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Working Group 3 "Policy Development for New EHEA Goals"

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Draft

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 cope serious challenges 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.

We, the Ministers, encourage higher education institutions (HEIs) to play a continued active role in society and to enhance the capacity of students and staff to be **active and responsible citizens**. Students should have the opportunity to work across disciplines and societal sectors and to develop original, creative and critical thinking. Becoming an active and responsible citizen cannot be learned from lectures, it must be practiced. Hence, HEIs bear a responsibility to build and keep up democratic institutions wherein students, staff and university leaders work together as partners within the decision-making processes at institutional, faculty and department levels. Such academic democratic citizenship is based on the necessary conditions of institutional 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.

Teaching and research are the key catalysers in the development of critical and creative thought. Both can be fostered on the European level. In order to make sure that in this process, the crucial integrating link between teaching and research is not only upheld but continually strengthened, it is pertinent to work towards more interaction and mutual reinforcement of the processes within **the EHEA and the ERA**. We therefore ensure that learning and teaching are considered in a more systematic way when addressing education and research policies. The most basic unit for fostering teaching and research is the institutional level, where research and teaching are two sides of the same coin: good academic teaching is based on original research and the research process gets boosted if it is scrutinized within the process of teaching. We thus commit to uphold and further an environment in which higher education institutions are sufficiently funded so as to be able to allow its staff to actively perform such integration of research and teaching and to reward such crucial work in both teaching and research adequately. At study program level, we encourage institutions to further integrate research and education within the process of curricula design

We agreed eleven years ago in our meeting in London that we share the societal aspiration that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations. Given that the need to work towards social cohesion is now more important than ever in many of our countries, we must step up our efforts to reach this aspiration. We thus reaffirm

the importance of students being able to access higher education and complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background and commit to adequately increase and widen our study financing systems. As our populations become more and more diverse, making our systems more inclusive and supporting **new learners** becomes an essential aim for the EHEA. We encourage HEIs to provide flexible study paths in terms of study pace, study aim and learning methods and agree to review and adapt HE support systems, qualifications frameworks, credit systems and quality assurance to provide the conditions for such increased flexibility and inclusiveness. We commit to oblige HEIs to implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities unrestrictedly.

The progress in **digital technologies** should be utilized so as to facilitate the needs of students, traditional as well as new learners, to enhance the accessibility of HE and to work towards a more inclusive and effective contribution of HE to the development of our societies. In order to reach this, digital technology should be used to create more flexible learning paths, implement student-centred learning, increase lifelong learning opportunities and facilitate internationalization at home as an addition to physical international mobility. To foster such beneficial use of digital technologies within teaching and research, we provide HEIs with means to support academic and technical staff in their creation of digital elements of HE so as to ensure high quality. We commit to work towards open science fostering adequate open access and open code policies and infrastructure and to support and reward European universities for sharing materials in an open way while ensuring that all teachers, academics and researchers, regardless of their academic status, enjoy full discretion in the copyright of their scholarly work.

We, the Ministers agree on a common understanding of main principles of quality teaching and learning. Teaching competences must cope with particular requirements of an increasing and diverse student population and new teaching methods like student-centred learning. Since we recognize research-led quality teaching as the fundamental basis on which the EHEA is built, we commit to more effort for **teacher support**. In order to reach this, we will provide a supportive working environment for HE teachers, ensure adequate funding of HEIs so as to enable them to provide academics with high quality pedagogical training and continuous professional development. Considering the challenges stemming from increased diversity of the student population, we recognize that quality teaching can only be sustained within decent working conditions. For instance, in order to ensure the sustainable quality of permanent tasks there is a need for permanent employment based on an effective social dialogue. To foster exchange and mutual learning on a European level, we are establishing in cooperation with HEIs, students and teaching staff a new EHEA teaching and learning platform in order to facilitate the exchange of experience and effective methods in terms of university teachers' development on European level.

We have implemented a quality assurance system that is applicable across the EHEA. The trust deriving from that certified external quality assurance is geared towards facilitating mutual trust between HEIs and the mobility of students. We believe that it would be beneficial for the economic development of the region of Europe if HE 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 professions while at the same time make them more permeable. As a means to that end and based on our jointly developed tools, we would like to enforce the mutual trust and give to competent authorities and employers the information necessary on qualifications and competences obtained for smooth recognition. Also, we will establish ways to give (prospective) students the necessary information about academic and **professional recognition** of their programmes across the EHEA. We encourage countries to participate in a pathfinder group, consisting of experts from higher education and professional recognition to pave the way to elaborate a common understanding of academic and professional.