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**EHEA WORKING GROUP ON STRUCTURAL REFORM**

**Membership**

The working group is chaired by Bartłomiej Banaszak (Poland), Fr. Friedrich Bechina (Holy See), Sjur Bergan (Council of Europe) and Noël Vercruysse (Belgium/Flemish Community), with Sjur Bergan as facilitator. Gayane Harutyunyan and Ani Hakobyan provide Secretariat support.

Armenia, Austria, Belgium (French Community), Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Moldova, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, European Commission, BusinessEurope, Education International, ENQA, EQAR, EURASHE, ESU, and EUA are members of the group, making it perhaps the largest of the four working groups in the 2012 – 15 program.

**First meeting**

The Working Group held its first meeting on December 13 -14, 2012, hosted by the Flemish Community of Belgium, in Brussels. This first meeting reviewed the state of affairs in each policy area covered by the mandate of the group – quality assurance, qualifications frameworks, recognition of qualifications and transparency instruments – and identified the most salient issues for its future work. It will aim to develop policy proposals as well as to identify problematic issues in the implementation of each policy area but its main emphasis will be on the interaction between and coherence of the four policy areas as well as their links with transversal issues, i.a. employability and the global dimension.

While a part of the first meeting was conducted in thematic working groups for each policy area, the group will aim to work transversally. It will therefore seek to avoid establishing sub-groups for each policy area and will aim to define transversal topics for much of its work.

The working group reviewed its terms of reference and made suggestions for amendments. The revised terms of reference are submitted to the BFUG for adoption.

**Issue for specific consideration by the Board/BFUG**

* The outcomes of the discussions at the first meeting are largely reflected in the suggested terms of reference. The Working Group would nevertheless like to draw the attention of the Board and the BFUG to two issues:
  + the recognition of prior learning which is important to the further development of the EHEA as well as to the role of higher education in furthering lifelong learning. This issue could be addressed by either the Working Group on the Social Dimension and Lifelong Learning – and more specifically by the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Network under this Working Group - or by the one on Structural Reforms. It has not been included in the draft ToR of the Structural Reform WG as we believe the Board and the BFUG should clarify which Working Group it wishes to take responsibility for this issue, so as to avoid overlap.

On this issue, the board at its meeting in Zagreb on January 15 recommended that the recognition of prior learning come under the remit of the Structural Reforms WG and the draft ToRs have been amended accordingly. It is assumed this implies that the RPL Network will report to the Structural Reform WG.

* + the issue of joint programs and degrees which is a significant tool in furthering goals of the EHEA Mobility Strategy. However the issue of dismantling obstacles to cooperation in the framework of joint programs clearly refers to the policy areas dealt with by the Structural Working Group. It was been reported to the Structural Working Group that this issue had not been included in the Terms of Reference of the Mobility and Internationalization WG.

On this issue, the board did not make a recommendation and it is submitted to the BFUG for consideration. The ToRs of the relevant working group should be amended in accordance with the BFUG’s decision.

**Further schedule**

The Working Group aims to meet at least once, sometimes possibly twice, between every meeting of the BFUG. The next meetings will be held on May 22 - 23 and September 24 – 25, 2013. For the latter, the possibility of a half day joint session with the EQF Advisory Group is being explored.

The four co-chairs work closely together and aim to meet once between every meeting of the working group. Their next meeting will be held in Strasbourg on February 22, 2013.

**SUGGESTED DECISION**

It is suggested the BFUG:

* take note of the report by the WG on Structural Reform;
* decided to include the recognition of prior learning in the ToR of this Group;
* decide whether to conclude joint programs and degree in the ToRs of the WG on Structural Reform or in those of the WG on Mobility and Internationalization;
* adopt the Terms of Reference of the WG on Structural Reforms.