

WORKING GROUP 2 ON IMPLEMENTATION

Tbilisi (Georgia) – 3 June 2016

Draft Minutes

List of participants

ALBANIA	<i>Linda PUSTINA</i>
ARMENIA	<i>Tatevik GHARIBYAN</i>
AUSTRIA co-chair	<i>Helga POSSET</i>
AUSTRIA	<i>Regina AICHNER</i>
BELGIUM VL co-chair	<i>Noel VERCRUYSSSE</i>
BFUG Secretariat	<i>Fabien NEYRAT</i>
DENMARK	<i>Allan Bruun PEDERSEN</i>
EQAR	<i>Eric FROMENT</i>
ENQA	<i>Paula RANNE</i>
ESU	<i>Lea MEISTER</i>
EU COMMISSION	<i>Mette MOERK ANDERSEN</i>
FRANCE	<i>Eliane KOTLER</i>
Eurostudent	<i>Martjn UNGER</i>
GEORGIA co-chair	<i>George SHARVASHIDZE</i>
GEORGIA	<i>Nino KOPALEISHVILI</i>
GREECE	<i>Christos SKOURAS</i>
HUNGARY	<i>MártonMihályBEKE</i>
HUNGARY	<i>LobodaZOLTAN</i>
POLAND co-chair	<i>Bartłomiej BANASZAK</i>
ROMANIA	<i>Daniela ALEXE</i>
ROMANIA	<i>Adrian GEORGESCU</i>
TURKEY	<i>Tuncay DOGEROGLU</i>
UKRAINE	<i>Olexandr SMYRNOV</i>
UNITED KINGDOM	<i>Anca GREERE</i>

The representatives from Business Europe, Croatia, EI/ETUCE, EUA, EURASHE, Germany, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Moldova, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland were excused.

Introduction to the meeting

The Georgian deputy Minister of education, George Sharvashidze, welcomed all the participants.

The agenda of the day was adopted.

Adoption of the draft report of the first meeting

The Sweden representative had made some proposals for changes in the WG 2 first meeting draft report. Accordingly, BFUG Secretariat proposed changes that have been adopted by all the participants.

WG 2 first meeting draft report: proposals for modifications

1. Point D “Objectives and methodology”:

After “The Group agreed that the events represented the main support of this Group to fulfil its commitment.” **add** “However, there is a need for further discussion to clarify this issue.”

2. Point E “Brainstorming sessions - Session 1: Recognition, Social dimension, Life-long Learning, Mobility - 2”:

Instead of “The representative of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee will communicate the report of the next annual Committee to be held in Paris (February, 29th 2016).”

Read “The representative of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee will communicate the Report of the Monitoring of the Implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, which will be presented during the 7th Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee in Paris (29 of February 2016).”

3. Point E “Brainstorming sessions - Session 1: Recognition, Social dimension, Life-long Learning, Mobility - 3”:

Instead of “Under the topic of “Automatic recognition” short cycle issues will be considered as relevant according to the needs of countries.”

Read ““Automatic recognition” will deal with all the degree levels according to the needs of countries.”

4. Point E “Brainstorming sessions - Session 1: Recognition, Social dimension, Life-long Learning, Mobility - 5”:

Instead of “Inclusivity” will be handled by this cluster: Ireland, Croatia, UK and Austria.”

Read “Croatia, UK and Austria proposed to handle the topic of “inclusivity”.

5. Point E “Brainstorming sessions”

After “For the preparatory work that needs to be done in each stage, one country/organisation or a cluster of countries/organisations has to take some responsibility.”

Add: “in order to prepare background papers regarding thematic session.”

Discussion on the procedure proposed by AG3 and on WG 2 events

The co-chairs reminded that during the last BFUG meeting in Amsterdam three key commitments were endorsed according to the Advisory Group 3 Working Papers about “Dealing with Non-Implementation”:

- A Three-Cycle System compatible with the QF-EHEA and scaled by ECTS
- Compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC)
- Quality Assurance in conformity with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)

During the BFUG meeting in Amsterdam the suggestion made by some members of the BFUG to add “Diploma supplement” and “Recognition of Prior learning” as key commitments, was discussed. But at the end the BFUG members decided not to add them to the list. The role of WG2 in the collegial support (WG1 and AG3) was also presented.

In this context, the co-chairs highlighted the importance of the document “Overview of the country performance on key commitments of the Bologna process” produced by the co-chairs of WG 1. This document sets out a summary of the Bologna Process Implementation Report 2015 related to the key commitments identified by Advisory Group 3.

The representative of Albania suggested updating the cluster of countries of the WG 1 document according to the current situation of the EHEA countries.

The co-chairs also suggested using the “Reverse peer review”. It consists of a “Peer Review” exercise on a selected topic, but is operated by a country facing challenges in a country with a successful implementation. International experts, as well as members of the Group, may be invited for this peering exercise. ENQA is willing to provide experts.

The representative of the European Commission called attention to the opportunity represented by the second round of the *Erasmus*⁺ call for proposal. The scope of activities of the Group matches the eligible actions. Only those countries not selected in the first call may apply. Strong incitation was made with regard to the countries clustered in the WG 1 paper.

It was decided not to limit the selection of WG 2 events to those strictly aligned with AG 3 commitments. Most of the events correctly correspond to the conclusions from the Implementation report and the measures adopted in the appendix to the Yerevan Communiqué. However it should be double-checked with the organisers of the events whether an event can contribute to peer support regarding three key commitments. Accordingly it was decided to modify the event template proposed by the BFUG Secretariat.

Decision taken and to be presented to the BFUG

- **Ask WG 1 to add to the document the rationale of the color used for the level of implementation and of the clusters of countries. It would be useful for selecting the most relevant WG2 peer learning activities and to ask the organizers to focus at least a part of the program of the event on the implementation of one or more key commitments depending on the main topic of the event.**
- **With the help of UK representative, the BFUG Secretariat will draft the following modifications about the WG 2 events template :**
 - o **Modify the template in order to define how to use the events in the context of the key commitments.**
 - o **Add a column in order to accept another initiative and innovative support.**
 - o **Add language of the event.**
- **Ask the organizers of the already proposed WG 2 events to have highlighted all the potential of the event in the description of the objectives by the end of the summer break.**
- **The co-chairs will operate a selection of events before the period of summer vacations**
- **By the end of June the co-chairs will propose a concept note about “Reverse Peer Review”. The Group will comment on line by the end of July 2016.**

Thematic sessions on Short Cycle

The Belgian co-chair presented the “Background paper on Short Cycle” (see Annex) composed of several reports (Implementation 2015, Structural reforms 2012 and CEDEFOP) and the EHEA Ministerial Communiqués. He reminded that the Yerevan Communiqué committed the members “to include short

cycle qualifications in the overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) (...)"

- Short Cycle students show more different profiles and backgrounds than those of Master programs.
- Short Cycle studies mostly belong to vocational training, very few to the field of Humanities and are broadly based on work experience.
- Short Cycle varies widely from one EHEA country to another: usually it is an independent program and not part of Master or Bachelor program. Sometimes it is not part of the higher education system but is included in the "higher post-secondary education".
- Between Short Cycle Higher Education level 5 qualifications and bachelor degree programs the articulation is easier than between Higher Vocational Education and Training level 5 qualifications and bachelor degree programs.

The main comments were the following:

- Short Cycle represents a genuine opportunity to have access to Higher Education in a cheaper way than what Bachelor/Master programs can offer.
- The "Nordic-Baltic Admission Manual" proposes a system of comparison and makes recommendations regarding the recognition of Short Cycle qualifications for countries that don't have Short Cycle degree in their NQF.
- The necessity of conducting an entirely new "Self-Certification" (ascertainment of the alignment of the NQF-HE with the overarching Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area) in case of adoption of a new Short Cycle provision was discussed briefly, but was more left as an open question. The "Self-Certification" will be applied only to the Short Cycle.
- Is there any impact on the ISCED codes? Many statistics on higher education are using the ISCED codes.

Decision taken and to be presented to the BFUG

- **Review Dublin descriptors for Short Cycle without modifying all the Dublin descriptors, just deleting the words phrase 'within the first cycle'.**
- **With regard to mobility of holders of Short Cycle qualifications to a country that doesn't provide SC qualifications, credit transfers based on learning outcomes in order to progress to bachelor cycle should be facilitated;**
- **The co-chairs encouraged all BFUG members to organize Peer Learning Activity focused on Permeability and Recognition of Short Cycle in 2017.**

Thematic session on Social Dimension

Martin Unger, from EuroStudent, made a presentation of the "PL4SD project". This project, that ended this year, is rooted in the commitment of the EHEA Ministers in Bucharest (2012) to "foster the international exchange of practices and experiences related to the social dimension of higher education". The objective of the PL4SD project is to address this need for "peer learning" and to provide effective measures for improving the social dimension of the European Higher Education Area.

The PL4SD database collates policy measures in the European Higher Education Area that address the social dimension of higher education: more than 300 have been collected and 70 of them have been adopted and implemented by other EHEA countries. Three "country reviews" have been made (Armenia, Croatia and Lithuania) in order to identify good practices and possibilities for improvements.

Topics for WG 2 Peer Learning Activities on Social Dimension

- **Lack of evidence and evaluation of the effects and impact of the measures adopted at ministerial level on Social Dimension.**
- **How to get students and central bodies of universities involved in Social Dimension issues in order to go from small initiatives to institution-wide larger scale initiatives;**
- **Financial support system in Social Dimension and evaluation of its efficiency.**
- **Relation between secondary school system and Higher Education system. There is an important drop in numbers of students (“early leaving”) with low economic and social background before the end of the secondary school. How to bridge the policy gap between the two systems?**
- **The role played by “soft factors” such as social habits and the different educational background of the students. For example, many homepages of the website of universities are only understandable by those with high academic background.**

The Austrian co-chair presented the “National Strategy for the Social Dimension in Higher Education - widening access and participation” (see Annex). The National Strategy paper for the social dimension will be finished and adopted at political level by end of 2016. The strategy on Social Dimension aims at remedying:

- Lack of a platform on a national level for socio-economically disadvantaged groups.
- Lack of definition criteria for disadvantaged groups and others underrepresented groups.
- Imbalance in the representation of students with academic parents and those with lower social status parents.
- Disparity in access to higher education among Austrian provinces.

The main comments on the session were the following:

- All participants recognized the strong influence of disadvantageous background that prevents students from participating in higher education. Some national provisions and access agreements already in place to ensure widening participation and fair access to universities were mentioned;
- Strategic assessments on Social Dimension by quality assurance agencies are necessary as long as institutional measures do not warrant their efficiency;
- Academic staff should be trained in the inclusive higher education system and in particular, in improving their competences with regard to designing and delivering an inclusive curriculum;
- Curriculum design may hinder a wider access to universities: the way the curricula are designed determines the way students approach their studies;
- The question regarding implementation of the UN convention on the rights of persons with disabilities and the right of all students with disabilities to get reasonable accommodation (article 24 regards Education) remains open.

Agenda of Peer Learning Activities on Social Dimension proposed

- **“Bologna day” 2017: presentation of the “National Strategy for the Social Dimension in Higher Education –widening access and participation” and the results of all the previous Workshops - Spring 2017 – Austria.**
- **Annual Higher Education Equality Summit: based on the work of British universities on social dimension - November 2017 - United Kingdom.**
- **Presentation of the concrete impact of the Social Dimension measures taken at the institutional and national level (survey results of 2015-2013, planned action). Late spring 2017 - Hungary.**

Date, place and topic of the next meeting

The third meeting should be held in Nice (France) within the first two weeks of November. The precise date and place will be known on the 14th of June 2016 and will be transmitted to the BFUG Secretariat for information to the members.

AOB

The report of the seminar on “Automatic recognition” held in Ghent (Belgium) on the 17th of May 2016 will be communicated to the Group. It was the final seminar of the Erasmus + KA 3- project that involved Poland, Denmark and Portugal.

In Annex:

- **Background paper on Short Cycle**
- **Background paper on the Social Dimension;**
- **National Strategy for the Social Dimension in Higher Education - widening access and participation**
- **Report of the three country workshops on automatic recognition**

Short Cycle

Social Dimension

Austrian national strategy

Automatic recognition

