**EHEA Working Group on Structural Reforms**

**Co-Chairs 3rd meeting, Rome, 8 July 2013**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**List of participants:**

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| Sjur Bergan | Co-Chair of the EHEA WG on SRs (CoE) |
| Nöel Vercruysse | Co-Chair of the EHEA WG on SRs (Belgium/Flemish Community) |
| Padre Friedrich Bechina | Co-Chair of the EHEA WG on SRs (Holy See) |
| Bartłomiej Banaszak | Co-Chair of the EHEA WG on SRs (Poland) |
| Margaret Waters | European Commission |
| Marzia Foroni | Co-Chair of the 3rd cycle ad-hoc WG (Italy) |
| Raul Ranne | Co-Chair of the RPL Network (Estonia) |
| Marin Gross | Co-Chair of the RPL Network (Estonia) |
| Gayane Harutyunyan | BFUG Secretariat |
| Ani Hakobyan | BFUG Secretariat |

Padre Friedrich Bechina (Holy See) opened the meeting and welcomed the participants to the 3rd meeting of Co-Chairs of the WG on Structural Reforms. It was stressed that the purpose of the meeting was to better coordinate the work with the Chairs of the sub-structures under the mandate of the EHEA WG, i.e to get updates on the work of the sub-groups, try it identify the main issues in the their fields, to prepare the further work of the Structural Reforms WG, and finally to prepare report to be submitted to the Tbilisi BFUG Board meeting.

**REVIEW OF THE MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP MAY**

The Co-Chairs shared their impressions on the second meeting of the EHEA WG on Structural Reforms and agreed that it was a rather difficult meeting in terms of finding common understanding of transparency concept. They also agreed that the WG needs to consider some of the aspects of transparency once again aiming to concentrate on the key issues to be covered in the final report of the WG. It was underlined that transparency of the diversity is to be achieved and elaboration of common template on the profiles of HEIs for the stakeholders is an issue to be solved. In addition few challenges were highlighted in relation to transparency, i.e. how to understand the concept of comparison, the relationship with ESG and data collection for employability.

**The ad-hoc WG on the Third Cycle**

Marzia Foroni, the Co-Chair of the Ad-hoc WG on the 3rd cycle, updated participants on the activities carried out by the sub-group and the open issues that still need to be tackled. Furthermore the timeline of the WG meetings was introduced. Marzia Foroni also introduced the main conclusions of the mapping exercise and the areas which need further enhancement, in particular, the use of QFs, ECTS and Diploma Supplement in the 3rd cycle, the issue of QA in the 3rd cycle, the extent to which the cooperation with the ESG revision group should be undertaken.

The following concerns were raised by the participants in the discussion after the presentation:

* The recognition of interdisciplinarity, particularly in the academic world as well as its increasing for the employability and research;
* Perception of the existing instruments such as ECTS, QFs as transparency tools in the 3rd cycle rather than regulative tools;
* Making clearer the differentiation between the workloads of various PhD programmes and the extent to which these programmes should be research based;
* The status of doctoral candidates: clarifying the link between their status and rights, obligations and the required workload of PhD candidates;
* Exploring the ways to make PhD candidates more self-employable in contrast to the other degree graduates;
* Lack of involvement of the labour market in designing PhD programmes and enhancement of synergies between the partners.

*For more detailed information see the document below*



**The ad-hoc WG on the revision of the ECTS Users’ Guide-**

Margaret Waters (EC) introduced the main rationale for setting up the revision group of the ECTS User’s guide and underlined that the accumulation function of ECTS has become even more significant than it used to be previously. The group intends to provide more guidance on programme design and teaching, learning and assessment and to shift to student-centred learning. For better articulation of LO use the group plans to publish on a website the range of various purposes it may serve for different stakeholders. It was stressed different misconceptions regarding the usefulness of the guide have arisen and the group is gathering the available information on existing misunderstandings to check the efficiency of the content of the revised guide.

*In the discussion the following issues and concerns were raised.*

* The role of LO while designing ECTS credit allocation;
* The interlinkages of LO and transversal skills and the of assessment;
* The communication between the RPL network and the ad-hoc group on the revision of ECTS User’s Guide;
* The role of QA in guaranteeing that the students have achieved required LO;

*For more detailed information see the document below:*



**The Network of National Correspondents for Qualifications Frameworks**

Sjur Bergan (CoE) introduced the meeting schedule of the network with the main purpose of the network and noted that many countries are at relatively advanced stages of developing their national frameworks. It was stressed that one of the major concerns of the network is the lack of participation of the members seen during the last meetings. In order to improve the participation in the network purpose all BFUG members will be asked to ensure the presence of their national contact points to the upcoming meetings.

**The Network of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**

Raul Ranne, the outgoing Co-Chair of the RPL Network, introduced the main tasks of the network and noted that the network is now in the process of elaborating strategies to overcome the barriers and challenges on RPL. Furthermore he presented the timeline of the network meetings to be organised in 2013 and introduced the main policy areas identified by the network requiring further efforts i.e. data collection, access to HE, need to develop QA regulations/ common principles, development of recommendation of good practices.

During the discussion the following issues were raised:

* To define common goals of RPL on the EHEA level;
* To identify barriers to RPL;
* To explore the interlinkages of RPL and other Bologna tools as well as tp enhance the cooperation between RPL and other instruments developed within structural reforms, i.e. ECTS User’s Guide, ESG;
* To better articulate the importance of RPL in a policy forum with the help of concrete examples;
* To consider the challenge of the implementation of RPL in non EU countries;
* To explore the ways of overcoming the issue of trust in relation to RPL.

Raul Ranne also introduced Marin Gross, who will take over as Chair of the RPL Network.

*For more detailed information see the document below:*



***Update on Bologna Pathfinder Group on Automatic Recognition, the revision of the ESG and the ad-hoc group on joint programs and degrees***

This work is carried out independently of the Structural Reforms WG, with the partial exception of the *ad hoc* working group on joint programmes and degrees, which will report to both the SRWG and the working group on mobility and internationalization. The activities are nevertheless of great importance to the SRWG, which will most likely be invited to comment on relevant proposals in due course.

*Bologna Pathfinder Group on Automatic Recognition*: Margaret Waters (EC) noted that the group has focused its work mainly on the system level and introduced the main activities the WG carries out, i.e. looking at the way different Bologna tools fit together in order to optimise them to make recognition more automatic as well as looking at the recognition processes in various countries. It was also noted that the group will soon shift its focus on HEIs and the way recognition processes and access/admission decisions are carried out within institutions.

*Revision of the ESG and the Ad-hoc working group on joint programmes and degrees*: Updates were provided on the current stage of developments and working structure of the corresponding sub-groups.

*For more detailed information see the documents below:*



**THE FURTHER WORK OF THE GROUP**

The third meeting of EHEA WG on SRs will take place in Brussels, 24-25 September 2013. The WG will have a joint session with EQF Advisory Group (AG) in the afternoon of September 25 and a separate agenda has been prepared for this part of the meeting (see Annex 1). In the upcoming meetings EHEA WG on SRs will mainly concentrate on preparing the report. For this purpose next meeting of the Working group will concentrate on the discussion of the first outline of the report, will give a basis, will identify the main issues/obstacles within each policy area to be covered in the report trying to keep the the balance between policy considerations and recommendations, on the one hand, and reporting on and identifying obstacles in the implementation of the structural reforms adopted within the EHEA so far, on the other hand. The Co-Chairs also agreed that the transparency is still an area that should be considered in the further work of the WG as the EHEA WG on SRs. The main outcomes will be feed into the final report of the WG.

It was also suggested to have a meeting of the Co-Chairs in Vilnius after the BFUG meeting aiming to coordinate the further work of the WG as well as to clarify the scope of the issues to be tackled in the agenda of the WG next meeting to be held on 9 – 10 December 2013, Gent or Brussels. Regarding the further timetable of the WG it was stressed that the draft report is to be finalized in early fall 2014 hence it will be required for the WG held meeting once or possibly twice in spring 2014.

**Annex 1**

**JOINT MEETING OF THE EQF ADVISORY GROUP AND THE EHEA WORKING GROUP ON STRUCTURAL REFORMS**

Brussels, September 25, 2013 14.30 – 18.00 hrs.

Venue: Centre Borschette, Room 1D (36 rue Froissart, B- 1040 Brussels) (close to Place Schuman)

The EQF Advisory Group and the EHEA Working Group on Structural Reforms will hold their joint meeting on September 25, 2013, starting at 14.30 and ending by 18.00 hrs. The meeting will be chaired jointly by Ana Carla Pereira (European Commission) on behalf of the EQF Advisory Group and Sjur Bergan (Council of Europe) on behalf of the EHEA Working Group on Structural Reforms.

**DRAFT AGENDA**

1. **Opening of the meeting (14.00)**
2. **Adoption of the agenda**

*Document*: References [this document]

1. **INFORMATION ON THE EHEA WORKING GROUP ON STRUCTURAL REFORMS AND THE EQF ADVISORY GROUP**

*Documents*: terms of reference of the EHEA Working Group on Structural Reforms

Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council on the European Qualifications Frameworks for lifelong learning

This item is intended to give a brief overview of the mandates of the EHEA Working Group on Structural Reforms and the on the EQF Advisory Group for the mutual benefit of the two groups.

Introduction by one of the Co-Chairs of the Structural Reforms WG and the European Commission respectively

1. **A EUROPEAN AREA FOR SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS (14.15)**

Introduction by the European Commission.

1. **QUALITY ASSURANCE AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS (15.00)**

*Documents*: report from the Irish Presidency conference on quality assurance in qualifications frameworks, Dublin, March 12 – 13, 2013;

European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Common Principles for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training in the context of the EQF (Annex III of the EQF Recommendation)

Introduction by Ireland.

1. **SHORT CYCLE QUALIFICATIONS IN THE OVERARCHING FRAMEWORKS (16.00)**

Documents: Qualifications referenced to EQF level 5 (CEDEFOP, 2013, manuscript

2012 report by the EHEA Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks

Introduction by CEDEFOP.

1. **REFERENCING AND SELF CERTIFICATION OF NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS AGAINST THE OVERARCHING FRAMEWORKS (16.45)**

*Documents*: Criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications levels to the EQF and self-certification against the QF-EHEA

2012 report by the EHEA Working group on qualifications frameworks

Introduction by a member of either group with experience from several self-certification and referencing exercises.

1. **QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS AND THE RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS (17.30)**

Document: Recommendation adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee in June 2012 [give exact title] and its explanatory memorandum

On the basis of the Recommendation adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention and their own experience, members of both groups are invited to explore how qualifications frameworks may be used to facilitate the fair recognition of qualifications.

Introduction by Carita Blomqvist, President of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee 2007 – 13.

1. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS (17.50)**