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REACT – Final Dissemination Seminar: minutes

Time: Friday, 17.01.2020 (09:00 – 16:30)

Place: L42 Business Center & Workspaces, Rue de la Loi 42, 1040 Brussels (BE)

Participants: Erlend Bern Aaser (NOKUT), Elisabeth Bartmann (KMK), Martina Darmanin (ESU), Nuria Diez Guardia (European Commission), Livia Fossati (CIMEA), Michele Gradoli (LUISS University), Johanna Hase (European Commission), Helén Sophie Haugen (NOKUT), Jens Kemper (University of Bremen), Angela Lambkin (QQI), John Lannon (University of Limerick), Fanchon Lefevre (ESU), Marina Malgina (NOKUT), Mamobo Ogoro (University of Limerick), Nathanaël Poli (CICIC), Jessica Stannard (NUFFIC), Henriette Stoeber (EUA), Lucie Trojanova (DG EAC), Clemens Tuor (Swiss Universities), Megan van der Moezel (University of Utrecht), Markus Wachowski (KIRON Open Higher Education), Miriam Wiederhold (KMK), Zsafia Patkai-Kiss (European Commission), Dennis van Gessel (European Commission).

1. Welcome

- Marina Malgina (NOKUT) provides the participants with an overview of today's programme, and general housekeeping rules.

2. REACT: Rationale, Expectations and Results

- Marina Malgina (NOKUT) presents the rationale of the project, as REACT builds on the second-cycle Erasmus+ project Refugees and Recognition – Toolkit (2016 – 2018).
- We have come a long way since 2016, when the kick-off meeting for the Toolkit-project took place in Oslo.
- Several initiatives were launched in 2015/2016, with the start of the refugee crisis in Europe.
- The monitoring report on implementation of LRC Article VII in 2019, show to significant progress in the amount of countries developing procedures for the recognition of refugees' qualifications.
- But, important work still remains as there is a need to focus on and work towards moving from ad-hoc solutions to more systematic procedures.





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- In a recent policy paper drafted by UNESCO and UNHCR, 1 in 8 immigrants said that qualifications' recognition is their biggest challenge¹.
- This is the Decade of Action, and we have to continue working together towards addressing the challenges that refugees face with recognition of qualifications and that institutions face with providing access to further studies for refugees.

3. Implementation of the Plan and Outcomes of the Project

- Erlend Bern Aaser (NOKUT) presents the framework and scope of the project, the different work packages, and the main outcomes of the project.
- REACT is an Erasmus+ KA3: Support for Policy Reform project, part of the NARIC Call (2018 – 2020). Estimated budget of 180 337,81 EUR.
- Consortium: Project team, Steering group and Higher education institutions
- Project team: NOKUT (Coordinator), NUFFIC, CIMEA, KMK, QQI
- Steering group: EUA, ESU, KIRON, CICIC, ENIC Bureau President
- Higher education institutions: Oslo Metropolitan University (NO), University of Utrecht (NL), LUISS University (IT), University of Bremen (DE), University of Limerick (IE).
- The project was structured along nine main work packages, including four physical meetings/seminars.
- WP1 Kick-off seminar in Oslo with project team: agreement on task distribution, recruitment of HEIs and revision of work plan and adjustment of budget.
- WP2 Fact-finding seminar in Rome with consortium: identification of challenges and needs at HEIs in advance of testing.
- WP3 Development of five new refugee country briefings: briefings developed on Iran, Ethiopia, Somalia, Venezuela, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Authored by expert credential evaluators from NOKUT, CIMEA, NUFFIC, KMK, QQI and NARIC Flanders.
- WP4 Development of e-learning modules for refugee country briefings: live-webinars (recorded) held by expert credential evaluators from the NARIC centres. NUFFIC

¹ Policy Paper 37, What a Waste: Ensure migrant and refugees' qualifications and prior learning are recognized
<https://educatechild.org/sites/default/files/docs/2018/UNESCO-PolicyPaper37-en-wa-print.pdf>





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responsible for the technical platform. Webinars were very well received, based on feedback from participants (survey). Wide reach, with over 1000 views in total on YouTube.

- WP5 Training seminar in the Hague: NOKUT provided HEIs with training in the methodology (Toolkit) and closer cooperation between NARICs and HEIs were instigated in advance of the testing period.
- WP6 Testing of the Toolkit at HEIs: testing between January – July 2019, with the aim to identify possible pathways for admission of refugee students to further studies at the HEIs.
- WP7 Identification of best practice cases: online meeting with consortium, planning on the dissemination on results from the testing.
- WP8 Live-webinar on results of testing: roundtable discussion where the main results from the testing were presented (possible pathways for admission of refugee students and building sustainable procedures at the higher education institutions). Webinar was very well received, based on feedback from participants (survey).
- WP9 Final dissemination seminar in Brussels: the main results from the project and the experiences of the consortium, will be presented and discussed today.

4. Pathways for Admission of Refugee Students to Further Studies: Roundtable Discussion with Higher Education Institutions Involved in Testing of the Toolkit

- Representatives: Erlend Bern Aaser (NOKUT), Jens Kemper (University of Bremen), Megan van der Moezel (University of Utrecht), John Lannon (University of Limerick) and Michele Gradoli (LUISS University).
- Discussion with representatives from the higher education institutions involved in the testing of the Toolkit, focusing on hearing the experiences of the institutions regarding taking part in this process and the main outcomes from the testing.
- Target group: different ways of operationalising the target group for the testing. Based on de facto situation of the applicant and their documentation, and requirements for their residence status.
- Challenges: several challenges faced at the institutions based on the status of the documentation received from the applicants, the different national stakeholders





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involved in the process of assessing the available documentation and ensuring good and transparent communication with the target group.

- Tools: on the basis of their institutional needs and available resources, the institutions tested different parts of the Toolkit as supplements to their ordinary admission procedures. Both document-based and interview-based tools were successfully tested during the testing period.
- Results: several different pathways for admission of refugee students have been identified at the institutions and the participation in the project have contributed positively towards building procedures at the institutional level.
- Building sustainable procedures: impact of the project – maintain commitment, raising awareness, provide reliable structure for implementation of procedure, breaking new ground for the institution, guarantee the safety and reliability of selection.

5. REACT as a Joint NARIC Project: Experiences of the Project Partners

- NUFFIC (Jessica Stannard): several internal developments following refugee crisis in 2015. Organised and hosted webinars, wrote briefing on Iran, approached Utrecht University for testing of the Toolkit based on their experiences with the «Inclusion Project». Ongoing commitment to recognition of refugees qualifications and will work on further dissemination of the results from the REACT project.
- CIMEA (Livia Fossati): background information on the ratification of LRC in Italy and participation in the first-cycle Toolkit project. Recruited LUISS University for their participation in REACT based on their commitment to internationalisation. Wrote briefing on Venezuela, disseminated project at CNVQR in March 2019 and will join NOKUT for Toolkit 3 application.
- KMK (Miriam Wiederhold): high demand for procedures based on numbers of refugees in Germany, possibility to introduce a new product internally and understand needs of HEIs in Germany. Recruited HERE Bremen as they represent five universities and work specifically on access for refugees. Interviewed applicants and developed a national version of the QPR.
- QQI (Angela Lambkin): conduit project partner role, NARIC capacity limited. Recruited University of Limerick based on their University of Sanctuary programme. Developed





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briefing for DRC in cooperation with NARIC Flanders. Will work on further dissemination in Ireland and recommends looking into extending work to TVET.

- NOKUT (Erlend Bern Aaser): dual responsibility as coordinator of the project. Responsible for briefing on Ethiopia, quality assurance of all briefings and coordination of webinars. Recruited Oslo Metropolitan University based on their relevant experience and willingness to test new tools. Coordinated and monitored testing with HEIs. Currently in initial phase of applying for third-cycle Toolkit 3 project.

6. Recognise, Examine and Act (REACT): Q-Card for Admission Officers

- Marina Malgina (NOKUT) presents the purpose of the Q-Card for admission officers, developed on the basis of results from the testing of the Toolkit at the universities.
- In addition to the webinar on results of testing at the HEIs, the Q-Card represent the main product developed for dissemination of results of the testing and has been developed to provide staff at HEIs with recommendations on how to proceed when providing access to refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation.
- Process: Recognise, Examine, ACT (REACT)
- Main challenges identified during the testing period, the different opportunities available and recommendations on how to take action at the institutions.
- The Q-Card is still under development and the draft will be distributed to the participants at the seminar, with the opportunity for the participants to provide comments and suggestion before finalisation of the product.
- When finalised, the Q-Card will be published online and adapted for printing in similar format as the Toolkit.

7. To REACT or Not REACT? Panel Discussion with Steering Group

- Representatives: Marina Malgina (NOKUT), Nathanaël Poli (CICIC), Henriette Stoeber (EUA), Martina Darmanin (ESU) and Markus Wachowski (KIRON).
- Panel discussion where the broader picture is discussed, related to the development in the field from 2016-2020 and how we can move forward based on the outcomes of





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the REACT project and similar initiatives related to providing access to further studies for refugees.

- Nathanaël Poli: emphasising the importance of maintaining momentum and not going into sleeping mode when it comes to developing relevant procedures and solutions addressing the challenges with recognition and access, as the numbers of refugees entering Europe is not as high as it were in 2015/2016.
- Henriette Stoeber (EUA): emphasising the social responsibility of HEIs, lessons learned in the REACT project and similar initiatives EUA have been involved in over the past few years' where analysis of challenges in providing access for refugees have been identified.
- Martina Darmanin (ESU): emphasising the differences between international students and refugee students, the importance of further disseminating the results of the REACT project to HEIs in Europe and the ESU refugee project grants and buddy program.
- Markus Wachowski (KIRON): emphasising the rationale behind establishing KIRON in 2015, the free online opportunities offered, and the importance of thinking differently and creating innovative solutions for access for refugees to further education in host societies.
- Brief Q&A session.

8. Recognition and Admission of Refugee Students to Higher Education – where are we now and our way ahead

- NOKUT informs that, as project coordinator, they would like to collect feedback on the results achieved as part of the REACT project and thoughts on what should be prioritized in the years to come.
- Participants write their feedback and thoughts on REACT-postcards. The feedback will be looked closer into before the final report is finalised.

9. Closing Remarks

- Marina Malgina (NOKUT) provides a brief summary of what we have been through today, thanks everyone for their contribution and informs that the Q-Card will be distributed soon for comments and feedback.

