

POLICY DEVELOPMENT FOR NEW EHEA GOALS FINAL REPORT



WORK PLAN 2015-2018

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of Working Group 3

as of October 2017

Terms of Reference – Outcome/ tasks fulfilled by October 2017

By October 2017 five planned meetings of WG3 have been held according to the agreed schedule:

- 9 February 2016 – Moscow (Russia),
- 13-14 June 2016 – Paris (France),
- 2-3 November 2016 – Stockholm (Sweden),
- 6-7 April 2017 – Brussels (Belgium),
- 5 September 2017 – Brussels (Belgium).

In addition, between WG meetings four face-to-face meetings of WG3 chairs have been held in Brussels.

WG3 has finally specified six topics in agreement with the BFUG, by taking into account the Yerevan communiqué and “The Bologna Process revisited”:

- Promoting active and responsible citizens,
- Linking EHEA and ERA,
- Using digital technologies,
- Supporting students from non-traditional backgrounds,
- Enhancing teacher support
- Improving professional recognition.

To explore potential new priorities for the future of the EHEA beyond 2020, WG3 during the reporting period co-ordinated a series of actions and events organised nearly in all countries of the WG. WG members guided and assisted in organising those actions. WG3 made a lot to ensure and foster the involvement of national, European and international stakeholders, e.g. the European Commission, European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE), European Region of Education International (EI), European Students' Union (ESU), German Association for Educational Development, Centre for Research and Interdisciplinary, Paris Descartes University, LADOK consortium – national system for study administration within Higher Education in Sweden, National Erasmus+ Offices, etc. in the organisation of the events and active participation. WG3 members worked to ensure the dissemination of upcoming activities and their emerging results using official ministerial web-portals, mailing lists, professional and public media. The working group regularly reported back to the BFUG on results of actions taken

and on reflections. As a result of discussions and activities undertaken by the WG, the policy recommendation paper and suggestions for the 2018 Ministerial Conference and Paris Communiqué has been drafted.

The resulting version of the final draft recommendations has been sent to WG3 members in the last days of September. WG3 members were invited to comment until mid-October; after that the chairs within one week produced the version for the BFUG meeting. Considering the feedback received after the BFUG meeting, further revision was made. There was a suggestion to eventually have one more meeting of WG3 chairs between 6 and 23 January in Brussels or Paris (depending on the feedback received at the Tartu BFUG meeting).

Additional results (not aimed at in Terms of Reference)

WG3 concluded that the impact of quality has to be taken into account by adapting quality assurance tools, bodies and systems to guarantee flexible recognition of non-formal and informal learning, and to ensure that higher education programmes concentrate on intended learning outcomes. This cannot be done by HEIs, but on national and European level.

Regarding the *Teacher Support* and the relation between EHEA and ERA, WG3 supposes the BFUG might call on the Commission to build synergies and to create financial programmes. Intensifying links to regional initiatives/programmes could be another option. A funding platform for both the existing online platform and a proposed teaching and learning platform could be included in the Commission's proposals.

Proposed input for the 2018 Ministerial Conference

For the 2018 Ministerial Conference, the WG proposes to initiate the establishment of the European “European Higher Education Platform” as a networking source for teachers’ support to share knowledge and experiences among education institutions, academics and administrators. It could also provide training for members. One of the key topics for country presentations should be the set measures of teachers’ support and guaranties for quality of teaching.

WG3 also briefly discussed experiences made in different BFUG contexts (BFUG, Board, AG, WG...) during the current working period. First proposals included e.g. to devote

a more targeted mandate to each group and that the BFUG should give a more effective definition of tasks and expected tangible outcomes and call for evidence in the reports. As this discussion was only started, no recommendation on these questions was included. Between 2018 and 2020, a potential group working on “New Goals” should particularly look at the governance of the European Higher Education Area beyond 2020.

Over and above, the pathfinder group on *Professional Recognition* proposed by the WG3 could discuss the integration of qualification frameworks, accreditation and professional recognition. This pathfinder group should recognise that there already has been a pathfinder group on academic recognition and should develop a way for common understanding. So far, recognition is not made easier but more difficult because of national regulations. As the existing directive is not applied to the EHEA but merely to the European Union, agreeing on a conclusion at BFUG level would really create added value.

Proposed input for the Paris Communiqué

We, the Ministers, meeting in Paris on 24 and 25 May 2018, are proud to recognize that further progress has been made in matching goals of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) since the Bologna Declaration. We have established the overarching Framework for Qualifications, a common credit system, common principles for the development of student-centred learning, the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance and Register of Quality Assurance Agencies, a common approach to recognition, as well a number of common tools, namely, the ECTS Users’ Guide, the Diploma Supplement and the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

In the current world situation, higher education has a key role to play, in Europe and beyond, in order to contributing to coping with serious challenges, such as the economic and financial crisis, social and educational inequality, demographic changes, new migration patterns including the forced migration of refugees, disintegration tendencies in the European Union, conflicts within and between countries, extremism and xenophobia. Therefore we must renew our original vision and agree on new goals for the EHEA beyond 2020.

I. PROMOTING ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

1.1. We, the Ministers, encourage higher education institutions (HEIs) to play an active role in society and to enhance the capacity of students and staff to be active and responsible citizens.

1.2. Students should have the opportunity to work across disciplines and societal sectors and to develop original, creative and critical thinking. This approach must include a consistent feature of curricula giving students free space to develop their personality self-contained.

1.3. Hence, HEIs bear a responsibility to build and keep up democratic participation wherein students, staff and HEI leaders work together as partners within all decision-making processes at institutional, faculty and department levels.

1.4. Such academic democratic citizenship is based on the necessary conditions of academic freedom, institutional autonomy and collegial governance, which are commonly agreed values in the EHEA. We, the Ministers, strongly object to any violations of these values.

2. LINKING EHEA AND ERA

2.1. We, the Ministers, encourage more and further interaction between the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) and the European Research Area Committee (ERAC).

2.2. Teaching, learning and research are the key catalysers in the development of critical and creative thought. We encourage HEIs to ensure that synergies between teaching, learning and research should be considered in a more systematic way.

2.3. We invite the European Commission to deploy a better coherence and complementarity between the Erasmus+ and the EU Research and Innovation Framework Programme Horizon 2020 in a “knowledge triangle” perspective.

2.4. From a teaching and learning viewpoint, we support the active involvement of all students in research practices allowing them to develop research skills and problem solving capacity and to contribute to the creation of new knowledge (research based teaching and learning). We thus commit to uphold and to further an environment in which HEIs are sufficiently funded to actively perform such integration of research and teaching.

3. USING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

3.1. We, the Ministers, call on HEIs to connect open science, open educational resources and innovation by digital technologies in the EHEA virtual campuses.

3.2. Higher education is built on three pillars, namely education, research and innovation which form its fundamentals regardless of the shape of the institution or means of delivery: physical or virtual. Connecting open science, open educational resources and innovation virtually opens up education for the creation of new learning experiences meeting the demands of the students.

3.3. We call on HEIs to create more flexible learning paths for lifelong learning, greater education and research collaborations and virtual mobility modules.

3.4. We commit to promote the development of policies and infrastructure for rewarding European HEIs for sharing materials in an open way while ensuring that all, regardless of academic status, enjoy full discretion in the copyright of their scholarly work.

4. SUPPORTING STUDENTS FROM NON-TRADITIONAL BACKGROUNDS

4.1. We, the Ministers, commit to develop national plans or strategies for lifelong learning, access, participation and completion in higher education controlled by national monitoring systems.

4.2. As our populations become more and more diverse, making our systems more inclusive and supporting students from non-traditional backgrounds, as well as offering various forms of lifelong learning provision become an essential aim for the EHEA. Given that the need to work towards social cohesion is now more important than ever, we must step up our efforts to reach this aspiration.

4.3. We highlight the importance of students being able to access higher education and complete their studies without obstacles related to their background. We develop guidance and counseling and commit to adequately increase and widen our study financing systems.

4.4. We encourage HEIs to provide flexible learning paths in terms of study pace, study aim and learning methods, using also the opportunities that digitalisation offers and agree to review and adapt higher education support systems.

5. ENHANCING TEACHER SUPPORT

5.1. We, the Ministers, commit to more effort for teacher support and will encourage HEIs to provide a supportive working environment for higher education teachers and to ensure academics receive high quality pedagogical training and continuous professional development.

5.2. We recognize research-led quality teaching as the fundamental basis of higher education. The status and recognition of teaching in higher education and in academic career paths must be enhanced. Teaching must cope with new challenges like an increasing and more diverse student population or the digitalisation of education, society and economy by new methods for teaching and learning like student-centred learning.

5.3. We recognize that quality teaching can only be sustained within appropriate teaching and learning conditions as well as decent working conditions for teachers, researchers and supportive staff. In order to ensure the sustainable quality of permanent tasks there is a need for more permanent employment and secure career paths based on an effective social dialogue.

5.4. To bring national good practice examples on EHEA level and to foster exchange and mutual learning, we are establishing in cooperation with HEIs, students and teaching staff a new EHEA platform to support pedagogical training and continuous professional development of academics.

6. IMPROVING PROFESSIONAL RECOGNITION

6.1. Recognizing the success of the Pathfinder Group on Automatic recognition (2012-2015), we, the Ministers, encourage countries to participate in a new pathfinder group, to develop a common framework of academic and professional qualifications.

6.2. We believe that it would be beneficial for the economic development Europe if graduates would face fewer obstacles towards a professional career across the EHEA. Regulations of professions can be barriers to that goal. Hence, we will elaborate how to ensure high quality of professional qualifications while at the same time make borders more permeable.

6.3. As a means to that and based on our jointly developed tools and our quality assurance systems, we would like to enforce the mutual trust and give competent authorities and employers the information necessary on qualifications and competences obtained for smooth recognition.

6.4. Also, we support enhanced awareness for prospective students of necessary information about academic and professional recognition of the qualifications they can gain in their study programme across the EHEA.



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