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## **Guiding notes for the establishment, composition and working methods of the peer groups supporting implementation of Bologna key commitments**

### **Rationale**

The success of the Bologna process and the EHEA relies on the shared and systematic implementation of an agreed set of commitments: structural reforms and shared tools, which have been agreed to and adopted at a political level in all member countries. Only by substantially implementing the Bologna key commitments, can a country and its higher education institutions, students and teachers fully benefit from participation in the EHEA through enhanced cooperation, ready mobility and exchange of students, teachers and researchers, through cross border partnerships, through joint study programmes and joint research projects, and with it achieve: an enhanced quality of education and research for all students and staff, which makes a meaningful contribution to society (local, regional, national and European), while allowing the EHEA to further develop its credibility and attractiveness.

The EHEA causal chain:

Full implementation of the key commitments → increased cooperation, mobility and exchange  
→ enhanced quality, attractiveness and contribution of higher education to European and global society.

The aim of those guiding notes is to provide some guiding ideas for the further work of the peer groups. But it is up to each peer group to develop its own dynamics and to find the most appropriate way of progressing. The ultimate binding factor/request is that each peer group designs and shapes actions and measures to foster, improve and speed up the implementation, and reports on the progress of those actions to the BICG, and ultimately the BFUG and the EHEA Ministers.

### **The establishment of the peer groups**

By the end of 2018, at least three (3) peer groups dedicated to the three key commitments or to a key facet of the structural reform concerned, have to have been established and operational:

- A peer group dealing with quality assurance
- A peer group dealing with qualifications frameworks including ECTS
- A peer group dealing with the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention including the DS.

Depending on the goals, demand and interests identified by EHEA member countries it could be possible and advantages to subdivide peer groups to best suit the specifics of the support needed.

The peer groups are formally established by the BFUG during the first meeting of the new working period, following the Ministerial conference in Paris, and after receipt of the responses of the countries to the call launched in June 2018 (see timeline).

### **The composition of the peer groups**

The peer groups will include countries (no fewer than 2 to 3) that have sufficiently implemented the key commitment concerned and countries (no fewer than 2 to 3) that need to address specific challenges for full implementation of a particular key commitment at the system and institutional level.

Countries should be represented by representatives of ministries, as well as stakeholders' representatives as appropriate: e.g. HEIs, students and other agencies or additional stakeholders.

Each peer group will be coordinated by a set of two (2) chairs, representing countries at different stages of implementation of the key commitment that is being supported. The chairing countries will be supported

by the BFUG secretariat for organizing exchanges, meetings and any site visits, while financial support could be granted by the European Commission on the basis of a targeted ad hoc call.

### **Actions and working method of the peer groups**

As outlined above, a single, or a small cluster of peer groups could be set up for each key commitment. The expectation is that each EHEA country contributes to at least one such peer group.

Each peer review group offers a platform for policy dialogue among equal partners and for mutual exchanges of ideas and practices on an equal footing, including but not restricted to:

- a platform for sharing knowledge, ideas and practices;
- a platform for dialogue and mutual learning and understanding with regard to the implementation process: the context, the policy/policies adopted and the measures translating the key commitments at the national level; as such the group is also a platform for discussing factors that are affecting implementation both positively and negatively.

The peer groups should also agree on further actions aimed at fostering, improving and speeding up implementation, in particular:

- peer support / peer counselling : expert support, exchange of experts,
- targeted seminars including in particular the national public authorities and the broader academic community to build a shared ownership and commitment;
- drafting legislative documents.

The countries that have successfully implemented the key commitment under focus, or a specific part thereof, should be ready to deliver peer to peer support to other countries in their efforts to further and better implement reforms related to that commitment, and be ready to invite peers to review and comment upon their adopted policy and how it is put in practice.

The countries that have not yet fully implemented the key commitments should be ready to discuss the actions that they will undertake in order to step up and fulfil the implementation process and are ready to review the way the peers have implemented a key commitment-related reform and its impact.

A timeline of actions should be drawn up by the chairs of the peer groups, including how these will best meet the implementation goals set up by the countries participating in the group. Between November/December 2018 and March 2020, each peer group will meet 2/3 times, while regular updates must be provided to the BICG and to the BFUG, as stipulated in the relevant timeline and the ToR for the BICG.

In time for the next Ministerial, the chairs of each peer group should conduct an evaluation of the usefulness of the peer-group activities which were carried out, and provide a feedback to the BFUG, and the EHEA Ministers on the follow-up of the agreed actions.

An overall assessment of the outcomes of the peer groups will be included in the final report from the BICG 2020.

The chairs as peer group coordinators are responsible for the coordination of the work of their peer group.

The chairs will join the BICG (see terms of reference of that group).