Strasbourg, March 27, 2014

**BOLOGNA FOLLOW UP GROUP**

Athens, April 9 – 10, 2014

**REPORT BY THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

*Revised following the meeting of the CDPPE March 25 – 27, 2014*

*Please note: this is a revised version of the report submitted on March 13. The repot has been revised to include the outcomes of the annual plenary session of the CDPPE, pp. 3- 4.*

**INTRODUCTION**

As an active consultative member, the Council of Europe believes it has made and continues to make a substantial contribution to the development of the European Higher Education Area, in particular through:

* Its commitment to democracy, human rights and the rule of law;
* Its insistence that all education systems need to address the full range of purposes of education[[1]](#footnote-1):
  + Preparation for employment;
  + Preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies;
  + Personal development;
  + The development and maintenance of a broad, advanced knowledge base.
* Its commitment to quality education, as defined and outlined in Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13 on ensuring quality education. Among other things, this recommendation underlines that quality must be assessed in relation to the purposes of education, that it must be considered at the level of education systems as well as of individual institutions, and that it must be inclusive: no education system can be of high quality unless it offers adequate opportunities for all students and learners.
* Its work on defining the public responsibility for and the role of public authorities in higher education, as exemplified in particular though recommendations CM/Rec(2007)6 on the public responsibility for higher education and research and CM/Rec(2012)6 on the public responsibility for academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

Within the EHEA, the Council of Europe is:

* A consultative member of the BFUG and Board;
* Co-chair and coordinator of the Working Group on Structural Reforms (the subject of a separate report to the BFUG);
* Chair of the Network of national correspondents for qualifications frameworks. In this area, the Council of Europe cooperates very closely with the European Commission, through the EQF Advisory Group and the National Coordination Points (referred to in the report by the Structural Reforms Working Group);
* Member of the Working Group on Mobility and Internationalization
* Through regional and bilateral cooperation, including through regional networks for qualifications frameworks for South East Europe and Joint Programs with the European Commission;
* With UNESCO, the custodian of the only legal treaty of the EHEA; the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention). The Council of Europe and UNESCO provide the Secretariat for the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee and the ENIC Network of national information centers on academic mobility and recognition; the latter cooperates very closely with the NARIC network of the European Commission.

**The Council of Europe’s 2014 – 15 for education**

The focus of the Council of Europe’s Education program for 2014 – 15 is:

* Democratic governance and innovation
* Diversity
* Participation

The Council of Europe’s activities in and of relevance to higher education are located within these three broad priorities. In addition to the direct contribution to the EHEA, these include following up the Recommendation on ensuring quality education. In 2014, particular emphasis will be focused on establishing a platform of exchange of information and best practices on ethics and integrity in education and on competences (see below). While the danger of corruption is real at all levels of education, it is particularly great in higher education. A feasibility study will be one of the main items on the agenda of the Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice, which will meet in Strasbourg on March 25 – 27, 2014.

***Competences for democratic culture and intercultural dialogue***

The Council of Europe has recently launched work on developing guidelines and descriptors for competences for a culture of democracy and intercultural dialogue. This initiative arises from the Chairmanship conference organized by Andorra in February 2013 and it acts on the Council of Europe’s conviction that preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies is one of the major purposes of education.

The kinds of competences our education systems provide say something about the priorities of our societies. If we are serious about ensuring that preparation for democracy is and remains a major purpose of education, we have to go beyond rhetoric and identify the kind of competences our education systems need to provide students with at different levels and in different strands of education. This does not mean that such competences can be obtained through formal education alone but it does mean we need to relate competences for democratic culture and intercultural dialogue to the different parts and strands of the formal education system. If we were unable to do this, we would risk sending the message that formal education is for employability and non-formal and informal education is for citizenship, whereas of course all kinds of competences can and should be developed through formal as well as non-formal and informal education. Intercultural dialogue and democracy are not one and the same but it is difficult to imagine how intercultural dialogue could be carried out satisfactorily in non-democratic societies and it is equally difficult to imagine that democratic societies could be unwilling and unable to dialogue with those whose cultural background differs from the majority of the members of society. This project will therefore play an important role in the 2014 – 15 Education program and has implications for all levels of education, including higher education.

***The democratic mission of higher education***

A conference on Higher Education for Democratic Innovation will be held at Queen’s University Belfast on June 25 – 27, 2014. It will be organized jointly by the Council of Europe, the US Steering Committee of the International Consortium for Higher Education, Civic Responsibility and Democracy; Queen’s University; the European Wergeland Centre; and ESU, and invitations have been sent out to, among others, BFUG members. The conference will underline and explore the commitment of higher education to democracy, human rights and the rule of law, as well as to social cohesion and intercultural dialogue. In particular, the conference will focus on the need to rethink and innovate the way we approach and practice democracy in modern, complex societies. Few venues in Europe would be better suited to illustrate this theme than Queen’s University Belfast, in view of its role in building bridges across communal divides in Belfast and, more broadly, Northern Ireland.

**The Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice (CDPPE)**

The CDPPE held an informal session in Beograd on October 24 – 25, 2013, at the invitation of the Serbian authorities. This session focused on follow up to the Helsinki ministerial conference, inclusive education and competences for democratic culture and intercultural dialogue.

As noted above, the 2014 plenary session will be held in Strasbourg on March 25 – 27. In addition to the transparency/anti-corruption platform and competence for democratic culture an d intercultural dialogue, referred to above, the plenary session will, among other things, consider the role of the Council of Europe in higher education; history teaching; education for democratic citizenship and human rights education

In 2012 – 13, the Chair of the CDPPE was Jorma Kauppinen (Finland) and the Vice Chair was Germain Dondelinger (Luxembourg). The Secretary to the CDPPE is Stefania Kruger of the Council of Europe’s Education Department.

The 2014 plenary session was held on March 25 – 27 in Strasbourg. Among other things, the CDPPE:

* Decided to establish an informal *ad hoc* working group on higher education;
* Accepted the invitation of the Belgian authorities to hold an informal meeting in Brussels on December 18 – 19, 2014 to mark the 6oth anniversary of the European Cultural Convention;
* Approved the outline of the recently launched project on competences for democratic culture and intercultural dialogue;
* Approved a feasibility study for a new project on Ethics and Integrity in Education;
* Mandated its Bureau to develop further proposals for projects concerning quality education, based on Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13 on ensuring quality education;
* Decided to grant OBESSU observer status with the Committee.

The CDPPE also elected its Bureau as follows:

Chair: Germain Dondelinger (Luxembourg)

Vice Chair:   Jindřich Fryč (Czech Republic (Deputy Minister))

Bureau members:

Etienne Gilliard (Belgium)

Tatjana Jurek (Germany)

Ellen Lange (Norway)

Ketevan Natriashvili (Georgia (Deputy Minister))

Observers from the academic community:

Aleksa Bjeliš (Croatia; Rector of Zagreb University)

Srdjan Stanković (Serbia; Chair Higher Education Council)

Observers from NGOs:

Stefan Delplace (EURASHE)

Sabine Rohman (NGO Group)

Gender Equality Rapporteur:  Bernard Wicht (Switzerland)

**Secretariat**

The Director of Democratic Citizenship and participation (encompassing Education and Youth), Ólöf Ólafsdóttir, retired on October 1, 2013. Following a period of interim arrangements, Jean-Christophe Bas has very recently been appointed to the post and will take up his new post on June 16.

The Education Department is still headed by Sjur Bergan and the Education Policy Division by Villano Qiriazi.

**Council of Europe Higher Education Series**

[*Recognizing qualifications in the European region. The Lisbon Recognition Convention at 15*](https://book.coe.int/eur/en/higher-education-and-research/5887-the-lisbon-recognition-convention-at-15-making-fair-recognition-a-reality.html), edited by Sjur Bergan and Carita Blomqvist, has just been published as volume 19 of the Council of Europe Higher Education [Series](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/Resources/HEseries_en.asp).

A volume on *Student engagement in Europe: society, higher education and student governance*, to be edited by Manja Klemenčič, Sjur Bergan and Rok Primožič, is under development and will hopefully be published in late 2014.

1. Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)6 on the public responsibility for higher education and research. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)