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European Higher
Education Area

Mobility

Quality of Teaching
and Learning

Recognition

Digitalisation

Joint Study

Sustainable
Development Goals

3-IN-AT

Social Dimension

Pro.Mo.Austria+

REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GOALS AND PRIORITIES
OF THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA IN AUSTRIA

EHEA IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

 **Federal Ministry
Republic of Austria**
Education, Science
and Research



EUROPEAN
Higher Education Area



Erasmus+

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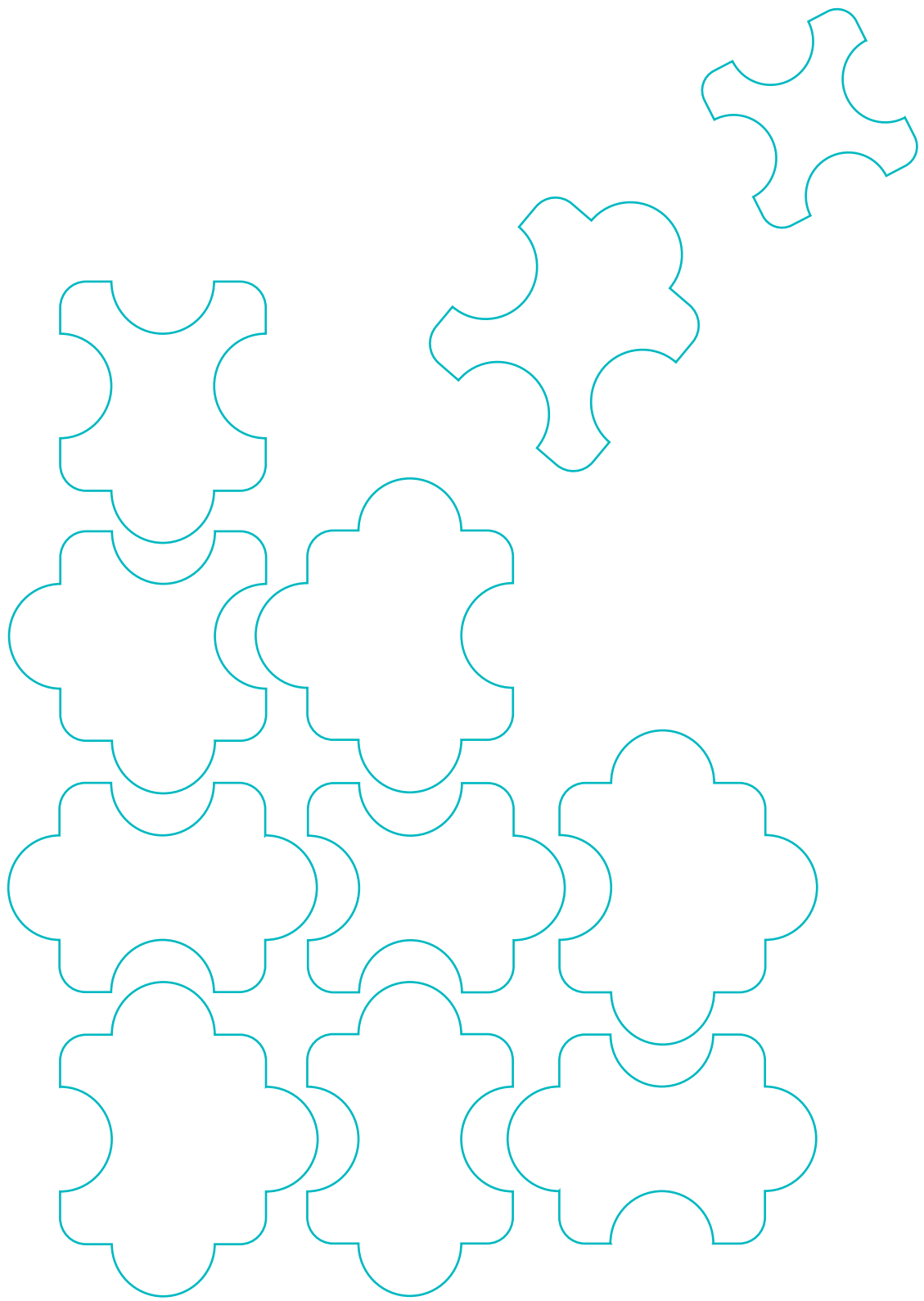
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REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GOALS AND PRIORITIES
OF THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA IN AUSTRIA

EHEA IMPLEMENTATION REPORT



PREFACE

In November 2020 the beginning of the next decade (2020–2030) of the Bologna Process will be officially celebrated in Rome at the EHEA Ministerial Conference. Since the signing of the Bologna Declaration in 1999, the establishment of a common European Higher Education Area, linking together what is now 48 member countries across national boundaries, has created a feeling of community and cohesion. This sense of community and increased international cooperation will now become even more significant, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, its profound consequences and associated limitations.

Against a background of globalised and increasingly complex conditions, the integrity of science and research can act as a stabilising factor beyond the European Higher Education Area, enabling us to face the existing and future challenges of the years and decades ahead with confidence, openness and transparency. With more intensive collaboration between the European Research Area and the European Higher Education Area, their combined endeavours should also help to make the best possible use of the potential inherent in the synergies between the two. Commitment to the implementation of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals is also a commitment to the future, and one in which Austrian universities will be increasingly involved.

There is a parallel determination to create the broadest and most inclusive possible access to internationalisation and mobility, and to further expand the existing initiatives. Students, teaching staff, researchers and non-academic staff will have more opportunities for extensive participation, with increasing use of digitalisation. In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, topics such as virtual



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mobility and blended learning have gained new impetus, which will have ongoing relevance as we move forward into the next decade. Austria is responding in a timely manner here with further development of the Higher Education Mobility Strategy, amongst other things, and is renewing its commitment to the Erasmus+ project, to support higher education institutions in their efforts to internationalise teaching and learning. Intercultural experiences not only enrich each individual involved, but also constitute a qualification of immeasurable value to society as a whole, for the labour market, and for the development of the entire European economy.

One of the major achievements is the progress already made towards the harmonisation of higher education with regard to programmes of study and final qualifications, with due consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of the differing tertiary education and training sectors of individual member states. This is an impressive demonstration of how persistent efforts and intensive engagement over many years can result in a shared success story.

Over the next 20 years and beyond, cross-border cooperation in higher education, science and research will continue, through innovative and interdisciplinary activities, to play a vital role in addressing the important issues of the future.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Heinz Faßmann".

Univ.- Prof. Dr. Heinz Faßmann
Federal Minister of Education, Science and Research

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Abbreviations

3-IN-AT	Internationalisation/INclusion/ INnovation: Towards high- quality inclusive mobility and innovative teaching & learning in an internationalised Austrian Higher Education Area	EOSC	European Open Science Cloud
AK	Austrian Chamber of Labour	EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
AQ Austria	Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria	ESG	European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
AY	Academic year	ESU	European Students' Union
BFUG	Bologna Follow-Up Group	EU	European Union
BGBI	Federal Law Gazette	EUA	European Universities Association
BICG	Bologna Implementation Coordination Group	EURASHE	European Association of Institutions in Higher Education
BMWF	Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research	FHK	Association of Austrian Universities of Applied Sciences
BMK	Federal Ministry of Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology	fnma	Forum Neue Medien in der Lehre Austria (Austrian Forum for New Media in Teaching)
CCCA	Climate Change Center Austria	FWF	Austrian Science Fund
CoE	Council of Europe	GÖD	Public Service Union Austria
CuKo	Curriculum Commission	GUEP	Austrian National Development Plan for Public Universities
DS	Diploma Supplement	HE institution	Higher education institution
EC	European Commission	HEREs	Higher Education Reform Experts
ECHE	Erasmus Charter for Higher Education	HG 2005	Teacher Education Act 2005
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System	HMIS 2030	National mobility and internationalisation strategy for higher education 2020–2030 – “There are many routes to internationalisation” 2030
EFFECT	European Forum for Enhanced Collaboration in Teaching	HMS	Higher Education Mobility Strategy
EHEA	European Higher Education Area	HoP	Austrian University Plan
EI	Education International	HS-QSG	Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ENIC	European Network of Information Centres	IHS	Institute for Advanced Studies
		ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education

IV	Federation of Austrian Industries	RPL	Recognition of prior learning
IWGHE	Informal Working Group on Higher Education	RTI	Research, Technology and Innovation
KA	Key Action	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
LLL:2020	Strategy for Lifelong Learning in Austria	STEM	Courses in science, technology, engineering and mathematics
LRC	Lisbon Recognition Convention	StudFG 1992	Study Promotion Act 1992
MOOCs	Massive Open Online Courses	TPG	Thematic Peer Group
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centres	UAS	University of Applied Sciences
NQR	National Qualifications Framework	UG 2002	Universities Act 2002
OANA	Open Science Network Austria, vormalis Open Access Network Austria	UHStat 1 und 2	University and higher education statistics 1 and 2
OeAD	Austrian Exchange Service	UHSBV	University and Higher Education Statistics and Education Documentation Regulation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	UN	United Nations
OER	Open Educational Resources	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ÖGB	Austrian Trade Union Federation	uniko	Universities Austria
ÖH	Austrian National Union of Students	UniNetZ	Universities and sustainable development goals
ÖPUK	Association of Austrian Private Universities	WG	Working Group
PaGs	Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension in Higher Education	WIFO	Austrian Institute of Economic Research
PLA	Peer learning activity	WKO	Austrian Federal Economic Chambers
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy	WP	Work package
Pro.Mo.Austria	Promoting Mobility. Addressing the Challenges in Austria	WU	Vienna University of Economics and Business
Pro.Mo.Austria+	Promoting Mobility. Fostering EHEA Commitments in Austria	ZFHE	Zeitschrift für Hochschulentwicklung (Journal of trends in higher education)
RÖPH	Conference of Rectors of Austrian University Colleges of Teacher Education		



01



INTRODUCTION

01

INTRODUCTION

In the year 2020, the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) enters its third decade. In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EHEA Ministerial Conference in Rome has been postponed from June to November 2020.

Over the last ten years, much has been accomplished and implemented, although when the ministers met in Paris in 2018 they made it clear that the full potential of the EHEA can only be realised through rigorous and consistent application of at least its cornerstone principles, namely the three-cycle study system in accordance with the European Qualifications Framework, compliance with the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications, and underpinned by the necessary quality assurance.

As a very active member of the EHEA, Austria has over the last decade continued to work towards implementation, at European level and more particularly at the national level, and has set a course for the future.

As in the previous two working periods of the EHEA, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung – BMBWF) uses the European Commission's calls for proposals for "Support to the implementation of EHEA (European Higher Education Area) reforms" within the context of the Erasmus+ programme, specifically Key Action 3 – Policy Support, to further the implementation of targets and priorities related to the EHEA. Two such projects had already been completed – "**Promoting Mobility. Addressing the Challenges in Austria – Pro.Mo.Austria**" (duration

2014–16) and "**Pro.Mo.Austria+ // Promoting Mobility. Fostering EHEA Commitments in Austria**" (2016–18) – and the European Commission then also accepted a third project proposed by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research – "**INternationalisation/INclusion/INnovation: Towards high-quality inclusive mobility and innovative teaching & learning in an internationalised Austrian Higher Education Area – 3-IN-AT**" (2019–21) and awarded it a grant. The project budget also includes additional funding from the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research. Some of the key priorities of this project, such as mobility activities, internationalisation of higher education and teaching, the social dimension, and high-quality learning and teaching, are also mentioned in this report.

An important step is being taken towards improving the quality of mobility activities and towards more internationalised studies and teaching, with the further development of the Higher Education Mobility Strategy (HMS 2016), into a National mobility and internationalisation strategy for higher education 2020–2030 – "There are many routes to internationalisation" (HMIS 2030). The HMIS 2030 was drafted in a highly acclaimed bottom-up process, working with experts from all sectors of higher education. It aims to enhance the support for higher education institutions in implementing mobility programmes and the internationalisation of studies and teaching.

The *National strategy on the social dimension of higher education* was published at the beginning of 2017, and defines

targets and measures for the period to 2025; it is now in the implementation phase, and is due to be evaluated in the year 2021. This report describes the targets, indicators and current status of implementation in terms of statistics, and the implementation of measures within the performance agreement period 2019–2021. It also highlights various collaborations and projects at the international level. On the European level, Austria plays a pioneering role in projects relating to the social dimension, and is accordingly a popular cooperation partner. One of the main reasons for this is that Austria, alongside France and the Flemish community in Belgium, fulfils all the required characteristics specified in the surveys for the Bologna Process Implementation Report 2020 for support of mobility activities. In the overwhelming majority of EHEA countries, there still seems to be a long way to go on this.

Quality in learning and teaching is a significant aspect, not only in the EHEA and in the communiqués of the current decade, but also particularly in the Austrian higher education landscape. In this context, on a national level, a key topic for discussion is “structural studyability”, in the sense of efficient progression through a programme of study, without any loss of quality. Quality and feasibility (“studyability”) are also issues that arise in connection with the reformed teacher training programmes.

For the first time, an EHEA communiqué (Paris 2018) has included working towards implementation of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Correspondingly, this report also addresses the implementation

of these goals in the context of Austrian higher education; one example is the UniNEtZ project (the name is derived from the German for “universities and sustainable development goals”).

The topic of digitalisation is regarded as an interdisciplinary issue in the EHEA, affecting all aspects of higher education, and arises in many contexts. Open science, open access, citizen science and open educational resources (OER) are just some of the key concepts addressed in the chapter on digitalisation. In Austria too, digitalisation in the context of higher education and teaching is constantly being driven forward and supported.

In addition, the report describes the collaboration between national stakeholders towards optimal implementation of the EHEA targets and priorities in the Austrian higher education sector. Finally, the Austrian delegates participating in working and advisory groups of the European Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) also provide some insights into their processes and the issues addressed, and give their impressions of the overall atmosphere.



02



NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA'S GOALS AND PRIORITIES

02

NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA'S GOALS AND PRIORITIES

The following chapters describe individual aspects of the Austrian implementation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). By way of introduction, we take a look at how Austria celebrated the 20th anniversary of the EHEA. One particular high point was the 2019 Bologna Day conference on 4 June, which was themed “20 years of the European Higher Education Area: reflections – current situation – future”. The event was held at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna (mdw), and organised by the Austrian Exchange Service (OeAD) in cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research. The 200 attendees, including numerous national and international experts, took part in various plenary sessions and five themed forums, exploring the achievements so far, examples of good practice and ideas for further developments of the Bologna Process. There were also opportunities for discussions on academic freedom and scholarly integrity in teaching and research. Another special highlight was the musical entertainment by Christoph & Lollo, rounding off the day's rich and varied programme with some pointed yet funny and good-natured jibes.

The evening before Bologna Day 2019, Dr Iris Rauskala, the Federal Minister for Education, Science and Research, hosted a welcome event in the Ministry's Reception Hall. Guest speakers included several long-term supporters of the Bologna Process for creation of a European Higher Education Area who have had a lasting impact on the programme in Austria and in some cases are still involved. These included former federal minister Dr Beatrix Karl, former Director General Prof. Sigurd Hollinger (retired), Prof. Eva Werner, former Rector of Krems University of Applied Sciences, Prof. Christoph Badelt, Director of the Austrian Institute of Economic Research (WIFO) and former Rector of Vienna University of Economics and Business, and Director General Elmar Pichl, who shared various reminiscences and

brief anecdotes from their experiences. Speakers described the Austrian response to the objectives of the Sorbonne Declaration, and the challenges and obstacles faced in converting study programmes to the three-cycle system, structured around Bachelor's, Master's and PhD stages. The almost simultaneous transition of the universities to financial autonomy (Universities Act (UG) 2002) was also discussed, as were the events of the #UniBrennt student protests in 2009/2010. All the panel guests agreed that much has been accomplished already, and that Austria is well on the way to realising the aims and priorities of the EHEA; for this reason, there must be no easing off, and the momentum should be maintained, so as to ensure that Austria continues to play an active role in the future development of the Bologna Process.

For the Bologna anniversary year, the OeAD devoted a special edition of OeAD News (in German) to “20 years of the Bologna Process – working towards the European Higher Education Area”. This includes interviews on the theme of the Bologna Process, and guest contributions written by representatives of the higher education sector and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF), as well as various interest groups and experts from Austria and abroad. In this way readers are presented with a broad overview of the life and work of the EHEA, ranging from a historical outline, perspectives of students and teaching staff, facts and figures on the current status of implementation in Austria, to the perhaps increasingly digitalised future of the Bologna Process. The special edition is available online (in German only) at <https://oead.at/de/der-oead/downloads/>.

Mobility and internationalisation of teaching

There is no doubt that international physical mobility experiences, and the many and varied academic, personal and intercultural skills gained through them, form a significant, qualification-enhancing element of the education and training of students and university staff. It is also the central objective behind the EHEA and therefore also of the Bologna Process.

Austrian higher education policy made an explicit commitment to the advancement of mobility programmes in higher education as early as 2016 with its Higher Education Mobility Strategy (HMS 2016). Numerous related measures are being incorporated into a wide range of strategic documents and processes (e.g. the performance agreements for 2019–2021 include the internationalisation of curricula, and development and implementation of joint study programmes; corresponding points are also included in the Development and Funding Plan for Universities of Applied Sciences for 2018/19 – 2022/23, the Development Plan for University Colleges of Teacher Education for 2021–2026, and the Austrian National Development Plan for Public Universities for 2022–2027).

Furthermore the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research has already introduced an amendment to the survey of study-related stays abroad by graduates (UHStat 2 survey¹), which allows mobility stays of one month's duration to be included. The ministry is also lobbying at the European level for funding to support shorter student mobilities as part of the follow-up programme for Erasmus+.

To support social inclusion, from the academic year 2019/20 onwards, the Erasmus+ grant for study periods and practical experiences abroad was increased by €60 per month. In addition, to encourage socially disadvantaged students to participate in mobility programmes, recipients of the study grant are now entitled to claim both the full Erasmus+ grant and the Austrian “grant for study abroad”.

In order to enhance not only the quantity but also the quality of mobility activities, publication of the Higher Education Mobility Strategy (HMS) 2016 – as mentioned above – provided a definition of the strategic aims and made recommendations in the form of 16 action lines, to be implemented by 2025.

The **purpose** of this strategy is to offer Austria's young people a tertiary education that fosters the **skills necessary for globally networked and innovative thinking** and encourages **cooperation with our neighbouring regions and beyond**. Today it is more important than ever to be able to look beyond the horizon and consider different opinions and points of view.

A key factor in acquiring these skills is **mobility**, making it a **central theme of educational policy** at national, European and international levels. With its 2016 Higher Education Mobility Strategy, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research affirmed its commitment to promoting academic mobility programmes and the willingness to create the appropriate framework conditions. The aim is to strengthen the reputation of Austria as a location for education, science, innovation and research, and so to attract the best minds to our country.

¹ See Annex 15 of Section 26(1) and (2) of the University and Higher Education Statistics and Education Documentation Regulation (UHSBV)



Bologna Day 2019: “20 Years European Higher Education Area: Reflexion – Present – Future”
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The 20th anniversary of the Bologna Declaration was celebrated on Bologna Day 2019
© OeAD/APA-Fotoservice/Ludwig Schedl

An **interim report** was prepared as part of the 2018 Austrian EHEA Implementation Report for the EHEA Ministerial Conference in Paris in May 2018. This showed that the majority of the planned HMS measures have already been implemented or are under way. In addition, the HMS 2016 brought the topic of “higher education mobility” more emphatically to the attention of the stakeholders who are most relevant in this context.

As anticipated in Section 4 of the Higher Education Mobility Strategy 2016, this document is now being **redeveloped** to create a national strategy for the whole Austrian higher education sector: “**National mobility and internationalisation strategy for higher education 2020–2030 – “There are many routes to internationalisation”**”. The focus is on improving the conditions for high-quality physical mobility programmes and on the internationalisation of higher education and teaching. To this end the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, together with the higher education institutions, are taking a broad approach which includes not only the formal curriculum, but also the informal curriculum (learning experiences outside the formal programme of study, e.g. through extra-curricular activities and nature of the higher education environment), and the

so-called hidden curriculum (including for example the role of teaching staff, the norms for collaboration among students, assessment criteria or choice of literature). This broader focus stems from the recognition that defining mobility visits as a specific measure for the purpose of acquiring subject-related, international and intercultural skills is an oversimplification; it is more appropriate to regard them as an integral component of an internationalised curriculum. This internationalised approach to learning also provides an opportunity for non-mobile students to acquire international and intercultural skills. At the same time, internationalised curricula encourage a willingness to take part in mobility programmes, and lead to greater openness and tolerance towards other societies and cultures.

For the redevelopment of the HMS 2016, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, in cooperation with the Bologna Service Point of the Austrian Exchange Service (OeAD), has launched the **HMS Mobility Forum** – a participative process, inviting the involvement of Austrian higher education institutions, which play a central role in this context, and which through various different measures are making a vital contribution. In view of the current composition of the department’s portfolio – in contrast to the HMS



Bologna Day 2019: Discussion: "Fundamental Values and Academic Freedom – The role of the European Higher Education Area and the Vienna Declaration on 'Universities for Enlightenment'"; From left to right: Presenter Christian Meyer (University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna), Liviu Matei (Central European University), Edeltraud Hanappi-Egger (Vienna University of Economics and Business), Friedrich Bechina (Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education), Sijbolt Noorda (Magna Charta Observatory)

© OeAD/APA-Fotoservice/Ludwig Schedl

2016 – this will now also include the university colleges of teacher education.

After a very successful kick-off event on 23 October 2018 with representatives of the senior management of Austrian higher education institutions, more than 140 experts from these institutions worked to prepare recommendations and proposed measures in the following areas:

- internationalisation of curricula/higher education and teaching:
 - joint programmes;
- staff mobility – teaching staff (in the form of peer learning on "subject-related teaching methodology");
- staff mobility – non-academic/general staff;
- non-traditional and innovative forms of mobility for students;
- promoting mobility activities for under-represented student groups;
- quality assurance and quality management of measures for the internationalisation of higher education and teaching, including mobility programmes.

Each topic group came together for three working meetings. They worked intensively on their topics in a process that ran from February to June 2019. Two co-chairs led and moderated each topic group. To coordinate the content covered between the groups, the co-chairs themselves also attended three networking meetings of their own.

The resulting proposals from each topic group for recommendations and measures, together with the five strategic targets derived from those topics, were then discussed at a "dialogue event" on 24 October 2019 – this time with senior management representatives from higher education institutions. The results of this process have been incorporated into the redevelopment of the Higher Education Mobility Strategy and consequently into the above-mentioned national strategy for the Austrian higher education sector, *National mobility and internationalisation strategy for higher education 2020–2030* – "There are many routes to internationalisation". Publication of the HMIS 2030 is planned for the beginning of November 2020.

The Social Dimension

The Social Dimension in the European Higher Education Area

The 2015 EHEA Ministerial Conference in Yerevan agreed to make the social dimension one of the four EHEA priorities.² The aim is to enable members of all social groups to participate successfully in higher education, so that the composition of the student body at all stages of the higher education system (access, participation, graduation) reflects that of the overall population. This objective was already included in the 2007 London Communiqué, and the 2012 Bucharest Communiqué, and in 2013 it was adopted in the *Conclusions of the Council of the European Commission on the Social Dimension in Higher Education*. Participation in education and training at all levels raises the potential for social, economic and political inclusion and integration. In addition to ability and motivation, there are various “social” factors (e.g. regional and educational background, gender) that can help or hinder access to education and training. A socially inclusive culture in higher education, with more diversified opportunities for teaching and learning, recognises the value of a diverse student body and the integration of underrepresented groups as a resource for higher education, and supports all kinds of talents and abilities.

This *priority* was explicitly defined in the commitment “to make our higher education more socially inclusive by implementing the EHEA social dimension strategy”³, and there will be an update on its implementation so far in the Bologna Policy Implementation Report (Rome 2020). The Communiqué resulting from the 2018 Ministerial Conference in Paris also included a shared commitment to the

social dimension in higher education, and mandated the European Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) to continue with further implementation.

“We recognise that further effort is required to strengthen the social dimension of higher education. In order to meet our commitment that the student body entering and graduating from European higher education institutions should reflect the diversity of Europe’s populations, we will improve access and completion by under-represented and vulnerable groups. There, we mandate the BFUG to take this issue forward by the next EHEA Ministerial Conference.”

(2018 Paris Communiqué, p. 4)

The BFUG Advisory Group on the social dimension also developed a set of “Principles and guidelines to strengthen the social dimension of higher education in the EHEA”, which are intended to provide a basis on which the EHEA Ministerial Conference in Rome (November 2020) will create a framework for implementation of the numerous measures related to the social dimension within the EHEA.

² Yerevan Communiqué: “**Making our systems more inclusive** is an essential aim for the EHEA as our populations become more and more diversified, also due to immigration and demographic changes. We undertake to widen participation in higher education [...] We will enhance the social dimension of higher education, improve gender balance and widen opportunities for access and completion, including international mobility, for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.” http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2015_Yerevan/71/5/Widening_Participation_for_Equity_and_Growth_A_Strategy_for_the_Development_of_the_SD_and_LLL_in_the_EHEA_to_2020_613715.pdf (accessed: 20.07.2020)

³ **Widening Participation for Equity and Growth. A Strategy for the Development of the Social Dimension and Lifelong Learning in the European Higher Education Area to 2020** (p. 4); see also the chapter on “Working Group 1 Monitoring” (p. 76) http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2015_Yerevan/70/7/YerevanCommuniquéFinal_613707.pdf (accessed: 20.07.2020)

Status quo and challenges in Austria

National strategy on the social dimension of higher education

In consultation with the universities, universities of applied sciences, university colleges of teacher education and the private universities, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) compiled a document entitled **National strategy on the social dimension of higher education. Towards more inclusive access and wider participation**, which was published in 2017. The ministry assumes responsibility, in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, for its successful implementation by 2025. The interim evaluation planned for 2021 is expected to describe both the status of implementation in all sections of the higher education sector, and any adjustments needed in the strategy.

The three broad target dimensions, which each include three action lines, for different parts of the student life cycle, provide an excellent matrix for the analysis, development and implementation of the relevant measures:

Target dimension I "More inclusive access" addresses the quality and accessibility of information and advisory services and outreach activities in particular in order to ensure heterogeneity in higher education access. The recognition and validation of non-formal and informal skills is meant to simplify access and redesign these processes to be more effective.

- Action line 1: Improve quality and accessibility of information
- Action line 2: Outreach activities and diversity-sensitive course guidance
- Action line 3: Recognition and validation of non-formal and informal skills

Target dimension II "Avoid dropout and improve academic success" is related to the organisation of study programmes (including improving the compatibility between studying and other aspects of a student's life), entry into higher education (creating a welcoming environment, amongst other things) and the quality of teaching with the aim of improving awareness and appreciation of heterogeneity and diversity.

- Action line 4: Ease entry into higher education
- Action line 5: Structure of study programmes and quality of teaching
- Action line 6: Increase compatibility of studies with other areas of life

Target dimension III, "Create basic parameters and optimise the regulation of higher education policy" addresses system-related issues in higher education (such as the further development of study regulations, monitoring the feasibility of completing study programmes on schedule, improving social targeting with regard to access to higher education, and reviewing the impact of higher education funding on the social dimension); it also concerns the creation of appropriate governance structures at higher education institutions (e.g. integration of the social dimension in higher education institutions' strategy considerations), and student grants, which have been much improved thanks to the Amendment of the⁴ Student Support Act 2017.

- Action line 7: System-related issues in higher education
- Action line 8: Integrate the social dimension into strategic planning for higher education and create appropriate governance structures
- Action line 9: Further develop the Student Support Scheme

⁴ Student Support Act 1992 (StudFG), Federal Law Gazette II No. 305/1992, last amended by Federal Law Gazette I No. 77/2017 and Federal Law Gazette I No. 142/2017)

Implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the strategy

Progress in implementing higher education policy and management

The initial achievements of targeted implementation include the provisional withholding of 0.5% of the global budget in the 2019–2021 performance agreements with all universities, which was made possible by the new funding model for public universities (Universitätsfinanzierung NEU). A third of universities have decided to devise and implement their own institutional strategies for the social dimension. The remaining universities have incorporated substantial plans into their performance agreements. These relate for example to outreach measures, the monitoring of student admissions, and support on entry into higher education, or in the initial phase of studies.

The current Development and Funding Plan for Universities of Applied Sciences, for the period 2018/19–2022/23, makes reference to the social mix of the student body and the “integration of the social dimension into strategic planning”, and implementation of the “National strategy on the social dimension of higher education”. In universities of applied sciences, for example, it is a challenge to reduce the underrepresentation of students whose fathers have no upper secondary school leaving certificate “Matura”, and more specifically to reduce the gap with regard to the probability factor for student admissions/recruitment quotas between full-time courses of study and those intended to be “extra-occupational” (i.e. studied alongside employment commitments) even if admissions to courses in universities of applied sciences are generally more socially balanced.

Increase study grants

The strategy paper successfully initiated a supportive narrative on the social dimension, which has resulted in various developments emerging, being accelerated or completed. Adjustment of the study grant was one of several recommendations made in the strategy process, and expansion of the Student Support Scheme was subsequently included in the strategy paper.

The 2017 amendment to the Student Support Scheme resulted in a 24% increase per person in the average amount of the student grant. There are improvements for older students, e.g. supplementary grants for those above 24 years old, and similarly for “self-supporting” students over 27 years old who receive a maintenance grant.

Increase mobility grants

A further development related to the social dimension, which supports the fulfilment of quantitative goal no. 6, is the increase in additional grants for mobility (for details see the chapter on mobility and internationalisation of teaching).

Annual networking conferences

Annual networking conferences are worthwhile for disseminating requirements and examples of good practice. A wider range of participants is being invited – depending on the topic – (e.g. departments of education were invited to the 2019 networking conference, which focused on the “Transition from school to higher education”).

- December 2018: “Success in higher education? Supportive factors, from entry to graduation”
- December 2019: “Transition from school to higher education”
- October 2020: in preparation

The 2019 Social Survey of Students and Eurostudent VII

The 2019 Social Survey of Students is the first to be used as a direct reference source for supportive monitoring of the National strategy on the social dimension of higher education, with regard to individual quantitative targets and quantitative trends. Thanks to student social surveys conducted since the 1970s, Austria possesses ample information about the social status of students, which regularly informs higher education policy measures, such as student grants or information and advisory services. Evidence on students’ social background will be used to prepare a report for the Austrian parliament (National Council) in early summer 2020 on the measures of the Student Support Scheme and on key findings from the Social Survey of Students. Data from the 2019 Social Survey of Students, conducted

(during the 2019 summer semester) by the Institute for Advanced Studies, are also included in the Eurostudent VII⁵ survey (due to be published spring/summer 2021) and through this in international comparisons.

Bologna Day conferences 2017–2020

At the 2017 Bologna Day⁶ the strategy paper which had been prepared in advance was presented to stakeholders from the field of higher education. Bologna Day 2018⁷ featured remarkably open and practical discussions on aspects of the social dimension, and the 2019 Bologna Day⁸, in the 20th anniversary year of the European Higher Education Area, included numerous references to issues concerning the social dimension.

International visibility

The Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF), and many higher education institutions are involved in numerous projects, including those sponsored by the Erasmus+ programme. A few of these projects are outlined by way of example below:

PLAR-4-SIMP – Peer learning and resources for social inclusion in mobility programmes

Under the leadership of the Belgian education ministry (Flanders) an international consortium is developing a “toolbox for inclusive mobility”, with involvement from various experts, which is expected to include a report on steering mechanisms in higher education policy and institutions, and a database (with action plans and practical examples of initiatives for the social dimension in mobility programmes). One of the peer learning activities will take place in Vienna. This was originally planned for June (15–16 June 2020 at FH Campus Wien (University of Applied Sciences Campus Vienna)), but due to the current global situation with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is now likely to be held in April 2021 in Austria, depending on the rescheduling of other elements of the project plan.

3-IN-AT – Internationalisation/INclusion/INnovation

Towards high-quality inclusive mobility and innovative teaching & learning in an internationalised Austrian Higher Education Area: A 2017 peer learning activity (PLA) in Linz on “Mainstreaming the Social Dimension in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA): Strategies, Tools, Raising Awareness.”⁹ included the launch of the strategy paper, the day before the Bologna Day conference. As one of various follow-up events, another peer learning activity is planned, to include some of the same countries. The aim is to compare further developments and challenges in each country, and at the same time to involve new countries too. A publication on the status quo is also planned, with profiles of the relevant countries and examples of good practice.

SIDERAL – Social and international dimension of education and recognition of acquired learning

This project is coordinated by the Croatian education ministry, and supports implementation of the Croatian “National Plan for Strengthening the Social Dimension”, with the assistance of experts from Austria and Sweden, and in close cooperation with the European Students’ Union (ESU). One of the key focal points is the recognition of prior learning (RPL).

PROFFORMANCE – Assessment tool and Incentives for Developing Higher Education Teachers’ Performance

This project is coordinated by the Hungarian Ministry for Innovation and Technology, and the project partners are Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Georgia and Serbia. One of the most important objectives of the project is to develop a (self-)evaluation tool for teaching and learning in higher education, which will include, for example, evaluations of teaching staff by students. This is expected to have positive outcomes for students and university teaching staff, and also to influence university administration, e.g. with regard to strategic developments in staff recruitment planning.

⁵ Eurostudent VII 2018–2021: Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe. Synopsis of Indicators.

⁶ Bologna Day 2017: “Towards more inclusive access and wider participation: National strategy on the social dimension of higher education” <https://oead.at/fileadmin/Dokumente/oead.at/KIM/Veranstaltungen/2015/Bologna-Tag/PLA/Austria.pdf> (accessed: 28 May 2020)

⁷ Bologna Day 2018: “Recognising prior learning experiences: Strategies – recommendations – models” <https://oead.at/de/veranstaltungen/detail/2018/03/21/bologna-tag-2018/>

⁸ Bologna Day 2019: “20 years of the European Higher Education Area: Reflections – current situation – future” https://oead.at/fileadmin/Dokumente/oead.at/KIM/Veranstaltungen/2019/Bologna-Tag/Bologna-Tag_2019.pdf (accessed: 06.03.2020)

⁹ https://oead.at/fileadmin/Dokumente/oead.at/KIM/Veranstaltungen/2017/Bologna-Tag/Programme_PLA_Soc_Dim.pdf (accessed: 11.03.2020)

ENHANCE IDM (Inclusion and Diversity Management)

The Department of Higher Education Research and Development at the University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria, in cooperation with three other partner universities – Birmingham City University (United Kingdom), Laurea University of Applied Sciences (Finland) and the TH Köln University of Applied Sciences (Germany) – has developed training modules for developing more inclusive curricula, a toolbox for diversity management, and a self-assessment tool for evaluation of the user's own diversity skills. The primary target group is course leaders at participating higher education institutions. The aim of the project was to develop tools for diversity management in higher education, and to build up the diversity skills of stakeholders in higher education institutions. The online platform is due to be launched on 14 May 2020, at a virtual event hosted in Steyr, Upper Austria.

Specialist conference on “The New Student: Flexible Learning Paths and Future Learning Environments” in September 2018

During Austria's presidency of the Council of the European Union, a specialist conference was held in Vienna in September 2018, which addressed the potential benefits and challenges of an increasingly diverse student population. One central issue was how flexible study options and learning pathways can be facilitated by higher education institutions, and how national higher education governance and the European Union can best support this.

Presentations and panel appearances on “Social Dimension Policy” in an international context, extract

- 06/2018: Presentation on “Equity in Tertiary Education”, OECD, IWGHE (Paris)
- 09/2018: Conception of the conference workshop during the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union: “The New Student: Flexible Learning Paths and Future Learning Environments” (Vienna, see above)
- 05/2019: Presentation at the EUROSTUDENT VII Policy Makers' Conference (Tallinn)
- 04/2019: Presentation at the peer learning activity on “Inclusion in higher education: Promoting life-changing opportunities for people of under-represented groups” (Brussels)

- 07/2019: Presentation at the kick-off conference for SID-ERAL (Social and international dimension of education and recognition of acquired learning) (Zadar, see above)
- 12/2019: HERE (Higher Education Research Experts) Annual Conference (Prague)
- 03/2020: Panel appearances INVITED-Diversity, equity and inclusion at European higher education institutions¹⁰ (Brussels)

Quantitative targets: Developments over time

To allow developments to be tracked and evaluated, nine quantitative targets were also specified in the National strategy on the social dimension of higher education¹¹; these are intended as key indicators for some of the challenges within the target dimensions and action lines. The (purely) quantitative measurability of the effectiveness of qualitative measures was discussed during the development process for the strategy. Targets were set to encourage commitment and to make the “national commitment” visible, although progress is not evaluated purely by (non-) achievement of the specified targets. The (interim) evaluation will take account not only of quantitative monitoring but also the implementation of policy measures and institutional measures in the higher education sector, and the numerous national and international dissemination and networking activities.

¹⁰ <https://eua.eu/events/112-invited-project-final-conference.html> (accessed: 09.03.2020)

¹¹ [https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/dam/jcr:c9a80638-7c6c-4a3f-912b-8884ccc1ed2a/Nationale%20Strategie%20\(PDF\).pdf](https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/dam/jcr:c9a80638-7c6c-4a3f-912b-8884ccc1ed2a/Nationale%20Strategie%20(PDF).pdf) (accessed: 27.04.2020)

Overview: Quantitative targets and areas of responsibility

Quantitative goals through to 2025		Responsibilities
1a	Reduce the recruitment quota/probability factor for admission to higher education to 2.25 (2020), and 2.10 (2025)	BMWFW, HE institutions
1b	Decrease the discrepancy in the probability factors between public universities and universities of applied sciences	BMWFW, HE institutions
1c	Include private universities and university colleges of teacher education in the calculation of probability factors, adapt target values	BMBWF
2	Increase the number of non-traditional admissions (educational residents) to higher education to 5,300	BMWFW, HE institutions, employers and industry associations, Austrian Students' Union, education advisers
3a	Minimum percentage of 10% men or women in any field of education at any higher education institution (excluding doctoral study)	BMWFW, HE institutions, ÖH, education advisers
3b	Halve the number of fields of studies at each higher education institution where men or women comprise less than 30%	BMWFW, HE institutions, ÖH, education advisers
4	Increase the entry rates to higher education of 2nd generation migrant students to 30%	BMWFW, HE institutions, employers and industry associations, ÖH, education advisers
5	Increase the entry rates to higher education in all federal states to at least 42% by 2025 and towards the Austrian average with reference to the entire education and vocational education system	BMWFW, regional governments, HE institutions, employers and industry associations, ÖH, education advisers
6	Increase participation in study programmes abroad by students whose parents have no university entrance qualifications, to at least 18%	BMWFW, HE institutions, ÖH
7	Increase the number of extra-occupational study places at universities of applied sciences to 50%	BMWFW, universities of applied sciences
8	Increase the number of self-supporting students receiving maintenance grants to 15,000	BMWFW, HE institutions, ÖH, education advisers
9	Sustained increase in the percentage of student admissions from homes where neither parent has a university degree on medical and dental courses towards an eventual target of 50%	BMWFW, HE institutions

Quantitative targets: Developments since 2014/15

Quantitative target 1

Reduce the underrepresentation of students whose parents¹² have no upper secondary school leaving certificate “Matura”. The probability factor¹³ of 2.47 (2019/20 academic year) means that students whose fathers have an upper secondary school leaving certificate “Matura” (“educated family background”) are 2.47 times more likely to enter higher education than students from an “educationally disadvantaged family home”. After a slight decline between 2015 and 2018, in 2019 it has reduced again. A factor of 1 would mean that there is no difference in probability that

children of fathers with or without the upper secondary school leaving certificate “Matura” would enter tertiary education. Since in the case of students from an “educated” family background, the probability that these will study at a public university is higher than for universities of applied sciences, the difference in the recruitment quotas between public universities and universities of applied sciences is also considered, while at the same time reducing the underrepresentation.¹⁴

Recruitment quota/probability factor for admission to higher education

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Target for 2020	Target for 2025
Public universities	2.95	2.80	2.68	2.77	2.96	3.03	2.98		
Universities of applied sciences	1.89	1.86	1.81	1.80	1.81	1.89	1.80		
Public universities and universities of applied sciences	2.60	2.48	2.38	2.43	2.52	2.58	2.47	2.25	2.10

See also Budget appropriation 2019. Subdivision 31. Science and research. Objective 1 / Figure 31.1.5; see also the Social Survey of Students for 2015 and 2019.

Source: Higher education statistics (Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy – BMBWF) and Statistics Austria (micro census, UHStat 1), analysis by the Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS) as part of the Social Survey of Students

¹² Measured by the formal educational attainment of the father. Statements about the development of recruitment rates/probability factors are sounder when based on the father's education. With regard to the mother's education, the developments in the parents' generation were very dynamic, which is why the indicator would be influenced more strongly by changes in education in the parents' generation.

¹³ Calculation of the probability factor is based on the recruitment ratio, which correlates the composition of the domestic student body beginning degree programmes, in terms of the father's formal educational background, with the corresponding groups within the overall domestic population, see 2015 Social Survey of Students, main findings, volume 1, p. 47

¹⁴ Since the 2019 winter semester, the mandatory UHStat1 survey conducted by Statistics Austria has also included university colleges of teacher education and private universities (see quantitative target 1c)

Quantitative target 2

Increase the number of non-traditional admissions to higher education. Due to a change in the data available, the analysis was restructured and the target therefore needs to be adjusted upwards. At public universities, universities of applied sciences and university colleges of teacher education, around 10% of educational residents admitted

for the 2018/19 academic year had a qualification for higher education (Studienberechtigungsprüfung), a vocational matriculation examination (Berufsreifeprüfung), an external upper secondary school leaving certificate "Matura" or no school leaving qualification.¹⁵ This amounted to just under 4,500 people.

Non-traditional admissions to higher education (educational residents)

Academic year		2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Universities	Number	2,070	2,214	2,134	2,293	2,397	2,346	2,286	2,137
	Percentage	7.3%	7.8%	7.9%	8.1%	8.5%	8.7%	8.8%	8.6%
Universities of applied sciences – full-time FH	Number	793	824	856	852	859	927	892	1,003
	Percentage	11.5%	11.7%	11.7%	11.2%	10.8%	11.3%	10.8%	11.0%
Universities of applied sciences – extra-occupational FH	Number	588	710	808	768	827	872	911	788
	Percentage	20.6%	21.1%	22.4%	20.8%	22.6%	23.4%	23.5%	21.1%
University colleges of teacher education	Number	507	562	533	566	521	234	211	223
	Percentage	10.8%	12.4%	12.6%	10.6%	10.0%	10.8%	10.9%	9.5%
Total	Number	3,958	4,310	4,331	4,479	4,604	4,313	4,239	4,103
	Percentage	9.3%	10.0%	10.2%	10.0%	10.2%	10.8%	10.9%	10.5%

The table shows values which have been adjusted retrospectively, which do not correspond with the original values in the strategy document.

Source: Higher education statistics (Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy – BMWFW, Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research – BMBWF, Statistics Austria), analysis by the Institute of Advanced Studies (IHS), Vienna

¹⁵ The table shows values which have been adjusted retrospectively, which do not correspond with the original values in the strategy document.

Quantitative target 3

More equal gender balance in all fields of education. By 2025 each field of education (based on International Standard Classification of Education 3-digit classifications; ISCED 97¹⁶) at each higher education institution should have a minimum of 10% women or men in each student cohort. This indicator was devised in cooperation with the departments for higher education statistics and equality and

diversity management at the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, and included in the impact analysis, which ensures that this quantitative target is monitored every year. This amended analysis considers study programmes (i.e. at a more detailed level) rather than fields of education.

The number of study programmes available that do not yet meet the target gender ratio (min. 10% women/men)

	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	Target for 2025
Public universities	42	39	37	35	0
Universities of applied sciences	85	79	78	76	0
Public universities and universities of applied sciences	127	118	115	111	0

Source: Analyses based on the indicator for impact analysis, Dept. IV/11 and Pres./I

¹⁶ Excepting doctoral students, since this would require more preparatory work for indicator development.

Quantitative target 4

Increase the entry rate of (educational resident) students with a migrant background to higher education. The entry rate of (educational resident) second generation migrant students to higher education (i.e. student born in Austria, parents born abroad)¹⁷ was 22% in 2014/15, and should increase to 30% by 2025 (estimates based on data from the Social Survey of Students).¹⁸ As a result of the inclusion since winter semester 2019 of the characteristic “migrant background” in the UHStat 1 survey by Statistics Austria, it will in future be possible to show this target value on the basis of a full survey. The amended UHStat1 survey was first conducted in winter semester 2019, so reliable data on all higher education sectors will not be available until winter semester 2020.

There is no quantitative target for entry rates to higher education for first-generation immigrants¹⁹, as the difference between this group and domestic students with no migrant background was smaller. Recently however, a significant decline has been observed, from 30% to 19%. According to the analysis in the 2019 Social Survey of Students, this is largely due to the fact that the number of people with a first-generation migrant background increased as a result of the migration movements of 2015 in the relevant age groups (17–22-year-olds).

Estimated entry rate of educational resident second generation migrant students to higher education (i.e. student born in Austria, parents born abroad)

	2010/2011	2016/2017	2017/2018
Estimated higher education entry rate of educational resident second generation migrant students	19%	23%	21%
Estimated higher education entry rate of educational resident first generation migrant students	28%	30%	19%
Estimated entry rate of educational resident students with no migrant background	48%	51%	49%

Source: Social Survey of Students for 2011, 2015, data from the 2019 Social Survey of Students

¹⁷ Students in Austria whose parents were both born abroad.

¹⁸ Zaussinger, Unger et al. (2016): 2015 Social Survey of Students, Volume 1, p. 42 and analyses by the Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS) from data collected by the 2019 Social Survey of Students

¹⁹ The student and both parents were born abroad.

Quantitative target 5**Reduce regional differences in access to higher education.**

Higher education entry rates, as an estimate of how many people begin a degree level course “at some point in their life”, vary significantly across Austria by state of origin and gender; the percentage currently fluctuates between 33% of any year-group cohort in Vorarlberg and 66% in Vienna. In terms of the entire educational and vocational training system the higher education entry rate should be at least 42% in all federal states by 2025, or efforts should be

under way to increase this to reach the Austrian average. As the table shows, since 2014/15 Austria’s national higher education entry rate increased up to the year 2017/18, and in 2018/19 it sank back to below the starting level at the point when the national strategy was published (2014/15). Furthermore, in addition to Tyrol and Vorarlberg, the entry rates in Styria and Upper Austria have now also fallen below the target level of 42%.

Higher education entry rate (domestic students) by federal state of origin and gender, academic year 2014/15 to 2018/19

	AY 2014/15			AY 2017/18			AY 2018/19			Target for 2025
	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total	Total
Burgenland	61%	42%	51%	62%	42%	52%	58%	40%	48%	
Lower Austria	56%	40%	48%	58%	41%	49%	56%	39%	47%	
Vienna	68%	57%	63%	75%	60%	67%	72%	59%	66%	
Carinthia	60%	38%	49%	62%	39%	50%	59%	39%	48%	
Styria	49%	35%	42%	52%	38%	45%	43%	32%	38%	
Upper Austria	51%	33%	42%	50%	32%	41%	48%	32%	39%	
Salzburg	52%	40%	46%	50%	38%	44%	50%	38%	44%	
Tyrol	46%	35%	41%	48%	36%	42%	45%	34%	39%	42%
Vorarlberg	40%	32%	36%	42%	30%	35%	38%	29%	33%	42%
Total	55%	40%	47%	57%	41%	49%	54%	39%	46%	

Domestic admissions to bachelor’s degrees and diploma courses (not including incoming mobility students) by academic year. University colleges of teacher education for the academic year 2014/15, not including the summer semester 2015.

Source: Higher education statistics (Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, Statistics Austria), population statistics (Statistics Austria 2019b), calculation by the Institute of Advanced Studies (IHS), Vienna (using data from the 2019 Social Survey of Students)

Quantitative target 6

Increase participation in mobility programmes by students from “educationally disadvantaged” social groups. Of those students (summer semester 2015) whose parents have no upper secondary school leaving certificate “Matura”, 14% had completed a semester or practical work experience abroad, while for students whose parents have a Matura the proportion was 21%. Participation in study programmes abroad by students whose parents have no higher education entrance qualifications should therefore be in-

creased to at least 18% by 2025.²⁰ The data for 2019 will be taken from the supplementary report for the Social Survey of Students, on the theme of “International mobility”, which is expected to be published in May 2020.

**Participation in international mobility programmes:
Proportion of students whose parents have or do not have higher education entrance qualifications**

	2015	2019	Target for 2025
Proportion of students whose parents do not have higher education entrance qualifications	14%	not yet available	18%
Proportion of students whose parents have higher education entrance qualifications	21%	not yet available	x

Source: 2015 Social Survey of Students, Supplementary report, International mobility, p. 20, table 6

²⁰ Data source: 2015 Social Survey of Students; see Zaussinger, Unger et al. (2016): supplementary report, Internationale Mobilität der Studierenden (International Student Mobility), p. 20. As an alternative to this indicator, we are investigating using data from the combination of UHStat 2 (survey of study-related stays abroad towards completion of studies) with UHStat 1 (the feasibility and validity of data need to be checked).

Quantitative target 7

Increase extra-occupational study places at universities of applied sciences to 50% by 2020 (based on the “Strategy for Lifelong Learning in Austria”, LLL:2020).²¹

The consistent proportion of extra-occupational study places at universities of applied sciences can partly be explained by the simultaneous expansion of full-time places, as determined in the Development Plan for Universities of Applied Sciences 2018/19 – 2022/23, p. 9:

“During the academic years 2013/14 to 2017/18, the number of courses available in extra-occupational or extended extra-occupational formats increased noticeably from 201 to 237. This represents an increase of 18%. Over the same period, the number of students actively pursuing extra-occupational or extended extra-occupational programmes of study increased significantly, from 17,062 to 20,897. In this period the number of courses offered in purely full-time study formats increased from 199 to 212, an increase of 7%.”

Extra-occupational study places at universities of applied sciences

Academic years	2015/2016	2016/17	2017/18
Number of extra-occupational study places at universities of applied sciences	38.5%	38.7%	38.5%

Source: Analyses by Dept. IV/7, Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF)

²¹ Strategy for Lifelong Learning in Austria, LLL:2020, p. 31.

Quantitative target 8

Increase the number of maintenance grants available through the Student Support Scheme.²²

In the year 2015/16, 12,973 “self-supporting” students received a maintenance grant. By 2025 this number should rise to around 15,000.

Approved student support grants at universities (including private universities) and universities of applied sciences for “self-supporting” students per academic year

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Target for 2025
Public universities and private universities	7,688	7,829	7,904	7,898	7,957	8,237	7,886	7,801	7,843		
Universities of applied sciences	3,627	3,925	4,118	4,220	4,483	4,736	4,977	5,210	5,400		
Total for universities + universities of applied sciences	11,315	11,754	12,022	12,118	12,440	12,973	12,863	13,011	13,243		15,000

Source for the years 2010/11 to 2015/16: Austrian Study Grant Authority, cited by Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy (BMWF) (2016), Materialien zur sozialen Lage der Studierenden (Evidence on students' social situation), p. 16. Source for the years from 2016/17 onwards: Data from the Austrian Study Grant Authority

²² The “Maintenance Grant” for self-supporting students is a special form of study grant that is awarded regardless of parental income (after at least four years with own income).

Quantitative target 9

Increase the percentage of student admissions to medicine and dentistry from non-academic family backgrounds.

In the 2014/15 academic year, 40.7% of student admissions to medicine and dentistry courses came from a non-academic background. This proportion should be developed towards 50% by 2025.

Medicine and dentistry, domestic regular student admissions, by the father's highest level of educational qualification

Educational attainment of students' fathers in %	AY 2008/09	AY 2009/10	AY 2010/11	AY 2011/12	AY 2012/13	AY 2013/14	AY 2014/15	AY 2015/16	AY 2016/17	AY 2017/18
Compulsory schooling	3.0	5.4	5.6	3.3	4.2	2.8	4.0	4.1	3.6	3.7
Intermediate schooling	24.1	28.0	23.7	25.8	23.7	22.9	23.3	22.8	26.1	26.8
Higher schooling (“Matura” school leaving examination)	17.2	14.2	18.2	18.0	16.6	16.5	13.4	15.0	17.5	16.5
University/higher education	55.7	52.4	52.5	52.9	55.5	57.8	59.3	58.1	52.8	53.0

Source: Statistics Austria, UHStat 1; analysis by the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy (BMWFU)

High-quality learning and teaching

“Studyability” as a shared priority for higher education institutions and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research

In recent years a term has emerged in the Austrian higher education sector which has no real equivalent in the English language: “Studierbarkeit” – often rendered as “studyability”, meaning the practical feasibility of completing a study programme in a given time frame. Closer investigation reveals that enhancing “studyability” helps to change the emphasis from teaching to learning, and favours a more student-centred approach as described in the Bologna Process. This trend is already familiar in theoretical discussions on governance and in parts of the higher

education system, but practical implementation of the concept throughout Austrian tertiary institutions remains an important objective. In the context of higher education management, “studyability” – which is key to ensuring high quality tertiary education – is a central issue. The aim is not only to reinforce the measures being taken by universities, but also to make them more visible and to monitor their relevance. Quality and “studyability” also present a particular challenge in the design and implementation of the new teacher training programmes, which for general secondary education are run jointly by universities and university colleges of teacher education.



Dialogue on higher education teaching: “Studying at public universities”, September 2019

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Dialogue on teaching in higher education: “Studying at public universities”, keynote by Oliver Vettori (Vienna University of Economics and Business) in the working group D “Didactics for higher education”

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Changing perspective: from teaching to learning

The quality of learning and teaching in the tertiary education sector has become the focus of attention in higher education policy-making, both at the European level and in Austria. This raises questions of appropriate governance for teaching and learning which reflects the principle of academic freedom, the changing needs of students and the best possible use of public funding. The Paris Communiqué agreed by EHEA education ministers²³ (May 2018) highlights the need to balance these interests, and encourages an innovative approach to the conceptualisation and further development of tertiary study programmes and teaching. The emphasis on skills encouraged by the Bologna Process goes hand in hand with a paradigm shift in favour of a more student-centred approach to programmes of study. “Learning” and “teaching” are regarded as equally important, placing a new emphasis on didactics in higher education. In addition, digitalisation offers new ways to support teaching and learning processes and more direct access to knowledge. The Paris Communiqué calls on tertiary education institutions to develop their own strategies for research-based learning and teaching, and – as outlined by the European Standards for Quality Assurance²⁴ – to take responsibility for quality development.

An important European contribution comes from the European University Association (EUA) with the EFFECT project (European Forum for Enhanced Collaboration in Teaching), which supports experience sharing between higher education institutions, and evaluates national strategies. For Austria a 2018 study found that²⁵: “According to the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy, there is a dedicated learning and teaching policy framework in place, perceived by Universities Austria as a series of initiatives and working groups rather than an explicit strategy.”

As a result of the Paris Communiqué, at the end of 2018 the European BFUG set up an Advisory Group on Learning and Teaching to develop principles for innovation in learning and teaching and make corresponding recommendations to EHEA education ministers (see AG on Teaching and Learning; page number 78).

²³ Communiqué of the Ministerial Conference, Paris, 2018

²⁴ European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ESG)

²⁵ National Initiatives in Learning and Teaching in Europe, A report from the European Forum for Enhanced Collaboration in Teaching (EFFECT) project, Bunesco, Gaebel (2018)

“Structural studyability” – an (Austrian) quality issue

In the governance of public universities in Austria, the “studyability”, or practical feasibility of higher education programmes of study is a key priority. There are several reasons for this, above all the regular complaints from students about difficult study conditions (waiting times to get into courses, workloads, supervision ratios), particularly in the so-called mass-enrolment subjects. Weaknesses of the system – by international standards – manifest themselves in the length of time taken to complete studies, combined with low completion rates, and low numbers of exams taken in many subjects.

The effectiveness of the tertiary education system can be described in terms of factors such as relevance (i.e. the contribution of higher education institutions to science and research, society, and the (career) prospects of young people), use of resources (public and private funding) and the efficiency of their use of resources. One aspect of this efficiency is the “studyability”, that is to say the feasibility of timely progression through a high-quality programme of study. A tertiary institution can create the necessary framework for this and so ensure “structural studyability”. It also needs to consider the individual circumstances, lives and needs of an increasingly heterogeneous student body.

Action line 5 of the *National strategy on the social dimension* (2017)²⁶ concerns the organisation of study programmes and the quality of teaching with regard to the increasing diversity of the student body, and describes various measures that universities can adopt to address the needs of different groups of students. This includes curricular initiatives (particularly modularisation and credit recognition), the use of e-learning, and organisational interventions to minimise drop-out rates.

With reference to the Austrian National Development Plan for Public Universities (2022 – 2027)²⁷, optimising the practical feasibility of courses helps improve the quality and efficiency of university teaching (system objective 3), and is an aspect of quality management in universities.

“Structural studyability” is therefore a quality factor that is a key priority for Austrian universities, students and for the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF). As the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research understands it, “structural studyability of a curriculum exists when university structures allow a study programme to be completed successfully (in accordance with the defined skills objectives) within the normal duration of study with a workload that is consistent with the stated expectations.”

²⁶ <https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/Hochschule-und-Universitaet/Struktur/Studium/Leitthemen/Soziale-Dimension.html>

²⁷ <https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/Hochschule-und-Universitaet/Struktur/Hochschulgovernance/Steuerungsinstrumente/GUEP.html>

Quality assurance measures in universities to enhance “studyability”

The performance agreements between universities and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research for the period 2019–21 place a central focus on this aspect of quality, as follows:

- In the new capacity-oriented funding model for public universities (Universitätsfinanzierung NEU) the number of students admitted and their examination activity (>16 ECTS credits per academic year) is a key indicator for the allocated share of the global budget.²⁸ Other factors include the number of students completing degree programmes, and of students with a particularly high level of assessment activity (>40 ECTS credit points). These are determining factors for competitively awarded funding – and require evidence of quality assurance measures in teaching.
- The universities and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research have agreed on three central principles in the area of teaching, focusing on university-specific quality assurance and improvement measures, external evaluations of “studyability” at the request of rectorates, and raising awareness of the value of didactic skills for academic staff.

In recent years, universities have de facto not only made strategic commitments to structural improvements to enhance the feasibility of completing study programmes within the standard timeframe, but also introduced a plethora of measures to support students’ progression through study programmes and their successful completion. A survey by the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria (AQ Austria)²⁹ shows that promoting independent study without structural hindrances, with due consideration of individual life situations and diversity factors, is a central issue for university management bodies.

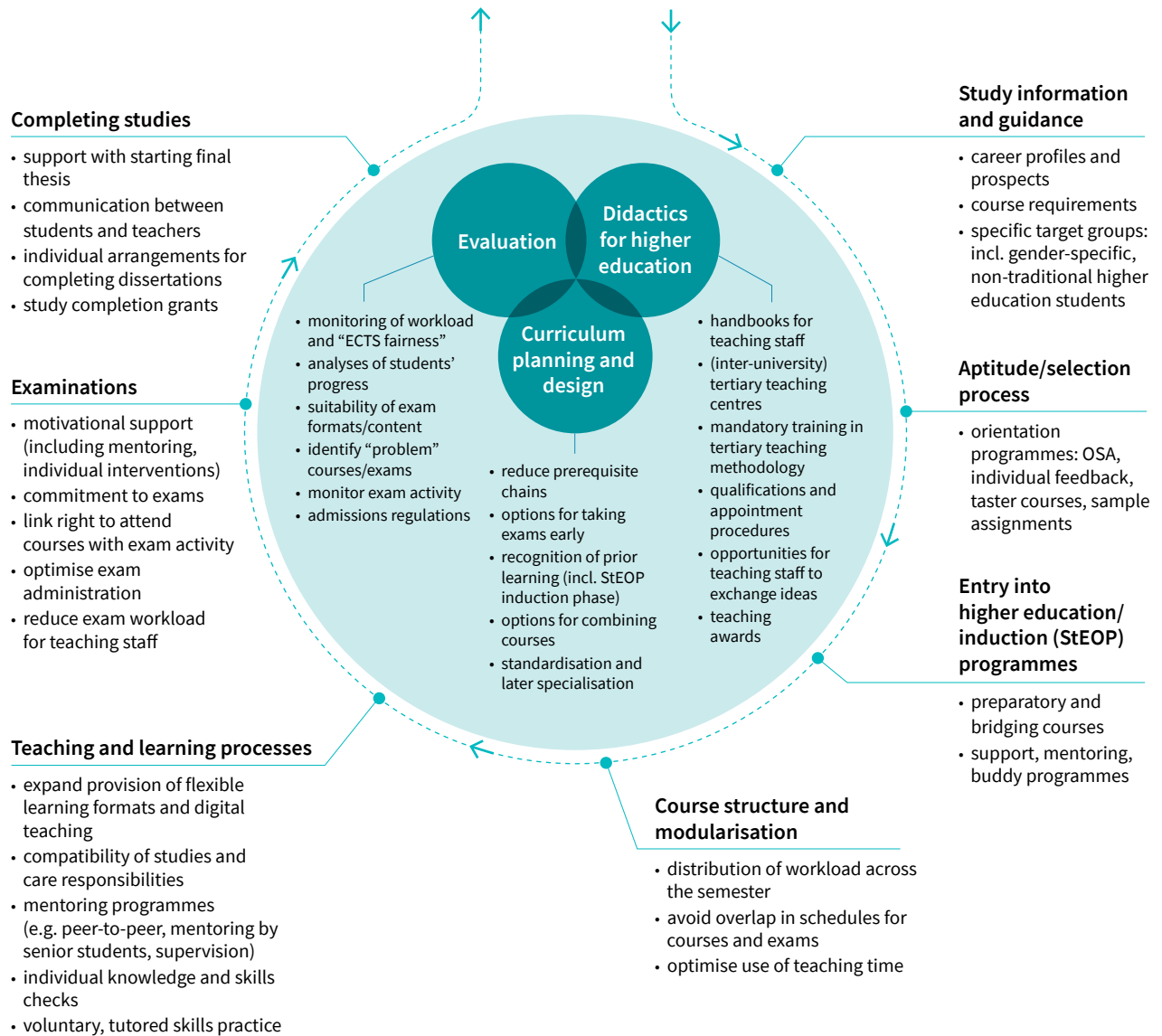
As part of the Erasmus Key Action 3 project 3-IN-AT, on 26 September 2019 the University of Vienna hosted a “Dialogue on teaching in higher education”. This event focused on analysis and debate on measures already under way in Austrian universities. These measures are included in the universities’ development plans and performance agreements and can be visualised in terms of the student life cycle:

- Course information and guidance is introduced at an early stage, increasingly in cooperation with schools.
- When students begin their higher education courses, orientation programmes help them settle into the practicalities of student life, and bridging courses help to fill any gaps in their prior knowledge.
- When designing the study system and modularisation, particular attention is paid to balancing the workload and avoiding schedule clashes.
- Teaching and learning processes are refined with a view to using flexible learning formats that allow for different personal circumstances and life situations. Support and encouragement are provided through buddy programmes and ways for students to keep track of their learning progress.
- To increase the level of assessment activity, the universities expect more commitment from students in registering for exams, but also offer more motivational measures (e.g. mentoring). Individual support and supervision is important, including in the final stages of degree courses.
- At curricular level the universities are working to create more flexible pathways for study and more recognition of prior learning achievements.
- More attention is being given to teaching skills for higher education in staff recruitment and selection procedures, and in staff development programmes.
- Universities have introduced monitoring and evaluation processes and the results of these are integrated into the design planning of the student life cycle.

²⁸ Further information on the funding model: University Report 2017, Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF)

²⁹ AQ Austria, Quality assurance in Austrian higher education – “Studyability”, report pursuant to Section 28 of the 2018 Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education (Hochschul-Qualitätssicherungsgesetz HS-QSG)

Student life cycle and “studyability” – references in the 2019–21 performance agreements



Quality and “studyability” in the new teacher training programmes

The introduction of new teacher training programmes in Austria is closely linked with addressing quality requirements and issues of “studyability”. “Structural studyability”, particularly for teacher training programmes delivered in cooperation with universities, presents a major challenge for university colleges of teacher education. One particular aspect is the legally mandated curricular framework for different types of teacher training programmes (identical structures for the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education (HS-QSG), Section 30 para. 1 let. 4, and the Teacher Education Act (HG), Section 74a para. 1 let. 4), which specifically defines the proportions of pedagogical, subject and specialist didactic content, as well as practical teaching elements. From 2013 onwards, teacher training programmes for primary education and those for secondary vocational education have been developed and delivered independently by university colleges of teacher education. In specialised teacher training programmes at university colleges of teacher education, comprehensive individual counselling, support and supervision of students in all phases of study have always been of key importance. This is evident amongst other things from the continuing and consistently high completion ratios in the study programmes designed and delivered independently by university colleges of teacher education (e.g. teacher training for primary education).

Teacher training programmes for secondary education were designed by universities and university colleges of teacher education in four regional groups (central, north-east, south-east, west), and delivered as shared programmes of study, in accordance with the 2017 amendment to the study regulations (Federal Law Gazette I no. 129/2017). The Quality Assurance Council (Qualitätssicherungsrat) for teacher training was responsible for evaluating the curricula, requesting adjustments where necessary and making recommendations for further qualitative development.

Appropriate weighting and integration of the content elements listed below is a particular quality requirement for the new teacher training programmes: There should be a balance between specialist subject knowledge and subject-specific teaching methodology (didactics). Subject-specific didactics should not be interpreted as simply a style of teaching but should be placed in context with educational content. Practical teacher training programmes, which include supervised teaching practice in schools, present a challenge both in terms of organisation and didactic content. Key points for optimising “studyability” include providing an adequate and appealing range of courses to accommodate all students; offering these programmes in different, sometimes widely separated institutions, in study programmes that have traditionally featured a high attendance requirement; and the organisation of substantial teaching experience in the context of practical teacher training programmes in consortia with a widely varying geographical composition.

Cooperative development work since 2013 has frequently been based on shared curricular principles, where the definition of general framework skills formed the basis of skills requirements for individual subjects and educational settings; concepts for the evaluation of teaching and learning are also shared. Consistent coordination of contents between specialist subject areas and education sectors has not always been completely successful. Once again the Quality Assurance Council recommended the development of content-related overall educational concepts, allowing connections to be made between different subjects and educational sectors, and encouraging coordinated training to cover all age groups. Higher quality standards in teacher training can only be achieved by supporting skills development in all the different fields of activity (teaching, guidance, diagnosis, assessment and evaluation, support and counselling). It will also be helpful to develop common quality standards for universities and university colleges of teacher education. An amendment to the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education (HS-QSG) will bring the university colleges of teacher education into the system of external quality assurance which is already used in all other higher education sectors.

The concept of modularisation in the new teacher training programmes has only been partially successful, according to external evaluation. A successful aspect has been the establishment of thematic frameworks in various curricula. However, unrealistically high expectations were set for learning outcomes at module level, which resulted in lower levels of ECTS credit points. Furthermore the fragmentation of courses was deemed problematic, linked with high levels of ECTS points and consequently little scope for self-regulated learning.

The first cohort of graduates from the bachelor's programmes provided some evaluation data on their experiences which are being used to devise measures for curricular improvement and to improve the organisational structure of the study programmes. Similarly substantial efforts and progress are now being made in consolidating and deepening cooperative programmes. Since the new teacher training programmes were introduced and implemented, they have been developed further, not only as specified in the 2017 amendment to the study regulations, but also with regard to some specific weaknesses that were identified. For example a clearer differentiation of skill levels between bachelor's and master's levels has been established. Most recently, aspects of digitalisation as an interdisciplinary issue have been embedded into individual curricular areas and made visible through the digi.komp competency model. One important measure for improving "studyability" was included in the curricula by minimising "prerequisite chains" (the requisite to pass specific exams to enter further courses). Taking advantage of the opportunities offered by digitalisation – particularly to allow for the increasing heterogeneity of the student body, which is also evident in teacher training programmes – has already resulted in a much more flexible range of study options.

The training schools which were integrated partners of university colleges of teacher education will be further developed into model and research schools, reinforcing the link between teaching and learning. This offers students more opportunities for reflective teaching practice in a research-based setting. From the perspective of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research a student-oriented approach to teacher training programmes can be

achieved through various measures and initiatives, including the following:

- needs-oriented study programmes for career-change entrants to teaching, in a format that can be fitted around the student's existing employment;
- ensuring compatibility of study and employment, and options for study regardless of physical location, through digitalisation of teaching, increased use of e-learning and blended learning options;
- expanding provision of information and advice for applicants on the requirements for study and future careers;
- further development of the existing tutorials for new students and the creation of efficient mentoring and buddy systems;
- further development of the qualifying exam for higher education (Studienberechtigungsprüfung), including validation of non-formal and informal achievements, in consultation with the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research;
- further development of interventions to prevent students dropping out, and to improve progression through their study programmes;
- creation of a needs-oriented and socially acceptable range of preparatory and bridging courses;
- creation of mobility windows for international study and practical experiences.

There are further challenges ahead for universities and university colleges of teacher education in the coming months and years. These include above all high-quality integration of supervised teaching practice, both early in the bachelor's programme and also in the subsequent master's programme. This requires close cooperation with schools and school authorities. "Structural studyability" is also reflected in organisational and logistical aspects of study and in-school practice, resulting from the involvement of geographically distant institutions. In this regard too, digitalisation offers further opportunities for new forms of teaching and learning.

Sustainable Development Goals

Political background and framework for implementation

The aim of sustainable development is to ensure that future generations inherit a world fit to live in, and to find solutions for the complex challenges of our time that are both environmentally friendly and socially acceptable. Since the 1992 United Nations conference in Rio de Janeiro, sustainability has been the subject of global discussion, and the launch of the United Nations “Decade of Education for Sustainable Development” (2005) resulted in numerous national initiatives in research and education. In 2015 the United Nations’ Agenda 2030 defined 17 Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets and was signed by all member states of the United Nations. Its objective is to make the planet more sustainable, more ecologically friendly and more socially just.

Austria is committed to sustainable development, and this is reflected in the government’s policy programme for 2020–24. Measures introduced and planned by the federal government are designed to support an eco-social market economy and to create a balance between a successful economy, social solidarity and ecological sustainability. Implementation of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs was agreed by the Austrian Council of Ministers (Federal Chancellery



17 Targets – Sustainable Development Goals

© <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>; The content of this publication has not been approved by the United Nations and does not reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials or Member States

12 January 2016); all ministries are therefore required to integrate Agenda 2030 into relevant national strategies and programmes, and to develop appropriate measures to this end. The EHEA conference of education and science ministers (25 May 2018) also confirmed its commitment to implementation of the SDGs in the higher education sector at global, European and national levels.

At the level of higher education policy-making, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) will continue to further the implementation of Agenda 2030 by incorporating it in key government strategy documents. This also applies to the Austrian National Development Plan for Public Universities (GUEP) from 2019 onwards (GUEP 2019–2024 and GUEP 2022–2027), and the Austrian Higher Education Plan (HoP) 2030, currently in preparation, which deal with the further development of the Austrian higher education sector. Both strategy documents set goals which are included in the performance agreements of individual universities. The Austrian Strategy for Research, Technology and Innovation (RTI Strategy) also highlights the principle of sustainability as a way of overcoming major challenges of our society.

Every three years the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research negotiates performance agreements with the 22 public universities, and implementation of the SDGs is enshrined in the auxiliary document for the draft performance agreements for 2019–21; this will also be continued for the 2022–2024 negotiation period. After doing an “SDG Mapping 2017/18” at the universities, all teaching, research and management activities were recorded and each university developed its own set of priorities for implementing the SDGs. In connection with the performance agreements based on these sets of priorities, in 2019 the UniNEtZ (short for “universities and sustainable development goals” in German) project was launched.

Since Austrian universities have a legally mandated responsibility for education and research, and a wealth of specialist expertise, their role in implementing the SDGs is an important one for our society, and they are engaging actively with this. In January 2020 Universities Austria (uniko) adopted a manifesto for sustainability, which consists of six points recognising the responsibility of universities for sustainability in teaching, research, knowledge exchange and university management, and supports the objectives of the “Fridays for Future” movement for global climate justice.

The major challenge for implementation of the SDGs is the complexity and diversity of the issues they address, which demand a holistic approach, inter- and transdisciplinary approaches in teaching and research, and the ability to anticipate the full consequences of decisions from a long-term perspective, and to consider these when making decisions.

Examples of successful implementation

Networks of excellence such as the Alliance of Sustainable Universities in Austria, the university network UniNEtZ, the Climate Change Center Austria (CCCA), and the ÖKOLOG schools network, which is run by university colleges of teacher education, provide coordination services and practical assistance – supported by scientific evidence – so making a significant contribution to the transformation of education policy, society and the economy. They merit a brief description here.

Alliance of Sustainable Universities in Austria³⁰

The Alliance of Sustainable Universities in Austria was founded in 2012 as an informal network designed to promote sustainability issues in Austrian universities, and so help to create a more sustainable society. As of the beginning of 2020, 16 of Austria's 22 public universities are already members of the network.

By standing together the group is able to highlight sustainability issues amongst universities, providing extra motivation and helping its members to integrate sustainability principles in their institutions. Each member university takes responsibility for formulating a sustainability concept that is specific to their institution, and which reflects its ecological, economic and social responsibilities over the long term.

The activities of the Alliance and dialogue between members cover research, education, day-to-day operations and social engagement. A group of experts nominated by the university rectorates meets three times a year to exchange experiences and discuss joint initiatives. There are also working groups to address specific issues: The working group on "CO₂-neutral universities" helps universities to work out their "greenhouse gas balance sheet" and to create roadmaps towards becoming CO₂-neutral. Work groups on mobility and procurement address other topics relevant to the "Green Campus". Another working group, "Education for sustainable development", launched a peer-learning training programme for university teaching staff, amongst other things.

In November 2018 the Alliance organised a conference in Vienna on "Science in Transition", focusing on research and teaching for sustainable development. Over 100 experts from the fields of research and teaching, university administration, government ministries and civil society attended, and emphasised that the challenges of sustainable development require a paradigm shift in tertiary education, science and research funding towards a more integrated, systemic and transformative approach in teaching and research. One successful example of this kind of change is the UniNEtZ project, which the Alliance was instrumental in launching.

³⁰ <https://www.nachhaltigeuniversitaeten.at>

Climate Change Center Austria (CCCA)³¹

The Climate Change Centre Austria (CCCA) is a research network backed by the most important research institutions in Austria, which links and supports research into climate change and its consequences, as well as providing society and policymakers with in-depth scientific information – and advice, where required – on climate-relevant topics. The CCCA does not conduct research, but functions as a coordinating body for Austrian climate research, helping members to pursue their research goals (with a focus on the entire field of climate research) in accordance with an overall strategy.

A current priority for the CCCA, at the request of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, is a project to “develop and test innovative methods to establish collaborative initiatives between research and education on issues of climate change and sustainability in Austria”. The research project in question includes two work packages (WP 1: Peer-to-peer learning, WP 2: Project-based teaching), which each make specific contributions to these meta-objectives. The two work packages interact in a systemic way and so contribute to the overall goal of education for sustainable development, namely to act as a key trailblazer for socio-economic transformation. The research-based approach of the project is intensified by the third work package (WP 3: Analysis of effectiveness), which studies the effectiveness of the programmes as they operate.

The results of the project are, where suitable, made freely available through an online platform called the Sustainicum Collection³², and on the website of the Climate Change Centre Austria.

University Colleges of Teacher Education in the ÖKOLOG network

The ÖKOLOG programme and network is an initiative of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, which for the last 20 years has provided support for schools seeking to establish an ecologically sustainable everyday culture, based on the teaching principles of “Environmental education for sustainable development”. For the school years 2017/18 to 2019/20 the main theme was “Working responsibly together to shape the future”. The network currently includes just under 600 schools, ten university colleges of teacher education and one department of education. Due to their central role in the education system the university colleges of teacher education are very important for the ÖKOLOG network. For this reason there is also a separate network specifically for these institutions, to ensure that ÖKOLOG activities in this sector are well coordinated and networked.

One impressive example of the key role played by the tertiary education sector in the ÖKOLOG network is the three-semester ÖKOLOG study programme, available throughout Austria, run by the ÖKOLOG regional team in Styria, the Styrian Environmental Education Centre, and the University College of Teacher Education Styria. This is an extra-occupational programme for practising teachers which trains them as “ÖKOLOG educators”, provides help for initiatives to create an eco-friendly everyday culture in schools, and enables them to transmit the programme content in their own institutions/schools, and to spread these ideas through networks.

The intersection between ÖKOLOG fields of action and the SDGs was depicted in graphic form³³, to give schools a simple way to begin the implementation process. To promote discussion of the SDGs in lessons, teaching materials were created for both primary level³⁴ and secondary schools, titled “The 17 goals for a better world”. There are also teaching materials available for upper secondary schools.

³¹ <https://ccca.ac.at>

³² www.sustainicum.at

³³ https://www.oekolog.at/fileadmin/oekolog/grafiken/Publikationen/ol_kolog_Poster_Aktionsber17_webA4.pdf, downloaded 20 February 2020

³⁴ Available at: https://www.oekolog.at/fileadmin/oekolog/SDGs/VS-Unterrichtsmappe_-_Die_17_Ziele_fuer_eine_bessere_Welt_Druck.pdf, downloaded 20 February 2020

Sustainability Award 2020³⁵

This year the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research and the Federal Ministry of Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology (BMK) will present the “Sustainability Award 2020”, to show fitting appreciation of the wealth of initiatives undertaken at institutions of higher education in the area of sustainable development. This Austrian Sustainability Award for universities, universities of applied sciences and university colleges of teacher education has been given every two years since 2008, for pioneering sustainability projects in eight different spheres of activity. There are award categories for teaching and curricula, research, structural integration, student initiatives, administration and management, communication and decision-making, and for regional and international collaborations.

Sustainability at the tertiary education level is a participatory and reflective learning process, with intensive discussion on possible thematic contradictions, dilemmas and conflicting aims. Global and local issues (sustainability challenges) are characterised by mutual dependencies between social, ecological, economic and cultural trends, which usually make a quick or straightforward solution impossible. The award-winning projects illustrate proposals for improvement in the eight fields of activity. As well as the winner's nomination for the top-ranked project, there are also commendations for second and third place. Project submissions are evaluated by a five-person interdisciplinary jury, composed of leading sustainability experts from the scientific and research communities.

The popularity of the award has risen enormously since 2008, and there is a growing trend for collaborative project submissions from groups of universities working together, and increased participation by university colleges of teacher education and universities of applied sciences.

Universities and responsibility for sustainable development – The UniNetZ project³⁶

The UniNetZ project aids inter- and intra-university networking and the integration of the SDGs in areas of university life such as research, teaching, student initiatives, management and administration, and aims over the long term to make a significant contribution to sustainable development in Austria. The initiative for the project came jointly from the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research and the Alliance of Sustainable Universities in Austria. Currently there are 16 Austrian universities involved in the UniNetZ project (see Table: Involvement of individual partner institutions). One or sometimes two universities take the lead for one of the SDGs (they adopt it), and work with other universities to develop the project³⁷.

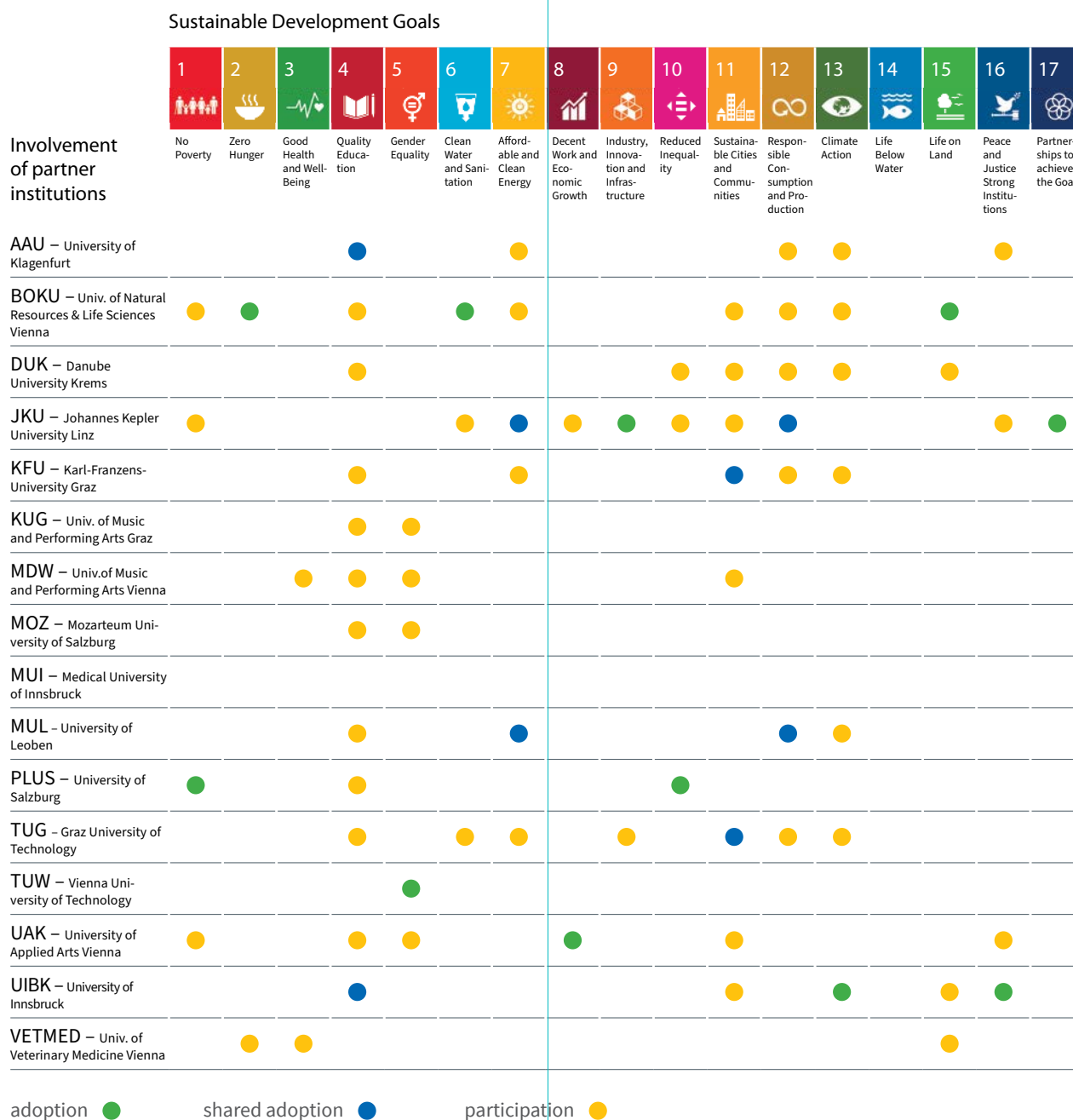
The 16 working groups on the SDGs are preparing a 2021 “Options Paper” for the Austrian government, which will identify and evaluate future options for action to implement the SDGs, as agreed by the Austrian Council of Ministers. The resulting proposals should be politically relevant and take the form of recommendations. The formulation of individual options is approached on an interdisciplinary basis, and with close attention to the interface between the sciences and arts, so as to intensify awareness of sustainable development and to make it more tangible. Scientifically supported options and sets of options should be discussed on a transdisciplinary basis, in a science-society-policy context. At the beginning of 2020 the first interim goal was achieved, which was to produce an Outlook Report presenting snapshots of the current status of the SDGs in Austria, and a view of the methods being used to develop the proposals for action for the planned Options Paper.

³⁵ www.nachhaltige-uni.at

³⁶ www.uninetz.at

³⁷ Körfggen, A.; Förster, K.; Glatz, I.; Maier, S.; Becsi, B.; Meyer, A.; Kromp-Kolb, H.; Stötter, J., It's a Hit! Mapping Austrian Research Contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainability 2018, 10, (9).

Involvement of individual partner institutions in the work on the 17 SDGs



source: UniNETZ, 2020

Digitalisation

„Digitalisation is not only an additional challenge, but also an effective means to address key challenges for higher education in the 21st century.“

Bologna Digital 2020. White Paper on Digitalisation in the European Higher Education Area³⁸

Processes of change triggered by technological developments traditionally present structural challenges for our society. However, they also open up new opportunities and the potential to make our lives easier. For the digital transformation that means access not only to new technologies, but also to the opportunities offered by modern society, because work, leisure, and access to knowledge are increasingly defined by digital applications. Digitalisation is also making inroads into universities and other higher education institutions, as key centres of knowledge transfer and knowledge creation in Austria.

So the cross-sectoral issue of digitalisation is a major focus³⁹ in the performance agreements for 2019–2021, as negotiated between the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) and the 22 public universities. The Ministry and the public universities have agreed to include development of a digitalisation strategy in the plans for each institution. In 2019 the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research also issued a call for proposals, Projects for digital and social transformation in higher education; the aim is to support profile-building structural development projects specifically focused on digital and social transformation, and which will provide an (inter-)nationally visible development boost for the public university system, and for the university as a whole, or at least in a cross-faculty and cross-disciplinary manner. There were 71 submissions. A jury selected 35 projects which will be allocated funding of 50 million euros altogether. The projects will be implemented in the period 2020–2024. They include some on topics such as further development of “open access on publications”, the establishment of an OER (open educational resources) repository, the formulation of principles for OER in Austria, digital transformation in the humanities, and programming courses at the University of Innsbruck. Some collaborative projects are explicitly focused on the development of “digital skills”.

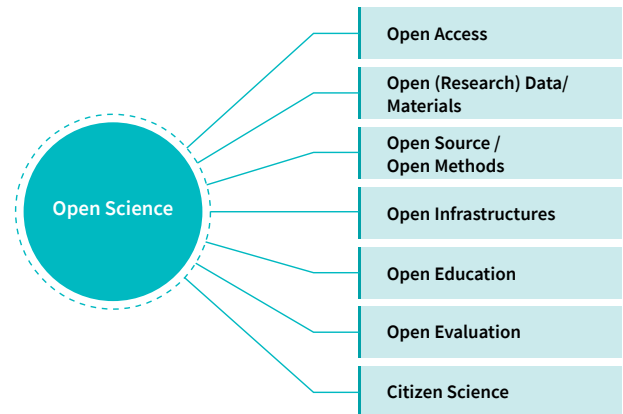
³⁸ See Rampelt, F., Orr, D., Knoth, A. (2019), Bologna Digital 2020. White Paper on Digitalisation in the European Higher Education Area. Berlin: Hochschulforum Digitalisierung (Higher education forum on digitalisation), https://hochschulforumdigitalisierung.de/sites/default/files/dateien/2019-05_White_Paper_Bologna_Digital_2020.pdf

³⁹ Implementation of proposals presented to the Austrian Council of Ministers on THE FUTURE OF DIGITALISATION – Austrian universities' pathway into the digital age (Resolution of the 21st Council of Ministers on 13 June 2018, <https://www.bundestkanzleramt.gv.at/medien/ministerraete/ministerraete-bis-mai-2019/21-ministerrat-am-13-juni-2018.html>)

Open science – Digitalisation in research

In the “open science” movement, researchers share their findings and data with the public and with colleagues. The idea behind this is an acknowledgment that a substantial amount of public funding is allocated to research, yet only a fraction of the results and data are published and made available to the general public. In the age of digitalisation – where most academic publications are primarily available in digital form – the concept of open science gives rise particularly to the issue of extended or even unlimited access to scholarly research (open access) and the data behind it (open [research] data).

Open science also includes other aspects such as open source/open methods, open infrastructures, open evaluation, citizen science, and open education (including the use of open educational resources (OER), see the section on “Digitalisation in higher education and teaching”).



Source: BMBWF

Austria has several networks of major importance in the implementation and further development of open science:

- Universities Austria (uniko),
- Forum of Austrian University Libraries (ubifo),
- Austrian Science Fund (FWF),
- Austrian Library Network and Service Ltd. (OBVSG)⁴⁰,
- Austrian Academic Library Consortium (KEMÖ)⁴¹ and
- Open Science Network Austria (OANA).

⁴⁰ Österreichische Bibliothekenverbund und Service GmbH (OBVSG), www.obvsg.at: The OBVSG provides services for Austrian academic and administrative libraries, and is an important partner for open access projects in Austria.

⁴¹ Kooperation E-Medien Österreich (KEMÖ), www.konsortien.at: KEMÖ is a consortium of libraries from 58 member institutions (including 18 universities, 8 private universities, 18 universities of applied sciences and 14 other institutions). Its purpose, in coordinating the acquisition, licensing and administration of electronic media for the library consortium, is primarily active support for open access in Austria and worldwide.

Particularly notable is the Open Science Network Austria (formerly Open Access Network Austria (OANA))⁴². This thinktank on open science was founded in 2012 as a joint activity under the organisational umbrella of the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) and Universities Austria (uniko). Its objectives are to facilitate the exchange of ideas, to coordinate and make links between initiatives and to draft recommendations on open science. For example, OANA has formulated 16 recommendations and steps to ensure that by 2025, as many as possible of the publications available or produced in Austria make the transition to an open access publishing model (Recommendations for the Transition to Open Access in Austria⁴³). These were published in German and English. In July 2016 these recommendations were adopted by the Austrian Council of Ministers and reflected in the federal government's Digital roadmap and its Intellectual property strategy for Austria. OANA also developed and published The Vienna Principles: A Vision for Scholarly Communication in the 21st Century⁴⁴ – a set of twelve principles for scholarly communication in the 21st century. The 2019–2021 performance agreements for all public universities include a commitment to the activities of OANA, combined with a willingness for university representatives to participate in its working groups.

Austria has a leading role to play in matters of open science – particularly in open access and open data – and representatives of various Austrian institutions and initiatives are also internationally recognised experts:

- cOAlition S⁴⁵ is a group of research funding organisations, including the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), which has published the principles for Plan S. The objective of Plan S is to make all publications sponsored by these organisations available in open access journals or on open access platforms, from 2020 onwards. In this way they hope to accelerate the transformation to full and immediate open access.
- In November 2018, in parallel with the official launch of the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC)⁴⁶ during Austria's presidency of the Council of the European Union, a reference model was published for the establishment of administrative structures, services and a data architecture within the EOSC. With the EOSC, the European Commission is pursuing the idea of creating an open and secure virtual environment, where scholarly data can be stored, processed and analysed free of charge. To this end, existing e-infrastructures are to be integrated across state boundaries and across disciplines, and enhanced to meet the highest standards. Participating institutions, companies and organisations make a commitment to compliance with "FAIR principles"⁴⁷, which are designed to ensure long-term, sustainable re-usability of stored data. "FAIR" stands for: "findable", "accessible", "interoperable" and "re-usable".

⁴² Open Science Network Austria (OANA), <https://oana.at>

⁴³ Recommendations for the transition to open access in Austria, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.51799>

⁴⁴ Vienna Principles on Scholarly Communication, <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.55597>

⁴⁵ cOAlition S, www.coalition-s.org

⁴⁶ European Open Science Cloud (EOSC), <https://ec.europa.eu/research/openscience/index.cfm?pg=open-science-cloud>

⁴⁷ FAIR principles, <https://www.tuwien.at/forschung/fti-support/forschungsdaten/forschungsdatenmanagement/fair-prinzipien>

Due to the efforts of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research numerous public universities already have institutional open access policies in place, which include making publications available in the university's own repositories.

In Austrian universities and university libraries, there are currently many institutional repositories already in operation or being planned. These arrangements are to a large extent autonomous applications, although some universities are clients of the University of Vienna (Phaidra) or the Austrian Library Network and Service Ltd. (OBVSG) (Visual Library). Calls for proposals by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research in previous years have also included a focus on the expansion of e-infrastructures for open access⁴⁸. In this context the project Austrian Transition to Open Access (AT2OA)⁴⁹ aims to assist the transformation from closed to open access for scholarly publications, and to initiate supportive measures.

Digitalisation in higher education and teaching

The opportunities offered by digital media have now become indispensable in almost all areas of society. In the tertiary education sector too, change is under way, and these institutions cannot afford to ignore innovative teaching and learning technologies. Digital teaching in the form of e-learning or blended learning for example, has been taking place for a long time already, and digital course components are the ideal complement to face-to-face teaching. Furthermore, virtual components such as learning platforms, open educational resources (OER), free online courses (Massive Open Online Courses = MOOCs), teaching and learning videos, the inverted or flipped classroom, on-line self-assessment, podcasts, student/audience response systems, streaming, interaction in discussion forums, e-books etc., are a sensible way to enhance course content and provide enrichment. In addition, at many universities there are also specific service units for media-assisted teaching⁵⁰. Their main function is primarily to provide a service to teaching staff and students, i.e. the operation and support of all virtual teaching and learning environments.

In the 2019–2021 performance agreements almost all public universities anticipate further expansion of digital methods to support the teaching of course content (e.g. the use of open educational resources). As part of competitive tenders by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF), Austrian universities can also introduce targeted measures starting from the point students begin their programme of studies, i.e. in the first semester/year of study, addressing possible differences in prior knowledge acquired at school, and which support students entering degree programmes with various different funding schemes and qualification routes for admission to university. Since March 2018 for example, Vienna University of Technology, Graz University of Technology and the University of Leoben have offered free bridging courses for applicants in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathe-

⁴⁸ Partnership projects of the Structural fund for the Austrian higher education sector (HRSM): e-Infrastructures Austria, E-Infrastructures Austria Plus (www.e-infrastructures.at/de) and Portfolio/Showroom (<https://portfolio-showroom.ac.at>)

⁴⁹ Partnership project of the Structural fund for the Austrian higher education sector (HRSM): Austrian Transition to Open Access (AT2OA <https://at2oa.at/home.html>)

⁵⁰ Servicestellen für mediengestützte Lehre (Services for media-assisted teaching), www.fnma.at/ressourcen

matics), as an early intervention to assist students in their transition to technical universities. These so-called STEM-MOOCs (MINT-MOOCs in German), and a range of other fascinating, free online courses, are available through iMooX⁵¹ the MOOC platform of Graz University of Technology.

In the context of digital media in teaching, open educational resources have a particularly important function. Open educational resources are teaching and learning materials that are deliberately designed to be freely accessible, so that they can be used by others. UNESCO defines open educational resources as follows: OERs are “teaching, learning and research materials in any medium, digital or otherwise, that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions. Open licensing is built within the existing framework of intellectual property rights as defined by relevant international conventions and respects the authorship of the work.”⁵² Open educational resources are defined as those which can be copied, printed, modified and republished without additional permissions. It is also possible to rearrange existing components in different ways and to combine them with new content. For this to be legally proper, these materials must be published with the appropriate declarations or free licences. In this context the *Forum Neue Medien in der Lehre Austria* (fnma = Austrian forum for new media in teaching) has formulated *Recommendations for the integration of OER in Austrian Higher Education* and a Concept for OER certification in Austrian Higher Education. Calls for proposals by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research have previously also included projects concerning the open access to teaching materials. The project Open Education Austria⁵³ for example, developed a national open educational resources infrastructure.

In the association mentioned above, “Forum Neue Medien in der Lehre Austria” (fnma)⁵⁴ Austria has a network that functions as a platform for dialogue between stakeholders in higher education institutions, and initiates new developments. The association consists of 45 full members from 19 public universities, 17 universities of applied sciences, nine university colleges of teacher education and two private universities. The objective of the association is amongst other to promote the use of new media in teaching in the Austrian higher education sector. Integrated into the association are the well-respected former e-science portal of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research⁵⁵ and the editorial body of the *Zeitschrift für Hochschulentwicklung* (ZFHE = Journal for Higher Education Development)⁵⁶. In 2016 the association published a study, *Die österreichische Hochschul-E-Learning-Landschaft* (The e-learning environment in Austrian higher education), which showed that the use of teaching and learning technologies is already well established as a form of support, but that universities set their own different priorities and expectations. So for the future a strategic approach is required with regard to extensive use of media in higher education.

⁵¹ iMooX, www.imoox.at

⁵² Butcher, N., Was sind Open Educational Resources? Und andere häufig gestellte Fragen zu OER, (What are open education resources? And other frequently asked questions about OERs) German version edited by Barbara Malina and Jan Neumann, in German Commission for UNESCO (eds.), Bonn 2013, www.unesco.de/sites/default/files/2018-04/Was_sind_OER_cc.pdf. Edited translation of: Butcher, N., A Basic Guide to Open Educational Resources (OER), in Commonwealth of Learning and UNESCO (eds.), pp. 6 and 31

⁵³ Open Education Austria, www.openeducation.at/home

⁵⁴ Verein Forum Neue Medien in der Lehre Austria (Austrian forum for new media in teaching), www.fnma.at

⁵⁵ The former e-science portal of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) www.fnma.at/ressourcen?cat=1017: The portal offers a brief introduction to blended learning, quality in teaching with new technologies, etc.

⁵⁶ Zeitschrift für Hochschulentwicklung (ZFHE = Journal for Higher Education Development), www.zfhe.at/index.php/zfhe: ZFHE is an open, free and successful publication for teachers and researchers in higher education institutions in the German-speaking countries.

Digitalisation in administration

In addition to research and teaching, digitalisation has had an impact on administration and administrative services in Austrian higher education. One example is CAMPUSonline, a campus management system developed by Graz University of Technology⁵⁷: with this comprehensive software, all data of relevance for day-to-day operation of universities and other higher education institutions, as well as for teaching, research and administrative services are stored and updated in a central database and can be accessed and processed at any time. All members of the institution have individualised access to the information that is relevant for them, regardless of time and physical location. CAMPUSonline is used in 38 higher education institutions, including 18 public universities, 14 university colleges of teacher education, one university of applied sciences, and four private universities.

⁵⁷ See CAMPUSonline, <https://campusonline.tugraz.at>



03



3-IN-AT

Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research and Erasmus+: projects for the national implementation of the Bologna Process

With Erasmus+ (2014 – 2020), the European Commission restructured the procedure of the calls, setting new priorities. The calls under Key Action 3 (KA3) – “Policy Support”¹ for the “Support to the implementation of EHEA reforms” are aimed exclusively at the Ministries of Education and Science. These raise the political profile of the Bologna Process and enable Erasmus+ states to forge ahead more determinedly in implementing the EHEA through a grant from the European Commission combined with additional national funding.

The choice of projects and the related approval of grants by the European Commission took place in a Europe-wide competition with other applicant states. The contents of the calls for projects were aligned with the priorities identified in the communiqués adopted by the EHEA Ministerial Conferences (Bucharest 2012, Yerevan 2015 and Paris 2018) and the thematic priorities included in the Bologna Implementation Report. This report is a narrative and illustrative summary of the degree to which the Bologna specifications were implemented in the EHEA member countries.

¹ The aim of Erasmus+ support for policy reform is to further improve European education systems. Key priorities identified within the framework of these calls include transnational collaborative projects, promotion of cross-sector cooperation, and closer harmonisation of higher education institutions and policy, amongst others. Calls for projects related to the Erasmus+ initiative to support policy reform are published on an irregular basis and are thematically oriented towards the relevant and current strategic objectives in European educational policy.



Welcome event for the Federal Minister on the occasion of “20 Years European Higher Education Area” in June 2019; From left to right: Beatrix Karl (University of Teacher Education Styria), Sigurd Höllinger (formerly BMBWF), Elmar Pichl (BMBWF), Iris Rauskala (BMBWF), Christoph Badelt (WIFO), Eva Werner (formerly IMC Krems University of Applied Sciences)

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In addition to providing an overview of the status of the implementation of well-known tools and measures, such as the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), the multi-cycle study system, the Lisbon Recognition Convention and quality assurance, the 2018 report also focused on aspects of learning and teaching and the social dimension of higher education students. Whilst a national team of Bologna experts was still desirable, it was no longer an obligatory part of the application.

In planning the topics of the three project applications since 2014, the specifications from the Bologna Implementation Report and the three communiqués were combined with strategic objectives identified by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research and suggestions advanced by the relevant interest groups, uniko (Universities Austria), FHK (Association of Austrian Universities of Applied Sciences), RÖPH (Conference of Rectors of Austrian University Colleges of Teacher Education), ÖPUK (Association of Austrian Private Universities) and ÖH (Austrian National Union of Students).

In 2018, the second Austrian project, “Pro.Mo.Austria+ // Promoting Mobility. Fostering EHEA Commitments in Austria (2016 – 18)” was successfully completed, and a further application was submitted for the project “INternationalisation/INclusion/INnovation: Towards high-quality inclusive mobility and innovative teaching & learning in an internationalised Austrian Higher Education Area – 3-IN-AT (2019–21)”. This has been running since the first half of 2019, in proven cooperation with the Bologna Service Point at OeAD (the Austrian Exchange Service) and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research.

Pro.Mo.Austria+ // Promoting Mobility. Fostering EHEA Commitments in Austria

This project built on the successes of the prior project from 2014–2016 (Promoting Mobility. Addressing the Challenges in Austria – Pro.Mo.Austria) and focused on the one hand on the two main topics that had already been addressed in the previous project: “Quality of mobility” and “Fair and transparent recognition”. On the other hand, the thematic focus of the European Commission’s call made it possible to involve other specialist areas of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research in the project. The new event format “dialogue on higher education teaching” was conceived as part of the work to implement the EHEA goal of “enhancing the quality and relevance of learning and teaching”, which was prominently established in the Yerevan Communiqué. As part of the “social dimension” priority, accompanying steps were taken to implement the “national strategy on the social dimension in higher education”.

Thanks to the high commitment of the Austrian higher education institutions to this joint work, it was possible to use project funds that had become available when the project was extended to implement additional activities. At the meeting of the European BFUG during the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, a presentation was made of the project results from several Erasmus+ pro-

jects under Key Action 3 “Support to the Implementation of EHEA Reforms” which in turn led to linkages between existing and future projects. In addition, the previous edition of the present report was initiated. The additional work package on the topic of mobility was certainly of great relevance to the Austrian higher education landscape. The kick-off event on 23 October 2018 was the starting signal for the further development of the Higher Education Mobility Strategy (HMS) into a national strategy for the Austrian Higher Education Area *National mobility and internationalisation strategy for higher education 2020–2030* – “*There are many routes to internationalisation*”.

In conclusion, the “Pro.Mo.Austria+” project was awarded by external evaluators from the European Commission 96 out of 100 possible points in the areas of topical relevance, project quality and schedule, the composition of the project team, and its sustainable effect on higher education policy, not least because of the expertise and the great engagement of the Bologna Service Point at the Austrian Exchange Service (OeAD), both in project development and implementation.



Welcome event for the Federal Minister on the occasion of “20 Years European Higher Education Area”

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Welcome event for the Federal Minister on the occasion of “20 Years European Higher Education Area”; Contribution of the chairing team of the Austrian Students’ Union national representatives 2017–19 From left to right: Johanna Zechmeister, Hannah Lutz, Marita Gasteiger

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Welcome event for the Federal Minister on the occasion of “20 Years European Higher Education Area”; Panel discussion, from left to right: Beatrix Karl (University of Teacher Education Styria), Eva Werner (formerly IMC Krems University of Applied Sciences), Christoph Badelt (WIFO)

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INternationalisation/INclusion/INnovation: Towards high-quality inclusive mobility and innovative teaching & learning in an internationalised Austrian Higher Education Area – 3-IN-AT

This joint project of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research and Erasmus+ (duration 2019 to 2021), which was once again developed together with the Bologna Service Point at the Austrian Exchange Service, builds on the project from 2016–2018 and was – like its predecessor projects – accepted by the European Commission with an outstanding evaluation from a total of 17 submitted project proposals.

One special feature of the Key Action 3 (KA3) – Policy Support – call of 2018, for which 3-IN-AT submitted its proposal, is the division into two tracks. Eight of the total 13 projects that were accepted focus on implementing the key commitments of the Paris Communiqué through cooperation in thematic peer groups. 3-IN-AT, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with the national implementation of further priorities of the Paris Communiqué, partly in cooperation with European project partners.

As was the case with the last two projects, the implementation of 3-IN-AT will be guided by the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria, AQ Austria. Two experts from the agency participate in working meetings and events to guarantee the process remains transparent and to ensure ongoing adherence to the targets and measures included in the project application. AQ Austria's interim and final reports will contain the results of the event evaluations and qualitative interviews with individuals who are regularly involved in the project or activities that fall within its scope or who share their relevant expertise. The reports address and steer the ongoing project's direction and also serve to provide input in terms of content and format for possible future projects.

Both thematically and in the conception of the offers, 3-IN-AT ties in seamlessly with the previous project. One of the focal points remains the topic of quality in mobility, now expanded to include the aspect of internationalisation; this above all in the context of further developing the Higher Education Mobility Strategy (HMS) into a national strategy for the *National mobility and internationalisation strategy for higher education 2020–2030* – “*There are many routes to internationalisation*”. In this project, the format “Dialogue on higher education teaching” is also dedicated to topics related to innovative teaching and learning, supplemented by questions of structural “studyability”, a topic that poses a particular challenge to public universities in Austria. In addition, an international Peer Learning Activity (PLA) is planned where best practice in teaching and learning can be shared. The three bilateral PLAs for Austrian and Swiss

university colleges of teacher education operate at the interface between the quality of mobility and teaching. These are intended to provide a forum for discussing the specifics of “quality of mobility”, “digitalisation” and “making curricula more flexible” at university colleges of teacher education.

The particular strength of 3-IN-AT is also reflected in the close link between its project activities and national strategic considerations on topics related to the social dimension. Building on the results of the international PLA in the Pro. Mo.Austria+ project in March 2017, a further PLA will take place in autumn 2020 to discuss how the national strategies are developing and how they have been implemented since 2017. The outcomes of the activity will be published with country profiles and examples of best practice.

Tried and tested project activities will be continued, such as advisory visits by EHEA experts to Austrian higher education institutions and sending Austrian higher education experts to international training courses and seminars with subsequent reporting to the national BFUG. A pivotal date in the Austrian Bologna Year remains Bologna Day, which is also dedicated to different focal points of the project in 3-IN-AT.

A new feature of the European Commission’s call was the selection criterion of involving additional partners in the national projects. These could be, for example, ministries of education and science of other states of the European Higher Education Area, as well as national interest groups or their umbrella organisations, if they are part of the European BFUG as advisory members. 3-IN-AT takes this requirement into account in many ways. The Croatian Ministry of Science and Education and the European Students’ Union (ESU) are involved in implementing the work package on the social dimension, and also co-chair the advisory working group on the social dimension of the European BFUG in preparation for the EHEA Ministerial Conference in Rome. On the topic of “Innovative teaching and learning/structured studyability”, the expertise of the European University Association (EUA) will be drawn upon. The European University Association (EUA) has started a large number of initiatives on the topics of teaching and learning in recent years. By involving them in 3-IN-AT, information on the latest approaches and developments can now also be made available to Austrian universities at a low-threshold level.

In addition, the Austrian and Swiss university colleges of teacher education benefit from the cooperation with the Chamber of Universities of Teacher Education of swissuniversities, the Rectors’ Conference of the Swiss Universities, in the course of the three bilateral peer learning activities (PLA).



04



THE STAKEHOLDERS

The Austrian and European BFUG

Relevant stakeholders have been involved in the implementation of Bologna Process targets in Austria from the outset and to the greatest extent possible. The national BFUG guarantees their representation and draws expertise from a variety of institutions and interest groups.

One of the national BFUG's essential tasks is formulating an Austrian position with respect to the issues that are currently receiving the most attention at the European level. In addition, this stakeholder group, in collaboration with experts responsible for the process's national implementation, discusses and crafts responses to any matters having to do with the Austrian higher education sector that are brought to its attention.

The Austrian Bologna contact point in the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research – Dept. IV/11 in its capacity as the interface between players at the national and European levels and in cooperation with Dept. IV/4 chairs and manages the national Bologna Process. The Bologna Service Point at the Austrian Exchange Service (OeAD see page 73) contributes to this overall arrangement by serving

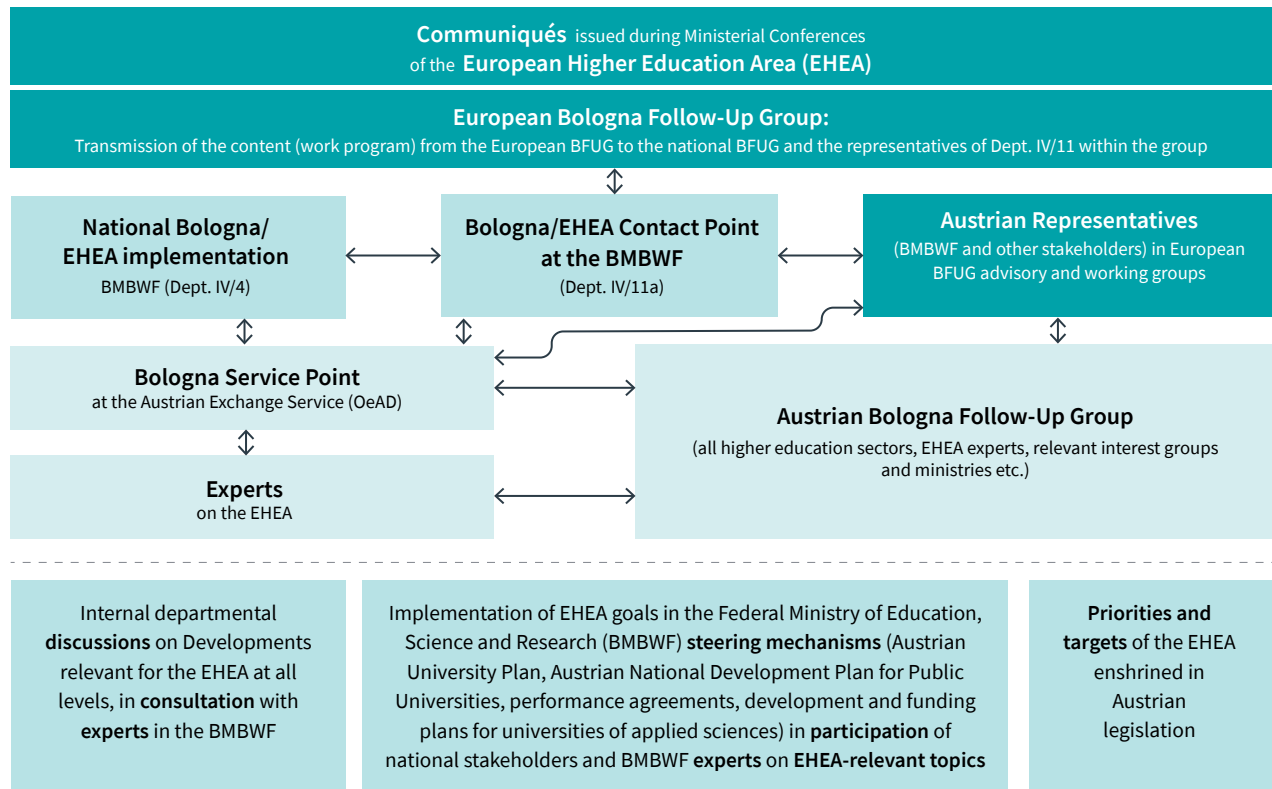
as a comprehensive and independent advice and information point for the entire Austrian higher education sector.

Most importantly, individual members of the national BFUG are responsible for contributing to the group's discussions, deliberations and decision-making processes by presenting the viewpoints of the stakeholder groups and organisations they represent. At the same time, they are charged with channelling the flow of information about Europe-wide developments to the groups and organisations they represent, thereby further supporting the implementation of the Bologna objectives.

The communiqués sent out (every three or two years) by the conferences of ministers (responsible for higher education) serve to define and guide EHEA (European Higher Education Area) policy in terms of targets and priorities.

The European BFUG, which functions as a political governance group on the level of the EHEA, organises conferences and provides follow-up and other working programmes in the interim period between these conferences. It is com-

The EHEA/Bologna network



prised of representatives from all countries that participate in the EHEA, the European Commission, European students' representative councils and an array of other relevant interest groups. The group is jointly chaired by the country holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union at that time and a non-EU member of the EHEA, alternating every six months in alphabetical order.

The European BFUG's board lays the groundwork; its chair is chosen in the same manner as that of the European BFUG as a whole and it is comprised of representatives from the EU Council presidency troika, the troika of non-EU EHEA members in the chairing committee, the European Commission and student representative councils and interest groups.

The Bologna Secretariat (currently Italy) is responsible for administering the agenda's implementation and is appointed by the host country of the next ministerial conference (Rome 2020).

Following the meeting of ministers, the European BFUG compiles an agenda based on the current Bologna Implementation Report for the subsequent three-year period, in which the shortcomings identified in the report are prioritised in future implementation plans. The subject-specific working and advisory groups, including relevant networks, are tasked with addressing specific selected issues and with developing approaches for moving forward.

In addition to the relevant federal ministries, members of the national BFUG include representatives from the following institutions and interest groups:

Universities Austria (uniko): Uniko promotes internal coordination amongst the 22 public universities in Austria, represents these in national and international bodies and is the public voice for the universities as a whole. It additionally provides administrative functions for the Federation of Universities.

Association of Austrian Universities of Applied Sciences (FHK): The Association of Austrian Universities of Applied Sciences (FHK) represents the interests of its members nationally and internationally. Amongst other responsibilities, it ensures the sector is represented on relevant bodies (BFUG, EHEA expert teams, etc.). It keeps its members informed about the latest developments in the EHEA and organises topic-based events.

Association of Austrian Private Universities (ÖPUK): The Association of Austrian Private Universities serves as a platform for the 16 private universities currently accredited in Austria to exchange information and is responsible for representing the private universities' interests and promoting their image and reputation in Austria. It represents the educational and research interests of its members in interactions with partners nationally and internationally.

Rectors' Conference of Austrian Public University Colleges of Teacher Education (RÖPH): This organisation is devoted to issues related to the training of all teachers in the compulsory education sector, vocational schools and in schools for intermediate and higher vocational education and is responsible for life-long learning and continuing education for teachers and others working in the education sector in all Austrian federal states. It therefore assumes a central role in the implementation of the Bologna Process.

Austrian National Union of Students (ÖH): The Austrian National Union of Students federal body of representatives is the legal representative of all students at Austrian universities, universities of applied sciences and university

colleges of teacher education. It provides higher education to students with a wide array of services and represents their interests in dealings with ministries and other actors in the higher education and research sectors. The Austrian National Union of Students (ÖH) belongs to the European Students' Union (ESU). It nominates an EHEA expert and organises events on issues related to the Bologna Process.

Bologna Contact Point in the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research: As the bridge between the national and European levels within the EHEA, the Austria Bologna Contact Point in the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research – Dept. IV/11 provides support in implementing EHEA priorities at Austrian higher education institutions.

ENIC NARIC AUSTRIA: ENIC NARIC AUSTRIA, the national information centre for the recognition of academic qualifications, is responsible for handling all questions related to the international recognition of academic qualifications and titles. It belongs to two international networks: ENIC (founded by the European Council and UNESCO) and NARIC (founded by the EU). ENIC NARIC AUSTRIA is the official point of contact for all cross-border issues related to the recognition of qualifications in the higher education sector.

National Agency Erasmus+ Education at the Austrian Exchange Service (OeAD): The national agency advises, guides and supports cooperative education initiatives in Europe. Its services cover all ages and education levels. The Austrian Exchange Service (OeAD) offers information tailored to specific target groups and organises events and consultations for educational institutions that are interested in the further development and implementation of Bologna targets.

Austrian Bologna Service Point at the Austrian Exchange Service (OeAD): The Austrian Bologna Service Point operates as the independent, cross-sector advisory and information point for the entire Austrian higher education sector. It organises events, facilitates networking amongst various actors and maintains know-how and organisational expertise related to Bologna initiatives.

National EHEA experts: EHEA experts provide advice, support and guidance for Austrian higher education institutions in the implementation of EHEA targets and priorities, and plays a role in the content design and organisation of national events related to the EHEA context (see also page 66).

Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria (AQ Austria): AQ Austria was founded in conjunction with the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education, which took effect on 1 March 2012. In accordance with the legal mandate, it is legally binding for the entirety of the Austrian higher education sector (with the exception of university colleges of teacher education). Its responsibilities include, amongst others, the development and implementation of external quality assurance measures in accordance with national and international standards, the accreditation of higher education institutions and study programmes, the certification of higher education institutions, conducting studies and systems analyses, evaluations and projects, providing information and advice related to issues of quality assurance and development, and international cooperation in the field of quality assurance.

Regional governments: The knowledge-based economy and research play an ever increasing role in securing and sustaining the dynamic development of states and communities. The regional governments maintain an intensive and successful relationship with universities, universities of applied sciences and private universities (no current representative has been nominated).

Federation of Austrian Industries (IV): In representing the interests of its own members, the IV works to strengthen Austria's association in Europe and internationally with education and innovation, and therefore make Austria an attractive location for manufacturing and for work. It has been included from the very beginning in the strategic design of the Bologna Process.

The Chamber of Labour (AK): As a legally recognised interest group, the Federal Chamber of Labour and the nine state chambers represent and promote the social, economic, professional and cultural interests of employees. The

AK is primarily involved with the EHEA in representing its members' interests at the policy level, but it also provides its own members with relevant services.

The Chamber of Agriculture: The Chamber of Agriculture's most important core activities, aside from representing its members' interests, are offering a comprehensive array of educational and advisory services and providing assistance with securing subsidies. The Chamber of Agriculture sends representatives to all of the bodies relevant to the Bologna Process.

Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB)/Public Service Union Austria (GÖD): An independent trade union movement puts people and labour at the heart of its efforts to protect all employees and workers. The Public Service Union Austria (GÖD) promotes Bologna-relevant activities in the areas of training, life-long learning and continuing education, in adult education and in youth welfare.

Austrian Federal Economic Chambers (WKO): As the legal representative of the Austrian business community, the WKO ensures that its member companies are able to flourish and develop in line with the market. It advises those institutions directly involved in the Bologna Process and keeps the business community up to date on the latest changes coming out of the process.

The Austrian BFUG meets two to three times per year, usually to prepare for European BFUG meetings. In addition to engaging with national concerns relevant to the Bologna process, the forum discusses other topics that are instead dealt with on the European level and to which individual Bologna countries contribute. It furthermore formulates an Austrian position on these issues. The Austrian Bologna Contact Point represents these resulting positions in the European BFUG.

National EHEA experts

There is no question that the Bologna Process has had both positive and negative effects on particular aspects of courses of study (multi-cycle nature, guidance by learning outcomes, ECTS credits as a means of describing workload, Diploma Supplements, internationalisation, etc.). Nevertheless, media reports, widely held national conceptions and “Bologna myths” contribute to an oversimplification of individual aspects or display a tendency to cast matters in a negative light.

There are significant challenges facing the involved parties in conveying what the creation of a European Higher Education Area really means as a whole and in deconstructing the established norms in higher education. Persuasive, experienced and perceptive individuals are needed to push for the scrutinising of organisational and communications processes within higher education institutions, to open new doors, to take note of solutions other institutions have devised and encourage a dialogue amongst equals. The national experts on the EHEA, formerly referred to as Bologna experts, have served to connect these initiatives since 2005.

Terms and nomination of national EHEA experts

Until the end of 2013, the former national agencies for life-long learning were able to apply every two years for co-funding for a national EHEA experts team as part of an Erasmus call for proposals. At that time there were 31 national teams in Erasmus countries comprised of 330 individuals. EHEA experts worked at a national level and within the European Union but also cooperated with expert colleagues from non-Erasmus countries, such as the Higher Education Reform Experts (HEREs) from Eastern Europe, Central Asia and North Africa. This regular exchange among experts contributed towards the growth of an international knowledge alliance with respect to higher education reform and development. The resulting network provided opportunities for exchange through training seminars and an online platform.

The “National Teams of Bologna Experts” call was more closely aligned with current priorities and the implementation of the Bologna Process as of Erasmus+ 2014–2020. In order to raise the call’s political profile, it has been addressed since 2014 solely to Erasmus+ countries’ education ministries as Erasmus+ programme – Key Action 3 (KA3) – “Policy Support” for the “Support to the implementation of EHEA reforms”.¹

The involvement of a national team of EHEA experts is no longer a requirement in applying for co-funding for projects related to implementing the Bologna agendas. Nevertheless, some countries continue to draw on the expertise of national experts in their projects. Thanks to maintaining its expert team, Austria too has an excellent communications network and, as a result, has built a strong relationship of trust with the country’s higher education institutions.

¹ The Key Action 3, “Erasmus+ Policy Support” represents a new instrument for providing support to the European reform process and for implementing European strategic objectives.



Members of the Austrian Bologna Follow-Up Group, including eight of the national EHEA experts, on Bologna Day 2019

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In the course of each project application, a call for proposals is sent to the interest groups Universities Austria (uniko), Association of Austrian Universities of Applied Sciences (FHK), Rectors' Conference of Austrian Public University Colleges of Teacher Education (RÖPH), Association of Austrian Private Universities (ÖPUK) and Austrian National Union of Students (ÖH), asking them to nominate people who are firmly rooted in everyday university life, who work with the main topics to be dealt with in the project and who will jointly serve as the national team of experts for the EHEA for a period of approximately 18–24 months.

The team was recently increased to nine people and expanded to include an expert nominated by the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, who will, among other things, provide support for the further development of the Higher Education Mobility Strategy.

The term for national EHEA experts² is linked to the duration of the respective joint Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research/Erasmus+ project, (see also Chapter 3).

Since spring 2018, the following people have been operating or operated within the framework of the projects “Pro. Mo.Austria+ // Promoting Mobility. Fostering EHEA Commitments in Austria” (duration: 2016 – 18) and “INternationalisation/INclusion/INnovation: Towards high-quality inclusive mobility and innovative teaching & learning in an internationalised Austrian Higher Education Area – 3-IN-AT 2019–21” in the national EHEA expert team.

The criteria used in selecting the above-named individuals included experience, innovation, communication skills. Flexibility, geographical considerations and a balanced representation of higher education sectors were also considered.

² <https://oead.at/de/projekte/promoaustria-2016-2018>

The team of currently nine EHEA experts is just one component – albeit an essential one – of a successful communications and implementation process.

The following section will provide a brief overview of the wide array of activities these experts undertake.

EHR expert team

(in alphabetical order)

Name	Position	Institute	Term	Nominated by
Gabriele Abermann	Lecturer, formerly Vice-Rector and Head of the International Office	Formerly Salzburg University of Applied Sciences	Project 2016–2018 and 2019–2021	FHK (2016–2018) BMBWF (2019–21)
Regine Kadgien (née Bolter)	Programme Director, Computer Science	FH Vorarlberg, University of Applied Sciences	Project 2016–2018	FHK
Karin Dobernig	Lecturer, Bologna coordinator	University of Applied Sciences Wiener Neustadt	Project 2019–2021	FHK
Kristina Kern	Student expert	St. Pölten University of Applied Sciences	Project 2019–2021	ÖH
Patricia Lang	Student expert	University of Applied Sciences Campus Vienna	Project 2019–2021	ÖH
Berta Leeb	Vice-Rector	Private University of Education, Diocese of Linz	Project 2016–2018 and 2019–2021	RÖPH
Susanne Linhofer	Lecturer and head of the Institute for Diversity and International Office	University of Teacher Education Styria	Project 2016–2018 and 2019–2021	RÖPH
Heidi Posch	Student expert	University of Vienna	Project 2016–2018	ÖH
Andreas Potucek	Student expert	Vienna University of Technology	Project 2016–2018	ÖH
Christina Raab	Bologna Expert	University of Innsbruck	Project 2016–2018 and 2019–2021	uniko
Sabine Schindler	Rector	Tyrolean Private University UNIT TIROL	Project 2019–2021	ÖPUK
Katalin Szondy	Head of UAS service Higher Education Development	St. Pölten University of Applied Sciences	Project 2019–2021	FHK
Günter Wageneder	Quality management	University of Salzburg	Project 2016–2018 and 2019–2021	uniko
Christian Werner	Managing Director	Private University Schloss Seeburg	Project 2016–2018	ÖPUK

National experts as advisory and independent partner contacts

In Austria, within the framework of the KA3 project 3-IN-AT, the team of national experts for the European Higher Education Area is available to universities free of charge for on-site consultation visits. The aim of the half-day visit by two experts is to provide informal assistance in the implementation and further development of the higher education institution's own, prioritised Bologna goals, in areas such as:

- **quality in mobility** of students, staff and teachers, taking into account the ECHE (Erasmus Charter for Higher Education);
- **internationalisation** (internationalisation strategy, internationalisation@home, motivation for staff mobility, joint degrees);
- **curriculum development** with a focus on joint and double degrees (modularisation);
- **study system** (bachelor, master, PhD), **transferability** and **transitions**;
- **recognition issues** (also in connection with European mobilities and recognition of prior learning);
- implementing **ECTS / Workload** questions;
- application of the **Diploma Supplement (DS)**;
- formulating and testing **learning outcomes**;
- **research-based teaching and research-led learning**;
- teaching and **quality assurance**;
- the **social dimension** (underrepresented groups, inclusion, special needs, diversity management).

In addition, Bologna objectives can be discussed that form part of the internal strategy of the applicant university.

The current project, 3-IN-AT, provides for up to eight consultation visits to universities, three of which were already implemented in the spring of 2019, and others are already being planned.

Within the framework of Pro.Mo.Austria and Pro.Mo.Austria+, a total of 14 on-site consultation visits were carried out between 2015 and 2018. This format, which is appealing due to the low threshold in applying to the National Agency for Erasmus+ Education, the setting that is as informal as possible and based on mutual trust, and the prompt provision of comprehensive documentation, including recommendations was also positively evaluated in the accompanying project monitoring of AQ Austria:

“These consultations were characterised by professional preparation on the part of Austrian Exchange Service (OeAD) and professional guidance on the part of the EHEA experts. The idea and the format of the consultation sessions were seen by both the EHEA experts and representatives of the participating universities as an important instrument for the further development and establishment of Bologna topics at higher education institutions. Participants mentioned in particular that it was helpful because external expertise not only provides for a transfer of knowledge, but is also recognised and accepted in a different way from the expertise provided within the organisation. The cross-sectoral approach and the mixture of cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary consulting teams worked excellently. This has resulted in increased knowledge gain for both sides (consultants and universities). In addition, it was possible to improve and further develop some Bologna instruments relatively quickly following the consultations. This included in particular the Diploma Supplement, course descriptions and information made available on higher education institutions' websites. The experts' helpful reports provide fundamental assistance in this.”

Excerpt from the Final Report on Accompanying Monitoring of the “Pro. Mo.Austria+ //Promoting Mobility. Fostering EHEA Commitments in Austria” project by the quality assurance and accreditation agency, AQ Austria, dated 30 November 2018

Higher education institutions that express interest in a consultation visit choose a maximum of four Bologna-related topics from the catalogue of options above that are, from their own perspective, of particular interest. A list of the individuals from the higher education institution who will be attending the informational exchange (e.g. from the rectorate, chairpersons of various boards, members of the senate, quality management, academic advising, international office, ...) will be sent ahead of time along with an estimation of the current general state of awareness and progress related to the chosen topics. The coordinating office of the National Agency for Erasmus+ Education chooses two experts on the basis of the desired priorities such that the exchange can take place in accordance with the principle of dual control. A qualitative analysis (or “screening”) of the Diploma Supplement is an obligatory item on the agenda.

These consultations are aimed at encouraging the relevant parties to harness the positive value of Bologna instruments (ECTS, Diploma Supplements, guidance by learning outcomes) to promote further development in the areas of mobility, internationalisation, multi-cycle Bologna study architecture, the social dimension, innovative methods of teaching and learning, recognition and quality assurance.

Involving national experts in other formats and activities

In addition to the consultation visits, the national EHEA experts also contribute in terms of content and organisation to the implementation of the project activities in the projects of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research and Erasmus+. Within the framework of 3-IN-AT, so far two annual events have been planned:

- Bologna Day 2019: “20 Years European Higher Education Area: Reflexion – Present – Future”, University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna; approx. 200 participants;
- Bologna Day 2020: “Think Big: Institutional teaching strategies and their implementation at Austrian universities”, University of Applied Sciences Wiener Neustadt, up to 160 participants

The Bologna Day 2020 had to be postponed due to the coronavirus crisis and will probably be held in autumn 2020.

The new thematic focus on “Good teaching”, which was started in 2017 in the Pro.Mo.Austria+ project, will also be continued and extended in 3-IN-AT (see also Chapter 3). The proven concept of the “Dialogue on higher education teaching” offers a platform for exchanging information among higher education teaching services, chairpersons of the Curriculum Commission, course directors and members of higher education boards. So far, with the support of the EHEA expert Günter Wageneder, one of the planned three events has been implemented:

- “Dialogue on higher education teaching: Studying at public universities”, University of Vienna, 80 participants.

In the framework of the cross-border peer learning activities with Switzerland, the two experts from the university colleges of teacher education, Berta Leeb and Susanne Linhofer, are responsible for essential organisational tasks and content planning.

Some of the current as well as former EHEA experts contributed to the work of the thematic field groups to further develop the Higher Education Mobility Strategy (HMS) (see also Chapter 2); in some cases they also acted as co-chairs. Thus, it was also possible to benefit from the experts' knowledge and experience in terms of content, practical experience and skills in moderating in this important process for the further development of the Austrian higher education sector.

In the further implementation of the planned activities within the framework of 3-IN-AT, the experts' experience in terms of content and moderating events will also be drawn upon.

In addition, current and former Austrian EHEA experts were given the opportunity to become involved in international activities. Sabine Schindler (UMIT University Tirol), Gabriele Abermann (formerly of Salzburg University of Applied Sciences) and Eva Werner (IMC Krems University of Applied Sciences) were selected as European Bologna Experts for the project "bologna hub peer support – bologna hub PS", which is coordinated by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

The former EHEA expert Arthur Mettinger (University of Applied Sciences Campus Vienna, formerly of University of Vienna) welcomed 40 Higher Education Reform Experts (HEREs) from Eastern Europe, Central Asia and North Africa to the FH Campus for a study visit in September 2019. The event was organised within the framework of the SPHERE project (Support and Promotion for Higher Education Reform Experts) of the European University Association (EUA), which is specifically aimed at supporting the development of higher education institutions outside Europe. At the University of Applied Sciences Campus Vienna, the HEREs were given a glimpse of the university of applied sciences' implementation of "Competence Based Education (CBE)".

Bologna coordinators as connectors and communications platforms inside higher education institutions

The currently more than 80 Bologna coordinators serve as permanent, i.e. institutionally established, contacts at Austrian higher education institutions.³ They are a unique information hub at higher education institutions in the EHEA, are appointed by management at their respective higher education institution and reflect in their diversity of functions the broad manner in which the Bologna Process has been conceived. These individuals work full-time, for example, in the rectorate, in international offices, in quality management, course advising or in higher education teaching. They are responsible for reviewing information (newsletters, surveys, event advice, etc.) from the Bologna Service Point, attending events related or relevant to the Bologna Process, and conveying and reinforcing the information gleaned from them at their own institutions.

Meetings for networking amongst Bologna coordinators take place according to the principle that learning from one another and informal exchange amongst Austrian higher education institutions can contribute to the successful handling of upcoming practical challenges in implementing EHEA targets and priorities.

Furthermore, Bologna coordinators regularly volunteer to host Bologna Days and specialist events, which help enhance the public profile of their higher education institutions in Austria and throughout the European Higher Education Area.

They keep abreast of know-how related to current national and European Bologna-related reports, subjects, studies or trends thanks to a newsletter produced by the Bologna Service Point exclusively for them, amongst other means.

³ https://oead.at/fileadmin/Dokumente/oead.at/KIM/Expertise/Europaeischer_Hochschulraum/Beratung_und_Umsetzung/Factsheet.pdf

The Bologna Service Point at the Austrian Exchange Service (OeAD)

The Bologna Service Point⁴ is dedicated to encouraging and assisting the Austrian higher education sector in embracing Bologna targets and the EHEA more generally. It serves as a comprehensive and independent service point providing advice and information to the entire Austrian higher education sector. It also offers a platform for cross-sectoral dialogue and exchange through the various events that it organises.

The focus of these formats, aside from inviting experts from Austria and abroad, is on presenting existing examples of good practice – and solution-oriented criticism is very welcome.

Since 2014, the Bologna Service Point has acted as coordinator for the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research of the projects in the framework of Erasmus+ Key Action 3 “[Policy] Support to the National Higher Education Authority” and thus helps with all the activities undertaken by the national EHEA experts.

Because the Bologna Service Point sees itself as a practical contact point for concerns and suggestions, it provides support to the Bologna coordinators at Austrian higher education institutions with regard to questions, for example, about the application of the Diploma Supplements (DS), the ECTS, or with suggestions of individuals to invite for talks on Bologna-related topics.

Additional responsibilities:

- support for national and European networking activities;
- meeting organisation and moderation; conception, organisation of conferences, seminars and expert workshops; preparation for and follow-up after meetings;
- media monitoring in Austria as well as in the neighbouring countries and research: e.g. monitoring the results of important research institutes and Bologna-relevant institutions;
- advice and information processing: e.g. advice for new Bologna coordinators, for example; preparing information on the current and expected development of the EHEA.

One of the Bologna Service Point’s central tasks is to promote a shared understanding of Bologna targets, thereby making Austria an even more attractive location for university-level students. Therefore, it is also a member of the national BFUG.

⁴ <https://oead.at/de/expertise/europaeischer-hochschulraum/beratung-und-umsetzung>

Austrian participation in European working groups – insights

Bologna Implementation Coordination Group

Helga Posset (Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research)

During the BFUG working period 2015 to 2018, Austria co-chaired the Implementation Working Group, which, together with the Advisory Group Non-Implementation, developed the **peer support approach** adopted in the Paris Communiqué to improve the implementation of the **three key commitments (KCs)** of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The Paris Communiqué therefore mandated the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG) to coordinate the peer support approach for the period 2018–2020.

Due to the very short working period until June 2020, BICG was already constituted in June 2018; Austria shares the chair with Bulgaria and Croatia. Other BICG members are EUA/EURASHE, Italy, Eurydice and the European Commission. BICG met six times, the seventh meeting on 11 March 2020 had to be cancelled.

A **thematic peer group** (TPG) was to be established for each of the three KCs, which would be dedicated to very specific implementation. Ideally, smaller projects will also be created to match these three major thematic priorities.

The implementation of the three KCs was supported by a “limited call” from the European Commission in the Erasmus+ programme.

BICG invited all Member States to participate in the peer support approach to promote the implementation of the three KCs. By the time of the European BFUG in Vienna at the end of September 2018, a number of countries had already been found who would like to be responsible for one of the three thematic peer groups (TPGs). Following the European BFUG in Vienna, BICG was then expanded to include the three co-chairs of each of the three TPGs. For reasons of practicability, a representative of the co-chairs should always be sent to further BICG meetings.

Together with the TPG chairpersons, BICG developed the guidelines for the work of the TPGs. These guidelines stipulated that the TPGs should develop goals and work plans so that specific results can be measured. In addition to meetings of the entire working group, various peer learning activities (PLAs), seminars and personnel exchange programmes (Lisbon Recognition Convention – LRC, quality assurance – QA) were held.

The TPG A (Implementation of the three-cycle study system, qualifications frameworks, ECTS) worked mainly on self-certification of national qualifications frameworks as well as on the application of qualifications frameworks by stakeholders, the full implementation of the ECTS Users' Guide and the relationship between qualifications frameworks and quality assurance.

The TPG B (Recognition – Implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention), in which the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research was also represented, focused on creating legal frameworks, implementing automatic recognition, qualifications of refugees and optimising the potential of digital technologies in recognition and in the Diploma Supplement (DS).

The focus of TPG C (Quality assurance and Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)) was on the legal frameworks of quality assurance, the European approach to accrediting joint programmes, the participation of stakeholders (e.g. students and employers) and external, internal and cross-border quality assurance.

The EHEA Secretariat (Italy) has set up a subpage on the EHEA website on the BICG and TPGs, where the work plans and activities of the TPGs can be viewed.

The first meetings of the TPGs took place already in December 2018 and in the meantime TPG A and C have been able to hold three meetings each including associated seminars and PLAs. The third meeting of TPG B in March 2020 had to be cancelled.

All three groups emphasised the huge commitment of the participants, the usefulness of the opportunity for networking and exchange and the low-threshold nature of the seminars, PLAs and exchange programmes offered in the field of recognition and quality assurance. For the next working period of the European BFUG, it was suggested not only to continue the peer support approach and the three working groups, but also to build a network for the working groups.

Future of the peer group approach

The Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG) will recommend that the European BFUG continue the peer support approach, because although some Member States already report concrete implementation steps, the Bologna Policy Implementation Report again calls on the EHEA states to do more to implement the key commitments. Another BICG will be established in the next period to coordinate the peer support approach.

Thematic Peer Group B – Lisbon Recognition Convention

Katrin Forstner (Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research)

The Peer Group B meetings took place in Tirana/Albania from 31 January to 1 February 2019, in Bologna/Italy from 24 to 26 June 2019 and in Sévres/France from 10 to 11 March 2020. In addition, I participated in a PLA on automatic recognition, which took place on 3 March 2020 in Kiev. I was selected for another PLA on automatic recognition, during which I will visit NARIC Ireland, after the application process in consultation with NARIC Ireland; this will take place before the end of July 2020.

The meetings consisted of the actual peer group meeting on the first day and a public seminar on changing topics on the second day.

While the seminars were useful, informative and target-oriented for the daily work of a credential evaluator, as well as for the strategy plan development at ENIC NARIC Austria and for the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, the meetings of the peer group did not run as well.

Content information was sent out very shortly before the meetings, thus making content preparation impossible – and it was evidently not even expected. Up to now, topics have always only been communicated transparently on site. The meetings did not have an overarching theme, so that at present (the third meeting has not yet taken place) it cannot be foreseen what the outcome of the group will be. Among other things, we dealt with block chain, the EU Refugee Pass project, recognition in the eyes of the students, better implementation of the LRC (Lisbon Recognition Convention), support for member states in implementation. It can be assumed that there will be results to present, but these will probably be achieved primarily by the organisers and group leaders without strong involvement of the participants.

In my opinion, the peer learning approach in itself makes sense, as we can see from the seminars which are led by ENIC NARIC centres and also from the quite successful PLAs. Topics were discussed in small groups, opinions and experiences were exchanged, and objectives and results were fed back into the Member States. If a clear topic had been dealt with in a structured way throughout the three meetings, and especially if work assignments had been communicated or at least a possibility had been offered to prepare for the topics, the outputs could have been much better.

Thematic Peer Group C – Quality Assurance

Jürgen Petersen (AQ Austria)

Within the framework of the “Thematic Peer Group C on Quality Assurance (TPG C)” AQ Austria 2019 intensified the exchange with quality assurance agencies, ministries and other stakeholders. Different formats enabled different forms and perspectives of mutual learning.

In December 2019, AQ Austria welcomed a representative of the Montenegrin agency AKOKVO for a workshop of several days in Vienna. The format of direct peer learning proved to be particularly fruitful for both sides. What is important here is the combination of a general understanding of the requirements and design of the respective external quality assurance systems with a simultaneous thematic focus, in particular on cross-border quality assurance.

At the second TPG C meeting in Cyprus in May 2019 and in preparation for the last TPG C meeting in Ghent in January 2020, however, the focus was on a broad exchange with various actors of the EHEA. Thematic priorities included for example:

- the establishment of resilient, legally secure and yet independent external quality management structures in the countries (and regions) of the EHEA;

- the design and implementation of transnational quality assurance and the quality assurance of transnational study programmes (joint programmes, franchising, etc.);
- the implementation of comprehensive and sustainable stakeholder involvement.

With regard to the last topic, it was found that, although the participation structures in the countries of the European Higher Education Area are basically similar, the procedures are very different – and differently regulated and formalised. There is also particular potential for development in the area of student involvement and preparation, as well as the future involvement of other stakeholders from civil society.

Both formats – concrete, personalised learning through peer exchange, as well as broader exchange in the context of conferences and workshops – will be continued in 2020. If BFUG’s evaluation of TPG C is positive, it may also be extended into the future.

Working Group 1 Monitoring

Helga Posset (Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research)

This was the fourth time that the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research nominated a representative to this working group, which draws up a Bologna Process Implementation Report for each period; three of these times they were representatives from Division IV/14 (Evidence-Based Higher Education Development).

In addition to various countries, the working group also includes stakeholder representatives such as the EUA (European Universities Association), EQAR (European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education), ESU (European Students' Union) and EUROSTUDENT, who provide parts of the report. The group is co-chaired by Eurydice, responsible for coordination and final editing, and Norway, which also chairs the Working Group I Task Force on Values (see below).

The report for this very short period of work is somewhat different from previous reports, as it is intended to provide a review of 20 years of the Bologna Process. The mandate in the Paris Communiqué also states that the three key commitments should be part of the report:

- the implementation of the three-cycle study system (and qualifications frameworks, ECTS);
- the recognition of qualifications (compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention); and
- quality assurance (European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance).

In addition, the report discusses internationalisation and mobility and the efforts to strengthen the social dimension.

The Paris Communiqué also aims to take stock of the values of the EHEA, namely academic freedom and institutional autonomy, in light of current political developments. To this end, a Task Force on Values was established under the auspices of WG I, consisting of country representatives, the Council of Europe (CoE) and the Magna Charta Observatory, as well as the European University Association (EUA), the European Students Union (ESU) and Education International (EI). The Task Force is chaired by Norway.

Structure of the report:

- Introduction
- Higher education statistics (especially timelines to depict long-term developments)
- Degree Structures (analysis of the study system established in the EHEA states, number of ECTS/study)
- Quality assurance and recognition
- Social dimension (including taking stock of the 'Strategy for Widening Access and Participation' adopted in the Yerevan Communiqué)
- Internationalisation: for the first time, indicators to monitor the mobility benchmark are planned (20% of graduates should have completed a study period abroad)
- Future developments

The **qualitative indicators (Score Card Indicators)** are maintained and updated.

At the BFUG in Helsinki in November 2019, San Marino submitted an application for admission to the EHEA. BFUG has now set up an ad hoc working group on San Marino's admission and WG I nominated Helga Posset for this group. The ad hoc working group is preparing a recommendation to BFUG based on the application and San Marino's report on their higher education system. BFUG will decide on San Marino's admission to the EHEA at the EHEA Ministerial Conference in Rome in November 2020.

First parts of the report were sent to BFUG representatives in December 2019 for comment and to answer specific questions. The Member States noted that more recent developments such as sustainability, digitalisation and micro credentials should also be included, so that the report has now been expanded to include a chapter on future developments (see above).

The draft final report was submitted to the members of the working group and the Member States for comment in mid-February. The report will be finalised and printed by mid-May 2020 at the latest and presented at the EHEA Ministerial Conference in Rome in November 2020.

Advisory Group 1: Social Dimension

Marita Gasteiger (formerly Austrian National Union of Students)

From the very beginning, the Advisory Group on the social dimension has been very popular – classically also among student representatives. This explains why this was not the first time that a student representative – namely Robert Napier, President of the European Students' Union (ESU) – was one of the two co-chairs of the Advisory Group, and also why there were other student representatives, in addition to him, at the table as delegates of the countries. These included Austria (Marita Gasteiger), Germany (Ronja Hesse) and Denmark (Julian LoCurlo). The Advisory Group on the Social Dimension was definitely one of the larger and, above all, one of the more broadly based groups of recent years. There were participants ranging from Ireland, Sweden and Denmark to Croatia and Romania and last but not least Kazakhstan. The European University Association (EUA) was also present, as well as Martin Unger as an expert of the EUROSTUDENT due to the complex data situation. The atmosphere was very positive right from the start, even if conflicting interests were repeatedly expressed in lengthy discussions. However, these disputes were always based on appreciation and mutual respect and understanding. It was precisely in this regard, that the co-chairs Robert Napier and Nino Schmidt (Croatia) succeeded in finding a balance and leading the further discussion in a goal-oriented and positive manner. During the meeting in Vienna (June 2019) Austria presented a strategy plan for the social dimension, which received a great deal of attention. However, it had to accept the criticism that the legislation in the field of higher education at that time was tending in the opposite direction, which would not lead to a broadening of access to higher education, but rather to a narrowing (for example, the introduction of nationwide tuition fees).

What began on 19 February 2019 in Zagreb ended five meetings and almost exactly one year (11 February 2020) later in Copenhagen with the result of the so-called Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension in Higher Education (PaGs). The interim results of the working group were already brought to the European BFUG for the first time in November 2019, with very positive feedback. This also showed that there is a willingness to make progress in the area of the social dimension – the obstacles the working group repeatedly identified were prestige thinking, financial resources and unfortunately often a lack of political will. All too often, responsibility for the area is simply shifted to other bodies or institutions. The next step of the Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension in Higher Education will now be to be approved by the European BFUG and then to be adopted as an annex to the Bologna Communiqué by the ministers of the European Higher Education Area.

Advisory Group 2: Learning and Teaching

Alexander Kohler (Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research)

The Bologna Process is going hand-in-hand with a change of perspective on university teaching. For a long time now, it has not only served to impart knowledge, but also to enable the acquisition of competencies. Students are not the recipients and consumers of higher education teaching, but are actively involved in the acquisition of competencies. Teaching is to be “student-centred”, which means that university didactics are receiving more and more attention. In short: where previously there was talk of teaching, now learning is also considered. The Paris Communiqué of the EHEA Education Ministers (May 2018) emphasised this change of perspective and focused on innovation in our higher education systems. In doing so, the link with research, which is a hallmark of higher education, should

be ensured. Higher education institutions are called upon to develop their own strategies for research-led learning and teaching and to take responsibility for developing their quality.

In order to keep steadily improving this topic, in December 2018, the European BFUG issued a mandate to work out principles for innovative approaches to learning and teaching, combined with practical examples of how ministries can support higher education institutions, while still respecting autonomy and academic freedom.

The Advisory Group set up for this purpose, in which around 25 experts participated, initially discussed the basic outlines and content of the document (Brussels, February 2019). Particularly productive was a hearing (Paris, April 2019) in which practical examples (including national strategies and structures to strengthen teaching, opportunities for digitalisation in teaching, ways to create student-centred teaching) were analysed and the findings were used to produce a first draft. The group decided to draw up recommendations on individual topics (Bologna, June 2019). For this purpose, a drafting group, of which the Austrian representative was a member, worked virtually to develop drafts which were then discussed in the entire Advisory Group. In addition, there was an exchange with the Advisory Groups on the social dimension and on quality assurance. After several virtual meetings, a final personal meeting of the Advisory Group took place in Vienna in January 2020 at the invitation of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research.

The document contains recommendations on three thematic areas:

1. Student-centred learning
2. Future teaching
3. Higher education institutional and systems' capacity to enhance learning and teaching

The recommendations are addressed to authorities and ministries with the aim of supporting higher education institutions with their initiatives, be it through general legal frameworks and funding mechanisms, or dialogue and exchange. These efforts can be accompanied by specially set

national strategies for the further development of learning and teaching, government initiatives in the field of digital transformation and empirical studies on innovative forms of learning and teaching.

The recommendations are formulated in such a way that they are relevant for the various higher education systems in Europe, which are at different stages of development and advancement, and can serve as an impetus for national strategies and measures. The recommendations are accompanied by a selection of "inspiring examples from practice" for initiatives in individual countries. This small selection can serve as a basis for a broader exchange of experience between the EHEA Member States. Austria can contribute with its experience with funding mechanisms and legal framework conditions geared towards higher education and quality teaching, as well as national initiatives to make good teaching visible (e.g. Ars Docendi State Prize for Excellence in Teaching, Dialogue on Higher Education Teaching). Austria will continue to learn from the experiences of other countries.

- Wie „öffnen“ sich die Hochschulen für eine zunehmend heterogene Studierendenschaft?
- Wie wirkt sich die Diversität der Studienanfänger/innen auf die Institution aus? Fehlen Ihrer Wahrnehmung nach Gruppen? Wie adressieren die Hochschulen unterrepräsentierte Gruppen? Welche Rolle spielen Zugangsregelungen?



05



GUEST CONTRIBUTION:
MANIFESTO
“INNOVATION THROUGH UNIVERSITAS”

05

GUEST CONTRIBUTION: MANIFESTO “INNOVATION THROUGH UNIVERSITAS”

Much of what has already been mentioned reveals just how much higher education needs to cultivate even more creative and innovative approaches. The reasons are manifold. Communications technologies continue to develop at a rapid pace, research and education are increasingly transdisciplinary, and workplaces are being transformed in a growing number of ways by digitisation and artificial intelligence.

In addition, our societies will be put to the test by a series of challenges in this century, including how we deal with an ageing population, environmental destruction and the related matters of generating clean and reusable energy, epidemics, etc. Solving these problems will require individuals who are able to think and act outside of the box, to embrace complexity, networks and creativity. We would therefore be best off focusing on those skills and abilities that give human beings the crucial “competitive advantage” over machines.

Higher education institutions must promote the incorporation of critical thinking, social intelligence and interdisciplinary communication skills into their curricula. We need new academic disciplines like change management as well as cross-disciplinary syllabi, especially for courses that can combine the arts and science.

Examples of these kinds of innovative projects already exist. One is the joint manifesto by the University of Applied Arts Vienna and Johannes Kepler University Linz (“Alliance of Art and Science”), which is introduced here in a contribution written by the universities’ respective rectors, Gerald Bast and Meinhard Lukas.

Innovation through Universitas

Preamble

The more it appears that the world is coming apart at the seams, the more important it becomes to search its innermost for those things that hold it together. This question has driven academia for centuries, propelling science and the arts to aspire to new heights. Only those radical enough to get to the bottom of things will discover something which is fundamentally new. This is an individual who is discontent with derivations of that what we know and that what is familiar. Eruption instead of deduction. This is the only way to unhinge the world. Archimedes' statement during the age of antiquity rings true today and continues to serve as a guiding principle for our modern times.

Discovery was once a harmonious act, simultaneously involving science and art. The "uomo universale", universal man of the Renaissance, re-discovered the world by means of comprehensive education, a critical spirit, creative power, and a humanistic attitude. He helped himself to all of this knowledge and the arts as if they flowed out of the same headspring. He was only interested in the gist of the matter. Any questions regarding access, methods, and the medium were of secondary importance because he could follow any and all paths and master all techniques. He was connected to Vergil by the longing to recognize rerum cognoscere causas, the cause of things.

Ideas on education and research during the Renaissance deserve our attention today, beyond any reminiscing of the history of art and science. And Humboldt's concept of Universitas is also becoming increasingly fitting once again during a time marked by granular, almost atomized knowledge and increasingly meaningless specialization. The humanistic educational canon enriched by the development of digital competence (and not mere skills) can, and indeed must, be the European educational system's answer to meet the challenges coming from the East and the West.

When quantifying the knowledge universities generate, this statement cannot be without consequences. The fixation on citations, reputation rankings and surveys, external funding, the number of students actively taking examinations, and other quantifications proceed to fall short of the mark. Indeed, social relevance and civic responsibility must be the dominant variables. Universities are first and foremost society's intellectual and scholarly centers. By virtue of their autonomy and resilience, universities must play a leading role in shaping social discourse.

Those who advocate for more Universitas must not reduce science to mere truth or art to mere beauty. Science and art best mutually benefit each other in areas where these disciplines – despite differences in perspective, method and findings – converge and ultimately even intermingle with each other. Knowledge and sensuality, ratio and emotion as well as empiricism and imagination can intertwine to fuel and inspire each other.

So let us bring something new into the world today by going beyond the parameters and getting involved in a dialectic of science and art, a synthesis of truth and beauty and a symbiosis of knowledge and creativity. Let us accept the enormous challenges of our time for the benefit of a humane and diverse society. These are the aspirations with which the University of Applied Arts and the Johannes Kepler University aim to forge an alliance in support of innovation through Universitas. May this alliance also serve as the momentum to broaden perspectives in a so-called knowledge society and re-think the increasing economization of knowledge.

Opportunities and Challenges of Our Time

The current technological revolution (artificial intelligence, the mutually intertwined relationship between humans and machines, synthetic biology, etc.), society's demographic transformation (an aging society, migration), and climate change have set profound social and economic change processes in motion.

- Over the next 25 years, the way people live and work will fundamentally change as never before experienced in the history of mankind; the change will not only be radical but also take place in a short span of time.
- As part of the relationship between man and machine, technological progress will open up completely new dimensions of human thought and action while simultaneously evoking fundamental and philosophical questions about humankind's role in the advancement of civilization.
- New, individual life concepts will emerge as aging societies and advancing urbanization bring about new perspectives. Our existing social and health systems, housing, mobility, and foundations for human co-existence will also be challenged.
- The climate crisis will impact our world dramatically. Even if we work rapidly to minimize the sources of global warming, climate change will significantly impact the food supply, housing, mobility, migration, and politics.
- Advancements in information and communication technology will mean a higher number of people can take advantage of more opportunities to pursue a better education. However, at the same time, liberal democracies will be put to the test in regards to adhering to individual fundamental rights and freedoms as well as free and equal participation when it comes to shaping social processes.
- Digitization and automation will lead to dramatic transformations in the labor markets, requiring us to re-define the concept of human labor.

A University's Educational Mission

- Universities now face a particular challenge knowing that education in particular is the most effective lever to strengthen society's ability as a whole to cope with change.
- University education must not be measured solely by criteria such as utility, applicability, efficiency or current trends. Knowledge must also be shared at universities for the sake of knowledge.
- Providing education – including university-level education – means preparing people for life in all of its social and professional dimensions. Students must develop a fundamental understanding of our world in a historical, political, ethical as well as academic and scientific context.
- Education to live and work in a digital age must promote critical thinking, social intelligence, interdisciplinary communication skills, and creativity. This is the only way to develop true digital literacy instead of mere skills.

The Educational System in a Democratic Society

Personal growth and creating meaning by acquiring knowledge and transferring professional skills are the cornerstones of democratic educational systems.

- When complexity, contradiction, uncertainty and permanent change become dominant features of social life, education must enable people to deal constructively with the circumstances and phenomena.
- If education (and politics) are primarily based on the irredeemable promise to create stability, clarity and certainty, this tends to lead to fear, frustration, loss of credibility, and aggression.
- Complexity, contradiction, ambiguity, uncertainty and change must be recognized and tested as structuring options. The ability to think and act in this way is imperative and a precondition in order to lead a more meaningful life and responsibly take part in advancing and shaping society.
- If intelligent machines take over existing jobs, meaning that new, completely different types of jobs will emerge in the future, then people must be educated to be employable in different ways. In the digital age, employability means concentrating in particular on areas in which people are generally better than intelligent machines.

Transformation of the Labor Market

In the near future, many professions we are familiar with will cease to exist. New jobs and professions will emerge. Whether or not there will be enough new professions in time to compensate for disappearing jobs is uncertain. Employees in these new positions will face different workplace demands and people will turn to the educational system, as is the case today.

- These yet-to-be undetermined and unspecified jobs and professions will require key skills that include being mentally flexible, thinking critically, social intelligence and creativity in the sense of thinking and acting in unusual contexts, productively handling vague situations, uncertainty and intuition, and questioning that what already exists.
- Education to prepare for new types of jobs and professions includes: non-linear thinking, changing perspectives, creating interdisciplinary contexts, applying communication skills between disciplines, imagination, and intuition.
- The universities are being called upon to take part in creating new jobs and professions by applying research and development and prepare for the demands of future job positions by offering new academic degree programs.

Shaping Social Development Together

Social human coexistence and taking part in shaping social development together face great challenges under the conditions of the 21st century.

- Major global challenges (climate crisis, the consequences of technological revolution, ageing societies, social inequality, rejecting existing labor markets, the erosion of democracy and human rights, etc.) can only be understood and solved by working across disciplines.
- Monodisciplinary research approaches alone are usually insufficient. We must take a look at the corresponding inter-relationships and systemic effects.
- Education – university-level education in particular – must teach the technological fundamentals and methods that are inherently changing the world so that people will be in a position to analyze the cross-disciplinary impact potential these technologies have. This is the only way they can practice their new jobs and have a say as citizens.

Innovation Instead of Mere Invention

- The history of civilization is a history of cultures driven by innovation.
- Innovation results from research and development.
- New approaches in education, research and innovation must do justice to the radical nature of social, technological and economic upheavals. Innovation cannot – and must not – be reduced to a business route.
- Innovation is more than just inventions. Inventions only become innovations through social, economic and cultural contextualization.
- In order for innovation to impact major global challenges, we not only need outstanding experts in key scientific disciplines, but also people who have interdisciplinary communication skills, the ability to deal productively with non-linearity, vagueness, a change of perspective, abstraction, imagination, and intuition.
- Innovation under rapidly advancing, profound, and interconnected technological, social and climatic change processes requires a synergetic application of scientific and artistic methods.
- The subject of a good life for future generations cannot be answered by technological advancement alone.

An Alliance between Art and Science

- To be able to work on our social challenges, we need the alphabet of arts just as urgently as the alphabet of sciences. Reason and passion are equally necessary in order to support social progress and advancements.
- The complex and potentially crisis-ridden challenges of our times can only be mastered in a creative environment; a type of 'fermentation chamber' if you like, for radical innovation. This requires a close alliance between art and science. At the same time, we must take into account the specific importance and the impact of science and art in their respective domains.
- In order to make an impact during the 21st century and keep current, art and science must engage with each other. Scientific methods and key skills must be extended to include artistic ones and vice versa. We need to develop a common language, a basis for understanding, an openness towards vis-à-vis methods, and respect for one another.
- A project-related and institutional innovation-alliance between art and science is the order of the day. Bearing this in mind, the University of Applied Arts and the Johannes Kepler University have formed this kind of an alliance to bring something new into the world together and transfer university education through dialogue.



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OUTLOOK

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OUTLOOK

At the European BFUG meeting in Bucharest in April 2019 there was intensive and open discussion on the future of the EHEA, and priorities for the way forward. On one point, however, the entire group was in agreement: the narrative of the Bologna Process and everything it stands for, remains as relevant as ever.

It is sometimes forgotten that meetings of the European BFUG as well as the EHEA Ministerial Conferences see 48 European states come together and discuss the issues as equals around one table. The aim is mutual support, not only from the perspective of education policy, but also from that of political democracy, to prevent disparity between east and west, and between north and south. So the Paris Communiqué included a renewed commitment to the fundamental values, such as institutional autonomy and academic freedom. The forthcoming Rome Communiqué will define and describe these values in more detail for the first time.

In 2020 the EHEA is entering its third decade – one that will bring many new challenges. It is already clear that continuing systematic implementation of the three Key Commitments (the three-cycle study system in accordance with the European Qualifications Framework, fair and transparent recognition of qualifications, and quality assurance), which are indispensable to a functioning and open EHEA, will be undisputed. In this context, the peer support approach, used for the first time in the current working period, has

proved to be an excellent method for mutual assistance in the implementation process. Learning from each other, with due consideration of the various different higher education systems, is an approach that is likely to characterise the coming decade.

The central issues will be digitalisation, innovative study formats, micro credentials, civic engagement, and implementation of the European Universities' Initiative. Inter- and transdisciplinary thinking (as exemplified in the joint manifesto by the University of Applied Arts Vienna and the Johannes Kepler University Linz – see the “Guest contribution”) will become increasingly significant, along with the development of correspondingly broad-based curricula, with the aim of giving students the best possible education and training for addressing global issues, especially those linked to climate change and the associated implementation of the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

As this report is being compiled, Europe faces one of the most severe crises (the COVID-19 pandemic) since the Second World War. It is particularly in times like these that Europe needs to work together more closely than ever. The extensive disruptions to all of our lives are creating major challenges throughout the higher education system; these are justified because – in terms of wider social responsibility – there seems to be no alternative. The demands on political leaders are enormous: they have to protect the entire higher education community in the best possible way,

and also provide security and help to maintain the routines of learning and student life. The European higher education landscape will have huge challenges to overcome in the months following the crisis. It is likely that the insights gained in this crisis situation will result in changes to the day-to-day practicalities of life in the higher education sector. Many tertiary institutions have greatly expanded their range of distance learning options during this period, with considerable success. And it is probable that options will be considered for the complementary use of physical and virtual mobility programmes, as well as virtual teaching and learning. Certainly one thing is true for the COVID-19 pan-

demic as for any crisis: it reveals an opportunity, the chance to scrutinise where we have come from and to realign our way forward, not least with a view to combatting climate change. Perhaps open science, open access, citizen science and open educational resources, as well as video conferences, distance learning and exams by video will soon be part of everyday life in higher education.

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APPENDIX
(PARIS COMMUNIQUÉ)

07

APPENDIX

(PARIS COMMUNIQUÉ)

Meeting in Paris on 24 and 25 May 2018, twenty years after the Sorbonne Declaration was signed, we, the Ministers responsible for higher education, wish not only to celebrate the progress made in building the European Higher Education Area over the past two decades, but also to make strong and ambitious commitments for its further development.

We are proud of what the Bologna Process has achieved. We have built something unique: a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in which goals and policies are agreed upon at European level, and then implemented in national education systems and higher education institutions. This is an area where governments, higher education institutions and stakeholders are shaping the landscape of higher education together; that demonstrates what a joint effort and continuous dialogue among governments and the higher education sector can attain. Through the EHEA, we have paved the way for large-scale student mobility and improved not only the comparability and transparency of our higher education systems, but also increased their quality and attractiveness. The EHEA has promoted mutual understanding and trust, and has enhanced cooperation among our higher education systems.

Academic freedom and integrity, institutional autonomy, participation of students and staff in higher education governance, and public responsibility for and of higher

education form the backbone of the EHEA. Having seen these fundamental values challenged in recent years in some of our countries, we strongly commit to promoting and protecting them in the entire EHEA through intensified political dialogue and cooperation.

Since the Sorbonne and Bologna Declarations, the EHEA higher education systems as well as institutions have undergone major reforms. At a moment when Europe is facing important societal challenges – ranging from unemployment and social inequality to migration-related issues and a rise in political polarisation, radicalisation and violent extremism – higher education can and must play a decisive role in providing solutions to these issues. It must also play a key role in establishing the facts on the basis of which public debates are conducted and decisions made. By providing students and other learners with opportunities for lifelong personal development, higher education enhances their prospects of employment and stimulates them to be active citizens in democratic societies.

We therefore commit to developing policies that encourage and support higher education institutions to fulfil their social responsibility and contribute to a more cohesive and inclusive society through enhancing intercultural understanding, civic engagement and ethical awareness, as well as ensuring equitable access to higher education.

Progress in implementing agreed reforms

As the 2018 Bologna Process Implementation Report shows, progress has been made while implementation remains uneven, both between policy areas and between countries.

Quality assurance is key in developing mutual trust as well as increasing mobility and fair recognition of qualifications and study periods throughout the EHEA. We therefore recognize the progress made in implementing the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” (ESG) into national and institutional practice in most countries, and we commit to removing the remaining obstacles to their implementation in national legislations and regulations. In order to encourage the development of more joint programmes and joint degrees, we will also enable and promote the use of the “European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes” in our higher education systems. We welcome and will promote the development of the Database of External Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR).

In order to further develop mobility and recognition across the EHEA, we will work to ensure that comparable higher education qualifications obtained in one EHEA country are automatically recognised on the same basis in the others, for the purpose of accessing further studies and the labour market. To this end we renew our commitment to ensure full implementation of ECTS, following the guidelines laid down in the 2015 ECTS Users’ guide.

We will work to implement the Council of Europe/UNESCO Lisbon Recognition Convention and its Recommendations, in particular on the recognition of qualifications held by refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation. We also urge the adoption of transparent procedures for the recognition of qualifications, prior

learning and study periods, supported by interoperable digital solutions.

We approve the proposed revised Diploma Supplement and commit to working for its adoption in identical versions within the respective frameworks of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and Europass. To further promote student and graduate mobility, we welcome and support initiatives such as the digitalisation of the Diploma Supplement, and commit to support higher education institutions to pursue further student data exchange in a secure, machine-readable and interoperable format, in line with data protection legislation. We also note with interest the current “European student card” EU pilot project, which could potentially be broadened to support and facilitate student mobility throughout the entire EHEA.

In many of our systems, ECTS-based short cycle qualifications play an increasingly important role in preparing students for employment and further studies as well in improving social cohesion by facilitating access for many who would otherwise not have considered higher education. We are therefore including short-cycle qualifications as a stand-alone qualification within the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA (QF-EHEA). Each country can decide whether and how to integrate short cycle qualifications within its own national framework.

The governance and working methods of the EHEA must develop to meet these challenges.

We ask the BFUG to review and simplify its governance and working methods, to involve higher education practitioners in its work programme, and to submit proposals for addressing the issue of non-implementation of key commitments in time for our next meeting.

We gratefully accept the commitment of France to host our next meeting in 2018 and to provide the Secretariat of the EHEA from July 2015 through June 2018.

Ministers welcome the application of Belarus to join the EHEA and in particular its commitment to implement reforms, 16 years after the launch of the Bologna Process, to make its higher education system and practice compatible with those of other EHEA countries. On that basis, Ministers welcome Belarus as a member of the EHEA and look forward to working with the national authorities and stakeholders to implement the reforms identified by the BFUG and included in the agreed road map attached to Belarusian accession. Ministers ask the BFUG to report on the implementation of the roadmap in time for the 2018 ministerial conference.

Finally, we take note with approval of the reports by the working groups on Implementation, Structural reforms, Mobility and internationalization, and the Social dimension and lifelong learning, as well as by the Pathfinder group on automatic recognition. We adopt the measures included in the Appendix and take this opportunity to underline the importance of all members and consultative members participating fully in the work of the BFUG and contributing to the EHEA work programme.

Unlocking the full potential of the EHEA: taking implementation forward

We acknowledge that the reforms driven by the Bologna Process require both successful implementation and full ownership of all of our agreed goals and commitments throughout the EHEA. Fulfilling our commitments depends on the concerted efforts of national policy-makers, public authorities, institutions, staff, students and other stakeholders as well as coordination at EHEA level.

In order to unlock the full potential of the EHEA and ensure the implementation of Bologna key commitments, we are adopting a structured peer support approach based on solidarity, cooperation and mutual learning. In 2018–2020, thematic peer groups will focus on three key commitments crucial to reinforcing and supporting quality and cooperation inside the EHEA:

- a three-cycle system compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA and first and second cycle degrees scaled by ECTS
- compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention,
- and quality assurance in compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

We mandate the Bologna follow-up group (BFUG) to implement, coordinate and monitor the adopted peer support approach, and to do so with the aid of the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group established to that end. It will analyse the first round of peer support and through the BFUG suggest the direction that the activity should take in the future, and report back to us at our next EHEA Ministerial conference in 2020.

We encourage the use of the Erasmus+ programme for increasing cooperation, beyond mobility, and achieving progress on the key commitments.

Belarus joined the EHEA in 2015 on the basis of an agreed roadmap. We acknowledge that some first reforms have been initiated, but also that substantial challenges remain. We welcome Belarus' commitment to work with and be supported by partners in the implementation of the proposed strategy for 2018–2020.

Innovation in Learning and Teaching

For the past 20 years, the core mission of the Bologna Process and the main objective of structural reforms have been to ensure and enhance the quality and relevance of learning and teaching. Lifelong learning is increasingly important to our societies and economies as well as to our citizens' wellbeing. Now it is time to add cooperation in innovative learning and teaching practices as another hallmark of the EHEA. We therefore commit to developing new and inclusive approaches for continuous enhancement of learning and teaching across the EHEA, and can succeed only if we do so in close collaboration with the European higher education community, in full respect of academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

The success of the European Learning and Teaching Forum launched by the European University Association last year demonstrates the value and potential of collaboration in learning and teaching, with tangible benefits for higher education institutions, staff and students. Therefore, in addition to measures at national level, we will develop joint European initiatives to support and stimulate a wide range of innovative learning and teaching practices, building on existing good practice in our countries and beyond. This will encompass the further development and full implementation of student-centred learning and open education in the context of lifelong learning. Study programmes that provide diverse learning methods and flexible learning can foster social mobility and continuous professional development whilst enabling learners to access and complete higher education at any stage of their lives.

We will support higher education institutions to develop and enhance their strategies for learning and teaching. We also encourage them to provide inter-disciplinary programmes as well as to combine academic and work-based learning. Students should encounter research or activities linked to research and innovation at all levels of higher

education to develop the critical and creative mind-sets which will enable them to find novel solutions to emerging challenges. In this regard, we commit to improving synergies between education, research and innovation.

Digitalisation plays a role in all areas of society and we recognise its potential to transform how higher education is delivered and how people learn at different stages of their lives. We call on our higher education institutions to prepare their students and support their teachers to act creatively in a digitalised environment. We will enable our education systems to make better use of digital and blended education, with appropriate quality assurance, in order to enhance lifelong and flexible learning, foster digital skills and competences, improve data analysis, educational research and foresight, and remove regulatory obstacles to the provision of open and digital education. We call on the BFUG to take the issue of digitalisation forward in the next working period.

As high quality teaching is essential in fostering high quality education, academic career progression should be built on successful research and quality teaching. It should also take due account of the broader contribution to society. We will promote and support institutional, national and European initiatives for pedagogical training, continuous professional development of higher education teachers and explore ways for better recognition of high quality and innovative teaching in their career.

Beyond 2020: a more ambitious EHEA

The EHEA has proved its role as a unique framework for higher education co-operation in Europe. To develop the EHEA further, we will intensify cross-disciplinary and cross-border cooperation as well as develop an inclusive and innovative approach to learning and teaching. We call on the BFUG to submit proposals in time for our 2020 meeting in order to enable higher education to fully play its role in meeting the challenges faced by our societies.

We will foster and extend integrated transnational cooperation in higher education, research and innovation, for increased mobility of staff, students and researchers, and for more joint study programmes throughout the whole EHEA. We take note with interest of the recent EU initiative on 'European Universities' and we will encourage all our higher education institutions to work in such new settings. We call on the BFUG to establish interaction with the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) by 2020 in order to develop synergies between the EHEA and the European Research Area (ERA).

We commit to developing the role of higher education in securing a sustainable future for our planet and our societies and to finding ways in which we, as EHEA Ministers, can contribute to meeting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals at global, European and national levels. As a follow-up to the Bologna Policy Forum, we mandate the BFUG to enter into a global policy dialogue to improve regular cooperation with other regions and international organisations. This dialogue should focus on promoting mutual learning and joint initiatives on issues of common interest, such as social inclusion and the wider role of higher education. We welcome the work on the UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications.

We recognise that further effort is required to strengthen the social dimension of higher education. In order to meet our commitment that the student body entering and graduating from European higher education institutions should reflect the diversity of Europe's populations, we will improve access and completion by under-represented and vulnerable groups. Therefore, we mandate the BFUG to take this issue forward by the next EHEA Ministerial conference.

Preparing the 2020 EHEA Ministerial conference

For our 2020 conference, we mandate the BFUG to develop a Bologna Process Implementation Report assessing the main developments in the EHEA since the Bologna Process began, including to what extent we have fulfilled the mobility target agreed in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve in 2009.

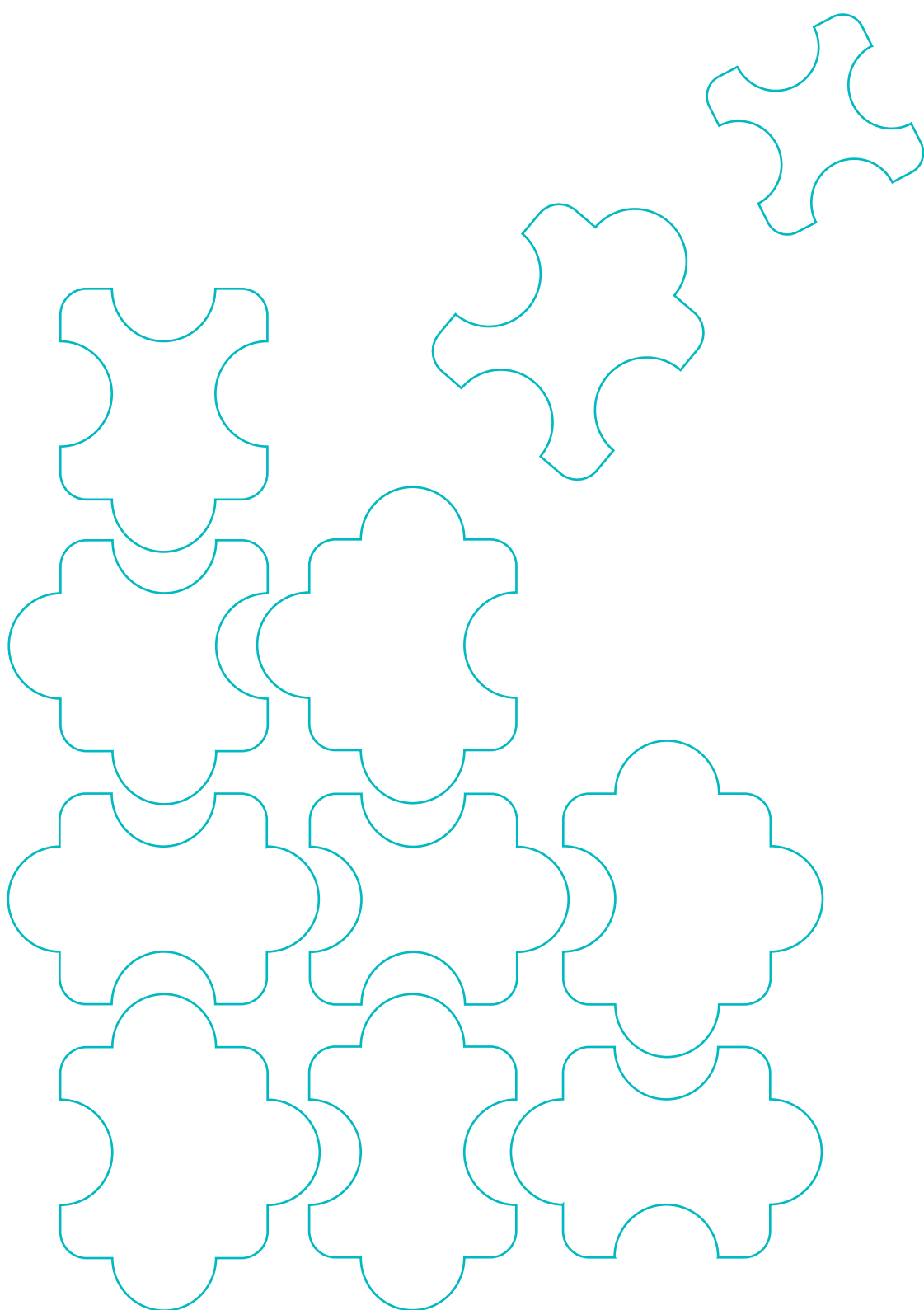
We also ask the BFUG to submit proposals for the main priorities for the next decade, in close cooperation with higher education institutions, staff and students, and for the governance of the EHEA.

We gratefully accept the offer by Italy to host the next Ministerial conference of the EHEA and the Bologna Policy Forum in 2020.

Appendices

Measures adopted:

- Structured peer support approach for the implementation of the three Bologna key commitments
- Belarus strategy for 2018–2020
- Short cycle qualifications as a stand-alone qualification level within the overarching Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA)
- Revised Diploma Supplement, with a recommendation for its adoption in identical form in the respective frameworks of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and Europass



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