



## WG3 MEETING ON NEW LEARNERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

### Purpose of the meeting

Discuss what challenges an expected increase of “New Learners” in Higher Education poses for the EHEA, how the EHEA can respond, and arrive at conclusions that can feed in to policy recommendations.

### The theme

Europe and the world face an increased demand for education, and the EU2020 target of 40% of attainment in tertiary education requires an increase in supply of higher education. One important reason for the increased demand and setting the EU 2020 target is to meet increased skill requirements in society and other changes in the labour market.

The increased number of students in HE means that the student body will be more diverse in terms of student’s background, prior knowledge, learning styles, aims and purposes of studies, abilities etc.

These new learners could for instance be older students who supplement their previous education (lifelong learning), students from non-academic backgrounds, immigrants, international students, adult students who are changing careers and students that choose to compose programs out of MOOCs from several different HEIs.

Simultaneously, there is an increased expectation of student-centred learning, and that students should be able to choose their own learning situation, study pace and place of study etc. based on their own needs.

This places new demands on the HEI, but also the supporting systems around the HEI, including the tools and instruments agreed on at the European level.

### The theme will address the following passages of the Yerevan-communiqué and the ToR of WG3.

*Study programmes should enable students to develop the competences that can best satisfy personal aspirations and societal needs, through effective learning activities. These should be supported by transparent descriptions of learning outcomes and workload, flexible learning paths and appropriate teaching and assessment methods.*

*Fostering the employability of graduates throughout their working lives in rapidly changing labour markets – characterized by technological developments, the emergence of new job profiles, and increasing opportunities for employment and self-employment – is a major goal of the EHEA. We need to ensure that, at the end of each study cycle, graduates possess competences suitable for entry into the labour market which also enable them to develop the new competences they may need for their employability later in throughout their working lives.*

*Making our systems more inclusive is an essential aim for the EHEA as our populations become more and more diversified, also due to immigration and demographic changes. We undertake to widen participation in higher education and support institutions that provide relevant learning activities in appropriate contexts for different types of learners, including lifelong learning. We will improve permeability and articulation between different education sectors. We will enhance the social dimension of higher education, improve gender balance and widen opportunities for access and completion, including international mobility, for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.*

**The following questions can be discussed, with the purpose of arriving at policy recommendations for the EHEA level:**

- 1) Which needs do the new learners have and how can these needs be identified?
- 2) What expectations are put at the institutional level to welcome new learners and cater for their needs?

For instance:

- What challenges do HEIs face in meeting the demands of so many different kinds of learners? How can expectations of increased individualisation be met if resources are the same?
- How can cooperation and interface with other education forms and levels be developed?

- 3) How should the European level respond to the diversity and the needs of new learners?

For instance:

- What needs to be done at European level to build as much openness and flexibility into the HE systems as possible without losing transparency and clarity?
- What does this development mean for EHEA/EU instruments such as Diploma supplement, ECTS, Erasmus, the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA, Lisbon Recognition Convention? Is there a need of updates?
- Are any new instruments required on the European level?
- What can be done at the European level to strengthen the inclusiveness of higher education?