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**ADVISORY GROUP 1 ON SOCIAL DIMENSION  
FOURTH MEETING  
Helsinki (Finland), 11 November 2019**

Minutes

**List of participants**

Delegation	First Name	Surname
Austria	Marita	Gasteiger
Austrian Student Ombudsman	Josef	Leidenfrost
Belgium Flemish Community	Patrick	Willems
Croatia, Institute for the Development of Education (Co-chair)	Ninoslav	Scukanec Schmidt
ESU (Co-chair)	Robert	Napier
ESU	Helmi	Andersson
ESU	Jenni	Röynä
ETUCE	Annette	Dolan
EUA	Anna-Lena	Claeys-Kulik
European Commission	Klara	Engels-Perenyi
European Commission (Eurydice)	David	Crosier
EUROSTUDENT	Kristina	Hauschildt
Germany	Ronja	Hesse
Kazakhstan	Khanat	Kassenov
Lithuania	Andrius	Zalitis
Slovenia	Erika	Rustja
National Union of Students in Denmark	Julian	Lo Curlo
Poland	Maria	Boltruszko
Romania	Mihai Cezar	Haj

United Kingdom (Scotland)	Lynn	Kilbride
BFUG Secretariat	Edlira Adi	Kahani Subashi
BFUG Secretariat	Filippo	Benedetti
Eurostudent	Martin	Unger

Apologies from: Bulgaria, EURASHE (AG2 on L&T Co-chair), Luxembourg, Sweden and United Kingdom.

### **Welcome remarks and approval of agenda**

The meeting was chaired by its Co-Chairs; Ninoslav S. Schmidt, Institute for the Development of Education (IDE), Croatia and Robert Napier, European Student Union (ESU).

Participants were welcomed in Helsinki by the Croatian Co-chair, who emphasized the fact that the Principles and Guidelines (PAGs) will be presented at the BFUG meeting that will take place after the AG1 meeting. He thanked the group members for being present at the meeting. Then he gave the speech to Finnish BFUG Co-Chair Maija Innola, who greeted the participants on behalf of the hosting Finnish HE Minister.

ESU Co-chair emphasized the fact of the meeting being a crucial one, as it is the beginning of the reports for the ministerial conference and presented the agenda, which was approved by AG1 members. Then he introduced the participants with some practical information about the recording of the meeting and invited the attendees to have a quick tour de table.

### **Introduction to Monitoring of the Social Dimension with Q&A**

ESU Co-chair introduced the next point in the Agenda and gave the floor to David Crosier, representative of Eurydice (European Commission).

EURYDICE representative made a presentation entitled “*Developing social dimension in the next decade: possible recommendations*” describing the ways in which the monitoring should be carried out in the future and the needs to be addressed in the future in regard to Social Dimension (SD).

He started underlining that throughout the Bologna Process there has always been a discussion about how could have been improved information on social inclusion, but the nature of the discussions was an avoidance tactics, a way to not talk about the main SD issues. It is very easy to get data when the priorities are very clear, so AG1 could help in pushing the political level to focus also on the SD issues.

Then he moved focusing on the national level saying that only few countries have had a national strategy on SD. Only gender was the most tracked data on national basis while all the others crucial aspects of the SD were not recorded. Another problem he underlined was the fact that the data are usually tracked at the beginning of HE studies, while the track starts getting loose and diminishes with the advancement of studies until to quite disappear after graduation.

On European level there is a tendency to compare SD data between countries. Statistics at the European level are unable at the current moment to capture the necessary data in order to define a real picture of the SD and eventually to make a comparison between countries (UOE, EU SILC, European Tertiary Education Register). The European data collectors most related at the SD issues are; a) Eurostudent, that is the most important in student field, in itself facing two problem: countries coverage and ensuring common methodology and **b)** Eurograduates, which gathers data on graduate characteristics. Both of them need a stronger political commitment to improve the SD data.

Then the presentation moved to some possible recommendations:

- 1) To recognize the problem of national and European gaps in data and the needs of a coherence (definition, words, target, etc.) in the way the data is developed. The main problems being: at national level improving the political commitment while at the European level the fact that the HE is not a competence. The process might be slow and might take time.
- 2) European Tertiary Education Register could be encouraged to develop SD data collected.
- 3) Stronger commitment of Bologna Process/EHEA countries on the social issues and in particular to Eurostudent and Eurograduate. It could be a reflection of a stronger commitment on SD issues.

Final suggestion to the AG1 on SD should be that it could make a recommendation about how information could be improved in the next decade.

Presentation was followed by an active discussion, in which participants raised their concern in regard to data collection on national level, while sharing also good practice, such as the one from Ireland, in which data collection are very detailed, taken from small geographical units and put together into a recent publishing. Ireland is one of the few countries which have a track of longer period of time to track SD issues among others. The issue of data collection for SD is still not priority on national level in the EHEA. There is a lot of concerns on privacy, looking into ethnicity, gender situation, and other areas in the process of data collection. If SD is a core commitment, there is the need to get much richer data. There is the need to ensure that collected data are used for improving policies. There is the need of a coherent approach when it comes to data collection.

Data collection is also one of the Principles in the PAGs, which contains guidelines for its implementation. There is the need to monitor implementation of this principle at the national and EHEA level, therefore there is a need to discuss on how to structure monitoring this principle - one of the big challenges in this process is the political commitment for SD and the definition of SD.

Participants concluded that peer-learning activity could be very useful for the development of SD, with the need to adopt a holistic approach to SD, which will horizontally connect SD with other key policy areas in higher education. The idea of a possible BFUG monitoring group for the PAGs was welcomed. In short term it could be useful putting a stress on the wider coverage of Eurostudent and Eurograduate in the EHEA.

### **State of Play of PAGs- Update on progress**

The Group had decided to elaborate the document PAGs as a short policy document to be annexed to the Ministerial Communiqué. It is a combination of ten principles (ten high level statements) and ten guidelines that describe how principles could be implemented. The definition of social dimension they started from was the one presented in the London Communiqué. Schmidt presented the Workplan (available at <http://www.ehea.info/page-Advisory-Group-1>) for this and next year. Co-chairs presented the structure of the PAGs and opened the floor for discussion and comments in order to improve the current version of the PAGs.

The discussion was designed in such a way that after reading each of the PAGs, participants discussed and agreed on a final text, reflecting everyone's input, which after being written down in a flipchart would be further developed and finalised by the Co-chairs of AG1 on SD. The updated PAGs would be presented to the BFUG meeting the following day, as part of the AG1 on SD report to the BFUG.

### **Further development and finalisation of PAGs**

This session of the meeting was entirely dedicated to a discussion and consultation on the current version of the PAGs document. All the members of the AG1 agreed on the improvements of the PAGs. Co-chairs will create a new version of the PAGs (based on the received input at the meeting) and will circulate it among AG1 members in order to create a new improved version of the PAGs. The next round of consultation on the PAGs among AG1 members will take place during January 2020.

### **Peer Learning Activity (PLA) on SD**

The PLA on SD within project SIDERAL (financed through Erasmus+) will be organized by ESU in Brussels on February 24-25, 2020. ESU will send more information about the PLA before the end of 2019.

### **Division of tasks for the next AG's meeting and meeting conclusions & AOB**

It was agreed that the next AG1 meeting (final meeting within the mandate of the current BFUG) will take place **in Copenhagen on February 11, 2020** and will be organized by the Danish Student Union. The joint dinner will be organized on February 10, 2020 at 7pm. Co-chairs will send an invitation for this meeting in December 2019.

Annex 1: Agenda of the meeting