Minutes of the

5th Working Group on Monitoring the Implementation of the Bologna Process meeting

Online, 9 October 2026

List of participants

Nr.	Name	Country/Organisation
1	Helga Posset	Austria (Co-chair)
2	Rob Copeland	Education International - ETUCE
3	Aleksandar Šušnjar	EQAR
4	Aleksandra Zhivkovikj	EQAR
5	Henriette Stoeber	EUA
6	Anna Horvath	EACEA / Eurydice (Co-chair)
7	Anna-Lena Claeys-Kulik	General editor of the BPIR
8	Snezhina Petrova	EACEA / Eurydice
9	Katerina Toura	EACEA / Eurydice
10	Susanna Zellini	Co-author of the BPIR
11	Kristina Hauschildt	Eurostudent
12	Luka Lešić	ESU
13	Alibek Madibekov	Kazakhstan
14	Stefan Sant	Malta (Co-chair)
15	Marius Deaconu	Romania
16	Aydın Aslan	Türkiye
17	Oana Alexandra Țînțar	EHEA Secretariat

Albania, Cyprus, Germany, the Republic of Moldova and Montenegro were absent.

Slovenia sent its apologies.

1. Welcome and introduction from the WG Co-chairs

1.1. Introduction of the new Eurydice WG Co-chair

1.2. Adoption of the agenda

1.3. Acknowledgement of the 4th WG on Monitoring meeting minutes

1.4. Tour de table

Document:

WG_Monitoring_5_IE_ME_1_Draft_Agenda

The Maltese Co-chair opened the meeting by welcoming the participants and introducing the new Eurydice Co-chair. He then presented the draft agenda and invited participants to raise any comments or questions. As none were raised, the agenda was adopted as proposed.

The Maltese Co-chair also invited participants to take note of the minutes of the 4th WG on Monitoring meeting, which had been circulated to members in their final version and published on the EHEA website. He then invited participants to briefly introduce themselves.

2. Updates from the EHEA Secretariat regarding the activity of the BFUG and other WS

Document:

WG_Monitoring_5_IE_ME_2_Updates_EHEA_Secretariat

The EHEA Secretariat member provided an overview of the Secretariat's activities since the previous BFUG meeting, including the support provided to the BFUG and its working structures.

She highlighted the conference *The Future of Higher Education: Sharing Knowledge and Supporting Implementation for a Stronger Bologna Process*, organised in Bucharest in September 2026, which brought together over 100 participants from more than 38 countries. Organised alongside the Bologna Process Researchers' Conference, the event provided an opportunity for policymakers, researchers and stakeholders to exchange perspectives on Bologna Process implementation and future priorities. In preparation for the conference, the Secretariat had developed a study on Bologna impact and future trends, which identified eight potential policy recommendations, subsequently discussed by the Task Force on the Future of Bologna.

In this context, she informed participants that a survey on future Bologna Process priorities had been circulated to the BFUG, with a deadline of 30 October 2026. The results would inform the discussions led by the Task Force on the Future of Bologna at the upcoming BFUG meeting in Dublin.

The EHEA Secretariat member then presented the Secretariat's proposal for a common structure for the final reports of the BFUG working structures for the 2024–2027 work cycle, which would be discussed at the upcoming BFUG meeting in Dublin.

Regarding the National Action Plans, she reported that 43 out of 49 had been received, with submissions still pending from Azerbaijan, Belgium Flemish Community, North Macedonia, San Marino, Serbia and Ukraine.

Finally, she outlined the main documents planned for discussion or decision at the BFUG meeting in Dublin.

3. Reporting from the C BFUG Board meeting in Podgorica

Document:

WG_Monitoring_5_IE_ME_3_Updates_from_C_BFUG_Board_meeting

The Austrian Co-chair provided an overview of the updates she had presented at the C BFUG Board meeting, held on 29 September 2026 in Podgorica, Montenegro, regarding the progress and timeline for the preparation of the Bologna Process Implementation Report (BPIR) 2027.

She recalled that the report structure had been approved by the BFUG in February 2025 and that the report would combine indicators on policy development with narrative texts addressing the work undertaken to support implementation across the different thematic areas.

Regarding the timeline, she confirmed that all countries had submitted their questionnaires and that the narrative texts from the working structures had been received. The WG on Monitoring would submit its report to the EHEA Secretariat by the end of October, ahead of the BFUG meeting in Dublin on 5–6 November 2026. The draft BPIR would subsequently be circulated to BFUG members for feedback, with 14 December 2026 established as a strict deadline. The feedback received would be incorporated during January and February 2027, with an almost final version of the report expected in March, ahead of its presentation at the Ministerial Conference in Iași and Chișinău in May 2027. The Austrian Co-chair noted that no questions or comments had been raised by the BFUG Board regarding the presented progress and timeline.

4. Updates from Eurydice regarding the progress achieved on the work on the 2027 BPIR

4.1. Updates regarding the Fundamental Values chapter of the 2027 BPIR

4.2. Updates regarding the Quality Assurance chapter of the 2027 BPIR

4.3. Updates regarding the narrative texts of the 2027 BPIR

Document:

WG_Monitoring_5_IE_ME_4_Updates_BPIR2027

The Eurydice Co-chair provided an overview of the progress achieved in preparing the first draft of the Bologna Process Implementation Report (BPIR) 2027. She confirmed that questionnaires had been received from all EHEA countries, although some clarifications remained outstanding. She recalled that the report follows the agreed structure of six thematic chapters: degree structures, recognition, quality assurance, fundamental values, social dimension, and internationalisation and mobility.

She explained that each chapter currently includes narrative contributions, an analysis of the indicators, information on implementation challenges and future prospects. However, several difficulties had been identified in integrating the narrative texts into the report, particularly regarding the lack of a broader policy context, the emphasis on procedural aspects of working structure activities, and inconsistencies between the narrative contributions and the empirical findings.

Regarding the chapter on degree structures, the Eurydice Co-chair highlighted the broadly stable implementation of degree structures, ECTS and the Diploma Supplement, alongside further progress in the implementation of national qualifications frameworks and the integration of micro-credentials. She raised the possibility of adjusting the chapter title to better reflect its evolving content and including additional summary figures to facilitate the interpretation of the data.

Concerning recognition, she reported progress in the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention principles and Article VII, as well as broader use of recognition tools. However, limited progress had been recorded regarding automatic recognition of qualifications and, particularly, recognition of prior learning (RPL). She also highlighted the need to better align the chapter's narrative contribution with the topics covered by its indicators.

The EQAR representative presented the preliminary findings of the Quality Assurance chapter. He reported continued progress in aligning external quality assurance systems with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG), alongside a substantial increase in the coverage of higher education institutions by ESG-compliant external quality assurance procedures. The reported level of student involvement in quality assurance had also increased, although he pointed out that these findings would

need to be complemented in the report with other sources, namely ESU's *Bologna with Student Eyes*.

By contrast, international involvement in quality assurance and regulatory openness to cross-border quality assurance had remained largely unchanged. Regarding the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, he highlighted a moderate increase in the number of systems allowing its use and a significant increase in the number of evaluations conducted, from approximately 30 to 130, while noting the relatively low initial baseline. Concerning transnational education, he reported that most responding systems apply their regular external quality assurance arrangements to transnational education provision, sometimes with additional requirements.

He then outlined several methodological issues requiring further consideration, including the harmonisation of data from EQAR and the BPIR, the need for additional country-level information for certain indicators, and the distinction between the yellow and orange categories of the scorecard indicator addressing the quality assurance key commitment, which depends on a multitude of factors which might be deemed arbitrary. He also proposed presenting the findings on transnational education through a descriptive figure rather than a comparative indicator, as the different national approaches could not meaningfully be ranked according to their level of implementation or performance.

Susanna Zellini, author of the Fundamental Values chapter of the BPIR 2027, presented the preliminary findings concerning the recognition and protection of fundamental values across EHEA higher education systems. She reported that academic freedom and institutional autonomy were explicitly mentioned in the frameworks of most systems (44 and 45 out of 49, respectively), while academic integrity is mentioned in 33 systems. However, she emphasised that explicit references do not necessarily imply the existence of legal definitions or equivalent levels of protection, as the scope and legal status of national provisions vary considerably.

Regarding academic integrity, the most frequently reported requirements concerned the existence of codes of ethics and monitoring academic integrity through quality assurance procedures, while external evaluation of institutional autonomy was required in only a minority of systems. Provisions for student and staff participation in institutional governance were widespread, although their scope and the rights granted vary across governance levels. She cautioned that the existence of formal provisions does not necessarily reflect the degree of influence exercised in practice.

She also explained that public responsibility had not been addressed through a standalone comparative indicator, given the diversity of legal, policy and institutional arrangements reported by countries. Finally, she highlighted the methodological challenges associated with interpreting and comparing national legal provisions, particularly the distinction between constitutional guarantees, legislation, judicial decisions and customary practices, as well as the need to ensure coherence between the narrative contribution and the questionnaire-based findings.

Katerina Toura, author of the Social Dimension chapter of the BPIR 2027, presented the preliminary findings concerning the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines for the Social Dimension. She reported broader coverage of measures supporting inclusive lifelong learning, monitoring student diversity, funding for equity and inclusive learning environments. However, implementation remained uneven across EHEA systems. In particular, coordination between policy areas, monitoring student progression and completion, support for part-time students and staff training continued to present challenges. Regarding policy dialogue, she noted increased stakeholder participation but fewer reported policy developments resulting from such dialogue. Overall, she emphasised that, although policy coverage had expanded since 2024, significant implementation gaps remained.

The Eurydice Co-chair then presented the preliminary findings of the Internationalisation and Mobility chapter. She explained that quantitative mobility data would be incorporated during the next revision phase, once the ongoing data collection had been completed. Regarding the policy indicators, she reported that fewer than half of the countries had dedicated internationalisation or mobility strategies, while concepts such as sustainable and balanced mobility remained relatively uncommon. She also highlighted the lack of progress concerning the portability of grants, alongside increased attention to inclusion and targeted support for disadvantaged students participating in mobility programmes. However, progress regarding support for disadvantaged and underrepresented staff remained limited.

Finally, Anna-Lena Claeys-Kulik, General Editor of the BPIR 2027, provided an update on the first round of editing of the narrative contributions received from the BFUG working structures. She explained that the initial editing had focused primarily on harmonising the style and structure of the contributions. However, further revisions were necessary to ensure their coherence with the empirical analysis presented in each chapter.

She highlighted that several contributions lacked a broader policy-oriented introduction, including references to the evolution of commitments reflected in previous Ministerial Communiqués. Moreover, many texts focused predominantly on the activities and achievements of the working structures rather than on progress made in implementing Bologna Process commitments across the EHEA.

She also noted inconsistencies between the thematic scope of certain narrative contributions and the indicators covered in the corresponding chapters. To address these issues, she suggested further restructuring the texts, distinguishing between the policy introduction, the empirical analysis and the sections addressing implementation challenges, progress and future prospects. She emphasised that additional coordination with the authors would be necessary to ensure that the narrative contributions support a coherent and policy-oriented presentation of the report's findings.

The Romanian representative highlighted the importance of giving greater attention to micro-credentials in the Degree Structures chapter, considering their relevance and the significant developments recorded in this area.

Supported by EUA, the Austrian Co-chair suggested reconsidering the title of the first chapter, recalling that the wording *Degree Structures and Qualifications Frameworks* had previously been used in the context of the Bologna key commitments. Regarding the Quality Assurance chapter, she asked whether the distinction between the yellow and orange categories of the relevant scorecard indicator could be further clarified. She also sought guidance on how the narrative texts could be better integrated into the BPIR and what additional instructions should be provided to their authors. Finally, she asked whether the European Commission's report on inclusive and balanced mobility had been considered in the Internationalisation and Mobility chapter and whether the lack of progress regarding the portability of grants could be further explained.

The EUROSTUDENT representative raised a methodological question regarding the reported decrease in EUROSTUDENT participation. She noted that the previous BPIR had considered participation across two EUROSTUDENT rounds, which could explain the apparent decline, and suggested reviewing the comparison to ensure consistency between reporting periods.

The EUA representative asked whether BFUG members would have an opportunity to comment on the quantitative mobility data from EHESO, expected to become available after the December feedback deadline. Regarding the narrative texts, she expressed concerns about their integration into the analytical chapters, particularly those on degree structures and quality assurance, and suggested separating the narrative contributions from the empirical analysis to improve readability. She noted that the approach adopted in the Social Dimension chapter, with the narrative introduction preceding the analysis and the challenges presented towards the end, appeared to work better.

The Maltese Co-chair also supported revising the title of the first chapter, suggesting *Programmes Referenced to National Qualifications Frameworks*, to better reflect the inclusion of micro-credentials and the chapter's broader scope. Regarding the narrative texts, he expressed concern that requesting revisions without sufficiently detailed guidance could lead to the same difficulties. Supported by EQAR, he proposed providing authors with a clearly structured outline, potentially specifying the expected content paragraph by paragraph, to ensure consistency across chapters and facilitate the revision process.

The EQAR representative clarified that the distinction between the yellow and orange categories in the Quality Assurance chapter had already been explained in the draft, but that the underlying concern was methodological, particularly whether the existing classification remained appropriate. He also supported the concerns raised regarding the narrative texts, noting that, in the Quality Assurance chapter, some narrative findings and conclusions were disconnected from the empirical analysis.

Responding to the interventions, the Eurydice Co-chair acknowledged the support for revising the title of the Degree Structures chapter, with *Degree Structures and Qualifications Frameworks* emerging as a possible option. She invited members to submit any alternative proposals in writing.

Regarding the Internationalisation and Mobility chapter, she confirmed that the European Commission's report on inclusive and balanced mobility had not yet been referenced but would be considered for inclusion. She also clarified that the quantitative data would be incorporated during the next revision phase, following the first round of BFUG feedback due by 14 December 2026. A second feedback round would subsequently allow BFUG members to comment on the revised report, including the analysis of the newly incorporated data.

Concerning the portability of grants, she noted that the indicator had shown very limited progress over several reporting cycles. While the reasons were difficult to establish, she suggested that the issue may have lost political momentum, as portability was no longer explicitly addressed in the most recent EU-level recommendations on mobility.

She also agreed to review the EUROSTUDENT participation figures with the EUROSTUDENT representative to ensure comparability between reporting periods. Regarding micro-credentials, she acknowledged the request for additional information and indicated that further country examples could be considered, within the limitations of the data collected through the BFUG questionnaire.

Anna-Lena Claeys-Kulik, General Editor of the BPIR 2027, then addressed the concerns regarding the narrative texts. She suggested that the purpose of these contributions needed to be clarified, particularly whether they were intended to provide a broader policy introduction to each thematic area. In this case, authors should be explicitly asked to address the evolution of relevant Bologna Process commitments and policy developments across the EHEA, rather than focusing on the activities of their respective working structures.

She also emphasised the need to resolve the mismatch between the topics addressed in the narrative contributions and those covered by the corresponding analytical chapters. This would require decisions on which information should be included in each chapter and how the narrative contributions should be integrated. Possible approaches included dividing the texts between introductory sections and concluding sections on implementation challenges and future prospects, or separating them entirely from the empirical analysis. She suggested revising the existing author guidelines accordingly and providing more precise instructions. She also observed that giving narrative authors access to the relevant draft chapters and their empirical analysis could help them better align their contributions with the report.

The Eurydice Co-chair subsequently outlined two main options for integrating the narrative texts: using them as policy introductions to the empirical analysis, subject to substantial revision and clearer guidance, or separating them from the analytical chapters, potentially by placing them in an annex. She also acknowledged the possibility of an intermediate approach, whereby policy-oriented content would be retained in the introductions and more procedural information presented separately. She stressed that the WG needed to agree on the intended purpose and placement of the narrative contributions before proceeding with their revision.

Snezhina Petrova, member of the Eurydice team working on the BPIR, clarified that the Degree Structures chapter already included a more extensive section on micro-credentials, covering their integration into national qualifications frameworks and relevant country examples. She explained that the analysis sought to maintain a balance between the different topics addressed in the chapter. The Eurydice Co-chair added that the country examples had not yet been incorporated into the version circulated to WG members but would be included in the first draft prepared for the BFUG.

Returning to the discussion on narrative texts, the Maltese Co-chair recalled that one of the objectives of the BPIR 2027 was to produce a more concise and accessible report. He therefore suggested simplifying the requirements for narrative contributions and focusing primarily on developments during the current work cycle, rather than providing extensive historical accounts of policy developments.

Katerina Toura, author of the Social Dimension chapter, suggested retaining policy introductions within each analytical chapter while presenting the activities of the BFUG working structures separately in an annex. She considered that this would provide visibility to the work undertaken by the working structures without disrupting the coherence of the empirical analysis. She also suggested that the policy introductions could be drafted by the Eurydice analysts, as in previous reports, while any conclusions or future prospects derived from the narrative contributions should be aligned with the findings of the corresponding chapters.

The EQAR representative supported distinguishing more clearly between the different purposes of the narrative contributions. He suggested incorporating relevant policy context into the chapter introductions, while information on working structure activities could be presented separately, given that the BPIR should primarily focus on implementation outcomes rather than activities undertaken. He also emphasised that achievements and conclusions should be grounded in the empirical findings and reflect progress made across the EHEA.

The Austrian Co-chair recalled that the narrative contributions had been introduced to complement the quantitative indicators with qualitative information on policy developments and implementation. She stressed that the BPIR should remain both a quantitative and qualitative report, reflecting not only measurable progress but also the priorities addressed through the Bologna Process and their implications for future work.

She emphasised that the reports on the activities of the BFUG working structures would be prepared separately and should not be duplicated within the BPIR. Instead, the narrative authors should be asked to relate their contributions more closely to the commitments set out in the Tirana Communiqué, highlighting relevant achievements and developments across the EHEA rather than procedural details. She also supported sharing the draft analytical chapters with the narrative authors to facilitate this revision.

The EQAR representative clarified that he suggested that relevant qualitative findings should be incorporated directly into the analytical sections of the chapters, alongside the quantitative data, rather than being confined to introductory or separate narrative sections.

Summarising the discussion, the Eurydice Co-chair proposed that the narrative authors should receive detailed instructions to substantially revise and shorten their contributions, with the primary objective of providing policy introductions to the corresponding analytical chapters. These introductions should focus on the commitments of the Tirana Communiqué, relevant policy developments and achievements supporting implementation across the EHEA, while avoiding procedural descriptions of working structure activities and empirical conclusions that could conflict with the indicator-based analysis. Information on meetings, PLAs and other activities would instead be addressed in the separate final reports of the BFUG working structures.

The Austrian Co-chair agreed that relevant qualitative findings from the narrative contributions could also be incorporated into the analytical chapters where appropriate, with their origin clearly acknowledged. She further proposed that the chapters could conclude with future prospects drawing on both the empirical analysis and the narrative contributions. The Eurydice Co-chair explained that, given the limited time remaining before the circulation of the first draft to the BFUG, the revised narrative texts would not be included in the first draft.

Before concluding the agenda point, the EQAR representative sought confirmation that the WG supported presenting the findings on transnational education through a descriptive figure rather than a comparative indicator. The participants agreed with this approach.

The Eurydice Co-chair invited members to submit any remaining comments, particularly regarding the proposed title of the Degree Structures chapter and the classification used in the Quality Assurance chapter, by Monday, 12 October 2026. She also noted that no objections had been raised regarding the proposed approach to analysing internationalisation strategies, including a map describing the type of strategies that cover internationalization and a figure on the policy issues addressed by the strategies overall

5. Introductive discussion on planning for the future monitoring of the EHEA

The Austrian Co-chair introduced the discussion on future monitoring arrangements for the EHEA, referring to the first draft of the 2027 Ministerial Communiqué, which envisaged continued monitoring of Bologna Process commitments, including through a further Bologna Process Implementation Report (BPIR). She invited participants to reflect on the scope and format of the 2030 BPIR, as well as the arrangements for its preparation during the next BFUG work cycle.

She recalled that the 2024 BPIR had been particularly comprehensive, while the 2027 edition aimed to provide a more concise presentation of the indicators and scorecards. She also referred to the 2020 BPIR, which had included a retrospective analysis of developments throughout the Bologna Process, and suggested exploring whether the 2030 report could adopt a similar approach.

Katerina Toura, author of the Social Dimension chapter of the BPIR 2027, proposed strengthening the wording of the draft Ministerial Communiqué by referring explicitly to the removal of *policy barriers* and the need to ensure equitable opportunities for all *in practice*. She emphasised the importance of distinguishing between the existence of policy provisions and their effective implementation, suggesting that this distinction could also inform future monitoring.

The Eurydice Co-chair explained that a longer-term analysis would be possible for certain indicators, but cautioned that the current Social Dimension indicators had largely been introduced in the 2024 BPIR, limiting the possibility of comparisons with earlier periods. She noted that some historical data were available for individual indicators, but not for the full set currently used.

The Austrian Co-chair then invited participants to consider whether the 2030 BPIR should focus on developments since 2020 or provide a broader retrospective assessment of the Bologna Process. The EUROSTUDENT representative supported both the continuation of a dedicated WG on Monitoring and the preparation of a more comprehensive report, raising the question of whether its retrospective scope should be explicitly specified in the Ministerial Communiqué.

In this context, the EHEA Secretariat member recalled the wording of the 2018 Ministerial Communiqué, which had explicitly mandated the BFUG to prepare a BPIR assessing developments since the beginning of the Bologna Process.

The Eurydice Co-chair cautioned against extending detailed quantitative comparisons too far into the past, explaining that changes in national reporting practices and corrections to previously submitted data could affect the reliability of longitudinal analyses. She suggested that broader historical trends could be addressed, while detailed comparisons of indicators would require careful consideration of data availability and comparability.

Concluding the discussion, the Austrian Co-chair summarised the proposed direction for future monitoring: the preparation of a more comprehensive BPIR in 2030, focusing on developments during the 2020–2030 decade, alongside the continuation of a dedicated WG on Monitoring in the next BFUG work cycle, with Eurydice envisaged as the main author of the report. The detailed approach to the report's scope and methodology would require further consideration.

6. Next steps - timeline and objectives

6.1. Preparation of the WG report for the CI BFUG meeting in Dublin

6.2. Timeline for after the meeting

6.3. Next WG meeting

6.4. Any other business and closing remarks

The Austrian Co-chair summarised the next steps and agreed timeline for the preparation of the BPIR 2027. She reminded participants that any additional feedback on the draft report should be submitted by Monday, 12 October 2026.

She confirmed that the first draft of the BPIR, excluding the narrative texts, would be circulated to BFUG members by the end of October, with a deadline for feedback of 14 December 2026. In parallel, the General Editor and the Eurydice team would develop an approach for communicating the revised requirements to the narrative authors and integrating their contributions into the report.

The Eurydice Co-chair clarified that the main objective of the first feedback round would be to verify and correct country-specific data and ensure the accuracy of the empirical analysis. A second, more complete draft would subsequently be prepared, incorporating the quantitative mobility data from EHESO and, potentially, the revised narrative texts, providing BFUG members with a further opportunity to comment.

The Austrian Co-chair announced that the next WG on Monitoring meeting would take place online on 5 March 2027, from 09:00 to 12:00 CET. The EHEA Secretariat would circulate a save-the-date calendar invitation.

As no other business was raised, the Austrian Co-chair thanked participants for their contributions and closed the meeting. The meeting ended at 11:40 CEST.