

## ACTION PLAN

**for the measures under the Strategy for Development of Higher Education in Republic of Bulgaria for the period of 2014-2020**

### **Scope**

This Action Plan is based on the objectives, challenges, measures, and expected outcomes stated in the Strategy for Development of Higher Education (2014-2020). The planned activities are distributed by objectives following the Strategy structure, with a projected deadline for implementation of each activity. The funds will be provided by two sources – program-based funding from the national budget for the scheduled reforms during the period 2014-2020 and from European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), mainly via the Operational Program Science and Education for Smart Growth, but also via other Community financial instruments, such as OP Innovations and Competitiveness, Priority Axis 2 Regional Education Infrastructure of OP Regional Development, etc. It is also possible to provide other sources of grant aid if necessary following a decisions by the legislative and executive during the Strategy’s effective period.

### **Objectives**

#### **Objective 1: Improve access to higher education and increase the number of university graduates**

No.	Activity/Task	Institution/s/ responsible	Deadline for implement ation	Source of funding
1.	Upgrade the model of crediting undergraduates and doctoral students	MES	2016	National budget
2.	Upgrade the scholarship provision system	MES and HEIs	2015	National budget and ESIF
3	Expand access to higher education via lifelong learning forms and the electronic forms of distance learning	MES and HEIs	2020	National budget and ESIF

#### **Objective 2: Considerably boost the quality of higher education**

No.	Activity/Task	Institution/s/ responsible	Deadline for implementation	Source of funding
1.	Introduction by the Government of strict control mechanisms to ensure that high-grade	MES	2015	National budget

	higher education is offered by all HEIs and actual application of the criteria for awarding the educational-qualification degree of Bachelor and Master and the educational and scientific degree of Doctor			
2.	Upgrade the accreditation model and the University Ranking System to ensure fair evaluation of the quality of training in terms of the level of preparation (basic, specialized, practical, soft skills, involvement of science activities) and career of graduates	MES and NEAA	2016	National budget and ESIF
3.	Differentiate funding according to quality and career of the graduates in each professional field	MES	Ongoing (as of 2015)	National budget
4.	Differentiated provision of the subsidy for science activities of HEIs based on the science outcomes	MES	Ongoing (as of 2015)	National budget
5.	Ensure opportunities for increasing the qualifications of the academic teachers and post-doctoral students, especially in foreign languages, new teaching methods, and ICT, via extension of the measures funded during the preceding programming period.	MES, HEIs and SO	2020	National budget and ESIF
6.	Activation of the forms of teaching quality evaluation by students and faculty	HEIs	Ongoing	HE's budgets
7.	Reform the curricula and academic content: A. Promote updating of curricula and syllabi; B. Promote internationalization of academic programs and training-learning; C. Promote opening of more joint programs; D. Encourage the expansion of foreign language programs.	MES and HEIs	Ongoing	ESIF and HE's budgets
8.	Improve the system of admission to HEIs vis-à-vis the outcomes from the professional fields evaluation	MES	2016	National budget
9.	Merge institutional and program accreditation	NEAA and CM	2016	National budget
10.	Further develop the practice of external evaluation of the quality of higher education, including involvement of abroad experts	MES and NEAA	2018	National budget
11.	Regulate the option for alternative evaluation by esteems European accreditation institutions such as agencies – members of ENQA and registered in EQAR	CM	2016	National budget and ESIF
12.	For the accreditation purposes each lecturers to be deemed as faculty member of only one HEI	NEAA	2016	National budget
13.	Elaborate and adopt a new Classifier of the areas of higher education and professional fields	MES	2020	National budget and ESIF
14.	Boost control on the existence of an operational System for Accumulation and Transfer of	NEAA	2016	National budget and

	Credits and mobility in accreditation			ESIF
15.	Ensure full transferability of national grant aids and student credits within the EHEA framework	MES	2016	National budget
16.	Optimize the procedures for recognition of comparable educational periods and degrees	MES and HEIs	2017	National budget and HE budget

**Objective 3: Set up a sustainable and efficient link between HEIs and the labor market and achieve dynamic balance between the demand for and supply of higher education specialists**

No.	Activity/Task	Institution/s/ responsible	Deadline for implementation	Source of funding
1.	Use of forecasts of supply and demand of labor force in Bulgaria, as elaborated by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, in the determination of the needs for higher education specialists in the planning of admission to HEIs	MES and MLSP	2015	National budget and ESIF
2.	Set up a competences profile for each specialty	MES and HEIs	2018	National budget and ESIF
3.	Promote dialog between HEIs and businesses in regards to the content of training, via extension and expansion of the measures funded during the preceding programming period	MES, employer organizations MEE, MAF, MRD, MEW	2017	National budget and private funding
4.	Target funding of strategic fields for the country (priority professional fields and protected specialties defined based on accepted criteria), such as: by increasing the standard for the support with a certain ratio, by decreasing or removal of tuition fees, by higher scholarships and through practical training in a real work environment by building a modern academic facilities in these fields	MES	2017	National budget and ESIF
5.	Set up a program for reintegration of young academic staff and researchers (masters, doctors, post-doctoral students, post-graduates)	MES	2018	National budget and ESIF
6.	Financial incentives for setting up research infrastructure in partnership with the business for specialties in demand	MES and MLSP	2018	ESIF, national budget and private funding
7.	Fund student internships and practices during training, via MES' web-system –	MES and	Ongoing (as	ESIF and national budget

	<a href="http://praktiki.mon.bg/sp">http://praktiki.mon.bg/sp</a> and other similar systems linking the HEIs, students, and employers, and create extra incentives for the employers providing hands-on training and internship post-graduation	MLSP	of 2015)	
8.	Set up an operating and effective tool for evaluation of the professional realization of graduates	MES and MLSP	2016	National budget and ESIF
9.	Set up a common information network of career centers, alumni associations, alumni centers, as well as boost their capacity	MES and HEIs	2016	ESIF and national budget

**Objective 4: Promote research operations at HEIs and development of innovations aligned to the market economy**

No.	Activity/Task	Institution/s/ responsible	Deadline for implementation	Source of funding
1.	Strengthen the potential for research and innovation elaborations at the HE's and on that basis – the integration between them	MES	2016	ESIF and national budget
2.	Promote and optimize integration of research operations between the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the Agricultural Academy by one and the HEIs and regions by the other	MES, HEIs, BAS, AA, territorial and local authorities	2018	ESIF and national budget
3.	Promote integration of research and innovation operations of the Bulgarian HEIs with the domestic and European businesses	MES and MEE	2018	National budget and ESIF, Horizon 2020
4.	Increase the funding of HEIs for the conducting all types of research	MES	2020	National budget and ESIF, Horizon 2020
5.	Upgrade the existing research infrastructure and the academic-research laboratories and establishment and development regional research infrastructures and national units – partners in European research complexes	MES	2020	ESIF and national budget
6.	Set up and develop Centers of Excellence and Centers of Competence	MES	2020	ESIF, national budget and private funding
7.	Differentiate the science operations subsidy levels for the HE's based on fair science outcomes indicators – number of published and referred science articles in the international databases, number of citations received according to such databases, number of filed international patent applications, etc.	MES	2016-2017	National budget

8.	Introducing a limit ration for the provision of science operations subsidy (termination of science operations subsidy for HEIs with poor scientific outcomes)	MES	2016	No funding required
9.	Promoting publications in scientific journals, including the global referral, indexing, and evaluation system	MES	2017	National budget
10.	Promoting involvement of students in research-, project-, and consultancy teams	MES	2017	National budget and ESIF
11.	Statutory regulation of the status of post-doctoral students and promote involvement of doctoral students, post-doctoral students, and post-graduates in research	CM and NA	2016	No funding required
12.	Support for scientific projects, which are of interest to leading companies	MES and MEE	Ongoing	National budget and ESIF
13.	Regulating the conduct of business by HEIs and removal of the statutory and administrative restrictions to such business, including the setting up of spin-offs and implementation of technology transfer	MES, MEE and NA	Ongoing	No funding required
14.	Setting up a tool for co-funding of science teams, which are awarded European and international projects	MES	2016	National budget
15.	Promoting joint research teams with leading European universities	MES	2016	National budget
16.	Supporting the access and involvement of Bulgarian scientific organizations and HEIs in various European technology platforms, joint technology initiatives, and the European Institute of Innovation & Technology	MES	2017	National budget and ESIF
17.	Attracting leading researchers from other countries and Bulgarian researchers working at abroad research organizations and HEIs via the tools of the European Research Area	MES	2018	National budget, ESIF and Horizon 2020

**Objective 5: Upgrading the HEIs governing system and clear definition of the HEIs types and educational-qualification degrees**

No.	Activity/Task	Institution/s/ responsible	Deadline for implementation	Source of funding
1.	Amending and supplementing the Higher Education Act in the part concerning the functions and composition of the Board of Trustees	CM and NA	2015	National budget
2.	Optimizing the HEIs network via properly considered financial mechanisms	MES and NEAA	2016	National budget and ESIF
3.	Regulating comprehensive universities and specialized HEIs, which train students in a single or several interrelated professional fields	CM and NA	2016	National budget

4.	Regulating the status of research universities, along with the rights and duties arising from such status	CM and NA	2016	National budget
5.	Cancelling the educational-qualification degree of “professional bachelor in...”	CM and NA	2015	National budget
6.	Promoting integration (incl. the setting up of joint teams) in training on directions, which overlap within the same region	MES and HEIs	2016	National budget
7.	Applying financial instruments and mechanism for determining the removal of extrinsic professional directions and specialties	MES and HEIs	2016	National budget

**Objective 6: Increase the funding of higher education and science and the effectiveness of their use via an upgraded funding model**

No.	Activity/Task	Institution/s/ responsible	Deadline for implementation	Source of funding
1.	Increasing the annual basis of the amount of funding for higher education and research as share of the GDP devoted to them	CM and NA	2016	National budget and private funding
2.	Terminating endorsement of enrollment for the worst performing professional fields	CM	2016	National budget
3.	Differentiating the funding according to the quality and career of the graduates realization in each professional field, regardless of the professional direction quotient to the statutory support prescribed for one student.	CM	Ongoing (as of 2015)	National budget
4.	Introducing a new methodology for determining the differentiated statutory amounts of support for the training of one student based on the actual cost of training by professional fields	CM, MF, and MES	2016	National budget
5.	Differentiating the manner of provision and the amount of student scholarships – such as need-based scholarships, excellence scholarships, and merit-based scholarships; as well as provision of higher scholarships in country-strategic directions, including via the web-system of MES ( <a href="http://eurostipendii.mon.bg">http://eurostipendii.mon.bg</a> )	MES and HEIs	Ongoing	National budget and ESIF
6.	Expanding the sources of funding of HEIs with opportunities for technology transfers, links to businesses, financial management and property management, including intellectual property (via amendment of the HEA)	CM and NA	Ongoing	National budget and ESIF

**Objective 7: Overcoming the negative trends in career development of lecturers at HEIs and incentivizing the best ones**

No.	Activity/Task	Institution/s/ responsible	Deadline for implementation	Source of funding
1.	Introducing common national minimum criteria to the applicants for academic positions and	MES	2015	National budget

	scientific degrees by professional fields and science areas			
2.	Introducing mechanisms of control of the statutory compliance and the requirements of the Academic Staff Development Act	MES	2015	National budget
3.	Creating incentives for application of the new model of funding for the HEIs according to the outcomes and in the determination of remuneration of the relevant HEI	MES and HEIs	2016	National budget
4.	Providing opportunities for skills training of lecturers and post-doctoral students, especially in foreign languages, new teaching methods, and ICT	MES, HEIs and NOs	2020	National budget and ESIF

**Objective 8: Expanding and strengthening the lifelong learning network; wide-ranging application of various electronic forms of distance learning**

No.	Activity/Task	Institution/s/ responsible	Deadline for implementation	Source of funding
1.	Stimulating university departments towards ongoing, continuing, or post-graduate training, as well as the career development centers	MES, HEIs and NAVET	Ongoing	National budget
2.	Stimulating joint elaboration of curricula and syllabi with business representatives	MES and HEIs	Ongoing	ESIF, HEIs budgets, and private funding
3.	Continuing promotion of the development of various electronic forms of distance learning, which started during the preceding programming period	MES and HEIs	Ongoing	National budget and ESIF

**Monitoring and updating**

No.	Activity/Task	Institution responsible	Deadline for implementation	Source of funding
1.	Setting up a platform maintaining a single database of detailed, dependable, and statistically reliable information about the higher education system for the purpose of single upload of data and its multi-purpose, multiple use	MES	2016	National budget, ESIF
2.	Introducing a system for annual evaluation of progress in the Strategy implementation for the purpose of updating the Action Plan and the stipulated indicators	MES	Ongoing	National budget
3.	Introducing an system of external evaluation of progress in the Strategy implementation for the purpose of updating the Action Plan and the stipulated indicators	MES	2017 2020	National budget and ESIF

**List of indicators measuring the achievement of objectives and implementation of measures stipulated in the Strategy for Development of Higher Education in Republic of Bulgaria for the period of 2014-2020**

<b>Strategic direction</b>	<b>Title of indicator</b>	<b>Unit of measurement</b>	<b>Baseline value</b>	<b>Target value – 2017</b>	<b>Target value – 2020</b>
<b>1</b>	Achieved national objective (36 % higher education graduates aged 30-34 by 2020) in terms of higher education graduates, in the framework of the national objective under the EU’s Strategy for Smart, Sustainable, and Inclusive Growth Europe 2020	Share of the persons aged 30-34 in 2020	26.9 % (as at 2013)*	30 %	36 %
<b>2</b>	Upgrade the systems for external evaluation of HEIs, incl. in terms of scientific outcomes, curricula, teaching methods, and lecturers qualifications	Number of certified quality management systems	6% of HEIs *	30% of HEIs	100% of HEIs
<b>2</b>	Publicity of the evaluation reports of the accreditation procedures	Share of conducted accreditation procedures, where the evaluation reports are public	5%	50%	100%
<b>2</b>	Involvement of abroad experts in the quality evaluation of higher education	Number of abroad experts participating in evaluation and accreditation procedures during the last six years	200**	500	1000
<b>2</b>	Active involvement of undergraduates and doctoral students in the accreditation procedures	Share of the evaluation and accreditation procedures, which have involved undergraduates and doctoral students as members of expert groups	N/A**	40%	100%
<b>3</b>	Increase the share of HE graduates obtaining jobs in their specialties in the first post-graduation year	Share of HE graduates obtaining jobs in their specialties in the first post-graduation year	N/A		
<b>3</b>	Set up a common information network of career centers, alumni associations, alumni centers, as well as boost their capacity	Share of the career centers incorporated in the common system	N/A***	50%	100%



3	Increase the share of students undergoing internship training in real working environment, at least once during their studies, beyond the mandatory curriculum, in the total number of graduates during a given year	Share of students undergoing internship training beyond the mandatory curriculum	N/A*	15 %	30 %
4	Terminate the research activities subsidy for HEIs with low scientific outcomes	Share of HEIs funded for research activities	100%	80%	50%
4	Centers of Excellence and Centers of Competence created at the HE's	Involvement of HEIs in both types of centers	N/A*	2	5
5	Refusal of admission in professional fields and specialties in specific HEIs because of lagging behind average performance in terms of quality and/or scientific operations in that field	Number of professional fields and specialties for which enrollment was not endorsed	N/A*	20	50
6	Introduce a sustainable funding model for the support of training at the HE's, based on a comprehensive evaluation of the quality of training and its alignment to the labor market needs	Share of the funds in support of training, which are obtained based on a comprehensive evaluation of the quality of training and its alignment to the labor market needs	14,6 % (for the budget year 2014)	40 %	60 %
7	Provided opportunities for raising the qualification of academic teachers and post-doctoral students at HEIs and NOs	Number of lecturers and post-doctoral students undergoing skills training – on annual basis	N/A*	1000	3000
8	Development of the electronic forms of distance learning	Number of professional directions and curricula accredited for a distance learning	N/A*	20	100

\*Information source: Ministry of Education and Science

\*\* Information source: National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency

\*\*\* Information source: HEIs