

1st Thematic Peer Group A on Qualifications' Frameworks meeting (TPG A on QF)

Riga, Latvia, 21st of March 2025

Minutes of meeting

List of participants

Country/Organization	Name	Last Name
Andorra	Jordi	Llobart
Armenia	Ani	Mkrtchyan
Armenia	Gayane	Harutyunyan
Austria	Karin	Riegler
Austria	Beate	Treml
EURASHE	Jakub	Grodecki
Belgium-Flemish Community	Marjolein	Muys
Council of Europe	Jean Philippe	Restoueix
Croatia	Slaven	Zjalic
Croatia	Josipa	Češnovar
Cyprus	Kyriacos	Charalambous
EHEA Secretariat	Alexandrina	Druta
EHEA Secretariat (Head of Secretariat)	Horia	Onita
Estonia	Gunnar	Vaht
Estonia	Olav	Aarna
ESU	Nora	Angelova
EURASHE	Ana	Duplava
European Commission	Tiina	Polo
Finland (BICG Co-chair)	Maija	Innola
France (TPG A on QF Co-Chair)	Sara	Thornton
Georgia	Ketevan	Panchulidze
Georgia (TPG A on QF Co-Chair)	Khatia	Tsiramua
Greece	Alexandra	Karvouni
Hungary	András	Derényi
Ireland	Órla	Barry
Latvia (TPG A on QF Co-Chair)	Baiba	Ramina
Kazakhstan	Amantay	Nurmagambetov
Latvia	Gunta	Kinta
Lithuania	Kristina	Sutkute
Malta	Stefan	Sant
North Macedonia	Borcho	Aleksov
Norway	Gro Beate	Vige
Poland	Jacek	Lewicki
Republic of Moldova	Tatiana	Gherstega
Romania	Tiberiu Gabriel	Dobrescu
Romania (Co-chair TPG C QA)	Cristina	Ghitulica
San Marino	Monica	Cavalli
Slovakia	Vladimír	Bilohuščin
Spain	Beatriz	Canal Rodríguez

Sweden	Adnan	Dautbegovic
Czech Republic	Tomáš	Kúst
The Netherlands	Tinka	Thede
Türkiye	Zafer	Tatli
Ukraine	Oleksandra	Odynets
Ukraine	Vasyl	Fediuk
Ukraine	Yuriy	Rashkevych
United Kingdom	Andy	Smith

Albania, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Denmark, Italy, Montenegro, did not attend the meeting. The Italian Co-chair of TPG B on LRC, Chiara Finocchietti, delivered her presentation online but did not participate in the subsequent meeting discussions.

The meeting started at 9:31 CET.

1. Opening of the meeting

The meeting began with a warm welcome from Khatia Tsiramua, Co-chair of the group on behalf of Georgia. The Georgian Co-chair welcomed members to the first Thematic Peer Group A meeting of the 2024-2027 term, hosted by the Academic Information Center of Latvia in Riga and scheduled alongside the QUATRA project Final Conference. The Georgian Co-chair continued by presenting the composition of the TPG A, consisting of representatives from 33 BFUG members. She further expressed sincere appreciation to the previous Austrian Co-chair, Karin Riegler, for her valuable cooperation and contributions over the years. In the end, the Georgian Co-chair noted that, similar to other TPGs, TPG A Co-chairs had applied for an umbrella project to support its activities, with funding results being awaited.

2. Approval of the agenda

Documents: [Agenda of the meeting](#)

The agenda was outlined by the Georgian Co-chair After confirming there were no questions or comments, the agenda was approved.

3. BFUG work 2024-2027 (groups, activities etc.)

Documents: [EHEA presentation](#)

The Head of the EHEA Secretariat (HoS) provided a comprehensive overview of the Bologna Process activities for the 2024-2027 working period. He presented the 2024-2027 Work Programme adopted by the BFUG, the mandate given in the Tirana Communiqué, as well as the working structures established for this working period. The Head of the Secretariat then detailed the development process for the Terms of Reference (ToRs), highlighting new elements such as liaison outside the Bologna Process, contribution to mobility enhancement, transversal topics (e.g., digitalisation and AI), and dissemination efforts. He illustrated synergies between working structures, pointing out TPG A's specific links with the WG on Internationalisation and Mobility and the CG on Global Policy Dialogue, alongside its role within the BICG framework. The HoS pointed out the broad geographical representation in TPG A, nevertheless touching upon the imbalance between the number of ministry and stakeholder representatives. Whereas the Paris Communiqué noted that both categories should be nominated in TPGs, he emphasised the difficulty to draw a clear distinction in the case of TPG A. In the end, the HoS informed members about the Schedule of topics for BFUG meetings, including timelines for key

deliverables, and the EHEA communication efforts via the website, the newsletter (next issue June, contribution deadline May 15th), and social media (notably growing LinkedIn engagement).

During the Q&A session, the Latvian Co-chair of TPG A on QF raised a question concerning the National Action Plans, noting that TPG A's program and topics for the period had already been discussed and largely defined. She inquired how the national action plans, submitted after this planning, could influence the group's work, suggesting that in future cycles the national action plans should precede TPG planning. The HoS acknowledged the timing issue, which was outside their reach, and agreed that in the future cycle a stronger correlation should be sought. Nevertheless, he informed that once the national action plans would be collected, the Secretariat would divide the commitments per TPGs and compare them with TPG plans. He advised that TPG members should communicate with their national BFUG representatives to ensure consistency between the action plans and the TPG discussions, and stressed that national plans should be developed collaboratively with stakeholders.

4. Terms of Reference for the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group, 2024-2027

Documents: [BICG ToR](#)

The Finnish BICG Co-chair presented the group's background, mandate, and ToRs. She recounted BICG's establishment after the Paris 2018 Ministerial Conference to oversee the implementation of the three key commitments through thematic peer learning groups. Despite progress reported, the Tirana Communiqué acknowledged incomplete and uneven implementation and reaffirmed the commitment to TPGs as a working method, as well as the creation of national action plans and strengthening the social dimension (leading to the creation of TPG D).

BICG's core tasks outlined in the ToR include coordinating and supporting TPGs, identifying cross-cutting synergies (like micro-credentials in the previous cycle), seeking to improve the peer support approach preparing recommendations for future actions, and ensuring synergies between these national plans and TPG activities. Initial key topics identified by the co-chairs for TPGs A, B, C, and D (with TPG D initially focusing on framework strategies for social dimension and voluntary country reviews) were also briefly mentioned.

Key messages from the Finnish BICG Co-chair to the TPGs emphasized the importance of focusing on implementation (with projects serving the TPG's goals), reducing potential sub-groups, fostering cooperation with other BFUG structures, enhancing mobility, and crucially, improving communication between national BFUG representatives and TPG members to ensure effective policy implementation. She further encouraged direct interaction between the BICG and TPGs, which was supported by the group, and coordination in the elaboration of national action plans, which should aid national planning, increase transparency, facilitate knowledge sharing, and provide input for TPG planning.

The ensuing discussion featured a suggestion from the Latvian TPG A Co-chair on improving BICG-TPGs' cooperation. She noted that while TPGs prepared recommendations and guidelines for the BICG, they often did not receive feedback on whether the work is heading in the right direction. In this sense, she proposed fostering more "content cooperation" in the future. The BICG Co-chair responded positively, supporting the proposal and emphasising that such communication should operate bidirectionally.

Following up on this point, the former Austrian TPG A co-chair expressed that while communication with BICG was highly valued, it would be helpful to increase direct communication between the BFUG itself and individual TPGs. She further suggested that TPG co-chairs should, in principle, be invited to Ministerial Conferences. The Finnish BICG Co-chair acknowledged the point about improved communication and highlighted that the Schedule of topics for BFUG meetings planned for allocating space to discuss implementation s within the BFUG, where the work of the TPG would be showcased, allowing for direct discussion about progress and obstacles.

On another note, the Latvian TPG A Co-chair added a suggestion that BICG meetings could occasionally be held with only one TPG at a time, to allow for more focused, internal discussions. The Finnish BICG Co-chair informed that the proposal would be discussed by the BICG Co-chairs. In closing remarks, the TPG A Co-chairs highlighted the critical importance of national-level communication and coordination regarding TPG work and action plans.

5. Update from TPG B on LRC and TPG C on QA

Documents: [Presentation- TPG B on LRC](#)
[Presentation- TPG C on QA](#)

5.1 TPG B on LRC

The Italian TPG B Co-chair, attending online, presented the group's action plan, focusing on implementing the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC). She detailed the group's large composition (44 members), its peer support methodology involving surveys, biannual meetings (alternating online and in-person), continuous monitoring, specific peer support activities, staff mobilities (bilateral and multilateral), and public seminars targeting HEIs. The six core thematic areas guiding the work, enriched by the Tirana Communiqué, remained: optimizing digital technology (including AI, countering fraud), recognition of alternative pathways, achieving automatic recognition, establishing institutional responsibilities, ensuring fair recognition for refugees, and establishing the legal framework for LRC implementation (including synergies with global/regional conventions).

The timeline includes six TPG meetings, mid-term and final monitoring surveys, peer support activities, and four online seminars (on automatic recognition, alternative pathways/micro-credentials, TNE, digital transition). She highlighted expected cooperation at national, EHEA (specifically TPG A & C, CG GPD, WG on Internationalisation and Mobility), and global levels (linking to global/regional conventions). Initial survey results showed that members' priorities leaned towards alternative pathways, digital technology, and automatic recognition, possibly reflecting a greater need to explore practices in these areas. The first TPG B meeting, held back-to-back with the final conference of the previous supporting projects (TPG LRC CoRE and IN GLOBAL), focused on defining the detailed work plan.

In the Q&A session, the Georgian TPG A Co-chair asked for further elaboration on TNE as a proposed topic for collaboration between TPG A, B, and C, inquiring whether the main outcome would be a joint publication. The Italian TPG B Co-chair responded that the plan, building on past experience, would indeed be to produce a joint publication addressing TNE from their respective angles (recognition, QA, QF). She also stressed that the exact shape and outcomes would depend on the discussions within each TPG.

5.2 TPG C on QA

The Romanian Co-chair of TPG C updated the group on TPG C's work on Quality Assurance (QA). She presented the group's large composition (47 members from 40 countries, EC, and 7 consultative members) but shared concerns regarding the engagement of some members and the skewed representation favouring QA agency staff over ministry representatives, which limits desired stakeholder dialogue. Working priorities encompassed achieving ESG compliance and fostering a quality culture, applying the European Approach for the QA of Joint Programmes (EA), fostering fit-for-purpose Cross-Border QA (CBQA), QA of Transnational Education, QA of European University Alliances, and QA of flexible learning pathways. Standing agenda items like the ESG revision and potential topics like QA of research and innovative EQA approaches were also noted. TPG C would also establish a dedicated working group focused on CBQA, tasked with updating the 'Key Considerations' document and developing a Code of Conduct to promote ethical practices and counter 'agency shopping'. Expected outputs of TPG C's work include thematic analysis reports, updated guidelines, policy briefs, and mappings. She also mentioned that support was anticipated from the umbrella project SIQA and related projects like ROQA-TNE and SPICE.

During the Q&A session, the French TPG A Co-chair asked if European University Alliances might naturally boost the acceptance of other QA systems and compliance, given their promotion of interactions and resource pooling. The Romanian TPG C Co-chair acknowledged the situation is "tricky" due to the complexity of alliances but expressed optimism. She believed that alliances could boost international cooperation in QA, as they involve institutions from different systems already collaborating with their respective agencies, potentially bringing these systems together. While collaboration between HE systems and QA systems were distinct aspects, she argued that in the case of QA the common methodology (ESG) and experienced agencies had already existed.

6. Union of Skills and impacts on qualifications frameworks

Documents: [Presentation](#)

The European Commission presented the comprehensive "Union of Skills" initiative. The EC representative outlined driving challenges such as skills shortages and gaps, the rapid pace of transformation outpacing education systems, and fragmented skills governance systems. She emphasised that the initiative aimed to empower everyone in Europe to develop skills, ensure competitive companies are able to find individuals with the right skills, and make skills and qualifications more transparent, trusted, and recognised across borders. She further detailed the four main work strands: Building skills for life (focusing on foundational skills and STEM), Upskilling and reskilling for digital & green transitions (including expanding micro-credentials' use, the reinforced Pact for Skills, a pilot Skills Guarantee for workers, and Individual Learning Accounts), Circulating and allocating skills to unlock the single market's potential (including innovative joint European degrees/labels, a legal status for Alliances, a pilot European VET diploma, Centres of Vocational Excellence, and the Skills Portability Initiative) and Attracting and retaining skills/talent from third countries (including the EU Talent Pool IT platform, MSCA Choose Europe pilot, new Visa Strategy, Multipurpose Legal Gateway Offices via Talent Partnerships, and Erasmus Mundus).

The Commission specifically elaborated on the Skills Portability Initiative, targeting proposals for next year, which would involve exploring legislative options for non-regulated professions (building on QFs, interoperable digital credentials), reviewing the regulated professions directive (considering updates/digital solutions), and exploring a common European framework for recognizing third-country nationals' skills and qualifications. Investment (mobilising public and private funding) and enhanced Governance were considered key horizontal enablers, with

plans for a dedicated Recommendation on the human capital in the European Semester, a European Skills Intelligence Observatory (providing data/foresight), and a European Skills High-Level Board (offering cross-sectoral guidance). An evaluation report on the European Education Area in the first half of 2025 would inform governance streamlining.

In the Q&A session, members raised the importance of including the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and validation of non-formal/informal learning within the Skills Portability Initiative, regulating the private training market for skills and balancing the STEM strategy with humanities disciplines. The Commission acknowledged the complex balancing involving multiple actors and policies and the potential for fostering better coordination between VET and HE policy makers, possibly through joint Council meetings or specific presidency initiatives.

7. The foreseen activities in the QUATRA – TPG A 2 project facilitating the work of TPG A

Documents: [QUATRA - TPG A 2 project](#)

The Latvian Co-chair for TPG A presented the QUATRA – TPG A 2 project proposal, designed to facilitate TPG A's work during the 2025-2027 period. She introduced the project partners: AIC Latvia (coordinator), Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA), Department of Education of the Republic of San Marino (DOE), and the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE). Associated partners included in the proposal were the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MESR, France) and the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE, Georgia). The project's core activities include organising four face-to-face TPG A meetings (planned in Latvia, Malta, Belgium, Georgia) and four distinct Peer Learning Activities (PLAs). These PLAs would focus on: self-certification of NQFs, recognition of transnational (cross-border) education and joint programmes (a horizontal topic requiring collaboration with TPG B & C), study programmes existing outside the standard Bologna three-cycle structure (exploring comparability and transparency, often linked to professional development/LLL, potentially hosted with EURASHE in Brussels), and enhancing national databases and registers of qualifications reflecting QFs (aiding transparency and comparability, planned for Tbilisi). Furthermore, the project would establish two working groups, with an anticipated size of 10-15 members each and the objective to develop dedicated recommendations. The first working group, chaired by AIC, would focus on supporting automatic recognition of HE qualifications using QFs, potentially developing guidelines. The second, chaired by EURASHE, would delve into qualification frameworks for flexibility of learning, examining how HEIs translate offers (short-cycle, LLL, professional HE) into QFs and support learner progression and recognition, including for shorter learning opportunities. The Latvian Co-chair then invited members to discuss on the relevance of these themes and methods within small groups.

8. Discussion in small groups

The participants engaged in table discussions to reflect on the proposed TPG A themes and activities, aiming to address thematic priorities, potential missing topics as well as working methods. There was broad agreement that all six chosen themes (self-certification, recognition of cross-border education and joint programmes, study programmes outside the Bologna three-cycle structure, databases and registers of qualifications reflecting QFs, automatic recognition support, QF for flexibility of learning) were relevant. Priorities varied based on national context and implementation stage but frequently mentioned priorities across tables included work on

databases and registers, flexibility of learning pathways (including programmes outside the three cycles), self-certification, and the recognition of cross-border education and joint programmes. Several suggestions emerged: combining the work on automatic recognition with databases, considering automatic recognition itself as more central to TPG B's mandate, while TPG A focused specifically on the QF's role within it; discussing the specificities and relationship between the EQF and QF-EHEA; making the connection to 'skills' more explicit within the themes; utilising methods like study visits (strongly supported if funding allows) and systematic collection of best practices.

Significant interest was shown in the topics concerning flexibility of learning pathways and programmes outside the standard three cycles, particularly around how QFs can encompass partial or non-degree qualifications (like micro-credentials), how these might be aggregated or 'stacked' towards full degrees, and who defines/denominates such qualifications. There was also a clear desire to better understand the precise role and mechanisms through which QFs support recognition processes, both for TNE and automatic recognition. The UK representative suggested conceptualising the work on QF considering the 'student journey' through HE.

9. Information on next meeting, conclusion and closing of the meeting

The Co-chair concluded the meeting by thanking participants for their engagement during the preceding two days, encompassing both the conference and the TPG A meeting. It was reaffirmed that the group was awaiting the outcome of the project funding application, with contingency plans to organise an online TPG A meeting in the Autumn should funding be delayed.

The meeting ended at 12:46 CET.