Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG)

Report to the

BFUG Meeting LXXXVIII
Brussels, Belgium
19, 20 February 2024

The Key Commitments

EUROPEAN
Higher Education Area

bologna process

Key Commitment 1
A three-cycle system compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA (QF-EHEA) and first and second cycle degrees scaled by ECTS

Key Commitment 2
Compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC)

Key Commitment 3
Quality assurance in compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)

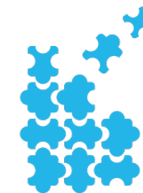Work period TPG: 2021 - 2024

Erasmus+ Projects

QUATRA – TPG A
Qualification Frameworks for trust, transparency and diversity

TPG-LRC CoRE
Micro-credentials, digital technology for the recognition agenda, and quality of recognition

IMINQA
Implementation and Innovation in Quality Assurance through peer learning

Work period umbrella projects: May 2022 – April 2025

Thematic orientations of the TPGs

Thematic Peer Group A (QFs)	Thematic Peer Group B (LRC)	Thematic Peer Group (QA)
Thematic orientations:	• Self-certification of the national qualification frameworks to the overarching Qualifications Framework of the EHEA; • Complete implementation of the ECTS User's Guide; • Short cycle higher education; • Multiple purposes and use of the qualifications frameworks by the stakeholders; • Study programmes outside of the Bologna three-cycle structure; • Relationship between the qualifications frameworks and quality assurance.	• Establishing the legal framework to allow the implementation of the LRC; • Establishing the distribution of work and responsibilities among the competent institutions that have the right knowledge and capacity to carry out recognition procedures; • Achieving automatic recognition; • Recognition of alternative pathways; • Qualifications held by refugees; • Optimising the potential of digital technology for the recognition agenda and the Diploma Supplement.	• Legislative framework in line with the ESG • Internal quality assurance • Enhancement-oriented use of the ESG • The European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes • Cross-border Quality Assurance • Quality assurance of micro-credentials • Quality assurance of European Universities • Digitalisation of quality assurance processes

Meetings of the BICG 1/2:

1. First Meeting of the BICG (May 2021, online)
The 2021-2024 Work Plan (Terms of Reference, deliverables and meeting schedule);
The draft Guidelines for the TPGs; Status Quo Implementation of KCs; European Commission support for TPGs under the Erasmus+ Program; Next steps.

2. Second Meeting of the BICG (October 2021, online)
Update from the Secretariat, the BICG Co-chairs and the TPGs Co-chairs; Umbrella Projects, EC support; Work Plans of TPGs /discussion of Templates for Work Plans/.

3. Third Meeting of the BICG (January 2022, online)
Update from the Secretariat, the BICG Co-Chairs; Umbrella Projects and update on EC support, update from the TPGs Co-Chairs; TPG Countries' work plans, discussion

4. Fourth Meeting of the BICG (March 2022, online)
Update from the Secretariat, the BICG Co-Chairs; Update on EC-Support on TPG Umbrella projects, Update from TPGs Co-Chairs; TPG Countries' work plans, discussion

Meetings of the BICG 2/2:

5. Fifth Meeting of the BICG (October 2022, online)
Updates from Secretariat, EC TPG Co-chairs and different PLAs

6. Sixth Meeting of the BICG (March 2023, online)
Updates from members and TPGs, BICG Input for Communique, BICG report 2024 (draft structure)

7. Seventh Meeting of the BICG (September 2023, online)
Updates from members and TPGs, BICG Input for Communique, BICG report 2024, TPG recommendations

8. Eighth Meeting of the BICG (January 2024, Italy, hybrid)

Regular pre- and post-meetings of the co-chairs are also held.

European Higher Education Area and Bologna Process (ehea.info)

TPG A - actions

7 TPG A meetings

June 2021 (online), November 2021 (online), March 2022 (online), October 2022 (Latvia), April 2023 (Austria), September 2023 (Georgia), April 2024 (Estonia)

4 PLA meetings

1) Micro-credentials and use of QF by stakeholders (October 2022, Latvia)
2) Implementation of Qualification Frameworks and ECTS – Focus on Learning Outcomes (April 2023, Austria)
3) Self-certification (September 2023, Georgia)
4) Assessment of learning outcomes on programme level (Spring 2024, Estonia)

3 sub-working groups

- Micro-credentials – survey on MCs in QFs
- Self-certification- survey Self-Certification of National Qualifications Frameworks Against QF-EHEA
- Short Cycle Higher Education – fiche on short-cycle qualifications for HE

➡️ surveys conducted and analyzed ➔ **recommendations made**

TPG B - actions

7 TPG B meetings

September 2021 (online), January 2022 (online), June 2022 (France), January 2023 (online), April 2023 (Albania), February 2024 (online), April 2024 (Italy)

Public seminars – in conjunction with the face-to-face meetings

Seminar on automatic recognition (28 April 2023)

Seminar on digitalisation (24 April 2024)

4 PLAs on digital solutions –input, throughput and output phases of the recogntion process

19 September 2023, 19 October 2023, 21 November 2023, 7 December 2023 - online

4 sub-working groups

- WG1 on micro-credentials   WG2 on digitalisation
- WG3 on quality of recognition   WG4 on European Degree

Staff mobility between July 2023 and January 2024

TPG C - actions

7 TPG B meetings

June 2021 (online), May 2022 (Belgium), November 2022 (online), June 2023 (Kazakhstan), December 2023 (online), June 2024 (Romania), November 2024 (Belgium)

3 PLA meetings

1) Aligning the legal framework with the ESG (September 2022, Belgium)

2) Cross-border QA and QA of transnational education (March 2023, Romania)

3) European Approach to the QA of joint programmes (September 2023, Belgium)

3 sub-working groups

- QA of micro-credentials
- QA of European Universities
- Digitalisation of QA processes

Staff mobility between Ocotber 2022 and February 2024

Achieving implementation of the 3 KCs

- What the BPIR 2024 shows: some examples on the next slides

  More examples in the BPIR and the BICG report

- Caveats:

- Country information is not yet final

- No scorecard indicator on Degree Structures prior to 2024 report

- Some of the elements proposed for the new indicator are questioned

- Similarly a change to the QA main indicator (to remove a category) agreed by the Monitoring WG is disputed by several countries and organisations

- Automatic Recognition indicator has been separated from Lisbon Recognition Convention elements

Other degree structure element: NQF

	2024	2020	2018
🟩	32 systems	30	28
🟨	12 systems	12	11
🟡	4 systems	2	4
🟧	0 systems	5	5
🟥	0 systems	1	1
N/A	1 system		

Lisbon Recognition Convention

	2024	2020	2018
All principles	31	23	18
4 principles	12	21	21
1-3 principles	3	4	6
0 principles	2	2	2
N/A	1		

QA: student involvement

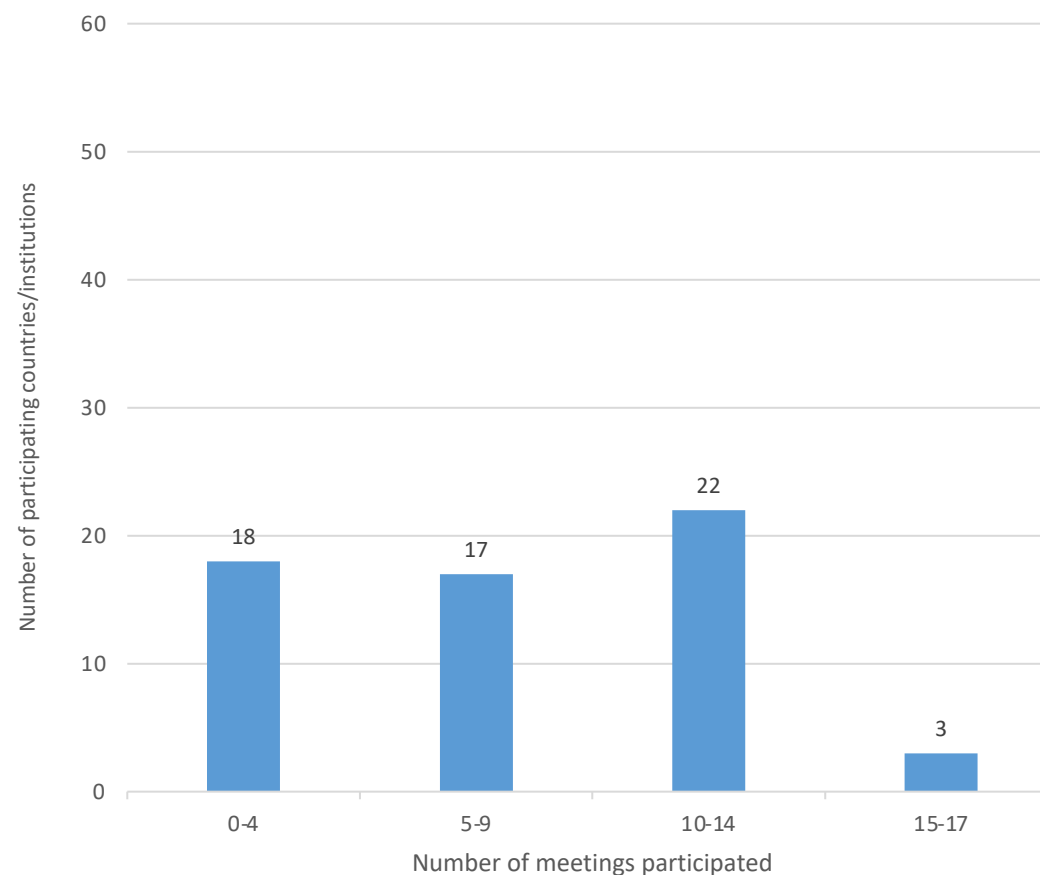|	2024	2020	2018
🟩	26 systems	20	20
🟢	9 systems	13	12
🟨	9 systems	6	7
🟧	4 systems	5	7
🟥	0 systems	6	4
N/A	1 system		

Conclusions from the BPIR 2024

- Positive developments on all key commitments …

  - **Degree structures:** not possible to compare, but still room for improvement
  - **Recognition:** significant positive change after 2020
  - **QA:** more change after 2018

- Impact of TPGs difficult to assess (as TPGs are not the only factors in play) but **reasonable to assume a positive effect**

Participation in TPG meetings

- 17 meetings in total across all TPGs

- 10% of countries/institutions did not participate at all

- 30% of countries/institutions participated less than 5 times

BICG – Conclusions

In a **generally positive context**, matters for discussion and consideration are:

- how to stimulate more active **participation** in the TPG activities by all countries
- how to **ensure** that **both** countries that believe they have completely implemented the Key Commitments and those that believe they need support participate fully and pro-actively
- **coordination among the various representatives (in different TPG) of each country is necessary but often problematic.**

The BICG's mission is to ensure that the **Key Commitments themselves** are at the **centre** of the TPGs' attention. Sometimes relevant but less central issues are at the forefront.

Complete and compatible implementation of the 'Key Commitments' is necessary for the realization of the other EHEA commitments – including new ones.

BICG – Recommendation for the Tirana Communiqué

The Ministers register the progress made in implementing the Key Commitments. The work of the Thematic Peer Groups, under the guidance of the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group, contributes to identifying challenges and finding solutions. After two work periods (2018-2020; 2021-2024), we note, that an implementation gap of these basic, and other commitments persists. Since the **full and compatible implementation of the Key Commitments is essential** for the EHEA to reach its envisaged potential, we **all** commit to

- **participate in all Thematic Peer groups (TPGs) where we have an implementation gap, as well as in those in which we can offer support;**
- **ensure that our nominees to TPGs are experts in the field, well informed about the policy level and about our country's higher education system;**
- **fully support our nominees and require them to communicate, coordinate and collaborate closely among themselves, and with our BFUG representatives;**
- **verify that the relevant laws and norms in our country are up to date, operational, and well known to the stakeholders.**

To close the **implementation gap** of these basic and other commitments made, we agree that after each ministerial Communiqué our country will devise a concrete **publishable implementation plan**, around which to coordinate ministerial actions and those of the working groups.

BICG – Challenges, topics of discussion and reflection

The BI(C)G question is:

Do countries **want** to close the "implementation gap"?

Thank you for your attention!

On behalf of the BICG

Helga Posset (Austria)
Ivana Radonova (Bulgaria)
Ann Katherine Isaacs (Italy)