

The following summary of the presentations and discussions during the PLA is organized around three main viewpoints: 1) the topics to be addressed, 2) the approaches to address them and – as far as possible – 3) the obtained effects or how to monitor them. Please note: References to single countries are only made in the case of very specific, outstanding approaches; common approaches or issues etc. are not referenced to countries.

Topics:

- quality of learning and teaching, student centred learning;
- evidence of what works (and what doesn't)/
evidence-based teaching and teacher development;
- professional development of teaching staff;
- curriculum development;
- incorporation of transdisciplinary topics (SDGs, ethics, digitalisation, ... as part of all curricula);
- generic skills, 21st century skills;
- definition of ambitious learning outcomes (Norway);
- research based teaching;
- relation to student mobility.

Approaches:

- define and continuously reform framework conditions and/or the national legal basis;
- definition of national strategies (e.g. Georgia with 3 pillars: modernisation, LLL, quality and equality; also Armenia and Portugal) or national development plans for higher education as a basis for subsequent governance (e.g. Austria);
- preparation of strategies and the like by national advisory groups with stakeholder involvement, esp. with students (e.g. Austria's "conference" of stakeholders in higher education (Hochschulkonferenz));
- responsibility of institutions to implement reforms, e.g. controlled by performance agreements between institution and resp. ministry that must incorporate national strategies or development plans (e.g. Austria);
- fostering of institutional strategies;
- specific agencies for the enhancement of learning and teaching (e.g. Ireland, Georgia, Norway: 12 national Centres for Excellence in Education);
- also quality assurance agencies in charge (e.g. Norway); incl. various forms of (external) quality assurance (e.g. incl. accreditation, i.e. in this context: setting of standards);
- HEI-based centres/departments (financed by the respective ministry);
- agenda setting, keeping institutions and individuals informed;
- also project funding plays an important role (Norway: competitive funding; also Portugal);
- relevance of EU funded programmes (e.g. Erasmus capacity building);
- inform and discuss via whitepapers (Norway: discussed and agreed upon in parliament), online repositories of good practice, conferences, governmental consultations, ...

- networking between various groups/stakeholders and various institutions;
- teaching awards;
- initiation and/or support of professional development activities;
- peer reviews of education;
- specific support of technology-enhanced learning (even before the lockdowns);
- research of effective teaching and resp. publications.

(Discussion on) Effects (and how do measure them) – i.e. monitoring:

- difficult to measure success;
- but various approaches to try to do so;
- focus on quality or quantity? focus on gained competencies?
- numbers preferred but various aspects difficult to put in numbers;
- national quantitative approaches: national student barometer (Norway), student social survey (Austria), national teacher survey (Norway);
- ensure student, alumni and other surveys on institutional level (e.g. via performance agreements); but student evaluation is also seen as a “black box”; alternative/addendum: focus groups;
- reports by universities (e.g. on accomplishment of performance agreements; annual knowledge balance reports);
- but in any case, strategies or measures need time to take effect;
- special approach: “Agreed National Understanding of Student Success” (Ireland).

Further discussion

- student involvement in stakeholder consultation;
- “The enhancement of L&T is a story of partnership, time, stability, quality and not quantity, support, value of teaching, innovation, etc.” (from one of the summaries during the PLA);
- Non-participation in development/innovation/... should not be sanctioned; rather rely on support;
- Aging faculty seems to be a problem in some cases;
- In some countries also geographic decentralisation is a challenge;
- The gap between the relevance of teaching and the relevance of research for a scientist’s career remains a big barrier to teaching innovation;
- Funding often isn’t sustainable.

Countries represented in the presentations during the PLA

Armenia, Austria, Georgia, Ireland, Norway, Portugal

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