Working Group 1
Brussels (Belgium), 22 January 2020

<u>Minutes</u>

List of participants

Delegation	Family Name	First Name
AGILIS	Santourian	Anais
Austria	Posset	Helga
ESU	Berger	Sebastian
Belarus	Betenya	Elena
Cyprus	Giorgoudes	Panicos
EQAR	Szabo	Melinda
EUA	Zhang	Thérèse Kai Ying
Eurostudent	Hauschildt	Kristina
EURYDICE	Crosier	David
EURYDICE	Wulk	Sophie
France	Lagier	Hélène
Germany	Petrikowski	Frank
Italy	Zara	Vincenzo
BFUG Secretariat	Finocchietti	Giovanni
BFUG Secretariat	Ioimo	Clarissa

Apologies from Albania, Armenia, Czech Republic, EI/IE, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Moldova, Norway, Poland, Russian Federation.

ITALIAN **BFUG** SECRETARIAT
2018-2020

1. Welcome

The EURYDICE Co-chair welcomed the participants and informed that the Norway Co-chair couldn't attend the meeting due to health problems. The Eurydice Co-chair apologised for the late sending of the drafts of the Bologna Process Implementation Report (BPIR). He explained that drafts were sent only to the WG1 members who would have attended the meeting to understand "where we stand" and send the drafts to the other members after the meeting. A tour the table followed, and members introduced themselves.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

The Co-chair presented the Programme: the agenda was adopted without modification.

3. Information on recent developments (BFUG, Task Force on values, other working/advisory groups)

Task Force on fundamental values: the EURYDICE Co-chair informed that the latest WG1 sub-group meeting was on 14 January 2020 in Brussels. It was a positive and highly efficient meeting; the main understanding is, at the moment, academic freedom. This issue was supported during the BFUG in Helsinki, where the Co-chairs illustrated the work done so far. It has been agreed not to make changes to what has been proposed for the Rome Communiqué. It was stressed that, if the BFUG deems it necessary, a working group could be created in the next term to carry on the work started by the Task Force and focus on further fundamental values of the EHEA as well. In this respect, Cyprus stated interest in participating if such a group were to be created.

Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG): The Austrian Co-chair summarised the main objectives and the work carried out by the three Thematic Peer Groups (TPGs). The TPG C on Quality Assurance had its last meeting on 16-17 January 2020 in Ghent; the TPG A on Qualifications Framework will meet in Prague in early February 2020; the TPG B on the Lisbon Recognition Convention will meet in Paris in March 2020. It was stressed that, although the time was limited, a very good job was done, and participation was very satisfactory. The case of staff mobility (TPG C on QA) was mentioned: it was considered a good project and it was suggested to consider replicating it in other groups. The BICG decided during the BFUG meeting in Helsinki to carry out a survey among the TPGs members to collect their feedback; the BFUG Secretariat is finalising the outcomes and will distribute them in the next days.

Advisory Group 1 on Social Dimension: the Austrian representative, on behalf of the Austrian AG1 member, referred on the progress, highlighting the good job the Group is doing. The next meeting will be on 11 February 2020 in Copenhagen, while a PLA will take place at the end of February 2020 [later postponed]. With regard to the PLA, it was asked to send the agenda in due advance to allow those concerned to organise organise their participation.

EHEA Ministerial Conference 2020: The BFUG Secretariat informed that the setting of a detailed agenda is underway for the Conference, the Bologna Global Policy Forum and the side events to be held just after the two main events. It is expected that the agendas will be ready in early February and will be disseminated as soon as possible.

The Group also dealt with the topic of the **application of the Repubblica di San Marino** (RSM) to join the EHEA. RSM expressed its interest to join the EHEA through a letter sent to the Head of the BFUG Secretariat. Following the Rules of Procedure for EHEA application, the Secretariat developed the template for a National Report to be submitted by the applicant. RSM sent a first draft to the BFUG Secretariat in October 2019, emphasising that it had to be considered a preliminary document. In January a second draft was sent by RSM. Following the Rules of Procedure, in order to assist the country in the application process and establish a road map, the BFUG set up a small ad hoc group, including a representative from WG1 (Helga Posset).

4. Preparation of the Bologna Process Implementation Report 2020 (BPIR): statistical and qualitative indicators and narrative sections

The Co-chair recalled that it was decided that the BPIR should follow a different format from the previous ones, covering the 20 years of EHEA. The final Report to be handed out to EHEA Ministers in Rome will be based on statistical and qualitative indicators and narrative sections. At this stage, the Report is to be considered a very-first-draft, assuming that a more advanced draft will be ready about two weeks before the BFUG meeting (Kyiv, 4-5 March 2020), to be circulated by the BFUG Secretariat to collect comments and feedback. In order to discuss the conclusions of the Report, it was proposed to hold a WG1 meeting in Split on 6 May 2020, just after the BFUG meeting LXXI.

4.1 Statistical indicators

Anais Santourian, statistic consultant, joined the meeting, recalled that "AGILIS - Statistics & Informatics" is in charge of the data collection for the BPIR and explained the developments in the data collection and processing. The data of the non-Eurostat EHEA countries were collected through questionnaires, which made the process more difficult, since different agencies and organisations had to be contacted. Some countries were contacted for further information or clarifications. The data for Belarus has not yet been incorporated into the current pre-draft Report as it was received late. In some cases, variations across time have also been highlighted in the Eurostat countries, due to a dynamic and constantly evolving data processing, or due to the effect of national reforms that produced relevant changes. In the discussion it was underlined that limitations to the data comparability should be clarified in notes as appropriate. Despite the difficulties in collecting and processing the data, the Co-chair concluded that the work done appears to be satisfactory and will continue in the best possible way up to the finalisation of the 2020 BPIR.

4.2 Qualitative indicators

The Co-chair explained the work done on qualitative indicators. After receiving data and feedback, some countries were contacted for further information or clarification on the data provided. In some cases, the questions submitted were not answered, therefore sometimes the job proved to be complicated. According to the interest and concern of member countries, many comments were received on some indicators, few on others. It emerged that the definitions are a quite relevant issue in qualitative indicators. This is due to the fact that there are different meanings to the same words in different countries; the case of "automatic recognition" was presented, as a consequence of existing differences among HE systems.

The WG1 Co-chair informed that the methodology will be explained in the introduction, in order to make the readers aware of the challenges related to definitions and possible misunderstanding.

4.3 Narrative sections

As far as the narrative sections are concerned, it was stated that there will be a thematic introduction on how the theme has developed in the Bologna Process. The authors of the chapters invited the participants to express their views and suggestions and added that the input they would receive would be taken into account and included in the conclusions. It was noted that some themes appear to be repeated recommendations that have been replicated over the years in the Ministerial Communiqués. If themes have come back, possibly not enough has been done yet, and improvements should be expected in the future. It was proposed to use the scenario emerging from the Report in the Rome Ministerial Conference, not only to celebrate the results that the Bologna Process has achieved, but also to provide critical inputs for the future. It was also suggested to include in the Report topics considered important, such as fundamental values and digitalisation. It has also been suggested to contact the Drafting Committee, to discuss the main issues to be included in the two documents and avoid conflicts. The discussion showed that the participants were satisfied to see a very first preliminary draft Report after the data collection, although a lot remains to be done; however it was recommended to pay attention to the links between the narrative section and the indicators, as well as to make a good historical analysis, well integrating it into the text. The aim should be to make the sections, although theoretically separate, a smooth and cohesive text.

5. Developing and finalising the report

The 2020 BPIR will consist of five chapters, an introductory part and a conclusion.

Chapter 1: European Higher Education Area Key Data

The contents of the chapter were introduced by the WG1 Co-chair. The discussion underlined how it is linked to other chapters of the report, especially those dealing with social dimension and mobility. It was asked to point out that the student population has grown considerably, especially in some countries. It was noted that no indicators of administrative staff are foreseen (in relation to this issue, the possibility of including it in the future has not been excluded). The issue of the reference to the International Standard Classification of Education was raised by participants, asking for a specification on ISCED Level 5 and differences among countries. This specification is not supposed to be made in the footnote, but in the text, so that it is clearer to the readers. Crucial issues will be highlighted in the conclusions, as well as general trends and exceptions to them.

Chapter 2: Degree Structures

The content of the Chapter will focus on progress and challenges of the implementation of the three-cycle degree structure reforms. The WG1 Co-chair informed that progress is slightly behind schedule with the writing of this chapter. The importance of underlining the differences in ECTS in the 1st cycle (180 to 240) and 2nd cycle (60 to 120) was stressed in the discussion. It appears that there is not enough evidence for the huge variety of QFs, and

it is not excluded to include some considerations - albeit in a marginal way - about such a challenging issue. The proposal was also made to introduce some topics of future relevance, among others micro-credentials, blended learning, short-cycle programmes and recognition of previous learning.

Chapter 3: Quality Assurance

EQAR is in charge of writing this chapter and invited the members of the Group to give their input. In the Quality Assurance (QA) context it was stressed that steps may not be the same in different EHEA countries. Attention needs to be paid to differentiate Eastern and Western EHEA countries, to the issue of quality control, and to bring out differences in culture and perception across countries. It was reminded that TPG C deals with QA involving many specialists and that, if deemed necessary, the Co-chairs of this group could be involved in contributing to the chapter, as well as the ENIC-NARIC Network and the E4 Group (ENQA, ESU, EUA, EURASHE). Finally, the connections among issues like, e.g., learning and teaching, recognition and prior learning in this and other chapters was underlined.

Chapter 4: Social Dimension (including Employability)

The contents of the chapter were introduced by the Eurostudent representative. There is a perception that relatively limited progress has been made in this area, and it was pointed out that it is difficult to know how many countries have real coherent strategies and policies at national level, or a wide set of measures related to Social Dimension (SD). Members were invited to give inputs. It was suggested to check at least countries having a regular monitoring of SD issues. The [European Commission documents on Social Dimension](#) and the [Bologna Researchers' Conference](#) outcomes have been consulted – as suggested in the discussion – for further inputs. The discussion also pointed out at the difficulty to integrate the topics of SD and employability in the same text. It was suggested to explore the possibility of putting text boxes focused on employability in all chapters.

Chapter 5: Internationalisation

The contents of the chapter were introduced by the Co-chair. While retracing the history, members suggested to shift from a "neglected issues" approach to a focus on, among others, how internationalisation has increased, how the very concept of internationalisation has expanded, how existing opportunities have grown, from credit mobility to a more complete set of tools, including degree mobility (from the Erasmus Programme to joint degrees, to the recent European Universities Initiative), how most universities have now an internationalisation strategy, which they did not have twenty years ago. It was recalled that the "non-implementation" issue is considered within EHEA as something to cooperate on, focusing on peer support and not on blaming or complaining. The discussion also emphasised that mobility has also increased because the student population has increased together with diversified opportunities for mobility and new topics emerged, including the SD of internationalisation and the geographical and disciplinary imbalances in mobility. Further issues should also be considered, like e.g. the brain drain vs. brain gain and mobility vs. brain circulation. The discussion also underlined that differences exist in the definitions and the targets of mobility, as well as in producing indicators on mobility, since classifications have changed across time; making reference to Education at a Glance and to the [Eurostudent Database](#) was recommended. It was also agreed to underline how EHEA is an

example of collective answer to the challenges of globalisation and one of the few peaceful international areas in the world.

6. Content of future-oriented conclusions

Members agreed on a number of issues to address. First of all, fundamental values are considered to be of primary importance, from which future processes are developed. Secondly, the group agreed to mention EHEA in the world as a reference. Thirdly, the issue of climate change cannot be ignored: linking mobility and impacts on the environment is to be considered fundamental for the future of EHEA and new issues should be raised for discussion like, e.g. how much energy needs to be produced for Artificial Intelligence, digitalisation etc., the impact of physical mobility on environment and sustainability, the possible alternative of virtual mobility (although likewise energy-consuming), and of the "Internationalisation at home".

7. AOB and end of meeting

It was contested that the chapters of the report were sent too late and not to all members of the Group. In fact, the documents were sent by the Co-chairs only to the members of the meeting, but in different stages. Furthermore, not all participants received the documents, e.g. due to incorrect email addresses. It has been reminded again to send the documents to the Secretariat which will forward the material on behalf of the Co-Chairs to all members of the group, indiscriminately from their effective participation or not, due to various reasons (agenda clashes, illness...). The Eurydice Co-chairs replied that it was not his intention to create problems or make differences within the group and that the material could circulate among all members immediately after the meeting and recalled that a new draft would circulate to all BFUG members by mid-February.