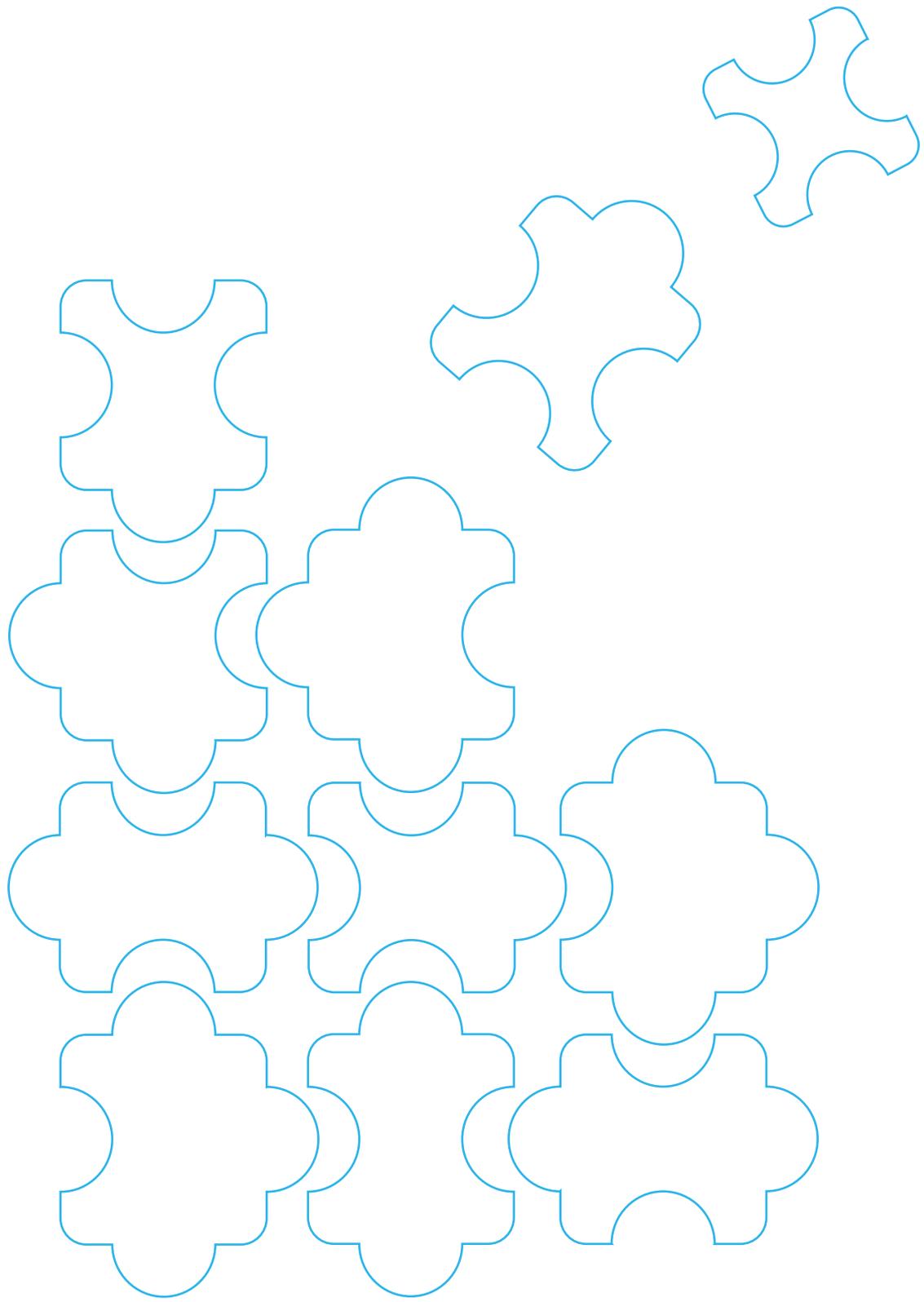
Appendix

I. Policy measures adopted

- the revised Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)
- the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes
- the revised ECTS Users' Guide, as an official EHEA document

II. Commitments

- 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;
- to ensure that competence requirements for public employment allow for fair access to holders of first cycle degrees, and encourage employers to make appropriate use of all higher education qualifications, including those of the first cycle;
- to ensure, in collaboration with institutions, reliable and meaningful information on graduates' career patterns and progression in the labour market, which should be provided to institutional leaders, potential students, their parents and society at large;
- to review national legislations with a view to fully complying with the Lisbon Recognition Convention, reporting to the Bologna Secretariat by the end of 2016, and asking the Convention Committee, in cooperation with the ENIC and NARIC Networks, to prepare an analysis of the reports by the end of 2017, taking due account of the monitoring of the Convention carried out by the Convention Committee;
- to remove obstacles to the recognition of prior learning for the purposes of providing access to higher education programmes and facilitating the award of qualifications on the basis of prior learning, as well as encouraging higher education institutions to improve their capacity to recognize prior learning;
- to review national qualifications frameworks, with a view to ensuring that learning paths within the framework provide adequately for the recognition of prior learning;
- to establish a group of volunteering countries and organizations with a view to facilitating professional recognition;
- to promote staff mobility taking into account the guidelines from the Working group on mobility and internationalization;
- to promote the portability of grants and loans taking into account the guidelines from the Working group on mobility and internationalization;
- to make our higher education more socially inclusive by implementing the EHEA social dimension strategy;
- to ensure that qualifications from other EHEA countries are automatically recognized at the same level as relevant domestic qualifications;
- to enable our higher education institutions to use a suitable EQAR registered agency for their external quality assurance process, respecting the national arrangements for the decision making on QA outcomes



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