**EHEA Working Group on Structural Reforms**

**Co-Chairs 2nd meeting, Strasbourg, 22 February 2013**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**List of participants:**

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| Council of Europe | Sjur Bergan |
| Belgium/Flemish Community | Nöel Vercruysse |
| Holy See | Padre Friedrich Bechina  |
| Poland | Bartłomiej Banaszak |
| BFUG Secretariat | Gayane Harutyunyan |
| BFUG Secretariat | Ani Hakobyan |

Sjur Bergan, the hosting Co-Chair, welcomed the participants to the 2nd meeting of the Co-Chairs EHEA WG on Structural Reforms and introduced the agenda with its main points:

* The review of the first meeting of the WG;
* The presentation to the BFUG, Dublin;
* Next meeting of the EHEA WG on Structural Reforms, in particular identification of the main issues for discussion and the structure of the meeting.;
* Timetable for the further work of the WG, in particular the calendar, the relationships with the EHEA sub-structures, proposed joint meeting with the EQF Advisory Group and draft report of the WG by summer, 2014

***The review of the first meeting of the Structural Reforms (SRs) WG***

The Co-Chairs shared their impressions over the first meeting of the Structural Reforms WG and unanimously agreed that the first meeting was rather constructive and well organized. It was also stressed that the participation and activeness of the members was on a quite high level. Although the Co-Chairs underlined that the outcomes of the first meeting were pretty successful, they succeeded in achieving the common understanding of the agenda points, especially on coherent approach towards structural reforms, still they shared their concerns on the following:

* Absence of information from few participant countries on their representation to the WG;
* Relationship between policy initiatives and policy proposals on one hand and the state of implementation of each policy area on the other hand;
* Relationship between EHEA WG on Structural Reforms and Reporting on the Bologna Process Implementation WG in terms of avoiding any overlapping in their work: i.e. data collection and analyses is inherent to the Reporting WG whereas the SRs WG can identify problematic issues in the implementation and assist the EHEA countries in the issues which are under the remit of the SRs WG;
* Extent to which the learning outcomes should be dealt by the WG;
* Ways of establishing effective working relationships with the sub-groups and networks falling under the mandate of the Structural Reforms WG including the possibility of having additional Co-Chairs meetings of the WG and its relevant sub-structures;
* Too little attention paid to interaction between the “Bologna Triangle” and transparency as well as the coherence of the four policy areas as well as their links with transversal issues, i.e. employability, lifelong learning, etc.
* Obstacles to recognition and development of the joint degrees;
* Small size of the subgroups during the breakout sessions was hardly workable;
* Timely preparation of the final report of the SRs WG and the importance to include in it recommendations on the policy proposals and initiatives;
* Volume of the work;

***Identification the main issues for discussion and the structure of the next meeting***

While discussing the salient issues of the main four policy areas of the Structural Reforms WG, the co-chairs pointed out in particular:

* Relations between transparency and the “Bologna Triangle”
* Issue of short cycle and access qualifications.
* Precise definition of quality assurance and qualifications frameworks as elements of the structural reforms in the higher education systems; definition of quality assurance as it varies throughout Europe and there do exist contradicting approaches, exploring the existing tensions and the ways of minimizing them. Another issue is to identify to what extent the structures responsible for quality assurance have to be similar and how different they can be across the EHEA.
* The main issues for discussion and the structure of the meeting
* Links between the structural reforms and employability

Regarding transparency, the Co-Chairs noted that although the coherence and interdependence of the elements of the triangle, i.e. quality assurance, qualifications frameworks and recognition, had been tackled duly, the issue of transparency needs more careful consideration. The co-chairs agreed that during the next meeting of the Working Groups the main attention should paid to reaching common understanding of transparency and its interlinkages with quality assurance, qualification frameworks and employability.

***Draft Terms of Reference for Structural Reforms WG***

The Co-Chair Sjur Bergan presented draft terms of reference of the Structural Reforms WG and gave background information on the suggestions/comments made by Board during its Zagreb meeting, on January 15, particularly on the issue of recognition of prior learning together with joint programs and degrees, which were singled out for particular discussion and attention during the first meeting of the Structural Reforms WG. The Board recommended that the RPL should be under the remit of the Structural Reforms WG, while the issue of the joint programs and degrees was left open for further discussion to be carried between the Co-Chairs of two working groups: WG on Structural Reform and WG on Mobility and Internationalization.. Suggestions made by the Board have been included and the draft terms of reference was amended accordingly. Co-chairs agreed on the Peter Greisler’s proposal to have a joint meeting of the WG co-chairs and relevant experts in Dublin around the date of the Bologna Follow-up Group meeting. They also welcomed the idea of establishing a small ad-hoc expert group which would work on the obstacles to joint programmes and degrees and present the conclusions to both working groups.

Chairs also made recommendations and comments on the draft terms of reference of the ad-hoc working group on the third cycle.

***Timetable for the future work***

The second meeting of the WG will be held on 22-23 May 2013, is Warszawa. The preparations have already started. The meeting will take place in a centrally located hotel and an invitation together with practical information will be sent out in the beginning of April. The Co-Chairs decided that the main focus of the upcoming meeting will be on transparency, i.e. exploring the concept of transparency and the ways to enhance it, general introduction to transparency issues, the connection of transparency and employability, the links between transparency and other policy areas of structural reforms. It was concluded that in the afternoon of the first day the working group would split into two sub-groups. One of the sub-groups will seek to analyze the relationship between transparency and qualifications frameworks and the other that between transparency and quality assurance, consequently the second part of the meeting would have particular emphasis on potential of transparency tools.Regarding the third meeting of the WG the Co-Chairs suggested meeting in Brussels, dated on September 24 – 25, 2013, which will partially be conducted together with the EQF Advisory Group. This time the working group will seek to have a focus on qualifications frameworks.

One that should be noted is that BFUG is likely to have a thematic debate on the revision of the ESG at its meeting in Vilnius on November 6 – 7, 2013 what should be taken into account while identifying the main points of the agenda for the next meetings in September and in the late November/December/January.

The Co-Chairs also explored the possibility to have a joint meeting with the Chairs of the Third Cycle ad-hoc group and other substructures under the Structural Reform WG during the next co-chairs meeting on July 8, in Rome.

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Annex 1

**2nd Meeting of the EHEA Working Group on Structural Reform**

***Venue:*** Warszawa

***Time: May 22-23, 2012***

**Draft Program**

**INTRODUCTORY ITEMS**

1. **Welcome and introduction to the meeting**
2. **Adoption of the Agenda**

*Document*: draft annotated agenda

1. **Information and updates**

Information on developments of relevance to the Working Group will be provided by the Co-Chairs and BFUG Secretariat. These are likely to include feedback from the BFUG meetings and conferences and the final version of the ToR of the Structural Reforms WG, adopted by the BFUG on March 14 – 15, in particular

Bologna Follow-up Group Meeting and the final version of the Terms of Reference.

 Conference on Rankings and the Visibility of Quality Outcomes in the European Higher Education Area. Dublin, 30-31 January 2013

 Conference on Quality Assurance in Qualification Framework.

*Document*: final version of the ToR

**FOCUS ON TRANSPARENCY**

*The particular focus of this meeting will be on transparency and transparency instruments, including the links between transparency and other policy areas of structural reform.*

**4. Exploring the concept of transparency:**

a) general introduction to transparency issues

b) what does transparency mean for the major policy areas?

c) the connection of the transparency and employability/transversal issues.

Noël Vercruysse, Chair of the EHEA WG on transparency instruments 2009 – 12

*Background document*: Report by the Transparency Tools Working Group <http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/%281%29/brosura_v1_v12_vp_120419_text.pdf>

1. **Breakout sessions: Analysing the interlinkages between transparency and qualification frameworks as well as transparency and quality assurance**

The Working Group will split into two sessions, one of which will consider the relationship between transparency and qualifications frameworks and the other that between transparency and quality assurance. Each group will have a chair, a resource person and a rapporteur.

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|  | **Transparency/Quality Assurance** | **Transparency/Qualification Frameworks** |
| **Chair** | Bartłomiej Banaszak,Fr. Friedrich Bechina | Sjur Bergan, Noël Vercruysse |
| **Facilitator** | Mark Frederiks  | Brian Maguire |
| **Rapporteurs** | Achim Hopbach | Ana Tecilazić Goršić |

1. **Reports from the break-out session**
2. **Transparency as the part of the Structural Reforms. Discussion based on the reports from the break-out session**

**FURTHER WORK**

1. **Further work plan for the Working Group**

Document: draft outline of further work [to be produced by Secretariat and Co-Chairs]

Terms of Reference of the WG and its sub-groups and networks

The Working Group will be invited to consider, on the basis of an introduction by the Co-Chairs, its further work plan, with the goal of producing a draft report by the end of summer 2014. It should be noted that the BFUG is likely to have a thematic debate on the revision of the ESG at its meeting in Vilnius on November 6 – 7 and that a joint meeting with the EQF Advisory group is considered for the September meeting of the WG (see below), in which case this meeting will focus in particular on qualifications frameworks. The Working Group will also be invited to consider how best to organize its relationship with the various groups and network falling under its mandate.

1. **Next meeting**

It is suggested the Working Group meet in Brussels on September 24 – 25, 2013. It is intended that a joint session with the EQF Advisory Group may be organized as a part of this meeting (2 – 3 hours), most likely on September 25 in the afternoon. Members should therefore plan for a two day meeting.

1. **Any other business**