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**June 2014 Progress Report – Bologna Pathfinder Group on Automatic Recognition**

**Report on the last meeting (15 May 2014) and next steps**

The pathfinder group on automatic recognition's 6th meeting took place on May 15 2014 in Brussels and focused on the following points:

* Progress updates from pathfinder group countries since the last meeting

**Belgium (Flemish Community) – The Netherlands:** BE-nl provided an update of recent developments to the group. In particular, through an update of the NVAO (Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders)-Treaty which entered into force on 01 April 2014, Bachelor degrees and Master degrees from the two countries are declared equal to each other.

**Benelux:** BE-nl and NL updated the PfG on BE, NL and LU having agreed to realise cross-border automatic (general) recognition of each other's qualifications, which was stipulated in the report of the Benelux ministerial meeting in November 2013 and is an item in the 2014 Benelux work programme, with further practical steps currently under discussion at ministerial and administrative level.

**Nordic and Baltic ENIC/NARIC:** SE informed about 1st meeting of Nordic QAAs in June 2014 in which Baltic QAAs will participate and informed about on-going review of QA-system. EE briefed PfG about Baltic ENIC-NARICs joint meeting in February 2014, also discussing Nordic-Baltic cooperation. DK updated the PfG on Nordic-Baltic cooperation being addressed during April 2014 NORRIC meeting and concluded that no major obstacles for recognition were inherent on general-level. The Nordic offices have proposed a joint Nordic-Baltic project targeted at developing placement recommendations for the HEI’s in the region. The project is aimed at supporting and applying knowledge for the admission decisions of the HEIs by producing short descriptions of the existing degree types of all the 8 countries and subsequently placement recommendations for the HEIs decisions on admission of students from other countries in the region. After the PFG meeting on 15 May the Nordic and Baltic ENIC-NARICs have agreed to initiate the project starting in autumn 2014.

**South-East Europe:** HR and SI informed the PfG about the Western Balkans-initiative refocusing on aligning work to the South East Europe (SEE) 2020 strategy of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), which provides a policy forum for further development, with recognition being a topic in the education agenda and a regional SEE Working Group on Recognition of Qualifications being set up. Due to funding constraints, the funding possibilities of this new tool considered helpful; one event per year to be funded by the new initiative with a first meeting due in September in Zagreb, also to focus on AR though with different focus than in PfG. Main focus of the new initiative will be work on legislation, i.e. revision of recognition legislation. WB-initiative of PfG renamed South-East Europe initiative to be in line with developments on regional level.

* Diploma Supplement (DS)

Based on HEI survey results showing that the majority of HEIs does not perceive the DS as sufficient for recognition, the group considered a recommendation to the BFUG to make the DS more useful for recognition purposes, inter alia by discussing a possible recommendation for a DS based more closely on learning outcomes.

* Revision of the LRC

Following a presentation of the workplan of the LRC bureau by EE, the PfG discussed a recommendation to the BFUG on improved guidance on the LRC, with the focus on a recommendation to and not a revision of the convention itself. PfG discussed possible proposals, e.g. further reducing the time limit needed for recognition decisions, possibly reducing still further or properly enforcing the 4-month time-limit stipulated by the Revised Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications. In addition, the group agreed on a recommendation to ensure the possibility of free appeals, which should be decided within a reasonable time limit.

* European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes

The group discussed the draft proposals for a European Approach to the QA of joint programmes. The PfG agreed to follow the developments closely and most members agreed that it could be a useful step.

* Autumn 2014 report to BFUG

The PfG discussed the possible content for its report to the BFUG more in detail and agreed on a collaborative way forward to finalise the drafting of the report.