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4th Workshop on Qualification and Occupational Standards
29-30 September 2014, Hotel Termag, Jahorina

REPORT

DAY 1: ## Welcoming and opening session (09:30)

Nedim Vrabac (CoE Project manager) introduced the fourth workshop. He warmly welcomed the employer representatives from the areas of agriculture, food processing and ICT who joined the workshop meeting. It was emphasised that the agenda for the two days was, as usual, to be flexible to allow changes to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of workshop time. Slight variations to the published agenda were made as the work progressed over the two days. It was emphasised that by the end of this workshop we should leave with five Qualifications Standard (QS) and two Occupational Standard (OS) templates. Karen Roberts was also welcomed to the meeting as lead expert on component 1 of the project (covering the situation of higher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina) who would be exploring, and seeking feedback on this aspect of the work from the working group members in plenary session,

Presentation of the results of working groups (09:45)

The five working groups presented the results of their interim meetings that took place between May and September 2014. The full reports and PowerPoints are on the project website. A selection of key points raised included the following:

(i)   Economy (see rapporteur report, previously distributed draft working document Qualification Standard [QS] and the meeting PowerPoint presentation)
- Compared two programmes of study where learning outcomes were presented in different ways;
- Noted that programmes in this area usually had many electives;
- Indicated that the group had several important decisions to make concerning their QS.

(ii)   ICT (see rapporteur report; previously distributed draft working documents: Qualification Standard [QS], Occupational Standard (OS) documents; and the meeting PowerPoint presentation)
- Announced they had presented their findings at an international conference and would welcome any financial support from the CoE associated with this activity;
- Presented the results of their comparative analysis of five universities with appropriate ICT programmes of study;
- Noted a wide range of qualification titles exist and decided to include 'ICT engineer';
- Grouped learning outcomes into 10 fields.

(iii) Engineering (see rapporteur report, previously distributed draft working document: Qualification Standard [QS])
- Presented the results of qualifications standard for Bachelor građevine (Bachelor of Civil Engineering) prepared after their comparative analysis of study programmes at six universities
- Learning outcomes are grouped into 19 modules/units
- The minimal volume is 180 ECTS

(iv)   <u>Agriculture + Food Processing</u> (see rapporteur report; previously distributed draft working documents: Qualification Standard [QS], Occupational Standard (OS); and the meeting PowerPoint presentation)
  - Decided the qualification was 'Food Technology Engineer' that links to the international classification system;
  - Noted that the scope of the area was very wide;
  - Adopted three headings for fields;
  - Used many learning outcomes from international body sources.

(v)   <u>Teacher Education</u> (see rapporteur report; previously distributed draft working document: Qualification Standard [QS]; and the meeting PowerPoint presentation)
  - Compared different study programmes from many institutions;
  - Focused on the approach taken by the University of Graz;
  - Examined the role of transferable skills.

Following the reports there was an extensive discussion of various aspects of the WG reports. Mile Dželalija commended all the groups on the quality of their work. He praised the quality of the learning outcomes identified by the groups. He commented that there are some weaknesses and needs for improvements of learning outcomes statements, but, in general, the quality of learning outcomes statements has been improved a lot comparing to previous results. Specifically, Stephen Adam with Mile Dželalija suggested that each working group should:

1. Considered each other's outputs;
2. Give further thought to the place and role of transferable skills and employability aspects within their QS;
3. Strengthen/deepen the learning outcomes; explore the role and weighting of any projects/thesis;
4. Consider if they have been sufficiently innovative in their QS - do they reflect cutting edge international standards?
5. Reflect on the level of choice and flexibility in the QS given the level of obligatory ECTS credits identified - are they being too prescriptive?;
6. Consider the possibility of introducing more flexibility regarding entry routes;
7. Check the consistency of QS with OS;
8. Check if the OS were sufficiently specific - would they function as intended?

Presentation followed by discussion led by Karen Roberts (CoE lead expert) of component 1 of the project: 'Analysis of the Higher Education situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina' (1145)

Karen Roberts provided information on this part of the project that focused on the elaboration of priorities for higher education in BiH. She presented three key areas of analysis: (i) The Student experience, (ii) Internationalization, and (iii) HE and the labour market. She emphasised that much of the work to date was desk-based study seeking to establish the facts on the ground. She emphasised that the views of the working groups' members are valuable for this aspect of the project as it moves beyond desk analysis. Karen identified some emerging draft themes but not results, as it was premature to draw conclusions at this stage. Themes included:

- Unclear vision of the future and strategy for development of HE in BiH;
- Unclear vision of the purpose of HE - to aid employability, but what else?
- High expectations of universities as the drivers of change but without resources or clear action plans;
- Need for improved communications and grassroots consultation in the area;
- Existence of poor and often conflicting basic data and evidence on dropout/completion rates, mobility, double degrees, etc;
- Misinterpretation of the Bologna 'rules';
- Accreditation issues and tensions between public and private education;
- Poor partnership between higher education institutions (HEIs) and students and limited student welfare and career support;
- Good but isolated examples of innovative practice in HEIs, plus lack of effective staff support mechanisms and ways to spread good practice.

The discussion of these points raised many questions and focused on three broad questions:

(a) Is there a labour market in BiH? What is its state and how to inform the curricula about the requirements of the world of work?

Comments from the plenary session on this question included:

- Most employment opportunities were in the public sector and many jobs were secured via family connections; the purchase of jobs - a dark sector exists;
- Poor employer-unemployed linkages exist;
- Cantonal employment bureaux exist with systems for the initial funding of jobs;
- No state-wide systems exist for facilitating employment;
- University studies have a role in reducing youth unemployment (kids off streets);
- Student dropout figures are unclear;
- Many employers do not recognise 'new' (Bologna) qualifications;
- More practical education programmes are needed with industry situated work-based learning, placements and internships, etc;
- Requirements are: more joint degrees; HE studies delivered in English; and international mobility opportunities for students;
- Professors, labour market and employers are all partly to blame for the current employment situation;
- The weak economy, low pay and subsequent high turnover of staff in some areas is a big problem for industry (meat processing);
- Some existing legislation needs repealing to improve certain employment issues. European strategies from other countries to improve employment levels need to be explored.

(b) To what extent is there cooperation between universities and the world of work? How far does the university prepare students for the labour market? Is cooperation formalised and how might it be improved?

Comments from the plenary session on this question included:

- There are projects (e.g. International University of Sarajevo USAID project) designed to link students and jobs in the IT area;
- There is too much 'Mafia' and no real strategies to improve employment, which results in many graduate students seeking employment/asylum abroad (brain drain);
- The law school in Mostar has a mandatory 21 days of practice in its programmes. University managements must assume a more dynamic role and responsibility for change;
- Other examples of good practice examples do exist (e.g. Electrical engineers in Banja Luka had links with Novi Sad + scholarships and internships exist. The University of Sarajevo has mandatory internships with business);
- Economic faculty of University in Sarajevo established a good practice. They formed "Business council" which include around 40 most prominent companies. This council is regularly consulted for feedback on graduates, curricula, provides advices and suggestion for studies improvement.
- Many existing qualifications need to be rethought (fundamental review of the curriculum development process), particularly in terms of placements, work-based learning (WBL), academic-industry staff exchanges, internships, industrial doctorates, WBL Master programmes, etc.

(c) Why do HEI do so little research on the HE sector and its requirements? What university research has been done to inform strategic planning (cantonal + state)?

Comments from the plenary session on this question included:

- Some examples of limited research exist but research is not necessarilly of good quality and is not followed up;
- No real strategic research is undertaken;
- It was indicated that universities and faculties need to be 'de-politicised' as a precondition to improvement;
- Academics are underpaid, have teaching contracts, but are not funded or supported for research. Staff also often have multiple employment contracts which means they are in effect 'safari staff'' with no time for non-teaching activities.

Qualification Standards (QS) and Occupational Standards (OS) - plenary session: introduction to working group afternoon tasks and individual meetings (1430)

The WG were asked to:

- Reflect on the CoE expert comments made in the morning session including: considering more innovative elements in their QS; considering what minimum standards means; evaluating their entry flexibility; checking the consistency of their work with the BiH/EQF level descriptors; exploring ECTS credit totals and the level of flexibility they have permitted; considering how transferable skills are introduced; considering sequence of study issues; deepening the learning outcomes they have identified; evaluating and learning from the work of other groups, etc.
- It was indicated that the two external experts would visit each WG to clarify issues and offer support.

Employers' parallel session (1445):

The employer representatives were introduced to the work to date and the main differences between Qualification Standards (QS) and Occupational Standards (OS). They were tasked to:

- Consider the QS and OS and decide if they were too detailed/too brief, plus suggest how they may be strengthened;
- Focus on the format and headings of the OS;
- Join their WG sessions and become full members as well as report back to the next plenary session their observations.

DAY 2: ## Extra Time for working group meetings (0900-1030)

The agenda was changed to allow the working groups extra time to refine their QS and OS.

Reporting back of working groups (plenary 1030)

Individual working groups reported back on their deliberations on the content and decisions associated with their QS and OS. Their reports focused on the changes and developments they had decided in the previous day's afternoon and the current morning WG sessions. The following points are just a selection of points made by the individual WG rapporteur.

(i) <u>Economy</u>
- Made a number of changes to the previous QS;
- Decided not to make entry routes more flexible;
- Explored the Tuning project's generic and specific learning outcomes;
- Re-defined their units of learning outcomes;
- Decided an obligatory 100 ECTS credits that allows faculties flexibility to decide the rest.

(ii) <u>ICT</u>
- Emphasised the positive contribution made by the employer representatives;
- Added new groups of subjects - information and computer security;
- Adjusted and reduced the number of obligatory ECTS credits;
- Made Learning Outcomes less generic and more precise;
- Decided the 'other needs section' related to society;
- Regarding OS: kept the software engineering title; added more jobs/occupations; and added the prototyping of software;
- The employer representative confirmed the usefulness of the meeting and the need to work on standardisation.

(iii) <u>Engineering</u>
- Finetuned their work;
- Refined the learning outcomes they identified - changed active verbs used;
- Included ECTS credits for the foreign language element;
- The new total of ECTS credits was now 160;

- Introduced a new institutional criterion for degree assessors.

(iv)   Agriculture and Food Processing
- Focused on changes made since the previous day;
- Valued the input of the employers;
- Reduced ECTS credit minimum to 145;
- Adopted the title 'Food Technology Engineer';
- Regarding OS: kept the title, adopted the three heading table, plus strongly valued the industry input.

(v)   Teacher Education
- Made a number of significant changes to their QS;
- Emphasised that qualified teachers must be at Master level;
- New title: Master degree in English language education;
- Sought a 4+1 approach with 60 ECTS credits for the latter aspect;
- Noted that different universities use 3+2 and 4+1 approaches;
- Included new learning outcomes in linguistics and teaching pedagogy;
- Explored different examples of teaching curricula;

Conclusions, next steps and tasks for interim (autumn) meetings of working groups (1200)

- Question from the floor: What is the role of our work and various finalised documents? It was indicated that our output would be received and assessed by the Ministry of Civil Affairs and EU Delegation. Ultimate implementation will rest on the relevant institutions in BiH. Daria Duilović (Ministry of Civil Affairs) thanked the WG for their positive work and indicated that responsibility for implementation lay with HEIs to a great extent.

- Mile Dželalija thanked the WG for all their work and the huge progress made. The work will result in five QS and two OS plus guidelines for their use. Mile Dželalija presented the tasks for the next set of interim meeting of the working groups and explained what is expected from the groups:
  - In their interim meeting to consider all the comments made by the CoE experts (re-consider the eight points identified previously in these minutes: 0945-1145 session – listed below) and especially to consider the documents produced by other WGs.
  1. Considered each other's outputs;
  2. Give further thought to the place and role of transferable skills and employability aspects within their QS;
  3. Strengthen/deepen the learning outcomes; explore the role and weighting of any projects/thesis;
  4. Consider if they have been sufficiently innovative in their QS - do they reflect cutting edge international standards?
  5. Reflect on the level of choice and flexibility in the QS given the level of obligatory ECTS credits identified - are they being too prescriptive?;
  6. Consider the possibility of introducing more flexibility regarding entry routes;
  7. Check the consistency of QS with OS;
  8. Check if the OS were sufficiently specific - would they function as intended?

- Stephen Adam thanked all the WG members for their work to date and the pleasant and constructive sessions held in the past two days. He emphasised that an important breakthrough had been made with the inclusions of employer/industry experts. Finally he noted that the end was in sight for the important work they have done but warned the really difficult part lay ahead - how to make the work live, become alive and a practical reality that impacts on positive curriculum change and improved employment.

- It was agreed that the 5th and final Workshop would take place in Sarajevo **December 11-12th (Thursday-Friday) 2014**;

- It was agreed that individual Working Groups would decide the dates and times of their next set of interim meeting(s) and inform the project management. The employer

representatives were invited to attend interim working group meetings. The final results (completed templates) of the interim meetings are to be finished and sent to the CoE project team at least 14 days prior to the 5th workshop to allow translation and distribution. It is important that this deadline is kept so that the CoE experts can provide detailed written comments on the materials;

- The next steps for the project were indicated and include the development and agreement of suitable guidelines on the use and status of QS and OS (draft user guides to be produced by Stephen Adam and Mile Dzelalija). These guidelines would address their use by the quality assurance agency, higher education institutions, ENIC-NARIC and other stakeholders. The draft guidelines would be presented to the WGs for consideration at their final meeting in December.

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