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Report on the Roundtable Meeting:

Towards a Higher Education Interoperable Data Initiative

Tuesday, 15 September 2020, 10:00 – 12:00 CEST (UTC+2)

Meeting documents

https://github.com/Knowledge-Innovation-Centre/HEIDI/tree/master/
Meetings/Policy%20Group/01%20Initial%20Roundtable%20-
%2015%20September%202020%20-%20hosted%20by%20EQAR

Participants

Anthony F. Camilleri, Knowledge Innovation Centre (KIC) & DEQAR
CONNECT expert

- Europass Digital Credentials Infrastructure (EDCI)

João Bacelar & **Jeroen van Lent**, European University Foundation (EUF)

- Erasmus Without Paper (EWP)
- My Academic ID

Jean-Paul Roumegas & **François Pradal**, CNOUS

- European Student Card (ESC)

Geir Vangen, UNIT

- EMREX

Roland Gácsi & **Orsolya Posch**, Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE)

- Erasmus+ App

Benedetto Lepori, Università della Svizzera italiana (USI)

- European Tertiary Education Register (ETER)
- Register of Public-Sector Organisations (OrgReg)

Laura Dirvonskyte & **Pietro Marchionni**, CIMEA

- DiploMe

Hosts: **Colin Tück, Annelies Traas** & **Aleksandra Zhivkovikj**,
European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)

- Database of External Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR)

Observers: **Vanessa Debiais-Sainton, Harpa Sif Arnarsdottir** & **Klara
Engels-Perenyi**, European Commission, DG EAC

Apologies: **Andreas Corcoran**, International Association of Universities (IAU),
World Higher Education Database (WHED)

Enhancing the Coverage and Connectivity of QA in the EHEA through DEQAR
DEQAR CONNECT

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Colin Tück (EQAR) welcomed participants and thanked for their interest. He explained the background of the meeting, which was part of the DEQAR CONNECT project and also followed up on prior informal discussions between EQAR, EUF and Europass. **Jeroen van Lent** (EUF) extended a welcome from the side of EUF.

Vanessa Debiais-Sainton (European Commission) gave a welcome address and underlined that advancements in interoperability would support the European Union's current priorities in regard to the European Education Area.

Anthony Camilleri gave an overview of the problem domains that might need to be addressed over time: different categories that are subjected to identification in HE, data availability and structure, amongst others. He introduced the proposed working methods by which the organisations present could collaborate and outlined concrete steps for further work, including formation of technical and policy groups that will have responsibilities in different stages.

Colin Tück presented how interoperability can be beneficial for different initiatives and showcased some use cases as examples. He summarised the status quo concerning HEI identifiers and the use cases that were formulated for an enhanced approach to identifying HEIs.

After both presentations, the floor was open for discussion and suggestions.

Main points raised by participants

Participants welcomed the initiative and were happy to collaborate in the format that was suggested. The proposal to address HEI identifiers as the first concrete problem domain was supported by those present.

On the topic of HEI identifiers a number of specific points were made:

1. Interoperability and assigning of IDs need to follow the needs of HEIs, rather than impose additional burden on them. Top down approaches should be avoided and bridges should be built between existing solutions.

2. Interoperability should be envisioned beyond the Erasmus+ programme and include other HEIs, too.

3. IDs need to be backed by a credible entity, which will guarantee the reliability of the code, if they are to be widely used. The main point of discussion should be who certifies/awards the ID.

4. It is important to pay attention to the specificities of HEIs around Europe. For example, some participants experienced difficulties with the SCHAC approach of using the HEI's internet domain name as identifier, as not all HEIs have separate domain names.

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5. The HEI identifiers in current use were created incidentally – in the context of a specific application and its requirements – and did not aim to be universally useful in the first place. However, some systems might be suitable for universal use if they are detached from their specific application to some degree.

6. IDs need to be stable and, once assigned to a HEI, should not change. Changes in IDs have been noted with one of the initiatives, and this caused problem in future endeavours.

7. Reliance on national identifiers can be problematic as they can change. European IDs should thus be decoupled from national/local IDs.

8. However, an ability to link to (national) legal identifiers or to have a "gateway" to further information would be a relevant use case for some applications.

9. Participants suggested to also look at similar initiatives in other areas, e.g. the financial sector.

While thanking everyone for their comments, the hosts recalled that the first step was to wrap up the use cases. On that basis, detailed requirements should be formulated by the technical group, which would then lead to the proposal of possible specific solutions.

As participants had no additions or amendments to the use cases for the moment, it was concluded to continue work on that basis.

Next steps

In line with the working format that was proposed, two groups will develop the ideas further:

a) The **Technical Group** on HEI identifiers will be chaired by Anthony F. Camilleri and include one representative from each organisation present (Jean-Paul Roumegas, Benedetto Lepori, Pietro Marchionni, Jeroen van Lent, Geir Vangen, Colin Tück, ELTE tbc, IAU tbc)

   Technical Group will develop requirements and scenarios for technical solutions, and present those back to the Policy Group.

   The Technical Group's mandate will end once a solution has been agreed.

b) The **Policy Group** is the continuation of today's format and will be composed of all organisations. The Policy Group will be permanent and move on to other problem domains in the future.

   It was agreed that the Policy Group will be hosted and chaired by organisations on a rotation basis. EUF will chair the next meeting.