



## Thematic Peer Group B on Lisbon Recognition Convention

First Meeting, Hosted by Italy, Online\*  
Tuesday, September 14, 2021,  
09.30-12.30 (Brussels time)

### Minutes

#### List of Participants

Country	Name	Last Name
Albania (Co-chair)	Linda	Pustina
Albania	Olsi	Vangjeli
Armenia	Gayane	Harutyunyan
Austria	Victoria E.	Tschiedl
Azerbaijan	Nijat	Mammadli
Azerbaijan	Nijat	Asadli
Belgium Flemish Community	Erwin	Malfroy
Bulgaria	Vanya	Grashkina
Croatia	Leonardo	Marusic
Croatia	Marina	Crcic Sokol
Cyprus	Alexandra	Petridou
Czech Republic	Veronika	Schmidtova
Council of Europe	Katia	Dolgova-Dreyer
Denmark	Allan Bruun	Pedersen
Estonia	Gunnar	Vaht
EQAR	Aleksandra	Zhivkovikj
ESU - European Students' Union	Pegi	Pavletic
EUA - European University Association	Helene	Peterbauer
European Commission	Lucie	Trojanova
Eurydice	David	Crosier
France (Co-chair)	Helene	Bekker
Georgia	Salome	Abramishvili
Georgia	Tinatin	Managazde
Germany	Hans	Leifgen
Holy See	Melanie	Rosenbaum
Ireland	Angela	Lambkin
Italy (Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee)	Luca	Lantero





Italy (Co-chair)	Chiara	Finocchietti
Italy	Alessandro	Arienzo
Italy	Silvia	Bianco
Italy	Livia	Fossati
Italy	Elisa	Petrucci
Kazakhstan	Kozhamzharova	Moldir
Latvia	Baiba	Ramina
Lithuania	Aurelija	Valeikiene
Moldova	Lilia	Parhomenco
Netherlands	Jenneke	Lokhoff
Romania	Gianina	Chirazi
San Marino	Remo	Massari
Sweden	Ulrika	Axell
Switzerland	Antoine	Maret
Ukraine	Kateryna	Suprun
UNESCO	Vanja	Gutovic
United Kingdom	Cloud	Baiyun
BFUG Secretariat (Head)	Enida	Bezhani
BFUG Secretariat	Kristina	Metallari
BFUG Secretariat	Patrik	Bardhi

Poland and EURASHE sent in their regrets.

**\*Note:** Due to the extraordinary circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic, this meeting was held online.

### 1. Welcome and introduction to the meeting by the Co-chairs

The TPG B Co-chairs welcomed everybody to the first meeting of the 2021-2024 work period and underlined the importance of Key Commitment 2, namely the national legislation and procedures compliant with the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), through the establishment of the legal framework to allow the implementation of the LRC, achievement of automatic recognition, recognition of alternative pathways and optimization of digital technology for the recognition agenda and Diploma Supplement.

Linda Pustina (Co-chair) introduced the BFUG Secretariat held by Albania for the working period 2021-2024 and re-iterated the commitment of the Albanian government for the organization of the Ministerial Conference in June 2024. With Albania being part of the EHEA countries looking to become part of the European family, it will continue to work on the implementation of the Bologna commitments, as well as toward its integration in the EU, by fostering effective cooperation and closer dialogue at the regional and international level.



Ms. Pustina emphasized the importance of the implementation of the Rome Communiqué in the work of TPG B, as well as the importance of not only sharing professional views and experiences with other countries, but also transferring fundamental values. She observed that the LRC principles should be strengthened and applied to students' qualifications by: using common assessment criteria and reports in collaboration with the LRC committee and ENIC-NARIC networks and making necessary legislative changes to guarantee automatic recognition at system level for qualifications delivered in EHEA countries. Further, Ms. Pustina encouraged the further development of block chain technologies, the use of the database 'DEQAR' to facilitate automatic recognition and the review of legislation, to ensure fair recognition held by refugees and other disadvantaged groups.

## **2. Bologna Key Commitment 2 on national legislation and procedures compliant with the Lisbon Recognition Convention**

Hélène Bekker (Co-chair, France) provided an overview of the framework of the TPG B in the EHEA, with special focus on the work of the group during the work period 2018-2020.

The structured peer support approach that was implemented in the Paris Communiqué was reconfirmed again in the Rome Communiqué and employed in the work of this TPG.

For more detailed information on the 2018-2020 work period, please see:  
<https://ehea.info/page-peer-group-B-LRC>

The main objectives of the meeting were highlighted, which included:

- defining the Work Plan of the group for the next years;
- looking at the TPG B state-of-play and focusing on an evidence-based approach;
- organizing discussions into three subgroups to elaborate on the existing and potential thematic indications to be included in the 2021-2024 Work Plan.

For more detailed information, please see: *1.1\_TPGB\_meeting\_peer\_support\_BEKKER.pdf*

An outline of current trends viewed from different perspectives was provided:

### 2.1. Bologna Process Implementation Report (2020)

David Crosier (Eurydice) gave a statistical overview of the current trends in recognition, based on the BPIR 2020. The report focused on key issues and the historical development of HE reforms.

Given that BIRP provides information on the implementation process *prior* to the TPGs' establishment, the impact of the group cannot be indicated/captured by the BPIR. Overall, there has been progress in some countries, and more focus is being placed on automatic



recognition. Nonetheless, LRC principles have yet to be embedded in legislation, along with the implementation of Article VII.

For more detailed information, please see: *2.1\_TPGB\_meeting\_Trends in recognition BPIR 2020\_CROSIER.pdf*

## 2.2. Monitoring the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention

Luca Lantero (Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee) presented the main components of the monitoring exercises, in 2016 and 2021, related to the LRC implementation. The 2016 exercise/Report included 22 questions on 10 main LRC provisions. In contrast, the 2021 monitoring report focused on 3 LRC principles, with 2 additional topics. Overall, the findings from the 2021 report indicate that there has been development in terms of knowledge and expertise of the respective institutions (i.e., accreditation evaluators) compared to the 2016 report.

Mr. Latero specified that countries were required to report on the LRC implementation status at a national level and qualitative results on this process will be available on September 27, 2021, as the data evaluation process is currently ongoing.

For more detailed information, please see: *3.1\_TPGB\_meeting\_LRC monitoring\_LANTERO.pdf*

## 2.3 Bologna with Student Eyes 2020

Pegi Pavletić (ESU) provided an update on the recognition in HE from students' perspective, focusing on 4 main areas, summarized as follows:

- Diploma Supplement
  - National legislations should define a framework for diploma supplement for it to be issued free of charge following student's graduation. This framework should be well-communicated among students and serve as a reference in every instance they may encounter problems related to diploma supplement.
- Recognition of foreign diplomas, credits and qualifications
  - National authorities should guarantee that, within their country, students from different universities have the right to undergo the same recognition procedures. It was observed that in some countries, labor market stakeholders can recognize qualifications without having to undergo a recognition procedure.
- Transparency and accessibility of recognition systems
  - Transparency, accessibility and time-efficiency of recognition procedures should be under the constant review of the respective bodies/authorities.
- Improvement areas
  - Recognition procedures should be consistent and shorter;



- The implementation of Bologna tools should be a priority to make automatic recognition happen;
- Recognition of prior learning is not occurring/institutionalized in many countries and should be seen as a priority and a strong enabler of student-centered learning.

The presentation was followed by discussions during which the good will for further collaboration between the ENIC-NARIC centers and ESU was stated, especially with regards to procedures of recognition and most importantly automatic recognition.

It was observed that students' perspective is very important and needs to be taken into consideration. Ministries and ENIC-NARIC centers tend to portray a more positive picture than what students experience in their HE systems, especially in areas like diploma supplement and recognition. As governments and ENIC-NARIC centers have more say on this than HE institutions, it is crucial to understand students' perception on these areas so that we end up with a clearer representation of the situation. Information obtained from the students can be very helpful in understanding where the main issues lie.

For more detailed information, please see: *4.1\_TPGB\_meeting\_ESU- Recognition BWSE 2021\_PAVLETIĆ.pdf (~21 MB)*

For more detailed information, please see: <https://www.esu-online.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/0037-Bologna-Publication-2021-WEB3.pdf>

### **3. Outcomes of the survey among TPG B members**

Chiara Finocchietti (Co-chair) provided an overview of the questionnaire, which aimed to obtain a picture of the current state of play of the implementation of the Bologna Key Commitment 2 in the national legislations and procedures, compliant with the Lisbon Recognition Convention, as well as capture the main interests, challenges and good practices of the members of TPG B. The questionnaire focused on the 7 thematic indications, peer support and transversal topics. The results of the questionnaire will feed into the development of the Work Plan.

For more detailed information, please see: *5.1\_TPGB\_meeting\_Survey\_outcomes\_FINOCCHIETTI.pdf*

### **4. Working groups on the TPG B Work Plan**

During this session, the members of TPG B were divided into 3 groups to discuss the selected thematic priorities included in the questionnaires (for countries, as well as consultative members and institutions) in the order of preference expressed by the respondents of the questionnaire. The top three thematic priorities included:





- 4.1. Optimizing the potential of digital technology for the recognition agenda and the Diploma Supplement;
- 4.2. Recognition of alternative pathways (flexible and open learning paths, including those leading to micro-credentials);
- 4.3. Achieving automatic recognition.

Each group was encouraged to address additional transversal topics as well. During the discussions, the members indicated sub-topics that needed to be discussed in more depth for each selected topic.

## 5. Reporting from the working groups

In a follow-up plenary session, three pre-assigned rapporteurs reported back on the discussions' topics of each group, as summarized below:

- 5.1. Group 1 (Rapporteur: Angela Lambkin, Ireland)

The group initially identified transversal topics and additional priorities as summarized below:

### Transversal topics

- Impact of the pandemic should be assessed: what went well in relation to our work and what has changed;
- Integration and consolidation of the work done to date: what needs to be done; what does not work (reflection on the last 10 years); distribution of responsibilities; feedback on students' experience.

### Additional priorities

- National legislation and its alignment to LRC: continuation of need for reflection; national legislation may impede some aspects of implementation;
- Undocumented refugee responses;
- Incoming challenges: Micro-credentials are still in an exploratory phase and the recognition process can prove difficult both at the national and EU level;
- Recognition of prior learning: the scope of recognition ought to be clarified;
- Cross border recognition: how to achieve flexibility?

The discussions on the sub-topics related to the top three thematic priorities are summarized below:

### Sub-topics of digital technologies





- Focus on the output of other digital projects (i.e., Europass);
- Maintaining of strong links to automatic recognition;
- Use of digital technologies in recognition.

#### Sub-topics of alternative pathways

- Countries need to correlate systems of cross-border recognition with recognition of prior learning (connection between alternative pathways);
- Micro-credentials should be included as an alternative pathway.

#### Sub-topics of automatic recognition

- The scope of automatic recognition needs to be defined and further explained/explored at an institutional level, at a system level and at the point of admission. Some points of reference to understand automatic recognition better may include, the Denmark case, I-AR net project survey findings, etc.;
- Identification of issues related to automatic recognition;
- Need to increase awareness of diploma mills.

In conclusion, it was observed that several approaches can be taken to improve and contribute to the progress of the mentioned thematic indications. Firstly, HEIs ought to be more included in this process, especially student representative groups. Secondly, a catalogue of approaches should be developed with best practices and different practices to assess what works best. Finally, stakeholder organizations such as EURASHE can contribute and help to achieve progress.

#### 5.2. Group 2 (Rapporteur: Baiba Ramina, Latvia)

The discussions on the sub-topics related to the top three thematic priorities are summarized below:

#### Sub-topics of digital technologies

- The issues related to diploma supplement, their authenticity and digitalization credentials should be further looked into;
- Block-chain technologies should be made of use. Additionally, DEQAR database can be a useful tool in the recognition procedure.

#### Sub-topics of alternative pathways

- Focus should be placed on the work of micro-credentials; prior learning; formal/informal learning;
- The input of Covid-19 in relation to learning interruptions and its consequences should be discussed.

#### Sub-topics of automatic recognition

- The interpretation of automatic recognition ought to be harmonized in each country, in order to have a common approach.





In conclusion, it was summarised that authenticity, digitalization and its ethical dimension, block-chain infrastructure and technology were the main topics of interest for this sub-group.

### 5.3. Group 3 (Rapporteurs: Ulrika Axell, Sweden and Jenneke Lokhoff, the Netherlands)

The group initially identified transversal topics and additional priorities as summarized below:

#### Transversal topics

- Alternative pathways and automatic recognition were identified as topics suitable for cooperation with TPG A and C.
- The inclusion of a learner-centered approach was suggested to be included as a “transversal lens” for the activities of TPG B, as a way of including the voice and perspective of students.

#### Additional priorities

- The structural (legal) implementation of the LRC principles and articles was identified as a priority, especially the implementation of Article VII (refugees).

For more detailed information, please see: [https://www.enic-naric.net/fileusers/1251\\_Recommendation\\_on\\_Recognition\\_of\\_Qualifications\\_Held\\_by\\_Refugees\\_Displaced\\_Persons\\_and\\_Persons\\_in\\_a\\_Refugee\\_like\\_Situation.pdf](https://www.enic-naric.net/fileusers/1251_Recommendation_on_Recognition_of_Qualifications_Held_by_Refugees_Displaced_Persons_and_Persons_in_a_Refugee_like_Situation.pdf)

The discussions on the sub-topics related to the top three thematic priorities are summarized below:

#### Sub-topics of digital technologies

- Digitalization ought to be applied in a national context and within EHEA: potential challenges should be identified (i.e., security and interoperability); optimum solutions (i.e., share good practices on national level and between ENIC-NARICs/with other parties) and information on current initiatives (i.e., Europass) should be provided.

#### Sub-topics of alternative pathways

- The scope of alternative pathways ought to be specified (i.e., focus on non-formal/informal learning, micro-credentials);
- Micro-credentials need to be recognized by respective institutions in order to support flexible learning paths. Their added value needs to be clearly defined.

#### Sub-topics of automatic recognition





- Countries ought to share good practices that can help implement automatic recognition at a national level. The multilateral agreement on automatic recognition of HE qualifications signed by the Benelux members and the Baltic States on September 14, 2021, can be used as a reference point;
- Analysis needs to be carried out on how digital solutions can support implementation of automatic recognition (information exchange, peer support).

In conclusion, digitalization, security issues, automatic recognition and additional topics (i.e., the limitations of Article VII, information sharing and collaboration among countries) were identified as key areas of interest by the sub-group.

## 6. Wrap up and conclusions

Chiara Finocchietti (Co-chair) concluded the meeting and made a few final remarks on the next steps to be undertaken by the group. She emphasized the importance of focusing on good practices, peer support and building on the work done in the previous working period.

Following the meeting, the final draft of the Work Plan will be finalized and shared with the TPG B members for final comments and then be submitted to the BICG by 31 October 2021. In line with the Guidelines of the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG), the TPG B will organize two meetings per year. The working methods will combine a mix of panel meetings to share information and smaller group activities, to facilitate the exchange of practices through peer support activities (including staff mobility, if possible).

Given that some of the countries have not been able to complete the questionnaire referenced to under point 3, the deadline for its completion was extended until 29 September 2021.

No other business was brought forward, therefore, the first meeting of the TPG B on LRC was concluded.