



BFUG Thematic Block on Learning & Teaching

Thematic group discussion within the BFUG meeting in Brno, 7 – 8 November 2022

1. Aim

Learning and teaching agenda gets core attention within the EHEA priorities, this was emphasised within the past two periods by an introduction of a specific working group focused on a wide range of issues and aspects related to high quality, innovative and flexible learning, its reflection in career progress and capacity development of academic staff, in supporting national and European policies etc. Moreover, the recent experiences including those gained during the covid pandemics might have fasten some trends in diversity of learning and teaching delivery, reflection of needs of diverse learners' groups, underlined some challenges and new approaches to mobility and inter-institutional or international cooperation. Arriving to the middle of the current EHEA period (2020 – 2024) seems to be a good opportunity to reflect on the current work, discussion, initiatives, yet also some of the Bologna-related projects¹.

The purpose of the thematic block is to provide a space for looking at trends, exchange of good practices with a focus on national and European policies, provide input and impulses to further work and allow reflecting on various topics within a wider context. Yet, thematic group discussion should not attempt to compete or substitute thematic peer learning activities within EHEA working structures or projects involving a wide range of actors and stakeholders.

It has been emphasised within the BFUG Board that the thematic group discussions should focus mainly on the **system, policy dimension**, identification of **good and inspiring practices** (maybe also failures and inoperable policy measures), both at national and European level. The BFUG bringing together the representatives of EHEA countries ministries seems to provide a good opportunity for such discussion, enhanced by views of stakeholders.

The document is intended to feed into the BFUG Board discussion, especially as regards the thematic groups focus on specific topics and the concept which should allow to make final steps for the thematic groups' preparation including agreements with speakers, facilitators and some background documents.

¹ Interim results and findings within the WG on learning and teaching , EUA run project LOTUS on leadership in learning and teaching, ESU findings regarding mobility are among possible sources for inspiration and input.

2. Thematic groups block concept

The thematic block is proposed to have several parts:

Monday, 7 November 2022

15:00 – 15:40 Introductory key contributions at the BFUG plenary:

- Issues of learning & teaching, leadership & staff capacity; Michael Gaebel, EUA
- Academic careers, institutional perspective reflecting system support and challenges; prof. Jiří Hanuš, vice-rector Masaryk University in Brno
- Students' mobility: patterns, opportunities, and challenges (Matteo Vespa/Horia Onita/Katrīna Sproģe, ESU)

16:00 – 17:00 Three parallel discussion groups with different focus

The groups should focus on exchange on relevant European and national policies, on good practices and other experience and discussion on possible policies and measures at European (EHEA) and national levels. There are no further presentations expected, the aim is to provide space for peer exchange and discussion on possible input to the EHEA Working groups agenda. Each of three groups will focus on its specific area:

A. Learning & teaching, facilitated by Ana Tecilazic, WG Learning & Teaching co-chair, EURASHE with focus on:

- Governmental support to innovative learning and teaching
- Reflecting on learning & teaching trends and patterns after covid experience
- Future learning and teaching organisation, challenges and opportunities
- Role of leadership in learning and teaching

B. Academic careers, reflection of learning & teaching, academic staff capacity building, facilitated by Vanessa Debiais-Sainton, EC with focus on

- National regulations and requirements for academic staff qualification, profile and career progress
- Potential national policies regarding academic careers, reflection of learning and teaching activities, support to capacity building
- Institutional autonomy and possible expectations for national support and policies

C. Mobility of students and staff, facilitated by Matteo Vespa/Horia Onita/Katrīna Sproģe, ESU follow up of the discussion started during the previous BFUG on addressing student groups not involved in mobility, data collection and analysis, enhancing staff mobility, various approaches to internationalisation and mobility, reflection in national/European strategies and policies....

Tuesday, 8 November 2022

9:30 – 10:10 Reporting on key messages from the thematic group discussions



3. Comments on the background

Learning & teaching

The topic of learning and teaching, and related student and staff requirements, as well as a reflection on career support and progression, as an integral aspect of the BFUG Working group on Learning & Teaching (WG L&T), will be addressed within the WG contribution to the BFUG. Still, in accordance with the BFUG mandate it is important to keep the focus on national and European policies. These discussions might complement the other activities of the WG L&T, especially emphasising the view of national governments and their capacity to strengthen learning and teaching and support capacity building, while respecting institutional autonomy.

Reflecting the autonomy of higher education institutions and an important role of institutional leaders, the “Bologna project” LOTUS coordinated by EUA provided a space for exchange on the role of leadership for learning and teaching strategies and development at various university levels, planning also synthesis of lessons learnt into messages to policy makers. While the project offered a great opportunity for mutual learning and exchange among universities, the translation of institutional experience and strategies into clear policy messages – besides the provision of resources and space for mutual learning and capacity building – might still need more time and shows difficulties of balancing the roles of relevant actors. Still, there were interesting examples of national initiatives.

It is proposed that the discussion group focused on learning and teaching should concentrate on;

- What are your current or planned national policies to support and incentivise higher education institutions in the development of flexible, high-quality learning and teaching?
- How do you involve higher education institutions (their leadership, staff and students) in the development of national policies to support and incentivise high-quality learning and teaching??
- Is there more that could be done at EHEA level to support relevant and flexible learning and teaching, and build capacity within higher education institutions?
- Can you provide any examples of inspiring practices?

Academic careers

The European Strategy for universities recalls that quality academic and supporting staff are essential for quality higher education and thriving higher education institutions. The Strategy emphasises the promotion of flexible and attractive career structures, the improvement of working conditions and the support to staff development as priority.

All across Europe, academic staff are more and more expected to fulfil various roles (teaching, research, civic engagement, entrepreneurship, participation in academic governance ...) and there are high policy expectations. Yet, they face serious challenges: uneven recognition of their diverse roles, gender bias, insufficient European mobility, unsatisfactory employment conditions.

This is why the European Commission’s plans regarding academic careers – building the framework for attractive and sustainable careers in higher education, intend to make recommendations to address²:

² Background paper for the EC Working Group on Higher Education, Attractive and Sustainable Careers in Higher Education Institutions (14 September 2022)



- Overly rigid academic system and career patterns;
- Lack of parity of esteem between different academic paths;
- Lack of career development support;
- Persisting gender gaps and bias;
- Precarious working conditions;
- Insufficient European mobility opportunities.

It is proposed that the discussion group focused on learning and teaching should concentrate on:

- How are academic careers regulated by the national legislation and/or policies? What are benefits and challenges resulting from such approaches?
- How important are teaching and learning in careers in national legislation and policies? How is teaching and learning recognised and valued (or not) in career progression? are career development and capacity building in innovative teaching and learning sufficient (or not)?
- What measures might be taken at national or EHEA level as regards support of relevant academic career system, especially regarding support of quality learning and teaching?
- Can you provide any examples of inspiring practices?

Mobility

In the BFUG Meeting in Strasbourg³, valuable discussions took place about the state-of-play, barriers, and trends in mainstreaming mobility across the European Higher Education Area, with an eye to the target of 20% mobile students. As takeaways from the BFUG meeting, there seemed to be an agreement on a further approach to the widening of both the 20% objective and the concept of the internationalisation policies and activities (e.g. including virtual learning experiences, foreign exchanges, blended learning mobility programs etc). For this endeavour, the co-chairs of the working groups that deal transversally with the topic of mobility were asked to provide input to continue the discussion on developing policies that support internationalization and mobility. Several highly relevant issues that need further attention have been raised both in BFUG in Strasbourg and during previous debates on internationalisation and mobility:

- Recognition of credit/degree mobility, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, non-Erasmus types of mobility, linked implementation of ECTS
- Supporting inclusive mobility (where the ministers approved, within the Principles and Guidelines on Social Dimension, a principle dealing with mobility)
- Data collection on mobility and student characteristics, in order to ensure common understanding and comparability
- Expanding the understanding of internationalisation at home policies, including curriculum development and use of virtual experiences
- International tuition fees or visas and working permits in regards to the degree mobility (including EU/non-EU differences)
- Using mobility as a tool for enhancing system-level quality student-centred learning

³ For more details see the minutes from the BFUG in Strasbourg, 11 – 12 April 2022



While the group won't be able to touch upon all these issues, there should be a reflection of relevant existing or desirable national policies, best practices and possible avenues for the development of the EHEA policies on internationalisation and mobility by answering the following three questions in the subgroup:

- How can we further promote inclusive mobility at national and EHEA level?
- What needs to be done in order to promote better comparability of data on mobility and mobile students at EHEA level and what data should we aim for?
- What proposals could be made at EHEA level to reflect current trends and challenges in mobility?
- Do current EHEA tools, such as in quality assurance, recognition or social dimension, need to be amended to strengthen inclusive mobility?
- Can you provide any examples of inspiring practices?