SIXTH MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA ADVISORY GROUP 4

ON THE DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT REVISION

14-15 September 2017, Tirana, Albania

Draft minutes

List of participants

ALBANIA co-chair	Linda Pustina
AUSTRIA	Nicole Guthan
BELARUS	Valentina Simkhovich
BFUG Secretariat	Françoise Profit
COUNCIL OF EUROPE	Jean-Philippe Restoueix
EU COMMISSION (DGEAC)	Klara Engels-Perenyi
EU COMMISSION (DG EMPL)	Zelda Azzara
ESU	Adam Gajek
EUA	Hanne Smidt
FINLAND	Susanna Kärki
FRANCE	Jean Louis Gouju
ITALY	Maria Sticchi Damiani
Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee Vice-President	Allan Brun Pedersen
ROMANIA	Antonela Toma
UNITED KINGDOM	Huw Morris

The Romanian co-chair and the representatives of Armenia, Business Europe, EI/ETUCE, ENIC NARIC Networks, EURASHE, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Russian Federation, UNESCO were excused.

1. Welcome by the Albanian chair and introduction to the meeting.

The Albanian co-chair, Linda Pustina, welcomed the participants and explained that the government had just changed and the new minister had not been appointed yet.
Antonela Toma, representative of Romania, thanked the host for the welcome and had to excuse the Romanian co-chair, Cezar Haj, for not being able to join the meeting. Nevertheless, he will represent the group at the board meeting in Saint Petersburg in a few days.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was adopted.

3. Updates

3.1 The Romanian representative gave some feedback from the last BFUG meeting in Malta, about the different advisory and working groups, underlining the main issues for each group.
Minutes of the BFUG meeting can be downloaded on the EHEA website:
https://www.ehea.info/cid106492/bfug-meeting-54.html
She stressed the main remarks made by BFUG members concerning the presentation of the work done by the group.

3.2 The representatives of the European Commission (DG EMPL) reminded participants of the adoption and publication of the recommendation on the revision of the European Qualification Framework that includes 8 levels described in terms of learning outcomes (LO). She also reminded that the European Commission will support the developments of methodologies for description, use and application of LO.
The proposal for a revision of the Europass decision had been adopted at the end of 2016. The mandate remains the same.
Concerning the Diploma Supplement, the template is no more in the recommendation.
Concerning the European classification of Skills, Competences Occupations and qualifications (ESCO), the Commission launched, in June, the first full version available in 26 languages. A conference will take place in Brussels on 9 and 10 of October 2017 on how ESCO is used in practice.
The DGEAC representative announced that the study on DS by PPMI was now available. (https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/0fbf14ce-6a9d-11e7-b2f2-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF)
The new agenda on education was published at the end of May. A call for tender for a survey on graduate tracking will be published.
Restricted call for the NARIC should start in March 2018.
The preparation of the new programme for the forthcoming period for Erasmus+ was under way.

The representative of the Council of Europe recalled that the reform of the DS needs to pass before the Lisbon Convention Committee in order to be adopted. The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled in November this year and another Committee will be held in 2 or 3 years. It is recommended that the LRCC first approved the new DS before the European Commission, since the countries members of the LRCC are more than the EU countries. European Commission reacted that this should be further discussed.

In September, the Council of Europe organized a meeting on the EHEA-Qualification Framework for the national qualification framework contact points. 19 countries were present. The question of the inclusion of level 5 remains a challenge. It is difficult to know how far higher education institutions are using LO to describe their qualifications. The ESCO classification related to occupations could be problematic at national level since dialogue between the different classifications does not exist.

It was proposed to reactivate the network of national correspondents for qualification frameworks, but in an innovative way.

4. Last and final modifications to the template of the Diploma Supplement and to the guidelines.

The group considered the proposal made by the representative of EUA to change the way of the structure of the guidelines: EUA proposed to change the order of the sections, thus making the two identical texts of the former section II and IV (now I and III) be the introduction to the guidelines, and introduce a better flow in the document. The proposed changes will also reduce the length of the guidelines.
The group agreed to adopt this new structure.
The group went over the content of the template and the guidelines.
A discussion was run about the use or non-use of terms like "duration", "length" and "years" and the concept behind these words.

The European Commission representatives asked to add a reference to ISCED, but this proposal had been discussed twice during the previous meetings. The group agreed not to add ISCED into the DS nor in the guidelines.
At the end of the day, all participants agreed on the template and the guidelines as presented after the day's discussion.

Concerning the glossary, the representative of Council of Europe will check the definitions proposed, and will cross them with the one from the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the EAR Manual. He also will indicate the sources of each definition used.

5. Report of the Advisory group to be presented to the ministerial conference in Paris, May 2018.

The report presented for the meeting was first structured by the Romanian co-chair and participants of the group helped to write parts of it.
After discussion, the structure of the report was changed as follows:

1. Introduction:

      A. Historical context

      B. Relations between DS and other Bologna tools

      C. Mandate of the AG

      D. Methodology

2. Recognition, mobility and employability purposes

3. Main issues discussed by the group

      3.1 Implementation

      3.2 Quality of DS

          A. Learning outcomes

          B. Presentation of data and additional informations

      3.3 HEI, employers, students awareness of DS, used of DS and ownership

      3.4 Format and Digitalisation of DS

      3.5 The doctorat supplement

      3.6 Role of DS for joint degrees

      3.7 Technical aspects: New template

4. Monitoring

5. Recommendations

6. Use of the document

Concerning the content of the report, the discussion pointed out the following elements:
- references to the Bologna Communiqués are needed and a general introduction with a paragraph on the history and the context should be added.
- For each chapter, it would be interesting to add a short introductive summary indicating what the outcomes of the chapter will be.
- There is a need to use the presentations made at the Berlin meeting in order to have all the stakeholders' perspectives and the problems they raised. It would be better to use a structure by identified problems rather than by stakeholders.
- The target has to be clear
- Concrete example can be used in order to present the barriers faced or to explain how to use LO for instance.

Concerning the recommendations, the group proposed to rephrase some of them as follows:

Main recommendations for the BFUG:
- Acknowledge the DS as an essential tool for recognition, employability and mobility. Underline the importance of the challenge opened by QA and QF and central document in the development of EHEA

- Support implementation to reach full potential in line with student-centred learning by recommending HEIs to revisit the DS and its implications

- The BFUG should acknowledge the work done by the AG4 and should support the proposed changes to the DS template and guidelines as this document is a common tool shared by the Council of Europe, the European Commission and UNESCO. The revised template will need to be adopted both in the Council of Europe/UNESCO and in EU frameworks, and it is important that identical versions be adopted in both frameworks.

- The BFUG should acknowledge the initiative of the European Commission concerning the Study to support the revision of the Diploma Supplement and analyse the feasibility of its digitalization at European level.

AG4 proposals for the Paris communique:
- **The ministers support the revision of the DS template and guidelines proposed by the BFUG**

    o **Proposed text:** *"(…) call upon the Council of Europe, the European Commission and UNESCO to adopt the proposed updated DS template and explanatory notes and call HEIs to revisit how DS can support the further development of student-centred learning."*

- **The ministers agree to monitor the implementation of the revised DS at the national and institutional level.**

    o **Proposed text:** *"(…) continue monitoring the implementation of the DS within the regular monitoring and reporting exercise"*

- **The ministers acknowledge that the digitalization of the diploma supplement is the way forward towards enhancing its objectives and that technical solutions exist**

    o **Proposed text:** *"(…) encourage HEIs to embark on the digitalization of DS and student data exchange, with a minimum commitment to collect student data in a structured, machine-readable data format, in line with the data protection rights."*

- **The ministers call upon the EC to introduce as a requirement the use of the DS for institutions participating in the ERASMUS+ programme**

    o **Proposed text:** "*(…) call upon the European Commission to set the implementation of the new DS template, following the updates guidelines, as a requirement for HEIs participating in the Erasmus+ programme after 2020."*

6. Next steps

The group asked those of its members who are members of WG2 as well, to make sure that WG2 takes the DS into consideration.

The new draft of the report will circulate among the members of the advisory group by the end of September. The group members will have five days to react and add what is missing from their perspectives.

A final version will be presented for the BFUG in Tartu, on November 9-10. The group will get feedback from the BFUG.

Feedbacks from the BFUG will be communicated to participants of the group