



Ministry of Education, Culture and  
Science of the Netherlands



Ministry of Education  
of the Republic of Moldova

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## Parallel session: EHEA governance after 2018 (and 2020)

### Introduction

In the Yerevan communiqué, the Ministers ask the BFUG « *to review and simplify its governance and working methods, to involve higher education practitioners in its work programme* ».

The work plan 2015-2018 validated during the last BFUG in Luxemburg has taken into account this requirement. However, 2018 is the last step before the end of the cycle 2010-2020 and the 2018 Ministerial Conference will have to begin to prepare the issue of EHEA beyond 2020.

Until now, the EHEA has been relying on the voluntary commitment of the members and is built on a « soft law » governance foundation with a non-binding character. This monitored process of coordination of national policies can be viewed as a strength (Ravinet, 2008) but it can explain as well that the Bologna Process has no more the same political appeal for the national governments of EU, the non EU and consultative members (Vukasovic, Jungblut & Elken, 2015) and that some plea for a revision of its governance to « introduce dynamism in an « exhausted process » (Harmsen, 2014).

### Purpose

In the parallel session on 'EHEA governance post-2018' we would like to make a start with the discussion on the governance structure of the EHEA after 2020 by:

- Making a list of the most relevant questions concerning governance to be answered in the years to come (until 2018 and/or 2020)
- Identifying ideas on how to move forward in trying to answer these questions : Which experts could be of help, which type of actions and meetings could be useful etc? (drawing a road map)

### Structure

As an introduction to the session Josephine Scholten, secretary general of the VSNU (the association of the Dutch research universities), will present to you her ideas on why making Bologna smart(er) is a clever idea. Focus, key targets and a transparent supporting structure to attain these are essential. In view of recent European and global developments this is now even more needed than ever. We have to be able to show results, not just in the long run (after 2020) but already in the short run (2018 !). Results are needed, for our ministers, as well as for our higher education institutions and for the world at large. The EHEA should offer our HE and our HE institutions the global position they deserve. Josephine will argue why this is a critical success factor for the EHEA.

After the introduction by Josephine Scholten, the group will be divided in two groups.

Some questions that might be relevant for the discussion on the governance structure of the EHEA:

1. What in our opinion should be the added value of the EHEA after 2020 ? What benefits should it bring to our countries, organisations, HEIs, students and teachers to keep wanting to invest in it ?
2. In the view of the relevant benefits of the EHEA, what should the governance structure look like? Which type of governance structure fosters best what we want to realise ?
3. What do we see as the strengths and weaknesses of the current governance structure (which is heavily relying on voluntary commitment of the members)?
4. Is there a need for changing the composition and the functioning of the BFUG and the board? Should we continue having a rotating secretariat together with the host country for the Ministerial or set up a permanent secretariat which would have to be prepared between 2018 and 2020 in order to be operational after 2020?
5. Should we propose any change in the follow-up mechanisms and tools ? (implementation report conceived as a benchmark tool and progress chart to let the countries stand where they are or a more binding measurement tool, propose external evaluation at country level , external evaluation of EHEA... ?)

### **Background articles**

Pauline Ravinet, *From Voluntary Participation to Monitored Coordination: why European countries feel increasingly bound by their commitment to the Bologna Process*, European Journal of Education, Vol. 43, N°3, 2008.

Martina Vukasovic, Jungblut & Mari Elken, *Still the main show in town? Assessing political saliency of the Bologna Process across time and space*, Studies in Higher education, DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2015.1101755, Oct. 2015.

Robert Harmsen, *Future Scenarios for the European Higher Education Area: Exploring the Possibilities of "Experimentalist Governance" »*, January 2016, to be published.