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**FOURTH MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA  
ADVISORY GROUP 4  
ON THE DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT REVISION**

27-28 October 2016, Vienna, Austria

Draft minutes

**List of participants**

ALBANIA co-chair	Linda Pustina
ARMENIA	Kristina Tsaturyan
AUSTRIA	Nicole Guthan
BELARUS	Valentina Simkhovich
BFUG Secretariat	Françoise Profit
COUNCIL OF EUROPE	Jean-Philippe Restoueix
EI/ETUCE	Agnes Roman
EU COMMISSION	Mette Moerk Andersen
EUA	Hanne Smidt
EURASHE	Michal Karpisek
FINLAND	Susanna Kärki
FRANCE	Jean Louis Gouju
ITALY	Maria Sticchi Damiani
Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee Vice-President	Allan Brun Pedersen
ROMANIA	Antonela Toma
ROMANIA, co-chair	Cezar Mihai Haj
UNITED KINGDOM	Huw Morris
UNESCO	Lene Oftedal

The representatives of Business Europe, ENIC NARIC Networks, ESU, Russian Federation, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia were excused.

The Advisory group welcomed as experts Karolis Šaduikis and Donatas Poclus from the Public Policy Management Institute (PPMI).

## **1. Welcome and introduction to the meeting by the representative of the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy of Austria, M. Elmar Pichl, Director General of Higher Education, and the co-chairs.**

M. Elmar Pichl, Director General of Higher Education of the Austrian ministry underlined the importance for Austria of holding the meeting on the Diploma Supplement which is one of the key tools of EHEA.

In their turn the co-chairs welcomed the participants and thanked the Austrian ministry representative for hosting the meeting during those two days on the premises of the ministry.

## **2. Adoption of the Agenda**

According to a suggestion of the European Commission, two experts from the Public Policy Management Institute (PPMI) have been invited to present the first elements concerning a "Study to support the revision of the Diploma Supplement and analyse the feasibility of its digitalisation at European level". Their presentation has been added to the last version of the agenda sent the day before the meeting. With this modification, the agenda was adopted.

## **3. Adoption of the second meeting minutes**

The minutes of the third meeting of the advisory group held in Tirana on 23th of June 2016 were adopted.

## **4. Updates**

Update by the co-chairs:

Cezar Haj informed the participants on his participation as co-chair of the group at two meetings: the co-chairs meeting in Berlin (Germany) on September 14, 2016 and the Board meeting on October 23, 2016 in Podgorica (Montenegro). There he presented the work done so far by the group and asked questions concerning the format of the final report. The answers were not clear but it was obvious that the group would have to present one report for the ministerial conference. This report will mention the work on the changes to be proposed concerning the template and the guidelines of the DS and will have to make recommendations on digitalization and the opportunity to propose or not a DS for doctoral studies. The proposals of the group can be changed by the three organizations. The report has to be ready for the end of 2017 and the next steps have to be clarified.

The Vice-President of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee (LRCC), Allan Brun Pedersen, explained that the date of the meeting is not fixed yet: the Board will probably move it to the end of 2018 and an extraordinary meeting on refugees could take place before the regular one which is scheduled, at present, for 2019.

According to the procedures of the BFUG, the co-chairs will have to provide a written report for the next BFUG meeting in Bratislava in December 2016.

Update by the by the representatives of the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO:

- European Commission

Mette-Moerk Andersen, the representative of the European Commission (DGEAC) explained that the proposal of revision of Europass has been adopted by the European Commission in October. The proposal modernizes the current documents including the DS but there is no specific work on the DS affecting the work done by the present advisory group. The negotiations are expected to end next year.

- Council of Europe

Jean-Philippe Restoueix reminded that the DS is part of a larger discussion and that different parts are disseminated into different documents. DS is used by all EHEA countries.

Concerning the ESCO (European skills, competences, qualifications and occupations) classification – which is part of the Europe 2020 strategy of the European Commission – the process is still going on.

A specific point will be made during the BFUG in Spring in Malta concerning the EHEA Qualifications Framework and the link to make with the Lifelong learning Qualifications Framework.

- UNESCO

UNESCO is working on the global convention on recognition. The second meeting is planned for this autumn. A draft has to be finalized for February 2017 after a concertation process with relevant stakeholders. In autumn 2017, the discussion will go on concerning the implementation of this global convention and the difficulties to be faced when a country has not ratified a regional convention but asks to be part of the global one. Furthermore, the discussions on regional conventions go on and are progressing slowly.

The information concerning the global convention can be found on the following website:

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/strengthening-education-systems/higher-education/recognition/global-convention-on-the-recognition-of-higher-education-qualification-project/>

UNESCO will organize five conferences in 2017; the theme of one of them will be "Quality assurance and diversification providers in higher education". The topic of the world conference in higher education in 2020 has not been decided yet.

## **5. Presentation of the document drafted by the representatives of Finland and Italy**

The document used is available on the EHEA website. It has been drafted by the representatives of Finland and Italy taking into consideration the first comments made by the group during the meeting in Tirana.

The group read the proposals of changes concerning the template of DS and agreed on the following points:

### **Introductory paragraph**

- begin with the second sentence and move the first sentence to the end of the paragraph
- modify "should be provided" and "should be free from"...using "is" instead of "should"
- move the last two sentences into the guidelines
- update the paragraph when needed: for instance to replace UNESCO/CEPES by UNESCO alone.

### **Chapters 1 and 2**

- keep the text as it was in the original version.

### **Chapter 3**

- adopt the changes proposed in 3.2: add "in credits and years".

### **Chapter 4**

- adopt the new title: "Information on the programme completed and the results obtained"
- adopt the new wording for
  - o 4.2: "Programme learning outcomes",
  - o 4.3: "Programme details (e.g.: modules or units taken), individual credits gained and grades/marks obtained: (if this information is available on an official transcript this should be used here)"
  - o 4.4: Grading system and, if available, grade distribution table:
- keep unchanged 4.1 and 4.5.

### **Chapter 5**

- change the title of the section 5 and in the corresponding paragraph in the guidelines into "Direct access to a regulated profession (if applicable)"
- keep 5.1 as it is
- eventually change the wording of section 5.2 from "Access to professional practice" into "Professional licence/authorization obtained in the country".  
→ This alternative has to be discussed during the next meeting of the group in 2017.

### **Chapter 6**

- adopt the new wording for 6.1: "Additional information on the qualification"
- keep as it is the section 6.2

## Chapters 7 and 8

- keep the text as it was in the original version.

The group read the proposals of changes concerning the guidelines of DS and agreed on the following:

### Main title and sub-title

- update the subtitle when the time comes

### Introductory paragraph

- delete the title and begin directly with the explanations
- adopt the changes proposed in the version of the guidelines submitted for the meeting for the first paragraph
- change the second paragraph and introduce a text referring to ECTS, learning outcomes (LO) and the place into national qualifications framework (NQF) – EUA's representative will draft a proposal for the next meeting.
- delete the title "joint, double, multiple degree or transnational/borderless education"
- adopt the changes proposed in the version of the guidelines submitted to the meeting for the last paragraph.

### Chapters 1

- adopt the general sentence on the purpose of the chapter as proposed in the version of the guidelines submitted for the meeting
- add a last sentence in section 1.4: "This is filled in if national legislation allows."

### Chapter 2

- adopt the general sentence on the purpose of the chapter as proposed in the version of the guidelines submitted for the meeting
- section 2.1
  - o eventually move the following sentence "Indicate if the award confers any nationally accepted title on the holder and what this title is e.g. Doctor, Ingénieur etc." to section 5.2
  - o delete "and, if appropriate, a specific professional competence, such as "teacher of French. Indicate if the title is protected in law".
- section 2.2
  - o delete the reference to ISCED classification
- section 2.3
  - o adopt the changes proposed in the version of the guidelines submitted for the meeting for section 2.3
  - o take out "private" and keep only "university" instead of "a private university"
- section 2.4
  - o change "In some cases that other institution may be located in a different country..." into "In some cases a branch campus may be located in a different country..."
  - o adopt the changes proposed in the version of the guidelines submitted for the meeting for this section
- no change to propose for section 2.5

### Chapter 3

- adopt the title of the chapter in the guidelines as proposed in the version of the guidelines submitted for the meeting
- adopt the general sentence on the purpose of the chapter as proposed in the version of the guidelines submitted for the meeting
- section 3.1
  - o adopt the changes proposed in the version of the guidelines submitted for the meeting for section 3.1
  - o add “and” in the sentences “Give the precise level of the qualification and its place in the specific national educational structure of awards, and/or in the National Qualifications Framework” and “QF-EHEA and/or EQF, e.g., Second cycle QF-EHEA/Level 7 EQF”
  - o add “If possible, indicate the corresponding ISCED classification” at the end of section 3.1
- section 3.2
  - o adopt the changes proposed in the version of the guidelines submitted for the meeting for section 3.2
- section 3.3
  - o adopt the changes proposed in the version of the guidelines submitted for the meeting for section 3.3

### Chapter 4

- adopt the title of the chapter in the guidelines as proposed in the version of the guidelines submitted for the meeting
- adopt the general sentence on the purpose of the chapter as proposed in the version of the guidelines submitted for the meeting
- section 4.1
  - o adopt the changes proposed in the version of the guidelines submitted for the meeting
- section 4.2
  - o keep “competences” in the paragraph
  - o replace “will increasingly become the key basis on...” by “is increasingly becoming the key basis on...”
  - o add another example at the end of the paragraph; UK representative will propose a draft for the next meeting
- section 4.3
  - o harmonize the title with the forthcoming comments
  - o add a sentence at the beginning of the paragraph that indicates that this section would show individual achievements gained within the framework of the study program (section 6.1 is used for extra activities validated by the university)
  - o reformulate the sentence as follows: “Similarly, if the programme of study included mandatory/recognised learning activities carried out outside of the university such as: a mobility period abroad, a work placement, voluntary work, etc. indicate which components of the qualification were successfully completed in which partner institution/company and duly recognised.”
  - o put bullet points into the paragraph to make the reading easier
  - o reformulate the sentence as follows: “This can be done either by including these specific activities directly in the transcript which their original titles, or by linking them in a transparent way with the mentioned activities recognized by the HEI.”
  - o clarify the issue concerning prior learning and recognition of prior learning
  - o add a new paragraph on joint degrees
  - o add a last sentence “If this section is too long, it can be included in an annex”
- section 4.4
  - o add a sentence at the end of the paragraph: “If this section is too long, it can be included in an annex with the transcript of records.”
  - o adopt the changes proposed in the version of the guidelines submitted for the meeting for section 4.4
- section 4.5
  - o adopt the changes proposed in the version of the guidelines submitted for the meeting for section 4.5

## Chapter 5

- adopt the general sentence on the purpose of the chapter as proposed in the version of the guidelines submitted for the meeting
- section 5.1
  - o adopt the changes proposed in the version of the guidelines submitted for the meeting
  - o delete the final sentence "Indicate if the qualification is a terminal (end) award or part of a hierarchy of awards". The end of the section will be as follows: "If this is the case, specify the grades or standards that have to be obtained to allow a progression."
- Section 5.2
  - o change the title of the section into "Direct access to a regulated profession (if applicable)" instead of "Access to professional practice (if applicable)"
  - o adopt the modifications proposed during the meeting as follows: "Give details of any rights to practise, or professional title, accorded to the holder of the qualification, in accordance with national legislation or requirements by a competent authority. Indicate what specific access, if any, the qualification gives in terms of exercising the profession (e.g.: the qualification allows the holder to practise a regulated profession or to access a further stage of professional certification, such as a state exam or approval by a competent authority)."

## Chapter 6

- reformulate the general sentence after the title into: "The purpose of this section is to allow for the inclusion of any other information which could not be included in the previous sections which is relevant to the purposes of assessing the nature, level and usage of the qualification."
- Section 6.1
  - o add a sentence saying that this section should show the individual learning achievements gained outside the framework of the programme certified by the university
  - o add "or" in front of the sentence "any additional information not included above but..." to underline the link with the first sentence to be written.
- Section 6.2: no change to be made, keep the initial version

## Chapters 7 and 8

- adopt the general sentences on the purpose of the chapter as proposed in the version of the guidelines submitted for the meeting
- keep the initial version.

## Chapter entitled "Principles and general guidelines for those producing supplements"

The sentences of the first paragraph can be updated (reference to pages and UNESCO/CEPES to be replaced by UNESCO).

The three institutions (Council of Europe, European Commission and UNESCO) will send their comments and feedbacks on this chapter to be refreshed before the next meeting to the co-chairs, copying to the Secretariat.

## Glossary

It was agreed that it would be necessary to add a definition of joint degree programme and multiple degree programme. The Vice-President of the LRCC, Allan Brun Pedersen will send a definition to the co-chairs, copying to the Secretariat.

## 6. Digitalization

*6.1 "Study to support the revision of the Diploma Supplement and analyse the feasibility of its digitalisation at European level" by Karolis Šaduikis, and Donatas Poclus from the Public Policy Management Institute (PPMI).*

The study is mandated by the European Commission and carried out by PPMI. It was launched in September 2016. The first results of the study are expected for December 2016. The two representatives of PPMI presented the objectives of the study:

- identify digital student data management practices
- analyse the digitalization potential of the Diploma Supplement
- analyse transferability of the digital Diploma Supplement
- recommend options of digital support of the Diploma Supplement

They also presented their first results, the main obstacles identified so far, a view on the different digitalisation initiatives, the means of digital data exchange and considerations on Diploma Supplement digitalisation prospects.

Assistance from AG4 members and questions were presented for the next meeting. (see PPT presentation).

*6.2 “Transforming the effectiveness of the Diploma Supplement – maximizing the use of data” by Huw Landeg Morris, Swansea University, member of the AG4 representing UK.*

The representative of UK presented the case of Swansea University concerning the use of Diploma Supplement and digitalization. The purpose of Diploma Supplement is to enhance students' employability. From its origin, the DS was designed in a digital format and extended to Doctoral degrees. It is an interactive document focusing on data as well as documents to support and facilitate evidencing academic and non-academic achievements, evidencing mobility, placements and experience, transition to higher education and transition to employment. It is a complete e-tool compliant with European standards with many advantages for students. (see PPT presentation).

The presentation provided an opportunity to raise controversial questions concerning the costs, the list of students' activities to be identified and assessed, the role of the DS in regard with the CV, the data protection and the role of psychometric aspects.

## **7. First elements concerning the final report of AG4**

The AG4 was reminded of its mandate: it has to work more on basic principles, less on methodology or technical aspects. The group will have to do some recommendations on the layout of the DS and its guidelines and on general principles concerning digitalisation and doctoral degree.

The report of the group will be structured on the debates the group had on the template and the guidelines, the discussions on “learning outcomes” and the proposals the group should make. A chapter on digitalisation and on doctoral studies will be included. The report will include clear recommendation for steps forward related to DS.

## **8. Next meetings in Brussels and Tirana**

The next meeting will be held in Brussels, on 27-28 of March 2017, hosted by the European Commission. The discussion will deal with the final topics of the template and the guidelines on which the group didn't agree during this meeting. A part of the next meeting will be devoted to the general principle of digitalisation with a first draft written by the Romanian co-chair. PPMI will present their final results in the study report. The doctoral DS will be discussed as well.

The final meeting will probably take place in Albania in September 2017 and will deal with the final report.