

Joint EU/CoE Project  
Strategic Development of Higher Education and Qualification Standards



**3rd Workshop on Qualification and Occupational Standards**  
**15-16 May 2014, Hotel Garden City, Konjic**

## REPORT

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

Nedim Vrabac (CoE Project manager) introduced the third workshop and provided an update on progress associated with the other components of the project. He introduced the 'Occupation Standards' focus of the workshop. He indicated the difficulties and extensive efforts made to get employers to attend the current meeting. Efforts to attract more employers to become involved with the project will continue. Unfortunately, due to unexpected catastrophic events, weather disaster that occurred in Bosnia and Herzegovina, causing floods and affecting almost 1'000.000 people, employers from Agriculture and Food Processing sector, that registered for the Workshop had to cancel their participation, since that economy sector was the most affected by the floods.

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

The five working groups presented the results of their interim meetings that took place between March and May 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 and PowerPoint)
  - The group decided not to write completely new learning outcomes but rather reformulated and refined their existing learning outcomes from previous workshops and tasks;
  - 15 common subjects were found; number of subjects have common content in most cases (apart from one or two) so they expended the number of core subjects;
  - Examined assessment criteria and procedures and decided they were well formulated and designed;
  - Decided the core common elements of the qualification;
  - Grouped the subjects and allocated ECTS;
  - Took over subjects they worked on within SHEIII project and indicated that their current analysis confirmed the results from the previous SHE III project.
- (ii) ICT (see rapporteur report and PowerPoint)
  - Existing ICT programmes differed in overall ECTS credit values (180/240);
  - Used the existing international standards for grouping of subjects in ICT field, which aided the work of the group;
  - The group identified key core components/subjects and found that many existing programmes were already harmonised;
  - The group analysed the existing programmes thoroughly – valuable source of information.
  - The WG may publish its findings;
  - Indicated the problem with decreasing participation in WG work from some BiH HEIs.
- (iii) Engineering (see rapporteur report and PowerPoint)

- Raised the questions concerning three and four year degrees and the difficulties of making comparisons;
  - Missing representation by some BiH HEIs was a matter of concern;
  - ECTS credit allocation in terms of learning outcomes was problematic;
  - Found big differences between ECTS values ascribed to different degree elements.
  - Main differences are: duration of studies, number of subjects in programmes, ECTS;
  - Raised a question of ECTS standards or basis for ECTS calculation.
- (iv) Agriculture (see rapporteur report and PowerPoint)
- Split into two sub groups;
  - Reported that some HEIs represented in WG were unable to attend;
  - ECTS credit allocation to units of study varied considerably;
  - All study programmes complied with the '*International Union of Food Science and Technology (IUFoST)*' standards.
- (v) Teacher Education (see rapporteur report and PowerPoint)
- Regretted some institutions did not attend the interim working group meeting – University of East Sarajevo, University of Zenica;
  - Raised significant issues associated with the recognition within BiH of 180/240 ECTS credit qualifications;
  - Indicated that some teacher education programmes omitted any pedagogy/didactics elements/subjects;
  - Found big variations in ECTS workload for different degree component elements/subjects;
  - Indicated that more transferable skills need to be developed and included in study programmes.
  - Repeated the absolute need for a larger scale, practical training to be conducted at all universities in BiH on writing learning outcomes.

A range of important issues was raised in the working group reports and presentations. Following the reports there was an extensive discussion of the differences between three and four-year degrees (180/240 ECTS credit). It was indicated that the Diploma Supplement was one way to illustrate the differences. The distinction is particularly significant in the field of teacher education. Most notable was the set of issues surrounding 180/240 ECTS credit recognition that link to study programmes of 3+1, 3+2, 4+1 year lengths. It was agreed that the public (and students) must be made aware of what different occupations require in terms of degree length and the BiH recognition problems associated with degrees of different duration. It was also pointed out that for the purpose of successful HE reform it is necessary to inform the public and especially employers about all the elements of new higher education philosophy.

Stephen Adam commented on the main issues raised in the written reports and identified the following important common points for consideration and discussion:

- We need to decide a mechanism and timescale for the production of a glossary (taking existing documents with glossaries in BiH).
- How, and on what basis, should three and four year degrees be distinguished (180-240 ECTS)?
- It is only possible to undertake analysis in terms of content, not learning outcomes - how could learning outcomes most effectively be introduced into our work/BiH?
- What assessment techniques and approaches currently dominate higher education (HE) in different subject areas in BiH?
- Transferable skills are often not identified - why and how can this situation be improved? How should they be included in the curriculum?
- ECTS credit allocation is a problematic area - what has to be done to improve the situation?
- Should there be guidance on the appropriate ratio between electives and core units of study - how much choice should exist?
- Should all undergraduate degrees include a thesis/major project element? What is their function and importance?

In the discussion it was indicated that a suitable glossary exists (produced by a Tempus project “BiH Higher Education Qualifications Framework”) and this was distributed to those attending. The vital issues associated with 180/240 ECTS credit qualifications were further explored. It was suggested that the Teacher Education group could send their specific concerns and issues to the project Steering Committee for consideration. It is good practice if clear regulations exist for all specific subject qualifications. There was no time to discuss the remaining six common issues for discussion.

## **Introduction to Occupational Standards (12:15)**

This session explored the nature and function of Occupational Standards.

### **Role of Occupational Standards**

Stephen Adam introduced Occupational Standards with the aid of an 'Information Sheet' distributed with the meeting documentation. This sheet also covered Curricula development, the Employability agenda and transferable skills. Apart from briefly describing European experience regarding occupational standards, it was emphasised that it will be necessary at some stage to determine their relationship to the BiH qualifications framework and quality assurance system(s). No European common approaches to Occupational Standards exist and great variations in their role, nature and details can be found.

Mile Dželalija presented a PowerPoint on the role and potential functions of Occupational Standards and emphasised the benefits of a common regional approach. Such standards can have a strong link to qualifications and Qualification Standards (QS). He explored the main purpose of this part of the workshop - to ask working groups to select what they consider to be the important elements in any template for an Occupational Standard. One page from the PowerPoint (Annex 1) was distributed and the five working groups were asked to agree on the functions and role of any qualifications standard as well as indicate any missing elements not on the list.

### **Reporting back of working groups (14:30 plenary)**

From the proposed roles of occupational standards presented by Mile Dzelalija (Annex 1), the group unanimously agreed that the following elements should definitely be roles of OS in BiH:

- Contribution to the development of study programmes, which create more relevance of qualifications in relation to labour market needs – sustainable employability
- Selection of candidates for employment
- Enabling (for individuals) better research of various jobs and identifying compliance with their acquired knowledge, skills and competence
- Identifying the main roles and responsibilities within a particular occupation
- Planning the development of personal career
- Supporting the system of quality assurance and relevance (of qualifications)

On the following proposed roles, the agreement of groups was partial, even though expert's stated that in other countries these are also some of the roles of OS, and for some of the roles WGs found that they are not appropriate for roles of OS:

- Contribution to the standardisation and implementation of assessment of students' achievements
- Designing of new jobs and their development
- Needs analysis and planning of further learning of their employees and themselves personally
- Defining characteristics such as ethics, attitudes, values and creativity
- Regulation of safety in the workplace
- By classification, enabling relevant monitoring of the labour market development
- Creating measurable indicators of performance at work and in education

### **Tasks for working groups (1530)**

The working groups were asked (in accordance with the previously agreed role and set of functions) to choose the components of any occupational standards template using the working

group task sheet in their document package (Annex 2). The groups considered this document and agreed to report back at the start of day 2.

## DAY 2: **Reporting back of working groups (plenary 0900)**

The working groups reported back on their deliberations on the appropriate minimal elements to be included in any Occupational Standard template.

After the intensive work of WGs in 2 sessions, from the proposed elements of occupational standard all groups agreed to the following minimal elements (template containing these elements can be found in Annex 3):

1. Basic characteristics
  - 1.1 Names of occupation
  - 1.2 Code of occupation
  - 1.3 Link to international classification
  - 1.4 Level of necessary qualification
2. Descriptions of occupations/key operations and competences needed
  - 2.1 Description of occupation
  - 2.2 Key tasks and required knowledge, skills and competence
3. Component for Quality Assurance of OS development
  - 3.1 Justification for the introduction of occupational standards
  - 3.2 Developers and date of OS
  - 3.3 Validity date of OS for qualifications standard development
  - 3.4 Competent institution for approval, link to sectoral council expert opinion and Registry decision
  - 3.5 Date of entry into Registry
  - 3.6 Working group members
4. Additional information
  - 4.1 Specific legal regulations directly related to the occupation
  - 4.2 Health risks in occupation and working conditions
  - 4.3 Specific requirements for employment

Many issues were raised during the discussion such as to reformulate and/or clarify some of proposed elements, to group elements differently, to combine elements into one, and so on, all of which was done having in mind that the result should be minimum common elements of occupational standards.

The groups also raised some more general substantive issues that should be addressed in the future process of OS development:

- To have in mind that new job positions will also define new standards
- It is necessary that occupational standards address recognisability at European labour market
- What is the role of OS for academic community and what for employers?
- Development of economy, technology, societies is fast and the process of developing, adopting and periodic revising of OS will also have to follow this.
- Diploma supplement should have a role in OS, since it describes learning outcomes from HE qualifications
- Employers from the region and even EU should be included in the future process of development of OS
- Avoid any discrimination

## **Conclusions, next steps and tasks for interim (summer) meetings of working groups**

After the session on occupational standards Mile Dželalija presented the tasks for interim meeting of the working groups and explained what is expected from the groups.

The working groups should fill out the agreed minimal elements of qualifications standards for one chosen qualification (Annex 4).

It was agreed that:

- Project team will distribute the agreed Occupational Standards minimal elements template;
- Project team will distribute the agreed Qualifications Standards minimal elements;
- All working groups will fill out the agreed Qualifications Standards template;
- The WG for Agriculture and Food processing and WG for ICT will fill out the Occupational Standard template with a chosen occupation as a first step in development of one occupational standard example, as they see fit, providing their own opinion for elements stated in the OS template.
- Project will contact employers from Agriculture and Food processing and ICT field and find a way to involve them in the process of development of OS. Assistance was offered from Employers' Association of BiH for the field of Agriculture and Food processing and International University of Sarajevo for the field of ICT.
- Each Working Group needs to decide for their Qualification Standards what number of ECTS credits to adopt - 180 or 240.
- Working Groups need to undertake some 'peer review' activity as they begin to finalise their Qualifications Standards. The working groups should find examples of best practice (study programmes in their respective field) outside BiH. This should include some evaluation and scrutiny of appropriate excellent qualifications from other European universities, global examples of good practice, and such information sources as the *Tuning project* and any appropriate Subject Benchmark Statements.
- It was agreed that the next workshop (the fourth) would take place 29-30 September 2014 at Jahorina.
- Working groups will inform the project team about the dates and location of their next interim meetings.

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## **Attachments and location of project information**

- Annex 1 – proposed roles of occupational standards
- Annex 2 –tasks of WGs 3rd Workshop Occupational Standard elements
- Annex 3 – minimal elements of Occupational Standard
- Annex 4 – minimal elements of Qualifications Standards
- The following can be found on the project's web site <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/web/bih-higher-education/home>
- Five rapporteur reports and PowerPoint presentations of the interim meetings held between March and May;
- The PowerPoint presented by Mile Dželalija '*Introduction to occupational standards*' is posted on the project website;
- Information sheet on occupational standards by Stephen Adam