

**MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN RPL NETWORK**

**Amsterdam, the Netherlands,** **13 February 2014**

**Venue: Eden Hotel**

**Time: 09.00-15.00**

**List of Participants:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Country / Organisation*** | ***Name*** |
| Andorra | *Apologies* |
| Armenia | Tatevik Arakelyan |
| Austria | *Apologies* |
| Belgium/Flemish Community | *Apologies* |
| Belgium/French Community | *Apologies* |
| BFUG Secretariat | Aida Tigranyan |
| Bulgaria | Karine Babayan |
| Croatia | Marina Crncic Sokol |
| CEDEFOP | *Apologies* |
| Denmark | Helle Bitsch Bay |
| EC | *Absent* |
| EC | *Absent* |
| EC | *Absent* |
| Estonia | *Marin Johnson* |
| Estonia | *Absent* |
| EURASHE | *Apologies* |
| EURASHE | *Absent* |
| EUA | *Absent* |
| EUA | *Absent* |
| France | Yolande Fermon |
| Germany | Markus Scholz |
| Iceland | *Absent* |
| Ireland | Deirdre Goggin |
| Ireland | *Absent* |
| Latvia | Rihards Blese |
| Latvia | *Absent* |
| Latvia | *Absent* |
| Malta | *Absent* |
| Moldova | *Absent* |
| Netherlands | Patrick Leushuis |
| Poland | *Absent* |
| Portugal | Maria Beatriz Goncalves |
| Romania | *Apologies* |
| Slovak Republic | *Absent* |
| Sweden | Mats Edvardsson |
| Switzerland | *Apologies* |
| Switzerland | *Absent* |
| Turkey | Mehmet Durman |
| UNESCO | *Absent* |
| United Kingdom | *Apologies* |
| United Kingdom | *Absent* |
| United Kingdom/Scotland | Ruth Whittaker |
| United Kingdom/Scotland | *Absent* |
| United Kingdom/Scotland | *Absent* |
| United Kingdom/Scotland | *Absent* |
| United Kingdom/Scotland | *Absent* |
| United Kingdom/Scotland | *Absent* |

**The ERPL Network consists of 46 members and only 14 were present at the Amsterdam meeting.**

**Welcome, introduction of participants**

Ms. Marin Johnson, the Chair of the Network, welcomed the participants by expressing satisfaction for the new members present in the meeting. A tour de table followed with a short introduction of all the participants.

**Adoption of the agenda and the Minutes of the previous ERPLN meeting**

The agenda was adopted with an inclusion of the presentation from the representative of BIENNALE on "The promise of Validation of Prior Learning (VPL) as the motor of social and economic change" conference which will be held on 9-11 April.

The Minutes of the previous RPL Network meeting held in Tallinn, Estonia (December 17, 2013) were endorsed without any comments.

**Overview of the Network activities and discussion on liaising with other networks and working groups (Structural Reforms WG; Revision on ECTS Users’ Guide WG)**

The overview of the Network activities started with concern on low participation of the member countries in the meetings. The Chair emphasised the importance of involvement practitioners in Network and offered to find the ways to invite new countries, on the other hand she noticed that often the countries are not able to participate in the meetings due to financial problems.

Ms. Marin Johnson reflected to the previous meetings and presented what had been done and what are the main activities of the Network in terms of policy development.

The Chair presented the activity of SRWG, ECTS Users’ Guide and Qualifications Frameworks working groups as the fields concerning RPL.

* *To elaborate strategies on how to develop and promote practice of RPL across the EHEA countries, including measures for removing various limitations leading to the award of complete HE qualifications.*

The Chair stressed that it is important to remember that all the activities relate not only the European Union but all the 47 EHEA countries which is much wider coverage. Taking into account the previous discussions of the Network Ms. Marin Johnson highlighted other topics such as:

* *Data collection and collection of best practices related to barriers, and implementation of policies overcoming the barriers in different countries have been seen as one of the main issues to improve RPL implementation.*
* *Building links between EHEA countries at various stages in RPL development.*

The Chair talked about European Guidelines for validation by CEDEFOP which is being updated and will be completed this month and the Network will have an opportunity to get new information from Europe. Moreover, it was highlighted that documents concerning RPL are being updated at the moment and it is obvious that there are a number of issues to be clarified and the question is what the Network can add or get from these documents. Ms. Marin Johnson stressed the sharing of information on different aspects as one of the most important pre-condition for success in RPL.

The other topics the Chair touched upon were:

* *Terminology for validation and recognition has been unclear and network has decided to clearly use the term recognition of prior learning.*
* *Lack of quality assurance in RPL has been seen problematic in various countries and thus the procedures and tools used in RPL need to be in focus.*
* *To liaise with other relevant networks and working groups, in particular the BFUG SRWG. Steering board members are working on three directions Quality Assurance, ECTS Users’ Guide and Qualifications Frameworks as the areas related to the RPL and the Network is working to keep links, have access and share information with the relevant working groups.*

During discussions there was a suggestion to work out a system for sharing information among the Network members in a written form as due to lack of time it is impossible to discuss all practices. The proposal will allow to have systemized information from members.

Ms. Marin Johnson talked on the BFUG Structural Reforms Working Group and its sub structures: *Ad hoc* WG on third cycle, *Ad hoc* WG on the revision of the ECTS Users’ Guide, Network on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Network of National Correspondents for Qualifications Frameworks.

She emphasized that the most important point for the RPL Network is developing policy recommendation and it is expected to work out them during the current meeting.

The revised ECTS Users’ Guide was the next point for discussion. The following points were made during the deliberations:

* ECTS has a key role in stimulating change and recognition and its proper implementation facilitates and encourages the paradigm shift from a teacher-centered to a student-centered approach, which is generally recognized as one of the main principles of the EHEA.
* The use of ECTS for lifelong learning enhances the transparency of learning programmes, provided that learning outcomes are recognised by higher education institutions.
* The fact that all learning outcomes are documented and ECTS credits are awarded makes it possible for learners to have their learning recognised with a view of achieving a qualification.
* Validation and recognition instruments used in formal education should adapt to the emergence of a much more diversified and flexible educational offer, including new forms of learning enabled by technology (blended learning, on-line learning, MOOCs).
* In terms of recognition of prior learning, higher education institutions should have the competence to award credits also for learning outcomes acquired outside of the formal learning context through work experience, voluntary work, independent study, etc., provided that these learning outcomes satisfy the requirements of their qualifications or components.
* The recognition of the learning outcomes gained through non-formal and informal learning should be automatically followed by the award of the same number of ECTS credits attached to the corresponding part of the formal programme.
* Institutions are encouraged to publish their recognition policies and practices for non-formal or informal learning prominently on their website.
* By implementing procedures for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, the social dimension of higher education institutions is strengthened.
* Institutions fulfill the objective of facilitating access to learners from professional life and a range of non-traditional learning environments, and thus contribute to making lifelong learning a reality.

The Chair reviewed the Documents regulating RPL and presented statements from 2005 Bergena and 2009 Leuven-la-Neuve Communiqués : “We will work with higher education institutions and others to improve recognition of prior learning including, where possible, non-formal and informal learning for access to, and as elements in, higher education programmes” and “Successful policies for lifelong learning will include basic principles and procedures for recognition of prior learning on the basis of learning outcomes regardless of whether the knowledge, skills and competences were acquired through formal, non-formal, or informal learning paths.”

The last topic was discussion of BFUG questionnaire concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning, progression in HE based on the RPL, consolidated indicator on the recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning, legislative frameworks and the recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning.

**Planning of the next RPL Network meeting**

Ms. Marin Johnson concluded by presenting next steps and informed that the next Steering Board meeting will be held in 9-11 April, in Rotterdam. During the meeting the members of the Steering Board will draft recommendations based on the results receiving from the current Network meeting. The next RPL Network meeting will be held in September.

**Planning the development of policy recommendations**

The Chair offered to discuss the issue in two smaller groups.

After discussions the groups presented their approaches.

The results from the first group:

1. Why RPL ? – is important

connecting to social, economic dimension

benefits to individuals – LLL

RPL available for academic qualifications as well as labor market qualifications

Recognizing new forms of learning through technology –MOOCS

Broaden score of academy not include wide exam of learning

1. How? – LOS – defining in such a way that enables variety of different ways for their achievement – formal, informal , non-formal/HEI + workplace

- Shared understanding – common guidelines for writing LOS

- Every HEI policy for RPL transparent /QA system

-Availability of RPL procedures –accessible to all citisen at any institution

- planning of support during process

- Training of RPL advisors/ assessors/facilitators

- Linking LOS to qualifications – rather than programme pathways + use of LOS to link world of HE to world of work.

- Involvement of more stakeholders, Trade Unions, students Associations / programme design

- Address difficulties presented by ECTS – based on learning effort, rather than LOS

RPL embedded in normal QA processes at HEI

- Development of more flexible curriculum – what, how, where, when

- Awareness raising

1. What ! – Different systems for recognition/ validation

Define score of RPL – shared understanding

***Actions***

1. Collect data on usage, patterns, impact,
2. Research on understanding and practices in LOs,
3. Use of ECTS to embeds LO approach,
4. Include RPL in DS (LO based),
5. Explore use of RPL to recognize the new focus of liaising MOOCs,,
6. Stocktaking - different practices of RPL, sharing of understanding

The results from the second group:

* Definitions: RPL – Formal, Informal & Non-formal

Validation, Accreditation and understanding of both terms in RPL context,

* RPL professional standard, development of training to ensure QA in support and assessment,
* Learning outcomes described in non discipline specific way/ WP Competencies,
* HE should be more focused on training for developing learning outcomes and the ‘natural’ integration of RPL into programmes and how LOs could be achieved via an RPL process.
* Exchange of Positive practices/ data,

Procedures on RPL from practitioners’ perspective based on good practice,

* Toolkit – portfolio context, ways to assess RPL

Mechanisms for assessing,

Develop of common template start with the less complicated areas in terms of case study development which could be developed into more complicated areas.

The Chair thanked the participants for the useful discussions and informed that presented results will be the base for the Steering Board to develop draft of Policy recommendations in April in Rotterdam.