



Last modified: 18.06.2021

## Working Group on San Marino Roadmap

First Meeting, Hosted by Andorra, Online\*  
Monday, May 17, 2021,  
15.00-18.00 (Brussels time)

### Minutes

#### List of Participants

	Delegation	First Name	Family Name(s)
1	Andorra (Co-chair)	Jordi	Llombart
2	Council of Europe	Sjur	Bergan
3	ENQA	Maria	Kelo
4	Finland (Co-chair)	Maija	Innola
5	Holy See	Melanie	Rosenbaum
6	Italy	Paola	Castellucci
7	Italy	Vera	Lucke
8	San Marino	Maria Elena	D'Amelio
9	San Marino	Remo	Massari
10	BFUG Secretariat (Head, Albania)	Enida	Bezhani
11	BFUG Secretariat (Albania)	Aida	Myrto
12	BFUG Secretariat (Albania)	Kristina	Metallari
13	BFUG Secretariat (Albania)	Irma	Sheqi
14	BFUG Secretariat (Albania)	Enis	Fita

Regrets were received from Liechtenstein.

**\*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

Jordi Llombart (Co-chair, Andorra) opened the meeting by introducing the San Marino Roadmap WG Co-chairs and welcoming everybody to the first meeting of the 2021-2024 work period. Maija Innola (Co-chair, Finland) thanked the BFUG Secretariat and Andorra Co-chair for organizing this meeting swiftly and emphasized the importance of this WG, regarding the implementation of the EHEA values in San Marino. The Co-chairs and BFUG Secretariat offered their full support for the upcoming work and meetings of the San Marino Roadmap WG.



## 1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda of the meeting was adopted without amendments.

For more detailed information, please see *WG\_SMR\_PT\_AD\_1\_Draft Agenda*.

## 2. Discussion of the Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the San Marino Roadmap Working Group (2021-2024) were adopted in the BFUG meeting hosted by Portugal, on April 15-16, 2021, and were discussed in this first meeting, with a view to underlining the main objectives, activities and working method.

It was noted that the current composition is very appropriate with good representation of northern and southern countries, as well as good references, i.e., Andorra, Holy See, Italy, Liechtenstein, for San Marino to draw on best practices. It was agreed that following the meeting, the Secretariat would share the updated ToRs, reflecting the actual membership (countries and stakeholders) of the WG.

While deciding on the meeting schedules of the WG, two considerations needed to be made:

- The internal dynamics in San Marino and the schedule of the colleagues from San Marino, as the aim is to help them;
- The need for regular reporting to the BFUG, therefore, the schedules should match that.

During the previous work periods, the submitted reports (from some of the WGs) have tended to focus more on procedure than on content. Forward, the reports to be submitted to the BFUG should be more analytical and also outline the challenges and considerations to be made. A meeting can be held in November in San Marino, should the Covid-19 situation allow, to finalize this WG's report for the BFUG meeting.

For more detailed information, please see *WG\_SMR\_PT\_AD\_ToRs*.

## 3. Current state of play of the implementation of the San Marino Roadmap

The representatives of San Marino thanked the BFUG for the support to date and presented a current state of play regarding the QF, QA, Recognition, HE governance and life-long learning and social dimension. The Sammarinese Ministry of Education has already established a national working group for the NQF. The group has prepared a first overview of the interventions required to develop the NQF and a first assessment of possible stakeholders. Involvement of the Labor Office by June 2021, as the main stakeholder due to the impact of NQF on the labor market, is the first step to be undertaken by the group. At a later stage, the group will also identify other stakeholders, who wish to be involved, e.g. professors, staff representatives, professionals, business associations, Sammarinese unions, etc.

The representatives of San Marino shared that their goal is to work closely with Italy regarding the NQF, as there is constant exchange of workers, professionals, as well as of degree recognition, etc. Hence, it was decided that Italy will be the main point of reference in this respect.

For more detailed information on point 4, please see *Current State of Affairs\_May 2021*.

## 4. Timetable for implementing the HE reforms and possible peer-learning activities to implement specific policy areas

### 4.1. Qualifications Framework

San Marino aims to have the first draft of the NQF ready by November 2021 and discussed and approved in the parliament, ideally by June 2022. Furthermore, it has been scheduled that, with the



participation of foreign experts, the final development of the NQF and establishment of self-certification will be completed by November 2023.

San Marino needs to self-certify its NQF to the EHEA-QF. San Marino is encouraged to do the referencing to the EQF as well, even if it is not need.

A change in the timetable sequencing proposed by San Marino, on the steps to be taken toward the NQF was suggested: first to develop the NQF with the support of the foreign experts and then adopt it into legislation. The representatives of San Marino will discuss it with the national NQF WG and the San Marino Roadmap WG will be notified via email. Should the national WG need advice and guidance from foreign experts, then the San Marino Roadmap WG will help identify experts, while also encouraging cooperation with Italy thanks to no language barriers.

The representatives of San Marino identified potential challenges concerning the EQF that link to educating stakeholders first (Ministry of Education, HE experts and the Labor Office). They added that the stakeholders will need to acquire first the necessary knowledge and 'know how' on the EQF.

It was underlined that the introduction of flexible learning paths would be considered a major step by the Sammarinese parliament, experts and ministry, to accept and adopt, due to the historically strict pathway to HE.

Three main suggestions were made to help San Marino in its approach:

- Include flexible learning paths in the NQF and alternative access routes to HE, other than by earning an academic secondary school leaving qualification;
- Specify the place/position of the Corsi di Master Universitario, the Master universitario di primo livello, and the Master universitario di secondo livello within the NQF;
- Include progress routes in terms of access to the labor market, available to holders of these qualifications. The university courses for the labor market should be placed accordingly within the NQF.

Based on the discussions, it was advised that the main objective for San Marino should be to include HE academic qualifications into the NQF. It was recommended to prioritize these academic qualifications over the professional qualifications, which can be included at a later stage, due to the complexity of this process. It was further advised to look into countries with similar experiences and communicate with the respective representatives for any clarifications or advice.

#### 4.2. Quality Assurance

An Independent Assessment Body (IAB) was established recently to develop the guidelines of an initial and very streamlined internal QA system that will then be revised once an external evaluation agency has been identified. The most suitable time to contact an external QA agency was discussed and it was recommended to:

- First, an internal framework should be identified within the university. Subsequently, any additional national criteria of QA should be specified, so that the WG members can suggest and help identify the most beneficial external QA approach for the Sammarinese Ministry of Education and other national institutions;
- San Marino could start with program quality assurance and then follow it by institutional quality assurance;



- After the adoption of an internal QA approach, San Marino can contact an external QA agency, when the new national criteria are implemented and evaluation is required;
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- Choosing an external QA approach over the development of an institutional QA framework does not present any issues. Even though it is best to analyze from the start the most suitable approach for the country, changes along the way are possible. To determine this properly, a dedicated meeting should be held with the key stakeholders, to advice on certain topics, when the San Marino Roadmap WG has a face-to-face meeting in San Marino. The importance of identifying any other absolute conditions apart from the ESG was emphasized, and this can be achieved by recruiting an agency, which understands the Sammarinese system and the language and is independent;
- ENQA shared its availability to provide advice any time, as well as EQAR. It was suggested to establish initially an internal QA framework, in order to determine the national criteria for an external QA agency to address the country's institution at a later stage. Based on the country's criteria or special area of interest, the Ministry of Education should make a call for external QA agencies, to provide assistance and guidance. If the criteria are in line with the ESG, that also determines the right balance between institutional autonomy and the role of the internal QA system. ENQA also offered to identify similar country experiences and present them for best practices to San Marino;
- An EQAR-registered agency or member of ENQA, can be used for this process, due to their extensive knowledge and expertise in this area as well;
- A balance should be defined between the role of the institution autonomy and the role of the QA system. This can be done by looking at 'best practices' from EHEA country members (i.e., Andorra, Holy See, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg), but also learning from their mistakes and by involving stakeholders that have the relevant expertise.

#### 4.3. Recognition of Qualifications

The representatives of San Marino provided an overview on the progress of San Marino, concerning the introduction of recognition of prior learning, including informal and non-formal learning, as part of the implementation of the ECTS Users Guide.

- A flexible learning path has been adopted within the university structure, including part-time attendance for students combining study and work - as most degrees require full attendance, this path provides an individualized study plan;
- Recognition of ECTS credits for professional work experiences (other than internships), seminars, conferences, volunteer experiences, etc., to be included in the final number of credits that students need to obtain in order to graduate. San Marino enquired whether credits can be given for merits in sports, as it is the case in Italy. Such a concept has been already introduced within the national working group and can be easily adopted, if confirmed to be credited.

It was clarified that both aspects are considered flexible learning paths and ways to recognize formal and informal education. The Andorran Co-chair shared Andorra's experience on free credit choice for attending seminars or completing internships. It was explained that in order to qualify these new ways of receiving credits, the national working group ought to seek approval or assistance from the university, to verify the authenticity of the credit certifications.

It was proposed that San Marino interfaces with countries that have undergone similar experiences, organizes workshops and peer learning activities to collect information, knowledge and receives advice on the recognition of qualifications of prior learning within the university structure.



## Discussion on Challenges Concerning Recognition of Qualifications

It is possible to acknowledge previously acquired competences within the HE institutions. These institutions should have processes and procedures in place to deal with applications for the recognition of prior learning.

The representatives of San Marino observed that the practical experience of other countries would be very beneficial and explained that in terms of recognition of prior studies/learning, the ECTS credit system is already in place in San Marino, along with a credit system related to work experience, as a substitute for internships' accreditation. But there is no system regarding an alternative to the recognized secondary degree (diploma is conditional). University admission is denied, if one lacks such degree. There is flexibility in obtaining the diploma, i.e., home schooling. However, after the completion of secondary studies, the student needs to pass the relevant exam to be awarded a diploma. Thus, no informal learning paths have been established yet.

The representatives of San Marino stressed the lack of experience in regard to the Lisbon Recognition Convention, especially Article 7 on the recognition of qualifications held by refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation. It was suggested to San Marino to identify areas it needs support with and further advice, so that other countries with similar experience can contribute toward those during the meeting in San Marino.

### 4.4. Higher Education Governance and Legislation

The representatives of San Marino informed that the legitimate process of the implementation of the principles of the EHEA will be initiated prior to the original timeline. The provision of the English translation of the legislation documents was requested, so that external experts that are well-advanced in the HE legislation can have access to them and provide further advice or recommendations. It was also decided to deliver all amendments to parliament as a full set for approval in one go, rather than individually. In any case, the representatives of San Marino notified that some areas on the legitimate process will entail more discussions, for instance the election of the rector. It was also underlined that legislation should be considered as the codification of measures the government and parliament wish to institute. It is, therefore, the end rather than the beginning of the process.

### 4.5. Lifelong Learning / Social Dimension of Higher Education

The representatives of San Marino notified that assistance for underrepresented groups or people with physical disabilities on learning is already in place (i.e., facilitation of class attendance, individualized support, study classes, etc.). However, there is no assistance or support in place for refugees or ethnic minorities, as such groups have not been defined in the country's context.

For future reference, it was recommended to address similar cases individually and not draft new legislation on them. One of the key objectives in light of the social dimension, is for every country to identify who are their respective unrepresented groups, so that the student population is monitored as well. Therefore, the representatives of San Marino were advised to identify any other groups that find education inaccessible or challenging. The Holy See shared a 'best practice' example of the procedures for people who do not have a formal degree to access university or further studies. The Holy See defined the recognition procedures for flexible learning paths without restricting them to refugees or minorities, but under the Covid-19 legislation, one can present any qualification of any form with relevance to what one intends to



do, not necessarily restricted to formal qualifications he/she has already acquired, but cannot prove in a documentary way. This way one can be admitted preliminarily and be monitored and his/her progress can be checked annually. It was suggested to San Marino to include individuals experiencing similar issues in a more general, bigger underrepresented group of 'workers'.

It was also emphasized that the topics of integration and provision of opportunities are applicable not only in the HE, but in the whole education system. As a result, some challenges can be tackled in the earlier stages of the education system. How teachers are educated, stimulates student learning in groups with low level of support. Andorra has implemented a program in junior secondary schools, focusing on the integration of students with little or no background of the country's language to the school system.

For more detailed information on point 4, please see *Current State of Affairs\_May 2021*.

## 5. Date of the next meeting

The Co-chairs summarized the next steps to be undertaken:

- It is advisable that the next meeting takes place over 1.5 days, combined with thematic topics which San Marino may identify as needing support with;
- Prepare a written timetable and Work Plan for the WG, with flexibility to requests from San Marino. The draft will be circulated to the membership for final confirmation. It was suggested to present the Work Plan and timetable through a written procedure at the BFUG Board meeting;
- It was advised to have the next BFUG WG meeting in San Marino with the participation of all the national stakeholders, as well as the Sammarinese HE education staff and university community;
- After the colleagues from San Marino will meet within the national WG on May 27, 2021, they will provide feedback and alternative dates (1-15.11.2021) for the next meeting of the BFUG WG. A doodle will be sent out with the dates confirmed by the San Marino working group) for the next San Marino Roadmap WG.

## 6. AoB

The WG Co-chairs wrapped up the meeting by thanking the members and the Secretariat for the meeting.