

FINAL REPORT

Working group to support the implementation of the roadmap for San Marino's accession to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)

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1. Introduction

1.1. Roadmap for San Marino's accession to the EHEA

The EHEA Ministers welcomed San Marino as a new member of the European Higher Education Area in Rome 2020 Conference: ***"We are pleased to welcome San Marino as a new Member of the EHEA. San Marino will be supported in the implementation of its commitments with an agreed roadmap."***

In view of the fact that San Marino joined the European Higher Education Area 21 years after the launch of the Bologna Process and 10 years after the EHEA was officially established, the Sammarinese authorities and the BFUG worked together on developing a roadmap for higher education reform in San Marino in accordance with the values, principles, and goals of the EHEA.

The roadmap (annex) builds on the national report submitted by San Marino in conjunction with its application for accession to the EHEA, the declarations and communiqués adopted by the EHEA Ministers, the Bologna Process Implementation Report, and discussions between the BFUG and the Sammarinese authorities. Under the roadmap the Sammarinese authorities have, in full respect of the competences of the Government, the Parliament, the University, and other stakeholders, committed to structural and legislative reforms.

The roadmap covers structural reforms, higher education governance, lifelong learning, social dimension and higher education legislation with specific provisions identified through an analysis of the Sammarinese national report and discussions with the Sammarinese authorities.

The roadmap outlines two sets of actions. A first set concerns the launching of implementation measures, for which the deadline was generally 1 June 2021. A second set of actions concerns the completion of these actions by 1 November 2023. Sammarinese authorities prepared their own implementation plan for the reforms based on the roadmap.

The roadmap is implemented by the Sammarinese authorities and stakeholders. The BFUG appointed a small working group for advisory and supportive role.

San Marino has demonstrated willingness and ability to reform its higher education system along the lines agreed in the roadmap, which has led to good overall progress in the implementation of agreed commitments. The working group also underlines that cooperation with Sammarinese authorities has been excellent. The mutual learning achieved resulted from open discussions between both parties.

In the following chapters of this final report, the working group presents the main findings of the implementation of the roadmap and highlights good practices and knowledge acquired during the work. The assessment of the implementation is based on the follow up of San Marino's reforms and discussions with Sammarinese authorities and stakeholders. The working group also gives some recommendations to the BFUG for the next Ministerial Communiqué.

1.2. Overview of the San Marino's higher education system

San Marino has a small higher education system with one public university, *Università degli Studi della Repubblica di San Marino* - hereafter University of San Marino. There are currently no private institutions, although San Marino does not exclude the possibility of hosting private institutions in the future.

Before its accession to the EHEA, since 2005, San Marino higher education system has been based on three cycle degree structure and CFU (*credito formativo universitario*) which corresponds to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) - 1 CFU = 1 ECTS. A further reform in 2014 introduced improvement of student services and reforms in university governance and policies of internal and external quality assurance.

In April 2023 a new Law on higher education was approved regulating all aspects of higher education in the Republic of San Marino (Law 69/2023). In August 2023 a new Delegated Decree on the institutional and organizational structure of the University of San Marino was issued.

San Marino's higher education degree system broadly corresponds to the Italian qualifications framework. It consists of first cycle programmes (*Laurea*) of 180 ECTS, second cycle programmes (*Laurea Magistrale*) of 120 ECTS and third cycle (*Dottorato di Ricerca*). The legislation includes the possibility to establish integrated long degree programmes (*Laurea Magistrale a ciclo unico*), but no such programme exists at the moment. In 2019 there were 130 graduates from the first cycle and 23 graduates from the second cycle. The University of San Marino is working on expanding the second cycle and making it more attractive. In the third cycle there is one programme in Historical Studies and a programme in *Ingenieria economico-gestionale* (Management-Engineering).

In addition, there are several other programmes outside the "Bologna structures" (*Master Universitario di primo livello*, *Master Universitario di secondo livello*, and *Corsi di Alta Formazione*). These programmes offer for example further specialization or continuing education after the completion of the first and second cycle degrees. The number of these programmes changes every year as the courses are organized on the basis of the labour market's needs. About 180-200 students study in these other programmes, which therefore concern 1/5 of all the students of the University of San Marino.

The University of San Marino has about 940 students enrolled in the 2022/2023 academic year. The number of students has increased in recent years. Over 80% of the students are Italian, about 15% are Sammarinese and 5% are other international students in the programmes in the first, second and third cycle. The share of Sammarinese students is higher in the programmes outside the "Bologna structure" as these directly serve the local labour market. The annual intake is about 780 students in the first, second and third cycle programmes and about 160 in the programmes outside the "Bologna structure". Students pay tuition fees in all higher education programmes.

All degrees awarded by the University of San Marino are double degrees (*titoli doppi*) with Italian partner universities, with one exception, which is a joint degree. Depending on individual agreements, students normally spend the first two years in San Marino and 6 months of the third year at the Italian partner university. Some students do the first two years at the Italian university and in the third year they come for 6 months to San Marino to obtain the double degree. Double degrees help students to find employment either in Italy or in San Marino.

The academic staff of the University of San Marino consists of full professors, associate professors, researchers and teaching assistants. The University of San Marino has 13 full-time professors (*docenti strutturati*), who can either be full or associate professors or researchers. In addition, there are Italian partner universities' professors who have specific contracts for teaching in the University of San Marino.

60% of the funding of the University of San Marino comes from the government, 36,5% from tuition fees, 1,5% from other public entities, and 2% from private entities that fund specific projects.

2. The mandate and the work of the working group

The working group to support the implementation of the roadmap for San Marino's accession to the EHEA was set up by the BFUG in its work plan for the period of 2021-2024. The purpose of the working group was to follow up the San Marino Roadmap together with the Sammarinese authorities and to assist the Sammarinese authorities in implementing the roadmap and in developing specific policy areas. The working group on San Marino roadmap also organised peer-learning activities and facilitated cooperation between San Marino and the BFUG.

The specific tasks of the working group established in the Terms of Reference¹ are:

- To follow up the San Marino roadmap together with the Sammarinese authorities;
- To develop a timetable for implementing the higher education reforms, building on the milestones set out in the San Marino roadmap;
- To assist the Sammarinese authorities in implementing the roadmap and in developing specific policy areas;
- To assist in peer-learning activities and to facilitate cooperation;
- To present regular updates to the Board and to the BFUG on the state of implementation of the roadmap;
- To present a final report to the BFUG meeting by the beginning of 2024.

The BFUG will report back to the EHEA Ministers in Tirana on the implementation of the roadmap.

¹ https://www.ehea.info/Upload/WG_SMR_PT_AD_ToRs.pdf

Composition of the working group: Andorra, Jordi Llombart (co-chair); Finland, Maija Innola (co-chair); Council of Europe, Sjur Bergan; ENQA/EUA, Maria Kelo²; Holy See, Melanie Rosenbaum; Italy, Paola Castellucci and Vera Lucke; Liechtenstein, Daniel Miescher (2021-2022) and Eva Meirer (since 2023); San Marino, Monica Cavalli, Paula Cenci, Elena D’Amelio, Laura Gobbi, Remo Massari and Marica Montemaggi.

The working group met twice a year between 2021 and 2023. Three meetings were held in San Marino, which enabled the working group to meet relevant stakeholders. The work of the working group has covered all aspects of the Roadmap.

Time and place	Topics covered
17 May 2021, online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Organisation and working methods of the working group ● Establishment of a timetable for the implementation of the San Marino roadmap
10-11 November 2021, San Marino	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Update on the implementation in San Marino ● Discussions with University of San Marino representatives, students and staff members ● Peer learning on National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and Quality Assurance (QA) ● Identification of possible further support measures needed
21 March 2022, online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Update on the implementation in San Marino ● Feedback on peer support sessions
26-27 September 2022, San Marino	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Update and analysis of the progress on the implementation in San Marino ● Meeting with stakeholders’ representatives on NQF ● Peer learning on alternative pathways to higher education
14-15 February 2023, San Marino	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Update and analysis of the progress on the implementation in San Marino ● Discussion on the legislative reforms and meeting with members of the Parliament. ● Peer learning on NQF (self-certification and short cycle) ● First discussion about the final report of the working group
5-6 October 2023, Andorra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Follow-up on the implementation ● Peer learning on recognition of qualifications, self-certification and internal quality assurance

² Maria Kelo took up a new position with EUA in the course of the work and remained a member of the working group with her new affiliation.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Agreement on the conclusions and recommendations of the final report
4 March 2024, online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Presentation of San Marino's NQF ● Updating the final report

The working group reported regularly on the progress of its work and on the implementation of the roadmap to the BFUG.

3. Implementation of the roadmap

3.1. Overview of legislative reforms

San Marino has implemented extensive legislative reforms in the field of higher education. In April 2023 a new Law on higher education was approved regulating all aspects of higher education in the Republic of San Marino (Law 69/2023). The new Law is a framework legislation for higher education in San Marino, not solely for the University of San Marino. It defines the purpose of higher education and promotes, in particular, international mobility, freedom of education and research, autonomy of higher education institutions, social dimension, and national and international cooperation. The Framework Law on higher education also regulates the establishment of higher education institutions, access to higher education, study programmes and degrees and internal and external quality assurance.

After the adoption of new Law on higher education three decrees have been issued:

- The Delegated Decree n° 149 of 19 October 2023, on criteria and procedures for the establishment, accreditation and settlement of private higher education institutions (issued in substitution of Delegated Decree n° 111 of 24 July 2023), ratified by the Parliament on 19 January 2024 (Delegated Decree n° 6/2024, <https://www.consigliograndeegenerale.sm/on-line/home/archivio-leggi-decreti-e-regolamenti/scheda17184097.html>)
- The Delegated Decree n° 125 of 30 August 2023, on the institutional and organizational structure of the University of San Marino (<https://www.consigliograndeegenerale.sm/on-line/home/lavori-consiliari/verbali-sedute/documento17142813.html>), ratified by the Parliament on 30 November 2023 (Delegated Decree n° 169/2023).
- The Delegated Decree n° 180 of 13 December 2023, on the National qualifications framework (<https://www.consigliograndeegenerale.sm/on-line/home/streaming-video-consiglio/documento17143083.html>), ratified by the Parliament on 13 February 2024 (Delegated Decree n° 180/2023).

The decree n° 169/2023 on the institutional and organizational structure of the University of San Marino regulates the governance and organization of the University of San Marino (see chapter 3.5 of this report). The decree on criteria and procedures for the establishment, accreditation and settlement of HEIs establishes the criteria and procedures for those. Although there are currently no private higher education institutions in San Marino, the new Decree n° 6/2024 establishes criteria and procedures for private providers that may in the future seek to become part of Sammarinese higher education system.. The Decree on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) allocates the qualifications of San Marino in eight levels based on learning outcomes.

The working group identified that a growing number of private, often online, providers entering the higher education market may pose a problem to many education systems in the EHEA, especially if they do not seek to be part of the higher education system of any country.

Good practices: protection of designations related to higher education and codes of ethics in the University of San Marino

The Framework Law on higher education lists a number of names related to higher education such as “university”, “academy”, “faculty” and degrees (in Italian and their translations into other languages). Their use requires an authorization by the ministry responsible of higher education. This can prevent fraudulent and misleading use of terms related to higher education and protect students and higher education institutions.

The Delegated Decree on Institutional and organizational structure of the University of San Marino includes a code of ethics. According to the Decree the University’s Code of Ethics defines the fundamental values of the university community and promotes the recognition of individual rights and respect for duties towards the University of San Marino. It also commits the institution to prevent and to combat all forms of discrimination.

3.2. Qualifications framework

The system of CFU/ECTS was adopted and used as a credit system by the University of San Marino before joining the EHEA. The University links study credits with both learning outcomes and student workload and includes attainment of learning outcomes in assessment procedures.

The development of a NQF of San Marino started before San Marino’s accession to the EHEA. The Government had decided to set up a comprehensive NQF for the entire education system, including higher education. A working group in charge of drafting the NQF was established in March 2020. In the initial accession assessment, it was considered to be in its early stages: steps 1-33 but it was noted there was a clear commitment to the development of a NQF compatible with the Overarching Framework of Qualifications of the EHEA (QF-EHEA).

The roadmap set a goal for San Marino to develop a NQF compatible with the QF-EHEA, incorporating a learning outcomes approach, and proceed to self-certifying the NQF against the QF-EHEA with the participation of foreign experts.

In the development of the NQF:

- Give due consideration to including flexible learning paths in the NQF, including alternative access routes to higher education other than by earning an academic secondary school leaving qualification.***
- Give consideration to and specify the place of the Master Universitario, the Master universitario di primo livello, and the Master universitario di secondo livello within the NQF, including progress routes in terms of further study and access to the labor market available to holders of these qualifications.***

San Marino adjusted the initial work plan in the field of the NQF. It was initially set to approve a law on the NQF, but along the process, the authorities of San Marino considered that it would be better to first approve a law on higher education and at a later stage approve the decree regulating the San Marino NQF. The new Law on higher education was approved by the Parliament in April 2023. Art. 3 of the Law delegates to a specific further decree the NQF implementation. After three years of collaboration with stakeholders in San Marino, the authorities developed a proposal for the NQF. The NQF was approved by issuing the Delegated Decree on 13 December 2023 (Delegated Decree n° 180 and ratified by the Parliament on 13 February 2024).

Time	Roadmap	Steps taken in implementation
2020		Launch of the work. The national working group on the NQF was established by the ministry responsible for higher education in March 2020.
By 1 June 2021	Establish a timetable for this work and identify a national steering group and launch	San Marino’s implementation plan presented to the working group on San Marino roadmap.

³ For an overview of the 10 steps in developing a NQF , see <http://www.ehea.info/cid102844/national-qualifications-frameworks-2009.html>

	work on the NQF by 1 June 2021.	Involvement of experts
March 2022		Involvement of all stakeholders First draft of the San Marino NQF
August 2022		Nomination of foreign experts for the development of the NQF: Rector Miquel Nicolau, University of Andorra and Director Luca Lantero, CIMEA Italy.
18 November 2022		First reading of the Law on higher education (art. 3 implementation of the San Marino NQF)
February 2023		First meeting with foreign experts for revision of the NQF draft.
By 1 November 2023	Complete the NQF, including self-certification	
13 December 2023		Approval of the NQF (Delegated Decree n° 180). ratified by the Parliament on 13 February 2024.
Foreseen later		Complete the self-certification.

After emanation of the NQF, San Marino has started the self-certification process to the EHEA-QF and referencing to the EQF.

The working group provided peer-learning on self-certification and San Marino has participated in the work of the Thematic Peer Group A on qualifications frameworks.

The roadmap suggests to give due consideration to include flexible learning paths in the NQF, including alternative access routes to higher education other than by earning an academic secondary school leaving qualification (which is already possible as separate “private” exam). The new Law on higher education allows the possibility to adopt flexible paths to access higher education, and San Marino plans to include alternative access routes to higher education in future regulations.

The original goal outlined in the Roadmap of completing the NQF including self-certification by November 2023 was not met but the working group does not have any serious concerns regarding the self-certification process and estimates that San Marino is able to fulfill this commitment in the near future. It nevertheless expresses concern that further alternative access routes to higher education have not been included in the NQF even though, as noted, the new law would make this possible, but San Marino has expressed the possibility to consider the issue in future regulations.

3.3. Quality assurance

The initial accession assessment pointed out that San Marino faces specific challenges for quality assuring higher education as a small system of higher education. Some reforms to strengthen both internal and external quality assurance were implemented before the accession. The internal quality assurance system covered curriculum design, teaching and research activities, the third mission and administrative processes. Internal quality is monitored through questionnaires to all students. An Independent Assessment Body (IAB) was established in December 2019.

From the outset, San Marino did not plan to establish a national quality assurance agency; instead it chose to make an agreement with a foreign QA agency.

The goal set by the roadmap is to *develop a plan for quality assuring higher education in San Marino in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).*

- Propose legislation establishing the basis for conducting quality assurance in conformity with the European Standards and Guidelines and seek its adoption by Parliament.***
- San Marino has indicated it will seek an agreement with a foreign quality assurance agency; this agency should operate in accordance with the ESG, as demonstrated through registration in EQAR or membership of ENQA.***
- Clarify the roles and functions of the Independent Assessment Body (IAB).***
- Engage in the activities and professional network of quality assurance agencies available through ENQA.***

The new Law on Higher Education includes provisions on internal and external quality assurance. According to this law, higher education institutions in San Marino must adopt an internal quality assurance system. The internal quality assurance must be developed in accordance with the ESG. The external quality assurance system includes a periodic evaluation, at least every six years, of the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes in order to accompany the higher education institutions in a constant quality growth. The Ministry responsible for higher education is authorized to subscribe agreements with bodies or agencies operating in accordance with the ESG in order to implement an external quality assurance system. According to the Law, both internal and external quality assurance documents and information are publicly accessible.

During the meetings of the working group, improvements to the internal quality assurance system have been discussed, with particular attention to the development of students' evaluation through questionnaires that guarantee their involvement regarding: perception on the quality of teaching staff, the timing of didactic material acquisition, the relative and overall teaching load.

In January 2023, the first report of the above mentioned IAB on teaching quality was presented to the Rector and to the General Director of the University; it was later shared with the directors of the university programmes who are directly involved in the QA procedures.

The outcomes include a systematic assessment of students' perceptions on teaching effectiveness and subsequent corrective actions. The testing phase of participatory assessment was carried out during the second period of the academic year 2022/23 and the official phase will begin in October 2023 with all courses of each degree program. A so-called Student Guarantor is in charge of preparing periodic reports to the IAB on the outcomes of student's assessment and follow proper implementation of corrective actions.

Following the suggestions discussed within the working group, the internal quality assurance system was better formalized. In June 2023, the Academic Senate ratified the University Quality Policies Document. This outline identifies the objectives and tools aimed at continuous quality improvement, in close connection with the principles set out in the new Higher Education Law n° 69/2023 and with the priorities defined in the University Strategic Plan.

Through the implementation of the University Quality Policies Document, the University of San Marino will promote the dissemination of the culture of quality, with the active involvement of students, scientific and technical staff, interpreting it as an organizational tool for improving the efficiency of the activities of the University of San Marino.

The internal quality assurance system is now clearly attributed to specific bodies that operate together with the University governance and the IAB. In particular, the University Quality Committee (*Presidio della Qualità di Ateneo, PQA*) will operate within the University structure, through a specific Regulation that has been also ratified in June 2023 by the Academic Senate of the University of San Marino.

The PQA is the internal operating structure of the University of San Marino that ensures the adequate performance of quality assurance processes in line with national and international guidelines (ESG). The PQA collaborates in implementing the quality policies defined by the governing bodies, thus contributing to the continuous improvement of all University structures, study programs and to the quality development of teaching, research and third mission activities. The PQA acts as a link between the central bodies and the structures equipped with teaching and research in the quality assurance processes and carries out training and information activities on related topics.

The PQA promotes improvement of the system through guidelines, consultation of all stakeholders, monitoring of indicators, analysis and sharing of the results of the self-assessment and internal and external assessment processes, enhancing the best practices identified. In carrying out its functions, the PQA liaises with the University's governing bodies, with the Department Directors, the Study Program Directors and the IAB, in compliance with the specific prerogatives and responsibilities.

San Marino chose the EUA quality assurance agency named Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP)⁴ to carry out the external quality assurance of the University of San Marino. In July 2023, the subscription to EUA-IEP was sent, the contract has been signed on the 25 October 2023. IEP carries out an institutional evaluation. San Marino does not plan to externally accredit the programs of the University of San Marino. The preliminary timetable for the external evaluation has been established for 2024. It is important that the evaluation takes place when the university structure is ready to

⁴ <https://www.iep-qa.org/>

uphold and enhance quality. In order to do so, the quality assurance system and the recent documentation needs time to be implemented.

Time	Roadmap	Steps taken in implementation
December 2019		Independent Assessment Body (IAB) at the University of San Marino was established to develop the guidelines of an initial and very streamlined internal QA system.
By 1 June 2021	Develop a timetable for establishing quality assurance arrangements. Clarify the roles and functions of the IAB engage in the activities and professional networks of ENQA	San Marino's implementation plan presented to the working group.
January 2023		Definition of guidelines for internal QA
April 2023		New Law on higher education was approved in Parliament establishing bases for internal and external QA
July 2023		Registration for initial IEP evaluation
August 2023		Rector's decree n° 34/2023 adopted and the Quality Policies Document and the University Quality Committee Regulation.
By 1 November 2023	Conclude an agreement with a foreign QA agency Propose legislation establishing the basis for conducting QA in conformity with the ESG and seek its adoption by Parliament.	The EUA-IEP programme was selected to conduct the external evaluation of the University of San Marino, the contract has been signed on the 25 th of October 2023.
Forseen in 2024		External evaluation of the University of San Marino by the EUA-IEP programme

San Marino has taken the steps agreed in the roadmap related to the implementation of the quality assuring higher education compliance with the ESG. The new Law on higher education establishes the bases for internal and external quality assurance in conformity with the ESG.

There is a clear indication of the development of quality culture in the University of San Marino. San Marino has subscribed to the Institutional Evaluation Programme EUA-IEP for external quality assurance of the University of San Marino. IEP is a member of the European Association for Quality

Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and listed on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). The evaluation is carried out in cooperation with AVEPRO, the Holy See quality assurance agency.

The roadmap suggests that San Marino should engage in the activities and professional networks of ENQA. Since San Marino decided not to set up its own quality assurance agency, it is more appropriate that University of San Marino engages to the networks and activities of other higher education institutions rather than to the networks of quality assurance agencies.

San Marino has participated in some work of the Thematic Peer Group C on QA.

3.4. Recognition of qualifications

San Marino ratified the Council of Europe/UNESCO Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) in December 2011 and this is still the single legal framework for the recognition of foreign qualifications.

Before accession to the EHEA, San Marino did not have a legal basis for recognizing informal or non-formal prior learning, although this is an aspect foreseen by the ECTS Users' Guide. Access to higher education in the first cycle study programmes is on the basis of a secondary school leaving qualification (*maturità*) obtained after 13 years of primary and secondary schooling or with a foreign secondary school leaving qualification giving access to higher education. The accession review noted that no alternative access routes to higher education are contemplated although Higher Education Law n° 69/2023 provides the legal basis to introduce them.

The roadmap set an aim to give due consideration to the introduction of the recognition of prior learning, including informal and non-formal learning, as part of the implementation of the ECTS User's Guide.

Academic recognition is mainly the responsibility of the University of San Marino. It applies the principles of LRC. The responsibility of the public authorities to verify the compliance with the LRC is carried out in close cooperation with the University. The *Centro Informazioni Nazionale per l'Educazione e per il Riconoscimento dei titoli Accademici* (CINERTA) also known as ENIC San Marino, works with the student office of the University of San Marino. If there are doubts with regard to specific applications, the ENIC San Marino assists and in general makes sure that the LRC is respected.

CINERTA provides a decision of academic recognition with a reference to one of the levels of the San Marinese Qualifications Framework when there are no substantial differences.

Recognition for the labour market is the responsibility of the State administration.

In January 2023, San Marino joined the Council of Europe's European Qualifications Passport for Refugees Programme (EQPR) and uses this tool to assess refugees' qualifications where these cannot be adequately documented. Two delegates (from CINERTA and the Ministry of Education) have been taking part in training sessions and meetings as part of the programme.

In the new Law on Higher Education, there is a possibility to issue a new decree that would formulate further criteria and conditions for access to higher education, also in accordance with art VII of the LRC.

Time	Roadmap	Steps taken in implementation
By 1 June 2021	Establish a timetable for the introduction of the recognition of prior learning.	San Marino's implementation plan presented to the working group.
By 1 September 2022		First draft of the document for the recognition of qualifications based on the evaluation
January 2023		EQPR adopted as tool for assessing refugee's qualifications
April 2023		Approval of the new Law on Higher Education. The new law enables to adopt a decree on alternative paths (art. 6)
By 1 November 2023	Implement measures to the extent they do not require modifying legislation and introduce any required legislation for submission to Parliament	Current university regulations allow the recognition of some coherent non-formal and informal experiences in the university path.

San Marino has participated in the work of the Thematic Peer Group B on recognition and the working group held peer learning discussions on the principles and practices of recognition and alternative access paths to higher education.

The use of the EQPR in San Marino advances assessment of refugees' qualifications where these cannot be adequately documented and implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Article VII. It helps refugees to access the job market or further studies.

Flexible learning paths and recognition of prior learning have not been part of San Marino's education system a part from the possibility to take a separate private exam in order to earn an academic secondary school leaving qualification (*esame di privatista*). Therefore, introducing alternative access paths to higher education and recognition of prior learning needs further consideration in San Marino. Sammarinese authorities noted that thanks to the implementation work of the roadmap, sensitivity towards recognition principles has widened and comprehends for example previous studies, language certifications and working experience. The working group welcomes the fact that new Higher Education law enables the Government to issue a new decree that would formulate further criteria and conditions for access to higher education. When approved, the decree would establish practices for prior learning and alternative paths to facilitate the access to higher education.

3.5. Higher education governance

The central governing bodies of the University of San Marino by legislation are the Rector, the University Council (*Consiglio dell'Università*) and the Academic Senate.

Before the accession of San Marino to the EHEA, the composition of the University Council included the Rector, a representative of the State secretariat, a representative of the professors and two members of the Parliament. Students and administrative staff had one representative each without voting rights. The Rector was elected by the Academic Senate and then the appointment was formally ratified by the Parliament (*Consiglio Grande e Generale*). The Parliament had the power to accept or reject the Academic Senate's candidate but it could not appoint a candidate who had not been proposed by the University of San Marino.

The roadmap required implementation of the principles of the EHEA, as expressed in successive declarations and communiqués adopted by Ministers, concerning student and staff participation, with voting rights, in higher education governance. The Roadmap requested also a review of the composition of the Consiglio dell'Università with a view to a composition that would ensure the autonomy of the University of San Marino, including ensuring that the Rector is elected by the appropriate body within the University of San Marino without subsequent approval by the public authorities. The Roadmap required also to review the current arrangements with representatives of the State in the University Council, taking account of EHEA standards and practice for institutional autonomy.

San Marino adjusted the initial work plan in the field of governance. It was initially set to approve a Law of the University of San Marino regulating the major issues related to governance. Along the process, the authorities of San Marino considered that it would be better to first approve a Law on higher education and at a later stage approve the Decree of the University of San Marino.

The new Law on higher education n° 69/2023 was approved by the Parliament in April 2023 followed by the approval of Decree of the University of San Marino governance. The framework law sets guiding principles of the autonomy of the governance bodies of higher education institutions and the participation of students and administrative staff in the governance bodies.

The composition of the University Council, responsible for budgets and strategic development plans, is now: the Rector, one representative of the teaching and research staff professors from each of the three Departments and two members of the Parliament (one from the majority and one from the opposition), one representative of the students and one representative of the administrative staff with voting rights. The inclusion of the representatives of the students and of the staff was acknowledged by the members of the working group.

The Academic Senate is responsible for the academic affairs, education and research of the university. It includes: The Rector, Directors of all University Departments, two representatives of the teaching and research staff from each Department, one representative of the students and one representative of technical staff, all with voting rights.

The Rector is elected by the Academic Senate. The Parliament (*Consiglio Grande e Generale*) expresses its appreciation and agreement (*gradimento*). If the agreement is not reached, the Parliament can ask the Academic Senate to make a new proposal, after presenting appropriate reasons. The Parliament can not appoint a candidate who has not been proposed by the Academic Senate.

The University has a Students' Council. The Students' Council elects its representatives who participate in the main governing bodies of the University of San Marino. There are 9 student representatives in the governing bodies. The interaction between academic staff, students and the administration is frequent and easily accessible. There is no formal student's union but the University decree establishes a student assembly (*Consulta degli studenti*).

Time	Roadmap	Steps taken in implementation
By 1 June 2021	Establish a timetable and develop an overview of measures required to modify current arrangement	San Marino's implementation plan presented to the working group
April 2023		Law on higher education was approved by the Parliament
By 1 November 2023	Submission of the required legislative measures to Parliament	
By December 2023		Delegated Decree n° 125 of 30th August 2023 on the institutional and organizational structure of the University of San Marino ratified by Parliament on the 30 November 2023 (Delegated Decree n° 169/2023)

The working group identified a clear progress in the implementation of the EHEA principles on higher education governance. San Marino has guaranteed participation rights in the education governance for the representatives of students and staff, with voting rights, by adopting a new Decree on the University of San Marino governance.

The working group acknowledges that the current system of the appointment of the University Rector is rooted in San Marino's tradition. It nevertheless needs to underline that the system where the Parliament expresses its appreciation and agreement (*gradimento*) to the election by the Academic Senate, can potentially lead in the worst cases to deadlocks or misuse. If an agreement would not be reached, the Parliament can not appoint a candidate who has not been proposed by the Academic Senate but it can ask the Academic Senate to make a new proposal, after presenting appropriate reasons. This could, in a worst case scenario, lead to a very lengthy process of several successive candidates being proposed and rejected. In this worst case scenario, the University of San Marino could be left without a principal for a long time, and the Academic Senate could also feel under considerable pressure to propose a candidate it could reasonably assume would receive the *gradimento*, even if this candidate would not be among the Academic Senate's first preferences.

The working group must therefore conclude that – even if the arrangement is rooted in Sammarinese parliamentary tradition, and even if the current arrangement is improved in relation to the previous arrangement – it seems not in line with the commitment to institutional autonomy to which the EHEA Ministers have committed on several occasions, including in the 2020 Rome Communiqué, which San Marino also voted on by virtue of its acceding to the EHEA at the beginning of the Rome Ministerial Conference.

The working group must therefore urge San Marino to bring this provision into line with the commitments undertaken.

3.6. Lifelong learning and social dimension of higher education

Before joining the EHEA, San Marino had invested in supporting students with special needs and disabilities in education and training. State scholarships and study grants were granted based on merit and income to all San Marino students who applied for them. The University of San Marino offers scholarships to cover all or part of the tuition fees. Portability of loans and grants was not guaranteed, but each case was evaluated individually.

The roadmap set an aim *to develop a plan and timetable for stimulating the participation of underrepresented groups in higher education and take measures to stimulate the participation of underrepresented groups in higher education, including creating flexible learning paths within the NQF.*

The University of San Marino has enhanced its services to students with specific learning disabilities by providing scholarships to students who offer help and support to their peers with difficulties. The University of San Marino promotes education and provides exemptions from fees for students over the age of 65.

At the present time, the University of San Marino provides a vast range of post-graduate courses, with no age restrictions for enrollment. These courses, designed for people in working life, have different length, workload and learning outcomes. Classes usually take place at weekends and some of them can be attended on-line.

San Marino has identified that further work is needed to formalize and develop post graduate courses in order to make them recognizable as microcredential, both by the market labour and for further studies.

For promoting lifelong learning, the University of San Marino provides flexible study times without extra fees for students already in working life.

The University of San Marino collaborates with the institutions of the Republic of San Marino through various research projects, courses and seminars. The projects are mainly funded by the University of San Marino and led by a professor with expertise in the specific area. The University of San Marino also offers seminars on various topics, such as:

- San Marino's path towards European integration
- Educational programs
- The prevention of repression and gender-based violence
- Labor legislative reform and the penitentiary system

Through the advisory body called Territorial Pact (*Patto territoriale*), the University of San Marino establishes connections with representatives of trade and entrepreneurial associations. This is a permanent cooperation framework between all relevant stakeholders and the University (see more information below) and should be of interest also to other members of the EHEA as an example of good practice.

The new Law on higher education mentions social dimension and lifelong learning programmes among the EHEA principles that higher education institutions shall promote. It provides a legal basis for work in this area. The University of San Marino has also reviewed its policies and practices against the Principles and Guidelines of Social Dimension of the EHEA.

Time	Roadmap	Steps taken in the implementation
By 1 June 2021	Develop a plan and timetable for stimulating the participation of underrepresented groups in higher education	San Marino's implementation plan presented to the working group.
January 2022		A working group started an assessment of specific needs and possible amendments needed in the policy of social dimension and lifelong learning.
April 2023		Law on higher education was approved by the Parliament with reference to social dimension of higher education and lifelong learning programmes.
By 1 November 2023	Take measures to stimulate participation of underrepresented groups. If these require legislative amendments submit them to the Parliament.	Interdepartmental center focused on inclusion and gender identity (<i>LEI - Laboratorio di Educazione all'Identità di Genere</i>) The working group on social dimension and lifelong learning recognised the needs to widen the offer of flexible courses for student workers and language courses for social inclusion.

San Marino has further implemented practices in stimulating the participation of underrepresented groups in higher education and providing possibilities for lifelong learning. The working group encouraged San Marino to continue the work and welcomed many good initiatives and practices on engaging stakeholders and wider society with the University of San Marino.

Good practice: Territorial Pact (*Patto territoriale*)

The Territorial Pact is an advisory body of the University of San Marino chaired by the Rector. The representatives of this body come from a wide range of stakeholders such as: local schools, local administration, employers, trade unions and the sports, cultural sectors, students and academic staff.

The Territorial Pact functions are:

- To suggest programs for the development of the University of San Marino (proactive function of stakeholders);
- To provide opinions on the strategic and development plan of the University of San Marino (advisory function of stakeholders);
- To provide information related to the current and future programmes of the University of San Marino to the stakeholders (communicative function of the University of San Marino);
- To encourage fund-raising.

The Territorial Pact enables stakeholders to engage in the strategic development of the University of San Marino in a systematic way and it helps the University of San Marino to understand and respond to the needs of the society. The involvement of the stakeholders has raised a greater awareness towards social dimension of higher education.

3.7. San Marino's participation in the BFUG work program

San Marino was accepted as a member of the EHEA in Rome Ministerial Conference with the same rights and duties as other members. The Roadmap obliges San Marino ***to appoint a delegation of 1-2 members to the BFUG to attend the meetings of the BFUG, starting with the first meeting to be held after the Rome Ministerial Conference, and ensure continuity in the Sammarinese representation throughout the work period.*** The roadmap also states that San Marino should ***ensure participation in the BFUG Thematic Peer Groups (TPGs) for the implementation of the key commitments, coordinated by the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group, and relevant seminars and other peer learning activities.***

During the work period 2021-2024, San Marino has participated in the BFUG meetings and in the work of the TPG-A on Qualifications Framework, the TPG-B on Recognition, and in the TPG-C on QA, following the suggestion.

San Marino has participated in the BFUG data collection for the Bologna Process Implementation Report 2024.

The working group further encourages San Marino to participate actively in shaping and implementing policies of the EHEA in the future.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

4.1. Cooperation with Sammarinese authorities

The working group underlines the excellent cooperation with Sammarinese authorities. The collaborative atmosphere enabled good progress and resulted in mutual learning.

The working group organized seven meetings, and the interaction with Sammarinese authorities was held in an open atmosphere. The working group was able to meet face-to-face on several occasions with relevant stakeholders and decision makers including some members of the Parliament. The working group perceives its cooperation with the Sammarinese authorities and stakeholders as open, constructive, and marked by mutual trust. San Marino has been open about both its achievements and the challenges it has faced and, in some cases, continues to face.

Overall, San Marino has demonstrated willingness and ability to develop and reform its higher education system along the lines agreed in the roadmap.

Representatives of San Marino appreciated the work and the support of the working group, and its full availability in finding solutions that guaranteed San Marino's compliance to the roadmap. The roadmap helped San Marino acknowledge and realize the implementations needed, it was never meant as a 'checklist' but as a 'guide' along the path to fulfilling agreed EHEA commitments.

4.2. Achievements in the implementation of the roadmap

The progress achieved in the implementation of the commitments has been significant and the working group considers that the roadmap has, for the most part, been successfully implemented. Major part of the issues highlighted in the roadmap have been implemented or there are no serious concerns regarding the implementation in the near future.

The areas in need of further improvement identified by the working group are:

- Developing alternative access routes to higher education
- Recognition of prior learning
- Higher education governance, in particular in the appointment of the Rector of the University of San Marino

These areas are important and the working group hopes San Marino will address them in the coming EHEA work period, even if the roadmap ends with the current work period.

The working group recommends that in the Tirana Communique Ministers acknowledge the work and the efforts done by San Marino in implementing the roadmap successfully but also asks that San Marino address the remaining areas of concern as outlined above.

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4.3. New members of the EHEA

The decision to accept new members to the EHEA is taken by the Ministers responsible for higher education in the countries participating in the Bologna Process. As the EHEA has evolved over years since it was established, it was decided that San Marino would be supported in the implementation of its commitments with an agreed roadmap.

The practice of accessing the EHEA with an agreed roadmap followed up by the appointment of a working group to assist and advise the new member through the work programme following accession has proven useful. The Roadmap gives clear indications of the next steps and sets timelines for the reforms. A small working group appointed by the BFUG can assist a new member in further reforms and follow up the implementation. In addition, the authorities of San Marino have found the peer learning organized by the working group useful and complementary to the work of TPGs because the information provided is tailored-made for the needs of San Marino.

The working group recommends that any new members accessing the EHEA will be supported in the implementation of its commitments with a roadmap and peer learning.

Each future roadmap must be drawn up on the basis of the needs highlighted in the accession assessment. Therefore, no uniform model can be drawn up. The purpose of the roadmap should be to give further guidance and support to a new member and clarify how and when a member will meet the specific challenges of the implementation of EHEA goals and principles.

4.4. Future policy guidelines on transnational providers

The working group proposes that transnational higher education and protection of students to be addressed in the future work of the BFUG. The growing number of private, often online providers entering to the higher education market may case challenges to many education systems in the EHEA. Therefore, common policy guidelines could be considered.

4.5. Proposal to be included in the Tirana Communiqué

We note with satisfaction that San Marino, the newest member of the EHEA, has largely implemented the agreed roadmap accompanying its accession to the EHEA and encourage San Marino to continue to address the few remaining concerns identified.



We note that associating new accessions to the EHEA with a roadmap accompanied by a small working group to assist and advise the new member during the work period following its accession has proved very useful. We therefore resolve that further members accessing the EHEA shall be similarly supported in the implementation of their commitments.



Annex

ROADMAP FOR SAN MARINO'S ACCESSION TO THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

Introduction

In view of the fact that San Marino will be joining the European Higher Education Area 21 years after the launch of the Bologna Process and 10 years after the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was officially established, the Sammarinese authorities and the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG) worked together on developing a roadmap for higher education reform in San Marino in accordance with the values, principles, and goals of the EHEA, as detailed below.

This Roadmap builds on the National Report submitted by San Marino in conjunction with its application for accession to the EHEA, the successive declarations and communiqués adopted by EHEA Ministers, the Bologna Process Implementation Report, and discussions with the Sammarinese authorities. It has been agreed with the Sammarinese authorities.

The Sammarinese authorities will implement this Roadmap in full respect of the competences of the Government, the national parliament, higher education institutions, and other stakeholders.

Estimated timelines are outlined under the different parts of the Roadmap. In general terms, these comprise two sets of actions. A first set concerns the launching of implementation measures, for which the deadline is generally 1 June 2021, i.e. approximately 6 months after the Rome Ministerial Conference, which will adopt the Roadmap. A second set of actions concern the completion of these actions. In general terms, the deadline for these should be a few months ahead of the Ministerial Conference following the Rome Conference, since this conference should be in a position to assess to what extent the Roadmap has been implemented. At the time of writing, based on the recommendation of the BFUG, it is assumed this conference will be held in Albania in May or June 2024, as a consequence of the postponement of the Rome conference. The deadlines in the Roadmap should be adjusted in accordance with the decision on the Ministerial conference following the Rome conference. For the time being, this deadline is indicated as 1 November 2023.

Structural reforms

Qualifications framework

Develop a National Qualifications Framework compatible with the QF-EHEA, incorporating a learning outcomes approach, and proceed to self-certifying the NQF against the Overarching Framework of Qualification of the EHEA (QF-EHEA) with the participation of foreign experts. San Marino will specify the extent to which the participation of foreign experts will be sought in the development of the NQF prior to self-certification.

Establish a timetable for this work and identify a national steering group and launch work on the NQF by 1 June 2021.

In the development of the NQF:

- Give due consideration to including flexible learning paths in the NQF, including alternative access routes to higher education other than by earning an academic secondary school leaving qualification.
- Give consideration to and specify the place of the *Corsi di Master Universitario*, the *Master universitario di primo livello*, and the *Master universitario di secondo livello* within the NQF, including progress routes in terms of further study and access to the labor market available to holders of these qualifications.

Complete the NQF, including self-certification, by 1 November 2023.

Quality assurance

Develop a plan for quality assuring higher education in San Marino in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

San Marino has indicated it will seek an agreement with a foreign quality assurance agency; this agency should operate in accordance with the ESG, as demonstrated through registration in EQAR or membership of ENQA.

Clarify the roles and functions of the Independent Assessment Body.

Engage in the activities and professional network of quality assurance agencies available through ENQA.

By 1 June 2021, develop a timetable for establishing such quality assurance arrangements.

By 1 November 2023, conclude an agreement with a foreign quality assurance agency, as specified above.

Propose, by 1 November 2023, legislation establishing the basis for conducting quality assurance in conformity with the European Standards and Guidelines and seek its adoption by Parliament.

Recognition of qualifications

Give due consideration introducing recognition of prior learning, including informal and non-formal learning, as part of the implementation of the ECTS User's Guide.

Establish a timetable for introducing the recognition of prior learning by 1 June 2021. By 1 November 2023 implement such measures to the extent they do not require modifying legislation and introduce any required legislation for submission to Parliament and seek its adoption.

HIGHER EDUCATION GOVERNANCE

Implement the principles of the EHEA, as expressed in successive declarations and communiqués adopted by Ministers, concerning student and staff participation, with voting rights, in higher education governance.

By 1 June 2021, establish a timetable for giving duly elected representatives of staff and students voting rights in all higher governing bodies.

In this context, review the composition of the *Consiglio dell'Università* with a view to including student and staff representation as well as to a composition that would ensure the autonomy of the University, including ensuring that the Rector is elected by the appropriate body within the university without subsequent approval by the public authorities. Review the current arrangements with representatives of the State in the University Council, taking account of EHEA standards and practice for institutional autonomy.

By 1 June 2021, develop an overview of measures required to modify current arrangements in this sense and a timetable for their implementation leading to the submission of the required legislative measures to Parliament by 1 November 2023 and seek their adoption by Parliament.

LIFELONG LEARNING/SOCIAL DIMENSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

By 1 June 2021, develop a plan and timetable for stimulating the participation of underrepresented groups in higher education.

By 1 November 2023, take measures to stimulate the participation of underrepresented groups in higher education, including by creating flexible learning paths within the NQF. If these require legislative amendments, submit the required legislative measures to Parliament by 1 November 2023 and seek their adoption by Parliament.

HIGHER EDUCATION LEGISLATION

By 1 June 2021, identify the extent to which implementing this Roadmap requires amending Sammarinese legislation. The overview should include a consideration of whether required legislation would best be submitted as individual amendments to current legislation, a

comprehensive package of all amendments required, or a new law replacing the current legislation.

By 1 November 2023, prepare the required legislation for submission to Parliament and seek its adoption.

IMPLEMENTATION

Commit to providing the necessary data for the 2024 Implementation Report, in the format and by the date that will be determined by the BFUG.

Commit to appointing a contact person for the 2024 Implementation Report exercise. The contact person will coordinate the gathering of information for San Marino and will ensure that all information requested is provided in English within the deadlines stipulated by the BFUG. The contact person should have a good knowledge of English orally and in writing.

PARTICIPATION IN THE WORK PROGRAM

Appoint a delegation of 1-2 members to the BFUG with good working knowledge of English. The delegation will attend meetings of the BFUG, starting with the first meeting to be held after the Rome Ministerial Conference, and will ensure continuity in the Sammarinese representation throughout the work period.

Ensure participation in the BFUG Thematic Peer Groups (TPGs) for the implementation of the key commitments, coordinated by the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group, and relevant seminars and other peer learning activities.

San Marino is encouraged to nominate candidates for working and advisory groups in the 2020 – 24 EHEA work program.

COOPERATION WITH THE BFUG

This roadmap will be implemented by the Sammarinese authorities and stakeholders in cooperation with the BFUG. The BFUG will appoint a small advisory group of members and consultative members that will facilitate cooperation, seek to identify possible partners for developing specific policy areas, and advise the BFUG on progress in the implementation of this road map. The Sammarinese authorities will facilitate the work of this group and provide a contact person or contact group for this work. The advisory group will, among others, cooperate with the Sammarinese delegation to the BFUG. The advisory group and San Marino will meet as required and at least once a year to discuss developments, including one meeting 1-2 months before the 1 June 2021 deadline and another meeting 1-2 months before the 1

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November 2023 deadline, as outlined in this Roadmap. The advisory group will report back from these meetings to the BFUG.

