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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 contributing to coping with serious challenges, such 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.

1. Promoting active citizenship

- 1.1. We, the Ministers, encourage higher education institutions (HEIs) to play an active role in society and to enhance the capacity of students and staff to be active and responsible citizens.
- 1.2. Students should have the opportunity to work across disciplines and societal sectors and to develop original, creative and critical thinking. This approach must include a consistent feature of curricula giving students free space to develop their personality self-contained.
- 1.3. Hence, HEIs bear a responsibility to build and keep up democratic participation wherein students, staff and HEI leaders work together as partners within all decision-making processes at institutional, faculty and department levels.
- 1.4. Such academic democratic citizenship is based on the necessary conditions of 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.

2. Linking EHEA and ERA

- 2.1. We, the Ministers, encourage more and further interaction between the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) and the European Research Area Committee (ERAC).
- 2.2. Teaching, learning and research are the key catalysers in the development of critical and creative thought. We encourage HEIs to ensure that synergies between teaching, learning and research should be considered in a more systematic way.
- 2.3. We invite the European Commission to deploy a better coherence and complementarity between the Erasmus+ and the EU Research and Innovation Framework Programme Horizon 2020 in a "knowledge triangle" perspective.
- 2.4. From a teaching and learning viewpoint, we support the active involvement of all students in research practices allowing them to develop research skills and problem solving capacity and to contribute to the creation of new knowledge (research based teaching and learning). We thus commit to uphold and to further an environment in which HEIs are sufficiently funded to actively perform such integration of research and teaching.

3. Using digital technologies

- 3.1. We, the Ministers, call on HEIs to connect open science, open educational resources and innovation by digital technologies in the EHEA virtual campuses.
- 3.2. Higher education is built on three pillars, namely education, research and innovation which form its fundamentals regardless of the shape of the institution or means of delivery: physical or virtual. Connecting open science, open educational resources and innovation virtually opens up education for the creation of new learning experiences meeting the demands of the students.
- 3.3. We call on HEIs to create more flexible learning paths for lifelong learning, greater education and research collaborations and virtual mobility modules.
- 3.4. We commit to promote the development of policies and infrastructure for rewarding European HEIs for sharing materials in an open way while ensuring that all, regardless of academic status, enjoy full discretion in the copyright of their scholarly work.

4. Supporting students from non-traditional backgrounds

- 4.1. We, the Ministers, commit to develop national plans or strategies for lifelong learning, access, participation and completion in higher education controlled by national monitoring systems.
- 4.2. As our populations become more and more diverse, making our systems more inclusive and supporting students from non-traditional backgrounds, as well as offering various forms of lifelong learning provision become an essential aim for the EHEA. Given that the need to work towards social cohesion is now more important than ever, we must step up our efforts to reach this aspiration.
- 4.3. We highlight the importance of students being able to access higher education and complete their studies without obstacles related to their background. We develop guidance and counseling and commit to adequately increase and widen our study financing systems.
- 4.4. We encourage HEIs to provide flexible learning paths in terms of study pace, study aim and learning methods, using also the opportunities that digitalisation offers and agree to review and adapt higher education support systems.

5. Enhancing teacher support

- 5.1. We, the Ministers, commit to more effort for teacher support and will encourage HEIs to provide a supportive working environment for higher education teachers and to ensure academics receive high quality pedagogical training and continuous professional development.
- 5.2. We recognize research-led quality teaching as the fundamental basis of higher education. The status and recognition of teaching in higher education and in academic career paths must be enhanced. Teaching must cope with new challenges like an increasing and more diverse student population or the digitalisation of education, society and economy by new methods for teaching and learning like student-centred learning.
- 5.3. We recognize that quality teaching can only be sustained within appropriate teaching and learning conditions as well as decent working conditions for teachers, researchers and supportive staff. In order to ensure the sustainable quality of permanent tasks there is a need for more permanent employment and secure career paths based on an effective social dialogue.
- 5.4. To bring national good practice examples on EHEA level and to foster exchange and mutual learning, we are establishing in cooperation with HEIs, students and teaching staff a new EHEA platform to support pedagogical training and continuous professional development of academics.

6. Improving professional recognition

- 6.1. Recognizing the success of the Pathfinder Group on Automatic recognition (2012-2015), we, the Ministers, encourage countries to participate in a new pathfinder group, to develop a common framework of academic and professional qualifications.
- 6.2. We believe that it would be beneficial for the economic development Europe if 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 professional qualifications while at the same time make borders more permeable.

- 6.3. As a means to that and based on our jointly developed tools and our quality assurance systems, we would like to enforce the mutual trust and give competent authorities and employers the information necessary on qualifications and competences obtained for smooth recognition.
- 6.4. Also, we support enhanced awareness for prospective students of necessary information about academic and professional recognition of the qualifications they can gain in their study programme across the EHEA.