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**1<sup>st</sup> plenary meeting of the  
Council of Europe Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education  
ETINED  
Council of Europe,  
24-25 November 2016**

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**GENERAL REPORT**

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The first plenary meeting of ETINED took place in Strasbourg on 24 and 25 November.

The Council of Europe Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education (ETINED) was established in April 2013 with the political mandate from the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education. Its conference in Helsinki on “Governance and Quality Education” asked to establish a Pan-European platform of exchange of information and best practices on ethics and integrity in education “with special attention to the fight against corruption and fraud in education and research”.

ETINED aims to address this challenge through a genuinely European dialogue and intergovernmental cooperation and by drawing upon the materials and norms developed by the Council of Europe.

ETINED’s work is based on the assumption that issues regarding quality education and corruption can only be effectively addressed “if all relevant sections of society commit fully to fundamental positive ethical principles for public and professional life rather than relying only on top-down mechanistic regulatory measures”. This was repeatedly stressed during the First Plenary meeting by presenters and participants.

During the Plenary meeting three main topic areas were explored:

**1. Ethical behaviour of all actors in education**

The main attention was devoted to learning from the existing systems of codes of ethics in education institutions, presenting several case studies and a European-wide study of the codes for school teachers.

**2. Academic integrity and plagiarism**

The main attention was devoted to approaches of introducing effective academic integrity in higher education institutions, as well as developing mechanisms of dealing with ghost-writing and its threats to academic integrity.

**3. Recognition of qualifications**

The main attention was devoted to learning from existing approaches of dealing with fake qualifications on individual and institutional levels, using the examples from the UK and Sweden.

The Plenary meeting was opened by an introduction to the work on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education done by the Council of Europe so far, presented by Ian Smith from the University of the West of Scotland and Tom Hamilton from the General Teaching Council for Scotland. An update on the study comparing policies for academic integrity in South-East Europe was presented by ETINED’s Steering Committee member Tomáš Foltýnek from

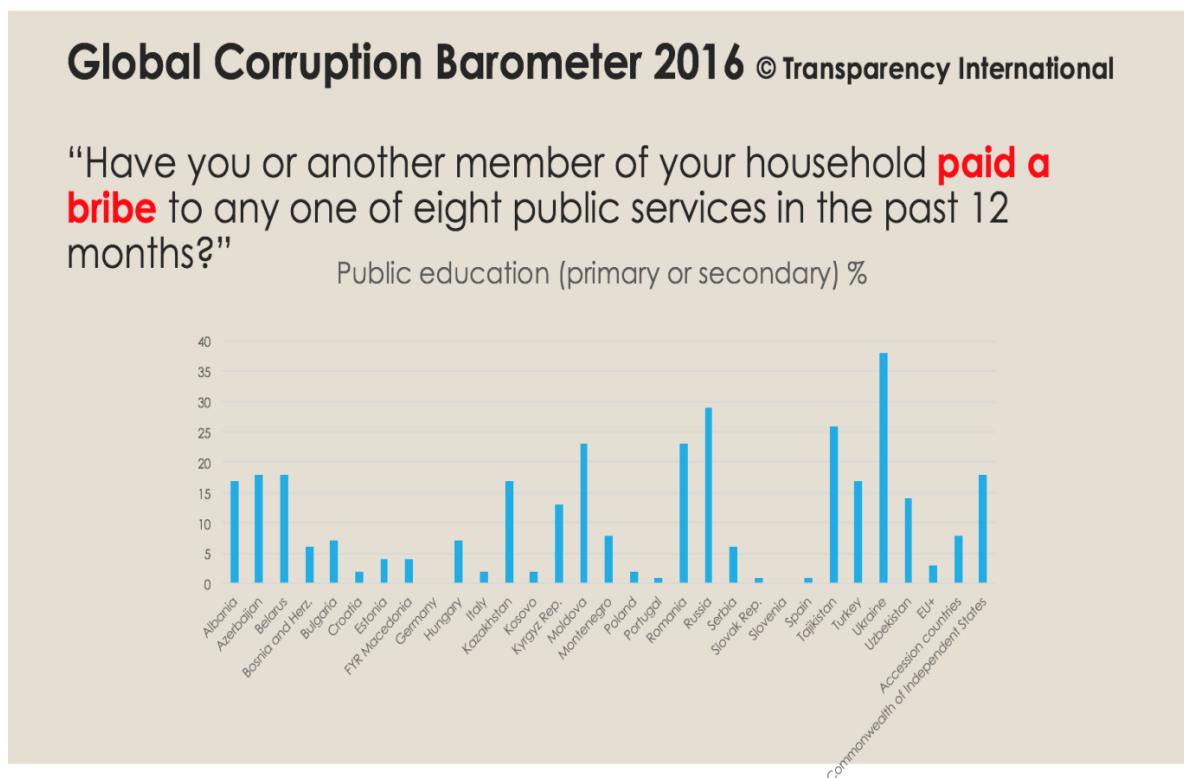
Mendel University in the Czech Republic. A suggestion was made to carry out similar studies in other regions as part of ETINED's activity.

A panel of ETINED's partners from UNECSO, the European Student Union and NARIC confirmed the importance of the topics covered by ETINED and encouraged continuing to develop co-operation and partnership with relevant stake holders in the field.

The next steps for 2017 and ideas for the 2018-2019 period were discussed at the end of the Plenary meeting. It was suggested that for 2017 the Platform would work in separate working groups, advancing the work on three topics covered during the plenary sessions that would meet 3 times during 2017. Topics such as stopping bribery and other forms of corruption in educational institutions and a focus on vocational education were mentioned as potential issues to be covered by ETINED in the future.

The next Plenary session will be held in Strasbourg at the end of 2017. A central event of the ETINED platform in 2017 will be the conference "Plagiarism across Europe and beyond 2017" that will take place on 24-26 May 2017 in Brno, Czech Republic.

The new data from the Corruption Barometer of Transparency International about corruption in educational institutions was presented to the Plenary session, alerting to the fact that corruption remains a serious problem in many member states of the Council of Europe.



## Reporting from the Work streams

### 1. Ethical behaviour of all actors in education

The main materials looked at during the Plenary meeting:

- **The European wide study related to the codes of conduct for school teachers**

Conducted on the behalf of Council of Europe by the Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS, Latvia and presented at the plenary session by Dr. Maria Golubeva

- **Presentation on strengthening Integrity and combatting corruption in higher education in Armenia,**  
Presented at the plenary session by Robert Sukiasyan, representative of the Ministry of Education and Science, Republic of Armenia
- **Code of ethics in Armenia**  
presented at the workshop by Arevik Anapiosyan from the Institute of Public Policy, Republic of Armenia
- **Assessment of the implementation of the PACA project results in regard to ethical codes in Albania**  
Presented at the workshop by Astrit Dautaj from the Institute for the Development of Education, Albania

During the meeting Dr. M. Golubeva presented the preliminary findings on the European-wide study on the codes of ethics for school teachers that was carried out on the behalf of Council of Europe by the Center for Public Policy PROVIDUS from Latvia.

The study emphasizes the role of codes of conduct in education, which, if taken seriously, can strengthen the ethics of the teaching profession. The codes are expressions of the profession's values and principles, and a means of communicating the profession's standards to other stakeholders. Adherence to the code can improve the educational experience for students and their parents. Codes and their implementation measures guide, support and professionally socialise teachers. Codes can also serve as regulatory tools, backed by established procedures, and monitoring and enforcement bodies.

There is a large variety of codes and approaches to having a code across Europe. 10 countries don't have a national level code and there was no information found on another 14 countries during the study. 10 countries were studied in-depth.

Depending on the country, codes differ in their level of detail and in the extent to which they rely on the internal guiding principles or external controls. The codes might be developed and adopted at the government level, or by teachers' and other educators' professional bodies.

The study draws on the best practices in some key areas as to developing and implementing the codes. The good practices include stakeholder involvement in the development of teachers' codes, as is happening in Scotland, Ireland and Finland where the code is developed "by teachers for teachers" and is curated by a body that is closely associated with the teaching profession.

In countries where the code is seen not just as an aspirational standard but also as a set of guiding principles realistically linked to teachers' work, the emphasis is placed on familiarising teachers with the code throughout their professional career.

Practical workshops and seminars for teachers with the involvement of professional bodies responsible for the code of conduct reaching out to teachers in their everyday working

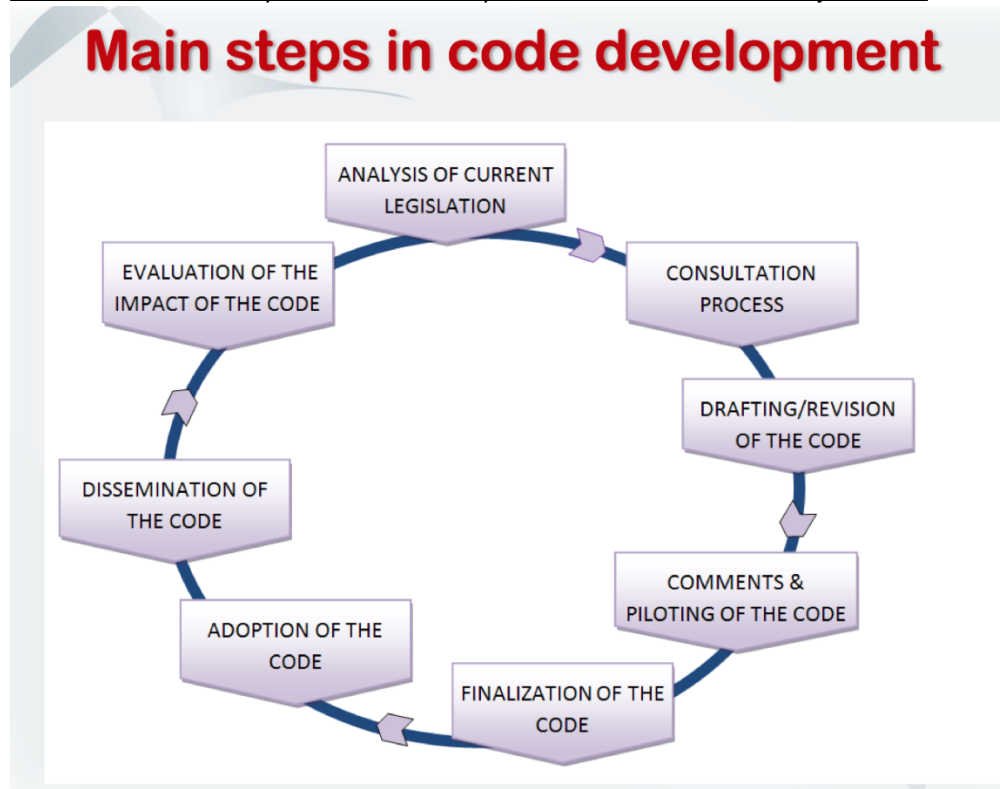
environment is a good way to implement codes. A specific example of good practices is the role of the Ethical Committee in Finland, which develops opinions on particular ethical issues for teachers as they arise.

Adequate disciplinary procedures are needed to keep the codes relevant. Sanctions should not be the primary means of implementing codes of conduct, but several countries provide the possibility to lodge a complaint or other triggers for the review of professional conduct in a fair procedure by a respectable professional body.

Regular reviews of the code signal that the codes are practical instruments.

The study has recognized several challenges and gaps as regards to the codes for school teachers: a code that is not connected to professional culture, rules without aspirational value statements, lack of ownership (codes created by central government and communicated top-down), lack of a clear implementation framework.

Table 2 The Main Steps in Code Development, slide from the Plenary session



## 2. Academic integrity and plagiarism

The two case studies looked at during the Plenary meeting:

- The “RefairEnce Project” for plagiarism prevention in universities  
Presented at the workshop by Ansgar Schäfer from the University of Konstanz
- Ghost-writing in higher education  
Presented at the workshop by Prof. Phil M. Newton from the University of Swansea

**Prof. Phil M. Newton** described the situation concerning plagiarism in higher education with the focus on ghost-writing, which is currently his research field. About 1/5 (19%) of all plagiarism detected by the electronic tool 'Turnit in' for higher education papers in the US in 2011/2012 came from the so called "essay mills" such as oppapers.com or bignerds.com. Professor Newton argues that the market for ghost-writing is large, established, easy accessible, affordable for students and legal in most countries. There are many companies operating in the market, providing services not only for pre-written essays, but also for tailor-made writer services for anything in one's academic life, from an essay to a master's theses. These services are also accessible via sites for freelancers.

Prof. Newton suggests that to address the problem "a positive, principle-based approach, based on quality" needs to be used. One would need to educate the educators and introduce a "rigorous assessment design" that would allow only those taking a particular course to complete the assessment. This would need to be backed up by action from regulators making it more difficult for companies to provide 'ghost writing services' while claiming 'tutoring services offered'.

According to Prof. Newton's research on UK academic institutions, academic integrity and contract writing is not covered during teaching courses for academic staff. In the design Prof. Newton suggests to focus 'on what students can do and not essays' where possible, personalize assessments and turn to more traditional classwork and assessment, look at class sizes and non-anonymous assessment practices. Building up of a culture of academic integrity, combined with severe fines for violations as well as practical tools, such as blocking access to the ghost-writing sites on campuses, could also serve as steps towards solutions.

**Ansgar Schäfer** provided recommendations stemming from a research project funded by the government of Baden-Wurtenburg in Germany:

- It is inevitable to understand and be proficient in methods of academic work. First of all, competence-building (exercise, feedback) is needed instead of instruction and detection only.
- Plagiarism is not only about words, it can be a photo, formula, etc.
- Methods of working need to be an integrated part of study programs within the subject.
- It is important to have strategic ownership of academic integrity issues within a higher education institution. That would allow to integrate and ensure measures and effective stakeholder engagement. Acting transparently, consistently, fairly and forcefully could bring the needed result.

### **Recognition of qualifications**

The two case studies looked at during the Plenary meeting:

- **Education fraud: degree of deception**  
Presented at the workshop by Cloud Bai-Yun from ENIC-NARIC UK
- **The experience of the Swedish ENIC-NARIC Office in dealing with fraudulent credentials and diploma mills**  
Presented at the workshop by Erik Johansson from ENIC-NARIC Sweden

**Cloud Bai-Yun** shared the UK experience and approach to dealing with education fraud, pointing out that copy-paste plagiarism is diminishing because of the tools available to detect it, but essay mills remain a problem. False certificates and fraudulent universities also remain a problem. She shared tips for detecting a fraudulent education institution. Several institutions in the UK are dealing with fraud in education and better co-ordination would be needed.


Table 3

From Cloud Bai-Yun presentation, Institutions: UK NARIC - National Agency for the Recognition and International Comparison, HEDD – Higher Education Degree Datacheck, NAFN - National Anti-Fraud Network, UK RLP - UK Register of Learning Providers, Digitary – www.digitary.net)

## Stakeholders: Advice and Guidance

	UK	Offers training	Overseas systems	Verification of quals	Verification of providers	Part of a Network	Legal powers
UK NARIC	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
HEDD	✓			✓	✓	✓	
NAFN	✓	✓					
UK RLP	✓				✓		
HEFCE	✓				✓	✓	
Digitary	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Met Police / Trading Standards	✓						✓

Prevention of Educational Fraud | [www.naric.org.uk](http://www.naric.org.uk) | [info@naric.org.uk](mailto:info@naric.org.uk)



**Erik Johansson** shared some of the best practices of the anti-fraud task force at the Swedish Council for Higher Education. It is an inter-departmental task force that develops methods and procedures to prevent forgeries in the assessment and admission process. The responsibility of the task force is to monitor the matter of fraudulent credentials and increase the awareness of this issue within the agency. Mr. Johansson provided examples of dealing with issues of certification from countries like Afghanistan, Moldova and Syria. He also shared ideas of what trends are happening in Europe and what could be done to improve the overall system.

Conclusions and recommendations after discussions of the working group:

- The issue covered by the working group is a growing trend in many countries despite national differences. However, there is little statistical information available to assess

the real scale of the problem. Solutions may not be difficult to find, but there is a lack of political will to face the problem.

- Technology is used for modern fraud but can also provide solutions on how to fight the problem. Using technologies for verification: e-verification system, e-transcript, etc. can be a strong preventive tool. E-transcript should become superior to paper documents, as it is more difficult to falsify e-verification services. It should be multi-lingual and free of charge.
- The working group established some best practices, such as reporting cases to police and checking the authenticity of documents. Using a consistent approach to develop guidelines and policies on the issue and focusing on all types of qualifications. Raising awareness in broader society might be necessary to create the political will and address the problem.
- The role of the network of the Groningen Declaration in working with recognition of qualification was stressed.
- The aim of this action for future ETINED actions would be to establish concrete tools such as checklists and screenings to help measure the level of integrity of an institution.
- A Working Group of the ETINED Platform could reflect upon the different dimensions of education fraud, related for example to qualifications obtained on-line (diploma mills) and to the problem of accreditation, with a specific focus on European cooperation.

The main expected outcomes of future activity would be:

1. the promotion of exchanges of information on recognized qualifications;
2. the establishment of checklists on information to be checked by students;
3. the drafting of policy recommendations for governments, establishing the responsibility of public authorities to provide information on recognition.