



Ministry of Education and
Science of Georgia

Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG)

7th Meeting, Hosted by Austria, Online*

25th September 2023

10:00 – 13:00 (Brussels time)

Minutes of Meeting

List of Participants

Delegation	First Name	Family Name(s)
Austria (BICG Co-Chair)	Helga	Posset
Belgium Flemish Community (TPG C Co-Chair)	Liesbeth	Hens
Bulgaria (BICG Co-Chair)	Ivana	Radonova
Co-chair of TPG A (Latvia)	Baiba	Ramina
EUA	Maria	Kelo
EURASHE	Jakub	Grodecki
European Commission	Julie	Anderson
European Commission	Svein	Hullstein
European Commission/ Eurydice	David	Crosier
Italy (BICG Co-Chair)	Ann Katherine	Isaacs
Italy (TPG B Co-Chair)	Chiara	Finocchietti
Romania	Madalina	Matei
BFUG Secretariat (Head)	Edlira Adi	Kahani Subashi
BFUG Secretariat	Ana	Zhibaj
BFUG Secretariat	Blerina	Dhrami





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1. Welcome from Co-Chairs

The BICG Co-Chair opened the meeting by welcoming all participants. The agenda of the meeting was approved without changes.

2. Update from the Secretariat (Board, BFUG, other events)

Edlira Adi Kahani Subashi, the Head of the BFUG Secretariat, presented updates from the Secretariat. It was stressed that the workload of the Secretariat has been unprecedented, as the 2021-2024 work period saw the highest number of Working Groups (WG) since the beginning of the Bologna process. It was informed that the EHEA website had been significantly improved by adding a new section for the BFUG Board the BFUG Archive Minutes, and social media account links. Furthermore, it was announced that the Secretariat was working on a new report documenting the web improvement and the work carried out so far. Regarding the date for the Ministerial Conference, the Head of the BFUG Secretariat stressed the fact that Albania has a new Minister of Education, who will be briefed on the current work processes, frameworks, and institutional partners, in order to allow her to fix the date as soon as possible.

It was noted that September 17th was the deadline for WG to send their updates to the Secretariat for the LXXXV Board Meeting (in Tbilisi, Georgia). Until now very few structures have submitted materials. The BFUG meeting in April 2024 will be crucial in shaping the Terms of Reference for all the WG for the next working period since they should be presented there. The Head of the BFUG Secretariat drew attention to the request of the Drafting Committee for WG to provide input for Draft Zero. Finally, the Secretariat announced it would reach out to all WGs to confirm or update their representatives.

3. Update from the BICG Co-chairs (BFUG Board Meeting LXXXIII and BFUG Meeting LXXXIV)

Helga Posset, the Austrian BICG Co-Chair, announced that no suggestions were made and there was no discussion on the BICG progress reports presented at the BFUG Board Meeting LXXXIII and BFUG Meeting LXXXIV. It was further noted that the slides of these presentations will be used as the basis for the presentation in the upcoming BFUG Board meeting in Tbilisi.

4. Update from EC (what is happening with regard to Higher Education)

Sven Hullstein and Julie Anderson (European Commission) provided updates on key initiatives of the EC regarding Higher Education, namely the European University Alliances, the European Degree, and changing the legal status of the alliances to facilitate transnational cooperation between universities.

The current status of the European University Alliances was touched upon, as it was noted that there were over 40 European University Alliances so far, with a stated goal of having 60 alliances by mid-2024. A monitoring framework is being developed and will be published next year, aiming to document the transformative power of these alliances. It was mentioned that the stakeholders are looking for new investment pathways, in order to secure a more sustainable and holistic funding experience, whereas at present the Alliances are co-financed through Erasmus+.



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Other flagship initiatives include the European Degree and changes in the legal status of the Alliances in order to enable transnational university cooperation. It was announced that pilot calls for both flagship initiatives had been launched in Autumn 2023, and it was noted that European universities are working on quality assurance (QA) and recognition of alternative pathways, with a focus on transnational cooperation and internationalization. The importance of quality recommendations on micro-credentials, the green and digital transition, and academic freedom was underlined. It was stressed that, while there are specific challenges linked to the establishment of the Alliances, for them to work together efficiently it is necessary for them to implement fully the key commitments of the Bologna process.

5. TPG Updates

5.1 TPG A updates

Baiba Ramina (TPG A Co-Chair) began the presentation with the work plan of the TPG, briefly listing past and upcoming meetings. The WG on Short-Cycle Qualifications is currently developing recommendations, and the report will be ready by 15 November. The definition of the short-cycle qualifications following the 2018 Paris Communiqué was emphasized once again, as the Communiqué allows the recognition of this level within the first cycle of the QF.EHEA. Additionally, it was stressed that the definition of short-cycle qualification is important for access to qualifications, in terms of duration and its relationship to micro-credentials. This is particularly complicated, as there are discrepancies in how different countries define level 5 and or 6 qualifications.

It was noted that the WG on Self-Certification is currently assessing reports and procedures. One of the key recommendations is preparing guidelines for procedures and criteria every 5-7 years — the WG will propose a new version, as it was pointed out that the language of the previous version from 2015 has unclear terminology and the periodic update would ensure that the language remains consistent. One of the other issues raised in the working structure is the involvement of international experts. The envisioned recommendations will outline the tasks and duties of international experts involved in Self-Certification.

It was emphasized that information provision and transparency should be the starting point for the Self-Certification report, therefore information about the procedures, and the report itself should be shared on prominent sites and at relevant events (like the EHEA or the PLA of the National Correspondents' group). One of the suggestions for the BFUG Secretariat to publish the Self-Certification reports on the EHEA webpage, was noted, and could be further discussed as a suggestion for the following term of the Secretariat.

5.2 TPG B Updates

Chiara Finocchietti (TPG B Co-Chair) provided updates on the group's progress, meetings (summarized in a table highlighting countries that never participated in meetings, and other countries that joined the TPG B recently), and public seminars, as well as on ad hoc peer support and staff mobility activities.

Updates on the matchmaking activity for staff mobility were provided — specifically, the mobilities would be organized by January 31, 2024, and they would last five days. It was noted that the key output of the staff mobility exercise would be the report on the main outcomes, and that the project would be co-financed through the umbrella project TPG LRC CoRE.



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Regarding the European Degree, it was noted that the Co-Chairs would coordinate with the European Commission, to determine the course of action for establishing a Sub-WG on the European Degree, one of the last sub-working groups to be established.

The TPG B Co-Chair announced that the document on recommendations on micro-credentials would be ready in November, accompanied by recommendations on quality assurance, the Lisbon Recognition Convention, and issues regarding ethics and transparency in digitalization. She further emphasized the importance of close cooperation between the TPGs groups, a cooperation that should be encouraged and will be documented in the report.

Finally, the tentative date of February 24th, 2024, was announced for the upcoming meeting of the TPG B.

5.3 TPG C Updates

Liesbeth Hens (TPG C Co-Chair) gave an update on the TPG C activities, related to previous and upcoming meetings. She stated that the meeting in Kazakhstan was very productive. The focus of the work of the TPG C was on micro-credentials and staff mobility.

She noted that recommendations from the WG are currently being drafted, and there is very little progress. It was emphasized that one of the key issues in implementing the Bologna key commitment to Quality Assurance is the commitment or lack of it by the member states to implementing the European approaches and legislation.

Finally, it was announced that the upcoming meeting of the TPG would follow the Tirana Ministerial Conference.

6. BICG and TPG proposals for recommendations for the Tirana Communiqué: discussion and provisional conclusions

Ann Katherine Isaacs (BICG Co-Chair) presented the draft for the text for the Tirana Communiqué, noting that the text is framed in a generally positive way, to stimulate more active participation in the TPG activities by all countries, to ensure that all countries participate fully and pro-actively (be it countries that have completely implemented the Key Commitments, or countries that need support). She stressed that coordination among the various representatives in different TPGs is necessary but has so far been challenging.

Strong emphasis was placed on the slow pace of the implementation of the Key Commitments, and concern was expressed about being able to show a reduction in the 'implementation gap'. It was suggested that the Communiqué include a provision for countries to present a publishable plan on how the EHEA commitments would be implemented, based on the BPIR.

One proposal would be to require that the EHEA members produce, after each Ministerial Conference, a publishable action plan, showing how they will carry out any new commitments, and also the Key Commitments in all cases in which further work is necessary.

It is important also to clarify the relationship between the BICG action plan and the work of the TPGs, to ensure that the central purpose of the BICG is being kept in mind. Another point of discussion was the





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level of expertise of the experts who are members of the TPGs and their mandate: it should be made clear that they not only should be experts in the fields, but they should also have a mandate from their ministry so that the results they obtain are meaningful for their countries. ~~mandate that should be clear on the required expertise of the members and the tasks they should perform.~~

It was agreed that the weight of the implementation falls not just on strong commitments, but commitment by the ministers and collaboration and coordination among all TPG members, underlining that activities not followed up by implementation of the Key Commitments will not shift the needle at all. Furthermore, it was suggested that Key Commitments should be at the center of Erasmus+ projects, in order to reduce the tendency to shift attention to less important but more trendy topics.

4.1. BICG final report – draft structure, content, working method, time line

Ann Katherine Isaacs (BICG Co-Chair) began the presentation of how to produce the BICG final report, by reflecting on the fact that since the last meeting in March 2023, the situation has not changed. She mentioned that in the previous meeting, it was decided to keep the structure used in the previous work period, consisting of an executive summary, activities, structure and intended outcomes of the BICG, and TPGs activities, results, and meetings. It was stressed that the report should be more focused on the accomplishments, as the working period was longer than the previous one, and concrete results are expected. Moreover, the focus should be placed on drafting a growing document that takes into account the group's progress, including the progress of the countries vis-à-vis their action plans.

With regard to the organization of the work and the distribution of tasks, it was clarified that the executive summary and part on the overall activities and accomplishments of the BICG would be drafted by the BICG Co-Chairs, while Chapter Two (Activities and results of the TPGs) would depend on input from the TPGs. The executive summary should contain concise and concrete recommendations for the communique, as well as summarizing accomplishments. It was noted that the activities and the work of the TPGs are already described on the slides, so they could be easily incorporated in the report. It was suggested that information for Chapter Two (outlining achievements of the TPGs during two working periods, namely Paris and Rome) could be derived from the implementation reports.

Regarding the deadline for the TPGs reports, it was decided that the TPG Co-Chairs deliver a draft before the BFUG meeting LXXXVI in Madrid, Spain, in November, including accomplishments made within the TPGs.

7. Next meeting / further meeting schedule

The members agreed that there should be a meeting in person sometime during the first two weeks of December, followed by two more meetings in Spring 2024, before the Tirana Ministerial Conference. It was announced that the host country would be Brussels, where EURASHE can offer a venue. The Secretariat would distribute a poll to decide the exact date of the meeting.





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8. AoB

It was announced that the new Co-Chair of TPG B (France) is Martin Beyer. The BICG Co-Chairs announced that the new version of the presentation for the BFUG Board meeting in Tbilisi would be shared soon among the members of the BICG.

No other business was brought forward, thus the seventh BICG meeting closed.



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