

## BULGARIA

### National Action Plan 2024-2027

Please identify here for your country the current situation and challenges (if relevant) in the respective key commitments. In addition, you may list other commitments of the Tirana or previous Communiqués and your priorities in their implementation.

The preparation of the National Action Plan is based on the 2024 Bologna Process Implementation Report. In the table are pointed out specific figures showing the areas that need further interventions or clarification for the current situation.

	Current situation	Key challenges
<b>ECTS and Qualifications Frameworks</b>	Figure 2.7: Scorecard indicator n°1: Implementation of agreed Bologna degree structures, 2022/2023	The data for Bulgaria is not correct – the 3-degree structure is fully applied since 1995.
	Figure 2.10: Scorecard indicator n°3: Stage of implementation of the Diploma Supplement, 2022/2023	At the moment, the requirement for automatic issuance of the diploma supplement is not fulfilled - a proposal for amendment of the Higher Education Act is envisaged.
	Figure 2.11: Scorecard indicator n°4: Implementation of national qualifications frameworks, 2022/2023	The National Action Plan provides for the implementation of the self-certification procedure.
<b>Recognition</b>	Figure 2.13: Implementation of Article VII of the LRC at national level, 2022/2023	Legally required (with procedures in place).
	Figure 2.15: Scorecard indicator n°5: System level (automatic) recognition for academic purposes, 2022/2023	Bulgaria applies System level (automatic) recognition for academic purposes, with individual level recognition procedures.
<b>Quality Assurance</b>	Figure 2.21: Countries allowing the European Approach for quality assurance of joint programmes, 2022/2023	The National Action Plan provides for the introduction of European Approach for quality assurance of joint programmes.

	Figure 2.22: Countries using the European Approach for quality assurance of joint programmes, 2022/2023	The National Action Plan provides for the introduction of European Approach for quality assurance of joint programmes.
<b>Social Dimension of HE</b>	Figure 4.3: Recognition of prior learning in accessing and for the fulfilment of first-cycle higher education study programmes, 2022/2023	The National Action Plan provides for the endorsement of the validation and the Recognition of prior learning in accessing and other academic activities.
	Figure 4.4: Scorecard indicator n°10: P & G 2: Enabling flexible modes of lifelong learning in higher education, 2022/2023	The National Action Plan provides for enabling more flexible modes of lifelong learning in higher education.
	Figure 4.13: Support to higher education institutions (HEIs) for staff training on equity, inclusion and diversity, 2022/2023	The National Action Plan provides for training staff on equity, inclusion and diversity.
	Figure 4.14: Scorecard indicator n°15: P&G 7: Inclusive learning environment and institutional culture, 2022/2023	The National Action Plan provides for more inclusive learning environment and institutional culture.
	Figure 4.15: Top-level measures supporting vulnerable, disadvantaged or underrepresented students in international learning mobility, 2022/2023	The National Action Plan provides for supporting vulnerable, disadvantaged or underrepresented students.
<b>Other Bologna Process Commitments</b>		

**Please summarise here (in a few bullet points) the main progress to be achieved by 2027 in your country, based on the detailed action plans below, including issues such as key regulatory changes or significant new policies foreseen to support the implementation of the Bologna Process commitments.**

- A functioning Bulgarian System Innovation Lab (SIL) is established and operationalised as a permanent policy instrument of the Ministry of Education and Science to accelerate the implementation of Bologna Process commitments in Bulgaria, with an initial focus on ECTS reform and the alignment and practical use of qualifications frameworks.
- Legislative changes and updates are proposed to ensure better functioning Higher Education system also in terms of quality assurance, recognition procedure and social inclusion.

- Transparent, sustainable and international-mobility-eased recognition procedures, designed in line with the LRC, and enhancing communication with other recognition authorities, qualification holders and other stakeholders.
- Updated national Quality Assurance procedures also in terms of the European Approach for Joint Degrees.
- More inclusive learning environments and strengthened institutional capacity for equity, inclusion and diversity.
- Structural embedding of recognition and flexible lifelong learning pathways.
- Targeted measures for improving access, participation and completion for underrepresented groups.

**Please list in the bellow table the concrete actions you want to undertake to achieve the commitments and how you want to tackle the challenge you have mentioned above (e.g. regulatory/legal change, data collection and analysis, (national) peer support, events, publication of support materials, ...)**

**Please use a separate table for each of the listed (key) commitments and add lines to the tables as needed.**

## 1) ECTS and Qualifications frameworks

Action	Contribution of the action to the implementation of the commitment	Expected outcome(s)	Timeline	Achieved in 2027(Yes/No/Partially)	Provide short explanation
Revising the HE system in Bulgaria in the light of the Bologna Process Implementation by launching a Bulgarian System Innovation Lab as a permanent policy instrument, particularly in the areas of European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and National qualification framework (NQF); Delivery of Self-certification Report.	<p>The action directly contributes to the implementation of core Bologna Process commitments by strengthening the systemic, coherent and evidence-based application of agreed EHEA tools and principles.</p> <p>Specifically, it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advances the implementation of the ECTS as a learning outcomes-based credit system, in line with the revised ECTS Users' Guide, by addressing persistent misinterpretations and by embedding the ECTS more consistently in curriculum design, assessment, and recognition practices.</li> <li>- Supports the introduction and integration of micro-credentials within the national legislative framework, ensuring their alignment with the ECTS principles and their compatibility with the Bologna commitments to flexible learning pathways and lifelong learning.</li> <li>- Strengthens the operationalisation of the NQF in alignment with the QF-EHEA, by translating framework</li> </ul>	<p>The necessary legislative changes drafted, including such with regards to the ECTS, micro-credentials, and the NQF.</p> <p>A revised, evidence-informed and stakeholder-tested understanding of the current state, bottlenecks and reform priorities of the Bulgarian higher education system in relation to Bologna Process implementation –produced and formally embedded in policy processes (<i>system-level outcome</i>).</p> <p>A shared national interpretation of the ECTS as a learning outcomes-based system (rather than merely workload-based credit tool) - co-developed, tested and documented; micro-credentials - introduced into the legislative framework and linked to the ECTS system (<i>ECTS-related outcome</i>).</p>	2027		

	<p>levels, learning outcomes and progression pathways into practical institutional guidance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contributes to transparency, comparability and trust in qualifications, including through automatic issue of Diploma Supplement, and the elaboration and presentation of the NQF Self-certification Report, reinforcing Bulgaria's commitment to the common framework and mutual recognition within the EHEA.</li> </ul>	<p>The role of the NQF and its link to the overarching QF-EHEA - translated into operational guidance for institutions, with a focus on learning outcomes, progression pathways and recognition. The NQF Self-certification Report for its compatibility with the QF-EHEA -elaborated and presented. <i>(QF-related outcome)</i></p>			
<p>Elaborating a Roadmap for further Bologna process implementation (BPI) through piloting an inclusive bottom-up approach, involving different stakeholders, through system-level analysis, experimentation and stakeholder co-creation.</p> <p>Based on the Roadmap, elaborating Action</p>	<p>The action enhances evidence-based and participatory Bologna Process implementation, in line with commitments to stakeholder involvement and shared ownership, by institutionalising a System Innovation Lab as a permanent policy instrument for continuous system learning and reform.</p>	<p>A co-created Roadmap for the further Bologna Process implementation in Bulgaria, developed through piloting an inclusive, bottom-up approach involving key stakeholders, with a specific focus on ECTS reform and the operational use of the NQF.</p> <p>Institutional and administrative capacity for system-level learning, experimentation and adaptive reform is strengthened through the SIL methodology, fostering a culture of collaborative problem-solving across policy, institutions and stakeholders. <i>(Capacity &amp;</i></p>	2028		

<p>Plan to tackle the remaining BPI gaps with impact indicators, including the ECTS and the NQF.</p>		<p><i>culture outcome)</i></p> <p>Revised and finalised policy and legislative proposals are produced based on the Roadmap, accompanied by an Action Plan outlining concrete time-bound actions, responsibilities and impact indicators to advance Bologna Process implementation, with particular emphasis on ECTS reform and the operationalisation of the NQF. <i>(Policy-level and mid-term system outcome)</i></p>			
<p>Analytical assessment of the higher education sector's readiness to advance Bologna Process implementation, with a particular focus on the effective use of ECTS and the alignment and operationalisation of the NQF.</p>	<p>The action contributes to Bologna Process implementation by strengthening the evidence-based application of ECTS and the alignment of the NQF with the QF-EHEA, reinforcing transparency, recognition and stakeholder-driven reform, and establishing baseline indicators for monitoring the progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Supports the proper implementation of ECTS as defined in the ECTS Users' Guide;</li> <li>- evidence-based and participatory policy implementation;</li> </ul>	<p>Elaborated comprehensive readiness assessment report (mapping institutional, regulatory and cultural readiness for further Bologna Process implementation, including ECTS practices and qualifications frameworks). Stakeholder-based evidence extrapolated (consolidated findings from consultations with HEIs, quality assurance bodies, students and policy actors on existing capacities, bottlenecks</p>	<p>2028</p>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lays the foundation for effective monitoring of Bologna Process implementation, by establishing baseline indicators and identifying risks and enabling conditions.</li> </ul>	<p>and reform needs). Gap and Risk analysis (identification of systemic gaps, implementation risks and enabling conditions affecting ECTS reform and qualifications framework use).</p> <p>Baseline indicators for monitoring progress elaborated (a set of qualitative and process-oriented indicators to support future monitoring of Bologna Process implementation).</p> <p>Policy-relevant recommendations proposed (targeted recommendations feeding directly into the national Roadmap for further Bologna Process implementation).</p>			
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## 2) Recognition

Action	Contribution of the action to the implementation of the commitment	Expected outcome(s)	Timeline	Achieved in 2027(Yes/No/Partially)	Provide short explanation
Enhancing Bulgaria's contribution to the EHEA priorities by reinforcing the full and effective implementation of the principles and procedures of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), since its signature in 1997 followed by ratification and national implementation in 2000.	Commitment in major international formats to full implementation of the LRC, building upon it, and based on that, effective contribution to the EHEA priorities.	Strengthened and more transparent recognition practices aligned with the LRC, supporting sustainable implementation of the EHEA priorities.	2027 and beyond		
Further development of the Integrated Information System of Academic Recognition, accessible by all HEIs, qualification holders and stakeholders since 2013, providing functionalities for full electronic recognition procedures, and a number of publicly accessible registers with recognition decisions, allowing sustainable and transparent implementation of the LRC by all Bulgarian academic recognition authorities and in support to the improved international academic and labour mobility of qualification holders.	The action contributes to the Bologna Process commitments on recognition as a prerequisite for mobility by strengthening the full implementation of the LRC through transparency, digitalisation and sustainable recognition procedures, that enhance trust, cooperation and mobility within the EHEA.	Transparent, sustainable and international-mobility-eased recognition procedures, designed in line with the LRC, and enhancing communication with other recognition authorities, qualification holders and other stakeholders.	2027 and beyond		

<p>Prototyping and testing AI-supported tools and an enhanced comparability module within the Integrated Information System of Academic Recognition, providing structured and reliable information to HEIs, qualification holders and other stakeholders, in support of mutual system-level automatic recognition.</p>	<p>The action supports Bologna Process commitments on recognition, mobility and transparency by enhancing system-level automatic recognition through digitalisation, efficiency of Bologna tools, and AI-supported comparability tools and digitalised recognition processes.</p>	<p>Upgraded functionality of the Integrated Information System of Academic Recognition through the responsible use of AI technologies, improving accessibility, consistency and user support for qualification holders from and beyond EHEA and stakeholders, enabling more efficient and predictable system-level automatic recognition.</p>	<p>2026</p>		
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### 3) Quality assurance

Action	Contribution of the action to the implementation of the (key) commitment	Expected outcome(s)	Timeline	Achieved by 2027(Yes/No/Partially)	Provide short explanation
Further development of the external quality assurance procedures in consultation with stakeholders	Promote a quality culture in higher education, fostered by fit-for-purpose quality assurance processes in line with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area	Prepared analysis on the introduced in 2023 new indicators in the procedures for program accreditation of external QA	2026		
		Revised set of indicators used in the procedures for program accreditation of external QA	2026		
		Multiple events (for HEIs, experts, students, wider audience) held	2027		
		Developed QA framework for micro-credentials	2027		
		Developed QA framework for TNE	2027		
		Revision of the National Quality Assurance Framework	2027		
Strengthen QA approval process for joint programmes and embed the European Approach	Strengthening the QA approval process and embedding the European Approach ensures systematic compliance with the ESG and the EHEA standards for joint programmes. The action enhances transparency, consistency, and mutual trust, reduces procedural duplication, and supports sustainable cross-border	Developed proposal for amending legislative changes to include European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes in the Higher Education Act	2026		
		Updated national QA procedures to accept outcomes of European Approach evaluations by other agencies	2027		

	quality assurance aligned with Bologna commitments on QA compliance.	Increased use of the cross border quality assurance	2027		
Digitalization of the accreditation procedures	Digitalisation of accreditation procedures strengthens QA compliance by improving transparency, traceability, and consistency in line with the ESG and the EHEA standards. The action enhances efficiency, facilitates cross-border cooperation, reduces administrative burden, and supports evidence-based quality assurance aligned with the Bologna commitments.	Provided cloud platform to support the accreditation procedures and access to it is provided to authorized representatives of higher education institutions.	2026		
		Developed and implemented processes for completely paperless accreditation procedures	2026		
		Automatic upload of the reports to DEQAR	2027		
		Integrated digital systems for accreditation launched	2027		

#### 4) Social dimension

Action	Contribution of the action to the implementation of the (key) commitment	Expected outcome(s)	Timeline	Achieved by 2027(Yes/No/ Partially)	Provide short explanation
Pioneering the implementation of the Social Dimension Indicators for QA in the EHEA jointly developed by Bulgaria and Romania, designed to enable systematic integration of equity considerations into QA frameworks.	Introduces an innovative, structured approach to embedding the social dimension within QA systems, moving from policy commitment to measurable implementation. Strengthens evidence-based monitoring and supports operationalisation of EHEA social dimension objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced transparency and comparability.</li> <li>• Improved monitoring of participation gaps; future integration of social dimension criteria into national QA systems.</li> </ul>	2027		
Endorsement of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and introduction of more flexible lifelong learning pathways in higher education.	Improves equitable access by recognising diverse learning routes and enabling flexible participation, reducing structural barriers for non-traditional and adult learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased access and participation of non-traditional learners.</li> <li>• Improved system flexibility and permeability.</li> </ul>	2027		
Training staff on equity, inclusion and diversity; integration of inclusive practices in governance and teaching.	Strengthens institutional capacity to implement equity policies systematically and mainstream inclusion across higher education structures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved inclusive practices.</li> <li>• Increased institutional accountability and awareness.</li> </ul>	2027		
Development of inclusive learning environments and targeted support for vulnerable and underrepresented students.	Addresses structural inequalities and promotes equitable access, participation and completion in line with the EHEA objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved retention and completion rates.</li> <li>• Reduced participation gaps.</li> <li>• Enhanced student well-being.</li> </ul>	2027		