



## Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG)

5<sup>th</sup> Meeting, Hosted by Austria, Online\*  
25<sup>th</sup> October 2022  
10:00-13:00 (Brussels time)

### List of Participants

	Delegation	First Name	Family Name(s)
1	Austria (BICG Co-Chair)	Helga	Posset
2	Belgium Flemish Community (TPG C Co-Chair)	Magalie	Soenen
3	Bulgaria (BICG Co-Chair)	Ivana	Radonova
4	ENQA	Maria	Kelo
5	EURASHE	Jakup	Grodecki
6	EURASHE	John	Edwards
7	European Commission	Kinga	Szuly
8	European Commission/Eurydice (Co-Chair of WG on Monitoring)	David	Crosier
9	Italy (BICG Co-Chair)	Ann Katherine	Isaacs
10	Italy (TPG B Co-Chair)	Chiara	Finocchietti
11	Romania	Madalina	Matei
12	BFUG Secretariat (Head)	Oltion	Rrumbullaku

**\*Note:** This BICG meeting was held online.

### 1. Welcome by Co-Chairs and BFUG Secretariat

Helga Posset (BICG Co-Chair) opened the meeting by welcoming all participants. The agenda was approved without changes. The BFUG Secretariat was asked to give information on the upcoming BFUG and Board meetings.

For more information, please see: [BICG CZ KZ 5 Agenda of the meeting](#)

### 2. Update from the BICG Co-chairs (BFUG Board meeting)

Ann Katherine Isaacs (BICG Co-Chair) updated participants on the Board meeting in Astana. There she summarized the BICG's composition, goals, and meetings held, and then gave information on the membership, actions, and meetings already held by each TPG, and on the action plans and future actions and meetings (according to the latest update by the Co-Chairs of each TPG). She also pointed out the challenges and concerns ahead for the work of BICG.

Ensuring that the Bologna Key Commitments are adequately implemented in all BFUG member countries in a compatible manner is one of the main responsibilities of the BICG. From the feedback, it could be concluded that the context is very positive, things are moving forward, at times even faster than foreseen. There are, however, some challenges and areas in which it seems important to look for ways to improve things. There are three things to pay attention to: **The first point** is how to encourage greater involvement from all countries in the activities.



It is unfortunate that the TPG A membership is small, and that the smaller countries don't appear to be interested in joining. This also explains why they don't always produce their action plan in a reactive manner. TPG A is working hard to figure out how to deal with novelties like micro-credentials in the framework of the existing tools, the QF and ECTS. **The second point** is how to achieve full and proactive participation from countries that believe they have completely fulfilled the key commitments as well as those that feel they require support. Often, it is observed that members of the same country in various TPGs have no connection to one another. Thus, coordination and information sharing between them needs to be better ensured. **The final point** that the BICG's central goal, to guarantee that the key commitments themselves are carried out, must continue to have a very important place in the TPGs' activities and concerns. The themes of the TPGs' meetings and initiatives make this issue fairly clear. The original key commitments of the Bologna Process ought to remain at the forefront of the BICG's work and their fulfillment is essential for the fulfillment of all other EHEA commitments, including the new ones.

It was agreed to recommend that all individuals participants in the WG, TPGs from a single country meet regularly together. This would ensure the coordination and communication and sharing of information.

Following the update, the three issues brought up by the BICG Co-Chairs were the main topic of discussion. The TPG C does not have a significant problem with the first two concerns brought up, as the participation in the meeting in presence in May was of great interest for both advanced and less advanced countries related to the TPG topics. In fact, countries that appear in dark green on the Bologna Process Implementation Report (BPIR) as regards QA have pointed out that they could also still learn from good practices of other less advanced TPG members. Regarding the third point, this is something all TPGs representatives should keep in mind.

Regarding the TPG B, there is a high level of involvement, which is also a result of the meetings being held again in-presence, since online meetings do not always include active participation and contact between participants. The TPG B's activity and the execution of the Bologna Process key commitments both depend on the point of national coordination. While there may be overlap with other professional networks because many of the representatives come from these networks, there is currently a good balance that complies with the BFUG's first mandate to ensure this balance. This balance currently offers a good mix of more technical issues and more legal topics which are more related to ministries and policymakers, even though the focus is on the exchange of practices.

Austria described its good practice for information sharing nationally. A sizeable group of stakeholders from the higher education context as well as the members of the BFUG working groups, TPGs, and TFs meet regularly typically one or two weeks before the BFUG meetings in order to discuss issues and documents relevant for the BFUG. It was described as being incredibly helpful to get together twice a year before the BFUG meetings, especially as it brings together people who would normally not meet frequently.

Moreover, the BICG suggested that the Secretariat maintains a database indicating all the attendance of member countries in all BFUG meetings, WG, Task Force meetings as well as all the TPG meetings.

### **3. Update from the European Commission**

Kinga Szuly (European Commission, EC) informed the participants about the drafting process of the automatic recognition document and said that the survey carried out for this purpose is

in its final stage. The EC has opened the new Erasmus Plus call on the European Universities Initiative, extended to both existing and new coalitions, with the deadline in January 2023. Information about the meeting on European Universities would be made public, although there is not much time left to submit a strong application for new alliances. There is currently the assessment process for the proposed legal instrument's pilot program for the European Degree label. Twelve applications have been submitted, which covers numerous higher education institutions (HEIs) and authorities. In more detail, there are 8 applications for the degree label and 4 for the legal status, and funding is anticipated to be allocated to more than one application depending on the quantity and quality. Additionally, applicants were notified that they could utilize older applications, although only if updated and improved.

Participants at the BICG meeting were informed that preparations for the Prague meeting of Directors General (DGs) and the EU Presidency conference are ongoing. The higher education sector observatory is currently under development. Work is being done on how to combine the existing data tools so that they may provide the maximum value, increase the analytical ability based on the existing data, and prevent duplications. The work is proceeding gradually because of the lengthy amount of work required to identify the best approaches, the most easily accessible sources and the most practical roadmap.

As for micro credentials, in order to assist countries in implementing the council's recommendations, the EC recently signed a contract with the OECD for a partnership initiative. The EC should share information with the TPGs that are developing guidelines on the topic, in order to avoid duplication, reinforce mutual efforts and cross-reference various publications.

#### **4. Update from the Secretariat (latest developments; upcoming BFUG Meeting)**

Oltion Rrumbullaku (Head of the BFUG Secretariat) gave a summary of the meetings that had been held as well as information about coordination sessions with the BFUG Chairs and the regular updates made to the EHEA website. Mr. Rrumbullaku also provided information on personnel changes at the Secretariat.

Regarding the technical issues that were experienced in the EHEA website, BICG members offered advice on how to address them, and it was suggested to report such problems to the BFUG. It was proposed that the calendar of the meetings be updated regularly, in order to avoid overlapping of dates. The suggestion was that the Secretariat either put in place live calendars, in order for groups to check and plan easily, or alternatively inform via email on upcoming meeting dates. There is the need to thoroughly review the EHEA website to check for any missing or obsolete information or broken links.

TPG C informed that it will forward all the necessary information to the Secretariat to update its designated section in the EHEA site with information on the project and other related materials, so that all information about the group's project can be accessed there.

#### **5. Updates from the TPGs**

##### 5.1. TPG A on Qualifications Framework

Ivana Radonova (BICG Co-Chair) gave an overview on the TPG A meetings held thus far, and also provided information on both the completed and upcoming peer-learning activities (PLA). Ms. Radonova informed that the PLA on 'Micro-credentials and use of QF by stakeholders' was held in Riga, Latvia on 20 October 2022, and the main themes covered during the discussion included the global approach to micro-credentials, the Canadian context for micro-credentials, the development of micro-credentials in Malta and Ireland, and a study on micro-credentials in Latvia.



Moreover, participants were provided with a brief summary of the meeting of the Working Group (WG) on 'Micro-credentials' (a "sub-WG" of TPG A) held online on 22 September, which was chaired by the Academic Information Center (Latvia), where the "sub-WG" ToRs were approved and country developments regarding micro-credentials (MC) were presented. Additionally, the inclusion of micro credentials in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was discussed. The use of ECTS in the context of micro-credentials at different educational levels and in different industries, as well as the use of micro-credentials to increase access to possibilities for lifelong learning were also explored. Furthermore, it was decided by the WG members to share information amongst the TPGs in order to develop recommendations for a unified report that includes suggestions from all TPG groups. The WG members also agreed to conduct a SWOT analysis of the micro-credentials in Higher Education (HE). In addition, it was decided that the next meeting would most likely be held online at the start of the following year.

The Sub-WG on Self-Certification (a sub-WG of TPG A), chaired by National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (Georgia), held its online meeting on September 29 to discuss the review of the current self-certification mechanisms, ideas for the future, and ways to assist other countries in completing their self-certification processes. The sub-WG ToRs were also approved at the meeting, and there was the discussion about the structure and content of the suggestions the WG came up with. In the meeting in-presence of the TPG A, it was concluded that the sub-WG would send a questionnaire to group members.

The Sub-WG on the Short cycle in HE (the third sub-WG of TPG A), chaired by the Academic Information Center (Latvia) discussed the best practices for short cycle qualifications including development and pathways; as well as ways to facilitate recognition by learners and the labour market. In the online meeting held on 2 September, the sub-WG ToRs were approved, and presentations on the short cycle higher education systems in each country were also made. There were also discussions about the format and content of the WG's recommendations, as well as conclusions and suggestions for future meetings. Additionally, it was decided that the following meeting would potentially take place online at the beginning of the following year.

For more information, please see: [Update from TPG A on QF](#)

## 5.2. TPG B on Lisbon Recognition Convention

Chiara Finocchietti (TPG B Co-Chair) informed on the composition of the TPG B, that includes a new country – Hungary. As for the thematic orientation, the TPG B has already the digital technology for recognition, diploma supplement, the recognition of alternative pathways, automatic recognition, distribution of work and responsibility, fair recognition of qualifications of refugees and the legal framework to allow the implementation of the law. A survey among the TPG B members to register the current state of play took place between June to September 2021. TPG B has scheduled seven meetings in total, with three public seminars on recognition of alternative pathways, automatic recognition, and digitalization. There is also *ad hoc* peer support and staff mobility, according to the needs expressed by the members.

An overview of the TPG B meetings was provided, with the first one held in September 2021, online. The topics tackled in this meeting started from the state of play of the implementation of LRC from three different angles: Bologna Process Implementation Report (BPIR), monitoring of implementation, and Bologna with Students Eyes- and of course, the result of the survey among the TPG B members and TPG B work plan. The second meeting was held online in January 2022, and focused mainly on digitalization and the Diploma Supplement; topics to be considered from three points of view: to secure trust and transparency in digitalized data provision, the platform for credential sharing, and the application of the LRC principles to digitalized data. The third meeting was held in-presence in France, in June 2022. The plenary



session was dedicated to presenting practical tools, including a normative instrument to support recognition of qualifications from Ukraine (this was actually one of the suggestions that the BFUG BICG (?) made). There were also updates from TPG A and TPG C, as well on the EU funded projects. TPG B organized two peer-learning activities (PLA) at the meeting: on digitalization for the recognition agenda and on recognition of alternative pathways. The upcoming meeting will be online on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2023. The fifth TPG B meeting was foreseen on 10-12 May 2023, but considering this is overlapping with the BFUG meeting in Stockholm, it is necessary to change its date.

TPG B will organize a public seminar on automatic recognition and on digitalization back-to-back with the TPG B meetings in presence. The idea is to have staff mobility and in order to do this, the idea of a questionnaire ahead of the seminar was put in place, to identify the interest of the countries and to have a match making activity during the in-presence meeting. The plan also includes some *ad hoc* smaller PLAs, based on the needs expressed by members. As for the brief update on the research publication in the framework of the work of the group and of the project, there are four WGs: WG on micro-credentials, WG on digitalization, WG on recognition and the WG on European degrees. The expression of interest for members of the TPG B will be launched during the January meeting. The main outcome of four WGs will be a publication on micro-credential recognition targeted to HEIs with the idea to have a document that will address HEI's solutions on micro-credential recognition with respect to the qualification framework and ECTS (to be done in cooperation with the other TPGs). The second will be on the mapping of digital tools, where it is intended to have a collection of practices from countries, as well as an exchange of practices. There will be focus on the Diploma Supplement (DS), something very relevant considering the recent developments at European level by the EC. As for the WG on quality of recognition from a HEI perspective, with the EUA as the leading partner, the idea is to focus on quality as trust enhancing tool enabling recognition, and to involve some HEIs to have a kind of pilot or focus group. So, the indication is to have a survey to distribute to HEIs and to do desk research on what is already available on the quality of recognition and implementation of ESG 1.4 on the quality of recognition procedures at institutional level. The fourth WG on the European degree will start its work later on.

The work that the WGs (sub-structures of TPG B) are doing will be the main topic of discussion at the TPG B meeting in January, and all member countries will once more be invited to express their interest in joining these WGs. The LRC committee will examine the subject at its upcoming meeting in November, thus it is not possible to include this on the meeting's agenda despite the desire to submit the monitoring report's findings informally. The results of the interim survey will also be discussed at the upcoming TPG B meeting. Given that the mandate is halfway through, it would be helpful to coordinate this poll with other TPGs and the BICG. The objective is to create a fairly straightforward questionnaire that will inquire how the TPGs' work is assisting each country in implementing its own national action plan and what can be done to make the TPGs work better from both a content and a metadata viewpoint.

For more information, please see: [Update from TPG B on LRC](#)

### 5.3. TPG C on Quality Assurance

Magalie Soenen (TPG C, Co-Chair) provided an overview of the current state of play of the TPG C, highlighting the key thematic components of the peer group's action plans, which include a legislative framework compliant with the ESG, internal quality assurance (QA), enhancement-oriented use of the ESG, the European Approach for QA of Joint Programs, and cross-border QA, the QA of micro-credentials, the QA of European Universities and the digitalization of QA processes.



There are six TPG C meetings scheduled for all members as part of TPG C's activities related to QA. The first meeting took place in person on May 17–18, 2022, in Leuven after a kick-off meeting was held online on June 30, 2021. There will be two upcoming meetings, one online in November 2022 and one in Kazakhstan in May 2023. Regarding the PLAs, one meeting was conducted in Belgium on September 1, 2022, to discuss bringing the legislative framework in line with the ESG. A second PLA on cross-border QA and the QA of transnational education will take place in March 2023 in Romania. A PLA meeting on the European approach to the QA of joint programs will be conducted in September 2023 in Belgium. Information on the call for proposals for the Staff mobility programme was provided, and it was indicated that a second call for proposals will be made in February-March 2023.

In addition, a WG on micro credentials (WG within the TPG C) was established in June 2022. The first WG meeting was held on 2 September 2022, and topics covered included the composition of subgroups working on desk research, guiding documents for HEIs and QA agencies, and important considerations for non-HEIs. Related activities also include gathering data from EHEA countries through surveys (ongoing), interviews, data analysis, and desk research that must be completed by September 2023 along with guiding documents on HEIs and QA Agencies. The WG established on QA of European Universities (another WG within TPG C) held its first online meeting on 17 June 2022. The following WG meeting is scheduled for January 2023, and a report is anticipated by that date. With regards to the 'Digitalisation of QA processes', it was stated that a mapping exercise will be initiated in October-November 2022, and a thematic workshop will be conducted to discuss outcomes by November 2024.

For more information, please see: [Update from TPG C on QA](#)

#### 5.4. Overall discussion and attempt at coordination - Overlaps between groups, possible synergies between TPGs and concrete steps to be taken to facilitate cooperation

Helga Posset (BICG Co-Chair) underlined that the work plans (WP) presented appears to be very ambitious and rich. Concerning the TPG B WG on Digitalization, which seems to be linked to the micro-credential topic, there is the need to discuss the topic with TPG A as well, as was suggested by the TPG B Co-Chair as well.

There was discussion as to whether surveys should be sent to all EHEA countries or only countries represented in the respective TPGs. The TPG Co-Chairs discussed this at their most recent coordination meeting. The meeting's focus was on the development of micro credentials, but the query posed was more general. The decision taken was to address the TPG members for now while leaving room for future broader requests, which would need to be discussed with the BFUG.

Magalie Soenen (TPG C Co-Chair) added that the Belgium Flemish Ministry of Education launched a survey related to the WG on Social Dimension, which has been sent out to all BFUG members. She revealed that a brief survey on micro-credentials targeted exclusively to TPG C members, is also being planned. The possibility that it might be distributed to the entire BFUG was highlighted.

Ms. Soenen informed that, according to discussions with ENQA representatives, who are coordinating the survey with TPG C jointly, the question of whether or not to send it only to TPG member countries is still up for debate as there is also the question of the survey's nature, which could be interpreted in different ways. Moreover, the nature of the answers would be viewed differently, as the data from the BFUG countries would be more official than the data from the TPG members. As an illustration, when a survey in MICROBOL was conducted, the information collected was not official information from the countries, unlike the information



collected for the BPIR, which has a different status. As a result, the project may elicit data that has been officially certified, as it depends on the individual providing the information for that country.

According to the concerns expressed about this issue, it was suggested that a discussion and decision be made about the best way to obtain official data from these surveys. The issue also revolves around how the data is handled. The small survey on micro credentials is largely internal for the work of the TPG as an input to further phases for building the guiding documents for HEIs, QA Agencies, etc., thus there is no reason to publish the data as official from any specific country.

Different kinds of surveys will yield different results: to gather informal working data from countries wishing to improve things, project surveys will be more suitable, because official surveys will normally be compiled or vetted by the 'hierarchy', which may have concerns about the county's or the organization's image'.

It was advised that being in continuous communication with other working groups and BFUG consultative members regarding the surveys and data collection is necessary in order to prevent questions on the same topics from being asked twice in the questionnaire that is sent to BFUG members. Additionally, it is important to refrain from posing the same queries in various contexts to various persons.

Overall, it was emphasized that there should be some cooperation between surveys conducted by the TPGs, and that BICG should take the findings into consideration.

## **6. Next meeting / further meeting schedule**

The BICG Co-Chairs raised the topic of the Secretariat's participation in future TPG meetings, whether online or in person, and suggested that the Secretariat consider all possibilities for doing so. The Secretariat would prepare a doodle for the following meeting and distribute it to the BICG members to select a date. No other business was brought forward, thus the fifth meeting of the BICG was successfully concluded.

Next meeting: Tuesday, March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 10.00 to 13.00 online, hosted by Austria

