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Progress Report of the BFUG Working Group on Learning and Teaching (April 2023)

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1. Introduction

Progress Report of the Working Group on Learning and Teaching gathers information about the activities and outcomes of the work of the Bologna Follow-Up Group Learning & Teaching Working Group (BFUG L&T WG), focusing on translating the Recommendations endorsed by Ministers in the 2020 Rome Conference of Ministers, in particular Annex III of the Communiqué, into concrete policy actions.

2. Background

The BFUG Working Group on Learning and Teaching (WG L&T) bases its work on the Recommendations to National Authorities for the Enhancement of Higher Education Learning and Teaching in the EHEA - Annex III to the Rome Communiqué (2020), specifically looking at how to translate these Recommendations into concrete policy actions across the EHEA and, where possible, into measurable, qualitative indicators.

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Reference to the Rome Communiqué

We adopt the “Recommendations to National Authorities for the Enhancement of Higher Education Learning and Teaching in the EHEA” (Annex III) and commit to following them, supporting higher education institutions in further implementing student-centered learning and teaching. The recommendations comprise increased support for all learners, and for teaching and non-teaching staff. Academic staff, including junior academics, require stable employment and career opportunities, parity of esteem for teaching and research, attractive working conditions, access to up-to-date staff development, and recognition of their achievements. In all these respects we will foster dialogue and collaboration on learning and teaching in our national systems and at EHEA level.

Flexible and open learning paths, part of the original inspiration for the Bologna Process, are important aspects of student-centered learning and are in increasing demand in our societies. In addition to full degree programmes, many higher education institutions offer or plan to offer smaller units of learning, which enable learners to develop or update their cultural, professional, and transversal skills and competencies at various stages in their lives. We ask the BFUG to explore how and to what extent these smaller, flexible units, including those leading to micro-credentials, can be defined, developed, implemented and recognised by our institutions using EHEA tools.

We commit to supporting our higher education institutions in using digital technologies for learning, teaching and assessment, as well as for academic communication and research, and to investing in the development of digital skills and competencies for all.

3. Thematic Framework

Three main specific topics in the broad area of learning and teaching, that the BFUG WG on L&T has been mandated to work on, are the following:

- Making student-centred learning a reality across the entire EHEA;
- Supporting staff development;
- Fostering innovative learning and teaching.

Additional topics from the Terms of Reference include the following:

- Discussing assessment in higher education;
- Supporting the continuous improvement of learning, teaching and assessment;
- Developing international learning environments for the students.

These additional topics are being addressed in the course of discussions on the three specific topics (SCL, staff development, fostering innovative L&T).

The WG on L&T is planning and carrying out its activities around these topics and always looking at the system-level initiatives and practices and not focusing on practices at the level of individual higher education institutions.

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4. Implemented activities

The BFUG Working Group on L&T has held five meetings so far, four of them online and one face-to-face meeting at the EURASHE premises in Brussels. In addition to that, the BFUG WG on L&T has held one PLA hosted by the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research.

[First meeting \(21 September 2021\)](#)

In its first meeting, the WG L&T discussed the Terms of Reference and agreed on how to make operational the tasks that it has been mandated to do. An agreement has been reached to first focus on discussing possible indicators in the area of learning and teaching based on the ministerial Recommendations.

The group agreed not to organise a specific survey based on the ministerial recommendations but to direct its efforts towards making a proposal to the BFUG Working Group on Monitoring and Implementation on topics and possible indicators to map challenges and actions within the EHEA in the implementation of the ministerial Recommendations.

These indicators would then be incorporated in the Bologna Implementation Report which would assure continuous monitoring and assessment of the implementation of Recommendations to National Authorities for the Enhancement of Higher Education Learning and Teaching in the EHEA (2020).

[Second meeting \(25 January 2022\)](#)

The Annual Work Plan for 2022 has been adopted and the agreement has been reached to divide the work into three sub-groups, each to be led by one of the co-chairs, focusing on three main topics that are:

1. Student-centred learning
2. Staff development
3. Innovative learning and teaching

Three sub-groups met online, each sub-group once (21 February 2022, 28 February 2022, 2 March 2022) to discuss the topics and thematic framework to draw indicators on learning and teaching.

[Third meeting \(5 April 2022\)](#)

In the third meeting the co-chairs reported on the work of the sub-groups and key topics under which the indicators would be developed for monitoring the implementation of the ministerial Recommendations, which have been put together.

[Fourth meeting \(12 May 2022\)](#)

The WG discussed the development of indicators that could best assess progress on implementing the *Recommendations to National Authorities for the Enhancement of*

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Higher Education Learning and Teaching in the EHEA and prepared an extensive list of topics that could be covered by indicators and submitted its proposal to the WG on Monitoring and Implementation.

The WG also discussed the possibilities of having PLAs on specific topics and sub-topics and prepared a structure for each member of the WG to come up with proposals and volunteer with specific contributions to PLAs. The excel table was prepared for that purpose. It is a working document shared on Google Drive and intended to be used throughout the duration of the mandate of the Working Group.

[Fifth meeting \(30 September 2022\)](#)

In the fifth meeting of the Learning and Teaching Working Group (30 September 2022) the WG discussed and agreed on a set of measurable indicators, prepared by the WG Monitoring based on a first list of possible topics identified by the WG L&T. The indicators cover the following topics:

- 1 Strategy and policy
 - 1.2 Strategy/policy implementation plan
 - 1.1 System-level strategy or policy on learning and teaching
 - 1.2 Strategy/policy implementation plan
 - 1.3 Consultation
 - 1.4 Monitoring mechanisms/QA
 - 2 Supporting learning and teaching
 - 2.1 Structures to support teaching and learning
 - 2.2 Consultation
 - 2.3 student-centred learning
 - 3 Professional development
 - 3.1 Initial and continuous teacher training
 - 3.2 Use of digital tools
 - 3.3 International Collaboration
 - 3.4 Professional experience

Moreover, the PLA on staff development was discussed and almost finalised and the discussion on the work plan for 2023 has been launched.

Finally, the co-chairs presented a proposed structure for the Final Report of the WG on L&T in a form of a discussion paper proposing a structure of the future report and calling for contributions from the WG members on drafting chapters on landscape scan, policy context, outcomes of the PLAs and direct inputs from members of the Working Group.

Working Group agreed to process based on a discussion paper that is to:

- a) co-chairs to develop a template for collecting examples of good practices at the system-level

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- b) WG members to contribute to the landscape scan;
- c) BFUG members to contribute with examples of practices from respective EHEA systems (using a common template).

Sixth meeting (1 December 2022)

In the sixth meeting of the Learning and Teaching Working Group the topic of the staff development was discussed based on the outputs of the PLA on staff development in higher education that was organised in Paris (27-28 October 2022) and with the objective to propose recommendations for the Tirana 2024 Communiqué. Participants were split into parallel breakout sessions and the three sub-groups offered potential proposals. The synthesis of the proposals is presented in Annex IV of this Progress Report - Proposals for the Ministerial Communiqué on the topic of STAFF DEVELOPMENT.

Seventh meeting (5 April 2023)

In the seventh meeting of the Learning and Teaching Working Group, three main items were on the Agenda: results of the landscape scan, discussion on the proposal for the Communiqué and the preparations for the next PLA. First, the results of the screening of good practices at the system level in learning and teaching were presented and discussed. Since only 16 EHEA members responded to the survey, the agreement was reached that the deadline would be prolonged and another reminder will be sent to the BFUG members.

Second, the proposals for the Communiqué on the topic of staff development were discussed. The outcome of the discussion is presented as the revised Annex IV of this Progress Report - Proposals for the Ministerial Communiqué on the topic of STAFF DEVELOPMENT. An agreement was reached that the content of the input for the Drafting Committee was very well reflecting the discussion held so far on the topic of staff development but that the next version of the input needs to be more visionary, shorter and condensed, focusing on the main idea and formulated as a ministerial commitment (this work is ongoing). Secondly, the group agreed that it will not propose another annex to the Communiqué but will limit its contribution to a paragraph(s) on teaching and learning in the Communiqué. The WG agreed that the existing Ministerial Recommendations (ANNEX III to the Rome Communiqué) are quite ambitious and that, in the next work programme of the BFUG, the focus should be given to the implementation rather than on creating new commitments. In addition to that, the WG will submit the updated Progress Report as the Final Report of the WG.

Third, the concept and the draft agenda of the PLA on student-centred learning were discussed. The PLA will take place in Bucharest, back to back with the EURASHE Annual Conference and will focus on developing a proposal on the topic of SCL for the Communiqué.

Finally, the discussions of this working session led to the creation of a small group responsible for collecting available data on ethical issues related to the use of digital

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tools in training and pedagogy (artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT, learning analytics...) and produce recommendations that the drafting committee can use if they wish.

5. Peer Learning Activities

Among the specific tasks of the WG L&T there is a task to further develop the recommendations in Annex III of the Rome Communiqué by translating them into concrete actions at the European/EHEA level and support member countries in the development of concrete national actions and strategies to implement the above recommendations. The WG chose to operationalise this task by translating all lessons learnt and information gathered from all the tasks completed, into concrete recommendations. More specifically, the collection of good practices at the system level is being done, among others, through organising PLAs for policymakers and HEIs. The first PLA addressed the topic of staff development. It was hosted by the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research and held in Paris on 26-27 October 2022. More information about the PLA is presented in Annex I of this Progress Report.

A second PLA will take place on student centered learning will take place in Bucharest on June 7, 2023 (<https://www.eurashe.eu/events/pla-student-learning/>). This PLA aims to bring together different stakeholders in higher education to share information about the system-level developments, exchange good practices and discuss possible commitments concerning further enhancing the student-centred learning approach at the system level.

6. Indicators

Among the specific tasks of the WG L&T, there is a task to develop measurable qualitative indicators, which can serve as a basis for monitoring the progress of learning and teaching in the EHEA, on the basis of the recommendations in Annex III of the Rome Communiqué. The WG L&T came up with an extensive list of topics and possible indicators and submitted it to the WG on Implementation and Monitoring which extracted from the original list those that are feasible to be measured and compared at the level of the EHEA. The original list of potential topics from which to formulate indicators is included in Annex II of this Progress Report. And the outcome of the discussion held at the fifth meeting of the WG on L&T with the participation of the co-chairs of the WG1 is included in Annex III of this Progress Report.

7. Links established with other structures and projects

Being mindful of natural links between the area of learning and teaching with other areas covered by different working groups, some of them being supported by the umbrella or other ERASMUS+ projects supporting EHEA reforms and developments, the co-chairs of the WG on L&T reached out to other groups and consortia and

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established regular communication and cooperation with the following BFUG working groups and supporting projects so far:

Coordination with other groups within the BFUG internal structure:

- WG on Implementation and Monitoring - developing indicators in the area of learning and teaching;
- WG on Social Dimension - developing indicators in the area of learning and teaching and social dimension of higher education; exploring possibilities of having a joint PLA on shared topics;
- TPG A on Qualifications Frameworks - developing recommendations on concrete policy actions to the BFUG and ministers on the implementation of micro-credentials in the EHEA, in line with the developments in the European Education Area.

Lacking support from an umbrella project of its own, the WG on L&T is continuously looking at how to make synergies and support from existing projects and relies substantially on resources of the WG members.

The WG is seeking for the best ways to find synergies with existing projects that focus on the same work areas in L&T:

- ERASMUS+ PROFFORMANCE+ Project - Organising forums and/or seminars for policymakers, make concrete recommendations to implement ministerial recommendations, exploring further PROFFORMANCE
- ERASMUS+ MICRONET Project – participation in the webinar on microcredentials organised by the Higher Education Authority, Ireland;
- ERASMUS+ START Project - Organising forums and/or seminars for policymakers, make concrete recommendations to implement ministerial recommendations;
- ERASMUS+ OCTRA - Facilitating transparency and recognition through online catalogues and databases for transparency and recognition.

8. State of Play and Next Steps

The L&T WG 2022 annual work plan was implemented almost entirely as planned. The work on indicators has been completed and support for the implementation of ministerial recommendations has been provided by sharing good practices at the system level. The difference compared to the preliminary annual plan is in the number of PLAs organized: instead of three, the WG has so far managed to organize one PLA in autumn 2022, on the subject of staff development.

There has been a new change in the co-chairmanship of the L&T WG:

- Ana Tecilazić replaced Ulf Daniel Ehlers on behalf of EURASHE;
- Lynn Ramsey replaced Terry Maguire on behalf of the Higher Education Authority, Ireland;

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- then Tim Conlon replaced Lynn Ramsey on behalf of the Higher Education Authority, Ireland.

The second PLA on student-centred learning will take place in Bucharest in June 2023, immediately after the annual EURASHE conference.

In parallel, we continue to collect data for the landscape analysis on good examples of implementation of ministerial recommendations in order to make recommendations on the translation of good practices at system level across the EHEA. The possibility of organizing PLA(s) to support the implementation of ministerial recommendations depends on the willingness of members to volunteer to act as hosts.

Recently in May 2023, a subgroup was formed with the aim of producing recommendations on the ethical use of digital technologies.

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Annex I – PLA on staff development, Paris, October 2022

The first PLA of the WG on L&T was hosted by the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research and took place in Paris. It focused on staff development in higher education. A range of international speakers presented examples of system-level developments in this area. After the Introductory Session, there were three Sessions covering: Skills for teachers in Higher Education, Teaching and Digitalisation, and Teaching Supports and Careers. After each session, there was a Round Table discussion on the subject matter.

The following topics were included in the programmes of the PLA:

Keynote

- Staff development, teaching enhancement and careers at European universities (Thérèse Zhang)

Skills for teachers in higher education

- The art of teaching: (how) can state governance encourage the development of teaching skills at autonomous universities? (Alexander Kohler)
- Student-Centeredness and University-Enterprise Collaboration in Armenia (Lilit Sargsyan)
- Developing teaching appreciation and quality through a national framework in Denmark (Jakob Ravn)

Teaching and Digitalisation

- Technology meets pedagogy: The role of staff support services in Norway (Silje Refnes)
- Good practice in integrating technology in teaching and learning in Turkey (Mustafa Sözbilir)
- Staff development for enhancing digital teaching and learning: Lessons learned from the Irish experience during the pandemic (Sharon Flynn)
- Thematic digital universities and "FUN Resources": two national open education services for teachers in France (Michael Matlosz)

Teaching supports and careers

- The Continuing Professional Development of higher education teachers in France: a lever for promoting student learning? (Christelle Lison)
- Academic staff development practices in Georgia and possible synergies with PROFFORMANCE project outputs: Reflection from the perspective of QA on development of indicators for academic staff development (Lasha Zivzivadze)
- Varied testimonies of recent situations and developments in the careers of higher education teachers in different countries of the EHEA

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Annex II - Topics and possible indicators to monitor learning and teaching at the system level (proposal of the WG L&T to the WG1)

Topic 1. System-level¹ regulations, including legislation, targeting L&T

- National (regional) learning and teaching strategy/policy and funded implementation plan developed through consultation with the sector that is regularly reviewed and captures impact.
- Dedicated funding for Learning and Teaching:
 - Is there a dedicated and sustainable funding stream for learning and teaching enhancement aligned to a clear and agreed strategy? How is this implemented? How the impact of this funding is evaluated?
- Strategic commitment to:
 - Learning and Teaching enhancement
 - A shared understanding and commitment to student-centred learning
 - Nationally agreed frameworks supporting capacity building to develop e.g., digital capabilities, open education and assessment literacy in staff and student
 - Provision that enables choice and flexibility to students to choose their own learning pathways and mode of learning and assessment
 - Programmatic approach to assessment
- Policies to support openness in education (QA,OER)
- The existence (or not) of national QA regulations that impact e.g., modes of learning across programmes or the need for staff to have a learning and teaching qualification to teach in HE.

Topic 2. Nationally agreed structures to support learning and teaching enhancement

- System-level institution/body to support learning and teaching
- Existence of processes to ensure inclusive decision-making, guiding national work
- Existence and quality of the processes in place for the HE sector and other stakeholders to inform policy at system level and support alignment, including e.g., representative bodies for QA, Institution type, student representation, staff unions etc.
- Top level frameworks e.g., professional development, micro credentials and/or commitment to flexible pathways, recognition of prior learning, student engagement, curriculum development, digital capacity and capability development. Level of guidance, incentives and support provided to ensure frameworks are embedded in a sustainable way.

¹ Please, note that national in some countries and regional in others needs to be captured in the indicator

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- An explicit commitment at the system-level to student centred learning and evidence of student partnership and co-creation in learning and teaching enhancement, including e.g., curriculum design, learning and teaching and assessment approaches.
- Recognition & reward structures that support e.g., staff professional development, leadership development, open educational practices
- The extent to which the system is agile, responsive innovative and forward looking.

Topic 3. Commitment to developing staff and student capabilities

- Regulation or recommendation for future university teachers to be trained for teaching
- Commitment to develop national leadership in teaching and learning enhancement (e.g. developing programme for supporting leaders)
- Provision for building open capabilities (so that people share but know what they should share, sharing resources that are granular, knowing what resource hubs are best to use to share)
- Commitment to professional development of teachers
- Commitment to enhancement of teaching and learning including programme development and innovation practice
- Commitment to building staff and student digital capabilities to ensure that the potential of technology to support learning and teaching is utilised and fair and valid digital assessment opportunities are provided for students.
- Commitment that assessment in higher education encompasses a wider set of learning outcomes, in addition to disciplinary knowledge, such as inter-disciplinarity and transversal, green and digital skills.

Topic 4. National and International Collaboration and linkages

- Connection with broader, international context e.g., international Open Education efforts and targets, e.g. EC, UNESCO
- Strength of links with industry including e.g., the opportunities for inter-stakeholder dialogue to develop curricula and to connect work-integrated learning assessment experience, both on and off campus

Topic 5. Scholarship and evidence-based policy making in Learning and Teaching

- Value put on SoTL .e.g., the recognition of the scholarship of learning and teaching
- The provision of integrated research funding, at national level, to support digital, online and open education

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- Provision for data collection and analysis to support evidenced-based decision making.
- The data that is available/collected to guide decision making e.g., on the profile of staff and students across the sector and the extent to which decisions are evidenced based.
- Monitoring Impact

Topic 6. Inclusiveness

- Equity in access to connect to Learning opportunities including national digital infrastructure
- National commitment to embed the principles of Universal Design of Learning (UDL) in Higher Education
- Funding models in place to support all groups within a diverse student body
- Explicit commitment to lifelong learning and availability of flexible pathways and choice of mode of learning for all students
- Level to which HE staff and student profile reflect the diversity of the general population
- Provision and support for recognised marginalised groups of staff and students.

Topic 7. Higher education staff profile and working conditions

- Workload models of staff and types of contracts (temporary, short-term do not have proper access to teaching resources and professional development)
- Recognition and award structures for those who teach
- Recognition and provision for ongoing continuous professional development throughout the career.
- The role of teaching in the academic career progression and advancement

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Annex III - Topics and possible indicators to monitor learning and teaching at the system level – outcome of the 5th meeting of the WG L&T

1 Strategy and policy

1.1 System-level strategy or policy on learning and teaching

This indicator considers whether higher education systems have a top-level strategy/policy on learning and teaching. It differentiates between:

- systems where at least one main learning and teaching strategy is currently being implemented within an overall higher education strategy;
- systems where a learning and teaching strategy is implemented independently;
- systems with no system-level strategy related to learning and teaching.

1.2 Strategy/policy implementation plan

This indicator is relevant only for systems where a strategy/policy is in place. It considers whether the learning and teaching strategy/policy is supported by a funded implementation plan with measurable objectives and targets.

1.3 Consultation

This indicator considers whether learning and teaching policy is the subject of regular consultation with stakeholders, including higher education institutions, academic staff, students, employers, trade unions and NGOs.

1.4 Monitoring mechanisms/QA

This indicator focuses on whether quality assurance agencies are specifically required to assess the implementation of the national strategy/policy (in countries where it is explicit). For countries without a strategy/policy related to learning and teaching, information on the role of QA agencies in relation to learning and teaching will be gathered.

2 Supporting learning and teaching

2.1 Structures to support teaching and learning

This indicator considers whether publicly-funded system-level bodies (e.g. an agency) exist to support learning and teaching in higher education institutions.

2.2 Consultation

This indicator considers whether system-level bodies are guided in their decision-making on the basis of consultation with stakeholders, including higher education institutions, academic staff, and students.

2.3 student-centred learning

The indicator considers the ways in which public authorities support student-centred learning.

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Possible question looking for incentives:

- Is SCL explicitly mentioned/defined in the national level strategies/policies/legislation?
- If the SCL approach is defined, which elements does it encompass?

Elements of SCL identified by the WG L&T:

- Changed roles of teachers and students
- Students' active role and responsibility
- Students' choices
- Learning outcomes approach
- Learning, teaching and assessment methods based on partnership and cocreation
- Recognition of prior learning
- Flexible learning pathways
- Diversity of students' body
- Formal students' participation in governance

Possible question looking for obstacles:

- Are there any legal obstacles to the implementation of the SCL approach? (e.g. legally defined assessment methods such as compulsory written final exam; legal restriction on the use of online learning, teaching and assessment tools legally defined in %; legal restriction for the use of RPL in terms of %)

3 Professional development

3.1 Initial and continuous teacher training

The indicator considers whether there are requirements for higher education academic staff to receive training in teaching a) prior to being recruited, and b) during their careers.

3.2 Use of digital tools

The indicator considers whether there are requirements for higher education academic staff to receive training in using digital tools in relation to teaching.

3.3 International Collaboration

The indicator considers whether higher education institutional recruitment and promotion structures are required to consider and give value to international collaboration and experience.

3.4 Professional experience

The indicator considers whether regulations for recruitment and promotion, are required to take into account specific criteria – including indicators of research performance, indicators of teaching performance, and professional experience acquired outside of the academic world.

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Annex IV – Proposals for the Ministerial Communiqué on the topic of STAFF DEVELOPMENT – the outcome of the 1st PLA and the 6th meeting of the WG L&T

CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES

- Professional development of teachers is fundamental to the provision of quality teaching and assessment and student success. There is increasing pressure on teachers to respond to multiple requirements (excellence in research, heavy teaching load, societal engagement). Frameworks for teachers' development need to accommodate and respect the diversity of teachers' profiles. Academic profiles are differently balanced for individuals, but teaching and learning should enjoy parity in esteem with research and other relevant factors (such as commitment to the institution) in relation to academic recruitment and progression;
- Diversity must be valued in relation to teachers' individual mission. In addition, diversity should be valued throughout teachers' careers;
- Digital transformation must be a particular focus for professional development in Higher Education.

THREE MAIN AXES

(1) IT IS ESSENTIAL TO PUT IN PLACE EFFECTIVE SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR TEACHERS IN THE PRACTICE OF THEIR PROFESSION AND THEIR CPD

- Sufficient, effective, efficient infrastructure is needed: learning labs and classrooms equipped with various educational resources (for distance learning, for animation in small groups, with mobile furniture, etc.). Institutional funding should allow for this;
- Compulsory professional development for early career academics could be recommended;
- Teacher training should be based on a scientific approach to teaching and on research carried out in higher education;
- Training teachers (initial, CPD) must be flexible, respectful of specificities for different domains/contexts, and learner-oriented. In addition, equality, student diversity and inclusion must be considered;
- The need for professional development in teaching doctoral students must be covered;
- The provision of educational resources (conferences, MOOCs, pedagogical workshops, with dedicated support staff) is essential. Professional temporary teachers must be able to benefit from these resources;
- The personnel of the pedagogical support centres must be trained, and there must be a sufficient number of them. It is an emerging profession that must also be valued;
- Institutions' learning management systems must be equipped with collaborative tools for work and interaction with increasingly diverse students;
- National platforms of digital educational resources should be set up. These resources must be in short formats to be easily appropriated by other teachers;

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- Networks of centres for L&T across the system could facilitate CPD and practice.

(2) IT IS ESSENTIAL TO VALUE TEACHING

This valuation can go through the:

- Give prestige to effective professional development for teaching;
- Career promotions based on teaching;
- Tenure tracks based on teaching quality;
- Teaching awards;
- Financial bonus, including for team teaching;
- Funding for teaching innovation.

It is important that the assessment of teaching should be robust and evidence-based.

(3) GIVING TIME IS ESSENTIAL

- All of the professional development which is required must be included as an integral part of the academic workload (not an additional requirement);
- The teaching load must be reasonable. It is unrealistic to think that quality education can be provided without devoting a certain amount of time to preparation, innovation, student support, and evaluation;
- Reforming takes time: it's not « done » once the reform is adopted.