

Tuning Phase III: Aims and Objectives

Note: Tuning is the larger project in Europe aiming at modernization of study at universities along Bologna action lines. Nine disciplinary areas are included, among them also Education and Teacher Education. In the third phase (Tuning 3: 2005-2006) some universities from South East Europe are included for the first time. More information:

<http://www.let.rug.nl/TuningProject/index.htm> and/or
<http://www.relint.deusto.es/TuningProject/index.htm>

The Budapest meeting is the start of the third phase of the project **Tuning Educational Structures in Europe: Validation, dissemination and further development** (January 2005 - 1 October 2006). It is the follow-up of the pilot project *Tuning educational structures in Europe*, phase 1 which started in December 2000 and ended in January 2003 and phase 2, which lasted from February 2003 until December 2004.

The project *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe* is at the heart of the Bologna – Prague – Berlin – Bergen process. It is one of the few projects in Europe that actually links the political objectives set in the Bologna Declaration of 1999 to the higher education sector. Tuning is a project developed by and meant for higher education institutions. In the summer of 2000, a group of universities took up the Bologna challenge collectively and designed this pilot project. During the period 2000-2004 a working programme has been developed and implemented. In that programme several of the Bologna action lines have been addressed, notably the adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, the adoption of a system based on two cycles and the establishment of a system of credits. The Tuning project contributes also to the realisation of the other Bologna action lines. To run the project successfully, five action lines have been developed, namely (1) generic competences, (2) subject-specific competences, (3) the role of ECTS as a accumulation system, (4) approaches to teaching, learning and assessment and (5) the role of quality enhancement and assurance in the educational process (based on a system of an internal institutional quality culture at programme level). It is intended that around **170 institutions from all (potential) Bologna signatory states** participate in the proposed new project. In Tuning phase II already some 135 institutions from all EU (old and new) member states as well as candidate countries are directly involved in the project. This makes the project the ideal think tank for European higher education, because it combines the most advanced expertise about the sector with the possibility to test ideas and proposals in a broad range of disciplines in all European countries.

The Tuning project recognizes and responds to a number of general tendencies, partly as a result of the Bologna process, in the European higher education sector, in particular:

- The shift of paradigm: moving from a staff oriented approach to a student centred approach;
- The shift from input to outcome based programmes
- A clear differentiation between first and second cycle programmes: less specialised academic education in the first cycle;
- The development of more flexibility in first and second cycle programmes;
- The modularization of education;
- The growing concern for the relation between higher education and employability;
- The growing concern for quality enhancement and quality assurance in higher education.

The Tuning project focuses not on educational *systems*, but on educational *structures* and *content* of studies. Whereas educational systems are primarily the responsibility of governments, educational

structures and content are that of higher education institutions. As a result of the Bologna Declaration the educational systems in all European countries are in the process of reforming. This is the direct effect of the political decision to converge the different national systems in Europe. For Higher Education institutions these reforms mean the actual starting point for another discussion: the comparability of curricula in terms of structures, programmes and actual teaching. In this reform process the required academic and professional profiles and needs of society (should) play an important role. But this is not sufficient. Equally important is the expression of the level of education in terms of learning outcomes expressed in competences to be obtained by the learner.

The main aim and objective of the project is to contribute significantly to the elaboration of a framework of comparable and compatible qualifications in each of the (potential) signatory countries of the Bologna process, which should be described in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile. The Tuning project has developed a methodology and a common language, reflected in the Berlin Communiqué (19 September 2003), which can serve as a common basis. The project plans to deliver the academic input for the development of an overarching European framework of qualifications, in particular for the three levels: undergraduate, graduate and doctorate.

As part of the methodology, Tuning has developed reference points for first and second cycle programmes for generic and subject-specific competences for (at present), nine subject areas. These reference points have been used to define cycle descriptors. In the framework of the Tuning project ECTS has been developed further as an accumulation system by linking credits to learning outcomes. The result of this exercise is reflected in the new ECTS features and in the report of the Zurich conference on ECTS. Furthermore, Tuning has developed an approach for measuring student workload. The project has also succeeded in linking the new methodology to approaches regarding teaching, learning and assessment, as well as to quality enhancement and assurance on programme level.

The first task of this new project is to validate the outcomes of the Tuning pilot project, phases 1 and 2. Main stakeholders, in particular academic researchers, professionals, employers, students and graduates, will be asked to endorse its methodology of defining programmes of study on the notions of social needs, available resources, professional and academic profiles and learning outcomes and competences. Validation panels in which the main stakeholders are represented will be set up do this for each of the nine subject areas, which have participated in the Tuning project phase I and II.

Validation will be prior to the next major tasks identified. Although a lot of attention has been given to the visibility of the Tuning project during the pilot phase, a more structured campaign is required, to make the outcomes known to all relevant players on international, national, (HE) institutional and subject area level. The purpose of this campaign is not only to disseminate results but also to realize actual implementation in practice. The members of the Management Committee and the representatives of the nine existing subject area groups, a total of at present around 150 persons from most of the Bologna signatory countries, will act as ambassadors and a number of them as counsellors in this respect.

Therefore, the second major task of the proposed project is to disseminate the Tuning methodology developed so far. This will first of all be done by assisting existing and new Socrates-Erasmus networks in the use of the Tuning methodology and its related tools and products. Other networks of subject areas will be identified to which the Tuning outcomes are of relevance. The project will concentrate its efforts on around 20 additional academic fields, which should serve as examples for the whole higher education sector. In practice this means that broad academic fields, which cover whole disciplines such as, for example, law and medicine, will be asked to define reference points as

well as cycle level descriptors for their disciplines. Furthermore, an information campaign will be set up, as well as structure to facilitate the actual use of the Tuning approach.

The process of validation, consolidation, dissemination and implementation should be accompanied by a structure for evaluation and for finding answers to questions that will be raised and problems that will be brought forward during this process. First of all, it is thought necessary that the present nine groups, which reflect more or less the range of different types of subject areas and approaches, are continued for another period to test and evaluate the material that has been developed by them in phases 1 and 2 of the Tuning project. They will also be asked to advance on a number of issues, like the development of a model for internal quality enhancement at programme level and the defining of third cycle (Doctorate/Ph.D) level descriptors for subject areas. Added to the membership of the present groups will be higher education institutions of new and potential Bologna signatory states: two to three per country. This will offer a marvellous possibility to link both the selected institutions as well as their countries directly in the Bologna process at the level of the higher education sector.

The subject area groups will also be used as the vehicle (think tank) to find answers to new issues raised, which are related to the use of the Tuning approach in practice in new fields. The groups will be complemented by a number of task forces which will reflect on more specialized issues.

Thus, the third task is to develop the outcomes of the pilot project further against the background of a generalisation of the use of the Tuning approach in the European Higher Education Area. The project will concentrate its efforts on the following topics: a) making the Tuning reference points and cycle level descriptors suitable for recognition purposes; b) making ECTS as an accumulation system ready for use in all types of learning; c) developing a model for quality enhancement and assurance on programme level; d) developing a model for setting up joint degrees as well as an approach for quality enhancement and assurance on programme level; e) testing different approaches regarding teaching, learning and assessment of generic and subject-specific competences and f) developing reference points and cycle descriptors for the third cycle for nine subject areas. Also the implementation of additional research on selected issues related to the use of competences will be part of this task.

Besides these three main purposes of the project, Tuning wants to offer a platform for the exchange of experience and knowledge between countries, higher education institutions and staff with regard to the implementation of the Bologna process on a Europe-wide level. This includes the further development and implementation of a European qualification framework and a structure of quality enhancement and assurance on the level of programmes of studies based on comparable level descriptors and learning outcomes and competences

The **main aims and objectives** of the project can be summarised as follows:

Validation of the Tuning subject area specific reference points and cycle descriptors

- To validate the Tuning outcomes by the main stakeholders: universities (academic researchers), employers, professional associations, students, alumni, quality assurance and accreditation agencies and recognition agencies (e.g. ENIC/NARIC).

Dissemination of Tuning outcomes

- To encourage the use of the Tuning methodology and related tools and products (for example the model for determining student workload, the model for designing curricula and the model for organising and applying quality enhancement and assurance) in existing and new thematic Socrates networks as well as in other existing international networks and associations of subject areas.

- To develop reference points for common curricula on the basis of agreed competences and learning outcomes as well as cycle level descriptors for another 20 major subject areas, like for example law and medicine. This should enhance recognition and European integration of diplomas, taking into consideration the diversity of cultures.
- To link the Tuning approach to other types of learning in a life long learning environment, like vocational educational training, distance learning, e-learning, prior (informal and non-formal) learning, etc. Setting up co-operation with relevant organisations in these fields.
- To make the material developed in Tuning 1 and 2 available and operational for the higher education sector in general: relevant organisations and higher education institutions. This also implies the translation of key documents in more languages.
- To work closely together and to exchange knowledge and experience with higher education institutions and organisations like universities and university staff, students (ESIB), Rectors Conferences, European University Association (EUA), EURASHE, Joint Quality Initiative, Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agencies (like ENQA), the Bologna Follow-up Group, Ministries of Education, the European Commission, the Council of Europe, organisations of employers and employees (social partners) and professional associations. To set up an overall strategy for dissemination and implementation of the Tuning methodology and approaches.
- To organise an information campaign in which the following levels are distinguished:
 - European level: EU-projects and programmes, relevant international organisations and university networks, like the Coimbra-group, the Santander-group, the Utrecht-network, the network of capital universities etc.
 - National level: Rectors Conferences, Associations of higher education institutions, Ministries of Education, Quality agencies and accreditation organisations, recognition bodies (NARIC/ENIC), national agencies, organisations of employers and organisations of employees.
 - Higher education institutional level: Management, faculty staff and students
 - Subject area level: international and international subject area based organisations, professional organisations, teaching staff, students, alumni and (other) stakeholders.
- To develop the information tools to be used in the dissemination and implementation process: Advanced website presentations, short power point presentations, leaflets and other information material, newsletter (electronically as well as printed).
- To train a group of around 30 Tuning counsellors for dissemination and implementation purposes. To set up information and training facilities for administrative staff (higher education planning and organisational officers), teaching staff as well as national student representatives.

New developments

- To extend the project to institutions in around 35 higher education institutions in new signatory and potential new signatory states of the Bologna process: two to three institutions per country. These institutions will be added to the existing nine groups. Institutions from the following signatory countries will be invited to apply for membership: the six CARD countries, Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, plus the Russian Federation. Also institutions from the following potential signatory countries will be invited to apply for membership: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine and, possibly, also Tunisia and Kazakhstan.
- To evaluate and monitor the use of the Tuning methodology and tools in practice in more general terms and on the level of subject areas.
- To update and adjust the Tuning methodology and tools such as general and subject specific reference points and cycle and intermediate level descriptors.
- To develop ECTS further as an accumulation system for the use in all learning environments and as one of the basic corner stones for qualification frameworks by refining the use of learning outcomes, competences and level indicators.

- To develop the Tuning approach further towards internal quality enhancement and assurance mechanisms on the level of the faculty / school and that of subject area / programmes of study leading to a comprehensive internal quality enhancement model at programme level.
- To start a journal for exchanging more substantial information, like the outcomes of evaluation and monitoring processes, new developments, experiences and opinions of individuals and institutions and organisations.
- To test different approaches, regarding teaching learning and assessment of generic and subject-specific competences in programmes of studies, which have been collected as part of an exercise done in Tuning II.
- To develop cycle level descriptors for the third cycle (doctorate/Ph.D) for the nine subject area groups of Tuning: Business, Chemistry, Education Sciences, European Studies, Geology, History, Mathematics, Nursing and Physics.
- To develop an approach for quality enhancement and assurance for trans-national programmes of study e.g. joint degree programmes.
- To establish a platform for the exchange of experience and knowledge between countries, higher education institutions and staff with regard to the implementation of the Bologna process on a Europe-wide level. This includes further development and implementation of an European qualification framework and a structure of quality enhancement and assurance on the level of programmes of studies based on comparable level descriptors and learning outcomes and competences.