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**FIRST MEETING OF THE AD-HOC WORKING GROUP ON THE REVISION OF THE ECTS USERS’ GUIDE**

**Brussels, 25 February 2013, 09:00 – 17:00**

**Draft minutes**

**List of participants**

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| **Country/ Organisation** | **Representative** |
| Armenia | Nerses Gevorgyan |
| Austria | Regine Bolter |
| Belgium/Flemish Community | *Apologies* |
| BFUG Secretariat | Marta Simonyan |
| EC | Adam Tyson |
| EC | Klara Engels-Perenyi |
| ENQA | Maria Kelo |
| ESU | Nevena Vuksanovic |
| EUA | Davies Howard |
| EURASHE | Sandra Kraze |
| Germany | Volker Gehmlich |
| France | Béatrice Delpouve |
| Hungary | Judit Hidasi |
| Italy | Maria Sticchi Damiani |
| Lithuania | Raimonda Markeviciene |
| Netherlands | Robert Wagenaar |
| Norway | Lene Oftedal |
| Sweden | *Apologies* |
| UK | Anthony Vickers |

1. ***Opening***

* ***Welcome by Adam Tyson (Head of Unit “Higher Education, Modernisation Agenda; Erasmus”, DG EAC)***
* ***Objectives of meeting, agenda, administrative issues***

Adam Tyson (EC), the Chair of the Ad-hoc working group (WG) on the Revision of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) Users’ Guide introduced himself and welcomed the participants to the first meeting of the WG.

The Chair stressed the importance of the task of the WG, also in the relation to the Bologna Process and the work of the European Commission's (EC) Modernisation Agenda.

ECTS has been a subject discussed in the Bucharest Communiqué for the following two reasons:

* as a widely used tool in terms of promoting mobility of students within the European Higher Educational Area (EHEA),
* it has the potential to be a key component in the modernisation of HE systems in general and in supporting a more effective transition for using the learning outcomes (LOs) in program designing.

The Chair highlighted that the purpose of the revision of the ECTS Users’ Guide is to make it more productive and helpful tool for the higher education institutions (HEIs) and countries and to foster its more consistent implementation, which would enable HEIs to modernise and to perform more effectively

The group confirmed the view that study credits should be linked to the LOs. The assessment procedures should take into account of the attainment of the LOs throughout the EHEA.

The Chair presented the draft version of the ToR and the short questionnaire which was circulated to the members of the WG with the intention to get views and perceptions how the work should be carried on.

Therefore, it was mentioned that the work of the WG will focus on the review of the ECTS Users’ Guide in order to reflect relevant developments that occurred since its last revision in 2009. It was noted that the starting point should be the use of the ECTS for the accumulation of credits both within and between various HE institutions in order to provide a solid basis for transfer and recognition of credits in the case of cross-border mobility. The aim of the ECTS Users’ Guide is to serve the needs of a broad range of stakeholders as well as to provide practical guidance to HEIs to improve design, application and assessment of LOs.

The agenda was adopted without any amendments.

1. ***Introduction of participants***

* ***“Check-in” of participants: professional background, expectations from the participation in the Working Group***

A tour de table followed with a short introduction of all the participants alongside their expectations from the Ad-hoc WG. All the participants unanimously agreed that the correct implementation of the ECTS Users’ Guide across the EHEA should be fostered.

1. ***State of play of ECTS in EHEA***

David Crosier (EURYDICE) made presentation on “**ECTS in European higher education: the impact of Bologna”.**

The presentation covered implementation of the ECTS across EHEA countries, on the basis of the Bologna Implementation Report of 2012, of Trends 2012 and of Bologna with Students Eyes.

The common conclusions drawn by the presentation were:

* ECTS is unchallenged as the credit system for higher education
* The intended purposes of the system are not fully addressed in national/institutional implementation
* LO are not yet widely understood and used in programme design, hence the "ideal approach" of the 2009 Users' Guide is rarely found in reality.

Nevena Vuksanovic (ESU) mentioned that the part of the ESU study used during the presentation was prepared by the students’ representatives on the national level.

Some comments were made:

* The aspect of fostering mobility with ECTS should not be forgotten;
* Recognition is still problematic ;
* Clear guidance and easy procedures are needed for better implementation of ECTS.

More information is available in the PowerPoint below.



The meeting was continued by Raimonda Markeviciene (Lithuania), who made a presentation, on **“A point of view: implementation of ECTS”**.

The presentation highlighted the main approaches to the ECTS implementation on national levels, which are:

* Legal;
* Consensus-based;
* Recommendation-based.

More information is available in the PowerPoint below.



1. ***What are the challenges for the implementation of ECTS?***

* ***Plenary, followed by discussion in small groups, with input from completed questionnaires.***

In order to discuss the challenges for the implementation of the ECTS the participants were divided into 4 parallel groups.

The 1st group pointed the following 3 main aspects:

* using ECTS in **programme design** and delivery and its relation to NQFs and student centered approach;
* **transparency of programs** which will allow to standardise NQFs;
* facilitating **mobility** and recognition.

The group also mentioned some benefits which are **student satisfaction, employability and consistency**. A change of mindset would be needed to implement a more student-centred approach, also in designing programmes (top-down, based on modules, linking better teaching/study time to learning outcomes and adjusting assessment methods).

The 2nd group pointed that the ECTS should be subject level, and support idea of **student centered approach**. **Accumulation and transfer of credits** was regarded not completely understandable and hence conduction of the transfer should be easy and transparent based on understandable assessment of LOs which will enable HEIs to foster the transfer of students between 1st and 2n cycle and better focus on the integration of part-time and work-based studies.

The 3rd group pointed that the challenges are **credit** **accumulation and student center approach**. Trying to solve problems with accumulation of credits will enable HEIs to solve many other related problems; new ways of learning and different pathways should be implemented allowing students to have more options; there should be limited flexibility while implementation on national and institutional levels. **Team work for professors and teachers, evaluation of LOs and ensuring quality** was mentioned as another challenge, which has an important link to the employability of students.

It was stressed that there is a need to clarify the expectation of challenges, because ECTS is not only allocation of credits but an overarching system.

# The 4th group pointed that the challenges are awareness of “users”, training for HEI teachers, program design based on LOs, cultural differences; student centered learning, different learning pathways; assessment, delivery of education outside of Europe, implementation and revision of the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and the EU Directive on Professional Qualifications.

1. ***How to address the identified challenges in revising the ECTS Users’ Guide?***

***Plenary, followed by discussion in small groups***

In order to discuss the challenges in revising the ECTS Users’ Guide participants were divided into 4 parallel groups, based on the outcome of the group discussion on the challenges (see point 4). The main areas of challenges were identified asassessment, program design, mobility, changing the culture.

Participants were asked to discuss in groups how these challenges could be addressed. After 2 rounds of group discussions the following general conclusions were drawn:

* **Assessment:** quality of the formulated LO is not always ensured; when formulating Los, there should be already a reflection on their assessment; the Guide should be very clear on assessment, grading scales, threshold and desired Los.
* **Programme design:**the focus need to be on learning first of all, not workload. The definition of LO at programme level should have a reference to qualifications frameworks and to sectoral frameworks, before the number of credits and the level of the programme is defined. After this the following reflection is how to break down the Los to modules. Question to be addressed: do LO reflect a threshold level or a desired level? The grades should state how well the LO are achieved by the students. The Guide should facilitate the development of joint degrees, encourage the establishment of mobility windows, but without the extension of a programme. LO can be achieved in different ways, not only through programmes (reference to informal and non-formal learning). 60 ECTS/year: should it be broken down for semesters? – not really, but for mobility shorter curricula are needed. If there is a real focus on LO, time does not matter any more.

**Mobility:** The guidelines are clear for international mobility, but national mobility is often more problematic. Slight modifications could be done in the Guide for the recognition of credits gained during study mobility periods. A separate agreement between the home HEI and the student should be encouraged to have clarity on recognition from the outset. Once this is done correctly, "transfer" should be automatic after the mobility period. The Working Group should concentrate more on the accumulation aspect, less on mobility. When accumulation is done correctly, mobility follows automatically.

* **Links to transparency tools:** consider questions like D
  + Does the Diploma Supplement fulfill what is expected from it?
  + ESGs on QA: internal and external QA should check the correct use of ECTS – to be addressed by the revision of ESG.
  + ECVET: how to translate it into ECTS? – Guide should address this, without being too prescriptive
  + For more details see annex 1.
* **Changing the culture**: need to recognize that ECTS is more about accumulation than transfer, need more teamwork in programme design, the knowledge of accumulation skills and competences, awareness of the culture and philosophy of student-centered learning, awareness of national context, student centered system.



1. ***Adoption of Terms of Reference of the Working Group and setting up a Work Plan***

At the end of the meeting and after the carried discussion the Chair presented the ToR of the WG. The participants were asked to comment on the document since it needs to be agreed before presenting it at the BFUG meeting in Dublin.

Agreement was reached on the work plan and dates of the next meetings.

The Ad-hoc WG also agreed what are going to be the topics of the next two meetings which are:

* Programme design;
* Teaching, learning and assessment;
* Mobility, recognition and grade conversion;
* Links to transparency and recognition tools.

It was also agreed that the WG will establish sub-groups around these topics, to prepare in-depth discussions in the mentioned areas and suggest modifications to the current version of the ECTS Users’ Guide. There will be an initial discussion on the structure of the ECTS Users’ Guide to make it as useable and as accessible as possible, including through a new web-based format.

The first draft of the revised ECTS Users’ Guide is planned for end September 2013, to allow further discussion in the next 3 meetings of the Ad-hoc WG, based on the draft. The ad-hoc WG will identify further experts who could be consulted on specific issues, if relevant. The initial drafting will be done by a smaller group of the participants, representing each of the identified sub-groups.

The ECTS Group will report to the BFUG on progress in its activities in autumn 2013 and present the revised version of the ECTS Users’ Guide to the BFUG by mid-2014. This timing will allow the ad hoc group to take account of developments in parallel processes, such as the revision of the European Standards and Guidelines on Quality Assurance and of the EU Professional Qualifications Directive. The Group will keep the Structural Reforms Working Group informed of its progress in the meantime.

Work Plan:

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| February 2013 | Agreement on Work Plan |
| April 2013 | In-depth discussion on "programme design" and "teaching, learning and assessment", prepared by sub-groups of participants |
| May 2013 | In-depth discussion on "mobility, recognition and grade conversion" and "link to transparency tools"; ECTS Users’ Guide structure, prepared by sub-groups of participants |
| Summer 2013 | Drafting group – one participant from each subgroup |
| October 2013 | Full discussion on revised text |
| January 2014 | Full discussion on revised text |
| April 2014 | Final text for submission to Structural Reforms Working Group |

1. ***AOB and closing of the meeting***

***Date of next meeting (s)***

***Preparation for next meeting***

Dates of next meetings were decided to be April 16th, 2013 and may 28th, 2013