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Advisory Group 1: EHEA International cooperation

Fourth Meeting

Alcala de Henares (Madrid, Spain), 30-31 January 2017

Draft minutes

List of participants

Advisory Group 1 Members

ACA/Academic Cooperation Association	Bernd WACHTER
BELGIUM VL	Noel VERCRUYSSSE
BFUG SECRETARIAT	Mariana SAAD
CYPRUS	Stelios CHRISTOPHIDES
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ENQA	Maria KELO
ESTONIA	Janne PUKK
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EU COMMISSION	Marlène BARTES
EUA/European University Association	Elizabeth COLUCCI
FRANCE chair	Patricia POL
FRANCE	Marie-Odile OTT
GERMANY	Katrin FOHMANN
GREECE	Panagiota DIONYSOPOULOU
GREECE	Alexandra KARVOUNI
IRELAND	Gerry O'SULLIVAN
LICHTENSTEIN	Daniel MIESCHER
SPAIN chair	Luis DELGADO
UNESCO	Liliana SIMIONESCU
UNITED KINGDOM chair	Ella RITCHIE

Advisory Group 1 Experts from International and regional organisations

AUF/Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie	Erol KŪLAHCI
AUF/Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie	Ciprian MIHALI
EAIE/European Association For International Education	Markus LAITINEN
IAU/International Association of Universities	Hilligje VAN 'T LAND
UfM/Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat	Emmanuelle GARDAN

Experts invited from the Latin American Region

CCA/Consejo Centroamericano de Acreditaci3n	Lea CRUZ
UNIVERSITY OF ALCALA/FAP/Foro Acad3mico Permanente ALC-UE	Fernando GALVÁN
FAUBAI/Brazilian Association for International Education/UNESP/Universidade Estadual Paulista	Jos3 Celso FREIRE Jr
OEI/Organizaci3n de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educaci3n, la Ciencia y la Cultura	Carlos ABICALIL
OEI/Organizaci3n de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educaci3n, la Ciencia y la Cultura	Alvaro RAEZ FERNANDEZ
OBIRET/Observatorio Regional sobre Internacionalizaci3n y Redes en Educaci3n Terciaria en Am3rica Latina y el Caribe	Jocelyne GACEL-ÁVILA
SEGIB/Secretaria General Iberoamericana	Felix GARCIA LAUSIN
UDUAL/Union de Universidades de America Latina y el Caribe	Roberto ESCALANTE

Experts invited from the MENAA region

AARU/Association of Arab Universities	Sultan ABU ORABI
ANQAHE/Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education	El Mokhtar BAKKOUR
UNIMED/Union des Universit3s de la M3diterran3e/ Pr3sident	Wail Benjelloun
UNIMED Directeur	Marcello SCALISI

The Spanish General Secretary for the Universities, Dr Jorge S3inz Gonz3lez, was invited to open the meeting.

The President and the Vice President for External Affairs of CREUP (Coordinadora de Representantes de Estudiantes de Universidades P3blicas) were invited to attend the meeting.

The AG1 members from Azerbaïdjan, Kazakhstan, Montenegro, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia and OECD, and the experts invited from AASU (All Africa Students' Union) and Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA), were unable to attend. Mr. Alexander Lyambabaje from IUCEA sent in advance his input to the initially foreseen roundtable on Sub-Saharan Africa.

1. Welcome and Introduction to the meeting

Welcome by the Rector of the University of Alcalá and the Spanish General Secretary of Universities.

Fernando Galvan, Rector of the University, welcomed the participants. He briefly presented the University of Alcalá, its long history and highlighted Alcalá's international dimension since the medieval ages.

Jorge Sáinz González, General Secretary of Universities at the Ministry of Education of Spain, stressed the importance and success of internationalization for the EHEA through, in particular the huge popularity of the Erasmus scheme.

Both hosts wished the participants a fruitful meeting.

Welcome by the chairs

The chairs of Advisory Group 1 thanked the hosts for their warm welcome in one of the first European universities. They noted that although no representative from the Sub-Saharan region was able to attend, Latin America and the Mediterranean, North Africa and Arabic countries were well represented in the meeting. They pointed out that the aim of the meeting was to enhance an inter-regional dialogue on HE with other regions of the world with the view to prepare the 2018 Bologna Policy Forum (BPF) following the mandate given to the Advisory group by the last BFUG meeting in Bratislava.

2. Adoption of the Agenda and information on the third meeting in Nizhny Novgorod.

The updated [agenda](#) without the Sub-Saharan roundtable was adopted. It was noted that, according to the proceedings 2015-2018, all the minutes of the BFUG working and advisory groups meetings did need to be adopted but have to be considered more like signposts for future decisions taken at the BFUG level.

3. Feedback from the Bratislava BFUG meeting

The French chair presented the BFUG Bratislava meeting discussions on the BPF concept note, the last proposal from Nizhny-Novgorod AG1 meeting, the agreed principles and the new orientations for the next BPF (see presentation). She mentioned that the BFUG congratulated AG1 for the work done in particular to develop a sustainable international cooperation policy through an inter-regional dialogue, the Alcalá meeting being considered as the first experiment. She explained that the BFUG asked AG1 to prepare for the next BFUG meeting in Malta a clear proposal for the 2018 BPF including the shaping of the possible launch of an "International Alliance" of regional higher education areas or systems. It was noted by the British chair that the AG1 has established dialogue with most regions of the globe but has no links yet with North America. This was part of the recommendations made in the minutes of the Bratislava BFUG.

The discussion that followed centred on the need to enhance the inter-regional dialogue and identify the added value of a regional approach for higher education. It was pointed out that not all countries follow the same policies and that, depending on the country and region, discussions should be engaged first with either ministers or universities.

Several participants from the EHEA stressed that collaboration between ministries and institutions was important to develop coherent policies for higher education and to contribute to achieve implementation of tools for internationalization.

It was also stressed that given the importance of institutional autonomy as a main value for higher education all over the world, it would be important to give a place to universities in the inter-regional dialogue. All the intervening participants agreed that the inter-regional dialogue is a good way to promote multi-stakeholders policy dialogue.

Participants agreed that inter-regional dialogue could not just be about the EHEA explaining to other countries or regions how better to manage higher education. It should be the place to highlight diversity of systems and actors as well as to focus on a topic of global relevance.

4. Enhancing international cooperation between regional higher education areas. Building Regional Dialogues

For this part of the meeting two round tables were organised, one for Latin America and another for the Southern Mediterranean, North African and Arabic countries. The speakers from non-EHEA regions had been asked to identify three main topics for collaboration with the EHEA and recommendations to the main actors, three activities needed to implement international cooperation, and possible challenges, benefits and risks.

4.1: Latin America

The round table on Latin America started with a presentation by Fernando Galvan, in his capacity as President of FAP (Foro Académico Permanente ALC-UE), the Permanent Academic Forum for Latin America, the Caribbean and EU, in which some 3,000 academics have participated in meetings and seminars both in LAC and Europe since 2012, when it started its activities. The FAP was created to enforce and support academic collaboration between the two regions. In this perspective, FAP has already identified three topics that need to be tackled: accreditation of studies and institutions, mobility and harmonization of credit systems and degree levels. Galvan also presented the three activities needed to implement international cooperation, as well as the three challenges, benefits and risks, according to the requirements of the round table. In short, he talked about the need of a joint proposal for a common path towards the accreditation of HE institutions in both regions, the establishment of an institutional framework based on bi-regional agreement within the strategic association, as well as the creation of a linking group to do the follow-up of those actions. He finally identified the main challenges, such as the heterogeneity, or the financial and legal difficulties due to the huge diversity within the Latin American and Caribbean region, and also between that region and Europe. He also mentioned briefly the benefits and risks involved (further details in his ppt presentation).

The next presentation, by Roberto Escalante, from UDUAL (Union de Universidades de America Latina y el Caribe), Association of the Universities from Latin American and the Caribbean, focused on the role of universities for society stressing that higher education is a public good. Universities are the main actors to help build international mobility in the area in particular through the pilot scheme ENLACES. ENLACES can be considered as a pilot project contributing to creating a common space for higher education in Latin America, supported by nine universities of the region working on seven academic careers and developing common statements and tools to facilitate recognition, comparability, e-learning programmes and mobility schemes. It was stressed that more agreements exist between Latin American universities and their European counterparts than with other Latin American institutions.

The third presentation, by the representative of CCA, Lea Cruz, whose organization works on the implementation of QA in Central America, highlighted the interest from the academics point of view of having a freer access to the EHEA for research collaborations.

The OEI (Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura) the Organization of Iberoamerican States for Education, Science and Culture is a specialized public policy intergovernmental organization promoting technical cooperation in the field of education, science and culture was represented by Carlos Abicalil. OEI is a major driver for the Espacio iberoamericano del conocimiento (EIC). The projects developed within this framework are adopted by the Heads of States and Government from Latin America, Spain and Portugal. The representative of OEI drew the attention of the participants on the little mobility of academics in the region and the need to strengthen capacities for training researchers. The position of the OEI is that collaborations have to be developed at both the government and universities levels. It was stressed that budgetary cuts and fatigue of the current tools for supporting university cooperation are to be taken into account when elaborating new structures or schemes.

Félix García Lausín from SEGIB the organization responsible for the coordination of the Ibero-American Knowledge Area presented the current status of the implementation of the projects developed within this framework, that are adopted by the Heads of States and Government from Latin America, Spain, Portugal and Andorra on aspects such as the development of a Register of Quality Assurance Agencies, a Recognition Framework, the Diploma Supplement and the setting up of “Campus Iberoamerica” to foster mobility programmes.

In the following discussion, several participants stressed that though Latin America has already many collaborations going on with European partners and especially Spain, there is a need to enhance inter-regional dialogue at policy level with the EHEA. Cooperation with the region, however, is not structured as such and it was stressed that this raises difficulties in terms of, among others, recognition of qualifications.

The participants also raised the topic of the very specific context of the new American administration in relation with graduate and postgraduate outgoing mobility.

4.2: MENAA

The round table on the Mediterranean, North Africa and Arabic countries region started with a presentation by Emmanuelle Gardan of the initiatives developed by Union Pour la Méditerranée for enhancing cooperation in the Higher Education sector. She pointed out that through their regional dialogues, three main priorities were defined for cooperation with EHEA: youth employability, advancing the mobility agenda and higher education governance.

This was followed by a presentation from Prof. Wail Benjelloun, President of the Union of the Mediterranean Universities (UNIMED), a network of 94 universities from 22 countries from both shores of the Mediterranean. Prof. Benjelloun explained that this structure has helped set up several cooperation programs implying both EHEA and non-EHEA institutions. For him, it would be a mistake to look for a uniformed or standardized system. Collaboration must be possible between HE systems that remain different. He was keen to highlight difficulties specific to the region and that need to be tackled to facilitate and further develop collaborations in the region itself and outside. These problems are firstly, the governance of universities, highly dependent of their governments, secondly the fact that in many countries mobility and budgets are authorized at ministry level and thirdly the lack of information on programmes and qualifications delivered by the institutions of the region.

The third presentation, by El Mokhtar Bakkour, representative for the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE), focused on the challenges faced by collaboration programmes between the EHEA and Arab countries. He signaled that any project of cooperation would have to take into account the diversity of the HE systems in the Arabic states world that follow either the French or the American or the British systems (he gave the example of North Africa, where the LMD (Licence, master, doctorat) French reform has been implemented since 2003). This implies that the systems of credits are different from one country to another which can pose specific problems for mobility and recognition of qualifications. He stressed that a convention of recognition of studies would not give any assurance about actual recognition of qualifications. He mentioned as well the importance of making a difference between the types of mobility considering that refugees needed specific attention.

The last presentation on MENAA was given by Dr Sultan Abu Orabi, from the Association of Arab Universities (AARU). Dr Abu Orabi highlighted the many collaborations already in place between Arab Universities and other continents, especially Asia. Evoking the unstable political situation of several Arab countries, he asked for an easier access to the EHEA for students and researchers coming from the Arabic region. He also stressed that there were many safe Arab countries and that there was a keen interest to establish a South-South dialogue between these countries and the Latin American region.

All the speakers welcomed the setting up of an inter-regional policy dialogue on higher education to address the issues discussed below.

Employability, Mobility and Capacity building were the main topics of the following discussion. It was highlighted that EHEA is attracting far more students from countries outside its Area than the number of its own students enrolling in non EHEA-institutions. Non-EHEA members also signaled that, although successful, the Erasmus+ program is not big enough (a drop in the ocean) for the huge number of students of the MENAA region and asked for more funding from the EHEA countries for developing cooperation programs. They also drew the attention of the participants to the fact that collaborations should be developed at regional level. Collaboration programs and schemes suppose the creation of legal structures and the signature of agreements. It was stressed how difficult it was to apply the Recognition conventions and that what mattered was effective recognition of diplomas. The creation of a platform for dialogue was proposed whose form and organization will be discussed during the working group discussions on the "International Alliance" (point 5 of the Agenda).

Autonomy of universities was also discussed as the MENAA and Latin American participants stressed that it was a real issue in their countries.

Several participants also mentioned that a large number of graduated students trained outside their countries of origin would not come back and would prefer to settle and work in the country where they finished their studies.

4.3: Global Round Table

This Round Table gathered representatives from EHEA, Latin America and South Mediterranean.

It started with a reminder by the British chair of the expectations set by the EHEA ministers in the Yerevan Conference and the main priorities of the 2015-2018 BFUG work programme. It is expected that the Advisory group will come up with new insights and proposals about mechanisms for global dialogue and models of structured global cooperation. Improving quality of teaching and learning as well as student and staff mobility are seen by the EHEA as key ways of achieving this.

Non-EHEA participants clearly expressed their interest in building a strong cooperation in HE with the EHEA and between other regions, stressing that building regional areas or systems was very appropriate in a context where higher education is facing global challenges.

All participants insisted on a dialogue between EHEA and other regions based on balanced and reciprocal cooperation policies. Many participants underlined the interest of both exchanges from one of the non-EHEA region with another as well as of dialogues inside their own regions. It was stressed that the purpose of such dialogues is to learn from each other and to better understand other systems.

The participants were also keen to highlight the many structures, programs and schemes already existing for inter-regional dialogue in HE. They stressed that the EHEA Inter-regional dialogue should not duplicate the collaborations or even surveys already in place but create synergies or something new.

Some concrete proposals were identified that could lead to a concrete outcome for the 2018 BPF. "Equitable and increased global mobility" was suggested as a global relevant topic. UNIMED proposed to launch a survey among its Southern Mediterranean members about the impact of the Bologna Process in their countries with the publication of a specific paper for the 2018 BPF.

5. Working Groups on the project for an International Alliance

Three groups worked on what an Alliance of HE areas would mean and how to organize it.

All three groups agreed on the necessity to structure the inter-regional dialogues in order to encourage regional higher education development on a long term basis. They all also recognised the importance of adding value to existing trans-regional networks. It was clear from detailed discussions at Alcalá that there is still huge potential to be gained from regional collaboration. However the experience of

deep dialogue during the Alcalá meeting had demonstrated the need for more discussion on what drives the process and how consensus is constructed and ownerships generated. It was agreed that in the context of global challenges for HE more integration of HE at regional level will encourage balanced and reciprocal cooperation policies, facilitate mobility and quality of HE and importantly contribute to solving global challenges. A form of International Alliance would facilitate this connection between HE areas and regions with a clear focus on sharing the Bologna experience and learning from each other region. An EHEA initiative in Paris could send a strong signal for Europe to build bridges in Higher Education.

The three groups differed on the name of the new network and on the likely speed of progress towards achieving it. **Group 1** argued that a formalisation of the ministerial commitment to the 'alliance' would be needed if launched in 2018. It should be made clear how this will be governed and resourced. If the Bologna secretariat has to be the key driver to support 'the alliance', this must be endorsed by ministers. Among the activities that could be developed are: workshops at regional level, peer learning, toolkits for QA of cross-border HE, platform of multilingual open resources, etc.

Group 2 strongly supported the idea of a global rather than a bi-regional perspective but felt that it was premature to launch an Alliance in 2018, as the word "alliance" is loaded with expectations. The proposal was to set up a framework with stakeholders from the EHEA and regional groupings to work out the details of global dialogue with a view to developing an Alliance in the mid-term. The proposal for 2018 is to rename and replace the BPF by "EHEA global policy dialogue" which would offer a platform to exchange best practices including spin off activities with a strong emphasis on topics of global relevance (e.g. equitable mobility). The focus should be on "policy", i.e. helping regions/systems develop policies to set up their own HE spaces by sharing EHEA experience. The main challenges identified are human and financial resources, as well as the need to ensure continuity and sustainability.

Group 3 argued that the process was not mature enough to be formalised through an 'alliance' expressing moreover the military aspect of such a 'concept'. The necessity to have a bottom up approach to reach a ministerial policy level was stressed in order to set a realistic framework and to influence legislation that would facilitate the setting-up of a HE area. It was proposed to organise workshops at regional level to keep active the process engaged by AG1.

All groups agreed that the invitation process for the next Ministerial should reflect the dynamics of the regional approach moving towards inviting regional delegations representing HE areas, which could be based on a combination of ministries, inter-governmental organisations, stakeholder organisations, university and student associations, networks. 'Sub-regional' spaces that have a political coherency should also be considered (ASEAN, Mercosur, Central America, East African Community, Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement supérieur (CAMES), etc.)

6. AOB

The Spanish chair informed the participants that a peer learning activity on "International teaching for employability and citizenship" would take place in a major University city in Spain in May. He invited all those interested to attend the event.

On the date for the next Group meeting, two possibilities were mentioned: September or October, with the offer of Germany to host the meeting. The BPF task force could meet up in Brussels before or after the Board meeting in March or April.

The chairs asked the participants from non-EHEA countries and organizations to send all available information about meetings and initiatives going on in their regions and asked the secretariat to keep an updated agenda per region and at global level for 2017 and 2018.

Many participants showed their satisfaction with the level of discussions and dialogue of the meeting wishing that the inter-regional dialogue on higher education could be continued in the near future.