

Minutes of the 3rd Thematic Peer Group D on Social Dimension meeting Oxford, 12th of November 2025

List of participants

Nr.	Name	Country / Organisation
1	Vangjush Stavro	Albania (online)
2	Anna Rechberger	Austria
3	Laura Reppmann	Austria (online)
4	Sanja Žaja Vrbica	Croatia (online)
5	Đurđica Dragojević	Croatia (online)
6	Cleo Savvidou	Cyprus (online)
7	Tereza Vengřinová	Czech Republic
8	Annette Dolan	Education International - ETUCE
9	Jass Juuremaa	Estonia (online)
10	Arno Schrooyen	ESU (Co-chair)
11	Henriette Stöber	EUA (online)
12	Mia Wallin Hansen	European Commission (online)
13	Martin Unger	Eurostudent
14	Alain Bouhours	France
15	Lasha Zivzivadze	Georgia
16	Tilman Dörr	Germany
17	Emmi Kraft	Germany
18	Nikos Papamanolis	Greece (online)
19	Bianka Paulovics	Hungary
20	Zsolt Dános	Hungary (online)
21	Sandra Jurika	Latvia
22	Artūrs Čerņiševs	Latvia (Co-chair)
23	Jon Vercellono	Malta
24	Jana Kazarjan	Malta (Co-chair)
25	Berit Johnsen	Norway
26	Maria Røed	Norway
27	Bartosz Brożek	Poland (online)

28	Priscila Couto	Portugal
29	Antonela Toma	Romania (online)
30	Monica Cavalli	San Marino
31	Martina Kokavec Beďatšová	Slovakia
32	Sebastian Steele	Sweden (online)
33	Graeme Atherton	United Kingdom
34	David Crosier	WG on Monitoring the Implementation of the Bologna Process (Co-chair, online)
35	Horia-Şerban Oniţa	EHEA Secretariat (HoS)
36	Oana Alexandra Țințar	EHEA Secretariat

Azerbaijan, EURASHE, Kazakhstan, Republic of Moldova and Montenegro were absent.

Belgium – Flemish Community, Iceland and Slovenia sent their apologies.

1. Welcome and introduction from the TPG D Co-chairs

1.1. Adoption of the agenda

1.2. Acknowledgement of the 2nd TPG D meeting minutes

1.3. Updates from the EHEA Secretariat and feedback report from the 2nd TPG D meeting

Documents:

- [TPG D DK LI 3 1 Draft Agenda](#)
- [TPG D PL AL 2 Minutes 25.04.2025](#)
- [TPG D DK LI 3 1 1 Updates EHEA Secretariat](#)
- [TPG D DK LI 3 1 2 Feedback Report 2nd TPG D meeting](#)

The Maltese Co-chair opened the meeting by welcoming the participants and inviting them to introduce themselves. As no issues were raised, the agenda was adopted as proposed by the Co-chairs.

The Maltese Co-chair invited participants to take note of the minutes of the 2nd TPG D meeting, which had been circulated to members in their final form and uploaded on the EHEA website.

The Head of the EHEA Secretariat delivered a brief update on developments within the BFUG working structures since the previous TPG D meeting. He noted that the Working Group on Monitoring was preparing the indicators for the 2027 Bologna Process Implementation Report, while the Working Group on Fundamental Values was advancing the monitoring exercise of the six fundamental values adopted in Tirana. He further informed participants that the Working Group on Internationalisation and Mobility was finalising a note on terminology – including references to inclusive mobility – to be presented at the December BFUG meeting, and was

developing a new Action Plan on internationalisation and mobility to be adopted by ministers in Iași-Chișinău.

The Secretariat further reported that the Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue was engaging with other macro-regions on topics including the right to education and the social dimension, and briefly referred to the work of the other thematic peer groups and the BICG. The latter would organise a debate on the future of the key commitments at the next BFUG meeting in Cyprus. Additionally, he drew attention to two documents to be presented in Copenhagen: the first draft of the revised Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA and the first draft of the revised ECTS Users' Guide.

The Head of Secretariat reminded participants that the EHEA website provides an overview of the BFUG schedule of topics and their progress towards the next Ministerial Conference. He presented attendance rates across the working structures, noting that TPG D had seen increased participation compared to the previous cycle. He also reported on the status of the National Action Plans, emphasising that several countries had not submitted a plan or had not included any information on the social dimension. He highlighted common elements in the submitted plans, including commitments related to study grants, the development or revision of strategies on the social dimension, support for students with disabilities, and improvements in data collection.

He informed participants that a comparison between the National Action Plans and the 2024 Bologna Process Implementation Report would soon be published, noting that social dimension remained the area with the highest number of unimplemented commitments and the weakest correspondence between identified gaps and planned actions. Finally, he encouraged members to subscribe to the EHEA Newsletter and to submit relevant national updates or activities for inclusion in the December edition.

The EHEA Secretariat member briefly presented the feedback report for the 2nd TPG D meeting, noting the positive feedback received and thanking ESU again for hosting.

2. Presentation on European Commission's upcoming plans on Social Dimension

Documents: [TPG D DK LI 3 2 Presentation EC upcoming plans on SD](#)

The European Commission representative delivered a brief presentation on the Commission's current and upcoming work related to the social dimension in higher education. She recalled that social inclusion had long been a priority both in the EHEA and in the EU contexts, and outlined the development of the European Framework for Diversity and Inclusion under the European Strategy for Universities. She noted that a toolbox on social inclusion, aimed primarily at higher education institutions but also relevant for policymakers, was expected to be launched as part of this work.

She highlighted that social inclusion was further strengthened under the Union of Skills – adopted in spring 2025 – which promotes an inclusive lifelong learning approach and emphasises widening access to higher education. She informed participants that an initiative on increasing accessibility to higher education was planned for 2027, and that the Commission would support higher education institutions in implementing the Principles and Guidelines and the related indicators.

She also drew attention to the growing challenges related to student housing across Europe, noting shortages of affordable accommodation and rising rents affecting both domestic and mobile students. She mentioned that several EU instruments – including Erasmus+, cohesion funds, the Recovery and Resilience Facility and InvestEU – have already supported student housing projects, and that the forthcoming European Affordable Housing Plan recognises student housing as a priority area.

She concluded by emphasising the relevance of these initiatives for the work of TPG D and expressed appreciation for the contributions received through national expert reports.

3. Tour de table on specific measures from National Action Plans (NAPs) on Social Dimension

Documents: [TPG D DK LI 3 3 Specific measures NAPs on SD](#)

The Maltese Co-chair introduced the agenda item and informed participants that the slides summarising each country's specific measures for the social dimension included in its National Action Plan would be shared during the discussion. She invited representatives of countries that had submitted National Action Plans to briefly present the measures.

A tour de table followed, during which each country representative outlined the specific measures on social dimension included in their National Action Plans and the presentation attached.

4. Presentation - Proposal of Social Dimension indicators for BPIR 2027

Documents:

- [TPG D DK LI 3 4 1 Presentation Proposal of Social Dimension indicators BPIR 2027](#)
- [TPG D DK LI 3 4 2 Proposal of Structure and Indicators BPIR 2027](#)

The Eurydice Co-chair of the Working Group on Monitoring the Implementation of the Bologna Process presented the proposal for the social dimension indicators for the 2027 Bologna Process Implementation Report. He explained that the Working Group had begun its work by reviewing the process carried out for the 2024 report, identifying both strengths and weaknesses. One of the main issues raised was the excessive amount of information requested from governments, which in turn made it difficult to verify the accuracy and quality of the data. He added that the BPIR had become too long and that not all areas required constant updating, leading to the decision to reduce the amount of information and focus more clearly on main policy priorities. He noted that the report would include two types of information: i) typical policy monitoring indicators; and ii) narrative text describing progress in implementation within each thematic area. This “twin-track” approach would allow the report to remain focused while still reflecting key developments.

Referring to the previous cycle, he recalled that the attempt to match scorecard indicators to all the Principles and Guidelines had resulted in a very large volume of data, as each scorecard

indicator contained several elements requiring separate questions. For the 2027 report, the social dimension chapter would therefore be limited to a maximum of five scorecard indicators, with sub-indicator data placed in an annex so that the main report focuses on the indicators themselves. He stressed that the Working Group had aimed to retain as many social dimension topics as possible. Some indicators previously included in the social dimension chapter were proposed for relocation - for example, the figure on recognition of prior learning to the chapter on recognition, and the figure on social inclusion in mobility to the chapter on internationalisation and mobility.

He then presented the five scorecard indicators proposed to remain in the social dimension chapter:

- Figure 4.6: Scorecard indicator n°11: P&G 3: Facilitating synergies for an inclusive lifelong learning
- Figure 4.8: Scorecard indicator n°12: P&G 4: Monitoring and data collection
- Figure 4.12: Scorecard indicator n°14: P&G 6: Sustainable funding for equity, inclusion and diversity in higher education
- Figure 4.14: Scorecard indicator n°15: P&G 7: Inclusive learning environment and institutional culture
- Figure 4.20: Scorecard indicator n°17: P&G 10: Policy dialogue on implementation of principles and guidelines

He underlined that if TPG D wished to reintroduce one of the indicators removed from the chapter, this would be possible as long as one of the five proposed indicators was removed in exchange.

Finally, he explained that narrative texts would also be included in the BPIR 2027. These texts would focus on developments supporting progress in each thematic area, and the Working Group invited the TPG D to propose an author for the narrative part of its chapter. A general editor would ensure consistency across chapters, and guidelines for drafting would be provided.

The Eurostudent representative asked whether there was a schedule for the overall process and, in particular, until when the narrative text for the social dimension chapter should be finalised by TPG D. In response, the Eurydice Co-chair indicated that the narrative text should be completed by the beginning of autumn 2026, as a draft of the overall report would need to be prepared for the second half of 2026.

5. Discussion on the proposal of Social Dimension indicators for BPIR 2027

The ESU Co-chair introduced the discussion and informed participants that the EHEA Secretariat had prepared a Slido displaying all the indicators used in the previous BPIR, inviting members to rank them based on the relevance and suitability for the next reporting cycle.

The Eurostudent representative asked whether the group should limit itself to the indicators used in the 2024 report or whether the selection should instead start from the principles themselves, even in cases where no indicator had previously existed. In response, the Head of the Secretariat noted that all principles had at least one associated indicator in the previous

cycle. He added that from the perspective of the monitoring process, adding new indicators different from those used in 2024 might further decrease comparability, even more so as part of the indicators would by default be discarded. He also considered that a figure may be designed to conceptually cover more indicators.

The ETUCE representative suggested considering whether, given the reduction in indicators, the narrative section could be used to address all principles.

The ESU Co-chair agreed that the overall amount of data would be lower than in the previous cycle but noted that this approach also allowed the report to highlight specific areas in each edition. He added that subsequent BPIRs could focus on different aspects, acknowledging that changes in higher education policy typically take time to materialise. Thus, focusing on particular figures in one cycle and shifting emphasis in the next would allow for better reflection of developments over time. He proposed that, for the sake of continuity, the group should first examine the indicators used in the previous report and then consider possible adaptations based on the priorities expressed by TPG D members.

Following the completion of the Slido survey, the following prioritisation emerged, ranked from the figure considered most important to the one considered least important:

- Figure 4.8. Scorecard indicator n°12: P & G 4: Monitoring and data collection
- Figure 4.12. Scorecard ind. n°14: P & G 6: Sustainable funding for equity, inclusion and diversity in higher education
- Figure 4.14. Scorecard ind. n°15: P&G 7: Inclusive learning environment and institutional culture
- Figure 4.1. Strategic commitment to the social dimension of higher education: top-level targeted strategies, action plans and measures
- Figure 4.4. Scorecard ind. n°10: P & G 2: Enabling flexible modes of lifelong learning in higher education
- Figure 4.2. Strategic commitment to the social dimension of higher education: requirement for quality assurance agencies to monitor HEIs' strategies on the social dimension
- Figure 4.20. Scorecard ind. n°17: P & G 10: Policy dialogue on implementation of PAGs
- Figure 4.5. Top-level coordination structures and mechanisms between different levels of education
- Figure 4.7. Monitoring student characteristics other than age and gender at HE entry, at the completion of the first cycle, and at the end of the first year of first cycle
- Figure 4.3. RPL in accessing and for the fulfilment of first-cycle HE study programmes
- Figure 4.10. Scorecard ind. n°13: P&G 5: Effective guidance and counselling services
- Figure 4.6. Scorecard ind. n°11: P & G 3: Facilitating synergies for an inclusive lifelong learning
- Figure 4.9. Legal requirement for free guidance and counselling services for actual and/or potential students in HE
- Figure 4.11. Grants awarded in the first cycle of higher education
- Figure 4.16. Scorecard ind. n°16: P&G 8: Supporting vulnerable, disadvantaged or underrepresented groups of students and staff in participating in international mobility
- Figure 4.13. Support to HEIs for staff training on equity, inclusion and diversity

- Figure 4.15. Top-level measures supporting vulnerable, disadvantaged or underrepresented students in international learning mobility
- Figure 4.17. Top-level funding of higher education institutions (HEIs) for community engagement activities
- Figure 4.19. Participants in policy dialogue to implement the principles and guidelines on the SD
- Figure 4.18. External quality assurance requirements for community engagement activities

The Head of the Secretariat clarified that Figure 4.2 (Strategic commitment to the social dimension of higher education: requirement for quality assurance agencies to monitor HEIs' strategies on the social dimension) was included within Figure 4.14 (Scorecard ind. n°15: P&G 7: Inclusive learning environment and institutional culture). Therefore, Figure 4.2 could be removed from the shortlist without losing the underlying information, which would still be reflected in the report. This would allow TPG D to free up space to prioritise another figure if desired. Consequently, Figure 4.2 was eliminated from the shortlist.

Furthermore, the Head of the Secretariat added that Figure 4.4 (Scorecard indicator n°10: P&G 2 – Enabling flexible modes of lifelong learning in higher education) was composed of four sub-indicators, three of which related to recognition of prior learning - proposed by the WG on Monitoring for relocation to the chapter on recognition. Thus, he pointed out that if three out of four elements were moved, the only remaining component under this scorecard indicator in the social dimension chapter would be whether legislation allows part-time study, questioning whether this information would suffice one indicator. The German representative stated that, while she understood the rationale for relocating the recognition-related sub-indicators to the recognition chapter, she was concerned that this would effectively eliminate the scorecard indicator itself. She suggested that Figure 4.4 should instead be retained, and that simpler indicators might be removed to maintain the overall balance.

The Maltese representative noted that moving the RPL indicators to the Recognition chapter in the BPIR carries the risk that RPL may not be recognised and could be declined, with individuals retaining the right to appeal. Given this and since RPL encourages lifelong learning, it would be reasonable for RPL to remain within the SD Chapter for continued review and analysis.

Following the discussion, the group agreed that Figure 4.4 (Scorecard indicator n°10: P&G 2 – Enabling flexible modes of lifelong learning in higher education) should be moved to the recognition chapter, while Figure 4.3 (RPL in accessing and completing first-cycle higher education programmes) could be dropped.

The group decided that, in light of the ranking results and the discussions held, the figures proposed to be retained in the 2027 report would be:

- Figure 4.8. Scorecard indicator n°12: P & G 4: Monitoring and data collection
- Figure 4.12. Scorecard ind. n°14: P & G 6: Sustainable funding for equity, inclusion and diversity in higher education

- Figure 4.14. Scorecard ind. n°15: P&G 7: Inclusive learning environment and institutional culture
- Figure 4.1. Strategic commitment to the social dimension of higher education: top-level targeted strategies, action plans and measures
- Figure 4.20. Scorecard ind. n°17: P & G 10: Policy dialogue on implementation of PAGs

The discussions then moved to the figures proposed for inclusion in the annex.

The Eurostudent representative referred to Figure 4.10 (Scorecard indicator n°13: P&G 5 – Effective guidance and counselling services), noting that while the title referred to “effective” counselling, the questions did not assess effectiveness but merely the existence of counselling services. He therefore suggested removing the word “*effective*” from the title.

The Slovak representative recalled that Figure 4.9 (Legal requirement for free guidance and counselling services for actual and/or potential students in higher education) formed part of the composite indicator under Figure 4.10. She agreed that removing the word “*effective*” would be appropriate, but added that, if one of the two figures were to be retained, she would prefer keeping Figure 4.10, as it provided more information. She noted that tracking effectiveness would in any case require a much more complex approach.

The Latvian Co-chair proposed keeping Figure 4.6 (Scorecard indicator n°11: P&G 3 – Facilitating synergies for an inclusive lifelong learning), noting that all countries had only partially met this indicator and that considerable progress was still needed. He pointed out a partial overlap with Figure 4.13 (Support to HEIs for staff training on equity, inclusion and diversity), as one component of Figure 4.6 related to developing competencies on diversity in initial teacher education programmes.

The German representative noted that Figure 4.6 combined four different aspects and that it was not always clear how countries performed on each of them individually.

The Eurostudent representative suggested that, if Figure 4.6 were placed in the annex, the annex could also include the underlying data for each of its four components. This would allow readers to see how countries performed on each dimension, for instance through a table listing all countries with colour-coded values for each sub-indicator. He also remarked that the main difference between Figure 4.6 and Figure 4.13 related to the inclusion of staff and teachers, which had been a novel and important emphasis in the Principles and Guidelines. For that reason, he cautioned against removing content referring to inclusivity for staff.

The HoS noted that support measures for staff in the 2024 BPIR had been defined rather vaguely and suggested that, moving forward, data collection on staff-related aspects could be made more concise and targeted without eliminating the topic entirely.

The German representative expressed support for retaining Figure 4.6 in the annex.

The group decided that the figures proposed to be kept in the annex of the 2027 report would be:

- Figure 4.5. Top-level coordination structures and mechanisms between different levels of education
- Figure 4.7. Monitoring student characteristics other than age and gender at HE entry, at the completion of the first cycle, and at the end of the first year of first cycle
- Figure 4.10. Scorecard ind. n°13: P&G 5: Effective guidance and counselling services (**renaming it “Guidance and counselling services”**)
- Figure 4.6. Scorecard ind. n°11: P&G 3: Facilitating synergies for an inclusive lifelong learning (**including in the annex a table listing all countries in rows and one column for each element of the scorecard.**)
- Figure 4.11. Grants awarded in the first cycle of higher education
- Figure 4.13. Support to HEIs for staff training on equity, inclusion and diversity
- Figure 4.19. Participants in policy dialogue to implement the principles and guidelines on the SD

Furthermore, the group agreed with the proposal of moving Figure 4.16. (Scorecard ind. n°16: P&G 8: Supporting vulnerable, disadvantaged or underrepresented groups of students and staff in participating in international mobility) into the Internationalisation and Mobility chapter.

The ESU Co-chair noted that, in addition to agreeing on the proposed indicators, TPG D would also need to designate an author for the narrative text of the social dimension chapter. The author would serve as the main drafting contact point, while receiving input and feedback from the entire group and presenting drafts during TPG D meetings.

He proposed Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt (former Co-chair of the Working Group on Social Dimension in the previous cycle) as author, noting his extensive experience and involvement in the INSPIRE project.

The ETUCE representative expressed no objections to the proposal, provided that drafts would be shared and discussed with the group. The ESU Co-chair confirmed that the drafting process would involve regular input from TPG D members and that the author would integrate feedback throughout.

The group agreed with the Co-chairs' proposal of the author for the narrative text for the social dimension chapter in BPIR 2027.

The ESU Co-chair recalled that the Institute for the Development of Education, where Ninoslav works, is part of the INSPIRE project, which would be closely linked to TPG D activities, including peer-learning activities and country reviews. To ensure coherence between the project and TPG D's work, he proposed that Ninoslav join TPG D as an external expert, receiving all the communication related to the TPG's activity. The Head of the Secretariat clarified that TPG D may propose the inclusion of an external expert, but regular participation beyond one-time engagements would require BFUG approval according to the new provisions in the Rules of Procedure, highlighting the readiness of the Secretariat to support the TPG D Co-chairs in this procedure.

The group agreed with the proposal.

6. Wrap up and conclusions. Next steps. AOB

The Latvian Co-chair informed participants that the next TPG D meeting would take place in Salzburg (Austria), between 18-19 February 2026. The event would consist of a half-day TPG D meeting, followed by a one-and-a-half-day Peer Learning Activity (PLA). The TPG D meeting would be held on 18 February in the morning. The PLA would begin on 18 February in the afternoon and conclude on 19 February, focusing on Principles and Guidelines 5 and 7 (student counselling and support, and inclusive teaching environments). He added that participants were kindly invited by the hosts to attend Austria's National Conference on the relaunch of Austria's Strategy on the Social Dimension of Higher Education, taking place on 20 February.

The ESU Co-chair explained that the EHEA Secretariat would circulate the final list of indicators proposed for the social dimension chapter of the 2027 BPIR, reflecting the day's discussion, so that members could provide feedback before the WG on Monitoring's preparations for the BFUG meeting in Copenhagen. He added that participants would also receive the meeting minutes and a feedback survey.

The ESU Co-chair noted that both he and the Latvian Co-chair would participate in the upcoming BFUG meeting in Copenhagen. He also provided a brief update on the INSPIRE project, recalling that a call for country reviews had been launched, with a deadline of 15 November. While no applications had yet been received, several countries had expressed interest and were expected to apply.

There was no other business. The meeting ended at 13:12 UK time.