

Fourth meeting of the EHEA Working Group on Implementation - Fostering implementation of agreed key commitments

20-21 March 2017, Vienna (Austria)

Minutes

List of Participants

COUNTRY	NAME & SURNAME
ALBANIA	<i>Dhimiter BAKO</i>
AUSTRIA co-chair	<i>Helga POSSET</i>
AUSTRIA OeAD	<i>Regina AICHNER</i>
AUSTRIA	<i>Gottfried BACHER</i>
BELGIUM VL co-chair	<i>Noël Vercruyssen</i>
BELGIUM VL	<i>Magalie SOENEN</i>
BFUG Secretariat	<i>Mariana SAAD</i>
BDA/ Business Europe	<i>Isabel ROHNER</i>
CROATIA	<i>Loredana MARAVIC</i>
DENMARK	<i>Allan Bruun PEDERSEN</i>
EU COMMISSION	<i>Mette Moerk ANDERSEN</i>
ENQA	<i>Padraig WALSH</i>
EQAR	<i>Eric FROMENT</i>
ESU	<i>Lea MEISTER</i>
EUA	<i>Henriette STOEBER</i>
ETUCE	<i>Riku MATILAINEN</i>
GEORGIA co-chair	<i>Maia Margvelashvili</i>
GERMANY	<i>Katrin FOHMANN</i>
GAC - German Accreditation Council	<i>Olaf BARTZ</i>
HUNGARY	<i>Marton BEKE</i>
HUNGARY	<i>Zoltan Loboda</i>

POLAND co-chair	<i>Bartłomiej BANASZAK</i>
SLOVENIA	<i>Alenka LISEC</i>
SWEDEN	<i>Cecilia GEORGE</i>
SWITZERLAND	<i>Antoine MARET</i>
TURKEY	<i>Tuncay DOGEROGLU</i>
UKRAINE	<i>Alexandr SMIRNOFF</i>
UNITED KINGDOM	<i>Anca GREERE</i>

Apologies from: the representatives from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Greece, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Moldova, Portugal, Romania, Spain, EURASHE.

1. Welcome and Introduction to the meeting

The meeting was organized by the Austrian co-chair who welcomed the participants.

After thanks from the other co-chairs, the Polish co-chair welcomed the new acting co-chair from Georgia, Maia Margvelashvili, and thanked the Belgium co-chair for preparing documents for the second day discussions. The Agenda was adopted.

2. Introductory session

Presentation by Riku Matilainen, ETUCE: "Staff (im-)mobility - challenges of and driving forces behind mobility"

See the attached file for the **presentation [when sent: kind reminder to Riku Matilainen]**.

The following discussion focused on the importance of structures and funding in helping staff and students to be mobile. Several participants stressed that appropriate funding is key when it comes to developing mobility. It was also noted that for an institution, the mobility of its staff meant an increase in the workload of the workers who stayed, and that this issue is rarely addressed in the existing mobility schemes.

The participants also mentioned the possibility for mobility to become mandatory. Italy has introduced this scheme lately, which has caused strong discussions in Poland.

This has to be linked with both the role of mobility in career building (for some careers it can become essential, depending on the country and general context), and the fact that not all students or staff wish to go abroad. In Austria, for example, 1/3 of students are mobile, and 30% don't plan to go abroad.

Presentation by Gottfried Bacher, BMFWF, Austria, European Higher Education Area, EU Higher Education Programmes, Bologna Process and Mobility: "Student Mobility: the Austrian Higher Education Mobility Strategy in the context of the EHEA"

This presentation focused on the Austrian situation. The speaker described the country's mobility strategy and explained how it had been built up. Mobility is seen as a main tool to make Austria an international player in research and economy. Although the country is not allocating any specific funds for this, an effort has been made at university level to exchange on good practice, schemes and activities already implemented. HE institutions are encouraged to build "mobility windows" in their curricula and to promote the European Charter for Researchers's decisions concerning early stage scholars.

The next big challenge for Austria is to achieve a balanced mobility and to improve its quality. Today, 15% to 20% of students are foreigners and the very large majority of them is coming from German speaking countries. Medicine represents a specific issue Austria, contrary to Germany, does not impose a numerus

clausus. The country's commitment to mobility has led to the creation of an Award for teachers with mobility experience and of programmes such as EMMA (Erasmus meets music and the arts). There is also a real effort made to monitor staff and students mobility with the creation of several tools.

In the following discussion, although mobility is not compulsory in Austria, participants raised the problems posed by mandatory mobility, especially funding and targets (how many students or academics, in which disciplines).

3. Final WG2 Report: setting the roadmap towards the first draft

-Topics and methodology.

The participants thanked the co-chairs for the draft and other material they sent. They agreed that the final report must be focused around only a few major themes and reflect the actual work done by the Group.

It was thus decided that the information collected on events should be put in an annex, as it had not been possible to do any analytical work on it.

Participants were especially concerned that the report states clearly what the next step(s) should be and highlights the added value of having such a Group through strong and clear recommendations.

It was also repeated several times that the report when dealing with the implementation issues related to a particular key commitment should recognize the diversity of the 48 EHEA countries as a reality that has to be respected. Diversity does not constitute an obstacle that needs to be removed.

It was agreed that the report should include recommendations on short cycle and that said recommendations could already be presented at the Malta BFUG in May 2017.

Participants also concurred that the Bologna Process needs to reconnect with the academic community and that its uneasiness with several topics like employability, the three cycles and recognition should be recognized. It was stressed that the Yerevan communiqué had asked for more involvement of the academics and that this issue had to be addressed by the Group.

-The (reversed) peer review experiment and its outcomes.

The Belgian VL co-chair presented the new scheme he has designed and already tested once (Ghent, December 2016) to foster dialogue between EHEA countries at different stages in the implementation of Bologna reforms.

The participants showed great interest in the scheme and the material it produced in terms of information on levels of implementation. The Hungary representative, who attended the first meeting on Q.A., highlighted the great profit his country found in the meeting, where dialogue was focused on exchange of practical information. The "reversed peer review" scheme helped go beyond policies to the difficulties each country is meeting because of its own particularities.

The organizer drew the participants' attention to the fact that such meetings require a lot of preparatory work and much funding. "Reversed peer reviews" demand time and personnel and are expensive to organize when the costs are covered by the organizer alone.

The participants agreed that the scheme needed to be supported by the Group as a successful and innovative one. They proposed that the costs were shared by the attending countries. They also stressed that the scheme is based on a voluntary process and on knowledge and experience sharing, which is in accordance with the Bologna spirit.

The next "reversed peer review" on Qualifications frameworks will take place in Ghent on 24-25 April 2017.

After some discussion, it was agreed that the final report should be organized around two main chapters or parts:

-part I: Implementation of key commitments

-part II: recommendations of the Yerevan communiqué

- Qualifications Framework
- Quality Assurance
- Recognition
- Social dimension
- Employability

It was also decided that short cycle, involvement of academics and the “reversed peer review” were important subjects that needed to be stressed in the report.

4. Liaison with other AG/WG.

This part of the discussion focused on AG3’s proposal for a cyclic procedure to monitor implementation of reforms and that would lead to the creation of positive/negative incentives.

It was stressed that the shown process was not adopted yet but subject to review.

Questions were asked by participants about the limits and scope of the initiative. It was also observed that the very idea of imposing sanctions didn’t seem in tune with the voluntary process that governs the EHEA.

The response to this last remark was that although Bologna is a voluntary process, ministers are making political commitments they should be expected to fulfill.

5. Preparing the Oslo Board meeting.

-Recommendations for the Malta BFUG meeting.

It was agreed that the Group as such needed to discuss the recommendations of the final Report. Parallel sessions will be organized around main proposals and topics at the next Group meeting, in Malmö in June. In particular, it was agreed that a list of events and their outcomes will be prepared by the Belgian co-chair. The members were asked to send any appropriate material before mid-May so that working documents can be sent to the Group by the end of May. Participants were informed that the network NESSIE will deliver its conclusions on grant portability at the same date.

It was also decided that the format of the Group recommendations (i.e. generic or by country) as well as implementation of short cycle (and how it differs from long cycle) will be among the topics to be discussed in Malmö.

-Inputs for the 2018 Communiqué.

The Group agreed on several topics to put forward as main recommendations:

- “Reversed peer review” as an effective and innovative tool supporting the implementation of the key commitments and the Lisbon recognition convention in the spirit of the Bologna process.
- Short cycle: this was the key topic for the Tbilissi meeting. In Vienna, there were discussions within the Group about the creation of a new level and how this new level would fit in the European QF and with the Dublin descriptors.
- Social dimension/Inclusiveness: it was agreed that this was an important topic to be supported by the Group. The main question was the scheme or schemes the Group should put forward in the final

recommendations, as there is always a danger to create one more network or advising body with no effective results at the end.

The Belgium VL co-chair prepared after the meeting a detailed draft to be discussed at Malmö (see enclosed document).

6. Next meeting:

Next meeting will take place 13th-14th June 2017, in Malmö (Sweden) following a conference on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL): "Refugees' impact on Bologna reform – Recognition of Prior Learning and inclusion in the light of increased migration" organized by the Swedish government (<https://www.uhr.se/om-uhr/Konferenser/refugees-impact-on-bologna-reform/>). The first inputs from the conference will be presented to the Group by the Swedish representative during the work session on recognition of prior learning.

Several thematic sessions will be organized to discuss the Group's recommendations and take a final decision on each one. The co-chairs will send material to the Group members to help them prepare the meeting.

A "Save the date" email will be sent to all participants.

It was noted that a last meeting should be organized in October 2017, although another last meeting might be needed if the November BFUG rejects the Group's report.

AOB

The Belgium VL co-chair presented briefly a policy seminar he is organising for the end of June in Brussels on the impact of the Bologna process on the work and career of academics.

A document presenting the "***Draft proposals of recommendations with regard to implementation***" to be discussed during the meeting of the BFUG in Malta, 24-25 May 2017 will be prepared by the chairs: **see annex.**

Annex

Draft proposals of recommendations with regard to implementation to be discussed during the meeting of the BFUG in Malta, 24-25 May 2017

1. We recommend to further develop the concept of 'reversed peer review' as an instrument and tool to provide support to the members experiencing difficulties in implementing the agreed goals and enable those countries who wish to go further to do so. The 'reversed peer review' offers plenty of opportunities of an in depth policy dialogue and exchange of good practices and as well as opportunities to involve the academic communities, professional practitioners and stakeholders. The two exercises that took place demonstrate the value of bringing together representatives from public authorities and institutions coming from very different higher education systems to discuss the implementation of quality assurance systems and qualifications frameworks. By bringing together different actors who are responsible for the implementation it could contribute to bridge the gap between *le pays politique* et *le pays reel*. It gives also the opportunity to the participants to tell their own story and to explain their own context. At the end of the day it will lead to a better understanding of the different approaches and to a better insight in the way the key commitments could be implemented. It offers also an opportunity to learn from each other. The organization of such events requires important human and financial resources.
2. In Yerevan the ministers committed themselves to include short cycle qualifications in the overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA), based on the Dublin descriptors for short cycle qualifications and quality assured according to the ESG, so as to make provision for the recognition of short cycle qualifications in their own systems, also where these do not comprise such qualifications.
 - a. In order to fulfill that commitment we recommend to review the Dublin descriptors and the Qualifications framework for higher education as it was adopted in Bergen without modifying all the Dublin descriptors but by just deleting the wordings phrase 'within the first cycle'. As a consequence the short cycle becomes an autonomous cycle in the qualifications framework for higher education in the EHEA. Those small changes don't imply that the four cycles should be considered as four subsequent cycles. We would like to recommend the use of the following terminology: short cycle, first cycle, second cycle and third cycle. For most of the countries the proposed deletion of the wordings 'within the first cycle' won't have consequences for the finalized self-certifying process or self-referencing process.
 - b. We recommend that the ministers and the higher education institutions should take the necessary measures to ensure that the holders of short cycle higher education degrees can progress to the first cycle by recognizing and validating and transferring the credits when those holders would like to enroll in a first cycle study programme within the national borders or cross border. We recommend also that the ministers and the higher education institutions should take the necessary measures to ensure that holders of vocational or professional qualifications at level 5 but which qualifications aren't included in the national qualifications framework for HE can progress to the first cycle study programmes by recognizing and validating and transferring the credits when those holders would like to enroll in a first cycle study programmes within the national borders or cross border. The use of the ECTS credit system or a credit system comparable to the ECTS system, a diploma/certificate supplement, the use of learning outcomes and a system of quality

assurance compatible with the ESG could foster the recognition and validation of the learning and those vocational qualifications.

- c. The sector of the short cycle qualifications and the level 5 qualifications is characterized by a huge diversity with regard to:
 - i. The drivers, rationales and purposes;
 - ii. Different types of institutions that have been authorized to offer level 5 qualifications;
 - iii. The name of the degree or qualification or certificate awarded;
 - iv. The student body;
 - v. The learning pathways;
 - vi. The QA system;
 - vii. The use of credits and learning outcomes approach;
 - viii. The transition to the next cycle.

We would like to recommend keeping the diversity of the learning provisions in place. But it is in the interest of the providers of level 5 qualifications and of the holders of level 5 qualifications that the qualifications and the learning could be recognized and validated if the holders would like to progress into the first cycle.

3. In Yerevan the ministers commit themselves to make our higher education more socially inclusive by implementing the EHEA social dimension strategy. There are good examples of countries which have developed a national social dimension strategy. Other countries have put in place a set of measures aiming at realizing the objectives with regard the social dimension without calling it a strategy. Building a more socially inclusive higher education systems requires measures and actions in different areas and a multidimensional approach: the teaching and learning dimension, the curriculum: the design and the delivery of the curriculum, extra-curricular activities, student facilities, transition from secondary to higher education, the transition from HE to the labor market, tuition fees, opportunities for combining working and learning, part-time studies, second chance learning paths, flexible learning paths etc. We would like to make the recommendation that higher education systems and institutions should mainstream and integrate the social dimension in all their purposes, functions, delivery of HE and actions (in order to enhance the quality of HE for all students and to make a meaningful contribution to an equitable society (paraphrasing the new definition of internationalization). Higher education practitioners have to play an important role and therefore we recommend establishing a European thematic network of higher education practitioners to foster an inclusive higher education. We would like to start with some 5 to 6 countries who would like to put some resources in the functioning of the network by organizing some seminars and conferences of HE practitioners (2 seminars each year and 1 conference every two years).