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IMPLEMENTATION AND SUSTAINABILITY OF EHEA REFORMS IN TURKISH HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM (TURQUAS) PROJECT

TURQUAS PROJECT

REPORT OF THE SECOND COORDINATION MEETING

29.09.2017



Prepared by Müsemme MERT, October 2017

TURQUAS PROJECT

REPORT OF THE SECOND COORDINATION MEETING

Date and Time:

29 September 2017, 09.30 – 13.00

Venue:

White Hall, Council of Higher Education, Bilkent/ANKARA

Aim of the Meeting:

Monitoring the activities that have been carried out since the beginning of the project and their results and planning of the schedule of the next period

Participants:

Prof. Dr. Hasan MANDAL, Deputy President of CoHE
Prof. Dr. Zeliha KOÇAK TUFAN, Executive Board Member of CoHE
Prof. Dr. Tuncay DÖĞEROĞLU, Deputy President of HEQB
Prof. Dr. Fahri YAVUZ, Atatürk University
Prof. Dr. Orhan UZUN, Bartın University
Prof. Dr. Mehmet DURMAN, Beykoz University
Prof. Dr. Aslıhan NASIR, Boğaziçi University
Prof. Dr. Nebahat SARI, Çukurova University
Prof. Dr. Süheyda ATALAY, Ege University
Prof. Dr. Sibel AKSU YILDIRIM, Hacettepe University
Prof. Dr. Lerzan ÖZKALE, İstanbul Technical University
Prof. Dr. Tuğba YELKEN, Mersin University
Prof. Dr. Sina ERCAN, Yeditepe University
Ayhan KOÇER, Higher Education Quality Board
Ayşegül KUTAY GÜNDOĞAN, Department of HE Project Development and Support
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bilge Kağan ÖZDEMİR, Department of International Relations
Dr. Canan ÜNVAN, Department of International Relations
Fırat GÜZELDAĞ, Department of HE Project Development and Support
Fikriye KARACAMEYDAN, Department of Recognition and Equivalency
Mehmet ŞENGÜL, Department of International Relations
Müsemme MERT, Department of International Relations
Zeynep SELVİ, Department of International Relations

Meeting Agenda:

- 09.30-10.15** Opening speech and general evaluation (*Prof. Dr. Hasan MANDAL Project Coordinator*)
- 10.15-10.30** Briefing on the general coordination and operation of the TURQUAS Project (*Prof. Dr. Tuncay DÖĞEROĞLU*)
- 10.30-11.30** Presentations on the work that has been performed since the beginning of the project within the scope of Work Package 1,2,3,4 and their outcomes and the work that will be carried out according to the project schedule in the next period:
- WP 1: Implementation of Higher Education Qualifications Framework (*Prof. Dr. Mehmet DURMAN*)
- WP 2: Increasing Awareness of Quality Culture and Expanding Quality Assurance Implementation in Higher Education (*Prof. Dr. Sibel AKSU YILDIRIM*)
- WP 3: Recognition (*Prof. Dr. Lerzan ÖZKALE*)
- WP 4: ECTS Implementation (*Prof. Dr. Süheyda ATALAY*)
- 11.30-11.50** Briefing on the developments related to the management and dissemination of the project within the scope of Work Package 5 and 6:
- WP 5: Quality Assurance of the Project (*Müsemme MERT*)
- WP 6: Dissemination and Exploitation (*Fırat GÜZELDAĞ*)
- 11.50-12.00** Briefing on the administrative and financial development of the project (*Mehmet ŞENGÜL*)
- 12.00-12.30** Wishes and requests, closing.

Meeting Report:

Project Coordinator Prof. Dr. Hasan MANDAL delivered the opening speech at the second coordination meeting of the TURQUAS Project. The activities of the work packages that were carried out within the scope of the project were discussed with the national experts.

Prof. Dr. Hasan Mandal informed the participants about the recent developments in higher education and the recent steps taken by the Council of Higher Education, particularly pointing out the steps that overlapped with the activities of the project.

The following topics were discussed in the meeting:

- The EHEA Ministerial Conference will be held at the Palais Brongniart on May 24-25, 2018.
- Turkey and Finland will co-chair the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) between July 1-December 31, 2019.
- According to the Global Competitiveness Report 2017-2018 by the World Economic Forum (WEF), Turkey has risen to the 53rd place from the 55th place in comparison to the previous year. Taking into consideration that Turkey was ranked 42nd in 2012, advancing two places could not be considered as an achievement. Turkey was ranked 101st out of 137 countries in the quality of the education system ranking of the report.
- The participants were informed on the number of students that were placed in Turkish universities by the OSYS in 2017 and the survey, which was created to determine the opinions, expectations and trends of the students who received higher scores than the minimum passing score but did not make any selections during the selection process. The survey revealed that students started to make more conscious choices during the selection process. It was also emphasized that the first factor that determined the choices of students for universities and fields of study was the employment opportunities after graduation (employability). In this context, it was stated that it was important to ensure that the labor market and the planned higher education programs are compatible with each other, emphasizing that the functionality and effectiveness of the programs in the Turkish higher education system must be reviewed with external stakeholders.
- It was noted that the medium-term programme of the government up to 2020 consisted of four main topics: Sustaining macroeconomic stability, improving quality of the human capital and labor force, high value added production, improving business and investment climate and strengthening institutional quality and service delivery in public sector.
- It was emphasized that Science, Industry and Technology Minister Dr. Faruk ÖZLÜ laid emphasis on the high-technology products manufactured based on the cooperation between CoHE and the Ministry of Science, Industry and Technology.
- The faculties of science and engineering of the universities that would like to implement the 7+1 education model, an education model realized as a result of the study conducted in coordination with the Ministry of Science, Industry and Technology started to receive government promotion and the students who had done internship/workplace training for one semester out of eight semesters could be paid up to one-third of the minimum wage starting from July 1, the realization date of the model.

- They moved on to the topic about the process for recognition, equivalence and qualifications. It was noted that approximately 65,000 students of the universities that were closed down during the July 15 incident were successfully placed in Turkish universities with the help of the Bologna tools. The implementations of the Bologna Process in Turkey were evaluated within this context. It was stated that the ECTS process, in particular, had been carried out successfully in Turkey and that there was room for improvement for the issue of internalisation of qualifications by Turkish universities in the ongoing process.
- The participants were informed on the ‘Conference on Higher Education and Refugees in the Mediterranean Region’ organized jointly by HOPES and European Commission on 25-26 September 2017 in Beirut. There were many countries/institutions/organizations that wanted to benefit from our experience as Turkey has presented good practices about Syrian students in higher education. Among the 3,181,538 Syrian refugees living in Turkey, it was reported that more than 430,485 Syrians were between the ages of 19 and 24 as of September 2017. According to a study, 25% of the Syrian refugees aged between 19 and 24 had the opportunity to enroll in a higher education institution in Syria before the war and, according to this calculation, it was revealed that there were more than 100,000 Syrian refugees that had the opportunity to enroll in a higher education institution in Turkey. It was stated that the number of Syrian students that continued their education in Turkey had reached 20,000 in 2017 and that it was aimed to increase this number up to 25,000. In other words, it was noted that 25% of the Syrian refugees that had the opportunity to enroll in a higher education institution in Turkey had become a part of the Turkish higher education system.
- The participants from European countries have frequently mentioned the successful management of the process and several measures taken by the Council of Higher Education about the recognition of prior learning and the placement of the Syrian refugees and the students that had come from countries where they were not able to receive education due to violence and crises since 2013. These topics were also brought up to agenda as a good practice in different sessions.

Following the two-hour discussion on higher education, the coordinators of the first, second, third and fourth work packages made presentations on the activities carried out within the work packages, the results of the activities and the activities planned according to the project schedule.

Prof. Dr. Mehmet Durman said the following in his presentation on Work Package 1 entitled ‘Implementation of Higher Education Qualifications Framework’:

The target groups in this work package are higher education institutions, accreditation bodies and other related stakeholders and the expected impacts are the completion of work on linking the Turkish Qualifications Framework (TQF) with learning outputs in higher education institutions, the raising of awareness of compliance of higher education institutions with the EHEA Reforms and encouragement of the process in higher education institutions that do not have any experience in programme accreditation.

Firstly, Prof. Dr. Durman briefed the participants on the work package. He stated that the aims of Work Package 1 were to complete and internalise work aimed at Higher Education Qualifications Framework in higher education institutions, to conduct five site visits to

volunteer universities, to increase awareness for programme accreditation, pilot implementation and quality assurance on programme level and to evaluate higher education institutions (HEIs) in terms of level of fulfillment of the requirements for the Bologna Process and analysis of evaluation results.

He also talked about the planned activities:

Aim 1: Seven Regional Meetings

- Linking the TQF with learning outcomes
- Sharing information on how learning outcomes should be determined with HEIs which have just begun their work

Aim 2: Site Visits to Five Universities

- Site visits to five voluntary universities on programme level in cooperation with accreditation bodies
- Having an international expert in one of the site visits

Aim 3: Bologna Report for Higher Education Institutions

- Determining the compliance of HEIs with the EHEA Reforms
- Providing input for the 'Bologna Implementation Report' that will be published in 2018

Prof. Dr. Mehmet Durman explained the criteria for the determination of the universities for site visits, which were previously determined as five but were later increased to six, while presenting the activities of Work Package 1:

- ECTS Label Holders: These universities are considered as universities that are fit for the aim determined within the project (WP1, WP3 and WP4) as they have structured their education and training programs in accordance with student-oriented learning outcomes, whether they are linked to the TQF/the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Turkey or not, and workload at a minimum level.
- Universities that have many types of program accreditation: These universities are considered as successful universities that are fit for the aim as they verified their achievements with accreditation(s) and implemented the topics that were discussed within the framework of the project (WP1, WP3 and WP4) during the accreditation process. They verified that they have structured their education and training programs in accordance with the related program criteria and learning outcomes for program accreditation and that they have developed them with the assessment and evaluation methods.

Several teams visited the following universities:

- Anadolu University (Site Visit Team: M. Durman, T. Yanpar, D. Us, Z. Selvi; Date of Visit: 12.06.2017)
- Atatürk University (Site Visit Team: S. Atalay, N. Sarı, M. Şengül, M. Özcan; Date of Visit: 12.06.2107)

- Ege University (Site Visit Team: M. Durman, T. Yanpar, D. Us, Z. Selvi; Date of Visit: 16.06.2017)
- Sakarya University (Site Visit Team: I. Özkale, S. Aksu, F. Yavuz, C. Ünvan; Date of Visit: 01.06.2017)
- Yıldız Technical University (Site Visit Team: S. Atalay, N. Sarı, M. Şengül, M. Özcan; Date of Visit: 19.06.2017)
- Yeditepe University (Foundation University) (Site Visit Team: L. Özkale, S. Aksu, F. Yavuz, C. Ünvan; Date of Visit: 30.05.2017)

The following general assessment was prepared as a result of the answers given to the following questions determined as evaluation topics in the universities visited by the teams:

- Qualifications (NQF-HETR/TQF) (The implementation level of qualifications frameworks (NQF-HETR/TQF); 9 questions): The level of awareness about the importance of the framework and its linking with programmes is quite high as a result of the work that has been carried out on NQF-HETR in Turkish universities since 2010. However, there is still room for improvement for the real implementation of the framework with all its elements. As the study on the relation between TQF and NQF-HETR was recently brought up to agenda, Turkish universities have not put it on their agenda yet.
- The implementation of ECTS and Diploma Supplement (DS) (programme design, programme and learning outcomes, workload and credits; implementation of diploma supplement; 14 questions): The implementation of ECTS and DS has reached a good level in these universities with the contributions of the Bologna working groups and projects and the work that has been carried out by the Council of Higher Education since the beginning of the 2000s. Learning outcomes, measurement and evaluation of stakeholder engagement, diversification of learning activities, workload and credits are issues that still need to be improved and internalized.
- Recognition (recognition of prior learning (formal, non-formal and informal) and credit transfer; 11 questions): Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and credit transfer in universities are processes for waiving some courses by taking exams and acknowledging the equivalent courses (vertical and horizontal transfer, mobility programs etc.) taken in another higher education institution.

Except for the waiving of some courses mentioned in the first article-it has a limited scope of application-, recognition and credit transfer generally include courses which have been successfully taken through formal education. The applications in this field are comprehensive and are developed in the universities we have visited.

However, these universities have limited or no practices of the processes carried out for the recognition of the achievements that were acquired through non-formal and informal education and could be the components of education and training programs (courses, practices, internships etc.). The non-existence or lack of adequate arrangements that regulate these issues at a national level and will set a framework for higher education institutions limits the practices and initiatives of higher education institutions in this field.

The following groups were determined for the seven regional meetings that will be held within the scope of Work Package 1:

- Group 1: Universities that only have experience on institutional external evaluation (25 universities)
- Group 2: Universities that have experience in every field (Institutional External Evaluation, ECTS Labels, Program Accreditation)(12 universities) and universities that have experience in at least two fields (primarily institutional external evaluation in 2016 or ECTS Labels)(19 universities)
- Group 3: Universities that have experience in minimum one or maximum two fields (32 universities)
- Group 4: Universities in the Central Anatolia Region that have no experience (15 universities) and universities in the Mediterranean Region of Turkey that have no experience (8 universities)
- Group 5: Universities in the Marmara Region that have no experience (22 universities)
- Group 6: Universities in the Marmara Region that have no experience (19 universities) and universities in the Aegean Region that have no experience (4 universities)
- Group 7: Universities in the Central Anatolia Region that have no experience (17 universities), Universities in the Southeastern Anatolia and Black Sea Region that have no experience (10 universities)¹

No work or activities have been undertaken for the Bologna Reports of the universities. It was noted that a common approach must be determined for the evaluation indicators of the Bologna Report (Quality Assurance, National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and ECTS Implementation, Recognition, Lifelong Learning, etc.) and for the tools that will be used to evaluate these indicators in a transparent and quantitative manner. The most important tool that could be used to come up with a solution could be “External Evaluation Reports”. As it is hard to know if these issues are handled in a reliable manner and within a common framework in the reports, it has been proposed to convert it into a "National ECTS Label" within the framework of the "ECTS User Guide", which was well-defined in terms of content and practice at the European level, instead of the Bologna Report.

Taking into consideration the work that has been undertaken and the work to be done/planned for the next period in line with the three key actions which are the components of the work package, it is believed that it will be possible to carry out NQF-HETR/TQF, the first action field of the work package, and the related work along with the regional meetings successfully even though there were some problems with staying on schedule. Implementation of program accreditation by carrying out site visits to five volunteer universities: We raised awareness of the issue by frequently bringing it forward in our site visits to six universities and the meeting that was held with the accreditation bodies. It will be appropriate to conduct surveys on the

¹ The decision for seven regional meetings were updated after a Skype meeting that was carried out at a later date. The said meeting report is attached to the report.

issues during the visits to universities with quality assurance bodies in order to evaluate the quality assurance and performance of the work package.

Prof. Dr. Sibel Aksu Yıldırım said the following in her presentation on Work Package 2 entitled 'Increasing Awareness of Quality Culture and Expanding Quality Assurance Implementation in Higher Education':

Firstly, she briefed the participants on the scope of Work Package 2. She stated that the aims of Work Package 2 were to raise awareness of quality culture in HEIs and expand quality assurance implementation in HEIs by focusing more on external quality assurance.

She said that the target groups in this work package are HEIs (academic staff, administrative staff, students, graduates), employers, accreditation bodies, other related internal and external stakeholders and that the expected impacts are the raising of awareness of quality in higher education culture, internalisation of internal and external quality assurance and sharing experiences in higher education. The activities that were carried out within the scope of the work package are summarized as follows:

- A meeting on institutional evaluation was held with the participation of the presidents and representatives of the quality commissions of higher education institutions on March 15, 2017. The 2016 Status Report of Evaluation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education was prepared (<http://www.yok.gov.tr/web/kalitekurulu/64>).
- The Institutional External Evaluation Training was organized with the participation of academic and administrative assessor candidates on July 6, 2017. The data in 2016 was evaluated and the schedule for 2017 was prepared in the Institutional External Evaluation Program.

The data on the levels of satisfaction for the training program for assessor candidates and the answers to the questions of "*What aspects of the training program did you benefit the most?*" and "*What are your suggestions for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the training program?*" were also shared in the presentation.

She stated that the performance indicators of the work package were the monitoring of good practices of quality assurance in at least 80% of HEIs and good practices in at least 20% of HEIs. The expected outcomes were listed as the preparation of training materials on internal and external quality assurance and the review and update of principles and standards of internal and external evaluation by the Higher Education Quality Board (HEQB).

The activities planned for 2018 are as follows:

- External evaluation of five volunteer higher education institutions within the scope of the project with the participation of international experts in September-November 2017,
- Holding a workshop on preparing an internal evaluation report within the scope of "Regional Thematic Meetings" in January 2018,

- Updating principles and standards and preparing a guidebook for the registration of accreditation bodies within the scope of the ‘Meetings with Independent Accreditation and External Evaluation Bodies’ in March 2018.

Prof. Dr. Lerzan Özkale said the following in her presentation on Work Package 3 entitled ‘Recognition’:

She noted that the concept of ‘recognition’ consisted of ‘recognition of prior learning’ and ‘recognition and equivalency of diplomas’ and said the aims of Work Package 3 were;

- Raising awareness of recognition of prior learning for employability and fair access to higher education, providing a basis on recognition of informal and non-formal learning,
- Raising awareness of recognition and equivalency of diplomas received from other countries,
- Contributing to the improvement of recognition and equivalency process,
- Taking care of different approaches of academic staff on recognition and equivalency,
- Increasing the compliance of recognition and equivalency process to the principles of transparency and clarity.

She also laid emphasis on the preparation of a guidebook about the recognition of prior learning:

- The recognition of prior learning is expected to be based on qualifications. The most commonly used approach for sorting out qualifications for recognition are academic and professional qualifications.
- Although it had been envisaged to prepare two separate manuals for RPL and equivalence/recognition within the scope of the project, it was then proposed to prepare a single manual for Turkish higher education instead of two in order to avoid repetition. The participants discussed the issue with the contributions of the related experts and exchanged ideas.
- It was stated that they obtained permission from the authorities to translate the ‘European Area of Recognition Manual’—a manual for fair recognition of qualifications—into Turkish. They have also talked about the translation of the chapters, which will help and guide the implementation of equivalence/recognition in Turkey, into Turkish and sharing it with the related parties. It was emphasized that the work must be carried out meticulously by taking into account the legislation, procedures and principles in Turkey.

Then, the data on refugees was shared and the basic principles for the recognition of prior learning were emphasized.

It was noted that the process for the evaluation of the learning outcomes that were acquired through prior learning should be assured with fair and transparent quality processes by using procedures and validation measures.

Another topic that was discussed in the meeting was the need for a comprehensive legislative work on the recognition of prior learning in Turkey.

Prof. Dr. Süheyda Atalay said the following in her presentation on Work Package 4 entitled 'ECTS Implementation':

She made a general evaluation on the current implementation and listed the aims of the work as follows:

- To display an overall picture of the current ECTS implementation,
- To organize a training for trainers for effective use of ECTS so that it is implemented with regard to compatibility of workloads and learning outcomes.
- To ensure internalisation of ECTS calculation and implementation.

She stated that there were 184 universities (approximately 20% of them are newer than 5 years) and nearly 7.100.000 students in Turkey. She added that there had been some challenges in the internalisation and sustainability of concepts on ECTS calculation based on workload and learning outcomes and that experts and academics had less experience on ECTS.

Five workshops, pilot implementation of ECTS/DS applications and announcement of ECTS/DS results were listed in the activity schedule of Work Package 4.

It was also stated that they had talks about the development of a common credit transfer system with the participant countries of the Vice Chancellors' Forum (VC Forum) held in Turkey on July 27, 2017 and that it was one of the outcomes of the forum. The VC Forum 2017 was held to encourage collaboration, promote the quality of education and discuss the current issues in the field of higher education in the Islamic world. The VC Forum, previously held in 2012, 2013 and 2015 in Pakistan, was organized by the Council of Higher Education on July 26-27, 2017 in Ankara with the theme "Forming the Higher Education Area of the Islamic World". 334 Rectors/Vice Chancellors/Presidents from 37 countries attended the forum. The titles of the panel sessions, which are of great importance for the formation of higher education area of the Islamic world, were as follows:

- Qualifications Framework and Quality Assurance
- Credit Transfer System and Mobility
- QA Agencies and Recognition & Equivalence
- Joint/Dual/Double Degree Programs

The outcomes of the panel discussions were evaluated at the final session on the 27th of July and Ankara Declaration 2017 was published as a road map in forming the higher education area of the Islamic world.

Due to time constraints, the information on quality assurance of the project, dissemination and exploitation of the project outcomes and the administrative and financial development of the project were later sent to the stakeholders by e-mail.

Attachments:

- Presentations
- Draft schedule for the Second Coordination Meeting dated September 29, 2017 (Excel table)
- Draft Gantt chart of the Kick-off Meeting dated September 29, 2017
- The report of the Skype meeting held with the participation of Prof. Dr. Tuncay Döğerođlu, Prof. Dr. Sibel Aksu Yıldırım, Prof. Dr. Mehmet Durman and Expert Mehmet Şengül on October 18, 2017.