



First Meeting of Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue

Hosted by the Belgium Flemish Community, online*,
Monday, June 7, 2021,
11.00-13.00 (Brussels time)

Minutes

List of Participants

	Delegation	First Name	Family Name(s)
1	Albania (Co-chair)	Oltion	Rrumbullaku
2	Belgium Flemish Community (Co-chair)	Magalie	Soenen
3	European Commission (Co-chair)	Fiorella	Perotto
4	Italy (Co-chair)	Ann Katherine	Isaacs
5	ENQA	Maria	Kelo
6	ESU - European Students' Union	Martin	Hammerbauer
7	EUA - European University Association	Michael	Gaebel
8	EUA - European University Association	Elizabeth	Colucci
9	EI - ETUCE	Hanna	Tanskanen
10	France	Helene	Lagier
11	Germany	Tim	Maschuw
12	Holy See	Melanie	Rosenbaum
13	Austria	Michael	Roither
14	Malta	Valerie	Attard
15	Malta	Jon	Vercellono
16	The Netherlands	Marianne	van Exel
17	Romania	Madalina	Matei
18	Spain	Margarita	de Lezcano-Mújica
19	UNESCO	Leticia	Sakai
20	UNESCO	Peter	Wells
21	United Kingdom	Ella	Ritchie



22	BFUG Secretariat (Head, Albania)	Enida	Bezhani
23	BFUG Secretariat	Aida	Myrto
24	BFUG Secretariat	Kristina	Metallari

Ireland and Kazakhstan did not attend the meeting.

***Note:** Due to the extraordinary circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic, this meeting was held online.

Welcome and introduction to the meeting by the Co-chairs and BFUG Secretariat

Magalie Soenen (Co-chair) opened the meeting by introducing the Co-chairs of the Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue and welcoming everybody to the first meeting of the 2021-2024 work period. Ann Katherine Isaacs (Co-chair) thanked everyone for their commitment during the previous work period and emphasized the importance of improving regular cooperation with other regions and international organizations, as well as promoting mutual learning and building trust among the EHEA and other countries and macro-regions through exchange of knowledge and cooperation. Fiorella Perotto (Co-chair) and Oltion Rrumbullaku (Co-chair) greeted the members and offered their full support and expertise for the upcoming work and meetings of the CG on GPD.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda of the meeting was adopted without changes.

For more detailed information, please see *CG_GPD_PT_D_Agenda*

2. Tour de Table

All members of the CG on GPD introduced themselves and informed on the positions they hold within the institutions/organizations they represented.

3. Introduction to the meeting and its objectives

Ann Katherine Isaacs (Co-chair) emphasized the importance of this meeting to:

- Introduce all new and returning members;
- Gather ideas and proposals in consideration of the pre-reads/materials shared ahead of the meeting;
- Discuss the recommendations and challenges outlined in the 'Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue Final Report' to establish new initiatives and determine which suggestions can be adopted (https://eha.info/Upload/CG_Global_Policy_Dialogue_Final_Report.pdf);



- Elaborate on plans and activities of this CG, to identify feasible and probable solutions, that can be supported by the Bologna process.

4. Review of the approved Terms of Reference

Oltion Rrumbullaku (Co-chair) provided an overview of the ToRs for this CG, indicating that the document was approved in the BFUG meeting, hosted by Portugal on April 15-16, 2021. The purpose of sharing the ToRs in this first meeting was to emphasize the expected tasks to be undertaken and the overall objectives to be achieved over the next three years.

This CG has received a lot of interest, hence the high membership number. Albania is especially happy to be one of the Co-chairs of this group, as the country that will hold the next Global Policy Forum in 2024, the organization of which falls under the remit of this group.

Under the thematic objectives several points were emphasized, with special focus on inclusion as taken from the Paris statement during the Global Policy Forum and the previous work of the BFUG and this CG. Mrs. Isaacs highlighted the importance of achieving some degree of compatibility with the Bologna process through:

- Fostering effective inclusion of learners not only in terms of admission to HE, but also with respect to retention;
- Creating contacts, systems and supporting reciprocal referencing of the Qualifications Frameworks and Qualifications Reference frameworks in the EHEA and in other macro-regions;
- Communicating and clarifying all the assigned roles and tasks of the group, in order to establish communication with macro and medium regions, as well as single countries. Bologna's objective is not for everybody to be the same, but for them to be able to communicate what they do and connect;
- A shift in more virtual and flexible activities.

The importance and broad range of the thematic objectives would enable the establishment of various sub-groups and organization of various events. However, focusing on specific tasks and goals that should be achievable by 2024 was suggested as a good starting point. As an example, regarding the designing of the Global Forum, the ambition is not only to organize a one-time event at the end of the work period, but to have ongoing dialogue, interface and engagement in interim.

The question of the added value of this group was also brought up and it is still to be fully clarified. Currently the group operates as a *foreign office* of the Bologna process, as a *global promoter* of the EHEA, *think tank*, *event committee* and more. Given its wide membership and broad expertise, it was observed that the group is well-positioned to accomplish the tasks ahead of it.

The insertion in the ToRs of a paragraph on mobility to include other forms of mobility (i.e., virtual mobility) resulting from the Covid-19 impact, covering measures and processes from an international dialogue perspective, as well as provide a good balance with inclusive and advancing mobility, was proposed. It was also suggested that countries and international organizations should be invited to share their perspectives and engage in active dialogue. The



Co-chairs clarified that the wording of the ToRs cannot be changed, as they are approved by the BFUG, however, the group can work on translating the current ToRs into a work plan for the upcoming three years and focus on inclusive and balanced mobility.

Reference was made to the Rome Communique in that, even though the group cannot interfere with the political ways of each country, the Global Recognition Convention should be ratified as soon as possible. UNESCO's regional offices in all regions organize seminars/webinars/conferences/workshops on all the topics outlined in the ToRs (QA, recognition, mobility, joint research/programs, inclusion, access), all under the umbrella of the 2030 Agenda/SDGs. Further, it was noted that it would be very beneficial for the EHEA to be represented in such dialogues and events in a systematic way between now and 2024. This in turn can help to increase visibility and the global presence of the EHEA, as well as establish a permanent dialogue with other regions to the benefit of better cooperation. It was highlighted that in the previous work periods (up to 2015), the objective of this group was focused more on the promotion of the EHEA. Thus, it was recommended to shift toward the establishment of a permanent rapport with other regions and engagement with stakeholders, as opposed to meeting online at ministerial conferences where the main contribution of the EHEA, in these instances, is to present a statement, rather than encourage discussions/dialogue. The members suggested to organize an EHEA Global Policy Dialogue session at the UNESCO 3rd World Conference on HE in Barcelona in 2022. Another suggestion was made to attend the Qualifications Framework EHEA National Correspondents meeting in September, however, in this case the main focus would be solely on the development of frameworks.

With regard to the thematic objectives, creating sub-groups to work on specific tasks can be proven beneficial for establishing a continuous dialogue with policy-makers and other macro regions. However, currently, the main goal is to set up a strategy for the 2021-2024 work period and if possible, to establish a particular rapport with countries that have worked hard to become compliant with the Bologna expectation. This can help the group foster ideas on how to develop its work - concentrate initially on how to initiate the work, rather than on how to divide into small sub-groups.

5. Proposed activities and tentative Roadmap

5.1. Aim and Objectives

It was emphasized that the overarching aim of the CG on GPD, as mandated in the 2018 Paris Communiqué, is to:

- Foster and develop regular dialogue with other regions and international organizations on matters of common concern and relevance for higher education;
- Build trust between EHEA and macro regions;
- Prepare and support the organization of a successful Global Policy Forum (GPF).

5.2. Proposed activities



Several suggestions were made on the tentative roadmap for the work period 2021-2024, outlined/grouped below thematically:

- During the 2018-2020 work period, the group had to prepare and support the organization of a GPF, to be held along with the 2020 Ministerial Conference in Rome, laying the foundations for continuation of the work in the post 2020 period. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the initial plan had to be amended and a brief global session was organized on November 19, 2020, in conjunction with the online Rome Ministerial Conference. Nonetheless, the preparatory work involving the organizational aspects of the GPF and its content was carried out and documented. Therefore, it was suggested to use the existing materials as the basis for the current work period and build further on the existing work;
- The importance of creating inclusive sub-groups that focus on macro-regions, rather than on specific topics was elaborated. If the latter is the case though, it was suggested to identify from the thematic objectives of the CG, specific topics that are applicable to specific regions. Nonetheless, it was noted that focusing on one topic for a specific region might not prove to be very efficient, due to the broad and general nature of the task. It was concluded that focusing on a regional perspective can be more beneficial, however, a combination of both aspects can be adopted, if combined in a functional way;
- The capacity challenge of the group was also discussed. If the sub-groups are focused on a regional aspect, it might prove challenging to design a series of events, due to the overload with the program planning and organization. A mapping of what could be done can be carried out though with a possible mid-term review. The question of whether the CG aims to focus more on themes or on events that could promote the Bologna process arose. In any case, given the lack of resources, the CG should take advantage of the opportunities as they arise (events as they happen), however, it is important that inclusivity is emphasized;
- What the CG wants to achieve and what will be different after 3 years were the persisting questions - promote EHEA beyond EHEA, bring other areas of the world into the EHEA or create alliances/cooperation? There was understanding that facilitating cooperation and enhancing mutual understanding should be one of the key objectives. Work done to date has achieved trust – trust of the countries in the Bologna process and trust among the countries. And this is something worth exporting and showing to others how it was achieved. The establishment of a sub-group to identify possible events that the CG can join was proposed. The sub-group should consider what the CG wants to achieve by 2024 – e.g. international collaboration; mutual inspiration – us inspired by other regions and vice versa, building up trust in a more inclusive HE system worldwide. The partners that the CG will work with during the next 2-3 years would be prominent partners in the forum to be held in Albania in 2024;
- When working with a specific region, the CG can focus on a task that is more relevant for that region. The strategy and work plan of the group in this case should be elaborated in consideration of the scope of the region. Further, many macro areas have important regional and sub-regional organizations that should be taken into account for future cooperation, due to the many overlapping areas and similar topics of interest between them and the CG;
- The CG should aim to improve its performance by monitoring events in which it could participate, not with the aim of publicity, but with the aim of building trust and compatibility. The EU call to support the Bologna processes could be an opportunity to fund events to be organized by the CG and recruit relevant staff to help with them;



- It was proposed that the group should take a more systematic approach in regard to the attendance and participation in large, regional events. This can help in the 'recruitment' of individuals that can support the CG, as well as bring the Bologna process and the EHEA into focus as part of the discussion in such events (i.e., by organizing an annex policy discussion). This point was highly emphasized due to the limited capacity (restriction in specific tools and resources) of the CG, to organize separate events to achieve the mentioned goals. Hence, as many of the events are hosted by organizations such as UNESCO, the European Commission, EUA, etc., who are already members of the CG on GPD, it was concluded that such events will prove to be more effective for the CG. These events can also be a good opportunity to build trust among EHEA members and other event participants, as well as determine what needs to be promoted by the CG when attending such events. Some of the events referenced included the Central Asian Conference, EU and African Union Summit (in Africa- date tbd) that will focus on the geopolitical dimension and cover reforms that might prove useful for the future work of the CG;
- It was also pointed out that the global policy notion adopted in Paris, did not focus on giving 'Bologna lessons' to the world, but rather learn from other regional models in a pragmatic way. With the upcoming French presidency, a conference is planned that will focus on taking a global approach.
- It was noted that the CG should differentiate between global events and regional dialogue, as well as make a distinction between meetings that will be self-organized by taking in a leading role and external meetings, where the group should take a participatory role. In the latter, the group can gather information on trending dialogue with certain regions, actors, etc. This, in turn, can determine the way the CG will shape its own dialogue when organizing its own events.

It was noted that the overall purpose of the CG on GPD needed to be clarified in order to devise a tangible work plan. The group should aim to facilitate more cooperation, enhance mutual understanding, spread the success of the EHEA and provide information to other regions on the work done.

To conclude, it was decided that a concrete work plan should be developed and inclusivity should remain the main focus area. The CG on GPD ought to take a pragmatic approach by developing tools that facilitate easier communication with other macro regions, as well as decide on strategic plans and activities, to finalize the roadmap of the CG on GPD.

6. Discussion of the scope and aims of a possible request for EU funding

During the previous work period, the European Commission opened a call that included two strands to support the Bologna initiatives. For this work period, the call is expected to be out by the end of June. Moreover, there will be no strands this time, but rather one general call. It was notified that based on the experience of the last work period, similar projects defined as 'The Umbrella Proposals' could be submitted by country members and consultative members to finance activities that include units and working structures within the EHEA. It was suggested this time to formulate a proposal that contains events and activities that involve individuals and countries outside the EHEA.



The deadline to submit a final proposal is set for September. In order to start preparing this proposal, the members of the CG agreed to finalize the roadmap, so that the priorities and specific tasks of the group are clearly defined. It was suggested that members would define concrete ideas, but formulate them initially in a broad extent, and specify them at a later stage through the incorporation of some specific tools. In overall, the project would have to include both general and specific aspects, with the aim of building trust and promoting dialogue, rather than promoting the work of the EHEA. It was advised that every member of the CG on GPD should send a reflective report by June 15, 2021, with ideas and suggestions on the formulation of the proposal.

7. AOB

No other business was raised and the CG on GPD meeting was concluded with thanks to the Co-chairs and the BFUG Secretariat for the well-organized meeting.