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SUPPORT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF KEY BOLOGNA COMMITMENTS

Proposal to the BFUG from AG3 on Dealing with Non-Implementation: adapted in line with discussions of the BFUG in November 2017; and after consultation with representatives of WG2 on Implementation in December 2017

Support for the implementation of key Bologna commitmentsⁱ takes place through a cyclic programme with dedicated peer groups, which aim to improve the implementation of specific key commitments of the Bologna process. It is based on the established reporting mechanisms of the Bologna Process and the principles of collaboration, peer-support, peer-learning and peer-counselling. Its main purpose is to improve full and effective implementation of Bologna key commitments throughout the EHEA.

The procedure follows the Bologna philosophy of peer- and process review which fits well with the collegiate and improvement-oriented ethos of the EHEA and aims to make implementation of key commitments more transparent.

The timeframe proposed for a single cycle is the period between Ministerial Conferences, thus following the normal monitoring timeframe in the EHEA. The programme will be supported by the facilitating Bologna Implementation Coordination Group, appointed during the Ministerial Conference, the terms of reference for which are found in a separate document.

Steps of support for implementation of key Bologna commitments



1. **Survey:** The level of implementation of the key commitments is surveyed based on data submitted during the BFUG's normal monitoring procedures, using the scoreboard indicatorsⁱⁱ in the Bologna Implementation Report. The implementation of the key commitments is addressed in a supplementary report thereon. *Timing: before ministerial.*
2. **Invite:** The BFUG delegates of all EHEA countries are formally invited by the BFUG co-chairs to take part in one or more thematic peer groupsⁱⁱⁱ, each focusing on one key commitment.
 - (a) Countries **successfully implementing a key commitment** (indicated by none of the relevant scoreboard indicators being red, and not more than one being orange) will be invited to suggest ways in which they are willing to support countries having difficulties with implementation of that key commitment, e.g. through peer-learning, reverse peer-review or other activities designed to share their examples of successful implementation and aid others in achieving the same.
 - (b) Countries found as having **not or insufficiently implemented** a key commitment will be invited to indicate what peer support would be beneficial to aid implementation and how it aims to use that support. Each country is expected to join at least one of the peer group(s) relevant to the key commitment(s) it has not or insufficiently implemented.
Timing: within one month after ministerial
3. **Response:** The BFUG delegate sends a reply to the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group and nominates representatives to the peer groups in those areas where the country requires support or can offer support, respectively. The representative(s) should be people with responsibility for the key commitment concerned, and BFUG delegates are encouraged to consider relevant stakeholders who could offer, or be the recipients of, peer-support or peer counselling in the area. The BFUG delegates of countries experiencing problems with implementation each submit a plan to the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group, outlining how the country aims to use the peer-support offered to aid implementation of the relevant key commitment(s) nationally, thus contributing to achieving better implementation of those commitments throughout the EHEA. The plans are published on the EHEA website. *Timing: before the first BFUG meeting of the new working period.*
4. **Peer support:** At this point peer-support will start. The Bologna Implementation Coordination Group matches countries offering peer-support and those wishing to take advantage of such support into relevant peer support groups, who in turn ensure that all countries will receive the peer support they require. *Timing: As all relevant implementation information is available before the preceding Ministerial conference, this step should be initiated no later than after the first BFUG meeting following a Ministerial Conference.*
5. **Update:** The BFUG delegate of a country gives an annual update on how the country has used peer support to enhance implementation and/or how it has supported other countries, respectively, to the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group, which in turn produces a summary report for the BFUG.
6. **Data:** All EHEA countries submit their data for the next implementation report which will mark the starting point of a new cycle.
The supplementary report on implementation of key commitments (see step 1) will show current implementation alongside level of implementation in the previous report for all countries. Submitted plans on implementation of specific key commitments will be highlighted in the supplementary report.

Incentives for improved implementation of key commitments

The normal Bologna reporting process and the proposed support programme act by their very nature as incentives for improved implementation, in the way that the Implementation Report highlights levels of implementation, and the programme supports improvements through targeted peer-learning and support. In addition it is proposed that countries that have made significant progress will be offered the opportunity to highlight their work on implementation at the Ministerial Conference.

In the event that no action has been taken by a country and no improvement in implementation can be noted from the data submitted during two cycles, the lack of improvement will be brought to the attention of the Ministerial Conference. The Ministers will be asked for recommendations on how to proceed on a case by case basis.

ⁱ The three key commitments BFUG has identified as the focus for further work in the period 2018-2020 are:

- A Three-Cycle System compatible with the QF-EHEA and scaled by ECTS: Programmes are structured according to the three cycle-system of the Bologna model and scaled by the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Qualifications achieved in each cycle are defined in a National Qualification Framework (NQF) which is compatible with the Qualification Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA)
- Compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC): Cross-border recognition practices are in compliance with the Lisbon Recognition convention, including promoting through the national information centres or otherwise, the use of the UNESCO/Council of Europe Diploma Supplement or any other comparable document by the higher education institutions of the Parties
- Quality Assurance in conformity with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG): Institutions granting degrees assure the quality of their programmes leading to degrees within the three-cycle system following the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG 2015). External quality assurance (be it at programme or institutional level) is performed by Agencies that have demonstrably complied with the standards and guidelines stipulated in the current ESG. This is best ensured where only those agencies registered on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) are allowed to operate in the country.

ⁱⁱ See supplementary list of scorecard indicators pertaining to the three current Bologna key commitments

ⁱⁱⁱ The concept of peer-support groups has been designed by WG2 on Implementation, adapted to fit the programme proposed by AG3, and includes the following elements

Reversed peer groups:

a/ Focus : reversed peer groups, each dedicated to supporting the implementation of a single key Bologna commitment and taking its information from the Bologna Process Implementation report as outlined in step 1 above: .

b/ Composition:

The reverse peer groups will include countries that have sufficiently implemented the key commitment concerned and that are coping with specific challenges to be addressed for full implementation. Large peer groups could be subdivided into smaller groups if the chairs think it beneficial to aid implementation support.

The countries will be represented by representatives of ministries, and stakeholders as outlined in step 3 above.

Each reversed peer group will be coordinated by a set of two (2) co-chairs, meaning one of each of the two types of countries (relative to implementation challenges).. The co-chair countries will be supported by the BFUG secretariat for organizing exchanges, meetings and any site visit, while financial support could be granted by the European Commission on the basis of an ad hoc call.

Actions and working method:

All countries are involved and each reversed peer review group offers a platform for mutual exchanges on an equal footing :

- 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 ; it is also a platform for discussing the factors that are affecting positively and negatively the implementation.

The peer groups should also agree on further actions aiming at speeding up the 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.

Between November/December 2018 and March 2020, each reversed peer group will meet 2/3 times, while regular updates must be provided to the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group and to the BFUG