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MINISTRY  
OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE  
OF UKRAINE

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# Implementing the Bologna Key Commitments through Peer Support

## DRAFT FINAL REPORT

Prepared by the Bologna Implementation  
Coordination Group (BICG) and the three Thematic  
Peer Groups



# Contents

Introduction	3
Paris Communiqué	4
Overview and lessons learned	5
Recommendations	6
Implementation of the Key Commitments	12
<i>The Thematic Peer Group A on Qualifications Frameworks</i>	12
<i>The Thematic Peer Group B on Recognition</i>	13
<i>The Thematic Peer Group C on Quality Assurance</i>	16
<i>Discussion on further work of the Bologna Peer Support Group on QA</i>	19
ANNEX I Terms of reference for the BICG	21
ANNEX II Participants in BICG and the TPG meetings	24

## Introduction

The ministers of higher education in the EHEA at the Paris Ministerial Conference in 2018 agreed, that full implementation of three key commitments is crucial for the success of the Bologna Process. The three key commitments identified are a three-cycle system compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA and first and second cycle degrees scaled by ECTS, compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and utilization of the Diploma Supplement, and quality assurance in compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

Moreover, the ministers adopted a structured peer support approach based on solidarity, cooperation, and mutual learning to promote the implementation of the three key commitments. Consequently, the Bologna Implementation and Coordination Group (BICG) was established with the objective to assist the BFUG in implementing, coordinating and monitoring the peer support approach. The peer support approach was to be facilitated by the establishment of three Peer Groups, each dealing with one of the three key commitments.

In preparation for the 2020 Rome Ministerial Conference and the Communiqué the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group should analyse the first round of peer support and, through the BFUG, report to the ministers suggesting the direction that the peer support approach should take in the future.

This draft *Final Report on Implementing the Bologna Key Commitments through Peer Support* provides information on the activities implemented and the first outcomes of the peer support approach with the objective to inform the discussion of the BFUG on continuation of the peer support after the Rome Ministerial Conference.

The remit of the group is further defined by its Terms of Reference, which were approved by the BFUG in April 2018 and can be found in the Annex I to this Report.

## Paris Communiqué

The Paris Communiqué states:

“We acknowledge that the reforms driven by the Bologna Process require both successful implementation and full ownership of all of our agreed goals and commitments throughout the EHEA. Fulfilling our commitments depends on the concerted efforts of national policy-makers, public authorities, institutions, staff, students and other stakeholders as well as coordination at EHEA level.

In order to unlock the full potential of the EHEA and ensure the implementation of Bologna key commitments, we are adopting a structured peer support approach based on solidarity, cooperation and mutual learning. In 2018-2020, thematic peer groups will focus on three key commitments crucial to reinforcing and supporting quality and cooperation inside the EHEA:

- a three-cycle system compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA and first and second cycle degrees scaled by ECTS
- compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention,
- and quality assurance in compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.”

“We mandate the BFUG to implement, coordinate and monitor the adopted peer support approach, and to do so with the aid of the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group established to that end.”

“We encourage the use of the Erasmus+ programme for increasing cooperation, beyond mobility, and achieving progress on the key commitments.”

## Overview of activities and lessons learned

In the course of summer 2018 the BICG set up three Thematic Peer Groups (TPGs), one for the three key commitments, in order to stimulate the new peer support approach, with the objective of providing a context in which the countries can support each other to fully implement the three key commitments. The cooperation structure established between the EHEA countries seems effective, although it requires thorough coordination. All EHEA countries decided to participate in at least one peer group, most of them in more than one, and most have actually done so. The work of the TPGs has been supported by a special strand of ERASMUS+ projects co-funded by the European Commission.

The work of the groups has focused on the implementation of the key commitments but also addressed specific issues in the respective policy areas. However, the importance of implementing the overall commitments has remained at the centre of the work.

The Peer Support approach seems to be successful and appreciated, especially where it has managed to bring together the key national stakeholders for policymaking and implementation.

The short time since the establishment of the Peer Support structure means that only a few concrete normative changes relevant for the implementation of the key commitments can be registered so far. One relevant result is the submission of the self-certification report of Kazakhstan to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area. The overall perception, nonetheless, of peer support approach is positive and its usefulness is recognised. In particular, the national action plans which countries were asked to draw up and keep updated, seem to have helped to improve the coordination of relevant national stakeholders. Progress can be only made if public authorities introduce the necessary changes in their legislation and regulations. Working together in the wider context of the higher education community, as encouraged by the peer support approach, seems to be the best way to ensure successful implementation, and how it can be enhanced remains a key issue for the future.

A questionnaire has been sent out to all members of the peer groups at the beginning of February 2020 in order to receive input on how the approach is seen by the participants. Results are expected by the end of March and can be included in the final version of the BICG report and presented at the last BFUG meeting planned before the Ministerial Conference (Split, May 2020). The questionnaire can be found at <https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/BICG-feedback-questionnaire>.

## Recommendations

[Tentative text, subject to changes following the BICG meeting on 11 March 2020]

Although the working period for the TPGs and BICG has been very short and the Erasmus+ projects that support the groups have a different timeframe, our observations of the interactions in the groups and the participants' reflections allow us to say that the Peer support approach stimulates positive developments.

All EHEA countries decided to be involved in the peer groups (most have actually done so) and many measures have already been implemented also at national level. The involvement of partners from different countries within the Erasmus+ projects is seen as very positive and has resulted in numerous joint activities. It is too soon, however, to draw major conclusions on the long-term impact the groups' work has on implementation. It is hoped that positive outcomes of the peer support structure will be even more visible in the 2023 Bologna Process Implementation Report (BPIR).

Experience so far also shows the BICG's role in coordinating the work and promoting synergies between the groups is useful; this aspect should be strengthened.

The funding of the TPGs' activities through the Erasmus+ Program has proved very useful and should be continued. In order to achieve greater improvement, countries should also provide more financial support for these peer support activities.

## COMPOSITION OF THE BICG

**Co-chairs:** Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia

**Members:** Vice-chair (Italy), Co-chairs of TPG A on QF (Czech Republic, Finland, Kazakhstan), Co-chairs of TPG B on LRC (Albania, France, Italy), Co-chairs of TPG C on QA (Belgium-Flemish Community, Georgia, Cyprus), Co-chairs of WG1 (Eurydice, Norway), EUA/EURASHE, European Commission

## COMPOSITION OF THE TPG A ON QF

**Co-chairs:** Czech Republic, Finland, Kazakhstan

**Members:** Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium Flemish Community, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Council of Europe, EI-IE, Estonia, ESU, EURASHE, European Commission, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Malta, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Spain, Turkey.

## COMPOSITION OF THE TPG B ON LRC

**Co-chairs:** Albania, France, Italy

**Members:** Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium Flemish Community, Belgium French Community, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Council of Europe, Denmark, EI-IE, EQAR, Estonia, EURASHE, ESU, EUA, European Commission, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Holy See, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine, UNESCO.

## COMPOSITION OF THE TPG C ON QA

**Co-chairs:** Belgium-Flemish Community, Georgia, Cyprus

**Members:** Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, EI-IE, ENQA, EQAR, EURASHE, ESU, EUA, European Commission, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, The Netherlands, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, UNESCO, United Kingdom (Scotland).

A record of attendance at all the meetings is provided in Annex II.

## ANNOTATED TIMELINE OF THE BICG

### Meetings of the BICG

The BICG has had seven meetings:

- 5 June 2018, Brussels
- 30 August 2018, Brussels
- 26 September 2018, Vienna
- 22 October 2018, Brussels
- 26 February 2019, Vienna
- 16 September 2020, Brussels
- 11 March 2020, Paris

The first three meetings focused on the central task of the BICG: to organize and support the three Thematic Peer Groups (TPGs). This task was accomplished by using a survey conducted among the BFUG members followed by matchmaking activities aimed at bringing together countries and stakeholder organisations willing to engage in the various aspects of implementing the three key commitments.

The method chosen was to ask countries to express their willingness to cooperate in order to help each other to implement three commitments fully. These are not the only commitments that EHEA countries have engaged to implement, and both the current three and other commitments indicated in the future as 'Key' are to be implemented.

The third meeting (September 2018) was held jointly with all the Peer Groups' Co-chairs in order to allow a good exchange of ideas and working methods. After that, each TPG nominated one of their co-chairs to represent their group in the BICG meetings.

An overall thematic framework for the work of the Peer Groups was established by the BICG in the beginning of the process, but it has been left to the groups themselves to decide on further activities and their focus. A standard Action Plan template for all the Peer Groups was developed to assure a standard approach to the methodology of work of the TPGs. The Action Plans have been updated on rolling basis and published on the EHEA website. Countries have been matched up to create sub-groups to work on the specific themes where they can benefit from each other. It has been important to ensure that, even when a peer support group focuses on quite specific themes, the importance of implementing the overall commitments is not forgotten.

## THEMATIC ORIENTATIONS AND INTENDED OUTCOMES OF THE TPGS

	Peer Group A (QFs)	Peer Group B (LRC)	Peer Group C (QA)
<b>Thematic orientations:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-certification of the national qualifications frameworks to the overarching Qualifications Framework of the EHEA,</li> <li>• Complete implementation of the ECTS Users' Guide,</li> <li>• Short cycle higher education,</li> <li>• Multiple purposes and use of the qualifications frameworks by the stakeholders,</li> <li>• Study programmes outside the Bologna three-cycle structure,</li> <li>• Relationship between the qualifications frameworks and quality assurance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing the legal framework to allow the implementation of the LRC;</li> <li>• Establishing the distribution of work and responsibilities among the competent institutions that have the right knowledge and capacity to carry out recognition procedures;</li> <li>• Achieving automatic recognition;</li> <li>• Recognition of alternative pathways;</li> <li>• Qualifications held by refugees;</li> <li>• Optimising the potential of digital technology for the recognition agenda and the Diploma Supplement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legislative framework in line with the ESG;</li> <li>• Ensuring effectiveness of internal quality assurance arrangements, including the use of QA results in the decision-making process and quality culture as well as links to learning and teaching;</li> <li>• External quality assurance;</li> <li>• The role and engagement of stakeholders in QA;</li> <li>• Cross-border QA;</li> <li>• European Approach to accreditation of joint programmes;</li> </ul>

	Peer Group A (QFs)	Peer Group B (LRC)	Peer Group C (QA)
<b>Intended outcomes:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support will be given to countries working on the self-certification of their NQFs to the QF-EHEA.</li> <li>• The webpage on Qualifications Frameworks will be updated with self- certification criteria and self-certification reports.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer support to share ideas in order to establish common standards to implement recognition practices operating in respect of the LRC and of national legislation within the EHEA.</li> <li>• Organise 3 public seminars on (1) fraudulent qualifications and digitalisation, (2) substantial differences, (3) information provision.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer to peer support and cooperation on the different thematic orientations in order to better fulfil the key commitment on QA.</li> <li>• Organise thematic sessions with the members of the peer group on the thematic orientations to exchange ideas and good practices.</li> <li>• Up to date action plan for each country participating in the peer group, with concrete activities within the peer group or the own country.</li> </ul>

## ACTION PLANS OF TPGS

Collecting the ideas and proposals by the TPG members in order to develop the PGs' action plans was key in focusing the work and valuable for progress.

The action plans contain the following information:

- Introduction and background information: the context for setting up the Thematic Peer Group, the scope, aims and objectives of its work;
- Thematic orientations: sub-themes that the Thematic Peer Group should cover in the frame of the Action Plan and the basis for such a thematic design (e.g. BICG survey results, networking sessions, discussions of the Peer Group at its first meeting, etc.);
- General information on the Peer Group: co-chairs, participating countries and institutions, umbrella project, other supporting projects;
- Peer Groups Activities and Outcomes: e.g. surveys, self-assessment, peer assessment, analysis, workshops, conferences, list of participating countries and institutions, explanation of the contribution of the activity to the implementation of the key commitment in one or several countries, if applicable, the projects supporting the activity and the time frame envisaged for the implementation of the activity;
- Specific country inputs: concrete actions to be undertaken in order to achieve the set engagements (e.g. surveys, self-assessment, peer assessment, analysis, workshops, conference), partners from the Peer Group, partners from the own country, outcomes, contribution of the activity to the implementation of the key commitments, timeline, supporting projects.

The TPG Action Plans are available on the EHEA website:

TPG A on QF: <http://ehea.info/page-peer-group-A-QF>

TPG B on LRC: <http://ehea.info/page-peer-group-B-LRC>

TPG C on QA: <http://ehea.info/page-peer-group-C-QA>

## Implementation of the Key Commitments

### The Thematic Peer Group A on Qualifications Frameworks

*The Thematic Peer Group A focuses on the Key Commitment 1: a three-cycle system compatible with the overarching frameworks of the EHEA and first and second cycle degrees scaled by ECTS.*

#### Meetings of the TPG A and other relevant events

Meetings: 15 January 2019, Helsinki

3 June 2019, Prague

18 February 2020, Prague

Events: Workshop on self-certification of NQF Prague, 3 May 2019

Conference on the Implementation of the ECTS Users' Guide Prague, 4 June 2019

Self-certification Workshop, Strasbourg 6 September 2019

PLA on National Qualifications Frameworks, Berlin 21 – 22 October 2019

PLA on Multiple Purposes and Qualifications Frameworks by stakeholders, Brussels, 18 – 19 November 2019

Seminar on Current and Future Trends – Linking Qualifications Frameworks and Quality Assurance, Prague, 17 February 2020

The first meeting of the peer group took place in Helsinki on 15 January 2019. Based on the country inputs where countries indicated their needs for support and offered their support, a workshop on self-certification of national qualification frameworks was organized on 3 May 2019 in Prague. Representatives of eight countries participated in the workshop; of these three countries (Finland, Germany and Croatia) had already self-certified their frameworks and they shared their experience with the others.

The second meeting of the peer group took place in Prague on 3 June 2019. Representatives of 18 countries and other stakeholders participated; in total there were 30 participants. The meeting was followed by a conference on ECTS and the implementation of national credit systems for higher education in line with the commitments of the European Higher Education Area.

Generally, the awareness about qualifications frameworks as well as the importance of their implementation has increased. Countries have been able to compare their situation, achievements and challenges with other countries. It has also been noted that availability of up-to-date information concerning especially self-certification on EHEA website is important. Co-operation with the EQF has been sought throughout

the work. Based on feedback received as well as observations of the co-chairs, it is important for those countries who have not yet done so, to prepare their self-certification reports.

ECTS as the main credit system of the European Higher Education Area is linked with the qualification frameworks. The ECTS Users' Guide has been adopted in 2015 and provides guidance on ECTS implementation. The conference on ECTS has shown that in many countries further work needs to be done in the area of ECTS implementation in line with the ECTS Users' Guide. Continuous attention to the implementation of qualifications frameworks, and to the proper use of ECTS including learning outcomes approach – in co-operation with higher education institutions – is considered very important.

Further activities carried out within the peer group include two peer learning activities (PLAs), one seminar, different workshops and the final peer group meeting. The first PLA was organized in October 2019 by the German Rectors' Conference. The focus of the PLA was on qualification frameworks, their design, promotion and on subject-specific qualifications frameworks. The second PLA was organized in November 2019 by the European Students Union in Brussels on the topic *Multiple purposes and use of the qualifications frameworks by the stakeholders*. In February 2020, two events took place in Prague. A seminar on quality assurance of qualifications framework was followed by the third final meeting of the peer group.

Further information, agenda and presentations of the events can be found at <http://ehea.info/page-peer-group-A-QF>.

## The Thematic Peer Group B on Recognition

*The Thematic Peer Group B focus on the Key Commitment 2: national legislation and procedures compliant with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the Diploma Supplement.*

### Meetings of the TPG B

Meetings: 31 January 2019, Tirana

24 June 2019, Bologna

9-10 March 2020, Paris

Events: Document fraud and digitalization (with EQAR) - 1 Feb 2019, Tirana

Seminar Substantial difference (with ESU) - 26 June 2019, Bologna

Seminar on Information provision (with EUA) - 11 March 2020, Sèvres

**1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the TPG B in Tirana on the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2019** (21 countries represented, 5 stakeholder organizations), followed by a Public Seminar on Document Fraud and Digitalization on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January (around 150 participants, organised with EQAR).

**2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the TPG B in Bologna on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June 2019** (30 countries represented, 5 stakeholder organizations), followed by a Public Seminar on Substantial Difference on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June 2019 (around 120 participants, organized with ESU).

**3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the TPG** will be held in **Paris** on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 2020, followed by a Public Seminar on information provision on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 (organized with the EUA).

During the first meeting the members of the Thematic Peer Group discussed the work plan of each country and the overall work plan of the group, matching needs and offers in the field of peer support on recognition issues. Furthermore, four subthemes were discussed: legal framework to allow implementation of LRC; achieving automatic recognition; qualifications held by refugees; digitalisation.

The second meeting was focused on sharing the state of play regarding the action plan of each country and the action plan of the group, with a focus also on the EHEA call and on a matchmaking activity as a support to the countries' action plans.

### **The role of stakeholders in the implementation of LRC**

- First of all students, and students' unions and associations, can play a crucial role in building awareness of the recognition process, the related "right and the duties", the concept of substantial difference, and in multiplying information. The seminar on substantial difference, in coordination with ESU, has been the occasion also to present the section of "Bologna with students eye" report dedicated to recognition, and to discuss the indicators and the main findings with Ministries, Higher Education Institutions, and ENIC-NARIC representatives.
- Higher Education Institutions are the frontline of information provision on recognition, as in the majority of member countries of the EHEA they are the competent authorities for carrying out recognition procedures and taking recognition decisions. One of the topics of the TPG is fostering higher education institutions' role in the implementation of LRC in relation to information provision on recognition (giving clear and transparent information on the process, the right to appeal, etc.). This will be in particular one of the topics of a seminar to be held in March 2020 in Paris co-organized with the EUA.
- Quality is another key word in the TPG discussions, both in relation to fostering the quality of the recognition process (quality is understood in this TPG context to mean recognition that is fully compliant with the principles of the LRC), and in the role of quality assurance agencies to fight corruption, diploma mills, and education

fraud in higher education. This has been one of the topics discussed at the seminar in Tirana together with EQAR.

The role of digitalisation in supporting mobility and employability of students and professionals, the automatic recognition and making it easier to share academic qualifications in a secure way has been examined. Different aspects of digitalisation have been discussed, from the use of digital credentials to the digitalisation of the recognition process, and the application of new technologies in recognition, such as the blockchain technology, should be further explored and implemented. Digitalisation is a key aspect also in linking recognition and quality assurance, with perspectives of simplifying the verification of accreditation of an institution or a study programme opened by the integration of the DEQAR database in the recognition process.

Also discussed is the need for tools and instruments to support portability and transparency of recognition decisions and to improve mobility, such as the European Assessment Report, as a reference document on key information that should be reported in a recognition statement.

In order to foster implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and move towards automatic recognition, the topic of substantial difference has been discussed, with the recommendations to further deepen the topic and define a core set of indicators of what should be considered “substantial difference”.

Cooperation among the 3 TPG is relevant: qualification framework, recognition and quality assurance concur in fostering mobility of individuals. In both the TPG B meetings co-chairs of the other TPGs were invited to share insights from the work of their Groups relevant also for recognition.

## NEXT STEPS

- **3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the TPG in Paris** on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 2020, followed by a Public Seminar on information provision on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 targeted mainly for HEIs (organized with the EUA).
- **Staff mobility activity:** the 1<sup>st</sup> call has been launched in October 2019, the 2<sup>nd</sup> call is going going to be launched in March 2020, and the staff mobility will take place in the period January – July 2020.

## Recommendations of TPG B

Step up action to foster the implementation of the LRC in close cooperation with the ENIC-NARIC centres and the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee Bureau.

Further develop the Peer support model, which has already added value, by addressing more transversal topic/actions among the different TPGs (i.e. topics that are of interest to the 3 TPGs).

Consider and discuss the need to further develop common tools, instruments and reports to support portability and transparency of recognition decisions.

Ensure commitment of the EHEA countries in fostering ethics, integrity and transparency in education, enhancing trust and confidence in the quality and reliability of qualifications.

Take action to eradicate all forms of fraudulent practice, through promotion of integrity and ethical practices, encouraging the use of new technologies in a proper way to support anti-corruption, and developing strong network and peer support activities among countries.

Further information can be found at <http://ehea.info/page-peer-group-B-LRC>.

## The Thematic Peer Group C on Quality Assurance

*The Thematic Peer Group C focus on the Key Commitment 3: quality assurance.*

### Meetings of the TPG C

Meetings: 3-4 December 2018, Tbilisi

27-28 May, 2019, Limassol

16-17 January 2020, Ghent

Events: PLA on the European Approach to the accreditation of joint programmes, Limassol, 29 May 2019

Thematic session on stakeholder engagement, Ghent, 17 January 2020

The group consists of 37 member countries and 8 stakeholder organisations. The representatives of the countries are a mix of persons working in QA agencies and ministries. The first meeting took place in Georgia on 3 – 4 December 2018 and was the kick-off of the peer group, with 17 countries and 6 organisations present. During this meeting the countries started to work on their country action plan and started to look for cooperation with other peer group members on the specific needs of their country. In February 2019 the peer group action plan, with input of all member countries was sent to the BICG and published on the website. During the second meeting in Cyprus on 27 – 28 May 2019, the countries elaborated on their country action plans and worked closely together on the 6 subtopics of the peer group. 54 persons from 26 countries and 7 organisations were present. On 29 May 2019 a Peer Learning Activity was organized on the topic 'European Approach to the QA of joint programmes'. A third meeting was held in Belgium, Ghent on 16 – 17 January 2020, with as main focus to share outcomes of the work so far of the peer group. An

extensive thematic session on the involvement of stakeholders was part of the third meeting (51 participants of 26 countries, 7 international organizations and 2 external experts). The peer group also discussed the further needs for future cooperation in the peer support structure.

In all meetings of the group the focus was primarily to have a lot of discussion and opportunities to exchange expertise among countries through various sessions.

## **Current actions**

The content discussed in the peer group is very broad and linked to the six main subtopics. To accommodate this wide range of specific needs for each country a staff mobility programme has been set up. Following the first call for applications, 47 persons from 26 countries/organisations have applied for a staff mobility to another ministry/QA agency. In a second call another 34 applications from 18 countries/organisations were received. In total 27 countries and 5 international organisations of the peer group took part in one or more staff mobilities. There is a broad range of countries applying, linked to all colours of implementation status on QA in the Bologna Process Implementation Report. The content of the staff mobilities is linked to the key commitments as such for certain countries, but for other countries it is more about enhancement in specific issues. Some good practice examples can be shared already. Staff mobilities take place between October 2019 and May 2020. Each mobile peer will produce an observation report. Input from these reports will be shared back with the peer group members for further dissemination of the lessons learned.

## **Challenges**

Topics discussed within the peer group are very broad and needs are very specific per country. In the many working sessions during the peer group meetings following challenges were raised:

1. Regulation of legal frameworks:
  - independence of QA agencies and internal QA mechanisms of agencies;
  - creation of good cooperation (dialogue and relationship) between governments and QA agencies; the extension of the legal framework regulating the QA procedures;
  - proposals for future projects on QA for Ph.D. programs.
2. European approach on accreditation of joint programs:
  - legal issues on the implementation of European approach;
  - procedural aspects;
  - an idea of a survey to collect information/inventory of joint programmes.
3. Stakeholders' engagement:

- two main groups of stakeholders, identified by the countries as problematic: students and employers;
  - structural engagement and capacity building of experts, students and employers;
  - stakeholders' engagement in cross border evaluations.
4. External QA:
- most countries have a combination of the programme and/or institutional approach, but rely also on internal QA processes (risk of overburden the higher education systems);
  - dealing with new study programmes (relevance, needs labour market, etc.);
  - design and publication of QA reports.
5. Internal QA:
- quality culture within higher education institutions.
6. Cross border QA:
- some countries are not so open for cross border QA;
  - challenges such as, different HE systems, non-accredited HEIs, etc.;
  - need to collect data on legal challenges in regard to incoming cross border QA and the necessary solutions.

QA should stay one of the Bologna key commitments and continuing the work in peer groups further would be welcomed. This especially regards QA, as it is the basis for many other topics such as recognition and mobility.

### **Other future actions**

Challenges on a global scale require to be prepared for smart and intelligent specializations and future jobs, innovative learning and teaching, reduction of bureaucracy while still maintaining QA.

The student population is becoming more and more diverse, so innovative ways of teaching and learning could offer flexible solutions to underrepresented groups in higher education, as well as to adult learners.

Learners also seek more and more knowledge, skills and competences through short courses or through non-formal or informal learning experiences. Validation and recognition of this experience is currently a challenge in many institutions and countries. Accumulation of these into larger credentials is not common, while learners would be interested in this, especially in the lifelong learning context.

On the other side of the spectrum also the world of work is changing and the labour market requires people who can easily adapt and up- and reskill throughout their career.

The higher education sector has to adapt to these needs and adapt their offer: e-learning, MOOC's, interdisciplinary programmes, short courses, etc.

All these forms of teaching and learning should of course also have guaranteed quality standards and be recognized appropriately throughout the European Higher Education Area.

We should explore whether the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) are ready to be used for these new kinds of teaching and learning methods and strive to have all agencies EQAR-registered .

We should also investigate the need to find a way to address and discuss QA provision by non-traditional providers.

#### [Discussion on further work of the Bologna Peer Support Group on QA](#)

The group discussed the messages to be sent to the BICG and the BFUG for the future of the TPG C on QA.

Participants discussed actively, emphasizing that although there are different QA arenas and structures, the specific structure of the TPG C on QA brings together ministries and QA agencies. There is a clear added value to have these entities combined, also in the future. Maybe adding smaller meetings on specific topics could also be useful. Furthermore, some members asked if more national stakeholders could be included in the composition of the TPG C on QA, e.g. employers. It should also be mentioned that the current work method allows participants to participate more easily.

The meetings provide a sort of forum to debate and talk about elements on general level, without entering into details and specifications and being too process oriented. There might be a need to find a more balanced way to set the dates for the meeting. Participants had different ideas about this. One meeting every six months however also keeps the attention of the participants.

Peer learning is very practical and important, the staff mobility project has also a clear added value. The dissemination of the outcomes in the national systems is important. Also the reporting of countries towards other members of the group can be considered relevant.

Several countries and stakeholder organisations have applied for further Erasmus KA3 projects in the field of QA. This can also be seen as an outcome of the peer support structure.

Concerning the content of the meetings and the way of working with subthemes, the general idea is that the key elements were covered. However, other topics could be added and need further discussion in the future, e.g. quality culture, third role of university linked to QA, etc. A new mapping of topics should be done if the peer group continues its existence.

The work of the TPG C on QA has been very concrete and with clear results, so hopefully the TPGs work will continue.

Further information can be found at <http://ehea.info/page-peer-group-C-QA>

## ANNEX I Terms of reference for the BICG

### Terms of Reference for the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group

**Name of the Working Group**

Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG)

**Contact persons**

Members should be nominated before and confirmed by the BFUG immediately following the Ministerial Conference. Therefore, an invitation for countries/organisations to volunteer for membership has to be launched in time for the Ministerial Conference, and nominations discussed no later than during the last BFUG meeting prior to the Ministerial Conference.

**Composition**

The group will include representatives nominated by both full and consultative members of the BFUG. Countries and organisations are requested to signal which (one or several) of the thematic peer groups they may wish to coordinate. The group should initially (i.e. prior to the first meeting of the peer groups in the first round of the support procedure) be composed of ca. 5 members, who will be joined by those chairs who are not already part of the BICG once the peer groups are operational. To aid impartiality, independence and transparency the BICG chair will not be a chair of a peer group.

The choice of countries/organisations will aim to represent the geographical diversity of the EHEA and ensure a balance of expertise across all key commitments. To ensure continuity, members should commit themselves for more than one work-period. Ideally there should be a maximum overturn of 2/3 of its members between work-periods. It is up to the BFUG to decide how this group could fit in the governance of the EHEA after 2020.

**Purpose and/or outcome**

The purpose of the BICG is to facilitate the coordination and reporting of the peer groups that support the implementation of key Bologna commitments (see associated document on Support for implementation of key Bologna commitments), and act as a venue for exchange of experiences and best practice between co-chairs of those peer groups. It facilitates the support for the implementation of key Bologna commitments through ensuring that countries that are facing challenges in meeting the key commitments are fully supported in taking positive action to improve the situation.

The supplementary report to the Bologna Process Implementation Report, addressing the level of implementation of agreed key commitments, will be used to determine priority issues for the BFUG.

The group's work will be guided by the adopted procedure for support for the implementation of key Bologna commitments. It will:

- prepare invitations to join the peer groups, to be sent out by the BFUG Co-chairs;
- facilitate the grouping of countries offering or seeking support to peer groups;
- follow-up peer support activities by keeping an overview of the composition and activities of the different groups;
- give the BFUG regular updates and an overview on the progress and effectiveness of the support for the implementation of the key Bologna commitments, based on the activities of the thematic peer groups.

The group may also make recommendations:

- to improve the support for the implementation of key Bologna commitments, including possible adjustment needed to the process between work periods;
- to improve the support offered to a specific country.

If a country shows no or insufficient progress after one round of peer support activities, the group highlights that in its report, and may advise the BFUG how to provide more specific support to address the issue.

If there is no progress after a further round the BICG prepares a specific report to the BFUG, providing information that can form the basis for a decision on any further steps to be taken by the Ministerial Conference.

### **Reference to the Yerevan Communiqué**

- "... implementation of the structural reforms is uneven and the tools are sometimes used incorrectly or in bureaucratic and superficial ways."
- "Through policy dialogue and exchange of good practice, we will provide targeted support to member countries experiencing difficulties in implementing the agreed goals and enable those who wish to go further to do so."
- "By 2020 we are determined to achieve an EHEA where our common goals are implemented in all member countries to ensure trust in each other's higher education systems;"
- "Implementing agreed structural reforms is a prerequisite for the consolidation of the EHEA and, in the long run, for its success. A common degree structure and credit system, common quality assurance standards

and guidelines, cooperation for mobility and joint programmes and degrees are the foundations of the EHEA."

- "Non-implementation in some countries undermines the functioning and credibility of the whole EHEA. We need more precise measurement of performance as a basis for reporting from member countries."
- "Full and coherent implementation of agreed reforms at the national level requires shared ownership and commitment by policy makers and academic communities and stronger involvement of stakeholders. "

### **Specific tasks**

- Prepare letters for BFUG Co-chairs;
- Facilitate the grouping of countries that offer support in implementation of key commitments with those who could benefit from such support and maintain an overview of the composition and activities of the different peer groups;
- To coordinate the work of the different peer groups;
- Inform and advise the BFUG on implementation of key Bologna commitments;
- Prepare analytical reports to the BFUG on the activities of the different peer groups and the support for the implementation of key commitments as a whole, including operation (what works, what doesn't work), impact and usefulness;
- Prepare recommendations for further action to improve implementation for consideration by the BFUG.

### **Reporting**

Minimum of one yearly report to the BFUG.

Minutes of BICG meetings will be made available by the Bologna Secretariat in addition to the full reports of the individual peer groups.

### **Meeting schedule:**

To be decided

### **Liaison with other WGs' and/or advisory groups' activities**

- WG 1 on "Monitoring" and any other relevant BFUG structures

### **Additional remarks**

## ANNEX II Participants in BICG and the TPG meetings

Countries/ organisations	BICG							TPG A on QF			TPG B on LRC			TPG C on QA		
	1st meeting	2nd meeting	3rd meeting	4th meeting	5th meeting	6th meeting	7th meeting	1st meeting	2nd meeting	3rd meeting	1st meeting	2nd meeting	3rd meeting	1st meeting	2nd meeting	3rd meeting
Albania				1					1		1	1		1	1	
Andorra																
Armenia									1			1			1	
Austria	1	1	1	1	1	1					1	1			1	
Azerbaijan									1							
Belarus								1	1		1	1				
Belgium Flemish Community		1		1	1	1		1	1		1	1		1	1	
Belgium French Community												1				
Bosnia and Herzegovina											1	1				
Bulgaria	1	1	1	1							1	1		1	1	
Council of Europe																
Croatia	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1		1	1		1	1	
Cyprus				1										1	1	
Czech Republic				1	1	1		1	1		1	1		1	1	
Denmark											1	1				
EI / ETUCE								1	1		1	1		1	1	

Countries/ organisations	BICG							TPG A on QF			TPG B on LRC			TPG C on QA		
	1st meeting	2nd meeting	3rd meeting	4th meeting	5th meeting	6th meeting	7th meeting	1st meeting	2nd meeting	3rd meeting	1st meeting	2nd meeting	3rd meeting	1st meeting	2nd meeting	3rd meeting
ENQA														1	1	
EQAR											1	1		1	1	
Estonia								1	1		1	1				
ESU								1	1		1			1	1	
EUA	1	1	1	1	1	1					1	1		1	1	
EURASHE	1	1	1					1	1			1		1	1	
European Commission	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1		1	1			1	
Eurydice		1	1	1	1	1										
Finland				1		1		1	1							
France				1		1					1	1		1	1	
Georgia				1					1			1		1	1	
Germany								1	1					1	1	
Greece								1	1		1	1				
Holy See											1	1				
Hungary									1					1	1	
Iceland																
Ireland											1	1				
Italy	1	1	1	1	1						1	1			1	
Kazakhstan								1	1		1	1			1	
Latvia														1		
Liechtenstein															1	
Lithuania												1			1	
Luxembourg											1	1				

Countries/ organisations	BICG							TPG A on QF			TPG B on LRC			TPG C on QA		
	1st meeting	2nd meeting	3rd meeting	4th meeting	5th meeting	6th meeting	7th meeting	1st meeting	2nd meeting	3rd meeting	1st meeting	2nd meeting	3rd meeting	1st meeting	2nd meeting	3rd meeting
Malta									1		1	1				
Moldova															1	
Montenegro														1	1	
Netherlands											1	1		1	1	
North Macedonia												1			1	
Norway											1	1				
Poland								1			1	1		1	1	
Portugal															1	
Romania								1	1			1		1	1	
Russian Federation												1				
Serbia									1						1	
Slovak Republic														1	1	
Slovenia											1					
Spain									1							
Sweden														1	1	
Switzerland												1				
Turkey																
Ukraine											1	1				
UNESCO																
United Kingdom – EwNI																

	<b>BICG</b>							<b>TPG A on QF</b>			<b>TPG B on LRC</b>			<b>TPG C on QA</b>		
<b>Countries/ organisations</b>	1st meeting	2nd meeting	3rd meeting	4th meeting	5th meeting	6th meeting	7th meeting	1st meeting	2nd meeting	3rd meeting	1st meeting	2nd meeting	3rd meeting	1st meeting	2nd meeting	3rd meeting
United Kingdom (Scotland)																
Total number of members participating	7	9	8	14	8	9		15	22		28	35		23	33	
<b>Total number of members</b>	<b>11</b>							<b>29</b>			<b>46</b>			<b>45</b>		