



BOLOGNA IMPLEMENTATION COORDINATION GROUP (BICG)

Second Meeting, Hosted by Austria, Online*
 October 1, 2021
 10.00-13.00 (Brussels time)

Minutes

List of Participants

Country	Name	Last Name
Albania	Linda	Pustina
Austria (Co-chair)	Helga	Posset
Bulgaria (Co-chair)	Ivana	Radonova
EUA - European University Association	Helene	Peterbauer
EURASHE	Michal	Karpisek
European Commission	Lucie	Trojanova
European Commission /Eurydice	David	Crosier
Italy (Co-chair)	Ann Katherine	Isaacs
Romania	Madalina	Matei
Co-chair of TPG A	Baiba	Ramina
Co-chair of TPG B	Chiara	Finocchietti
Co-chair of TPG C	Magalie	Soenen
BFUG Secretariat	Kristina	Metallari
BFUG Secretariat	Patrik	Bardhi
BFUG Secretariat	Aida	Myrto

Welcome by Co-Chairs and BFUG Secretariat

The BICG Co-chairs welcomed everybody to the second meeting of the 2021-2024 work period. Ivana Radonova (BICG, Co-chair) briefly updated the group on the Directors-General for Higher Education (DGHE) meeting which took place in Slovenia, emphasizing the new strategy for universities that was discussed, which focused on removing obstacles and barriers to strengthen the cooperation between the EHEA, EEA and ERA. Ann Katherine Isaacs (BICG, Co-chair) emphasized that focus should be placed on ensuring that the main elements of each key commitment are implemented in compatible ways by all members, rather than on collateral issues.

1. Approval of the agenda

The agenda of the meeting was adopted without changes.

For more detailed information, please see [BICG SI AM 2 Draft Agenda](#).





2. Update from the Secretariat and from the BICG Co-chairs

2.1. Update from the Secretariat

The Secretariat provided an overview of the activities that have resumed after the summer period. The EHEA Network of Qualifications Framework National Correspondents, TPG B, WG on Learning & Teaching, Task Force on Synergies between EHEA and ERA held their first meetings in September. Other structures have scheduled their second and even third meetings and are currently drafting their work plans. While all the meetings so far have been held online, the WG on San Marino Roadmap is planning to have its second meeting in person, in San Marino, in mid-November. The upcoming BFUG Board meeting and BFUG meeting will be held on October 21, 2021 and December 1-2, 2021, respectively.

2.2. Update from the BICG Co-chairs

Ivana Radonova (BICG, Co-chair) brought to the attention of BICG the presentations delivered during the DGHE meeting by the BFUG Secretariat and Eurydice, which focused mainly on the Bologna Work Plan 2021-2024, process and instruments, as key factors of success in the HE system. The increased number of members in the Thematic Peer Groups observed in the Secretariat's presentation attested to the successful work of the TPGs and the progress achieved by these working structures.

It was emphasized by participants in the DGHE that there is still work to be done in terms of openness and concrete ideas for cooperation. Various member states in the DGHE meeting underlined the importance of not duplicating the tools and principles of the EHEA and ERA, so that there is no confusion with the various terms and terminology.

Moreover, a new call for universities alliances will be launched in the fall and will provide sustainable funding for the new and successfully existing alliances. Further information on this call will be available at a later time.

3. Thematic Peer Groups Update

3.1. Update from the Co-chairs of TPGs

3.1.1. TPG A

Baiba Ramina (TPG A, Co-chair) provided an overview of the current state of play of TPG A. She explained that a survey was sent and completed by the members and some of the key priorities identified included: micro-credentials, relation between QA and QF, short-cycle HE, and more. A total of 12 priorities were identified.

A discussion took place on these priorities and it was observed that 12 priorities might be a relatively high number to manage, therefore, the Co-chairs may wish to prioritize and identify the top priorities out of these 12, to have a clearer action plan in place. Ms. Ramina explained that the key priorities have already been identified (prioritized) by the members in the survey.





It was also observed that the issue that TPG A faced during the last working period, was related to the fact that members were not focused on the main issue, which was the correct and compatible implementation of the QF, but instead more on the relationship with QA and micro-credentials.

The possibility of combining some of topics for this group was also suggested given the numerous priorities.

3.1.2. TPG B

Chiara Finocchietti (TPG B, Co-chair) provided an overview of the present situation of TPG B. She informed that a survey was also sent to the members – the survey was custom-tailored for countries and stakeholders. The survey was aimed at identifying the key priorities of the implementation of LRC and asked members to describe their current challenges and situation on this key commitment. It also aimed to identify good practices, potential peer support activities and members’ expectations on how TPG B can support the implementation of LRC.

Based on the survey results, the Co-chairs asked the members during the first meeting to prioritize the topics. Three key priorities were identified: digital technologies, automatic recognition and alternative pathways.

The main outcomes of the first meeting consisted of the agreement on the structure and content of the work plan, which is practically defined and finalized. The meeting also encouraged the planning of transversal topics (i.e., cooperation with HE institutions, synergies with relevant initiatives and cooperation with other TPGs).

Helga Posset (BICG, Co-chair) enquired about the participation of members in all TPGs and whether they are all actively participating. TPG A and TPG B Co-chairs informed that part of the members did not participate in the meeting, whereas TPG C Co-chair shared that participation rate was relatively high in TPG C. However, as the first meeting was more of a kick-off meeting, there were not many discussions or active participation. This was identified as an issue for all the TPGs, however, the TPG Co-chairs shared that they are planning to take action on this issue when the group activities commence.

3.1.3. TPG C

Magalie Soenen (TPG C, Co-chair) presented an update on TPG C, including members involved, agenda of the first meeting, survey results and priorities identified, actions proposed, set up of the umbrella project TPG C (2022-2025) and a general outline of the Work Plan. The priorities identified included: legislative framework in line with the ESG, European approach for QA of joint programs, cross-border QA, enhancement-oriented use of the ESG, internal QA and more.

3.2. Umbrella Projects, EC support

3.2.1. TPG A

No further information was given by TPG A at this time. More on the project will be shared at a later stage.



3.2.2. TPG B

TPG B Co-chair highlighted the main aspects of the Umbrella project, indicating that there are 9 partners, and the work packages include:

- Support of the TPG B meetings;
- Organization of public seminars;
- Research and publications;
- Dedicated peer support activities;
- Transversal topics on QA, dissemination and sustainability.

Based on the 3 key priorities (digital technologies, automatic recognition and alternative pathways), the group wishes to organize into 3 groups, working on each specific priority and their respective sub-topics. On the alternative pathways, the Co-chair added that there is good cooperation with the other TPGs’ Co-chairs on this matter. In addition, the establishment of a group on micro-credentials is also being considered. Ms. Finocchietti noted that the group will plan activities that do not overlap with what the European Commission is doing but expand on the overall work.

3.2.3. TPG C

TPG C Co-chair specified that the Umbrella project includes 4 partners and the work packages will focus on:

- Overall management;
- Organization of TPG meetings;
- Staff mobility program;
- Peer learning activities;
- 3 thematic work packages: QA of micro credentials, QA of European universities, digitalization of QA processes.

Ms. Soenen further explained that TPG C is merging 4 existing projects into one new big Umbrella project for the upcoming 3 years, and adding even a few new work packages. She added that there will be an open call to all TPG C members to invite them to a smaller working group, of approx. 30 members max.

In relation to the peer support, a question was posed whether countries have received any specific offers or have taken any approaches, as to with which other countries to cooperate. It was explained that for this working period, TPG C will organize staff mobility programs, where countries will have the chance to network, and form small groups to discuss specific tasks/topics, as well as work together on their specific needs/challenges. There was willingness to allow for hybrid staff mobility to prolong cooperation, in the event the experts from the various countries cannot meet physically.

TPG A Co-chair informed the group that TPG A is planning to form 2-3 sub-groups, with main focus on micro-credentials, Qualifications Framework and self-certification. In regard to peer learning activities, current TPG A Co-chairs have tried to reach out to the TPG A co-chairs of the previous working period, to assist with continuity and previous practices in regards to PLA. It was observed by one of the members that the work of the self-certification group during the previous working period proved successful, as there was a lot of interest from countries on this topic. One country also achieved self-certification, which was a concrete achievement.



Ms. Isaacs (BICG, Co-chair) pointed out a challenge that arose in the past, which is the non-participation of countries that are defined/marked as 'dark green' (meaning that they have implemented successfully the Key Commitments of the Bologna Process). During peer learning activities (PLAs), 'dark green countries' often did not come to the meetings or participate actively. However, it was proposed that countries that have achieved self-certification come and participate in PLAs to give their perspective and advice to the countries just starting on the implementation of self-certification, as well as gain knowledge on matters related to this topic.

The 'significant challenge' that non-EU countries cannot be involved as partners in projects due to the restrictions in place was emphasized. They can only be involved as key experts. It was observed that in the past, this has not been the case as all the EHEA countries participated in the project as partners. This is viewed as discriminatory, as the implementation of key commitments applies to all EHEA countries, not just EU countries. Thus, the pool of countries which can be a partner is limited and this in turn, slows down the process and affects negatively the progress of non-EU countries. Albania was brought forward as one example by Linda Pustina (TPG B Co-chair) that is not enabled to be a partner in the projects due to the restrictions applied. She suggested the European Commission discuss the re-evaluation of this restriction internally.

Raising this point in the BFUG Board meeting and/or the BFUG meeting was discussed. It was noted that the only feasible solution would be to raise the issue formally, with the BFUG structures and country representatives, so that they raise the issue towards the Commissioner and ask for additional add-on provision, which would allow the enhancement of the running projects and involve those who have not had access.

It was decided to gather some more information on the topic and raise the issue during the BICG update at the BFUG Board meeting.

The European Commission representative informed the members that she will discuss the matter within the Commission, as it came up during this discussion, and come back to the BICG with the meeting outcomes.

4. Work Plans of TPGs

Discussion of Templates for Work Plans

Magalie Soenen provided a draft template of the Work Plan, which was suggested to be used by all the TPGs. This format contained some similarities to the template used in the previous working period, which proved not to be very user-friendly. As there are links in between different pages, it is easier to navigate through this format.

Minor changes were suggested in the 'Timeframe' section as was slight adjustment of the country tables (where challenges are identified and the level of implementation of the key commitments is determined). The Co-chairs of all the TPGs were encouraged to make this template compatible for their respective groups and allow for flexibility in adjusting it among the different TPGs.





It was suggested that if the countries are supposed to fill out the tables, then maybe more specific indicators and/or outcomes should be included so that each country's achievement/progress is quantifiable. In addition, some examples could be provided from countries on their progress and concrete examples are provided. Ms. Soenen clarified that the table on monitoring and outcomes focuses on how monitoring is done within the peer group and not within each individual country. This table is needed more to reassess the work of the TPGs from the previous working period and compare it to this period.

It was proposed that the survey sent to the countries be sent again to check if any progress has been achieved. It was reemphasized that what the TPGs are trying to monitor through this template, is the support that the group is giving to the countries.

To the question about the number of times that countries need to update their respective templates, Ms. Soenen responded that there was no fixed number but, within TPG C the updates occurred rather regularly during the last work period.

The issue of the validity of the countries' responses in this template was raised. It was pointed out that if specific problematic areas were highlighted per country, then the exercise would become much more effective. Another issue observed is that not all countries would showcase the same level of openness, self-awareness and transparency in their replies. Thus, it was suggested that the Co-chairs try to encourage them to be more detailed when identifying challenges, obstacles and issues related to the Key Commitments, as well as find ways to strengthen the identification of challenges and issues rather than just ask countries to complete the given template.

As in the previous working period, it was suggested to send the countries an extract of what is publicly known of their degree of compliance. While they can look at the implementation report, an extract might be more practical for them. The Co-chairs of the TPGs were encouraged to structure the work in a way that the countries deal directly with their KCs, as these are the ones that make it possible to deal constructively across the board on the side issues. It was also suggested that a way to tackle this issue is providing the countries with an internal space to share their challenges, which would not be publicly advertised, and make them aware of any information that would be publicly available. This way, they could bring to light challenges that they face in a 'safe' environment.

With regards to the issue of strengthening the implementation of the KCs, Linda Pustina (BFUG Vice-chair) stated that for the non-EU countries that are candidate countries, there is a progress report in place, thus, these KCs could be part of this report. This would give these countries the possibility and motivation to strengthen their internal efforts to progress on the KCs, as this progress would be part of the EU membership progress report. Furthermore, she indicated that these countries can also have the possibility to include this progress report in projects (i.e., NIPA projects, new projects for EHEA countries). As a representative of Albania, she advised that reaching specific recommendations for the implementation of KCs, based on the BPIR, could prove more useful and successful in the Bologna Process context.

Overall, the members concluded that the proposed template was of a clear and well-structured format. Having a basis for demonstrating the progress and impact for the 4 years of this working period, in general and for each specific country, can prove beneficial for the HE



ministers, as well as document the TPGs approach. Additionally, each of the TPGs would adjust the template to their own personal formats, but the basis would remain the same more or less.

Any suggestions or proposals on the template will be sent to Ms. Soenen at the latest by October 8, 2021, so that the template is completed in time for the BFUG Board meeting on October, 21, 2021.

5. Next meeting / further meeting schedule

The Co-chairs reminded the members that the TPGs’ Action Plans ought to be finalized by the end of October, and the Country Work Plans to be finalized by the of end of January 2022.

The Secretariat will organize a doodle poll for the third meeting of the BICG, with the following alternative dates: January 14 or January 21, 2022.

6. AOB

The issue of the exclusion of Erasmus+ partner countries that are EHEA members from being part of programs/projects was decided to be raised in the Board meeting. This will be done during the BICG update to the Board and also be brought up for discussion at the BFUG meeting so that the TPGs can ask for support. This issue should be tackled not only due to the restriction of participating in the call, but also so that these countries can be eligible for any additional funding. Therefore, it was suggested that European Commission look into the matter for any feasible solutions and get in touch with REACEA prior to the BFUG Board.

No other business was brought forward, thus, the second meeting of the BICG was concluded.