Recommendations for national/governmental support/action for the enhancement of European higher education learning and teaching

BFUG Advisory Group 2 on Learning and Teaching

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1. Preamble

In the 2018 Paris Ministerial Communiqué, Ministers announced to "add cooperation in innovative learning and teaching practices as another hallmark of the EHEA".

To this purpose the present recommendations are proposed to Ministers and national authorities to act upon and to enhance collaboration and partnership within and between the European higher education systems.

[*To modernize higher education and to prepare students for the future society, it is important to rethink learning and teaching and to put the student at the center of this change as an active participant. In order to support higher education institutions to develop strong and effective* **strategies for supporting teaching and learning** *in a* **digital world** *it is essential to foster* **collaboration initiatives** *and* **platforms for exchange** *on a* **national and European** *level. Through bench-learning European higher education institutions can learn how to* **support their students** *to deal with the* **current and future challenges of society and the labour market** *in a productive way. This encompasses* **student-centred learning**, *the development and implementation of mechanisms for* **flexible learning pathways** *and of* **open education strategies** *on institutional and national level. In a* **reinforced partnership** *between* **self-responsible learners** *in* **active physical and digital learning spaces** *in which* **teaching and research are mutually supporting each other**, **teaching and research are valued in parity.** *Teachers are supported through* **professional development** *and* **attractive career pathways,** *and innovative ecosystem of learning and teaching can develop.*]

The recommendations are underpinned by principles that recall the need to consider the different national contexts and diverse institutional teaching practices, which will require different approaches. Recommendations and principles also reflect full respect of the fundamental values of the EHEA, latest expressed in the Paris Communiqué of 24-25 May 2018 as follows: "Academic freedom and integrity, institutional autonomy, participation of learners and staff in higher education governance, and public responsibility for and of higher education form the backbone of the EHEA."

Recommendations and principles underline the crucial importance of reinforcing the Bologna tools and the Bologna key commitments. They are centred around three themes:

- Making student-centred learning a reality
- Fostering future teaching
- Strengthening higher education institutional and systems' capacity to support learning and teaching

2. Recommendations for learning and teaching

Theme 1: Make Student-centred Learning a Reality

Governments should support higher education institutions in their efforts to reinforce the quality of learning and teaching and their approaches to student-centred learning, among others through an enabling regulatory framework and funding support.

Governments should focus policy development in the following areas:

Support student-centred learning: Support higher education institutions in starting or maintaining a structured dialogue on learning and teaching, with a focus on student centered learning. This can be done by creating regulatory frameworks that strengthen the involvement of both learners and teachers in the development of curricula and learning outcomes and assessment.

Future skills: Stimulate higher education institutions in starting or maintaining a structured discussion, involving all stakeholders including students, on the future skills that students need to face challenges of society and the labour market.

Inclusion, diversity and lifelong learning: Create a supportive environment for higher education institutions to enable them to offer education provision to different types of learners (lifelong learners, part-time learners, learners from underrepresented and disadvantaged groups), and build a culture for equity and inclusion.

Open Education, Open Science and Open Educational Resources: Encourage the development and implementation of strategies for Open Education and the use of Open Educational Resources at national and institutional levels, in order to enhance learners' use of learning spaces and open materials.

Underlying these recommendations are the following principles:

P 1.1: Learners are at the centre of education. They are an integral part of learning communities and they should be actively involved in all aspects of the learning experience.
• Higher education nurtures a culture and an environment in which learning in partnership between learners and teachers can take place, with meaningful feedback, including the use of learning analytics, and feedback from graduates and employers.
• Learners have to play a proactive role and have responsibilities. They should be empowered to plan and control their own learning, and to become autonomous and self-directed.

● Learners are involved in the conception of learning outcomes and assessment and contribute to the development of learning environments that are open, digital and innovative.

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P 1.2: Learning opportunities are flexible and tailored to the needs and capabilities of diverse learners, with the help of digitalization.

● Higher education actively explores and cherishes a variety of approaches to learning and teaching that respect a diversity of learners, stakeholders and disciplines. This means among others individualised curricula, with choice of electives, flexible pathways, regarding transition between study programmes, time, place and mode of learning (such as distance and open education), and recognition of prior learning.

● Student grants and loans reflect in their eligibility rules the needs of diverse learners.

● Learners are offered support and assistance, in order to ensure their success, and generally build a culture of student-centred learning based on collegiality and peer-to-peer learning.

● Learning analytics is used to better understand students' success pathways and difficulties.

P 1.3: Concepts of open education[1] and open science are included into higher education policy making and culture by default.

● Learning materials, courses and programmes, are made available to learners as much as possible as open educational resources and open data.

● Policies and/or regulatory frameworks are put in place that encourage to develop publicly funded educational resources to be openly licensed or dedicated to the public domain as appropriate.

● Open Science principles are integrated into student centred teaching and learning notably by stimulating the opening of students' access to publications and research data.

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[1] Open education is understood as the use of open educational resources in order to provide better quality and more flexibility in higher education.

Theme 2: Foster Future Teaching

Learning and teaching should proactively respond to future skill needs, take advantage of opportunities that digitalisation offers, and be able to relay on an enabling environment. Governments should support higher education institutions in enhancing teaching through regulatory frameworks and funding support.

Governments are recommended to enhance policy development in the following areas:

Recognise teaching properly: Develop structural measures to assure the parity of esteem for teaching and research. Governments in collaboration with the higher education institutions explore how to support the revision of academic career schemes to include teaching and other important areas of staff activity, in addition to research.

Inter-institutional staff development: Support and foster approaches for inter-institutional staff development and exchange of good practices.

National support systems: Explore the possibility of creating cooperative national structures, in which institutions and all stakeholders in the learning & teaching community are involved, to work jointly on the innovation of the teaching. Explore ways in which cross-border exchange of good practices can be strengthened.

Underlying these recommendations are the following principles (P):

P 2.1: Teaching as a core function in higher education is recognised and respected scholarly and professionally, including in academic career paths.

- Career paths for teachers should be transparent and sustainable and ensure the recognition of teaching as a professional activity, considered and actively promoted within recruitment schemes, promotion schemes and career paths models.

- Frameworks guarantee recognition of career schemes across higher education institutions and higher education systems of all countries fully recognize and appreciate periods spent abroad.

P 2.2: Quality teaching needs a sustainable and supportive environment at institutional and national levels, rooted in values and open to change and innovation.

- Teachers and other staff contributing to learning and teaching should be offered opportunities for continued professional development, so that they can continue to fulfil their role in a changing environment, with new and evolving tasks.

- Quality teaching requires decent working conditions and an adequate teaching workload as well as attractive tenure opportunities.

- Additional efforts have to be made to enable the exchange of good practices and collaboration on professionalisation of teaching, and teaching staff enhancement across higher education institutions and systems, and to promote international teaching mobility.

P 2.3: Teaching practices should reflect the diversity of methods and concepts, making best use of pedagogies, didactics, and digital technology, with the aim to continuously strive for innovation and quality improvement.

- Higher education institutions cherish an open culture of experimentation in order to develop and enhance innovative pedagogical approaches, also in view of the opportunities that digitalisation holds.

- development and enhancement of learning and teaching requires evidence: Institutions should develop and use research on their own learning and teaching. Teachers are actively supported to engage with scholarship of learning and teaching to inform their own practice.

- Continued pedagogical staff development should make best use of open educational materials (OER), to build and underpin communities of practice and professional networks. OER creation has to be recognised as a professional achievement and academic merit.

Theme 3: Strengthen Higher Education Institutional and Systems' Capacity to enhance Learning and Teaching

Governments should support the strategic development and innovation capacity of learning and teaching, including its transformation in a digital age. This is mainly done through support to institutional developments, but also underpinned by national level initiatives and processes.

In particular, governments should focus policy development in the following areas:

Digital transformation: Promoting and supporting digital transformation and open education should form an integral part of national higher education strategies, rooted

in dialogue and collaboration with all stakeholders (higher education institutions, students, teachers and other staff, external stakeholders).

National strategic approach: Include learning and teaching into national strategies on higher education, as a basis for a structured dialogue with higher education institutions ,and all stakeholders in the learning and teaching community, and a departure point for concerted action. It should encourage and support the interinstitutional, and international exchanges.

Funding for learning and teaching development: Allocate stable and adequate resources and adopt fit for purpose regulatory frameworks in order to enable higher education institutions to develop innovative and high-quality teaching and learning environments.

Data usage: Governments and higher education institutions alike should be stimulated to use empirical education research on effective learning and teaching. Support the collection and use of data about education, while respecting data privacy, both at national and institutional levels.

Underlying these recommendations are the following principles (P):

P 3.1: Comprehensive strategies on learning and teaching are needed in order to foster the necessary transformation of learning and teaching to meet future societal challenges. This includes but is not limited to optimizing the use of new, digital possibilities.

- Higher education institutions develop and enhance comprehensive institutional strategies, which also consider the opportunities of digitalization, structures and capacities for learning and teaching organisation and services, and research and data collection.

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- innovative possibilities offered by digital technology, including the promotion of flexible learning paths for lifelong learners.

P 3.2: Measures to build a supportive environment for innovation in teaching and learning are established or further developed in order to contribute to a culture of innovation for quality learning and teaching.

- Governments provide the appropriate and sustainable funding that higher education institutions need to develop and carry out a long-term strategy for innovation in learning and teaching.

● Innovative learning and teaching concepts and practices are developed and shared in a collaborative and collegial stakeholder community.
● Higher education institutions have the capacity to equip themselves with innovative and modular learning centers and teaching spaces (both physical and digital), allowing high quality and innovative teaching and learning

P 3.3: Educational research and evaluation of learning and teaching practices informs strategy development and strengthens institutional capacity at all levels.
● Educational research is embedded into learning and teaching practices and best practices are shared within and between institutions.
● Learners and teachers are included in a structured dialogue about pedagogical methods and new developments in educational research.

Inspiring examples

Underlying the recommendations and principles in this document, are many inspiring examples of how governments can support higher education institutions to develop, enhance and implement strategies for teaching and learning within higher education institutions while respecting academic freedom and institutional autonomy. Below is a selection of such examples:

National forum for the enhancement of teaching and learning in higher education

Ireland

description to be included

Open courses at a national level

France

The platform FUN MOOC delivers online courses designed and run by French higher education institutions and their partners.
Launched by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research in October 2013, this initiative aims to unite the projects of French universities and schools to give them international visibility. The FUN-MOOC Public Interest Grouping (GIP) is the operator of the FUN platform. Its missions are as follows:

- Support the development of trainings taking full advantage of the digital lever and accessible to the greatest number
- Encourage digitalisation at the heart of the student and higher education and research professions
- Offer mutualized means and services in support of digital initiatives of institutions
- Promote the visibility of the French offer of training and digital resources

National Awards for Recognizing Innovative Education

Ireland, Norway, France, Netherlands (various examples)

- Ireland: teaching heroes

- Norway: National Educational Quality Prize
- France : PEPS awards (Passion Teaching Pedagogy in Higher education). Launched in December 2015 by the Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research, the PEPS prize aims to:
  - recognize, support and promote the initiatives of institutions in the field of educational transformation
  - promote the commitment of teachers, researchers, teaching teams, support teams and learners in this dynamic within higher education institutions.

For the 2019 edition, the international jury has distinguished 8 emblematic projects of the dynamics of educational transformation at work in schools, awarded 1 special jury prize and 10 certificates of excellence. The categories are: "Pedagogical innovation, lifelong learning, support for student success, internationalization

- Austria :

Defining competence framework for teachers in higher education

France   **+**   **Croatia**

Croatia**:** The Educa-T (Emphasis on Developing and Upgrading of Competences for Academic Teaching) Project was designed and implemented in the period from June 2016 to June 2018 with a view to creating conditions for improving the quality of learning teaching in Croatia's higher education. As part of the project, piloted by the Ministry of Science and Education, a Working Group was appointed to develop the Competence Profile for Higher Education Teachers and the Curriculum for Teaching Competence Enhancement in Higher Education, and to set forth Recommendations for Developing and Enhancing Teaching Competences at Croatian Higher Education Institutions.

The Project received grant co-financing under the EU's Erasmus+ programme (Key Action 3/KA3/ - Support to the Implementation of the EHEA Reforms). **http://educa-t.hr/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/seminar-1-05-pp-vlasta-vizek-vidovic.pdf**

France **:** This document was published in June 2019 and aims to explain the activities and skills of teacher-researchers. It is fully in line with efforts to promote the same level of teaching and research missions, in accordance with their status and in respect of their academic independence and academic freedom. It is the result of a cooperative effort between, among others, the services of the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, the Rector's Conference, the Conference of Directors of French Engineering Schools, the association of vice-rectors of higher education institutions in charge of human resources, the network of vice-rectors in charge of L&T, as well as numerous professional networks dedicated mainly to pedagogy.

http://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/cid143194/www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/cid143194/www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/cid143194/reperes-pour-l-exercice-du-metier-d-enseignant-chercheur.html

Promoting and accelerating digital solutions at a national level

Netherlands

In the Netherlands, a collaborative organisation for ICT (information and communication technology) in Dutch education and research called SURF was established that is fully owned by its member organizations. With the mission "Driving Innovation Together", SURF cooperates with more than 100 education and research institutions.

In late 2017, SURF, the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) and the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences (Vereniging Hogescholen, VH) presented the Acceleration Agenda for Innovation in Education. This agenda was intended to designate a new joint course to change education successfully. In their 2018 Acceleration Plan, the Dutch stakeholders further elaborate on the agenda and describe the design of a strategic four-year programme to achieve these objectives. According to the Acceleration Plan, digitalisation offers a great deal of opportunity for higher education in the Netherlands. It can contribute to the quality of education and strengthen the international position of higher education.

The Acceleration Plan is based on 3 shared ambitions:

1. Better connection to the job market
2. Making education more flexible
3. Learn smarter and better by using technology

https://www.surf.nl/en/acceleration-plan-for-educational-innovation-with-ict