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Terms of reference

Name of the working group

Working Group on the Social Dimension and Lifelong Learning

Contact person (Co-Chairs)

Karina Ufert – ESU (karina@esu-online.org)

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Composition

Armenia, Austria, Belgium/Flemish Community, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Norway, Romania, United Kingdom, Ukraine, EC, EI, EUA, EURASHE.

Reference to the Bucharest Communiqué

(With reference to the sections of the Communiqué on “Providing quality higher education for all”, “Enhancing employability to serve Europe’s needs” and “Setting out priorities for 2012-2015”)

In the Bucharest Communiqué, in undertaking to provide quality higher education for all, EHEA Ministers observed, “...widening access to higher education is a precondition for societal progress and economic development. We agree to adopt national measures for widening overall access to quality higher education. We will work to raise completion rates and ensure timely progression in higher education in all EHEA countries...”

Ministers also re-confirmed the declared objective of the social dimension as already outlined at the London and Leuven/Lovain-la-Neuve Ministerial Communiqués – that the student body entering and graduating from higher education institutions should reflect the diversity of Europe’s populations.

Ministers also agreed to step up their efforts towards underrepresented groups to develop the social dimension of higher education, reduce inequalities and provide adequate student support services, counselling and guidance, flexible learning paths and alternative access routes, including recognition of prior learning.

In setting out the specific priorities for 2012-2015, the Ministers committed to strengthening policies of widening overall access and raising completion rates, including measures targeting the increased participation of underrepresented groups. The Ministers also undertook to develop a system of voluntary peer learning and reviewing

by 2013 in countries which request it and initiate a pilot project to promote peer learning on the social dimension of higher education.

The Ministers further committed to enhance the employability and personal and professional development of graduates throughout their careers. In that regard, they asserted that lifelong learning (LLL) is one of the important factors in meeting the needs of a changing labour market, and acknowledged that higher education institutions play a central role in transferring knowledge and strengthening regional development, including by the continuous development of competences and reinforcement of knowledge alliances.

Overarching aims of the working group

- To further support the development of the social dimension of higher education at national and the EHEA level through strengthening policies to widen overall access, raising completion rates and targeting the increased participation of underrepresented groups;
- To assist the EHEA countries in their work to enhance employability and lifelong learning through improved cooperation with relevant stakeholders;
- To work closely with the sponsoring consortium on the development of the pilot project on peer learning for the social dimension of higher education (PL4SD), with a general oversight mandate to further BFUG social dimension goals.

Objectives of the working group

- **To mobilise the cooperation of all relevant actors** in pursuing efforts to promote greater access, participation and completion rates in higher education for all students.
- To fulfil the Ministerial commitment to adopt national measures for widening overall access to quality higher education **by supporting EHEA countries in their work to develop and implement** national access plans or strategies.
- To support the development of common approaches in monitoring the implementation of national access plans **by elaborating core indicators** that may be used for measuring and monitoring the relevant aspects of the social dimension in higher education.
- **To promote the development and implementation of institution-level strategies** for widening access, targeting the increased participation of underrepresented groups and raising completion rates.
- To support and guide the implementation of a pilot project (PL4SD) **to facilitate peer learning** on the social dimension of higher education which will assist EHEA countries in developing, implementing and monitoring social dimension policies.
- **To contribute to the development of structured peer review processes** across EHEA countries and institutions

- To address the emerging pedagogical and didactical requirements to support the needs of a more diverse student population and improve their completion rates, through **practical recommendations on implementing student-centred learning (SCL)**.
- To address aspect of employability by **advancing implementation of Bologna reforms and raising awareness on the purpose of those among stakeholders** (including employers).
- To help to **identify and set priorities for peer learning and peer review activities** concerning the areas of the social dimension and lifelong learning.

Reporting

Minutes of working group meetings will be made available to the BFUG on the protected part of the website (by the Bologna Secretariat). Bologna Secretariat, at the request of the WG Chairs, may circulate relevant updates to the WG members by email.

The BFUG should also receive regular reports and updates from the working group. To ensure good communication with the BFUG as a whole and for the necessary consultations, progress reports should be submitted at least two weeks before each BFUG meeting.

Meeting Schedule

First meeting Brussels, 13 December 2012

Second meeting Dublin, 17 April 2013

Liaison with other WGs and networks

- Reporting on the Implementation of the Bologna Process WG
- 'Structural Reforms' WG
- NESSIE
- RPL Network

Additional remarks

In addition to the objectives above, the working group will also set out a number of explicit tasks, which will contribute to accomplishing its mandate. These will be specific activities designed to realise the objectives set out above in the context of the overarching aims identified by EHEA Ministers in the Bucharest Communiqué. They will also take into consideration the recommendations of the 2012 report of the social dimension working group and the social dimension chapter of the 2012 report on the Implementation of the Bologna Process.

The draft action plan of the working group for 2013-15 can be found in Annex 1. During the meeting on 17th April 2013, the working group will be invited to discuss and approve the draft action plan.

Draft detailed action plan for the Social dimension and Lifelong learning Working group

(To be discussed and agreed at the Working group meeting on 17th April 2013)

Timeframe	Theme of the meeting	Expected outcomes	Expert organisations to be invited
2013 I half 17 th April WG meeting in Dublin	Theme of the meeting: Lifelong learning and its role in supporting the social dimension and better skills policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better understanding on implementing lifelong learning policies in EHEA • Identifying barriers to LLL and policy measures/ practices on the European, national and institutional level to address those barriers • Demonstrations of good practice in designing and implementing LLL policies on the national and institutional level (FLLLEX project, EUA University Charter) • Agreeing on the indicators with regard to SD&LLL to be reflected in Bologna implementation report (good practice example – Irish National Access Office) • Better understanding of the activities of the Structural working group and RPL network and its relation to core objectives of SD&LLL working group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EURASHE (FLLEX project and the outcomes of RPL conference) • EUA to present LLL Charter • Irish example of good practice (National Access Office) <p style="margin-top: 20px;">IMP: Members of the WG are invited to propose experts or good practise as well!</p>
2013 II half	Theme of the meeting: Quality teaching and its role in supporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the preconditions for widening access through creating supportive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EI and ESU on Student-centred learning toolkit and

2-day meeting	social dimension	learning environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the institutional responsibility for widening access (quality of teaching, student support services) • Consider the latest developments and findings with regards to quality teaching on the European level (High-level working group on Excellence in teaching, ESG revision process) 	its promotion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-level group on excellence in teaching representative • WG member, working on the institutional level
2014 I half 2-day meeting	Theme of the meeting: European framework (strategy) on Social dimension and LLL¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of progress on implementing national plans/strategies for the social dimension • Discussing and agreeing on the structure and core indicators for the European framework on Social dimension and LLL (draft framework will be prepared by co-chairs before the meeting and sent to the WG) • Discussing and agreeing on the next steps of finalising the framework • Examining the experience of the peer reviews and how such practice can be encouraged more widely in the Bologna process – presentation of at least one national system, which went 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PL4SD representatives • Country representative taking part in peer-review via PL4SD

¹ As a number of WG members expressed during the first meeting in December 2013, to advance the progress on implementing social dimension and lifelong learning policies, there is a need to create an overarching European framework, covering the working definition of the subject of WG, main indicators, which could help to describe such definition and allow monitoring the progress and sharing good practices. Such framework would largely build up on the outcomes of the previous mandates of the WG and reporting exercise. It is envisaged that the work of the PL4SD project on setting-up a database with reference to national policy measures, strategies and indicators will be used to assist the WG in this regard. Title of the framework/ strategy is yet a subject for further discussion, the working title remains as *European framework on Social dimension and Lifelong learning*.

		through review	
2014 II half	Theme of the meeting: Role of the social dimension and LLL in advancing graduate employability – building up on the outcomes of the Employability working group 2007-09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussing the contribution of Bologna reforms to fulfilling one of the missions of higher education, which is employability. Sharing good practices on raising awareness of the employers on the value of higher education qualifications • Quality internships in Europe • Finalising European framework on Social dimension and LLL and proposal for the monitoring tool • Defining key aspects to cover in the report (co-chairs to draft the final report) • Cross-checking with the Reporting working group on their findings and what is relevant to put forward for the Yerevan Communiqué 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tbc
2015 I half Before the Ministerial Conference	Theme of the meeting: Future of Social dimension and LLL in the Bologna process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulating recommendations for the Yerevan Communiqué • Performing evaluation exercise for the working group: working methods, satisfaction with accomplished tasks, recommendations for future steering/ structure • Agreeing, whether WG suggest a prolongation of the mandate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting representative • Tbc
Ministerial Conference		Decision on the working priorities for 2015-2018	WG

May 2015			
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Topics, which could be interesting to cover in addition to the general ones:

- Massive open online courses (MOOCs) and their role in widening the access – opportunities and risks
- Impact of fiscal and economic constraints to implementing widening access policies in Europe
- Loans as a form of support and long-term implications for students (choice of study and future employment, level of debt)

Working group members are invited to comment on the proposed draft action plan, which follows the overall objectives of the Working group, as agreed by the BFUG.