

# Promoting a European dimension to teaching enhancement

A feasibility study from the European Forum  
for Enhanced Collaboration in Teaching  
(EFFECT) project



This publication summarises the main outcomes and lessons learnt from the European Forum for Enhanced Collaboration in Teaching (EFFECT) project.

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European University Association asbl  
Avenue de l'Yser 24  
1040 Brussels, Belgium  
+32 (0) 2 230 55 44

[www.eua.eu](http://www.eua.eu) – [info@eua.eu](mailto:info@eua.eu)

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# 1. The EFFECT project

## The Effect Consortium



AdvanceHE

eua EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION

100 UNIVERSITY OF LATVIA ANNO 1919

HRK German Rectors' Conference  
The Voice of the Universities

IRISH UNIVERSITIES ASSOCIATION

U.PORTO



EADTU



Hungarian Rectors' Conference



UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN FINLAND



The EFFECT project explored how pedagogical staff development and learning and teaching developments in general could be enhanced and supported through European-level action.


EFFECT is an Erasmus+ KA3-funded project (2015-2019). It was developed by a diverse consortium of 12 partners, coordinated by the European University Association (EUA).

The consortium brought together major European stakeholder organisations (such as the European Students' Union, ESU, and the European Trade Union Committee for Education, ETUCE), specialised university networks (such as the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities, EADTU), national organisations representing higher education institutions (the rectors' conferences from Germany, Hungary, Ireland, and Poland), individual universities, as well as professional organisations specialised in teaching enhancement (the former Higher Education Academy, now Advance HE).

In addition, EFFECT was able to involve representatives from non-university higher education institutions in various activities and meetings, as well as experts who were seconded by partners, or associated with the project during its lifetime. EFFECT could, for instance, benefit from the expertise of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Ireland, the Leiden-Delft-Erasmus Centre for Education and Learning in the Netherlands, the University of Tartu in Estonia, and the Estonian Rectors' Conference.

The EFFECT Consortium primarily aimed at assessing the feasibility of a European-level approach to teaching enhancement. This reflection was triggered by a recommendation of the European Commission's High-Level Working Group on Modernisation of Higher Education: the establishment of a "European Academy for Teaching and Learning led by stakeholders, and inspired by [...] good practices ..."<sup>1</sup>

1 High Level Group on Modernisation of Higher Education, 2013, *Report to the European Commission on Improving the quality of teaching and learning in Europe's higher education institutions*, Recommendation 14, p. 57. <https://bit.ly/2ALnthe> (accessed 16/01/2019).



In 2013, an EC high-level working group on Modernisation of Higher Education concluded: “The need for professional training as a teacher at primary and secondary school level is generally taken for granted but remarkably, when it comes to higher education there seems to be an all too common assumption that such professional teacher training is not necessary, as if it is somehow an idea unworthy of the professional academic.”<sup>2</sup>

Instead of focusing on a brick-and-mortar academy, EFFECT explored ways of facilitating European-level exchange and effective collaboration for the enhancement of learning and teaching. EFFECT approached teaching enhancement as part of a broader change agenda that institutions have to embrace. Teaching enhancement cannot be an isolated measure towards “better teaching”, but must be embedded into institutional, strategic and systematic approaches for learning and teaching, linked to other higher education mission goals, in particular to research, and supported by the governance and management system.

Hence, EFFECT simultaneously worked on approaches for enhancing teaching staff development and institutional strategies for learning and teaching, with the underlying idea that individual and institutional levels need to be interconnected in order to enhance learning and teaching. Subsequently, the project was structured following three strands:

### **Exploring the feasibility of a European-level offer for teaching enhancement courses**

To meet this objective, desk research was conducted, and experiences from different higher education systems and institutions were examined. This comprised the examples of the Higher Education Academy in the UK, and the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Ireland, as well as examples from institutions in systems with less mature approaches. In addition, the project consortium explored other measures to support the enhancement of learning and teaching, e.g. through a survey-based study on teaching prizes across Europe and a briefing on how research and teaching could be interconnected. In this context, the project consortium also examined how to recognize good practices in learning and teaching, which resulted in the development of a matrix.

2 *Ibidem*, p. 18.

In order to test and draw lessons from organising teaching enhancement as such, EFFECT also organised a series of seven interactive, physical and online pedagogical staff development workshops. The workshops took place in different European countries and targeted different profiles of academic staff, each of them built on lessons learnt from the preceding workshops. The project consortium chose inclusion and citizenship skills as the topic for experimenting with this format of staff development workshops.

## Supporting the development of institutional approaches on learning and teaching

Consortium members devised a framework to support the development of institutional approaches in learning and teaching: the European Principles for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching. Each principle is accompanied by a set of guiding questions, and will be complemented by an adaptable model of workshop that can be implemented to hold discussions on learning and teaching, based on the principles.

In order to test the usefulness and relevance of the principles, a pilot experience took place with 11 European universities, in a context of strategy building. The EFFECT Consortium members also conducted workshops on the principles in several European events on learning and teaching.

## Developing approaches for a European initiative for teaching enhancement, based on the results from the two previous strands

EFFECT resulted in the following main published outcomes:

### The Ten European Principles for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching:

<https://bit.ly/2EobM3Q>



### The Institutional Strategies Support Package – Principles and Guiding Questions:

<https://bit.ly/2SLgWKn>



The EFFECT project was launched in 2015, at a time when, among European policy makers in the Bologna Process and within the higher education sector, there was an increasing awareness that, beyond structural reforms such as adopting a learning outcome-based approach to curriculum and promoting student-centred learning, closer attention should be paid to the quality of learning and teaching and to what is happening in the classroom. This also explains why, beyond concrete outcomes, the EFFECT project connected with various other emerging initiatives, and generally contributed as a catalyst for discussions among consortium partners on learning and teaching at a European level. Among these initiatives, the following could be mentioned:

- EUA's Trends 2018 report,<sup>3</sup> which is the latest issue of the Association's landmark series mapping reforms in European higher education: Trends 2018 integrated inputs from EFFECT's study on national initiatives in learning and teaching.
- EUA's Learning and Teaching Initiative (started in 2016): the reflection on learning and teaching started under EFFECT nurtured discussion with EUA leadership and with members, and resulted in new initiatives, both at

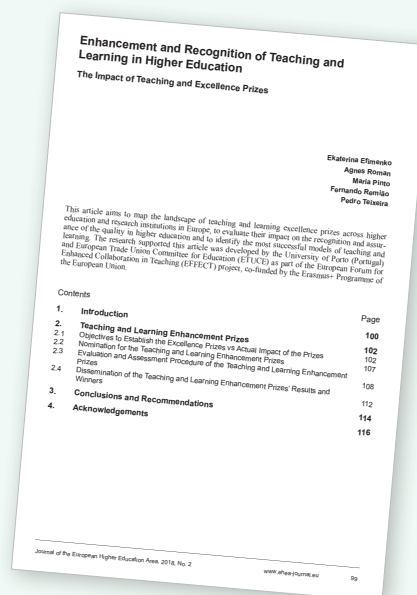
the policy level and for supporting members. Under its Learning and Teaching Initiative, EUA initiated a series of Thematic Peer Groups and the European Learning and Teaching Forum (first edition in 2017) in order to foster collaboration and exchange. These activities will continue on a regular basis in the future.

- An EUA position paper on learning and teaching,<sup>4</sup> its statement to the Bologna Ministerial Conference of May 2018<sup>5</sup>, and a related background document, which references EFFECT and its initiatives,<sup>6</sup> all of which are contributions to policy-making, inspired by outcomes from EFFECT.
- More generally, consortium partners and other participants to EFFECT activities reported that this was their first European collaboration on learning and teaching, which impacted their ongoing national and institutional initiatives.

### A study on National Initiatives in Learning and Teaching in Europe: <https://bit.ly/2L6QHVm>



### A published paper "Enhancement and Recognition of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. The Impact of Teaching and Excellence Prizes": <https://bit.ly/2QRfjc2>



3 Gaebel, M. and Zhang, T., 2018, *Trends 2018: Learning and teaching in the European Higher Education Area* (Brussels, European University Association). <https://bit.ly/EUATRENDS2018> (accessed 16/01/2019).  
 4 <https://eua.eu/component/attachments/attachments.html?id=418>  
 5 <https://bit.ly/2Gev51n>  
 6 <https://bit.ly/2Cckb8n>

# 2. Pedagogical staff development

## 2.1. General findings

### Teaching as part of the academic profession

While teaching is part of the academic profession, in most institutional and systems contexts, it is less valued and recognised than research, and does not or only insignificantly counts for career development.<sup>7</sup> This issue was identified across Europe as one of the major obstacles for the overall development of learning and teaching.<sup>8</sup> In particular, young academics feel under pressure to excel in all areas of the academic profession (research, teaching, service to society and to the university), but are very aware that their career would mostly progress thanks to outstanding research achievements.<sup>9</sup>

### Emergence of pedagogical staff development

The previous point would to some extent explain why the demand for, and use of, pedagogical staff development or teaching enhancement remains patchy across Europe. Generally speaking, pedagogical staff development was not very common at European higher education institutions (with some notable exceptions), and there were major differences between systems, types of institutions and disciplines. However, in the past decade, more and more higher education institutions started offering it to enhance the quality of teaching, respond to larger and more diverse studentship, address student-centred learning, provide better skills for employment, citizenship and personal fulfilment, and change approaches in learning and teaching, including technology-enhanced provision.

Still, the Bologna Process Implementation Report of 2018 points out that there is no systematic approach to teaching enhancement. The EFFECT study on National Initiatives in Learning and Teaching in Europe<sup>10</sup> concluded that in most higher education systems, the organisation of teaching enhancement is left to individual institutions. While this can have the advantage of better tailored measures and increased ownership and acceptance among staff, it also requires professional experience and resources. In some systems, institutions collaborate on teaching enhancement.

### Making teaching enhancement mainstream

The 2018 EUA Trends report found that there has been no significant increase in the teaching enhancement course offer over the past three years. Optional courses are frequently described as attracting the “converted” and missing out on those who actually would need them. Compulsory courses typically target newly arrived and early career academics, who are often also offered welcome courses and other support measures to help them take up teaching. Most importantly, courses or other incentive measures need to be embedded into a culture that generally values and supports learning and teaching, and where teachers have a say in course contents and offer. If this is not the case, measures such as compulsory courses may result in participation without real commitment, and even trigger resistance among staff.

### Institutional approaches, and the wider collaboration on teaching enhancement

Intra-institutional communication and collaboration on learning and teaching is crucial for the success of teaching and teaching enhancement. This concerns institutional strategies and organisational structures, such as learning and teaching centres, platforms or working groups for learning and teaching, and other places that may not or not only be of importance from the point of functional organisation, but contribute to make up institutional culture.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, while institutional governance and management structures account for formal responsibilities in learning and teaching, it seems that the actual structures and formats on which successful provision of education is based is much subtler.

In Trends 2018, 90% of responding higher education institutions indicate that they collaborate on teaching enhancement with partner institutions, via university networks, and through national and international initiatives. However, only few examples of more formalised inter-institutional initiatives on teaching enhancement have been identified, and it also seems that these collaboration initiatives, as valuable as they are for the participating institutions, are not very visible and do not impact the debates on learning and teaching in Europe.

7 Sursock, A., 2015, *Trends 2015: Learning and Teaching in European Universities* (Brussels, European University Association). <https://bit.ly/2EtDn3R> (accessed 16/01/2019).

8 Gaebel, M., and Zhang, T., *op. cit.* <https://bit.ly/EUATRENDS2018>.

9 EUA's Thematic Peer Groups in 2017 and 2018 confirm this, based among other sources on a series of interviews with PhD candidates and postdocs (2018). See Dakovic, D. and Loukkola, T. (Eds.), 2017, *EUA's Learning and Teaching Initiative. Reports from the Thematic Peer Groups* (Brussels, European University Association), pp. 4-8. <https://bit.ly/2LgmJVF> (accessed 16/01/2019), and te Pas, S. and Zhang, T., 2019, *Career paths in teaching. Thematic Peer Group Report* (Brussels, European University Association, Learning and Teaching Paper #2). <https://bit.ly/2stW3bq> (accessed 16/01/2019).

10 Bunescu, L. and Gaebel, M., 2018, *National Initiatives in Learning and Teaching in Europe. A report from the European Forum for Enhanced Collaboration in Teaching (EFFECT) project* (Brussels, European University Association). <https://bit.ly/2L6QHvm> (accessed 16/01/2019).

11 “Institutional culture” should be understood as “not something an organisation has, but rather what it is. It refers to ways of doing, talking, and thinking about things, about patterns that make up a group visible against the backdrop of other groups” (Alvesson, M., 2002, *Understanding Organizational Culture* (London, Sage)).



## 2.2. Case study 1: A pilot module for pedagogical staff development

### 2.2.1. Rationale

To explore how teaching enhancement can be provided on a European level, EFFECT developed a pilot where a series of physical and online pedagogical staff development workshops on inclusion and citizenship skills have been implemented.

The following aspects have been considered in order to ensure that the measure would meet the needs of European higher education institutions, and could be reapplied and sustained after the project has been concluded:

- adaptability to different themes and contexts
- ability to engage participants from different positions in different disciplinary, institutional and cultural backgrounds
- adaptability to physical and virtual delivery
- feasibility with relatively few technical and financial means
- generation of design of a customisable workshop prototype

For the thematic focus of the workshops, the EFFECT consortium decided to focus on inclusion and citizenship skills, as these two issues are:

- of high priority for Europe, and its societies
- of key importance for higher education institutions, with regard to the more diverse student body and the pressure not only to cope with, but to foster and increase diversity. The way academic staff teach is of critical importance in any reform designed to enhance inclusion and citizenship in higher education. Both angles impact the notions of inclusion and citizenship.

Interestingly, while the majority of institutions confirm the growing importance of inclusion and citizenship, and proactively consider them in their learning and teaching approaches, they seem not to be considered as priorities for teaching enhancement (Trends 2018). This was yet another reason to take it up.

### 2.2.2. Methodology

For the pedagogical staff development workshops, the Change Laboratory methodology<sup>12</sup> was chosen, which is an intervention-research methodology that aims at reconceptualising activity: it intends to provoke authentic reactions, responses and disagreements among the participants and encourage them to work together to reimagine their activities and identify 'concrete' solutions that address persisting issues in their practice.

For this purpose, stimulus material, or mirror data, was developed. It comprised original student and teacher testimonials (written or video footage) on concrete situations related to inclusion and citizenship. The stimulus material was mostly drawn from the workshop discussions, which took into account the practices, attitudes and understanding of the participants, establishing a small library of mirror data and artefacts.<sup>13</sup>

As applied in the workshops, the methodology stimulated discussion and reflection among the participants, and brought together different perspectives to a shared challenge. This allowed the exploration of different and at times contradictory "activity systems"<sup>14</sup> which would work together to achieve change in the teaching practice.

12 Bligh, B., Flood, M., 2015, "The Change Laboratory in Higher Education: research-intervention using activity theory", p. 10, in Huisman, J., Tight, M. (2015), *Theory and method in higher education research*, Vol. 1 (s.l., Bingley). [http://eprints.lancs.ac.uk/74672/1/Volume\\_3\\_Bligh\\_Flood.pdf](http://eprints.lancs.ac.uk/74672/1/Volume_3_Bligh_Flood.pdf) (accessed 01/10/2018).

13 See Appendix 2 on the EFFECT webpage: <http://bit.ly/EFFECTproject>.

14 Engeström, Y., 2001, "Expansive learning at Work: Toward an activity theoretical reconceptualization", *Journal of Education and Work*, 14(1), pp. 133-156.

### 2.2.3. The workshops

Around 100 participants from 10 European countries attended one of a series of four physical pedagogical staff development workshops in the period from January to September 2017. Two workshops attracted a national audience, and the two others a European audience. They had academic teaching staff as the main target group, but also involved students, institutional leadership, technical and administrative staff, international relations officers, etc.<sup>15</sup>

The online workshops brought together a pilot group of 10 selected academic teaching staff participants from six European countries, who never met physically. Unlike in physical workshops, they followed all three successive workshops. The online workshops were developed on a virtual learning environment and on a free sign-up platform for real-time group brainstorming and a decision-making app (Dotstorming).

#### **A set of open reflective questions for teachers was proposed during the workshops:**

- What are the artefacts, rules and organisational structures at play in your institution and which directly affect your teaching practice?
- What different perspectives, points of view and traditions are at play in your teaching practice?
- What is the history or histories that are influencing your situation as academic teaching staff?
- What is the source or nature of the dissatisfaction with your current teaching practice? Why does it matter?
- What is your motivation for seeking change? What will/could be different? What difference will it make?
- What can you personally do about it? Who else would work with you? How disruptive are you prepared to be?

### 2.2.4. Main results from the pilot workshops

The workshops enabled the participants to:

- use open reflective questions to provoke discussions about the challenges faced in their own learning and teaching contexts
- help through discussions to recognise the “problem” even when the latter is not the most pressing issue in their context
- and identify possible solutions and approaches

This has been confirmed by feedback collected from both physical and virtual workshop participants, and observations shared among the EFFECT consortium, which brought forth the following conclusions:

- Most participants rated the workshops as very good and innovative. They appreciated the opportunity to discuss issues on learning and teaching in an open fashion.
- The workshop methodology was highly appreciated. Participants stated that it enabled them to reflect upon their pedagogical practices, identify unconscious biases, and consider students’ needs and current challenges in their teaching at their home institutions.
- Participants perceived the choice of inclusion and citizenship as a transversal and thought-provoking method whose value-add is to facilitate discussion and bring to light unconscious thinking.
- Participants found it comforting to learn that colleagues all over Europe face similar problems and appreciated the wealth of different views and approaches. Both national workshops and European workshops were successful, and engaged participants in interaction, discussion and constructive group work.
- Among the most valued aspects of the workshops was the bringing together of different university stakeholders: academic teaching staff, students, institutional leadership and administrative staff. This confirms the value of diverse groups. Student representation in such teacher training workshops can be constructive as long as the student perspective is presented in a way that encourages academic staff to reflect on their own personal role in addressing the challenges.
- In particular, those participants who initially saw challenges mainly in the comportment of others (students, colleagues) and the conditions set for teaching (by the faculty, the institution, or the national system), were able to shift towards a more proactive and outcome-orientated attitude that focused on their own contribution to solving issues.
- National workshops benefited from a clearer assessment of how the national system impacts inclusion and citizenship, through regulation, policies and similar governance systems at the institutions. Discussions could be held in the usual working language, with English being used as a second language, given the presence of some international observers. They also seemed to be more successful in bringing in colleagues with more sceptical attitudes towards teaching enhancement.
- The relative anonymity of the online mode seems to have helped participants to contribute more openly.

Overall, it was found that the pilot designed a customisable workshop prototype for physical and digital delivery,

<sup>15</sup> Every workshop gathered a different group of participants, therefore a different iteration of the Change Laboratory methodology was conducted with each group. In a conventional Change Laboratory, the same group of participants would work through a number of iterations over a 6-12 month period.

which can be easily adopted to other themes in teaching enhancement and adapted to national and institutional settings.

Finally, it should be noted that the organisation of international workshops, even if done in an economic fashion, would require external funding. For these pilot workshops, participants attended on a self-funded basis, while catering costs were covered by the EFFECT project budget.

A detailed description of the methodology, account of how workshops were conducted, and lessons learnt from the pilot is available as Appendix 1 on the EFFECT website: <http://bit.ly/EFFECTproject>.

### 2.3. Case study 2: Thematic peer learning groups

In 2017, EUA launched a series of Thematic Peer Groups (TPGs) on learning and teaching, which were not part of, but informed and stimulated by, experiences under the EFFECT project. The model of peer groups was first used for exchanging and cherishing good practices in doctoral education under the EUA Council for Doctoral Education. Following an open call for participation, eight to twelve higher education institutions collaborated on a given topic, through three physical meetings and electronic exchanges. The main outcome of this group work consisted of a report mapping common challenges and providing recommendations, mostly targeting institutions, from a practice- and peer-based perspective.<sup>16</sup> Institutional representatives involved in these groups are leaders with strategic responsibility for education (vice-rectors, directors of learning and teacher centres), specialised staff profiles depending on the topic, and students. Each group was led by a chair and supported by a coordinator from the EUA secretariat.

The TPGs were organised in the most cost-effective and logistics-effective way possible: participants covered their own travel and accommodation costs, whereas the meetings were hosted at group members' institutions.

So far, the experience has been the following:

- The TPGs developed a very dynamic approach to exploring complex topics of immediate and practical importance for higher education institutions. Participants appreciated the open and collegial exchange, and the diversity in groups.
- They resulted in short written reports, with useful insights for institutional leadership as they tend to reflect the collective experience of the group in addition to presenting cutting-edge research on the issue.
- They offered an opportunity for structuring networking and exchanges, and greatly contributed to building up a community of practice in higher education learning and

teaching on a European level. As the outcomes from the TPGs are presented in the European Learning and Teaching Forum, it also allowed this community to meet on an annual basis and connect with broader circles of audiences (institutions, policy makers) with an interest in the same topics. Many participants were eager to continue the work, and there have been some spin-offs.

- Since different group members hosted the meetings, members of the TPGs were able to visit different higher education institutions across Europe, and grasp different realities on site.

While not a structured professional development, TPGs are an opportunity for peer learning for vice-rectors and other leadership profiles in learning and teaching. They seem to address an obvious demand, resulting from the increased importance of teaching in leadership positions, due to the need to develop strategic and coordinated approaches for learning and teaching throughout the institution. In two rounds, conducted in 2017 and 2018 with four groups running every year, the TPGs involved 120 participants. A third round will take place in 2019. Demand exceeded by far the available vacancies, and feedback from participants suggests that this is going to continue.

### 2.4. Conclusions

These two cases demonstrate how collaboration in enhancing learning and teaching could be provided on a European level, and that diversity of participants, rather than being an obstacle, can benefit the discussions. There is obviously a wealth of experiences that could be shared among different types of institutions from different education systems.

Two principal considerations need to be taken into account:

- Teaching enhancement initiatives based on collaboration need to have a business model that would upscale and sustain them.
- European initiatives would not be able to provide sufficient capacity to fulfil all, or any, staff development needs in Europe.

The added value of European initiatives clearly lies in their ability to address multipliers, and through them, to inspire, complement and enhance national and institutional measures. This should be a call for higher education institutions to exchange and pool their teaching enhancement approaches, and to European higher education networks and associations, as well as the EU and national governments, to support and facilitate such initiatives. Erasmus staff exchanges, currently used mainly for training in internationalisation, could possibly help to co-finance such initiatives.

16 See Dakovic, D. and Loukkola, T. (Eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 4-8. <https://bit.ly/2LgmJVE>; and te Pas, S. and Zhang, T., *op. cit.* <https://bit.ly/2stW3bq>.

# 3. Institutional strategies

Learning and teaching is not just the interaction between learners and teachers, but also depends on various conditions, such as infrastructure, availability of teaching support and student services, and therefore also on support from other staff, including administration and leadership. In addition, it is conditioned by the institutional and national frameworks for higher education. Therefore, EFFECT envisaged the prospects for teaching enhancement (pedagogical training for higher education teaching staff) as part and parcel of a broader strategic approach to learning and teaching across the entire university.

## 3.1. The European Principles for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching

In order to overcome the challenges posed by the wide diversity of higher education institutions and national structures across Europe, and to provide a foundational Europe-wide building block from which higher education institutions can work together to address common challenges in learning and teaching, the EFFECT project developed a set of European Principles for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching. These principles, which were developed in consultation with stakeholders from a broad range of different national, institutional and cultural backgrounds:

- have been designed to cover all the main aspects that an institution would have to consider when developing or implementing a strategy for learning and teaching.
- were drafted as non-prescriptive: engagement with them is voluntary.
- are written in a style and language that make them adaptable to, and meaningful in, very different institutional and national contexts.
- aim to serve as an instrument for dialogue and cooperation, and help to find a common starting point for the systematic enhancement of learning and teaching across different academic fields and institutions, both within national systems and across European networks.

The principles are complemented by a set of guiding questions. As in the case of the principles, the guiding questions aim to provide self-reflection and conversations between stakeholders: they are neither exhaustive nor prescriptive, but aim to encourage institutions to develop questions relevant to their own institution and context. Within an institution, they can be an instrument for facilitating a broader discussion on how to approach learning and teaching enhancement. To illustrate this with two examples:

Principle 5 confirms the vital role of teachers and students, but also refers to administrative staff, and stakeholders outside of the institution. The main point is not so much the statement itself, but how the institutions would act upon it, and that can ensure that its members and partners can collaborate in a meaningful way, getting the necessary support. It would also help to ensure that the institution's contribution to society, which is a mission goal for many institutions, is anchored in its learning and teaching policies, structures and activities.

5

### **Learning and teaching is a collaborative and collegial process involving collaboration across the university and with the wider community.**

The entire institution, including students, administrative and technical staff are actively involved in learning and teaching. Opportunities in the private, public and voluntary sectors are essential to enable students and graduates to fulfil meaningful roles in an ever-changing society. Learning and teaching processes ultimately promote social responsibility.

Principle 4 highlights the role of leadership, and while there was strong agreement about the substance of this point, there was some discussion on whether it actually requires a separate principle, especially as it is implicitly included in Principle 5.

4

### **Institutional leadership actively promotes and enables the advancement of learning and teaching.**

An institution-wide strategy requires the institutional leadership team to drive, support and maintain the focus on learning and teaching.

Discussions with institutions confirmed the importance of stressing the role of leadership in two respects:

1. Leadership is required for coordination and collaboration throughout the institution. Over the past years, staff positions and organisational structures have been developed, and where already existent, enhanced. This is in particular the case for the position of the Vice-Rector in charge of education, and her/his team, but also relates to dedicated structures such as learning and teaching centres at institutional and faculty levels, and the establishment and functioning of dedicated committees, working groups, etc. This is documented through surveys (Trends 2015; Trends 2018), and confirmed through focus groups with institutions. How exactly this is done can differ tremendously among systems and institutions, and even among faculties and departments. Cultures of autonomy and academic freedom come into play, and institutional governance and management models obviously have a strong impact. At one institution, there is a clear organisational structure built around study programmes, whereas at another, it is a task

first and foremost of teachers, also due to academic freedom. While Trends 2018 shows that individual teachers indeed play a major role, it also confirms that at practically all institutions, this is combined with collaborative structures at faculty and institutional levels. Clearly, for the leadership it is a delicate task to develop top-down approaches able to accommodate diverse bottom-up initiatives, and create a shared ownership for education among the members of the institution.

2. Attention paid to learning and teaching by the institutional top leadership is crucial for its recognition as an institutional mission and a strategic priority. Some institutions reported that learning and teaching has been treated more as a by-product of research, or just as an administrative task. Even where leadership was mentioned as being supportive to learning and teaching, the answer to the question whether it would dedicate as much attention to education as it does to research was usually negative. But the discussions also helped to clarify some of the difficulties that leadership faces when it wants to address learning and teaching, and to initiate an exchange of ideas on how this could be changed. In research, leadership can refer to large strategic projects with high amounts of funding, involving prestigious international partners. Research can also be expressed in material terms, via budgets of competitive funding, expensive equipment, additional staff vacancies, prizes and awards, patents and products. This is far less common for education, but it is possible, and there are some good examples. In addition, university leaders who aim to promote new teaching approaches may find it difficult to base this on their own, usually past, teaching

experience: they may have never undergone any pedagogical staff development and never received any formal recognition for teaching. In research, on the other hand, they can offer peer-reviewed papers, published, presented at conferences, with a citation number, and affirmed through research partnerships.

The resulting challenge is obviously to find a way to enable university leaders to speak confidently about their institutions' achievements and challenges in learning and teaching, making the education side of the institution more visible and attractive, and ensuring that top leadership is informed about changes in learning and teaching, and ideally also has an authentic account of it, e.g. through attendance at selected events and meetings.

### 3.2. Reactions to the European Principles

The principles have been discussed and tested in various contexts: at conferences and workshops, with university networks, and with thematic peer groups. In addition, a group of universities was selected under an open call for participation to pilot the use of the principles and guiding questions at their home institutions.<sup>17</sup> The call specifically targeted higher education institutions that were in the process of designing, revisiting, or implementing their institutional strategy for learning and teaching, testing the use of the principles in existing or planned strategic discussions.

#### Feedback received on the principles



#### 3 Commitment to learning and teaching is integral to the purpose, mission and strategy of the university.

Enhancing learning and teaching requires that the mission reflects the educational purpose and values of the institution. Comprehensive, values-based institutional strategies are needed to guide the learning and teaching initiatives, and enhance their impact and sustainability.

17 The list of institutions selected to take part in this pilot is available on the EFFECT project webpage, "Activities" tab, <http://bit.ly/EFFECTproject>

The reactions from higher education institutions that engaged with the principles so far can be summarised as follows:

- So far, there has been no substantial disagreement with the principles: colleagues provided some suggestions on how to improve the wording and enhance the messages, some of which will be taken up in the forthcoming revision.
- A common reaction was that institutional representatives stated they had implemented “more or less” all the principles. All but one seized the opportunity to “have a check” on the accuracy of the statement, and reported this to have been a highly beneficial exercise.
- Some institutions felt that they needed only some of the principles, either because those principles addressed the specific problems they faced, or because they had just started to develop their strategy, and felt slightly overwhelmed by the holistic approach. Their reports proved that once they had to work with some of the principles, the need to address others became evident and also feasible, and helped to structure a more systematic process.
- Some institutions would have preferred to have some points of content more explicitly stated and elaborated on. They were encouraged to develop additional texts and guidelines for their own use, on the basis of the principles. This is one of the ways of working with the principles.
- The pilot institutions found the guiding questions useful to help engage with the principles, and inspirational for developing their own reflection processes on their education mission.
- The principles’ voluntary and non-prescriptive nature made them attractive for some institutions, but more difficult to promote and use for others. Some asked for indicators and measurement. Obviously, individual or groups of institutions could use the principles in very different ways.
- Generally, the principles were reported to facilitate conversation on learning and teaching between different parts of the institution and different types of staff, which was found to be an important element for both strategy development and implementation.

Asked in what ways the European Principles and guiding questions would be useful, institutions provided the following examples:

- as a framework for discussion with different internal groups, and developing a shared understanding of the institution’s priorities and distinctive mission.
- for identifying needs, concerns and challenges, but also for tracking and demonstrating achievements.
- for structuring the work on strategy development and implementation, allocating tasks to different actors.

- for internal reviews at faculties or departments.
- as a self-assessment tool, when constructing a narrative on the institution’s education mission for outside parties or purposes (such as external reviews or accreditations).
- as a basis for exploratory talks with potential international partners to assess and find common grounds.
- as a potentially common framework for addressing learning and teaching with national authorities, quality assurance agencies and funding bodies.

Beyond the institutional context, the principles could help provide a common language in national discussions on learning and teaching and hence also contribute to national policy-making and shared initiatives among institutions. Some institutions thought they could be useful for raising awareness about the importance of learning and teaching at national quality assurance agencies and other public bodies.

### 3.3. Development prospects for the principles

The focus groups and workshops organised under EFFECT showed that the principles can enable discussion and collaboration among different types of institutions from different higher education systems – which makes it suitable for European level exchanges and collaboration. Therefore, one approach would be to continue to promote them across the higher education sector and the community, including through higher education organisations and networks, and collect examples of their use.

In the medium to long run, this could provide for an interesting discussion on how national authorities and higher education institutions collaborate on learning and teaching, in the framework of institutional autonomy provided by different higher education systems.

# 4. Conclusions: European approaches for teaching enhancement

## 4.1. Background observations

The following observations on the feasibility of European approaches for teaching enhancement are based on research and work carried out in the context of the EFFECT project.

### 1. Current provision of teaching enhancement in Europe

The majority of the European higher education institutions indicate that they offer teaching enhancement opportunities, and most of them also engage in cooperation with partner institutions or participate in existing European and international fora on teaching enhancement. Only 10% of institutions indicate making use of the offer of for-profit providers (Trends 2018). Most institutions develop their own approaches, sometimes at the faculty or departmental level. This has the advantage that institutions can tailor their measures to their needs and ensure ownership among their members. However, doing so is resource-intensive, might forgo opportunities to consider established good practices and lessons learnt in other universities and systems, and may not gain recognition outside the institution.

One-third of institutions surveyed in the Trends 2018 study offer obligatory courses, which, however, may not be compulsory for all staff; they often target debutants and newly arrived staff. About three-quarters of institutions indicated having voluntary courses.

University associations and networks develop their shared initiatives, including professional standards and guidelines, either purely self-regulated (Sweden) or in response to and in reflection of national regulation (Netherlands, Norway). In some systems, individual institutions organise courses for their own staff; in others, they offer them also for staff from other institutions.

There are also activities at the European level. Networks and associations like the Network of Universities from the Capitals of Europe (UNICA), the League of European Research Universities (LERU), the Coimbra Group and EUA organise peer-learning events for professional exchange. While such initiatives allow for the exchange of good practices, enable peer learning, and may even define – explicitly or intrinsically – shared approaches and standards, they usually do not assess participants' learning, or provide a formal offer for continued professional development, with accreditation or certification.

Dedicated professional bodies and standing initiatives, such as the UK Advance HE (previously known as the Higher Education Academy) and the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Ireland, provide a range of professional development opportunities for individuals and institutions. Advance HE also provides courses and other services outside of the UK.

Some professional and disciplinary groups provide courses and peer learning for their members.<sup>18</sup> The UK Higher Education Academy launched a number of disciplinary networks, which were quite successful, but it has now discontinued them due to a lack of funding.

Education trade unions provide professional training opportunities to their members. These include pedagogical staff development, but usually target teachers from sectors other than higher education.<sup>19</sup>

There is also a tendency to consider learning and teaching more and more in performance agreements between higher education institutions and authorities, often with provision of teaching enhancement as one of the commitments.

The demand for, and acceptance of, certified courses and formal teaching qualifications seems not to be very high across Europe – with some notable exceptions in systems in which it has become compulsory, due to the self regulation of the sector, pressure from national authorities, or a combination of both (England, and to some extent Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden).

18 For instance, The International Society for Engineering Pedagogy (IGIP), which has 40 years of existence. <http://www.igip.org>.

19 Stevenson, H., Milner, A. and Winchip, E. (Education Trade Union Committee for Education, ETUCE), 2018, *Strengthening the capacity of education trade unions to represent teachers' professional needs in social dialogue*, pp. 23-24. [https://csee-etu.org/images/attachments/RP\\_TeachProfNeeds.pdf](https://csee-etu.org/images/attachments/RP_TeachProfNeeds.pdf) (accessed 16/01/2019).

## 2. Will teaching enhancement provision increase and become mainstream?

The overall assumption is that institutional and national initiatives for teaching enhancement are likely to rise in number and will gradually become mainstream. This is confirmed by survey results and discussions with sector representatives, who state the need for more initiatives, and more systematic, provision and organisation of teaching enhancement. This is also increasingly visible in national higher education strategies and policies, and funding support available at the European level.

But sector representatives also tend to agree that this development is not unconditional or automatic. This is confirmed by the finding that over the past three years, the number of institutions that provide pedagogical development courses seems not to have increased (Trends 2018). This is not surprising, as the participation in teaching enhancement in most systems and institutions is voluntary, and does not have a significant impact on career development.

Drivers usually mentioned for teaching enhancement are:

- exchange and collaboration with colleagues and stakeholders;
- measures that support professional development and scholarship of learning and teaching;
- development and use of data collection and institutional research;
- funding and, in particular, better recognition of teaching as a profession;<sup>20</sup>
- new pedagogical opportunities through the use of digital tools and methods.

## 3. The lack of recognition for teaching and teaching enhancement

After funding, the lack of recognition for teaching as part of the academic career is mentioned as the biggest obstacle for the enhancement of learning and teaching (Trends 2018), and subsequently also for teaching enhancement. Comparison is frequently made with the esteem that research achievement renders. Teaching needs to be recognised as a core component of academic careers and academics' professional identity. Recognition for teaching also needs to come from national (legislation or policy) and institutional frameworks. How exactly this can be achieved is an open question – but if it is not tackled, one cannot imagine how teaching enhancement, and learning and teaching more generally, can be successful.

It is likely that a wider approach is necessary, which would not only aim at achieving a better parity of esteem between teaching and research, but also at redefining the academic profession, which comprises more than research and teaching.

## 4. The purposes and benefits of teaching enhancement

The purpose of teaching enhancement can be seen differently: Its primary goal is to enhance the quality of learning and teaching, and to provide students with a better learning experience. In this regard, it is also an important component of quality assurance.

The promotion of teaching enhancement also contributes to raising awareness of teaching as an important part of the academic profession, the needs of those who are teaching, how teaching aligns with other tasks, in research or professional practice, and how it is rooted in specific disciplinary and professional cultures.

Promoting a European dimension in teaching enhancement would also be a way to explore the different national and institutional traditions in teaching, learn from good practices across a range of these traditions, overcome related obstacles and support a European approach towards the scholarship of learning and teaching (research on teaching).

Finally, as pointed out in the previous section, it should also provoke scrutiny of the strategies and measures that higher education institutions and systems have in place for learning and teaching, opening the horizon for a broader reflection on teaching as part of the mission, and how it responds to societal demand. Therefore, rather than focusing exclusively on “how to teach” approaches, teaching enhancement should be developed as a systematic approach, a response to ensure that teaching adequately reflects and addresses the change in research, professions, and society.

20 More details are presented in the Trends 2018 report (<https://bit.ly/EUATRENDS2018>) and in the EFFECT study on national initiatives in learning and teaching in Europe (<https://bit.ly/2L6QHvm>).



## 5. Responding to ongoing change in education and society

Higher education teaching is changing, but in ways that are not easy to predict. Technical changes lead to transformation such as massive online courses, hologram teaching, artificial intelligence and blockchain are visible, and there is speculation on how they will impact change in higher education teaching. In addition, research and professional knowledge are developed and shared differently. Often, they are attributed as “open”, meaning that people connect to and learn from each other, and participate in learning communities, locally and around the globe. This may result in deeper and more disruptive developments that impact learning and teaching, the daily practice of students and staff, and the ways in which higher education institutions operate. Anticipation and response could become a task of teaching enhancement, and this would also enable a shift in focus away from deficit-based professional *development* in teaching, and towards more holistic, adaptive and reflective continuous professional *learning* for teachers.

This would support a concept of teaching enhancement that goes beyond the provision of teaching skills training and should likely not even be referred to as teaching enhancement, but as academic staff development. This might also be a way to address the lack of recognition that teaching is facing.

## 6. Feasibility and demand: a European structure for teaching enhancement

It would not be realistic to expect one European initiative to cater to the diverse needs and demands of the entire European higher education sector. Therefore, several alternative models should be considered. These would seek to synergise and collaborate with already existing national and institutional initiatives, facilitating exchange and collaboration among them, and enabling a European dimension in teaching enhancement similar to other areas of collaboration established either at European policy levels or among institutions in the EHEA.

European teaching enhancement approaches would be of added value for institutions and teachers in those European countries that have no national initiative, either because it has not yet been developed, or due to the limited capacity and small size of the system.

While teaching enhancement may offer some kind of certification, it should not emphasise this aspect too strongly, as this may negatively affect voluntary participation, and impede truly explorative exchange and collaboration, as currently practiced in some of the networks. In addition, teachers from countries where certified courses are commonly implemented (such as Finland, Ireland, Sweden and the UK) or from systems with a national regulation on teaching enhancement (Denmark, France, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway) are unlikely to find added value in undergoing more of such courses. But their participation across a broad range of existing European initiatives proves that they regard uncertified development opportunities as highly valuable.

A further question is how to ensure the sustainability of a structure that should be owned and governed by the sector. A business model should include:

- income-generation (the structure would become a service provider);
- membership fees from individual members, institutions or governments;
- grants provided by public funding and other donors;
- a combination of these.



## 4.2. Different models for cooperation on teaching enhancement

The EFFECT project has considered a range of different teaching enhancement models that are presented with their associated conditions for success and possible challenges. The different options proposed may be envisaged in combination, and the list is certainly not exhaustive.

### Structured peer-learning opportunities

Peer learning groups have been tested in the context of EUA Learning and Teaching Thematic Peer Groups in 2017 and 2018 (see Case Study 2). EUA's objectives in forming these groups were to:

- map the topic by sharing the participants' understandings of it and by reaching a common definition;
- discuss challenges related to the topic;
- explore case studies and lessons learnt in group members' institutions or countries;
- identify recommendations that could be useful for other institutions beyond the group, thus aiming to take the results beyond the group context;
- publish the results in a report.

The outcomes from such groups matter as much as their journey: This format of learning is adapted for developing communities of practice, which would build on a commonly defined language for addressing learning and teaching. Participating representatives of higher education institutions found the approach highly useful and meaningful. The format of peer learning could be used between, as well as within institutions.

#### Conditions for success

The positive points of this approach are the:

- low investments in terms of resources and institutional support;
- highly flexible and scalable nature, dependent on demand and resources;
- participant and topic-driven form;
- ability to target specific profiles (in this case, vice rectors);
- networking and community building;
- identification of expertise and excellence;
- exchange of good practice.

#### Considerations and challenges

Organisers of such groups may want to reflect on the:

- sustainability and continuity between generations of peers involved in these exchanges;
- outreach beyond individuals involved in these groups;
- relatively short duration;
- reliance on participants in managing the initiative and producing results;
- evidence of impact at institutional and system levels.

## Network to support national approaches

The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Ireland is an example of such a network. It serves as the standing advisory body on learning and teaching at the national level in Ireland and works with other representative bodies and stakeholders in the sector. Notably, the forum offers opportunities for funding projects, organises teaching awards, and has developed resources on different topics such as professional development, digital learning, discipline-based teaching enhancement, and strategic approaches to student success.

Such networks could also be mandated to manage a national learning and teaching enhancement fund, as well as resource hubs to inform, guide and support individuals and institutions. Their very existence stimulates and values a higher education learning and teaching culture at the national level.

### Conditions for success

The positive points of this approach are the:

- sustainable and formal structure;
- mobilisation of expertise from across the sector;
- potential for interplay, dialogue and collaboration between institutions, student and academic communities, sector organisations such as funding bodies and quality assurance agencies, and policy makers.

### Considerations and challenges

Organisers of such networks may want to reflect on the:

- sustainability and attractiveness of such a network, which depend on external funding support (most likely by the government or a group of higher education institutions);
- delicate balance needed for retaining its identity and independence, as it is funded by governments, and initiated by the sector;

## A network of institutional centres for learning and teaching

Institutional and/or faculty-based learning and teaching centres or units are becoming widespread across European countries (Trends 2018). These centres, sometimes also called labs, typically advise academic staff (and sometimes leadership) on learning and teaching, offer academic staff development courses and material, support innovative teaching initiatives, analyse data on student success and teacher performance, and conduct research on didactics and pedagogy, among other tasks.

Gathering such centres into a European network allows the sharing of expertise, the examining of common challenges and the exchange of examples of practice, and could stimulate and enable cross-border collaboration. The diversity of teaching cultures and academic backgrounds would enrich exchanges and ultimately contribute to creating a European community of practice in the field.

### Conditions for success

The positive points of this approach are the:

- establishment and strengthening of a professional network;
- exchange of good practices and lessons learnt;
- potential for collaboration on innovative practices and the setting of professional standards.

### Considerations and challenges

Establishing such a network would require reflection on the:

- relation with existing national networks of the same kind (if any);
- tangible benefits for higher education institutions from such a network;
- relation with the different national initiatives and partners;
- level on which the mission of such a network should be defined: serving the community of centres (to better develop themselves), and/or serving a broader dialogue among institutions on how to enhance learning and teaching.

## Collaborative staff development programmes offered by university consortia

By sharing teaching enhancement measures, higher education institutions are able to provide collectively a broader, more diverse, and better recognised offer. This enables a division of tasks: Each institution could be in charge of specific modules on different aspects of pedagogy, which could be undertaken in flexible combinations by any staff from other institutions, and potentially also by outside participants. It would require a light but robust management, and a steering group to reflect on goals and quality assurance. Modules could be provided face-to-face and online.

Such an approach could be built upon and further inter-institutional strategic collaboration, which is one of the long-term goals of the Erasmus+ programme, and specifically of the European University initiatives.

### Conditions for success

The positive points of this approach are the:

- use of existing structures;
- cost effectiveness;
- enhancement of inter-institutional collaboration, good practice exchange in learning and teaching, with a likely impact on joint programmes and other collaboration initiatives;
- potential for collaboration on innovative practices and pedagogical research;
- high potential for customising to the local/national context;
- flexibility regarding the participation of additional partners, but also staff members from other institutions;
- enabling of exchange among individual teachers from different institutions.

### Considerations and challenges

This approach can be explored with limited risks, but with consideration for the following factors:

- a risk of closed clubs, rather than an open European approach;
- a clear governance structure and substantial resources required for scaling up such approach;
- different levels of expertise and capacity to offer such modules. It is important therefore to ensure mutual benefit.

## Development of a European professional body for teaching enhancement

The former Higher Education Academy in the UK is an example of such a professional body. It serves individuals (through a valued network of fellows who underwent its training and professional standard framework scheme) as well as institutions. The Academy was a major contributor to certified professional development courses in the UK, and its UK Professional Standards Framework has gained recognition beyond the country.

Such a professional organisation would contribute to building a shared agenda that values learning and teaching at a European level, following a supportive, peer- and membership-based approach. Defining European professional standards may be a complex task, and might not be appropriate given the diversity of higher education systems and the principle of subsidiarity. Moreover, articulating such standards with a supportive, open-exchange and membership-based approach may prove difficult.

### Conditions for success

In order to address a shared agenda that values learning and teaching, such a body would need to:

- be established with the best multilateral practices, and with full respect for the diversity of higher education systems and academic cultures.
- be recognised across Europe for ensuring its success. This implies that public (national or European) support and funding would be needed, at least at the kick-starting stage. This also means that the activities run under such an organisation would need to relate to other, existing initiatives at European, national, and institutional levels, and complementarities should be sought.
- seek ownership through membership provision. It could be based on individual membership (similar to the model of the European Association for International Education, EAIE), institutional membership (such as EUA), or a dedicated national organisation (which would require the establishment of such organisations in each country). It could also involve different types of stakeholders, including national authorities (following the example of the European Quality Assurance Register, EQAR).

### Considerations and challenges

Establishing such an organisation would require:

- a clear definition of ownership, potentially through a complex shared governance model.
- appropriate lead-time and resources, such as a major start-up investment, the establishment of a permanent secretarial body with staff, facilities and resources, and a clear and sustainable business model, which could be based on a combination of membership fees, public and third-party grants and donations, and income generated from services.
- careful consideration for the service offer. Such services could include:
  - professional development for individuals and institutions, to be offered to individuals, institutions or national authorities;
  - competitive funds for innovative projects, carried out by individuals, teams, or institutions. Awards and prizes could be one way to implement this;
  - resources and networking opportunities on a European level.

## An institutional evaluation approach

A fit-for-purpose and voluntary evaluation scheme that focuses on learning and teaching could be tailored to institutional needs, in a perspective similar to EUA's Institutional Evaluation Programme, and the German Rectors' Conference (HRK)'s Internationalisation audit.

Such evaluation scheme could be integrated into existing external quality assurance arrangements, or take place independently as a complementary, voluntary exercise. It could help institutions to develop their strategies and approaches in learning and teaching, and in the medium term, establish a pool of reviewers with European expertise in learning and teaching. The institutions involved in the pilot experience for the European Principles for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching noted that the principles could be used as a common language for addressing learning and teaching at the national level. In this perspective, quality assurance agencies that are in a process of developing the way they address learning and teaching with institutions may want to examine how using the principles could be beneficial to their practice. This would require articulation with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) – as stated in the Principles for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (Principle n° 10).

### Conditions for success

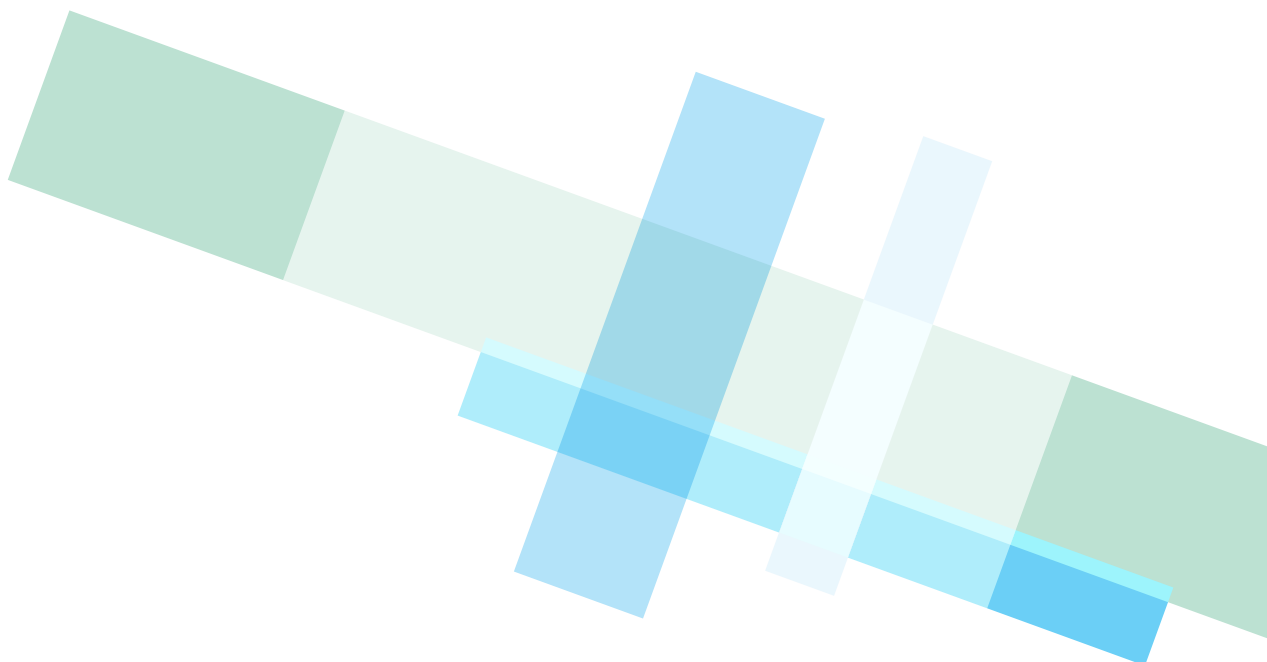
Such approach should take into account the following goals:

- strengthening self-evaluation approaches in learning and teaching;
- strengthening institutional approaches;
- offering peer-to-peer support;
- being fit-for-purpose, enhancement oriented;
- offering formal recognition of institutional approaches for learning and teaching;
- opening to potential for developing QA approaches for learning and teaching.

### Considerations and challenges

Organising evaluations would need take into account the following challenges:

- the relatively high costs for conducting evaluations – which however is not uncommon for such evaluations;
- the possibility of being misperceived as an “accreditation”.



The publication is complemented by a series of Appendix available on the EFFECT webpage: <http://bit.ly/EFFECTproject>.

#### **Appendix**

Appendix 1 – The EFFECT pedagogical staff development workshops: methodology, assessment, and lessons learnt


Appendix 2 – The EFFECT pedagogical staff development workshops: a repository of stimulus material

Appendix 3 – The Institutional Strategies Support Package: 10 European Principles for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching and their guiding questions

Appendix 4 – A model workshop for using the Principles

Appendix 5 – *National Initiatives in Learning and Teaching in Europe*, by L. Bunescu and M. Gaebel

Appendix 6 – *Enhancement and Recognition of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. The Impact of Teaching and Excellence Prizes*, by E. Efimenko, A. Roman, M. Pinto, F. Remião and P. Teixeira



The European Forum for Enhanced Collaboration in Teaching (EFFECT, 2015-2019) project aims at facilitating European collaboration on teaching enhancement, identifying and developing innovative practices, supporting higher education institutions in developing strategic approaches, and assessing the feasibility of a sustainable structure for the enhancement of learning and teaching at the European level.

The project consortium is led by the European University Association, and brings together experts, dedicated networks, organisations, national rectors' conferences and institutions from different parts of Europe.

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More information: <http://bit.ly/EFFECTproject>

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