

# Bologna Implementation Coordination Group - draft proposal on self-certification presentation and on implementation discussion at the Cyprus BFUG meeting

## Introduction

The work of the BICG is progressing as planned. Since the group has not met since the last BFUG meeting the purpose of this report to the BFUG Board is to present two draft proposals for the next BFUG meeting in Cyprus. Next meeting of the BICG is scheduled to be held on 16 February.

## I. Presentation of the Self-certification process

The implementation of national qualification frameworks compatible with the QF-EHEA is one of the Bologna Process key commitments. Ensuring the compliance with this key commitment and, thus, the alignment of the NQF with the QF-EHEA requires the completion of a self-certification process. The practice has been that the self-certification reports are presented in the meetings of the National Correspondents on Qualification Frameworks of the Council of Europe, which was in previous working periods also formally a BFUG working structure. Council of Europe does not operate the National Correspondents group anymore and it has thus not been a part of the BFUG working structures starting from 2024.

TPG A working group on Self-Certification prepared a report “[Guidelines, observations, and recommendations](#)” in 2023, which included a procedure to conduct the self-certification and guidelines for its structure. The report highlights that the purpose of the presentation of the self-certification report is to facilitate transparency of national qualifications frameworks and systems of higher education and ensure a platform for peer learning and exchange of good practices between the EHEA countries. Therefore, the presentation of the self-certification report and discussion with other EHEA members is an essential part of the implementation of the NQF.

In late 2025, the Secretariat received the first self-certification report of the NQF with QF-EHEA of this cycle (2024-2027) from our Andorran colleagues. The report has been published on the EHEA website.

It is our view that the TPG A on QFs has the best expertise of all current BFUG structures to act as a platform for the presentation of self-certification reports, to facilitate transparency of national qualification framework, and to provide peer learning possibilities on this topic. In addition, the European Commission and Council of Europe are both members of the TPG A and therefore would be engaged in the process. TPG A can also report to the EQF Advisory Group about self-certification reports which are presented in TPG A, since many self-certification

reports with QF-EHEA are included in the referencing with EQF, ensuring good communication and exchange of information between EQF and QF-EHEA.

Furthermore, as presented by the Working Group on Monitoring in the last BFUG meeting, the proposal for the indicator on the QF-EHEA in the 2027 edition of the Bologna Process Implementation Report considers whether a self-certification exercise has been conducted in the last 10 years. Whereas there is no timeframe for the revision of the self-certification reports, it is expected that BFUG members would submit a revised report when major changes occur in their NQF or when their NQF is updated.

Proposed action from the BICG to the BFUG:

1. Endorse the 'Guidelines' prepared by the TPG A as the process for submitting the self-certification report.
2. Adjust the ToRs of the BICG and mandate TPG A to act as the platform for presenting self-certification reports and to provide expertise and feedback about self-certification reports to the members and to the BFUG (see annex).
3. Advise BFUG members that they should revisit their self-certification report and decide whether an update is necessary, informing the EHEA Secretariat accordingly. In addition, BFUG could consider whether a 10-year time limit should be set as guideline for revisiting their self-certification report.

## II. Discussion on implementation in the BFUG

The Tirana Communiqué acknowledges the important contribution of the Thematic Peer Groups in improving the incomplete and uneven implementation of the key commitments and recognises that more work is needed to improve the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education. The Communiqué also introduces a commitment to have and publish national action plans to address remaining implementation gaps.

The purpose of the BICG is to facilitate a coordinated implementation of the four identified topics: the three key commitments (ECTS and QFs; recognition; and quality assurance) as well as of the social dimension of higher education. BICG terms of reference also mandate the group to provide input for the BFUG discussions about implementation.

The BFUG workplan foresees a session on implementation and the TPG methodology in the next BFUG meeting in Cyprus. This gives the BFUG a good opportunity to exchange views on how to improve implementation, what works and how we should address the implementation gaps in the future.

Based on the BFUG Board advice, the BICG will prepare a background discussion paper on implementation. Possible discussion themes for the Nicosia BFUG meeting are:

1. Peer learning and national action plans

Since 2019 the BFUG has worked to improve the implementation of key commitments through the work in the TPGs and by using the peer support methodology. The current work period builds

on the previous work period experiences and achievements. Over the years the work has been active and productive, focusing on key commitments but also dealt with several connected and emerging themes. The work of the TPGs has been supported by Erasmus+ funded projects.

The final report of the BICG from the previous working period concludes that the change has been positive, but slow. To strengthen implementation, the report notes that countries that have not fully implemented the Key Commitments are not always active in the TPG's work. In some cases, active participation does not help, if countries are not committed to making changes. Good representation in TPGs with expertise in the field and good communication and collaboration with the BFUG members have been highlighted repeatedly over the years as good practice.

The Secretariat provided an update on the national action plans during the Copenhagen BFUG meeting. So far 40 (out of the 49 National Action Plans (NAPs) expected) have been submitted. Once received, the NAPs were published on the EHEA website on the dedicated section for each member country. The national action plans include both areas where implementation is lagging and areas where BFUG members want to improve the status quo even when commitments had already been met. The BFUG members also included additional themes in the National Action Plans, notably Internationalisation and mobility, fundamental values, learning and teaching, artificial intelligence, and/or digitalisation. The current TPGs have integrated NAPs in their work plans.

While the methodology works, and is particularly beneficial to the countries, organisations and individuals actively involved in the TPGs, some questions for the future work are worth considering:

- How should the work of the TPGs contribute to the BFUG discussions, including but not limited to regarding future commitments and policy areas?
- Is the current method of working fit for purpose of achieving the expected and desired results?
- What is the role and impact of the national action plans in addressing implementation gaps together with the TPGs?
- How could the NAPs be better utilised in the future?

## 2. Future-proof development of the Bologna tools

The final report of the BICG from the previous period highlighted the rapid evolution of the world of higher education, with increasing presence of flexible learning pathways, personal approaches to learning, microcredentials, joint degrees and university alliances, etc. The report states that these changes can be accommodated by the EHEA by the already agreed tools if they are correctly and completely implemented across the EHEA. The Tirana communiqué put forward the future-proof development, dissemination and possible expansion of Bologna tools and it gave a mandate to revise the ECTS Users' Guide and the ESG. The rest of the tools are not under similar review for this current cycle. In addition, digitalisation and artificial intelligence affects the activities of higher education institutions and the use of the Bologna tools. Without a common approach, higher education systems risk moving in different directions making cooperation and mobility more difficult.

Questions for the BFUG:

- How should the BFUG examine the mandate from the Tirana Communiqué to analyse the “future-proofness” of the Bologna tools?
  - May this, for example, imply considering the revision of QF-EHEA and the Dublin Descriptors?
  - Are there potential documents that could be considered Bologna tools?
- How should the digital interoperability of Bologna tools be supported?