



## WORKING GROUP ON MONITORING OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

Fourth Meeting, Hosted by Norway, Online\*  
Wednesday, 14 September 2022  
10.00 – 13.00 (Brussels time)

Minutes of meeting

### List of Participants

Country/Organization	First Name	Last Name
Austria	Helga	Posset
Cyprus	Cleo	Savvidou
EI - ETUCE	Andreas	Keller
EQAR	Melinda	Szabo
European University Association (EUA)	Henriette	Stoerber
European Commission/ Eurydice (Co-Chair)	David	Crosier
EACEA	Olga	Davydovskaia
ESU	Katrina	Sproge
France	Mathieu	Musquin
Germany	David Akrami	Flores
Malta	Valerie	Attard
Malta	Viktoria	Maltseva
The Netherlands	Robert	Wagenaar
Norway (Co-Chair)	Tone Flood	Strøm
Romania	Camelia	Mircea-Sturza
United Kingdom	Valentina	Chervenkova
BFUG Secretariat	Aida	Myrto
BFUG Secretariat	Patrik	Bardhi
BFUG Secretariat	Migena	Stafa

Eurostudent sent regrets. Albania, Czech Republic, Italy, Kazakhstan and Moldova did not attend the meeting.

### 1. Welcome by the Co-Chairs of the WG

The Co-Chairs welcomed everybody to the fourth meeting of the 2021-2024 work period. The minutes of the third meeting were approved by all members. Moreover, an outline of the agenda was provided, which was adopted without changes.

For more information, please see: [WG Monitoring 4 CZ KZ Agenda](#)

For more information, please see: [WG Monitoring 3 FR AZ Minutes of meeting](#)

### 2. Updates on meetings of the BFUG and BFUG working structures

#### 2.1. BFUG Meeting LXXX, Strasbourg, France, 11-12 April 2022

Tone Flood Strøm (Co-Chair) delivered a summary of the discussion that took place at the BFUG meeting LXXX in April, in which the suspension of Russia and Belarus was highlighted. Ms. Strøm also gave an overview of the activities undertaken by the WG on Monitoring,

including the establishment of a framework for the 2024 Bologna Process Implementation Report (BPIR) and a mechanism for developing indicators, indicating that the BFUG approved the proposed structure of the BPIR. She continued by saying that information from several additional sources, including consultative members, would be included in the BPIR for this working period.

David Crosier (Co-Chair) remarked that Ukraine had requested that the BPIR include information on how European nations had responded to the situation in Ukraine, to which the Co-Chairs advised that the topic be discussed at a later time. It was also suggested that an ad hoc WG may be formed to examine the Rules of Procedure, a topic that would be explored at the upcoming BFUG meeting in November.

## 2.2. Update of the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG)

Helga Posset (Co-Chair, BICG) also gave an update on the group's progress, noting that the TPGs had started their work to provide a progress report, to be compiled by the BICG and presented at the BFUG Board meeting LXXXI<sup>1</sup>. Ms. Posset added that a few more members had submitted applications to join the TPGs and had received approval.

## 2.3. Update of the Working Group on Fundamental Values (WG on FV)

Tone Flood Strøm (Co-Chairs, WG on FV) provided an update of the progress made by the WG on FV, noting that the group is currently preparing framework statements for the remaining values, including institutional autonomy, public responsibility for/of higher education, and student and staff participation. She added that the group had agreed on the monitoring of six values, where academic freedom and academic integrity are included. She continued by stating that a monitoring framework would be established if and when the ministers endorsed the statements. Moreover, it was noted that this WG was entrusted with developing indicators to evaluate both the *de facto* and *de jure* contexts. Ms. Strøm noted that rather than creating new indicators in such a short length of time, the group decided to focus on a limited number of existing indicators in the 2024 BPIR. The group will have its next meeting in November/December 2022, to finalize the work on indicators and submit it for review to the WG on Monitoring.

## 2.4. Update of the Working Group on Social Dimension (WG on SD)

David Crosier (Eurydice) provided an update on the progress made at the most recent meeting of the WG on SD, noting that a comprehensive review on indicators as a way to monitor their implementation was conducted. The group also developed indicators to help with the implementation procedure from an institutional perspective. Mr. Crosier stated that, in the opinion of the Working Group, the implementation of principles and guidelines was the most important topic to be covered in the BPIR and that, with a few adjustments and revisions, the indicators developed for the Eurydice project were determined as appropriate for BPIR's objectives.

## **3. Preparation of the 2024 Bologna Process Implementation Report**

The state-of-play of chapter preparations was provided, followed by discussions with BFUG working groups. The WG Co-Chairs discussed some of the key elements of the work completed thus far, some of the challenges that had arisen, and the brainstorming that had taken place. David Crosier offered a summary of some of the indicators that will be used, separating them into qualitative and quantitative data that would be collected through

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<sup>1</sup> Eighty-first Bologna Follow-Up Group Board meeting, hosted by Kazakhstan (Astana), 5 October 2022.

scorecard indicators, as well as through EQAR, ESU, Eurostudent, EUA or other additional sources.

### 3.2. Discussion on the basis of working group documents

- Chapter 2: Indicators on Fundamental Values in Higher Education

The first document, that is being produced in coordination with the WG on FV, was discussed. Mr. Crosier mentioned the Erasmus+ project, which was launched and would continue until 2024 with amongst other things emphasis on proposing indicators relating to the six specified fundamental values. Tone Flood Strøm emphasized that the results will most probably not be available for the 2024 BPIR, therefore it will be important to determine how the group plans to use this project's work. She emphasized the role played by the experts in the WGs on FV and Monitoring in the development of the statements, demonstrating the strong connection between the two working groups

The potential indicators of academic freedom were discussed, along with the significance of pointing out existing legislation, particularly the requirement for external quality assurance. Additionally, it was indicated that the WG on FV was uncertain whether employing the Academic Freedom Index (AFI) or not. Hence, it was reportedly decided that the members would provide more comments and feedback on the indicators at the next WG on FV meeting.

It was determined that the indicators for *Academic Freedom Index* should be provided in their entirety, to avoid any assumptions that they will be in full alignment with the terminology in the Rome Communiqué. Moreover, it was advised to exercise caution when using impartial indicators for academic freedom and institutional autonomy. It was also underlined that the measurement of academic freedom proved complex for QA agencies. As a result, Mr. Crosier clarified that there was no intention to include this on a scorecard and that, instead, a neutral approach would be utilized to determine whether or not the QA agencies include academic freedom.

It was suggested that the context of the value of academic freedom be carefully considered because it can overlap with other aspects of fundamental values. The AFI was the only source available at the time, but it was confirmed that additional information on the de facto component could be added. The Co-Chairs thanked the members for their feedback on the group's work and announced that they will present it at the subsequent WG on FV meeting, to be ultimately presented as a complete work paper at the upcoming BFUG meeting LXXXII.

It was mentioned that there hasn't been a statement made about *Academic Integrity* yet, and there aren't any established potential sources of de facto indicators either. Moreover, it was suggested that an incentive ought to be added as a support mechanism for student participation governance, with regard to the participation of students and staff in HE governance. A written proposal would be sent with more details on this matter.

Therefore, it was determined that the regulation of the legal framework for HE and research, including equal opportunity and inclusion policies for staff and students covering the broad concept of public responsibility, should be the main focus. To ensure that the legal structure represents the objectives of higher education, it is then important to decide how the stakeholders will be involved in the development of the framework.

Tone Flood Strøm (Co-Chair) affirmed that a draft of the statement and the discussions of the meeting of FV WG will be presented in the next BFUG meeting. But no date has been determined yet for the final report.

For more information, please see: [Chapter 2: Indicators on Fundamental Values in Higher Education](#)

- Chapters 5: Indicators on Social Dimension

David Crosier (Co-Chair) proposed to examine the challenges of stakeholders in the design and implementation of policy and legislative frameworks, as well as community engagements and QA in accordance with the ESG. He verified that the scoreboard indicators, which were created on the Eurydice project that monitored the application of principles and standards, are subject to comments from the WG on SD. Mr. Crosier added that, since the statistical data would be included in the key data chapter, the SD chapter would have more capacity for content.

For more information, please see: [Chapter 5: Indicators on Social Dimension](#)

- Chapters 4: Indicators on Learning and Teaching

With regards to this chapter, Mr. Crosier affirmed that the indicators have not changed, however the possibility is opened for proposals to amend the indicators before they are updated for the BPIR. He continued that the Chapter 4 document would function as a proposal to be delivered to the WG on L&T, if all members of this group concurred.

Further, it was suggested to consider the reliability of career paths and working conditions. It was also agreed that because the HE landscape is so diverse, having a comprehensive strategy would be beneficial. Tone Flood Strøm (Co-Chair) noted that HE systems have a top-level strategy or policy on L&T, and it would be difficult to see a country not having a top-level policy on this area. The strategy would be more specific, concrete, and have clearer priorities, but ultimately every country has a policy on higher education.

For more information, please see: [Chapter 4: Indicators on Learning and Teaching](#)

- Chapter 3 Key Commitments: Proposals for scorecard indicator updates on QA

The Key Commitments document was introduced, including proposals from EQAR, which revised the phrasing of two scorecard indicators and proposed a scorecard indicator on the adoption of the European approach (EA) to QA of joint programs. Melinda Szabo (EQAR) described the principles behind each of the three scorecard indicators, reaffirming that only 4 countries have lacked thorough coverage since the establishment of EQAR.

She added that EQAR keeps a record of registered agents, has a database of external insurance reports, and obtains all external evaluation reports from each agency listed. As a result, everything has been investigated and recorded in the database, which at the time contains 70,000 reports, making the coverage fairly comprehensive.

David Crosier (Co-Chair) stated that by shifting to using DEQAR as the means to evaluate how well QA systems are operating in conformity with the ESG, they will be given a more accurate and more up-to-date snapshot. Although the system makes sure that the quality assurance reports are updated automatically into DEQAR, this shift may have some disadvantages for those countries that are not yet fully automated.

It was queried whether private, non-degree-granting HEIs were included in the all-encompassing category of HEIs. To this, the EQAR representative underlined that each country must define what constitutes higher education, hence a HE system will be included in the external QA system if it includes private providers, otherwise it will not be mentioned.

For alternative providers and those that offer micro credentials, EQAR intends to create a distinct section on DEQAR, that would be independent from the list. Further, HE systems or HEIs are determined by national laws, thus EQAR does not set definitions. Additionally, it was mentioned that, when new HEIs open in a country, there is a name change or merger of institutions; information is given by both QA agencies and HEIs.

Once the BFUG has adopted the scorecard indicators, the EQAR website will include updated information on whether each country has met or not the key commitment. There will also be a map to illustrate this, with various colours for each country, which may serve as an incentive to fulfil the commitment. Further, the BPIR and EQAR website will automatically align, removing any potential disputes.

Although there was consideration of exceptional circumstances, it was highlighted that most countries have institutional and program level requirements. It was noted that such occurrences won't significantly alter how the country is covered, as they won't become the norm and the reality won't be misrepresented. Nonetheless, it was advised to make some mention of these cases in the BPIR.

Another potential principal issue was noted: if a country decides that its QA system is to be based exclusively on program accreditation, the indicator is formulated to cover institutions that don't mention programs. To this, the EQAR representative responded that the document would be amended to include the "programs" option alongside HEIs.

Regarding the Proposal "Openness to Cross-border QA," it was mentioned in several comments that the wording was unclear, and seemed to require EQAR approval in order to conduct cross-border QA. Similarly, it was stated that the proposal "European Approach for QA of Joint Programmes" reads as though the EA is necessary in order to score highly on the scorecard. Members agreed that EA should be possible to utilize and eventually even encouraged, but that institutions should make the decision and that any additional procedures should not affect where a country is ranked on the scorecard. Because of this, it was decided that members would submit written comments on the proposals' wording.

In a similar manner, members noted that the text in the proposal statement (while complying with national requirements) was fairly important for a number of countries when this commitment was made, hence did not indorse its removal. They added that, as many countries have specific national requirements, having the initial text is vital so that they conform to them. As a result, the EQAR representative agreed to check into it and re-include it if necessary.

Underlined was the objective of the "Proposal to add Scorecard Indicator on Implementation on European Approach to QA of Joint Initiatives," which was to demonstrate and incentivize governments to support EA for QA joint programs. But, the main issue with this concept is whether data from countries can be gathered or only be obtained anecdotally, which is ultimately linked to what countries submit in the survey.

It was also mentioned that it is surprising that no country has implemented a joint procedure since the EA was adopted in 2015, despite institutions having the option to do so or not. As a result, it was decided that no Bologna Process commitment should be created on a matter for which there is no data. As a result, it is essential to encourage countries to collect this data, otherwise they will be making a commitment to something they don't monitor or collect.

The EQAR representative stressed the importance of using the EA because it is designed to make the process and implementation of joint programs simpler. She proceeded by explaining that having a theoretical commitment is ineffectual, and added that needing only one joint program to undergo EA evaluation is considered to be a moderate barrier and not overly restrictive for a dark green scorecard category.

It was made clear that when a country does not comply with the EA, they will follow their standard procedure; however, this country would have to go through a double procedure to submit information in English as well, although this is not regarded as a barrier. It was added that in some countries (i.e., Austria), HEIs can choose to use the EA for self-accreditation of their own programs in a joint partnership, in addition to self-accreditation.

Even though establishing national standards and allowing joint programs can be challenging, some countries have done so because the QF system as a whole necessitates such alignment with national learning outcomes. However, it should not be carried out in a way that renders the procedure unfeasible. Subsequently, it was decided to put a footnote with difference among systems to further explain the procedure in these cases.

The process for collecting the data was addressed. When the institution is in partnership with other countries and the EA is being used, it was explained that typically one of them will have a program requirement and the joint program would generally be used. Also included in that partnership will be those who have self-accreditation. Therefore, data will be gathered through partnerships, accredited bodies, or countries.

It was recommended that countries increase their awareness of the situation and inquire about the implementation of joint programs or the use of EA, eventually encouraging countries to collect or monitor data on these situations. Overall, it was concluded that, if introduced as a commitment, the WG ought to make sure that data can be gathered.

For more information, please see: [Chapter 3: Indicator Proposals on Key Commitment of Quality Assurance](#)

#### **4. Next steps: Planning of next WG meeting, and preparing for autumn BFUG**

To forward these proposals and get them approved at the BFUG meeting, the Co-Chairs encouraged members to submit written comments and feedback to them before the next WG meeting.

It was decided to keep the data collection process as straightforward as possible for the countries, while also making certain that the correct information is acquired. To assist countries on what to report, if any of the issues mentioned have changed, previous reporting data could be sent to them, maintaining a form of reporting continuity as a result.

To conclude, the following steps included reaching an agreement on indicators with the BFUG in the fall of 2022, developing the questionnaire by the end of 2022, and potentially finalizing data collection in May of 2023. Additionally, data consolidation and analysis would be completed by June or July 2023, and the report drafting would be conducted between September and November 2023.

The next WG meeting would be held on October 27, so it was encouraged that since other WGs would meet beforehand, members notify the Co-Chairs of this WG if any information needed to be shared with the other WGs Co-Chairs so that they can present it accordingly.

#### **5. AoB**

The Co-Chairs thanked the members for their contributions and input to the meeting, as well as on the recommendations on the proposals presented. No other business was brought forward, thus the fourth meeting of the WG on Monitoring was successfully concluded.