5th Working Group on Internationalisation and Mobility (WG on IM) Meeting

1st – 2nd of October 2026

Hosted by DAAD in Berlin, Germany

Minutes of the meeting

List of participants

Country	Name	Last Name
Andorra	Jordi	Llombart
Belgium – Flemish Community	Ruth	Lamotte
Czech Republic	Roman	Klepetko
Finland	Kaisu	Piiroinen
France	Solange	Pisarz
Georgia	Nino	Kadagishvili
Germany	Alex	Stenger
Germany (Co-chair)	David	Akrami Flores
Greece	Niko	Karaiskos
Holy See	Melanie	Rosenbaum
Italy	Maria Antonietta	Ciclista
Latvia	Martins	Sabovics
Malta	Adam	Liwak
Moldova (Co-chair)	Daniela	Pojar
Netherlands (Co-chair)	Arthur	Belle
Romania	Nicoleta Cristina	Popa
Slovenia	Božidar	Grigić
Switzerland	Rahel	Hollenstein
Türkiye	Muhammet	Akif ATAMAN

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Ukraine	Alla	Rybalko
Ukraine (Co-chair)	Maryna	Mruga
United Kingdom (Scotland)	Andy	Smith
UNESCO	Leila	Loupis
ENQA	Elena	Cirlan
ESU	Bálint	Koós
EUA	Michael	Gaebel
Head of EHEA Secretariat (HoS)	Horia	Onita
Member of EHEA Secretariat	Lilia	Parhomenco
Member of EHEA Secretariat	Alexandrina	Druta

Austria, Business Europe, Croatia, EURASHE, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Poland, the European Commission and Slovakia sent their apologies. Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belgium – French Community, Cyprus, Education International - ETUCE, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Montenegro and San Marino did not attend the meeting.

The meeting started at 9:34 CEST.

1. Welcome by the host and adoption of the agenda

Documents: WG_on_IM_4_CY_NO_1_Minutes_11.05.2026
WG_on_IM_5_IE_ME_1_2_Agenda_29.09.2026

The German WG Co-chair welcomed the participants to Berlin. He outlined that the focus of the meeting would be to discuss the third draft of the Action Plan on Internationalisation and Mobility in preparation for the upcoming BFUG meeting in Dublin. The Dutch, Ukrainian and Moldovan Co-chairs welcomed participants and thanked DAAD for hosting the WG meeting the second time.

The German Co-chair asked for comments on the minutes of the 4th meeting and on the agenda of the present meeting. No comments were made on the floor and thus the minutes of the 4th WG meeting were acknowledged and the agenda of the meeting was adopted.

2. Update from the WG on IM Co-Chairs

Documents:WG_on_IM_5_IE_ME_1_1_Update_from_Co-chairs

The Dutch Co-chair gave an update and started by emphasising that since the last meeting, the Subgroup on drafting the Action Plan had been very active. He pointed out that the first version of the draft Action Plan was submitted to and discussed at the BFUG Board meeting in Podgorica, and a version would be submitted for discussion at the BFUG plenary in Dublin in early November.

Following the comments received at the WG meeting in Vienna, the subgroup divided the work by sections and revised the draft over the summer. He pointed out that five major changes had been made: reducing the number of commitments; merging the commitment on stakeholder engagement into the one on overall internationalisation policies; expanding the commitment on a broad vision of internationalisation; merging the commitment on staff mobility into the one on international collaboration; reworking the commitment on removing barriers to mobility. The overall structure remained the same, including an overview of the commitments, introduction, purpose, strategic vision, the nine commitments, and implementation and monitoring, the latter to be further expanded.

The Dutch co-chair informed that the BFUG Board expressed general support for the work done and the approach of the draft Action Plan, and made the following suggestions: further work on barriers to mobility, linking them to inclusive mobility and covering both socio-economic, cultural and motivational barriers; taking note of the recent European Commission study on balanced and inclusive mobility and, since it was a one-off study, recommending that such data be collected at a structural level; differentiating more clearly between credit and degree mobility and the implications for inclusive, balanced and sustainable mobility; and taking into account the differences between regional geographic areas. He concluded that after the WG meeting in Berlin, two further meetings were planned for Prague (December 2026) and possibly Paris (early 2027).

The HoS noted that the earlier discussion at the BFUG meeting in Cyprus (held online) supported the direction of the Action Plan and ensured that the work of the WG remained aligned with BFUG expectations. He invited the Working Group to also reflect on what would happen at and after the Ministerial Conference, as well as to discuss within the WG on the draft Communique. Supported by EUA, the Holy See suggested organising a session on internationalisation and mobility with the Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue at the Global Policy Forum. The Dutch WG Co-chair added that alignment with the CG GPD was sought and at the BFUG Board meeting both groups considered that the draft Global Policy Forum Statement and the Action Plan were already well aligned in tone and vision.

Andorra raised the issue of synergies with other structures, pointing out that the third draft of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG) included definitions also addressed by the Working Group, albeit formulated differently. The HoS informed that the revised draft had not been received yet, nevertheless in the BFUG Board the ESG Review Steering Committee highlighted that some definitions from the ESG would be removed.

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The Dutch co-chair added that a terminology coordination meeting took place, as definitions were included in several documents (the ESG, the ECTS Users' Guide, the BPIR and the Note on terminology of the Working Group), with the aim of aligning definitions across these documents. He emphasised that in the meeting it had been agreed that each structure takes the lead on certain concepts, with the definition of joint programmes left for the European Approach on the QA of Joint Programmes.

Referring to the BFUG Board feedback, Slovenia expressed the concern that differentiating between credit and degree mobility or considering regional differences may complicate the structure of the Action Plan. The Dutch co-chair clarified that differentiation did not mean splitting the commitments by type of mobility, but recognising that credit and degree mobility, as well as regional approaches to mobility follow different patterns and have different implications.

3. Updates from the EHEA Secretariat and Feedback from the BFUG Board in Montenegro

The HoS thanked the co-chairs for the cooperation and the host, and presented general updates on the BFUG Work Programme. He recalled the progress achieved at the BFUG meeting held online in March 2026 and introduced the draft 0.1 of the Communiqué, including the section on Interconnected EHEA. The HoS also informed about the Conferences on the Bologna Process organised in Bucharest in mid September 2026, which also included a well received presentation from the WG on IM Co-chairs followed by thorough debates. He also presented the background study commissioned in preparation for the Conferences and updated the WG on a survey on priorities for the next cycle, including internationalisation and mobility, to be sent to the BFUG members in preparation for the BFUG meeting in Dublin. The EHEA Secretariat further emphasised the timeline for preparing the final reports of the BFUG working structures and presented the expected documents to be discussed at the BFUG at the meeting in Dublin.

The Holy See suggested adding on the WG meeting's agenda a discussion about the Draft Communiqué, which was agreed by the WG. The Holy See added, as a former Co-chair of the drafting committee, that corrections should be sent as early as possible.The Dutch co-chair further explained that the text was drafted by the Drafting Committee on the basis of the building blocks (bullet points) submitted by the co-chairs, before the draft Action Plan was shared.

4. EUA – Reflections on the proposal 'Enhancing students' international experiences and making them count'

Documents: WG_on_IM_5_IE_ME_2_1_Note_on_International_Experiences

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The Ukrainian Co-chair introduced the item, noting that the WG had discussed at length new concepts of internationalisation beyond physical mobility, including where to place and how to count them, and invited EUA to present an exploratory note prepared by several members.

EUA recalled that the Rome Communiqué (2020) committed that every learner should have an international experience, however without defining it. Non-mobile forms of internationalisation had grown, especially after COVID, supported by virtual components being eligible under Blended Intensive Programmes (BIPs), arguments of inclusion, flexibility, sustainability and cost, and better technology and cross-border cooperation, notably in the European Universities alliances. The note proposed a typology distinguishing international experiences with mobility (credit and degree) and without mobility. EUA pointed out that only some institutions treat online experiences systematically as regards definition, recognition and reporting. He cited the Vienna University of Economics and Business, which flags courses with a 'global mindset' label counting as an international experience, and a FOREU4ALL paper recommending to alliances a clear definition of mobility, a common reporting template and a focus on impact.

EUA proposed that the WG consider supporting a European typology of international experiences without mobility that could be recognised and counted, with formal criteria (e.g. credit-bearing, reference in the Diploma Supplement) and, more importantly, criteria for the quality of such experiences developed through piloting, data collection and periodic review. EUA highlighted that expected benefits were the parity of esteem for non-mobile formats, enhanced clarity on the ministers' commitment, but also revisiting the assumption that physical mobility automatically results in an international experience. Questions for discussion were how to define and count such international experiences without mobility, how to make them appealing, and whether to start now or in the next work cycle on their definition, measurement, counting and quality criteria. Finally, EUA emphasised that preparatory work now would help include the topic in the next BFUG work programme.

Slovenia supported a distinct stream for international experience without mobility while keeping the agreed 20% mobility target, and suggested working in the next cycle on a separate target and the types of activities counted.

The Holy See welcomed the note yet considered that the Rome Communiqué did not commit to an international experience for all learners but rather to enabling all learners to acquire international and intercultural competences, through internationalisation of the curricula or innovative international environments at their home institutions, and to experience some form of mobility (physical, digitally enhanced, virtual or blended). In reply, EUA pointed out that counting international competences would be too complicated and even in the case of physical mobility what is counted is the activity.

From the Holy See's perspective, the definition should therefore align with the acquisition of international and intercultural competences, as one may have an international experience without acquiring them. Supported by ESU and Finland, the Holy See stressed that any strengthening of non-physical formats must be balanced with promoting physical mobility, which needs to be prioritised.

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ESU welcomed using the concept 'virtual exchanges' instead of 'virtual mobility' and, based on a recent ESU survey on BIPs, noted that virtual components often lack quality standards and amount to passive webinars. ESU considered that international experiences should be built into the curriculum, with quality standards and learning outcomes, and noted the difference in internationalisation exposure based on the language of instruction. Greece agreed that non-mobile experiences can enhance mobility, recalling the good practices on preparing students for mobility presented in The Hague.

Finland welcomed the initiative, which could give visibility to the international dimension, reach more students and support the European Universities Initiative, but doubted that a definition could be wide enough and still yield reliable data, and stressed that the focus should be not only on counting experiences but on the competences students actually gain. Andorra stated that such international experiences should be promoted but kept clearly separate from the 20% mobility benchmark.

EUA noted that, although alignment with the EU benchmark had not been agreed by the BFUG, non-mobile formats should still be promoted and, if presented correctly, would not harm mobility ambitions. He added that institutions working in networks or alliances tend to define virtual exchanges and their quality criteria more conceptually and inspiration should be taken from their initiatives. In reply to ESU's point, EUA emphasised that beyond integration into curriculum, international experiences could be gained also through extracurricular activities. In this sense, he considered that a definition and quality indicators for international experiences should not be overprescriptive, while avoiding that any online activity, such as MOOCs, count as an international experience.

Slovenia agreed that targets were also needed for internationalisation beyond mobility and did not share the concern that these would shift attention away from mobility. He suggested that the Action Plan addresses specifically related barriers, such as the language of instruction, and quality and pointed out that micro-credentials could be used to certify international and intercultural competencies, allowing to demonstrate participation in relevant activities during studies. The Holy See considered that a micro-credential risks becoming a tick-box exercise, whereas the aim was an international perspective in all curricula, through credit-bearing, high-quality activities.

The Ukrainian Co-chair suggested linking internationalisation at home, considered hard to measure and to ensure its quality, to the recognition of formal and non-formal learning (e.g. in the Diploma Supplement), which would provide instruments for both quality and quantification. She emphasised that the concept should explicitly indicate the involvement of foreign teachers in the teaching process as a form of internationalisation of the curriculum. The Moldovan Co-chair informed that Moldova was developing a regulation on mobility and internationalisation of the curriculum, as institutions use different approaches and terminology. She pointed out that a shared European framework would be valuable and exemplified that part of public funding in Moldova depends on KPIs related to incoming and outgoing mobility, where a concrete definition and a minimum threshold of ECTS credits was needed.

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The Holy See presented a proposed amendment for the Action Plan to capture the core of the discussion, namely *encouraging institutions to develop and provide high-quality, credit-bearing short-term international activities and integrated curricula that foster the inclusion of all students and raise motivation for long-term mobility*, while also highlighting the need to guarantee academic quality, active peer-to-peer interaction, integration into curricula with ECTS credits recorded in the Diploma Supplement.

UNESCO informed that the first monitoring exercise on their 2023 Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development would deliver first results by mid-2027, and offered to share early data in relation to promoting internationalisation.

The Dutch Co-chair noted that the draft Action Plan treats internationalisation and mobility on equal footing and incorporates the concept from the Note. He considered that all types of internationalisation activities had already been included in the Action Plan and suggested adding a table overviewing internationalisation activities and specifying that quality standards should be addressed for all internationalisation modalities, including mobility.

EUA suggested reviewing the Note on terminology to define the international experience itself, and that the Action Plan includes the commitment to explore the topic, including a typology to be used for reporting, in the next BFUG cycle. The Dutch Co-chair proposed that, for the BFUG meeting in Dublin, the Action Plan incorporates the qualitative approach and the typology without addressing monitoring and measurement at this stage.

The Holy See noted that the discussion had returned to its starting point, the acquisition of international and intercultural competences, which can be expressed as learning outcomes and quantified in curricula. She recalled that framing it as an 'experience' might turn it into an activity next to the curriculum that cannot be quantified or verified. EUA agreed that international competences were the aim but since they were hard to count, it would be more advantageous at policy level to define what an international experience is , how it generates international competences, and to count the experiences as it is done for mobility.

The Ukrainian Co-Chair pointed out that its education is built on competences and learning outcomes, however with no system for matching extracurricular activities with competences, yet such a matching could be an instrument to make international competence a mandatory component for each student.

The Ukrainian Co-chair concluded that the topic needs further discussion before a proposal is put forward. EUA offered to draft a very short text to be included in Commitment 2 (holistic perspective of internationalisation) instead of a separate document for Dublin.

In closing, EUA asked whether the Action Plan should be more explicit on how the BFUG should follow-up the work in the next cycle. Supported by the Ukrainian Co-chair, EUA and the Holy See, the HoS cautioned against pre-empting the BFUG and suggested including a general mandate in the Communiqué and the Action Plan with more detailed proposals in the WG's final report.

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EUA added that the WG could further advise the BFUG to follow up on both the defining and measuring of international experiences as well as a more differentiated monitoring for the physical mobility benchmark.

5. Plenary discussions on the EHEA Action Plan on Internationalisation and Mobility 2027, Draft 3.0 – September 2026 (Commitments 1–3)

Documents: WG_on_IM_5_IE_ME_3_1_Draft_Action_Plan_v3.0

The German Co-chair opened the discussion on the draft Action Plan, to be addressed section by section.

General comments, introduction and purpose

UK-Scotland declared their support for the Draft Action Plan and its emphasis on inclusion and disadvantaged students and further pointed out that Scotland is preparing to rejoin Erasmus+ in 2026/2027.

The Holy See noted that the document still read as a policy document with language focused on commitments rather than an action plan with concrete actions, and that many paragraphs could actually belong in the Communiqué itself. In reply, the Co-chairs indicated that the positioning of certain commitments between the Action Plan and the Communiqué would be decided as the Communiqué is drafted. The Holy See also proposed referencing the 2012 Bucharest Mobility Strategy and the continuity with this Action Plan more visible in the Introduction.

ENQA noted that one of the purposes of the key commitments of the Bologna Process (quality assurance, recognition, ECTS) is to facilitate mobility and internationalisation and, despite being mentioned under a commitment, they should also be included in the Introduction.

UNESCO, as co-chair of the CG on Global Policy Dialogue, welcomed the alignment with the Global Policy Forum Statement and post-2030 Roadmap and suggested moving from dialogue towards cooperation and co-creation with other regions, e.g. 'through more reciprocal, co-designed cooperation with other regions' included the first paragraph.

Strategic vision and introductory paragraph of the commitments

The Ukrainian WG Co-chair proposed a principle on crisis resilience under which countries and institutions should develop internationalisation, mobility and cooperation mechanisms that can function in natural or man-made disasters and other large-scale crises, including war.

The Holy See suggested reconsidering the order of the enumeration in the first paragraph and, under the principle on diverse mobility formats, ring-fencing physical mobility by highlighting that online learning opportunities complement and enrich, but do not replace, physical exchanges, and are universal pedagogical enhancements rather than a lower-cost alternative for underrepresented students.

ENQA proposed clarifying that the internationalisation of the curriculum is part of internationalisation at home and not vice-versa by stating 'internationalisation at home (IaH), including internationalisation of the curriculum, and online learning opportunities'.

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UNESCO proposed a principle on balanced and co-designed cooperation with other regions. On the same vein, the Holy See noted that the global dimension was missing in the introductory paragraph and proposed 'foster internationalisation and mobility across the EHEA and beyond'.

The HoS considered the reference to 'general political commitments' inaccurate, since some commitments are not general and the Bologna Process does not label its commitments as political, and 'Member States and national authorities' a duplication; he proposed deleting 'general' and 'political' and referring only to Member States or ministers.

Commitment 1

The Moldovan WG Co-chair presented the changes from the previous draft, outlining that stakeholder engagement was moved to the references on the full policy cycle, a 2028 horizon was added for internationalisation strategies, and respect for diversity, institutional autonomy and academic freedom was further referenced in the text.

The HoS noted that the first bullet (national strategies by 2028) was stronger than the commitment itself and that it should be included into the Communiqué. He considered that bullets 1 and 2 overlap, and the enumeration in bullet 5 is too long to allow follow-up and could become a general statement. A delegation considered 2028 unrealistic, as the Action Plan will be adopted in May 2027, and proposed 2030.

ESU asked who the 'academic communities and relevant partners' in bullet 3 are and suggested 'co-creation' instead of 'consultation'; on bullet 4, ESU noted that not all financial conditions were national (e.g. Erasmus+), with the Holy See proposing replacing 'national' with 'domestic'.

The Holy See also proposed harmonising the enumeration in bullet 5 with the Strategic vision presented above. EUA proposed reordering the bullets (4 and 5 to become 2 and 3, followed by support to institutions, stakeholder participation, and societal and economic relevance).

France proposed emphasising the role of institutions as actors and gatekeepers of international collaboration, exercising due diligence in view of geopolitical and strategic issues. UK-Scotland noted that bullets 2 and 6 list almost the same stakeholders and proposed merging them.

Commitment 2

ENQA suggested making the text shorter. Andorra found the commitment inconsistent with the others, due to the very long opening sentence, and proposed deleting the introductory part, starting with 'We promote…', as well as using shorter sentences. Switzerland noted that requiring international competencies to be explicitly anchored in the curriculum in bullet 3 would create a requirement affecting institutional autonomy over curricula and proposed revising the language. Finland also considered bullet 3 too strict and asked to keep flexibility for institutions to decide on its implementation.

The Holy See proposed removing COIL from bullet 1, as it was not an established BFUG term and presupposed conditions such as high-speed internet, hardware and compatible digital environments. The Holy See further suggested specifying in bullet 2 the commitment referred to (from Rome 2020) and adding a bullet that internationalisation at home and virtual exchanges complement rather than substitute physical mobility. She also considered adding

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that Member States shall ensure that non-physical forms are not used as a replacement for physical mobility for disadvantaged, underrepresented or vulnerable students, nor by institutions to justify reducing the targeted support that makes physical mobility accessible. The Holy See pointed out to its written text submitted prior to the meeting.

ESU noted the lack of quality standards and assessment for online components and proposed stating, as in the following commitment, that virtual exchanges should be in line with the Bologna key commitments and tools.

UNESCO noted that the Action Plan did not mention artificial intelligence and suggested a paragraph on ethical, human-centred approaches to digitalisation and AI in virtual exchanges and mobility, covering issues such as bias, privacy, and digital equity.

Switzerland noted an inconsistent terminology on languages ('foreign languages' in bullet 4, but 'widely used languages' and 'English-taught programmes' in the table on barriers). The Dutch Co-chair explained that 'foreign language' was used deliberately in order to be more inclusive, while the language of instruction was linked to barriers to balanced and inclusive mobility. The Holy See argued against favouring English-taught programmes and suggested deleting it from the table.

Romania found 'higher education staff' in bullet 4 unclear and proposed 'teaching and administrative staff' or 'academic staff'. UK-Scotland proposed rewording bullet 2 around working jointly with the higher education sector, for which the Holy See suggested 'stakeholders'.

Commitment 3

ENQA proposed rephrasing the commitment to 'barriers to (instead of through) joint learning opportunities' and suggested to make the types of barriers explicit (e.g. regulatory). ENQA also found bullet 3 on EU initiatives too thin, suggesting to explain how these initiatives strengthened support for mobility, and the staff mobility bullets repetitive, proposing one bullet on joint programmes and degrees and one on staff mobility. The Dutch Co-chair suggested replacing 'joint learning opportunities' with 'transnational collaboration'.

ESU suggested rephrasing bullet 3 around EU funding by explaining how EU funding helps reducing barriers to mobility.

The Holy See considered bullets 1 and 2 more fitted for the Communiqué and bullet 3 inaccurate, arguing that Erasmus+ support had not expanded across the EHEA. The Holy See proposed deleting bullets 1 and 2 and rephrasing bullet 3 as an aspiration of ministers. Andorra noted that non-EU countries had not been informed about the Erasmus+ strategy and proposed moving bullet 3 about the role of EU initiatives to the introduction. Slovenia asked to reference the European Universities Alliances, which include non-EU partners.

UNESCO supported maintaining a bullet point on international collaboration and the reference to the Bologna tools, but noted that the section mixed international collaboration (first three bullets) and staff mobility (last three). UNESCO also proposed references to the ratification and

implementation of the recognition conventions, to the work of the CG GPD, and to the comparability between and cooperation across regional quality assurance tools and networks.

The HoS noted that welcoming EU initiatives is not a commitment in itself and fits the introduction, and that the role of national action plans should first be clarified in the Communiqué itself. He pointed out that without these elements the bullet points would only focus on staff mobility, diverging from the core of the commitment. Furthermore, he thought that the language around staff mobility was weaker than previous Communiqués talking about pension systems, social security, or recognition.

EUA proposed simplifying the commitment around international collaboration by keeping bullet 2, reworded to say that the Bologna tools should be used consistently; adding a bullet on barriers to collaboration; keeping short-term staff mobility, stressing its value for collaboration and career development; and stating the added value of collaboration. Finland considered bullet 4 too strong on promotion and appraisal systems and incentives for staff, given institutional autonomy.

The Dutch Co-chair suggested to rephrase stating that key commitments accommodate, facilitate and encourage international collaboration, without repeating each specific commitment of the Communiqué. He considered that the EU reference should include the Alliances and the joint European degree label. As staff mobility had been merged in rather mechanically, he asked whether it should move to Commitment 2.

EUA preferred keeping staff mobility in Commitment 3, to underline that it serves collaboration, and ENQA agreed that joint provision and staff mobility belong together as the barriers largely overlap.

Slovenia proposed a separate commitment on staff mobility, given its links to institutional strategy, career development, students' engagement and quality of teaching. The Moldovan Co-chair proposed mentioning research staff mobility, which adds visibility, including in rankings.

The Co-chairs concluded that the subgroup will integrate staff mobility and collaboration better within Commitment 3 for the next draft, rather than moving staff mobility to another commitment.

Commitment 4

Integrating elements of the Note presented by EUA, the Holy See proposed adding to bullet 5 the text presented under item 4 on high-quality, credit-bearing short-term international activities and integrated curricula, fostering the inclusion of all students in internationalisation and raising motivation for long-term mobility. The Holy See also supported Slovenia's suggestion to integrate micro-credentials as long as it relates to regular activities and does not become a tick-box exercise.

ESU proposed adding to bullet 4 (support structures) equal treatment of international students and equal access to student support services.

Commitment 5

Switzerland asked whether national strategies for inclusive mobility meant separate strategies or integrating inclusive mobility objectives and measures into broader national strategies, and preferred the latter. The Moldovan Co-chair clarified that the intention was for inclusive mobility to form part of broader national strategies, with appropriate goals and measures on inclusion.

ESU proposed referring explicitly to flexible pathways enabling students to undertake mobility while continuing their studies at the home institution, and to accessibility for students with disabilities, particularly physical ones. The Czech Republic considered flexibility of curricula and academic calendars closer to the barriers under Commitment 8, and that Commitment 5 should remain focused on inclusive measures.

EUA considered the wording on raising awareness among teaching and administrative staff relatively weak and suggested reflecting the role of institutions in developing inclusion policies and raising staff awareness. Slovenia stressed that awareness-raising activities should remain a concrete, separate element, as a strategy does not imply that staff are aware of it.

ENQA asked whether the institutional understanding of underrepresented groups should be linked to data and monitoring or remain flexible. The Moldovan Co-chair and ESU preferred flexibility in this regard, noting that institutions may hold data on students who go on mobility but not on those who have never considered it.

Finland likewise supported flexibility as regards the groups covered (e.g. students with families and children, with an immigration background or with mental health difficulties) and the measures and tools to enhance the number of mobile disadvantaged students.

EUA suggested alternatively referring to the inclusion of mobility and internationalisation in institutional inclusion and equity strategies, whereas UK-Scotland asked how underrepresented groups would be defined and evidenced, at both home and host institutions, and what evidence base would assess their participation and outcomes. The Holy See suggested linking the commitment more clearly with the work on the social dimension and the elements adopted in the Principles and Guidelines on Social Dimension.

Commitment 6

ENQA recalled the question raised of whether an incoming mobility target should accompany the outgoing one, stressing that they took no position on the matter. The German Co-chair recalled that the WG had previously concluded not to set a separate incoming target, and the HoS confirmed from the minutes that the BFUG in Cyprus had not been in favour of proposing one.

The Holy See pointed out to the reasoning that countries may deliberately prefer different balances according to national interests (e.g. recruiting foreign professionals in some fields, while others prioritise outgoing mobility), so targets could be perceived as infringing national policy autonomy.

Andorra questioned the direct reference to the EU 'Study in Europe' initiative in a document covering the whole EHEA and suggested mentioning it in the introduction. UNESCO supported

the concern and suggested keeping a reference to institutional partnerships while making explicit that they are not limited to European or EU contexts and also cover other regions.

Slovenia explained that national 'Study in' initiatives, with centres supporting incoming (particularly degree-seeking) students, followed a broader initiative, whereas support for outgoing degree-seeking students was less developed. He suggested that the Action Plan address this and also asked whether visa procedures, a recurring issue particularly in cooperation with other regions, should be mentioned more explicitly.

EUA found the commitment to balanced mobility understandable but the actions less clear, particularly regarding how governments and institutions would achieve balance while the Action Plan also stresses more open systems. He also pointed out that national authorities may influence flows (e.g. through visa policies), but it might be more appropriate to encourage institutions to seek balance and reciprocity.

The Dutch Co-chair explained that the issue was linked to the barriers under Commitment 8, since systems differ significantly in accessibility, attractiveness and affordability, which contributes to asymmetric flows. He reminded that the WG had agreed on a definition of balanced mobility combining quantitative and qualitative elements, not simply equal numbers of incoming and outgoing students, so a purely quantitative incoming target could be inconsistent with it. For credit mobility, he pointed out that institutions know both incoming and outgoing students and can strive for balance and reciprocity, which the commitment could encourage. On the other side, for degree mobility an institution has no information on its country's students who study abroad for a full degree, so balance must be considered at national level. The Dutch Co-chair emphasised that the aim was not to restrict systems that attract many international students but to move towards more comparable attractiveness, openness and accessibility.

Commitment 7

The Dutch Co-chair recalled that the commitment on sustainable and environmental responsibility was meant to cover the entire mobility process and experience, including awareness and sustainable travel options and not only the travel itself. Switzerland suggested revisiting the wording on institutions integrating sustainability into curricula to respect institutional autonomy. The Dutch Co-chair agreed and proposed to treat autonomy as a general drafting principle and to review the whole document on this point later. UNESCO strongly supported keeping sustainability as a standalone commitment.

UK-Scotland asked whether 'underline' as a general verb for commitments was strong enough compared with 'commit', 'strive', 'reaffirm' and 'affirm' used elsewhere, and suggested referring to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Dutch Co-chair supported the SDG reference and explained that the cautious wording was intentional since the commitment was not meant to discourage physical mobility. Furthermore, he pointed out that some member countries, including island countries, had shown that longer-distance travel cannot always be replaced and the aim was to promote awareness of environmental implications and, wherever possible, sustainable alternatives.

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Commitment 8

Greece introduced a revised proposal on systemic and structural barriers to mobility, submitted to the Secretariat during the meeting. Greece explained that the original section with five categories of barriers had not clearly identified who was affected, which forms of mobility were concerned, what actions were needed or who was responsible, while the categories were also strongly interrelated. The revised version added a systemic and structural perspective with a new introductory section on systemic barriers. Greece also added that barriers differ between outgoing mobility and incoming mobility.

EUA found the section considerably longer than the rest of the Action Plan and repetitive, and asked for it to be shortened. ENQA raised drafting points (the meaning of barriers that 'link back' to the mobility target; clearer wording on financial barriers, separating insufficient support from lack of portability; consistency on recognition of learning outcomes; and a clearer order of categories) and asked about the added value of the table with recommendations, which repeats measures found elsewhere. Greece replied that the categories were agreed in The Hague and their order did not indicate priority.

The Moldovan and Dutch Co-chairs noted the Tirana Communiqué mandated the WG to identify barriers and suggest their removal, which justifies a longer section if it gives concrete recommendations. The Dutch Co-chair welcomed the distinction between outgoing and incoming mobility, which links the commitment to inclusive and balanced mobility respectively, and noted that, if the five categories are retained, the table should follow the same structure. Greece stressed that barriers overlap, for example a delay in ECTS recognition is an administrative barrier, while a denial of recognition a policy barrier.

Supported by Finland, Slovenia proposed moving the barriers towards the beginning of the mobility section (state of play, the barriers explaining it, then solutions), as the Action Plan was requested because the existing strategy and target had not achieved results, with a table mapping each barrier to the commitment addressing it rather than a separate set of recommendations.

Finland considered that presenting the difficulties openly would give an honest account, though unusual in a ministerial document, and asked to shorten the treatment of barriers. The HoS noted that BPIR data could put the discussion on a stronger factual basis, and that a table linking each barrier to an action could be among the most concrete elements distinguishing an action plan from broad political commitments, provided it does not become another list of general commitments.

UK-Scotland asked whether the table justifies interrupting the flow of the document and suggested moving it as an appendix.

The discussion continued during Day 2.

ESU supported the revised categories, considering it fit the Action Plan better and covered a wider range of issues. The Holy See raised concerns on administrative and financial barriers: as their higher education institutions receive no general state funding, it could not commit to specific additional funding and suggested referring to competent authorities where appropriate.

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The Holy See reiterated their proposal to delete the reference to English-taught programmes and suggested strengthening affordability through equity funding for underrepresented and disadvantaged learners, so that physical mobility remains feasible for all.

EUA welcomed the revised proposal as a significant improvement and listed elements of the existing text to keep in the revised version: accessibility through digital modes, language issues (proficiency, language courses, programmes in different languages), and motivation and information services. ESU noted that linguistic preparation was already included in the social barriers section and could be made more concrete.

ENQA asked how the material would be incorporated (annex, reference in the introduction, or under Commitment 8), noting that keeping the full text under Commitment 8 could cause structural difficulties as several measures, particularly on financial barriers, are addressed elsewhere. The Dutch Co-chair explained that the revised proposal is understood as a possible full replacement of the existing Commitment 8 text and an integral part of the Action Plan.

EUA supported examining the overlap with Commitment 5 (Commitment 8 identifying barriers and the need for support, with detailed inclusion measures staying under Commitment 5), noted that a detailed list of barriers would create expectations of follow-up and reporting.

Finland cautioned that the wording on grants and portability interacts with national regulations and funding systems. The HoS pointed out that the portability of grants and loans was one of the first commitments of the Bologna Process in the field and the longest monitored one. He added that the initial progress was followed by a long period of limited change, and more recent monitoring appears to show a reversal, with more countries introducing restrictions. He asked whether the Action Plan should simply repeat the commitment or respond more structurally or ambitiously, and whether portability remains a priority in its current formulation.

Supported by ENQA, the Holy See proposed eliminating Commitment 8 as a separate section, since 'barrier' already appeared throughout the Action Plan, and distributing the relevant barriers among the commitments that address them, which could reduce repetition and shorten the document. ENQA considered that the Holy See's proposal would give a clearer logic (commitment, the barrier that makes it necessary, how it will be addressed), and added that commitments, barriers and measures should be sharper and more concise for readers unfamiliar with the BFUG structures.

Commitment 9

ENQA asked whether the commitment on data collection and monitoring came too late in the document. Greece considered it could remain at the end, as the preceding commitments dealt with policy decisions and credible data was needed to inform them.

EUA suggested introducing evidence-informed policymaking earlier, with Commitment 9 focusing on data collection and measurability. In reply, the Dutch Co-chair proposed placing evidence-informed policymaking in the first commitment in relation with strategies, policies and action plans. Slovenia suggested making clear that data and monitoring are also needed to measure the outcomes and implementation of the Action Plan.

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UNESCO cautioned against suggesting that additional data or indicators be developed only at national level, stressing the importance of regional and global statistics comparable across countries and the already existing international statistics.

The Dutch Co-chair argued for the need of more structural data collection and monitoring, arguing that comparative European data remained lacking and that one-off studies, such as the European study on balanced and inclusive mobility, took years and do not allow continuous monitoring. ENQA noted that, while the Action Plan stresses the participation of students from different backgrounds, the monitoring language refers mainly to inbound and outbound flows by field, level and region. UNESCO added that the lack of disaggregated data could itself be identified as a barrier.

EUA asked whether Commitment 9 should address only data collection or implementation more broadly, given the isolated implementation and monitoring paragraph, and whether the call for data collection targets the EHEA level or the Member States.

The HoS considered that existing data-collection initiatives could be presented in footnotes and thought that referring to certain policy dimensions as 'not adequately covered' by the UNESCO-OECD-UE framework could have political implications that need to be carefully considered. He added that the text did not acknowledge successful cases of data collection, e.g. on recognition, and proposed separating the implementation provisions (commitments to integrate the Plan in national policy, monitoring, peer-learning etc).

The group supported keeping Commitment 9 at the end, with the reference to evidence-informed policy-making moved to the first commitment.

8. Discussion on the Draft Ministerial Communiqué

The German Co-chair introduced the section on Interconnected EHEA, covering also internationalisation and mobility.

ESU asked whether students 'coming into our area' meant students arriving from outside the EHEA or moving between EHEA countries. The HoS clarified that it meant students from outside the EHEA and agreed that the wording was unclear.

The Dutch Co-chair considered that several aspects of the WG's discussions were not fully reflected and highlighted that the paragraph should reflect the broader, holistic approach to internationalisation, while the formulation on mobility should be reconsidered.

The Holy See noted that the draft does not capture the discussion on international experiences and on international and intercultural competences, suggested 'students facing obstacles' rather than 'obstacles facing students', and considered that redrafting so that core substantial issues are better covered. UNESCO agreed and considered that the paragraph should better reflect the WG's priorities in its' order and structure, be shorter paragraph and more explicitly refer to students coming from outside the EHEA, who may face specific barriers.

ESU and the Holy See proposed replacing 'virtual mobility' with 'virtual exchanges' and supported treating different types of international experience separately. To a question of UNESCO on what the 'additional target' for shorter, blended and virtual formats

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meant, the HoS explained that the wording reflected the BFUG discussion in Cyprus, where a majority of delegations supported maintaining the EHEA target while also referring to the EEA one. The Dutch Co-chair suggested linking the additional target to the Rome 2020 commitment that all learners acquire international and intercultural competences.

EUA remarked that the Communiqué should avoid referring to types of mobility such as blended or virtual ones and instead consider mandating a task force to explore them and potentially develop separate European benchmarks. EUA also noted that the formulation for 'students coming into the EHEA' was different than the one in the Action Plan, although the issue was considered relevant given discussions on visas, funding and openness. The Dutch Co-chair recalled the different dimensions of mobility (within the EHEA, between EU and non-EU EHEA countries, and between the EHEA and other regions) that should be made more explicit in the Action Plan and, where appropriate, the Communiqué. Asked by Andorra whether the visa reference concerned only students moving within the EHEA or also those arriving from outside, the Holy See said students in the Bologna Process should be considered in the same framework. The German Co-chair considered the nuances too detailed for the Communiqué and asked that the wording be checked against the WG's discussions and the BFUG minutes.

The Holy See proposed in writing an alternative formulation for the WG's contribution to the Communiqué, which was accepted by the WG as the working version for discussions. The Holy See suggested linking the Rome commitment that all learners acquire international and intercultural competences with the adoption of the Action Plan, describing it as addressing persistent barriers to mobility and internationalisation and outlining the way forward, with implementation through national strategies or major policy documents. The Holy See further urged making clear from the outset that shorter, blended and virtual formats complement rather than substitute physical mobility. The Dutch Co-chair suggested that the Communiqué follow the Action Plan's structure (internationalisation, mobility in general, then inclusive, balanced and green mobility) and considered that the current draft did not sufficiently distinguish international experience, international and intercultural competences and the wider internationalisation agenda.

Supported by the Holy See, the HoS suggested reflecting both the Rome and Tirana Communiqués, including a commitment to reporting in 2030 and strengthening the role of national strategies. Andorra questioned the deadline of implementation 'within the next working period', with the Holy See explaining that it was meant to maintain momentum, as similar commitments had gone unimplemented for years.

ENQA asked whether the Action Plan should also refer to the possible additional target encompassing additional types of mobility, since it was only referred to in the Communiqué. The Dutch Co-chair

The Dutch Co-chair proposed that the Subgroup on the Action Plan works on revising the current text to reflect the WG's main points and tone, ensuring alignment with the Action Plan.

9. AOB / Next meeting of the WG on IM and the work in the last semester of the current cycle, before the Ministerial Conference in May 2027

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The Czech Republic confirmed that the next WG meeting would take place in Prague on 3rd–4th of December. He informed that invitations and registrations would open soon and invited members to the CEEDUCON Conference taking place between the 1st–2nd of December.

The Dutch Co-chair noted that the BFUG meeting in Dublin would precede the WG meeting in Prague, with an updated Action Plan to be circulated after the BFUG meeting in Dublin. He reflected on a possible additional WG meeting hosted by France, focusing on the implementation of the Action Plan and the next working cycle. The HoS suggested that a March meeting, between the two BFUG meetings in Lithuania, could be more useful, as a contingency point for finalising the Action Plan.

EUA suggested presenting the Action Plan to the BFUG in Dublin as a draft whose content and principles were relatively well established but whose presentation and wording remain open, to help BFUG members focus on substance rather than wording.

The HoS thanked the host and participants and reminded members various reminders. EUA referred to the recent award of the Erasmus+ Charter to 163 universities in the United Kingdom and welcomed it in the context of renewed UK participation

The German Co-chair thanked the host, the EHEA Secretariat, the Co-chairs and all WG members and closed the meeting.

The meeting closed at 11:25 CEST.

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