Thematic Peer Group A on Qualifications Framework

Third Meeting, Hosted by Georgia, Online*
Monday, 15 March 2022
10:00-11:30 (Brussels time)

Minutes

List of Participants

Country	Name	Last Name
Albania	Ermelinda	Durmishi
Andorra	Jordi	Llombart
Armenia	Ani	Mkrtchyan
Austria (Co-Chair)	Karin	Riegler
Austria	Stephan	De Pasqualin
Azerbaijan	Vusala	Gurbanova
Belgium Flemish Community	Nina	Mares
Bulgaria	Ivana	Radonova
Croatia	Josipa	Cesnovar
Croatia	Slaven	Zjalić
Cyprus	Kyriacos	Charalambous
Czech Republic	Veronika	Schmidtova
Estonia	Janne	Pukk
ESU - European Students' Union	Kristel	Jakobson
European Commission	Maya	Ivanova
Georgia	Ketevan	Panchulidze
Georgia (Co-Chair)	Khatia	Tsiramua
Greece	Alexandra	Karvouni
Latvia (Co-Chair)	Baiba	Ramiņa
Latvia	Gunta	Kinta
The Netherlands	Lineke	van Bruggen
Poland	Jacek	Lewicki
Romania	Antonela	Toma
Romania	Tiberiu	Dobrescu
Slovak Republic	Lukás	Bosnák
United Kingdom (Scotland)	Sheila	Dunn
Polytechnic University of Tirana (Guest)	Aleksandër	Xhuvani
BFUG Secretariat	Kristina	Metallari
BFUG Secretariat	Xhesika	Lulaj

Belarus, Council of Europe, EI-ETUCE, EURASHE, Germany, Italy, Kazakhstan, Malta, North Macedonia, Russia, San Marino, Spain, Turkey did not attend the meeting. European Commission sent regrets.

1. Welcome by the Co-Chairs of TPG A

The Co-chairs welcomed everybody to the third meeting of the peer group. The agenda of the meeting was adopted without changes and the minutes of the second TPG A meeting were approved without additional remarks.

For more information, please see: *Agenda of the meeting*
For more information on the second meeting of TPG A, please see: *Minutes of second meeting*

2. Country Action Plans update

Karin Riegler (Co-Chair) gave a summary of the Country Action Plans, stating that 18 of them had been received thus far. Ms. Riegler encouraged the remaining countries to deliver their Action Plans as soon as feasible so that the Co-Chairs could gain better insight on the priorities to be set for TPG A on QF.

A list of the thematic priorities was provided, with self-certification, ECTS User's Guide and micro-credentials as the most preferred priorities to focus on. It was underlined that there is also interest in certain priorities that are not part of the Key Commitments of the Bologna Process (i.e., databases, registers, digitalization).

For more information, please see: *Country Action Plans*

3. Introduction of Working Groups

Baiba Ramiņa (Co-Chair) presented an outline of the Erasmus+ Programme Project "Qualifications Frameworks for trust, transparency and diversity" (QUATRA), with the aim of providing country members with opportunities for a peer-to-peer support in order to ensure the fulfilment of the key commitments that are essential for the functioning of the EHEA. A list of the project partners, as well as the main activities of the QUATRA project were also provided. Four peer-learning activities were mentioned to be arranged:

1. Micro-credentials and use of QF by stakeholders – Autumn 2022 (Riga, Latvia)
2. Implementation of Qualification Frameworks and ECTS – Spring 2023 (Vienna, Austria)
3. Self-certification – Autumn 2023 (Tbilisi, Georgia)
4. Assessment of Learning Outcomes on program level - Spring 2024 (Tallinn, Estonia)

Further information on the TPG A working groups [1] was provided, including the composition of each working group and the main topics for discussion and outcomes. The activity of the working groups was outlined for this working period, with 3 online meetings and one in-person meeting to be organized. The agenda for the first meeting consisted of setting up the work plan and agreeing on the Chairs of each working group.

For more information, please see: *Working Groups of TPG A*

4. Presentation of Report: The Albanian Qualifications Framework referencing to the European Qualifications Framework and self-certification of compatibility with self-referencing to the Qualifications Framework of EHEA

Prof. Aleksander Xhuvani (Polytechnic University of Tirana) provided an outline of the Albanian Qualifications Framework (AQF) referencing to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and self-certification of compatibility with self-referencing to the Qualifications Framework of EHEA (QF-EHEA). A statistical overview including the number of education institutions and types of qualifications of the Albanian educational system was presented.

The AQF's development and transformation phases were discussed, with a task force formed to aid in the effective completion of these phases so that the QF report could be presented to the EQF advisory group. In addition, a comprehensive overview of the governance system was offered, including the advisory bodies and implementation institutions, with main focus on VET institutions.

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[1] Working group on micro-credentials; Working group on self-certification; Working group on short cycle higher education.

A comparison of the AQF and the EQF was offered, with the EQF awarding qualifications after the completion of primary school, unlike the AQF. A detailed overview of the Albanian higher education system was provided, encompassing qualifications obtained through upper secondary education and vocational training, as well as short cycle qualifications. There was also a comparison of the AQF and Dublin QF level 5 descriptors, demonstrating the commonalities between the two QFs.

A concrete example from the Polytechnic University of Albania was provided with regards to the referencing process and diploma supplement, with the latter corresponding of the AQF level; knowledge; skills; and competence (autonomy and responsibility).

In conclusion, a description of the Albanian HE system and AQF was presented, including comprehensive information on the AQF's referencing and self-certification to the EQF and QF-EHEA, as well as the fulfillment of criteria and procedures, and the AQF's further development.

For more information, please see: *AQF referencing to the EQF and QF-EHEA*

5. Q&A Session

The support received regarding AQF was highlighted, with Mr. Xhuvani explaining that two international experts provided advice, and there was also engagement with the EQF advisory group on the first draft of the report, providing feedback and reflecting their views and questions on the final report.

The types of institutions that provide short cycle qualifications, as well as whether these qualifications serve as a bridge to gaining entrance to the higher education system, were discussed. It was highlighted that there are two types of short cycle credentials (one-year duration; two-year duration), which are offered by both HEIs and non-HEIs. While the latter does not serve as a bridge to allow direct access to the HE system, short cycle courses offered by HEIs can progress to bachelor degrees if they meet or exceed the Albanian quality threshold, and they can also transfer credits for common courses, under the condition to be in compliance with the council of ministers' decision on the average grade required in secondary school.

The self-certification procedure was explained, beginning with a presentation of an offer to all international experts willing to assist in the development of the AQF and the drafting of the QF report. This procedure was also carried out with the assistance of the UNDP office in Tirana, which launched an appeal for offers in order to compile a short list of candidates, from which two were chosen: one with expertise in the pre-university system and the other with expertise in the higher education system.

To work on the AQF, two large groups were established: one in pre-university and vocational training and the other in higher education. The report was approved by the task force established by the ministries responsible for education and VET training and education.

To summarize, there is growing interest in the self-certification process, and acquiring feedback and experience from countries that have already gone through this process is extremely valuable for this group's work. The sharing of experiences is expected to expand between new members in the working groups, as well as through participation in the upcoming PLA formats.

6. Date of next meeting and AoB

The Co-Chairs notified the peer group that the next meeting is expected to take place in autumn 2022 in Riga, with an exact date to be provided at a later stage. No other business was brought forward and the third meeting of the TPG A on QF was concluded.