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**DISCUSSIONS EHEA - EQF ADVISORY GROUP**

At its meeting on May 27 - 28, the Council of Europe provided the EQF Advisory Group with an overview of developments in the EHEA on the background of the Yerevan Ministerial Conference and Communique as well as the report by the Structural Reforms Working Group (SRWG).

The EQF AG is interested in developing cooperation with the EHEA - and in particular the QF-EHEA - further. Today, the Council of Europe, as coordinator of the Network of national correspondents for qualifications frameworks, is represented in the EQF AG, and the Commission unit responsible for the EQF participated in the SRWG in 2012 - 15 as well as in the EHEA WG on qualifications frameworks in the previous work program. The Network of national correspondents also had an annual joint meeting with the EQF National Coordination Points.

The QF-EHEA and the EQF are compatible but not identical. On the one hand, the set of countries involved is different: all 36 countries in the EQF also participate in the EHEA but 12 of the 48 EHEA countries are not in the EQF. Secondly, the QF-EHEA comprises higher education qualifications whereas the EQF comprises education qualifications at all levels in a lifelong learning perspective. Thirdly, the professional education/VET aspect of the EQF is very clear, whereas the recognition and quality assurance aspects are clearer in the QF-EHEA than in the EQF. Those involved in the EHEA, including the SRWG and the network of national correspondents are, for obvious reasons, higher education specialists, whereas most members of the EQF AG have their background in VET and/or general secondary education.

At national level, most countries now have developed or seem to aim to develop comprehensive national qualifications frameworks encompassing all levels of education, including higher education. Some 15 countries have now self-certified their national framework against the QF-EHEA and referenced it against the EQF in a single operation and report. A few countries have, however, opted to develop national frameworks that so far have a purely labor market focus and have therefore chosen to reference against the EQF only. In the early phases of both overarching frameworks, some countries self-certified their framework against the QF-EHEA before referencing it against the EQF.

The national correspondents in the EHEA have discussed self-certification by exchanging experience and through comparison of self-certifications. They have, however, not discussed individual national reports. In the EQF-AG, on the other hand, national referencing reports are subjected to peer scrutiny, and this had been an important measure for creating trust in the referencing procedure. Possibilities for further cooperation on self-certification/referencing - which was one element of the EQF reflection at the 27-28 May meeting - would be an obvious topic for discussion but there may also be other possible topics.

The EQF AG has expressed a desire for a joint meeting with the BFUG or another appropriate EHEA body. It is recalled that a joint meeting of the EQF AG and the SRWG was held in September 2013 but it is felt that a new meeting is now required and that this should perhaps be with the BFUG. From an EQF point of view a meeting in fall 2015 would be ideal because this would allow the EHEA body to be informed of and consulted on a review of the EQF to be launched within the next few weeks. From an EHEA perspective, a meeting in spring 2016 would, however, be easier because the new EHEA work program will not be decided until the fall 2015 meeting of the BFUG.

In its discussion of the 2015 - 18 work program the Bologna Board may therefore wish to consider what advice to give the BFUG on further cooperation with the EQF, and in particular on the possibility of a joint meeting as well as on the main topic(s) of such a meeting.