



European Education Area Strategic Framework

Working Group on Higher Education

Work Programme



EEA Strategic Framework Working Group on Higher Education

Work programme

Table of Contents

- 1. Introduction 5**
 - 1.1. EEA Strategic Framework 5
 - 1.2. Objectives of the EEA Strategic Framework Working Group on Higher Education 5
- 2. Expected Working Group outputs6**
- 3. Overview of the initial themes to be addressed by the Working Group... 6**
- Annex 1: Indicative roadmap for the Working Group activities (Dec 2021- early 2023) 8**
- Annex 2: Working methods to be used by the working group 11**

1. Introduction

1.1. EEA Strategic Framework

The Commission's Communication of 30 September 2020 on Achieving the European Education Area by 2025 and the Council Resolution of on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030) call for maintaining the format of working groups as part of the "tried and tested working arrangements" in the context of the new cycle of European cooperation in education and training.

In particular, the Council Resolution stresses that the mutual learning initiatives should have "clear mandates, time schedules and planned outputs to be proposed by the Commission in cooperation with Member States". Seven new working groups – the **EEA Strategic Framework Working Groups** - will contribute to the EU's policy cooperation process in the sector of education and training. Building on the results of the ET2020 Working Groups, they will each focus on one of the themes of common interest: Early Childhood Education and Care, Schools, **Higher Education**, VET, Adult Learning, Digital Education and Equality and Values in education and training.

The overall objective of the new working groups shall be to promote mutual learning on policy reform of national education systems with a view to effectively contributing to the achievement of the European Education Area by 2025, and as relevant, the Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027) through tangible outputs.

1.2. Objectives of the EEA Strategic Framework Working Group on Higher Education

The EEA Strategic Framework Working Group on Higher Education (hereafter referred to as Working Group on Higher Education) will support the Member States' and other participating countries' reforms to maximise the potential of higher education systems to promote transformation of the higher education sector and provide high quality higher education, preparing graduates for changing societies and labour markets and contributing to building a stronger Europe through enhancing Europe's innovation capacity on the way towards a European Education Area by 2025

It will do so by promoting mutual learning on policy reform within national education systems and discussing European higher education policy initiatives at a technical level. The Working Group will also facilitate synergies between the education and the research and innovation missions of higher education institutions, in the context of the European Education Area and the European Research Area, while ensuring consistency with the European Higher Education Area.

This initial work programme aims to provide a framework for the first stages of the Working Group activities and will be updated at a later stage. The work programme is based on the mandate for the Working Group on Higher Education as agreed with the Education Committee of the Council of the EU. The priorities to be addressed by the Working Group on

Higher Education comprise: 1. Quality, equity, inclusion and success in education and training, 2. Lifelong learning and mobility, 3. Teachers and Trainers, 4. Higher education, 5. Green and digital transitions.

This work programme includes:

- An overview of the expected outputs of the Working Group (as specified in the mandate)
- An overview of the initial themes and actions which will be addressed in the Working Group activities

The annexes comprise:

- Annex 1: the draft roadmap (initial timetable) for the Working Group activities
- Annex 2: the working methods to be used by the Working Group

2. Expected Working Group outputs

The Working Group will focus primarily on the follow-up and implementations of the actions from the Working Group mandate, as agreed with the Education Committee of the Council of the EU. These actions are part of the strategic objectives that the European Commission will present in January 2022 with the European Strategy for Universities, combined with a proposal for a Council recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation. The list of themes provides an overview of all current actions in higher education on the European level and can be updated based on developments in the higher education field. The most important actions will be indicated in the working group roadmap and will be decided on in collaboration with the working-group members

3. Overview of the initial themes to be addressed by the Working Group

The Working Group will focus primarily on the follow-up and implementations of the actions from the Working Group mandate, as agreed with the Education Committee of the Council of the EU. These actions are part of the strategic objectives that the European Commission will present in January 2022 with the European Strategy for Universities, combined with a proposal for a Council recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation. The list of themes provides an overview of all current actions in higher education on the European level and can be updated based on developments in the higher education field. The most important actions will be indicated in the working group roadmap and will be decided on in collaboration with the working-group members.

WORKING GROUP'S PRIORITY AREAS	RELEVANT ACTIONS
Higher Education	The European Strategy for Universities: implementing its flagship initiatives
	Proposal for a Council Recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation
	Roll-out of the European Universities initiative
	European Framework for Attractive and Sustainable Careers in Higher Education
Quality, equity, inclusion and success in education and training	The review of the 2006 Council and Parliament Recommendation on Quality Assurance. Towards the launch of a Quality Assurance and Recognition System.
	Support and exchange on the inclusion actions under the European Strategy for Universities
	Monitoring of the principles of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education
	Support for adequate funding for quality and inclusive higher education
	Exchange on the rationalisation, use and synergies of data monitoring tools and the access to national data sources
	European framework for diversity and inclusion, including closing the gender gap
Lifelong learning and mobility	Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European Approach to Micro-credentials for Lifelong Learning and Employability
	Implementation of the 2018 Council Recommendation on automatic mutual recognition
	Roll out of the European Graduate Tracking initiative
Teachers and trainers	Promote exchanges between stakeholders and member states
Green and digital transitions	Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Learning for Environment Sustainability
	The roll-out of the European Student Card initiative

Annex 1: Indicative roadmap for the Working Group activities (Dec 2021- early 2023)

PHASES	MEETINGS	MAIN ACTIVITIES
Phase 1: December 2021	15 December 2021	Introduction to the Working Group Discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms of Reference, Rules of Procedure, Work Programme of the Working Group • Upcoming and recently published Commission initiatives, for example, proposal for a Council recommendation on Micro-credentials (December 2021), upcoming European Strategy for universities and proposal for a Council Recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation (adoption foreseen early January 2022), 3rd Erasmus+ call on European Universities • Strengthening synergies between the European Education Area, the European Research Area and the European Area for Higher Education
	16 March 2022	Presentation and Q&A on implementation of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Strategy for Universities (adopted on 18 January 2022) • Proposal for a Council Recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation. (Adopted on 18 January 2022) Technical discussion on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The criteria for the Erasmus+ pilot for a European label for joint programmes
	27 April 2022	Preparation for meeting of Directors-Generals for Higher Education Technical discussion on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-creation process and pilot project towards a European label for joint programmes and institutionalised cooperation instruments for alliances of higher education institutions • Exchange on the rationalisation, use and synergies of data monitoring tools and the access to national data sources • Launch of the European Graduate tracking network (planned for May 2022) and on the second Eurograduate

		pilot survey
	June 2022	Peer-Learning Activity on micro-credentials, hosted by Ireland
Phase 3: July - December 2022	Early September 2022	Discuss present initiatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results of the 3rd Erasmus+ call for European Universities, the mid-term evaluation review, and further roll out of the initiative Technical discussion on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A European framework for attractive and sustainable careers in higher education
	Late October 2022	Preparation of meeting of Directors-Generals for Higher Education Technical discussion on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A European Quality Assurance and Recognition System
	December 2022	Peer-Learning Activity on learning for environmental sustainability (tbc)
Phase 4: January - March 2023	February 2023	Discuss upcoming initiatives for 2023-2024: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further roll-out of the European universities initiative • Further roll-out of the European student card initiative • Towards the launch of a Quality Assurance and Recognition System. • The rationalisation of Higher Education monitoring tools • A European framework for attractive and sustainable careers in higher education • European criteria for joint programmes • Institutionalized cooperation instruments for alliances of higher education institutions

	March 2023	Peer-Learning Activity on quality assurance (tbc)
--	------------	---

Annex 2: Working methods to be used by the working group

The Working Groups perform five main types of activities, which aim to produce and disseminate quality outputs:

- **Peer learning activities (PLAs)** co-led by the Commission and a Member State/stakeholders' representative hosting the event and with a good practice to demonstrate or a policy issue of national significance to explore. PLAs can also be coordinated by a Steering Group (of 2-3 Member States/other countries/stakeholder organisation). PLAs focus on one specific policy issue and gather Member States, EFTA and candidate countries and representatives of stakeholders selected by the Commission for which the issue at stake is a national challenge or where they have good practice to share. They serve to analyse, compare and contrast different policy options or approaches, to develop new knowledge about the policy area, to exchange policy experience and evidence, to integrate research into policymaking and to offer practical guidance to participating countries, thus focusing on excellence as much as on the modernisation of education and training systems.
- **Working Group meetings** in Brussels or online with all members of the Working Group. Working Group meetings can include a range of different working methods including keynote speeches from leading experts on particular themes, panels of speakers, breakout group exchanges, marketplaces of inspiring practices, etc.
- **Online exchanges using webinars** (through Microsoft Teams) with all Member States, candidate countries, countries of EFTA and representatives of stakeholders selected by the Commission.
- **Dissemination activities** of the outputs: Working Group members will also contribute to the dissemination of its outputs at European, national, regional and local levels, including through the EEA portal. The valorisation and dissemination of the Working Group's outputs could be further strengthened through various other channels, such as the European Education Summit, or the Erasmus+ National Agency network. Working Group experts have a key role to play in ensuring that exchange of information and dissemination of the Working Group results contribute to capacity-building as well as informing policy reforms in Member States and other participating countries.
- **Working in synergy:** the Working Group will work in synergy with other EEA strategic framework Working Groups and Commission Working Groups related to education and training, and will be open for cooperation and synergies with relevant EHEA and EEA structures.

Due to the pandemic, it is likely that the Working Group will convene often online. Also PLAs could be adapted to a shorter online format (i.e. covering one morning or afternoon) and be in fact 'mini-PLAs' that could take place more frequently than regular PLAs. If the pandemic allows, the Working Group can again meet physically.

