**EHEA Working Group on Structural Reforms**

**6th Meeting, Warszawa, 27-28 May 2014**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

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| --- | --- |
| ***Name*** | ***Country / Organisation*** |
| Sjur Bergan, (Co-Chair) | Council of Europe |
| Noël Vercruysse, (Co-Chair) | Belgium/Flemish Community |
| Bartłomiej Banaszak, (Co-Chair) | Poland |
| Padre Friedrich Bechina, (Co-Chair) | Holy See |
| Marzia Foroni | Italy |
| Arkadi Papoyan | Armenia |
| Regina Aichner | Austria |
| Allan Bruun Pedersen | Denmark |
| Carita Blomqvist | Finland |
| Elene Jibladze | Georgia |
| Olaf Bartz | Germany |
| Christos Skouras | Greece |
| Bryan Maguire | Ireland |
| Aurelija Valeikienė | Lithuania |
| Priscila Alexandra Silva Couto | Portugal |
| Sara Bringle | Sweden |
| Metin Toprak | Turkey |
| Mehmet Sengül | Turkey |
| Carolyn Campbell | United Kingdom |
| Frank Petrikowski | European Commission |
| Anita Krémó | European Commission |
| Klara Engels-Perenyi | European Commission |
| Karin Åmossa | Educational International |
| Padraig Walsh | ENQA |
| Colin Tück | EQAR |
| Nevena Viksanović | ESU |
| Tia Loukkola | EUA |
| Stefan Delplace | EURASHE |
| Gayane Harutyunyan | Head of the BFUG Secretariat |
| Ani Hakobyan | BFUG Secretariat |

*Apologies were received from the Belgium/French Community, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Republic of Moldova, The Netherlands and Switzerland.*

**Welcome and introduction to the meeting**

Bartłomiej Banaszak (Poland), the hosting Co-Chair, welcomed the participants to the sixth meeting of the EHEA working group on Structural Reforms (SRWG)**.** Information on the timetable of the meeting followed.

The meeting agenda and the minutes of the WG’s fifth meeting were adopted with minor changes.

**Feedback on the activities of the BFUG and its sub-structures**

***Athens BFUG meeting, 9-10 April, 2014:*** Christos Skouras (Greece) briefed the SWRG on the outcomes of the BFUG Athens meeting and highlighted the dialogue that was launched around the future of the Bologna Process. During the deliberations the BFUG realised that there is a need to reinforce the Bologna Process and in order to enable the Bologna Process (BP) to continue to have its impetus in the following years the EHEA countries have to adapt to the new challenges and to make it again important issue in the political agenda of the ministers.

***EU Council Conclusions on QA, 20-21 May 2014:*** Under the leadership of the Hellenic Presidency the EU Council adopted its conclusions on QA in education and training on May 21. Earlier on May 7 2014 the draft of the Council conclusions was discussed and unanimously accepted by its permanent committee. The conclusions underline the importance of continuously enhancing the quality of education and training and ensuring QA work for all levels/forms of education considering experience gained in HE and VET.

Another important aspect that is underlined in the EU Council conclusions is that EHEA countries should not only worry about QA at national level but at the same time also have more European oriented prospective.

*For more details see the document below.*

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***The network of NQF correspondents***met in Athens on April 11, 2014 after the BFUG meeting. Sjur Bergan (CoE) updated the SWRG on the outcomes of the survey carried out by the network with a purpose to have an overall picture on the implementation state of the NQFs. As it appeared the reality is far behind the Ministers’ commitment to develop NQFs and self-certify those by 2012. The next issue on the agenda of the network is the insufficient level of participation of national contact points.

**Presentation of the draft report of the ad-hoc WG on the 3rd cycle**

Marzia Foroni (Italy), the Co-Chair of the **3rd cycle WG** updated the SRWG on the recent developments of the WG and informed that at its last meeting, which took place on 12-13 May, the WG in addition to its report has almost finalised its recommendations to contribute the SRWG report. The report of the WG is structured around 3 main chapters, i.e. mapping the implementation of the Salzburg Principles and the Principles of Innovative Doctoral training, Implementing structural reforms in the 3rd cycle and implementing policy reforms in the 3rd cycle.

For more details see the ppt and the document below.



Following comments were made during the discussion that followed:

* The quality of professionals’ doctorate should not be less valuable of the academic one, as it enhances deeper cooperation of the industry and academia.
* ECTS Users’ Guide for the 3rd cycle should be an option of diversity; in addition compulsory use of DS and LOs in this cycle needs further consideration.
* In case post soviet countries choose to self certify the doctoral nauk something beyond 3rd cyclethan these countries at least should not require any form of academic decision of recognising country.
* As for the DS for 3rd degree holders it was noted that the structures of the programmes are rather different and it is difficult to imagine issuing DS to the graduates of such programmes where no structure is seen: in this case DS has no added value.
* When applying for public position, excluding research-based positions, doctoral diploma is not valued as an additional study. In other cases it is considered the same as the diploma of the 2nd cycle graduates. Hence the WG will come up with recommendation saying that this degree is a result of an additional study and employers need to consider it when hiring personal.
* HEIs with the help of DS should make visible the mobility experience of the candidates during the whole programme.
* According to the data available not even 20% of the candidates have shorter mobility experience.
* When focusing on the term of LOs it becomes difficult to measure but just dealing with the term “Outcomes” is generally more accepted: there are certain outcomes that each candidate achieves.

**Presentation of the updated draft report of the Structural Reforms WG and discussion following**

Sjur Bergan (CoE) presented the second draft of the report with the main changes, reformulations as a result of the deliberations in Rome and added that some chapters of the report still need further enhancement hence have been singled out for more broad discussion. It was stressed that after the Rome meeting all the proposals that SRWG members will provide need to be precise suggestions on alternative formulations, additions or deletions, hence this is the last chance for proposing changes for the body of the text. Afterwards the floor was given to the WG to discuss each chapter one by one.

Please find the draft report below:



* ***2:*** In response to the considerable deliberations that took place upon the title of the paragraph (trying to identify whether it is policy or political context) it was clarified that EHEA is not just complex of certain policies. Moreover, it is political goal to set an area where the European students and staff can move, to enable HEIs, educational systems and public authorities cooperate and to see the development of coherent EHEA.
* There is a need to distinguish in the report between the success of SR templates and the success that have been scored in implementation.
* ***3.2:*** In regard to the recommendation 3 it was noted that the issue is rather delicate and is linked to the organisation of whole Bologna Process. The rationale behind proposing this recommendation is realised, however it is very strong recommendation.
* There is a need to make clear in the recommendations that it is a shared responsibility of public authorities and institutions to ensure that HE staff has the capabilities to implement the LOs.
* LOs are fundamental for success of the EHEA and as well as the SRs.
* There is a danger that structures will look alike on the papers but the implementation in different countries could vary the extent to which EHEA countries would not have common structures in reality. The fact that EHEA relies on national authorities and HEIs to implement the structures in one hand increases their ownership but on the other hand makes it difficult to ensure coherent implementation.
* Training of trainers should be better reflected in the text.
* Developing mutual help system is important EHEA principle. The strength/weakness of the EHEA is also to be developed throughout the implementation. In case of there is a weakness in implementation there is no intention to force the country, peers can offer systems/other experiences to overcome the difficulties.
* It was suggested recapitulate the specifities of the 3rd cycle in the context of this chapter.
* Use of LOs in wider community practices associated with professional development and regulation needs to be more closely considered.
* In general it was noted that recommendations are rather strict and it will be preferable to make them less prescriptive; e.g. initiative for support in form of peer learning activities should come from country in question (Rec 3.).
* ***3.3:*** There is a need to look at the employability of 3rd cycle graduates in non-academic labour market in addition to the proper communication between HEIs and labour market: there is a lack of awareness in the labour market around achieved outcomes of the 3rd degree graduates.
* It was suggested to strengthen the role of student representation and student centred learning in this chapter and to emphasise that all the refomrs happen in the environment which supports the paradigm shift from the teachers centred to the student centred learning;
* Quality of collaboration between HEIs and labour market is insufficient.
* It is important to look at the social dimension of the employability and to consider the issue of unemployment from this point of view as well.
* It was recommended not togeneralise the issue of unemployment for all 1st degree holders as it also depends on the way the program is structured, on very specific LOs and the way it is linked with the profile of the institution.
* It was acknowledged that there is a need to add a recommendation addressing only to the role of employers and the benefits the HEIs and students can have from their contribution.
* Concerning the employability of the 1st degree holders it was noted that in many countries where bachelor degree holders have more easy access to the labour market is also due to the private labour market and not only to public authorities.
* ***3.4:*** It is important to articulate better theuse of self-certification reports and to find the ways having updates on the national systems more regularly.
* There is a need to have clear information from the national authorities about all existing qualifications in system and their interpretation in the context of EQF.
* It was noted that it is rather problematic to impose countries to publish new self-certification reports in the coming years according to the changes in their NQFs, however in case major reforms are carried out in national systems, which will impact the QFs, than countries have to re-self-certify their NQFs agianst the over-arching frameworks.
* It was stressed that Institutions do not use the QFs for academic recognition properly, so it will be useful to recommend that HEIs and credential evaluators make full use of the QFs for the purpose of recognition.
* It was suggested to make a reference to EAR manual.

***Discussion on the report continued 4th paragraph***

* ***4.1:*** There is a need to explore further what else can be articulated to see what is common between the practices of HE and VET.
* It was noted that the recommendations illustrated in this chapter are overstressed and look like goals.
* It was noted that one of the challenges that exist in the Bologna Process is to promote the successful implementation of the communiqués.
* It was underlined that in case the SRWG finds that revision of the common principles of QA in HE and VET has to take place within EU decision making process than there is a need to have some kind of mandate from Yerevan meeting: theme of sequencing is important.
* Ireland, ENQA and EC will come up with the revised part of the report/recommendations for our next meeting**.**
* **4.2.2-4.2.3**: It was suggested to make explicit that SCQs are those that have QA procedures linked to ESG.
* Final recommendation will state that SCQs will be based on Dublin descriptors; quality assured by ESG and be part of QF-EHEA.
* **4.2.4:** There is a need for strengthening the role of the national correspondents and explore the ways to develop criteria/procedures for including SCQs in the QF-EHEA: give t more precise task how to strengthen the network and be more representative and operational.
* It was noted that in countries where is no long tradition of the existence of NQFs there is a need to raise the public awareness and promote the benefits of creating the framework.
* It was noted that publication of self-certification reports is problematic: at a time when QFs WG developed its report ENIC-NARIC’s and EHEA websites were the addresses for publishing the self-certification reports. Now EQF website is running and the usage of the Bologna website for QF-EHEA has to be developed. Moreover, there is a need to ensure that self-certification reports are linked to the referencing reports on the EQF websites. It was suggested to further consider this issue of maintaining the websites with the bologna Secretariat, EC and the Co-Chairs group.
* It was stressed that this paragraph is the proper place to come up with an overarching generic recommendation to establish satisfactory implementation of the QFs, particularly the LOs, by taking into account review/assistance exchange.
* **4.3.1**: It was suggested t include an appeal to HEIs to use the EAR manual.
* It was noted that in case the credential evaluators HEIs and not ENIC centres the rights for appeals are not implemented effectively.
* **4.3.2:** It was suggested to explore the possibility to include procedures to assess the LOs without questioning the way they have been achieved formally: not measuring what students has done during their studies but fair assessment of all competences at the end of the studies.
* It was suggested to develop more the RPL in the report:
* It was noted that there is a need to articulate the usage of the ECTS Users’ Guide for RPL: this is one of the ways of assessing LOs coming from informal and non-formal learning

**Presentation on the revised ECTS Users’ Guide**

Klara Engels-Perenyi (EC) presented the new draft of the ECTS Users’ Guide and in brief presented the rationale behind its revision. It was mentioned that though the Guide was rather established and of a wide use there were still problems with the use and interpretation of LOs in addition to the need of enhancing interlinkages between the Guide and QFs. As soon as the work on the revision started the group agreed that the new Guide has to concentrate more one the programme design, lifelong learning, recognition and the mobility. Guide aims to revise all key definitions, formulate principles of learning, teaching and assessment.

*For more details see the ppt and the document below.*

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*The conclusions and suggestions made during the discussion are described below.*

* The definition of competences in the EQF is more understandable/comprehensible than in the Guide.
* The main objective of the Guide is to properly implement the student-centered learning approach hence it might be confusing/not correct to say that the main objective of the ECTS Users’ Guide is still to facilitate learning mobility between institutions for short-term study periods (Page 16).
* The reference to ECVET in the Guide was welcomed. However it was noted that the evaluation report on ECVET describes it primarily as a mobility tool rather than competency in contrast to the Guide.
* The fact that the document is described as a Users’ Guide and consequently meant to imply its non-obligatory nature (in contrast to the ESG, which are standards) may hinder its proper implementation by national institutions. Not be explicitly stated but make changes, e.g. at least in the title, in order to facilitate its proper and timely implementation.
* In contrast to formulation of the LOs in the QF-EHEA the ECTS introduces a new mission of LOs, i.e. making LOs also verifiable, which is not accurate as the shift/change in the description of any instrument must be reflected simultaneously in all interrelated documents.
* Short cycle qualifications are introduced as part of QF-EHEA framework in the Guide, however this is something that competent bodies are currently working on and also subject to further cooperation.
* There is a concern that using learner centred approach instead of student centred approach might further confuse HEIs and moreover open possibilities for some educational providers not necessarily to go through adequate QA processes to recognise prior learning, which is something students would like to happen in HEIs.
* It was suggested to insert additional bullet point under the subsection “Selection of partner institutions” (page 18) saying that- “which are duly quality assured according to their respective national systems”
* The grade distribution is better explained, but is quite complex and time consuming for institutions. In addition, in case an institution sends students to different partner institutions in the same country (e.g. a Dutch institution sends students to five different institutions in France), the divergent grade distribution practices among these different institutions within the same receiving country risk to appear confusing to the sending institution.
* It was suggested to reformulate the following sentence “They may indicate sub-levels with level descriptors within a qualification (cycle)” (page 9) and read as “They may indicate sub-levels with level descriptors within a level” taking into consideration the fact that countries can have several qualifications at the same level.
* It was noted that it might appear controversial to set precise number of LOs for an educational component (page 11).

As for the conclusion the SRWG was informed that the ad-hoc WG on the Revision of the ECTS Users’ Guide will aim to send the revised Guide to the SRWG by its next meeting to be held in September.

1. **Global dimension**

Padre Friedrich Bechina (Holy See), the Co-Chair, in short introduced the context in which SWRG has to reflect global dimension in the report. It was noted that the WG has to deal with the promotion of the EHEA as a whole/as a European product in other parts of the world, to represent the EHEA in a transparent way to ease the fair recognition and mobility and improve the collaboration to enable proper comparison of HE systems and go beyond the institutional level, i.e. HE systems.

Moreover it is recorded that the EHEA SRs have been observed and followed by other regions as well as efficiently implemented.

* SRs by themselves have built in important values: commitment to democracy, wider participation, engagement of the important stakeholders, having process that is indeed multinational. Major partners of other regions sometimes attempt to transplant the technical aspect of the QFs/QA without actually realising that there is no shortcut around the values imprinted in the process and this is very much embedded within the structural component.
* There is a need to initiate dialogue on specific issues with other regions in addition to political forum of the EHEA ministers.
* The suggestion regarding the expanding the collaboration with other regions also in the SRs was questioned in the light of existing experience. However it is good to have a dialogue, also in case the BFUG has proper resources for organising effective cooperation.There are two kinds of directions of cooperation in EQF: there are countries which desire to introduce their NQFs compatible with EQF but need help in implementation of the procedures /principles/ levels and also using LOs approach to develop their qualifications. Second pillar is that countries attempts relate their NQS with EQF with a view to support the mobility and the recognition between Europe and their countries.
* It is better to provide some kind of clarity what is meant by region. It’s a 2 way dialogue –possibility towards having Asian solutions to Asian challenges and it is important not to think that EHEA have the answer to the issues of other regions, the only answer is the common challenges and probably different ways of resolving them; we can benefit and make use of their way of solutions’ provisions.
* It is important to implement structural reforms such as governance and leadership, it is very interesting dimension and is lacking in here.
* It is important to better match of the discussions that took place in BFUG and its sub-structures regarding the efficient organisation of the BPF.
* It is important for EHEA that the rationale behind the policies Bologna countries implement are understood in other parts of the world.
* There is a need to realise which tools can enhance the capacity building, help to analyse the situation and then try to find ways for more focused assistance in other regions based on the knowledge on the situation.
* The SRWG report should state explicitly that because of these Bologna Process values that EHEA countries share we are able to progress .
* This chapter on the global dimension should clarify the way SRs are embedded into a global context, how the discussion on SRs can help to get into dialogue with non-EHEA countries.
* The SRWG should also have point on possible return of UNESCO into the process as their absence has considerable impact.

**Discussion on transparency particularly in context of the following tools: Diploma Supplement (DS), European transparency framework and U-Mulirank.**

The Co-Chiar Noël Vercruysee (Belgium/Flemish Community) opened the session on transparency and indicated that due to considerable diversity of structures and provision within the EHEA transparency becomes specifically important and simultaneously controversial issue. The Co-Chair stressed the value of diversity and added that this diversity becomes more transparent and understandable in the light of existing tools, i.e. ECTS Users’ Guide, DS, QFs, LOs approach and etc. Afterwards the increasing importance of having credible and transparent HE systems was presented in addition to the way transparency issue was developed gradually through different communiqués. Since Bucharest communiqué the Bologna Process has recorded certain developments, i.e. EQAR has been expanded, U-Multirank is already operational, newly revised ESG and ECTS Users’ Guide. Also the Co-Chairs of the SWRG developed the European transparency framework, which gives opportunity to enhance the communication and coherence of the existing tools.

**U-Multirank, Frank Petrikowski (EC)**

Frank Petrikowski informed that the official launch of U-Multirank was on 13 of May, 2014 and presented the rationale beyond establishing it. In contrary to already existing rankings this tool is a new user driven, multidimensional, world ranking of universities and colleges covering 5 dimensions of higher education: research, teaching and learning, international orientation, knowledge transfer and regional engagement. Since the landscape of HE in EHEA as well as abroad is so diverse that one can hardly compare to allow the users to devise their own rankings according to their need and to what they believe is important. This unique new tool for comparing performance includes information on more than 850 higher education institutions, 1,200 faculties and 5,000 study programmes from 70 countries.

*The conclusions and suggestions that followed are illustrated below:*

* The SRWG in general welcomed the U-Multirrank and noted that the project should keep on running and continues its work. Also it was suggested to add more disciplines and to take into account all criticism the universities have to further enhance the tool.
* There is a need to make clear which universities have been included in the database and to provide more feedback of 60000 participating students.
* A questioned was raised regarding including medicine universities as mostly these universities have less than half of the indicators required for U-Multirank.
* When discussing rankings are 3 aspects appear: whether these rankings are reliable, secondly if they are meaningful and finally whether the public authorities should make use of it. 5 dimensions, that U-Multirank has, in principal cover the major goals that HEIs should reach. Secondly whether it is relevant and meaningful: the question by itself links to the rankings concept, however reliable methodology is it is meaningful to know the place university has in the ranking. As an information tool it is a significant step forward. As for public authorities to make use of it, highly depends what it is used for: for ranking or getting appropriate information on the profile of the HEI.
* Regarding the suggestion of taking into account also the institutional and Bologna related indicators such as QA, admission requirement, employment rate, the quality of the management of the institution as well as corporate governance it was clarified that linking to the Bologna related indicators could be challenging, as these tool is already really complex.
* In contrary to the existing rankings that are in the hands of media organisations U-Multirank gives public the opportunity to compare by themselves.
* Rankings are more and more often used for the public policies, in particular for recognition and internationalisation policies, hence there is a danger that this can be broadened. Having this dilemma a new approach of U-Multirank is welcomed.
* On one hand there are well-established indicators for research and knowledge transfer and on the other hand incomplete indicators for teaching and learning. A question was raised whether the indicators on the teaching and learning are going to be improved.
* A question was raised on possibility to link to the other instruments that are already elaborated and are of great use not only in Europe aiming to promote transparency.
* **European transparency framework:** It will be useful to make more explicit the intention of developing this chapter in introduction saying that provision of this framework doesn’t mean to bring a new concept it is just a new way of describing and bringing different elements together and more understandable to outside, also showing the extent to which all these tools are interrelated.
* There is a need to be more explicit on responsibilities shared among the stakeholders engaged,
* It was noted that the title actually doesn’t correspond the aim of the chapter.
* It was suggested to focus more on the European tools and on a bigger picture.
* There is a need to identify central and communication tool and put others in relation to it. The exercise should seek the ways to group the different tools and find the one, which has higher rank (e.g. QFs.): prioritised structure (key information) then to have secondary information and after additional.
* The SWRG was mainly in favour of generic approach when reflecting interlinkages between these tools and also in favour of not to integrate so many details: specifying what kind of information all the programmes have to provide is very challenging and is not feasible (example of the ESG).
* The concept of the macro level is well understood but when it comes to implementation countries, HEIs lack for common understanding when dealing with programme specifications, LOs and ect.

**Discussion on transparency 3.5. (continued…)**

* It was suggested to reconsider the attention that is paid on academic fraud as having the text like it stands in the report might send a signal that it is major issue in EHEA.
* Institutions need to be responsible for storing information not only about their current awards and programmes but also about past performance.
* It is necessary that public authorities promote public awareness against fraudulent information and not serious HE providers in order to safeguard the public interest.
* In case the WG develops recommendation on the revision on DS it will be useful to be explicit on the expected outcomes afterwards: employers do not properly use DS and it is one of the purposes that might be indicated in the final aim of the revision.
* Database of all awarded qualifications and direct access of the public to it might turn useful for transparency purposes.
* **Diploma Supplement:** It was suggested to revise the DS and to have extendable DS in order to further enhance its usage.
* It was noted that the idea of revising the DS for the purpose of improving the use of the LOs should be linked to the ECTS Users’ Guide.
* It was proposed to develop guidelines for HEIs the way they should fill in and issue the DS.

**Next meeting of the EHEA SRWG, September 16-17**

*The seventh meeting of the SRWG will be held in Vatican City on September 16-17,2014.*