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## Working Group 3: Policy Development for New EHEA Goals

Stockholm (Sweden), 2-3 November 2016

### Minutes

#### 0. List of Participants

Delegation	First name	Surname
BFUG Secretariat	Marina	Steinmann
EI/ETUCE	Andreas	Keller
ESU	Liva	Vikmane
EUA	Michael	Gaebel
EURASHE	Ulf-Daniel	Ehlers
European Commission	Julie	Anderson
Albania	Linda	Pustina
Belgium/Flanders	Noël	Vercruysse
Belgium/Wallonia-Brussels Federation	Marc	Vanholsbeeck
Croatia	Vladimir	Mrša
Finland	Sanna	Hirsivaara
France	Luc	Hittinger
Germany	Peter	Greisler
Hungary	Agnes	Keresztessy
Hungary/Erasmus+ National Agency TPF	Szilvia	Besze
Latvia	Ivsina	Daiga
Lithuania	Giedrius	Viliūnas
Malta	Tanya	Sammut-Bonnici
Norway	Jens Uwe	Korten
Romania	Ligia	Deca
Romania	Alexandra	Coltan
Russia	Nadezda	Kamyninan

Sweden	Eva	Åkesson
Sweden	Albin	Gaunt
Sweden	Per	Rosenblad
Sweden	Caroline	Sundberg
United Kingdom	Pamela	Wilkinson
External*	Alastair	Creelman
External*	Olga	Oleynikova
External*	Mauritz	Danielsson

\* Invited speakers, attended a part of the meeting.

## 1. Opening of the meeting

Albin Gaunt opens the meeting and explains the division of tasks between the chairs. Whereas he is hosting the meeting and providing all practicalities, Nadezda Kamynina is responsible for the topic “Competences” and Liva Vikmane for “Digitalisation”.

Karin Röding, State Secretary to the Minister for Higher Education and Research welcomes the participants on behalf of the Minister Helene Hellmark Knutsson. During her time at the Directorate of Higher Education, she has been involved in the meetings at Prague, Berlin and Bergen. She stresses that despite the slow-down of the Bologna process which had been anticipated ten years ago, the platform is still unique. She highlights priorities of Swedish higher education policy, global challenges and calls for initiatives to strengthen internationalisation (cf. presentation).

## 2. Adoption of the draft agenda

The agenda is adopted.

## 3. Discussion on conclusions of the Paris meeting (New Learners)

Draft Conclusions on the topic “New Learners” have been distributed together with the minutes from the Paris meeting. Comments received from Germany, the United Kingdom and the European Commission have been discussed by WG3 chairs. The participants agree to adapt the minutes with the changes presented by Albin Gaunt, the conclusions revised during this meeting will be published as a separate document.

## 4. Work plan and next meetings

After this third meeting (Moscow – Paris – Stockholm), the date 6/7 April will be kept for the next meeting in Brussels, as only EUA is concerned by the collision with the EUA conference.

For the last meeting in autumn 2017 which is planned for finalising all recommendations, the 5th September 2017 is proposed. At this meeting, the recommendations will be reviewed in the context of all meetings/topics. Some conclusions might relate to more than one theme, i.e. ending up as transversal recommendations.

Active Citizenship will be covered in the next meeting; eventually a part might already be dealt with competences.

Members are reminded of filling in the questionnaire which has been sent asking for contributions/background material for the remaining three topics.

## 5. Competences

Professor Olga Oleynikova, Head of the National Erasmus+ Office in Russia introduces in the Relevance of Competences (cf. slides). Though the issue of competences is highly relevant to enhance quality of education, there is no general understanding of the term “competence” but many varying definitions. The existence of and chance for implementation of a general strategy depends very much on the size and structure of a national higher education system. Sustainability could be a dominant requirement for the future.

It is necessary to also look at teachers’ competences for teaching.

A public consultation regarding the European key competence framework will be published shortly; results should be available in 2017.

Two groups discuss the following questions

- What are the knowledge gaps which need to be filled for an evidence-based policy and practice to enable learners to develop and acquire a set of competencies relevant for individual and development needs?
- What changes (e.g. visions, policies, programmes and interventions) should be made in our education system to attain the desired learning outcome more effectively? What are strengths that exist in our current system to facilitate these changes? How can they be leveraged most effectively?
- What are the required actions to deal with the priority constraints and the identified knowledge gaps?

Transversal competences overlap with sustainable competences. Transversal skills should be defined subject-related, with a focus on interdisciplinary skills, and it has to be discussed if this means “without soft skills”. It would be helpful to identify and promote best practice. Answers depend on the employers’ need, partnership with employers, society and alumni.

What is available/needed: a skill and competence forecast or jobs forecast? There is a mismatch existing between demand and available competences. It is necessary to foster links between universities and employers (enterprises and other employers).

Regarding competences different problems arise, e.g. knowledge gaps and acceptance problem in academia. The discussion is an important process for making progress (instead of just accepting definitions).

Curriculum development should be done on senior level and following an institutional approach (not leave it to individual professor). There is a need for training, financial support and allocation of time to work with competence approach.

Feedback from academics on how the system works is necessary.

In her presentation (cf. slides) Nadezda Kaminynan highlights eight levels of competencies, and explains the UNESCO approach for quality education and learning effectiveness (comparative research for definitions of key/core competencies). Active citizenship could be regarded as one competency.

Two parallel groups discuss another set of questions. Some present concrete initiatives and good practice (e.g. teaching of two professors from different disciplines in a joint outside-the-classroom project). Implementation is often difficult, as it is very hard to motivate individual professors to integrate transversal skills in their curricula. A pedagogical strategy for the institution is proposed. The appropriate learning environment is important, but sometimes quite expensive.

It is stated that learning outcomes and competences are mixed. WG3 should find out if/what is the added value of a concept of competences might be in comparison with learning outcomes. Even participants have diverging visions of the terms. Some propose to define a potential added value by allocating learning outcomes to the micro-level (inside the classroom) and competencies to a broader level (institutional/outside the classroom activities). Others feel that competences are more relevant for the teachers’ perspective than

for the learners. Competences as a topic are not new at all. In the common language of the Bologna process, learning outcomes is the agreed term. The BFUG Secretariat is asked to contact the editors of the Journal of the EHEA to ask for permission to spread the article of Kennedy/McCarthy. The assessment of competences/learning outcomes might be worth looking at.

The following basic conclusions are drafted:

1. Society should be open for both formally and informally obtained competences (recognition, especially for new learners)
2. Definition of competences should be driven on university level. At policy level (national) generic competences can be formulated.
3. Society has to be responsible for development of sustainable learning environment which is both friendly and clearly open for different types of learners and different categories of teachers
4. competency in the field of active citizenship.

During the discussion in the plenary, it is stated that various organisations offer definitions of core competences (e.g. UNESCO), in addition to the many definition of competences (e.g. 8 competences in the EU framework). Any curriculum is a systematic and intended packaging of competencies (i.e. knowledge, skills and attitudes that are underpinned by values) that learners should acquire through organised learning experiences.

Participants agree that competence-based learning outcomes have always been mentioned in the Bologna context, but reality is different. Other possible suggestions concern research on assessment and a case study identifying successful practices.

It is obvious that this way the conclusions are too complicated for presentation to the ministers. It might be necessary to define Competence, Competency and Learning Outcome. Nothing is “radical” enough; ideas for something very new should be developed. A smaller task force (Russia, Eurashe and EUA) agrees to polish the draft conclusions and to formulate recommendations.

The topic is overlapping with the one of “New Learners” and should be discussed further with “Active Citizenship”.

## 6. Digital Education

Alastair Creelman from Linnaeus University gives a presentation asking “Can digitalisation of higher education support new modes of learning and teaching?” (cf. slides).

E-learning should lose the “E” – there is no contrast between learning and e-learning. Sitting together in a room is not more a collaborating experience than other ways of learning if not facilitated properly. The topic is becoming part of the mainstream (e.g. at the EUA annual conference 2016 it was not asked whether or why but “how”). Digitalisation should be seen as evolution instead of revolution. It is suggest to also stop talking about students and start talking about learners to make clear that the traditional student is not the only one who is aimed at. Teachers need to know that campus students are aware of what good pedagogy is, whereas other students are much more demanding. Distance students tend to disappear if the quality of teaching is not good enough. Efforts for the virtual campus have to become comparable with those for the physical campus (attractiveness and areas for communication). It is not a question of either or, but of how traditional and digital offers can be mixed.

Physical presence might hinder some people to take part actively (language, psychological reasons...), digital education might help them. Universities have to ask if they are making the best use of the time they have with the students. It is necessary to make this time so interesting that it is not affordable to not be there, that recording is not an alternative. Digital media should be used to prepare the meeting time, to make it very intensive and direct. Pedagogy has to come first, then the design of rooms and materials. The insecurity of teachers (e.g. if they do not want to publish materials) has to be addressed by strong leadership.

There are many opportunities for MOOCs (e.g. taster for higher education, international co-operation, lifelong learning, innovation, shorter programmes). A new ecosystem for credentials will develop – if the labour market accepts them, they will become hard cash.

Do universities have to have full control of everything or are there other actors which can be trusted? Paying for research, losing access to publications – this is the model that we do not want to follow with higher education.

Mauritz Danielsson from the LADOK consortium presents a project building the Swedish student information system (cf. slides). The digitalisation of student support should abolish some obstacles to student mobility by providing tools for transfer of student data (ECTS, results etc.).

In a first step, two parallel groups define relevant areas in Digitalisation on European level and on institutional/national level.

The first group proposes to distinguish between general questions (e.g. funding), specific tools (e.g. compatible/interoperable software) and exchange of knowledge and good practice (e.g. training). The main aspects are

- aims and goals for Digital Education: contribution to lifelong learning, social inclusion and flexible learning
- incentives for digitalisation (e.g. rank system)
- Quality assurance (e.g. quality frameworks for digital education)
- links between open science and open research
- link higher education with secondary education (especially platforms)
- compatibility of supporting tools (platforms like in presentation)
- exchange of experience/knowledge (platform or institution, e.g. Teaching Academy)

The second group lists

- Open Educational Resources
- providing lifelong learning as an additional task
- online exchange/collaboration, joint online programmes.
- collaboration with commercial providers
- Quality assurance methods
- capacity building at institutional level.

In a second step, draft conclusions on the theme “Digitalisation” are discussed.

#### 1. Open Education resources

Encouraging European universities to share materials in open education resource depositories in a way that they are used in open science.

With the questions of quality assurance (peer review), who will organise it, who will pay for it and when we will have to use a metrics, as it is used in science.

#### 2. Instruments for capacity building/peer learning

Recommendation of the governments for the universities to invest their campuses with a strategy of capacity building in a broader digital strategy including learning (staff training and students), research, administration strategies, but also links to society.

With the question of a framework that needs to be attractive and sustainable. This needs additional funds in order to start with but requires the responsibility of the presidents and their teams to organise the system that needs to become sustainable over time.

#### 3. EHEA aims on digitalisation

The Bologna Process should be digitalised.

All tools and instruments of the BP should be (re)considered in light of new technology.

Digitalisation should be an aspect of all higher education processes.

Digital education study experiences should be a part of all students learning processes.

Digital technology should be used to promote co-operation between higher education institutions and help them share resources.

#### 4. Digitalisation as a tool to increase access to higher education and lifelong learning

Higher education institutions should be digitally accessible and present.

Digital technology should be used for pre-courses in order to increase access and retention.

Digital technology should be utilised to create more flexible learning paths and in student centred learning and for lifelong learning opportunities.

#### 5. Quality Assurance

Existing tools and systems for quality assurance do already cover all kinds of education, but the practice is different. Quality assurance agencies need capacities and methods to assess digital education and suitable criteria.

National systems/legal frameworks should acknowledge digital education and the respective degrees.

Digitalisation can be used to improve Quality assurance e.g. involving students.

#### 6. Online exchanges in the EHEA (e.g. "virtual Erasmus")

The term "Mobility at Home" is preferred instead of "virtual Erasmus".

Institutions could be obliged to establish learning agreements for digital programmes.

Institutions should offer joint online courses

Provide additional funding for the institution

Thoughts which are missing in the conclusions but must not be lost (some of them are transversal):

Changes in professions have to be taken into account. How to reasonably cover this change and cater for right competences?

Framework of interoperability of different software systems and processes

Digitalisation is global; it is not possible to exclude the rest of the world. Initiative for a global credit system?

### **7. AOB**

Concerning the interaction with other groups it is agreed that Luc Hittinger will attend WG2 meeting in Nice.

WG3 members are invited to announce seminars and events (through the joint list of events for WG2 and WG3 available at [eha.info](http://eha.info)).

A paper proposing an expert meeting on Professional Recognition in spring 2017 (Germany) is distributed. Some WG3 members could be invited (cf. annex, please contact Peter Greisler in case you should be interested).

Hungary has just finished the OECD report and will organise a dissemination event on 29 November 2016.

Romania plans to host a researchers' conference in 2017 and might be publishing a call for papers.

The Swedish Council for Higher Education will be organising a conference on Higher Education in light of the refugee situation in June 2017.

The next meeting of WG3 will take place in Brussels on 6/7 April 2017. The final meeting is planned for 5 September 2017.