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## **Supporting the Bologna Process with IT standards – new emerging European group for the definition of data exchange standards between Higher Education Institutions**

### **Report from the European workshop, 9<sup>th</sup> November 2007 in Rome**

Representatives from European and US universities and other institutions active in the field of Higher Education met on the 9th November 2007 in Rome to discuss future common data standards for exchanging student curriculum data. The workshop “Defining electronic standards and procedures for the exchange of student curriculum data between Higher Education Institutions” was hosted by the Conference of Rectors of the Italian Universities (CRUI) in Rome. 40 participants from 13 countries attended the meeting with the dual intent of sharing domestic and international initiatives in this area and defining future common actions to be taken. A representative mix of active practitioners and standard seekers animated the workshop with project demonstrations and panel discussions.

The workshop's assembly expressed a general consensus on the results of the meeting of the technical committee TC 353 of the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) regarding the theme “Information and Communication Technologies for learning education and training”. The technical committee summarized in the so-called “Athens Declaration” requirements for harmonization in the field of course description, which the work group considers as being valid also in the area of student curriculum data:

- There is a considerable interest in many countries in Europe in creating specifications for the exchange of information about courses and other learning and training opportunities.
- There is a clear scope for greater harmonization of these efforts within a European context.
- All existing national initiatives will benefit from contributing towards harmonization at a European level.
- There are sufficient clear commonalities across existing national initiatives for future European standards to be developed.
- Harmonization should balance the benefits of common standardization with the necessity of meeting local contextual needs and infrastructure.
- Harmonization efforts should focus on small, simple models based upon existing commonalities that can be expanded upon at national or regional level, rather than all-inclusive monolithic standards.

The workshop's recommendations for future actions are as follows:

- establish a “permanent observatory”: to monitor, supervise and share all efforts made in Europe regarding the standardisation and exchange of student curriculum data. This observatory will be based on the group of experts present in Rome and should meet regularly to report on the situation, trends and issues relating to standards in student curriculum data exchange
- elect a delegation of experts: to participate in official tables of discussion at European level, where standards are being made (CEN for example)
- promote technical sub-workgroups: to carry on operational initiatives instrumental to the transition from specifications to standards; candidate topics are for example the structured comparative analysis of existing specifications and the definition of a reference glossary of terminology and semantics to be adopted in this area.

More generally the workshop's assembly identified the following aims for future actions:

- concentrate on the topic of exchanging student curriculum data
- implicate all stakeholders, projects and work groups already active in this area
- implicate all institutions which could give visibility to the work carried out or diffuse the standards defined as OECD, TERENA, EUNIS, EAIE
- start with a minimal core of common specification
- favour the practice over the standardisation
- make common propositions to and be involved in the CEN TC 353

The participants are aware that standards come about through adoption and that defining the path from specification to adoption requires collaboration, effort and dissemination.

The next meeting of the work group is already planned to take place in March 2008 in Dublin.

Documentation about the workshop is available at <http://www.moveonnet.eu/institutions/standards>.

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