



REPORT

ON MEETING THE TARGETS OF THE WORK PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTING EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA TOOLS IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM OF THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS IN 2018 – “WORK PLAN 2018” (FEBRUARY 2019)

Prepared by the Belarusian Independent Bologna Committee
and the Ad Hoc Committee of the Belarusian National Platform
of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum

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Editorial notice: *All 2018 Work Plan titles are copied from the official version submitted to BFUG by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus. A number of organizations' official titles and some terminology are also kept in line with the official Work Plan 2018 to avoid any misunderstanding and misinterpretation when reviewing submitted comments and analysis.*

1. "Nomination of members to the National Working Group for further implementation of the EHEA tools in the higher education system of the Republic of Belarus: approval of the group".

Date – July 2018

Implementer – Ministry of Education (further referred as ME)

Implementation status as of the end of 2018:

There is no publicly available information about the ME approval of the composition of the National Working Group for further implementation of the EHEA tools in the Belarusian higher education system. The websites of the Ministry of Education, the National Institute for Higher Education (NIHE) – Bologna process, and other public sources do not contain any references to this.

2. "Informing stakeholders about the development of higher education system of the Republic of Belarus and about the implementation of the Bologna tools during public councils sessions, staff meetings, meetings of university councils, etc."

Date – October 2018

Implementer – NIHE and Main Center for Information and Data Analysis of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus (further referred as MCIDA)

Implementation status as of the end of 2018:

According to ME letter titled "About organising educational process in higher education institutions (further referred as HEIs) in 2018/2019 academic year" (#03-01-17/7194/дс) "the information Internet portal <http://by-ehea.info> will be launched on 1 September 2018" (p.22) in order to provide information and analytical support for implementation of EHEA tools in the Belarusian higher education system. This statement was published on [NIHE](#) website.

However, as of December 2018, repeated attempts to access the above mentioned Internet portal have been unsuccessful: "Page is unavailable. Website by-ehea.info can't process this request. HTTP ERROR 500". This means that portal doesn't work or has not been developed yet.

3. "Workshops, webinars, continuing professional development courses and other events aimed at raising awareness of HEI staff and other stakeholders about the development of education system of the Republic of Belarus".

Date – October – December 2018

Implementer – ME, NIHE and HEIs

Implementation status as of the end of 2018:

According to the information published at National portal for educational standards projects in higher education ([Educational Standards](#)) the following took place:

- On 5 December 2018, the national skills session on the issues of developing educational standards and study and programme documentation for wider group of specializations at Master level for 2019/2020 academic year was held at NIHE ([National meeting December 5 2018](#));
- On 18-22 December 2018, Belarusian State University (further referred as BSU) hosted 2-day seminar “Current issues of developing educational standards and curriculum for wider groups of specializations at Master level for 2019/2020 academic year” ([BSU seminar December 2018](#)).

Thus, we can conclude that some work had been done in implementing the Work Plan 2018 provisions.

4. “Study visits for Belarusian HEI staff to EHEA member states universities”.

Date – October – December 2018
Implementer – ME, NIHE and HEIs

Implementation status as of the end of 2018:

There is no publicly available information about conducted study visits and its outcomes. The ME, NIHE – Bologna process and HEIs websites do not have any references to study visits specifically.

5. “Proposal to the BFUG about consultants/experts on the implementation of individual sections of the Strategy”.

Date – September 2018
Implementer – ME and NIHE

Implementation status as of the end of 2018:

There is no publicly available information on implementing this provision of the Work Plan 2018 on ME, NIHE – Bologna process and HEIs websites.

6. “Reviewing and discussing the Draft National Qualification Framework” (further referred as NQF).

Date – September – December 2018
Implementer – ME and NIHE

Implementation status as of the end of 2018:

There is no information about public discussion of NQF for higher education available on public sources.

At the same time, we can confirm that some work has been carried out, in this direction. The Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus (Resolution “About Strategy for Improving National Qualification System of the Republic of Belarus” #764 from 24 October 2018) approved Strategy for Improving National Qualification System that includes Action Plan (further referred as Plan) for its implementation ([NQF Strategy Plan](#)).

It also should be noted that this Strategy was the first official document that ensured systemic approach to National Qualification System (further referred as NQS) and NQF ([Strategy NOS NQF](#)) development.

According to the Plan (p.14), NQF should be developed during 2020-2023 by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (further referred as MLSP), Research Institute of Labour (further referred as RIL) and the Ministry of Education.

Irina Kostevich, Minister of Labour and Social Protection, announced that NQF should be approved by 2021. This announcement was made during the roundtable “Improving National Qualification System” held by the Permanent Commission on Labour and Social Issues of the House of Representatives on 31 October 2018 ([Announcement Roundtable](#)).

7. Elaboration of a new generation of educational standards and curricula (G3+): first stage

Date – July – December 2018
Implementer – ME, NIHE, HEIs and EMA

Implementation status as of the end of 2018:

On 30 May 2018, the Belarusian Minister of Education, Igor Karpenko approved draft Guidelines for developing new educational standards and curriculum (generation 3+), which were modified based on HEIs’ recommendations. This means that the methodological base is created for implementing the Work Plan 2018 provision 7.1. This document can be found in [Educational Standards 3+](#).

On 24 October 2018, the National HEIs Council of Rectors discussed and approved new Concept for optimizing content, structure and volume of social sciences and humanities at HEIs. The draft Concept is available at [Optimisation Concept](#). The latest update was as of 24 October 2018.

Draft curricula models for social sciences and humanities disciplines are available at [Curricula Models](#) under section “Draft Curricula Models” ([Educational Standards](#)).

8. “Amendments to the Draft Higher Education Standards Recommendations for Cycle I (Order of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus #143 as 07.03, 2013) and the Draft Higher Education Standards Recommendations for Cycle II – Master’s Degree Programmes (Order of the Minister of Education of the Republic of Belarus #850 as of 30.12. 2011)”

Date – July 2018
Implementer – ME and NIHE

Implementation status as of the end of 2018:

The Ministry of Education (Order “On developing educational standards, and educational and programme documentation for higher education programmes” #594 from July 18, 2018) approved new educational standard and curriculum for 1st cycle of higher education ([New Models BA](#)).

Concerning the 2nd cycle of higher education – Master level, the following regulatory documents were prepared:

- The Ministry of Education (Order “On developing educational standards, and educational and programme documentation for higher education programmes” #611 from 23 July 2018) approved new educational standard and core curricula for 2nd cycle of higher education – Master level ([New Models MA](#));
- The Ministry of Education (Order “Amending the Ministry of Education Order #611 from 23 July 2018”) approved some changes to educational standard for 2nd cycle of higher education (Master level) ([Amendment MA](#)).

9. “Elaboration of educational standards and new core curricula for the first cycle of higher education with 4 –year term of study; their approval and adoption”.

Date – August 2018
Implementer – ME, NIHE, HEIs and “Inter-University Methodological Clusters (for various fields of education)” (further referred as IUMC)

Implementation status as of the end of 2018:

During July – December 2018, the number of educational standards and core curricula for shorten study period at the 1st cycle of higher education were developed and approved by the Ministry of Education (Order #594 “On developing educational standards, and educational and programme documentation for higher education programmes” from July 18, 2018) ([Educational Standards database](#)).

10. “Finalising of the National Classifier of the Republic of Belarus “Specialties and Qualifications” OKRB 011-20XX) compliant with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 2011); preparing it for further approval”.

Date – December 2018
Implementer – ME, NIHE, HEIs, Republican Institute for Vocational Education (further referred as RIVE) and IUMC

Implementation status as of the end of 2018:

On 17 December 2018, the Ministry of Education approved Amendment #27 to State Classifier of the Republic of Belarus “Specialties and Qualifications” OKRB 011-2009. This amendment was agreed upon with interested governmental bodies (organisations) and National Statistical Committee of the Republic of Belarus. Then, according to national legislation and regulations, this document was submitted to National Centre of Legal Information for legal expertise. The Amendment #27 could be found at [Draft Amendment 27 \(Approved Amendment 27\)](#).

11. “Amendments to the Procedure of Development and Approval of Curricula and Individual Study Programmes for Cycle I (approved by the Minister of Education of the Republic of Belarus on 6 April 2015)”.

Date – November 2018
Implementer – ME and NIHE

Implementation status as of the end of 2018:

The draft amendments to the “Procedure” for developing and approving curricula for the 1st cycle of higher education approved by the Ministry of Education on 6 April 2015 are available at [Draft Amendment](#).

The approved version of this “Procedure” with incorporated amendments is not available for public access at any applicable resources such as ME and NIHE websites or other public sources.

12. “Amendments to the Procedure of Development and Approval of Curricula and Individual Study Programmes for Cycle II (approved by the Minister of Education of the Republic of Belarus on 6 April 2015)”.

Date – November 2018
Implementer – ME and NIHE

Implementation status as of the end of 2018:

On 3 December 2018, the Minister of Education, Igor Karpenko approved revised “Procedure” for developing and approving curricula and MA students individual Work Plans for the 2nd cycle of higher education. This document was amended taking into account HEIs recommendations and suggestions. This document is available at [Guide MA](#).

13. “Amendments to the Guidelines for Measuring Higher Education Programmes Workload with Credit Unit System (approved by the Minister of Education on 6 April 2015).”

Date – December 2018
Implementer – ME and NIHE

Implementation status as of the end of 2018:

Until now HEIs have been using the Guidelines for calculating workload for higher education programme using “credit unit” system approved by the Minister of Education on 6 April 2015. There is no information available on whether this Guidelines were amended or new Guidelines have been developed in accordance with 2015 ECTS User’s Guide either on ME, NIHE -Bologna Process websites or other public web sources.

14. “Updating Action Plan on Development of Independent Higher Education Quality Assurance System of the Republic of Belarus” (approved by the Minister of Education on 14.02.2017).

Date – September 2018

Implementer – ME

Implementation status as of the end of 2018:

The Strategic Plan envisages the establishment of modern internal quality assurance system in HEIs by 2020 and to develop legal framework for the activities of an independent quality assurance agency with the purpose of launching its full-scale practical activities by 2022. This agency should proceed with quality assurance of all level of education. Its work is to be based on ESG – 2015 and carried out in cooperation with ENQA/ENQR.

The Work Plan 2018 envisaged updating “Updating Action Plan on Development of Independent Higher Education Quality Assurance System of the Republic of Belarus”, which was approved by the Minister of Education on February 14, 2017. The deadline was set as of October 2018. There is no information available whether this work was completed.

On the other hand, based on the available information we can conclude that there were no actions taken to establish an independent quality assurance agency as well as modernize the internal quality assurance system in HEIs what undermines achieving long-term goals of 2020 and 2022.

15. Launching English language version of Belarus-ENIC website.

Date – December 2018

Implementer – NIHE

Implementation status as of the end of 2018:

This task is not fulfilled. NIHE website, the structural division of which Belarus-ENIC is part, doesn’t even have English language sign as an added option for viewers and readers. Belarus-ENIC page ([NIHE ENIC Page](#)) presents information in Russian only. All links to Belarusian sources listed on ENIC-NARIC website ([ENIC-NARIC Belarus](#)) are marked “in Russian language”.

16. “Development of the multilingual Diploma Supplement Draft, including its digital format.

Date – December 2018

Implementer – ME and NIHE

Implementation status as of the end of 2018:

Neither draft nor proposed layout designs of multilingual Diploma Supplement in the European format including digital one are available on ME, NIHE – Bologna process websites or any other public sources.

17. “Studying and examining the approaches to employment and job placement of university graduates in the EHEA member states; holding webinar “First job placement of university graduates: best practices”.

Date – September – December 2018

Implementer – NIHE and HEIs

Implementation status as of the end of 2018:

On October 23, 2018, the Ministry of Education sent out a letter #03-01-16/9113/дс informing Belarusian governing bodies, the National HEIs Council of Rectors and other organizations on fulfilling obligations set in the Council of Ministers Order # 05/209-440/11284p from October 4, 2018. This letter acknowledges the crisis of HEIs graduates work placement system since the significant part of graduates of the year 2018 didn't arrive to assigned first work place. The letter contains warrant for taking appropriate measures to recover from them funds spent on their education and develop measures to exclude such situations in the future. According to laws, these repressive functions are primarily assigned to universities' rectors.

At the same time, this letter proposes to study and submit proposals on the use of German dual system for training professionals but adapting it to Belarusian conditions by November 15, 2018.

On December 19, 2018, Presidium of the National HIEs Council of Rectors discussed the issue of “HEIs graduates work placement: current conditions, problems and solutions”. The outcomes of this discussions are not available for public access at Council's website.

18. “Holding consultations with the BFUG on the procedure of providing information on implementation of the EHEA tools and carrying out the Strategic Plan”.

Date – September 2018

Implementer – ME and NIHE

Implementation status as of the end of 2018:

There is no information available about the consultations on procedure for presenting information on EHEA tools and Strategic Plan provisions implementation and its outcomes at ME, NIHE – Bologna process websites and other public sources.

19. “Ensuring Belarus participation in BFUG meetings, workshops and events; nomination of Belarus representatives to BFUG peer-learning groups”.

Date – September – December 2018
Implementer – ME

Implementation status as of the end of 2018:

There is no information available on the implementation of this 2018 Work Plan provision on ME website or on any other public source.

20. “Development and approval of the Work Plan for implementing EHEA tools implementation in the higher education system for 2019”.

Date – December 2018
Implementer – ME, Council of Rectors and NIHE

Implementation status as of the end of 2018:

There is neither draft nor approved Work Plan for implementing EHEA tools in the Belarusian Higher Education system for 2019 available on ME, Council of Rectors and NIHE – Bologna process websites or any other public sources.

The Russian language version of the Work Plan for implementing EHEA tools in Belarusian Higher Education system for 2019 has some provisions that were not included into its English version but it seems the implementation of thereof is closely linked to the implementation of other provisions of the Work Plan. Thus, the authors decided to provide an assessment of their implementation.

- Introduction of the multi-cycle system of higher education with the bachelor degree (180-240 European Credit Transfer System (further referred as ECTS) credits and the master degree (90-120 ECTS credits).

Date – July – December 2018
Implementer – ME, NIHE, HEIs, and Educational and Methodical Association (further referred as EMA)

Implementation status as of the end of 2018:

According to information published at [Educational Standards](#) website, Belarus began developing generation 3+ educational standards and curriculum for the 1st and 2nd cycle of higher education. Currently, there is a public discussion of educational and study programmes’ materials for the 1st and 2nd cycles of higher education, which are also published on this website.

With that, terminological and, to some extent, content mismatch of terms “credit” and “cumulative points” does exist in Belarusian higher education system. This shows that 2015 “ECTS User’s Guide” has not been used correctly in Belarusian higher education so far. For example, the term “credit” is used in the Work Plan 2018 while draft educational standards and curriculum refer to “cumulative points”. Furthermore, the one “cumulative point” corresponds to 36-40 hours, which does not match ECTS credit of 26-30 hours.

- Ensuring the expansion of practice to use modern (student-centred) educational technologies through BSU Inter-Universities Portal for Creative Education and advanced training system for HEIs faculty members.

Date – September – December 2018

Implementer – Me, NIHE and HEIs

Implementation status as of the end of 2018:

BSU Inter-Universities Portal for Creative Education [Creative Education BSU](#) is accessible and somehow puts into practice what it was assigned to do ([Creative Opinion BSU](#)).

The professional training and retraining plan for 2019 for personnel in education, and NIHE educational programmes envisage advanced training programmes for HEIs teaching staff aiming at expanding their practical use of modern technologies in education ([Plan 2019 and NIHE Programme 2019](#)). However, we cannot determine the degree of student-centredness of these technologies.

- Widening the scope of applying student’s workload calculation in ECTS credits in accordance with 2015 ECTS User’s Guide.

Date – July-December 2018

Implementation status as of the end of 2018:

It is difficult to assess whether this Work Plan 2018 provision was implemented and to what extent because the Guide for calculating the workload for higher education programmes has not changed. The proposed changes envisaged the use of credit system in accordance with 2015 ECTS User’s Guide but draft Guide for developing and approving curricula for the 1st level of higher education and approved Guide for developing and approving curricula and individual Work Plans of MA students for the 2nd level of higher education refers to the calculation of workload in hours although the “cumulative points” are mentioned but purely nominally.

Comments to the Report

In 2018 Belarusian Ministry of Education was able to make a number of milestone decisions in pursuance of Work Plan implementation, which had been postponed for a long time pending the approval of new Education Code. In particular, this is linked to slowly expanding academic autonomy of Belarusian higher education institutions ([Educational Standards 3+](#)).

However, the Work Plan 2018 tasks and targets were not ambitious and could not instigate significant reform of the higher education system. Despite this fact, even the modest tasks were not implemented in full. At the same time, it is important to note the implementation of Bologna tools and values has not (yet) been supported within the highest political circles. President Alexander Lukashenko has repeatedly expressed doubts about benefits of Bologna process for Belarusian higher education.

The 2018 Work Plan implementation did not require amending legislation in general and still number of tasks remained to be done. In particular, the provisions on Belarusian education system transparency (launching the information Internet portal/website raising awareness of a wide scope of stakeholders about the processes of the higher education system in the Republic of Belarus development and Bologna tools implementation; launching English language version of Belarus-ENIC website). The low level of transparency does not allow for obtaining the information on implementation of some of the 2018 Work Plan provisions. There is no publicly available information, or it is incomplete, or it is published with delays. Thus, transparency remains a challenge to which Belarusian higher education system is not able to answer yet.

Furthermore, Bologna reforms envisaged by Strategic Action Plan will require amendments to the Education Code. However, according to the Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus from 4 January 2019 “On adopting the plan for preparing bills in 2019”, the adoption of the new Education Code is not listed in the legislative plan. In addition, there is also information from the Commission for education, culture, and science of the National Assembly’s House of Representatives that draft Education Code has not been passed onto them for review so far. As a result, the lack of legislative initiative can block the implementation of a number of Strategic plan provisions in the future.

The implementation of social dimension of higher education and fundamental academic values has not been reflected in Belarusian Ministry of Education plans in a way it was specified in Council of Europe Recommendations and EHEA Summits’ Communiqués.

The Belarusian government’s education policy aims at restructuring professional education by decreasing the higher education – proportion. However, this strategy does not address the inclusiveness issues of higher education system. Higher education accessibility for underrepresented groups – will not? not improve and could even deteriorate due to removal of some of the old instruments enabling underrepresented groups to access higher education programmes. In addition, such approach is also not in compliance with the new European mechanisms of ensuring inclusivity.

The new annual Work Plans for implementing Strategic plan provisions should include detailed actions on Council of Europe Recommendations Rec/CM(2012)7 implementation and introduce measurable indicators for increasing inclusiveness of Belarusian higher education.

More Information

The Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) is a unique multi-layered regional civil society platform aimed at promoting European integration, facilitating reforms and democratic transformations in the six Eastern Partnership countries - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Serving as the civil society and people-to-people dimension of the Eastern Partnership, the EaP CSF strives to strengthen civil society in the region, boost pluralism in public discourse and policy making by promoting participatory democracy and fundamental freedoms. For more information, please visit the EaP CSF website at www.eap-csf.eu