

Review of the ECTS Users' Guide

17 February 2025



EUROPEAN
Higher Education Area



Welcome and opening

Suzanne Conze, European Commission

Agenda

11.15 – 11.25	Welcome and opening
11.25 – 12:00	Round of introductions
12:00 – 12.10	Overview of the revision of the ECTS Users' guide
12.10 – 12.30	Q&A
12.30 – 12.45	Presentation of the research approach to conduct the sampling
12.45 – 13.00	Q&A
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch
14:00 – 14:50	Roundtable discussion session around the ECTS Users' guide
14:50 – 15:50	Discussion on the proposed approach for the research
15:50 – 16:00	AOB and close

Round of introductions and
icebreaker

Overview of the review of the ECTS Users' guide

Presentation by Colin Tück, Lead Expert

Background

- Three most recent versions from 2005, 2009 and 2015
- Tirana Communiqué (2024):

To support the implementation of the ECTS, including learning outcomes, we invite the BFUG to review the ECTS Users' Guide 2015 by 2027, to strengthen its key features and adapt it to current developments, including micro credentials.

- Revised version to be endorsed by BFUG in 2026
- Adoption by EHEA Ministers in 2027

Informing the revision

- For a sample of 80 HEIs from 8 countries
 - Desk research
 - Surveys
 - Focus groups
- Consultation session(s)
 - Additional stakeholder perspectives
 - In-depth discussion of selected topics

Tentative timeline

When	What	
17 February 2025	Advisory Group meeting #1 (hybrid)	
24/25 February 2025	BFUG	
February – April 2025	Desk research, surveys	
April 2025	Advisory Group meeting #2 (online)	intermediate results, refine approach to focus groups
May 2025	Focus groups	
June/July 2025	Advisory Group meeting #3 (in person)	full results of the research, discuss findings, input for drafting
July – September 2025	Wrapping up research	
September 2025	Advisory Group meeting #4 (online)	discuss first draft, plan consultations + presentation to BFUG
November 2025	Advisory Group meeting #5 (in person, back-to-back with consultation sessions)	discussion of the second draft, results of consultation meetings
15/16 December 2025	BFUG	
January 2026	Advisory Group meeting #6 (online)	wrap-up of the final draft to be submitted to the BFUG
Q2 2026	BFUG	
<i>In between</i>	<i>Further revisions/iterations of the draft as needed</i>	
Q2 2027	EHEA Ministerial Conference (Moldova/Romania)	

Q&A

Presentation of the methodological approach for the Research

ICF Team

Introduction to conducting the research

- **Two main research dimensions to investigate:**
 1. The level of implementation of ECTS in practice in line with the current Users' Guide
 2. The usefulness of the current Users' Guide as perceived by academics, administrators and students
- **Data scope:**
 - Covering 80 HEIs (10 HEIs from Austria, Bulgaria, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Spain and Sweden)
 - Disciplines: Engineering, History and Business
 - Education level: Bachelor/Masters/Phd

Research phases and components

- **Data collection**
 - I. Sampling HEIs
 - II. Desk research
 - III. Online Survey
 - IV. Focus group discussions
 - V. Consultation sessions
- **Data processing and analysis**
- **Reporting**

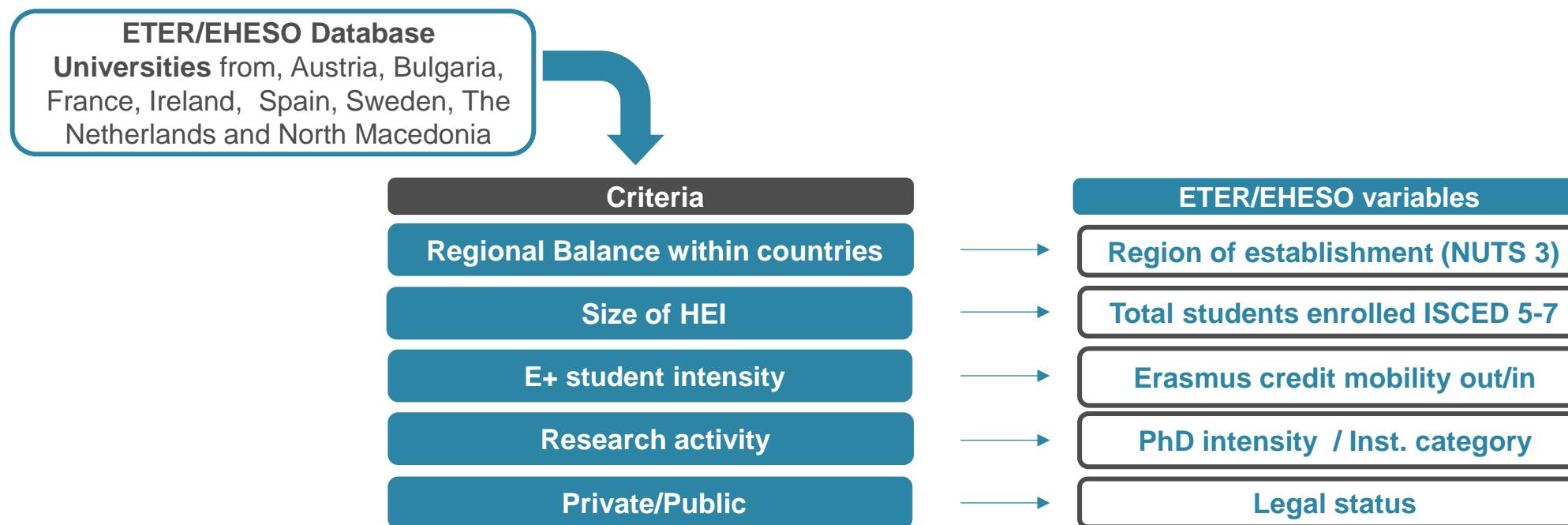
Data collection

Data collection components

Sampling HEIs - Methodology

1. Preparation of main dataset:

10 HEIs across eight countries: Austria, Bulgaria, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Spain and Sweden.



Data collection components

Sampling HEIs - Methodology

2. Categorisation of each variable:

- Region per country (NUTS 1) → Eurostat Regions in Europe data
- Size category (big, medium, small) → The median was calculated for each country, with thresholds set at $\pm 10\%$ to define the range
- E+ intensity (high, medium, low) → The median was calculated for each country, with thresholds set at $\pm 10\%$ to define the range
- PhD intensity (yes/no) → The median was calculated for each country. Binary classification
- Public, private, or private government-dependent

3. Cleaning and data stratification

- Stratified random sampling applied in R to ensure balanced and random selection of HEIs.
- First, ensure regional balance within each country, followed by size balance within each region.

4. Quality assurance checklist

- Existence of at least one the three disciplines at BA, MA or PhD level.
- Replacement strategy



100 HEIs: 10 HEIs per country plus a reserve list of 20 HEI

Data collection components

Desk research: HEI websites, based on lines of enquiry

Online Survey: Response rate of 100 per HEI

Staff	Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Demographic questions, including whether the respondent is responsible for a single course, module or programme▪ Level of usefulness of the guide▪ Level of understanding of ECTS concepts▪ Whether and how ECTS allocation (workload) is monitored▪ Recognition practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Demographic questions, incl. whether the respondent had mobility experience▪ Knowledge of ECTS▪ Awareness that ECTS is used in their programme▪ Has their workload been monitored▪ Student-centred learning: do they recognise the features (see p. 15 in the 2015 ECTS User's Guide) in their programme▪ Recognition of credits (if applicable)▪ Grade transfer perceived as fair and transparent (if applicable)

Data collection components

Focus group discussions

- **16** in total: 2 per country by three target groups: academics, administrators, students
- **Main topics:**
 - ECTS practices at institutional level
 - Identifying areas for improvement

Example:

Students	Administrators	Academics
<i>Are you familiar with the ECTS system? How aware were you that it is a Europe-wide system applied by your institution?</i>	<i>How is the ECTS guide used for the management of credits in your institutions, including learning agreements, and recognising credits from partner institutions?</i>	<i>How has the ECTS Users' Guide been used in designing your study programmes? Are programmes designed in a learning outcome-based approach?</i>

Data collection components

Consultation sessions (later phase of the study)

- Three meetings
- Engage in dialogue with additional stakeholders
- Focus will be on in-depth discussions on selected issues (to be confirmed as the research progresses)

Clarification Q&A on the methodological approach

Lunch

Roundtable discussion
session/feedback around the
current ECTS Users guide

Brainstorming and roundtable discussion

- Do you agree with the main relevant trends and challenges identified?
- What are initial ideas and potential ways for the Guide to address them?
- What are specific items that might be addressed in the research?

Discussion on the proposed
approach for the research

Discussion on the proposed approach for the research (in groups)

What is your view on:

- The main lines of inquiries of the desk research?
- Discussion of the survey questions?
- Discussion of the focus group guide? Suggestions to support engagement with HEIs?

AOB and close

Kinga Szuly, European Commission

Colin Tück, Lead Expert

Thank you!