



First Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG) Meeting

Online*, hosted by BFUG Secretariat, Albania
Thursday, May 10, 2021,
14.00-17.30 (Tirana time)

Minutes

List of Participants

No.	Delegation	First Name	Family Name(s)
1	Albania (TPG B Co-chair)	Linda	Pustina
2	Austria (BICG Co-chair)	Helga	Posset
3	Austria (TPG A Co-chair)	Karin	Riegler
4	Belgium Flemish Community (TPG C Co-chair)	Magalie	Soenen
5	Bulgaria (BICG Co-chair)	Ivana	Radonova
6	EUA	Tia	Loukkola
7	EURASHE	Michal	Karpíšek
8	European Commission	Klara	Engels-Perenyi
9	European Commission/Eurydice (Co-chair of Monitoring WG)	David	Crosier
10	France (TPG B Co-chair)	Helene	Bekker
11	Georgia (TPG A Co-chair)	Ketevan	Panhulidze
12	Italy (BICG Co-chair)	Ann Katherine	Isaacs
13	Italy (TPG B Co-chair)	Chiara	Finocchietti
14	Latvia (TPG A Co-chair)	Baiba	Ramina
15	Romania	Madalina	Matei
16	Romania (TPG C Co-chair)	Daniela Cristina	Ghițulică
17	BFUG Secretariat (Head, Albania)	Enida	Bezhani
18	BFUG Secretariat (Albania)	Kristina	Metallari
19	BFUG Secretariat (Albania)	Aida	Myrto

Apologies from Kazakhstan (TPG C Co-chair).

***Note:** Due to the extraordinary circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic, this BICG meeting was held online.

Welcome and introduction to the meeting by the BICG Co-chairs and BFUG Secretariat

Helga Posset (Co-chair, BICG) opened the meeting by introducing the BICG Co-chairs and welcoming everybody to the first meeting of the 2021-2024 work period. Ann Katherine Isaacs (Co-chair, BICG) and Ivana Radonova (Co-chair, BICG) thanked everyone for their commitment and the satisfactory results achieved during the previous work period and emphasized the importance of the implementation of the three key commitments (KCs). Special thanks were expressed to the former Croatian BICG Co-chair Ana Tecilazić Goršić and also to all the TPGs' co-chairs for the excellent cooperation, high level of commitment and the very fruitful results achieved.



The BICG Co-chairs underlined the importance of adopting a structured peer support approach through the work of the Thematic Peer Groups and encouraged all countries to engage in the second round of the BICG's activities. Enida Bezhani (Head of BFUG Secretariat) welcomed everybody as well and offered the Secretariat's full support for the upcoming work and meetings of the BICG.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda of the meeting was adopted.

For more detailed information, please see [BICG 1st meeting 10 05 2021 Agenda](#).

2. Tour de Table

All members of the BICG introduced themselves and informed on their respective roles.

3. BICG Work Program 2021-2024

3.1. Tasks

Ivana Radonova (Co-chair, BICG) emphasized the importance of communication between the three TPGs. The BICG must report regularly to the BFUG and the BFUG Board on its progress, updates and activities and provide recommendations by the end of the work period (e.g., possibly extending peer support in other policy areas).

Ann Katherine Isaacs (Co-chair, BICG) agreed that the follow up tasks should be carried out diligently. She also noted that the KCs should be implemented in all countries. Often, even countries that have implemented the KCs have done so in different ways: it is important to work together to increase compatibility and trust.

In conclusion, all TPGs need to stimulate an effective level of communication and connect to a wider audience. Additionally, more efforts need to be made with regard to the implementation process of the KCs.

3.2. ToR

The draft Terms of Reference for the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (2021-2024) were introduced and the discussions mainly focused on the KCs and the group composition. The tasks of the TPGs ought to be well-defined, focusing on the improvement and acceleration of the implementation process. Two main points were raised during the discussion of the ToRs (to be elaborated in greater detail under point 4. of the agenda):

With regard to the BICG composition, the question of whether Co-chairing countries of TPGs will be also considered as country members of that respective TPG, or only as Co-chairs. Following discussions, it was decided that any country can be both a member and a Co-chair;

Furthermore, the representation of TPGs in the BICG meetings was discussed. It was agreed to have one Co-chair from each TPG as a representative in order to keep the BICG relatively small and well-functioning. It can be the same TPG Co-chair attending every BICG meeting or they can rotate;

There should be up to three co-chairs per TPG, respecting also a principle that one country representative should not co-chair more than one TPG or the BICG.

3.3. Provisional meeting schedule

It was decided to hold BICG meetings twice a year, ideally about three weeks prior to the BFUG Board meetings. Meetings can be physical or online, taking into account availability of the BICG members.



Physical meetings can be one or one and a half day and could also be held in combination with other meetings (BFUG or TPG).

With the next meeting scheduled provisionally for the end of September - beginning of October 2021, the BFUG Secretariat will send a Doodle for the following dates: 29-30/09 and 01/10 for a half a day meeting, on-line.

4. Thematic Peer Groups

4.1. Co-chairs of TPGs and representation in the BICG

Following the above discussions, it was agreed that the Co-chairs of the TPGs will inform the BICG at a later stage whether they will hold both roles (member of BICG as a country and as a co-chair of TPG) or just hold the position of the Co-chair of a TPG.

4.2. State of Play of Key Commitments Implementation

An overview of the Bologna Process Implementation Report (2020) with regard to the implementation of the 3 Key Commitments was presented by David Crosier, EURYDICE, Co-chair of the Working Group on Monitoring. It was noted that the impact of the TPGs was not reflected in the presentation, as the data on the work of TPGs took place after the data was collected.

In general, there is a positive dynamic, however improvement is more evident in some commitments than others. Thus, it was suggested that the TPGs should contribute to achieving steady and uniform progress on all commitments.

Nevertheless, it was suggested that although many countries have moved to the light green area of the scorecard (referring to the color-codes used in the score cards in the BPIR), there is still room for improvement and simply moving to the 'green' area is not enough.

Subsequently, there was a discussion with regard to the collection and interpretation of data. It was pointed out that the data collection should follow a similar pattern every time so that progress can be measured accurately. The data presentation serves also as an indicator of the starting point and it is a useful orientation tool.

The importance of measuring the work of the TPGs by including a qualitative aspect in the measurement of improvement, which was supported by many members, was emphasized. It was noted that the indicators alone cannot fully determine the improvement level, as there are data limitations in this methodology. Thus, the Implementation Report serves as a baseline, but should not be understood/perceived as the 'full picture' of the actual improvement level of each country.

4.3. Draft Guidelines for TPGs

The *Background and Objectives* section of the Draft Guidelines for BFUG Peer Support presented by the BICG Co-chairs was confirmed with no amendments.

In the *Working Methods* section, on the meeting schedule paragraph, the following sentence was adjusted (please see in bold): "Each Group should organize **preferably** at least two meetings per year (physical meetings, if possible, as well as online meetings) that gather all the group members together." On the dedicated webpage: "Special attention should also be paid to sharing information outside the meetings. The BFUG Secretariat will provide each TPG with a dedicated webpage under www.ehea.info that will allow the TPG to communicate about its activities and results," the Secretariat requested clarification on whether the work of the TPGs should be published on the current section of the website or a new section should be created. It was advised that a separate, well-structured section be developed for the new BICG work program, which focuses simultaneously on being user-friendly and useful. It was advised that the work of the TPGs for the period 2021-2024 should be included in one



landing page, with a link to the 2018-2020 work period available for reference and information. In conclusion, it was decided to use the current sections of the website to present the work and activities of the TPGs, while grouping the activities of each TPG from the previous work period under links to be found on the dedicated website section for each TPG, so as to showcase the previous impact and work progress of TPGs, as a form of legacy, to give continuity and so that no information goes unrecorded.

The importance of involving all TPG members in the work within their respective group was emphasized. Each TPG needs to determine a key area of interest and specify relevant tasks to be completed. To achieve this, an overall plan for improvement needs to be decided upon based on the Guidelines.

The Guidelines outline various subjects of interest and provide a set of themes and actions for the TPGs to follow in order to generate a positive impact. Members should contribute equally and prioritize the work by indicating the direction of their actions, with well-defined and clear priorities to follow. This should be incorporated in the Action Plan of each TPG, so that all countries follow through.

The number of members' representatives to the TPG meetings was discussed. "To ensure efficiency, the members should preferably send only one person to each meeting." It was suggested that one key person per member should be chosen to attend the TPG meetings, as a way of ensuring continuity. The appointed person would preferably have all the necessary information from the previous meetings and needs to be well experienced in the field and aware of his/her responsibilities in regard to the implementation of actions. This comes also as a suggestion from the assessment of the work of the BICG during the previous term to avoid overlapping. Michal Karpíšek (EURASHE) suggested that it would be beneficial to include national stakeholders as part of the meetings.

Taking into consideration all the comments that were made, it was decided to adjust the relevant paragraph accordingly and approve it via email, considering the document as an output plan rather than as an input plan.

The term '*Action Plan*' was specifically discussed. It was decided not to refer to 'Country Action Plans' as such, but rather to coin a new name/term. This is due to the differences among countries in the perception of this document. In some countries an 'Action Plan' or 'Roadmap' is considered a document that needs to be approved by the parliament. "Country Work Plan" could be used as a term.

In the *Future Recommendations* section, discussions took place on: "*Improved synergy within and between countries could be brought about by more efficient national coordination. Public authorities should cooperate systematically with stakeholders in discussing and introducing necessary changes in legislation and regulations.*" In this light, the importance of correlating the TPGs' Action Plans with national strategies to some degree, so there is alignment in goals and objectives from both sides, was emphasized. TPGs should focus on achieving synergy and effective national coordination. The need to have commitment both from the TPGs and state authorities was also noted. To achieve this, the TPGs should have committed members that contribute regularly and are knowledgeable about the work of their respective groups and the BICG as a whole.

Following discussion on the *Timeline, outcomes and reporting* section, it was concluded that the TPGs' **Action Plans** are to be sent to the BICG by 31 October 2021. These plans (one per TPG) will not include the individual **Country Work Plans**, but will focus on a general, comprehensive work plan for each TPG as a whole.

It was decided by the BICG to postpone the proposed Interim Report date to September 2022 (exact date to be decided). In addition, the proposed deadline for individual Country Work Plans was also postponed to the end of January 2022.

Discussion followed on the practicality of the Excel Template for the 'TPG Action Plan'. It was noted that the template files used during the previous work period were not easy to handle given the overload of information shared by the countries and included in the file. It was suggested to change and adjust the



template so that it is more user-friendly, by keeping parts of the existing template (i.e., the general page on the excel file for the work of each TPG) and reorganizing the rest of the template.

4.3.1 EC Support for TPGs

The European Commission informed the members that an “invitation to submit project proposals” (Erasmus+ Call), to which TPGs will have the possibility to apply, will be published at the end of June.

The Call will be very similar to the one from the previous work period, with the slight structural difference of having everything in one block, differently from the previous call (2 strands). The evaluation criteria are formulated in a way that peer support is fundamental and the TPGs are first served.

Applicants can be National Authorities for Education in the Erasmus+ (“Program”) countries and consultative members of the Bologna Process, including EQAR. The “Program Countries” can make proposals for projects including any member country of the EHEA. For future consideration, smaller projects will be highly encouraged, with a minimum of two countries involved in a project, the main applicant being an Erasmus+ (“Program”) country. In cases when an organization wishes to apply, two partner countries are still required. These requirements are preliminary and are yet to be confirmed, as some of the conditions have been changed in the new program. The TPGs do not need to involve all their members as partners, but the members will be beneficiaries of the program.

For more details on the Draft Guidelines for BFUG Peer Support 2021-2024, please see: [BICG TPG Draft Guidelines](#).

4.3.2 Annex & Survey discussion

With respect to the Annex section, it was emphasized that the specific thematic indications are intended more as guidance or suggestions to help the TPGs, rather than actual points to be fulfilled. If a new survey is to be conducted, the TPG Co-chairs can decide on the formulation, and the information from the Annex can be used as a form of orientation or inspiration.

The BICG does not send a general survey to all countries, but each TPG sends a survey to the countries that have expressed interest to join the TPG. It is suggested to divide the topics so that the survey is not overloaded with excessive questions/information. This will also help the TPG Co-chairs in planning the topics.

It was suggested that each TPG should specify certain activities and select some topics from their respective indications that can be achieved during the current period, rather than have several theoretical topics that are not fully tackled. The topics can be selected through the survey.

As the project proposals will be written during summer and given the limited time, they will be very general/broad. However, the countries can focus on the general themes of the projects and further come up with specific tasks related to the general project theme. Alternatively, they can have smaller, specific projects on a regional level.

5. Next Steps

Ms. Radonova provided a summary of the main points and conclusions of the meeting. She outlined the next steps to be undertaken, which included:

- Revising the BICG Draft Guidelines for the BFUG Peer Support document (update the new deadlines, establishing a new terminology for ‘Country Work Plan’, emphasizing the importance of nominating individuals with the right knowledge and area expertise so that there is a high level of commitment and responsibility toward the full implementation of the KCs);



- Setting the date for the first TPG meetings, preferably before summer, so that the Co-chairs are well-prepared to write the project proposals;
- A Doodle for the next BICG meeting to be sent by the BFUG Secretariat (for the previous work period 12 meetings were held in total out of 7 that were initially planned, therefore, there will be flexibility in the organization of meetings for this work period as well).

6. AoB

It was noted that some countries have not joined any of the TPGs yet. The BICG may contact them directly as per the practice of the last work period, to encourage them to join. In the past some countries were nominated, but never participated or submitted any Action Plans, so the question of how to deal with them arises. The BICG needs to find a way to deal with this and ensure that members take responsibility and engage.

In conclusion, it was decided that the BICG and TPG Co-chairs will contact the countries that have not submitted an expression of interest and encourage them to join one or more TPGs. The TPG Co-chairs from the previous work period will be happy to help and advise the Co-chairs that have joined during this work period. The Secretariat will share the contact lists of the approved members of TPGs.

The BICG Co-chairs wrapped up the meeting by thanking the members for the meeting and the Secretariat for hosting the meeting and for their hard work.