



Ministry of Education and
Science of Georgia

Working Group to Support the Implementation of the Roadmap for San Marino's Accession to the EHEA

Sixth Meeting, Hosted by Andorra
5-6 October 2023

Minutes of meeting

List of Participants

Country	First Name	Last Name
Andorra (Co-Chair)	Jordi	Llombart
Andorra (invited expert)	Isaac	Galobardes
Andorra (invited expert)	Rosa Maria	Mariño
Andorra (invited expert)	Mar	Martinez
Finland (Co-Chair)	Maija	Innola
Finland (invited expert)*	Merja	Forest
Council of Europe	Sjur	Bergan
EUA	Maria	Kelo
Georgia* (invited expert)	Khatia	Tsiramua
Italy	Vera	Lucke
Liechtenstein	Eva	Meirer
Portugal* (invited expert)	Beatriz	Gonçalves
San Marino	Maria Elena	D'Amelio
San Marino	Monica	Cavalli
San Marino	Paula	Cenci
San Marino	Remo	Massari
BFUG Secretariat	Oltion	Rrumbullaku

Online participation*

Holy See sent regrets for being unable to attend the meeting.

1. Information by the Co-chairs

The Co-Chairs welcomed everyone to the sixth meeting of the Working Group to support the implementation of the Roadmap for San Marino's accession to the EHEA. The agenda was approved without any changes. The minutes of the fifth WG meeting are approved.

Further, the Co-Chairs informed that during the BFUG Board meeting held in Tbilisi on 2 October 2023, they presented the draft final report to the Board. The Co-chairs shared the dates of the upcoming Board and BFUG meetings in 2024.

For more information, please see: [WG SMR ES GA 6 Agenda](#)

2. Presentation of the legislation approved by San Marino on Higher Education

The representatives of San Marino informed the rest of the group about the national legislative updates since the previous meeting of the WG. They reported that three major regulations have been approved. The most important document is the Law on higher education in the Republic of San Marino. Pending from this Law, two decrees have been approved: the decree on institutional and organizational structure of the University of the Republic of San Marino and the decree on criteria and procedures for the establishment, accreditation and settlement of higher education institutions (HEIs).

Furthermore, there is some progress to get the Decree on the National Qualifications Framework

approved. The draft document has been presented to the Government. After the draft receives approval, the plan is to present it to Parliament. The aim is to secure Parliament's approval by February 2024.

2.1. Law on HE

The representatives of San Marino presented the Law on HE article by article. They highlighted how the fundamental values of the EHEA and the social dimension of higher education are included in the Law. The Law mentions the Sammarinese National Qualifications Framework, the right to collaborate with other HEIs, to establish partnerships and to subscribe conventions and agreements. The Law establishes the criteria to access HE, the structure of HE and the use of ECTS. The Law adopts an internal and external quality assurance system and protects the names requiring authorization, such as: university, athenaeum, master's degree or PhD.

The representatives of San Marino explained that there is a rigorous legislative approval process. After being approved by the Parliament, laws and decrees become valid; however, an additional legislative step of endorsement must be completed within three months from the date of approval.

After the presentation, there was some discussion on the name of ECTS and CFU. The representatives of San Marino mentioned that 1 ECTS = 1 CFU and they clarified that even if in the Law only ECTS is mentioned, the HEIs can use also CFU in the transcripts.

2.2. Decree on institutional and organizational structure of the University of the Republic of San Marino

The representatives of San Marino presented the Decree on institutional and organizational structure of the University of the Republic of San Marino and went through article by article.

The norm establishes the purpose, the principles, a code of ethics, the financing and the regulatory acts of the University. The Statue of the University is in Annex A of this decree.

There is an important focus on the governing bodies of the University. Article 12 was highlighted as it establishes the nomination of the rector.

Before the accession of San Marino to the EHEA, the Rector was elected by the Academic Senate and then the appointment was formally ratified by the Parliament (Consiglio Grande e Generale). The Parliament had the power to accept or reject the Academic Senate's candidate but it could not appoint a candidate who had not been proposed by the University.

The representatives of San Marino underlined that there is a slight reform of the nomination of the rector. The Rector is appointed by the Academic Senate from among professors of the highest academic rank (or from among professors who have held management positions in the University's academic bodies) or among personalities of international academic reputation. The Parliament expresses its appreciation and agreement (*gradimento*). In the event that the Parliament denies approval, upon appropriate justification, the Academic Senate is called upon to propose a new candidate. This process will continue until the Parliament expresses approval. Until the new Rector is finally appointed, his/her functions are performed by the University's Dean Professor.

In discussion, some concerns were raised about the system in which Parliament conveys its approval and agreement (*gradimento*) to the election by the Academic Senate. Even if the current arrangement is improved in relation to the previous arrangement, it seems not to be in line with the commitment to institutional autonomy to which the EHEA Ministers have committed on several occasions. The potential risks of deadlock or misuse were also highlighted. In the event of a failure to reach an agreement, Parliament cannot appoint a candidate not proposed by the Academic Senate. However, it has the option to request the Academic Senate to put forth a new proposal, provided adequate reasons are presented. This scenario could lead to a lengthy process with multiple candidates being successively proposed and rejected. In the worst-case situation, the University may be without a principal for an extended period, and the Academic Senate might feel compelled to propose a candidate it believes would likely secure *gradimento*, even if not among its initial preferences.

Article 13 concerns the Council of the University. It is underlined that the University Council is responsible for the approval of budgets and strategic development. The representatives of San Marino underlined that there is a significative improvement of the representation of the members of the Council.

Before the accession of San Marino to the EHEA, the composition of the University Council included the Rector, a representative of the State secretariat, a representative of the professors and two members of the Parliament. Students and administrative staff had one representative each without voting rights.

Now, the Council is composed by: the Rector, one representative of the teaching and research staff professors from each of the three Departments and two members of the Parliament (one from the majority and one from the opposition), one representative of the students and one representative of the administrative staff with voting rights. The working group acknowledged a clear progress in the implementation of the EHEA principles on higher education governance as San Marino has guaranteed participation rights for the representatives of students and staff, with voting rights.

The decree mentioned other important aspects like the academic structures, requirements and transparent procedures to recruit professors, administrative procedures and the Territorial Pact.

The Territorial Pact was identified by the WG members as one of the best practices of the University of San Marino as it acts as a meeting point between representatives of the university and representatives of the institutions, the cultural, economic, professional, trade union and association world. It serves to make proposals for the direction and development of the University taking into account the local needs, to provide opinions on the University's strategic and development plans and to provide information to stakeholders about the programs that the university intends to implement.

2.3. Decree on criteria and procedures for the establishment, accreditation and settlement of higher education institutions

The representatives of San Marino presented the Decree on criteria and procedures for the establishment, accreditation and settlement of HEIs and went through article by article.

They informed the group that this decree sets the criteria and procedures for the establishment, in the Republic of San Marino, of Higher Education private Institutes and for the accreditation of their study curriculum as well as for the establishment of Higher Education Institutes already operating in other countries.

The establishment of a Private Higher Education Institute or the settlement of a Higher Education Institute already operating in other countries is subject to the authorisation of the Congress of State for the exercise of teaching and research. The authorisation is granted by the Congress of State on the proposal of the Ministry with responsibility for Higher Education and Scientific Research.

In order to obtain the authorisation to carry out teaching and research activities from the Congress of State, they must submit the appropriate application to the Ufficio Attività Economiche which, after examining the application, shall forward it no later than fifteen working days, to the Ministry with responsibility for the University and Scientific Research.

Any new HEIs must comply with the ESG and be accredited by an external quality assurance agency.

There was a discussion on the growing numbers of on-line private institutions being created everywhere around in the EHEA. It is a risk because they focus on providing professionals to the labour market and disregard the educational process of training people into responsible adults ready to act in democratic societies. It was suggested that the WG could propose that transnational higher education and protection of students should be addressed in the future work of the BFUG

3. Discussion on the draft of the final report

The Co-Chairs presented the first draft of the final report. Given that the document had been distributed to the WG members several weeks ahead of the meeting, members had had an opportunity to review it and put forth suggestions to clarify certain aspects and enhance others. The Co-Chairs recorded all the comments provided by the members and committed to incorporating them into the final draft report, scheduled for presentation at the BFUG meeting in Madrid on November 16-17, 2023.

It was agreed to highlight the excellent cooperation with Sammarinese authorities in the final report. The collaborative atmosphere has been a key factor in mutual learning. The working group concluded that overall progress achieved in the implementation of the roadmap has been significant and it should be reflected in the final report. Areas in need of further improvement identified by the working group are: developing alternative access routes to higher education, recognition of prior learning and higher education governance, in particular in the appointment of the Rector of the University of San Marino.

4. Peer Learning Activity on Recognition of Qualifications - Presentation of the decrees on academic recognition and examples of applications, resolutions and internal procedures.

The Co-Chairs gave the floor to Mar Martinez (Andorra), Eva Meirer (Liechtenstein) and Vera Lucke (Italy). Each of them explained the process of academic recognition of qualification in their respective countries. The representatives of San Marino took notes of the different processes and reflected on how to improve the procedure in San Marino.

For more information, please see: [Academic recognition of foreign HE qualifications – Andorra](#)
[Recognition of qualifications: Evaluation workflow and methodology – Italy](#)
[Recognition of qualifications: Georgia](#)
[Recognition of qualifications: Liechtenstein](#)

5. Peer Learning Activity on self-certification - Presentation of the work done so far by countries who are currently writing or who have recently written the self-certification report

Khatia Tsimamua (Georgia), Jordi Llombart (Andorra), and Beatriz Gonçalves (Portugal) provided insights into and detailed the self-certification processes in their respective countries. Notably, variations in the pace of self-certifying National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) to the European Higher Education Area Qualifications Framework (EHEA-QF) were observed.

Portugal, for instance, had aligned its NQF with the EQF in 2011. In contrast, Andorra is currently midway through drafting its national self-certification report and aims to complete the process by June 2024. Meanwhile, Georgia has initiated the process of forming the drafting group and plans to conclude by 2025.

The representatives from San Marino took note of the challenges highlighted by the speakers and deliberated on implementing best practices in San Marino.

For more information, please see: [PLA on self-certification: Andorra](#)
[PLA on self-certification: Georgia](#)
[PLA on self-certification: Portugal](#)

6. Visit to the QA Agency of Andorra and presentation of the external quality assurance process

On 6 October 2023, the WG members visited the Quality Assurance Agency of Andorra (AQUA). Mr. Isaac Galobardes, the director of AQUA, explained that since 2016, the agency's headquarters have been located in the building of the Parliament of Andorra (Consell General). Between 2006

and 2016, AQUA had a sole staff member situated in the premises of the Ministry responsible for higher education. In a move towards transparency, the AQUA staff is now based in the Parliament, and the team has grown from one to four members in just a few years.

Mr. Galobardes shared that AQUA was established in 2006 and is affiliated with ENQA. The agency aims to become a member of ENQA by 2025 and, subsequently, to join EQAR. Mr. Galobardes presented the external quality assurance process applied to the five HEIs in Andorra. It was explained that AQUA intervenes in the quality assurance process when an HEI seeks accreditation before commencing operations. Additionally, AQUA plays a role in assessing programs, participating as a relevant stakeholder in the creation of a degree before it is offered. Furthermore, AQUA is involved in accrediting programs once the decree is established. After ten years of program implementation, AQUA intervenes again to assess quality and update required learning outcomes. External experts, including some from international backgrounds, are involved in these assessments conducted by AQUA.

7. Update from San Marino on QA

The new Law on higher education approved in 2023 regulates all aspects of higher education in the Republic of San Marino. The framework legislation includes provisions on internal and external quality assurance. According to this law, HEIs in San Marino must adopt an internal quality assurance system. The internal quality assurance must be developed in accordance with the ESG. The external quality assurance system includes a periodic evaluation, at least every six years, of the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes in order to accompany the HEIs in a constant quality growth.

The Ministry responsible for higher education is authorized to subscribe agreements with bodies or agencies operating in accordance with the ESG in order to implement an external quality assurance system. According to the law, both internal and external quality assurance documents and information are publicly accessible.

San Marino chose the EUA quality assurance agency named Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) to carry out the external quality assurance of the University of San Marino. In July 2023, the subscription to EUA-IEP was sent, and the contract was signed on the 25th of October 2023. IEP carries out an institutional evaluation. San Marino does not plan to externally accredit the programs of the University. Preliminary timetable for the external evaluation has been established for 2024. It is important that the evaluation will take place when the university structure is ready to uphold and enhance quality, and that in order to do so, the quality assurance system and the recent documentation needs time to be implemented.

8. Peer learning activity on quality assurance - Presentation of the internal quality assurance process done by two universities

The Co-Chairs gave the floor to the 2 next speakers: Rosa Maria Mariño, Responsible for QA of the Universitat d'Andorra and Merja Forest from the University of Applied Sciences of Lapland. Each speaker delivered a presentation focusing on the internal quality assurance processes within their respective HEIs. With these presentations, coupled with the earlier speaker's contribution, the representatives from San Marino gained a thorough understanding of both internal and external quality assurance processes.

For more information, please see: [External Quality Evaluation in Andorra](#) and [Internal Quality Evaluation in Andorra](#); and [Internal Quality Assurance in Finland](#)

9. Wrap-up of the meeting and future plans

The Co-Chairs summarized the meeting and agreed to incorporate the meeting's comments into the final report in the upcoming days. The revised document would be circulated to the WG members for a final round of comments by October 30, just before the deadline for submitting documents to the Secretariat for the BFUG meeting in Madrid on November 16-17. Additionally, the lines in the Ministerial Communique referencing the WG's work would be circulated for

comments.

The Co-Chairs inquired whether the representatives of San Marino deemed another in-person meeting necessary in the first semester of 2024. It was agreed that no additional in-person meeting was required. Considering the advancements in implementing national legislation, San Marino suggested arranging an online meeting to provide updates in the final report.

The representatives of San Marino expressed gratitude for the excellent relations within the WG, appreciating the support received over the past three years. They felt well-supported and viewed the experience as highly positive for the future of higher education in San Marino.

The Co-Chairs extended thanks to the guests and members for their valuable contributions to the meeting, and expressed gratitude to the members for their active participation and supportive approach throughout the process.

No other business was raised, thus the sixth meeting of the WG on San Marino Roadmap was successfully concluded.