Working Group to Support the Implementation of the Roadmap for San Marino's Accession to the EHEA

Fourth Meeting, Hosted by San Marino,
26-27 September 2022

Minutes

List of Participants

Country	Name	Last Name
Andorra (Co-Chair)	Jordi	Llombart
Council of Europe	Sjur	Bergan
European University Association (EUA)	Maria	Kelo
Finland (Co-Chair)	Maija	Innola
Holy See	Melanie	Rosenbaum
Italy	Vera	Lucke
Luxembourg (Guest)	Isabelle	Reinhardt
San Marino	Maria Elena	D'Amelio
San Marino	Remo	Massari
San Marino	Paula	M. Cenci
San Marino	Monica	Cavalli
Ministry of Education, San Marino (Director)	Laura	Gobbi
BFUG Secretariat (Head)	Oltion	Rrumbullaku
BFUG Secretariat	Klodiana	Thartori
BFUG Secretariat	Enis	Fita
BFUG Secretariat	Migena	Stafa

Liechtenstein sent regrets. Maria Kelo from EUA attended the meeting online due to COVID-infection. Due to administrative complications, members of the BFUG Secretariat also attended the meeting online.

1. Welcome and information by the Co-Chairs

The Co-Chairs welcomed everyone to the fourth meeting of the Working Group (WG) to support the implementation of the Roadmap for San Marino's accession to the EHEA, emphasizing the importance of this meeting as an opportunity for members and stakeholders to exchange information.

It was emphasized that the key aim of the WG the is to assist San Marino in the implementation of the national laws on education to align its system to the EHEA. In addition, the ToR requires the WG to report to the Board and the BFUG. In order to do this, the Co-Chairs have prepared the agenda so that there is time for both peer learning activities and a report on the progress from San Marino delegates. Additionally, knowledge and information sharing on how things are done in other EHEA members will be provided in order to inspire the implementation process. Agenda of the meeting, was adopted without changes.

The invitation to this WG meeting was send out in July indicating that the meeting would be held in presence in San Marino. Regretfully, the BFUG Secretariat informed one of the Co-Chairs just one working day before the meeting that the Secretariat would not be able to travel to the meeting due to administrative complications. The Secretariat's inability to attend the meeting in-person raised strong concerns among the WG members. They urged the Secretariat to resolve this issue, as it interferes with the WG's operations and efficiency. The WG requested that the

Secretariat address this issue with the Albanian authorities urgently to comply with the ToRs and fulfill its duty as the supporting mechanism for the BFUG and its structures. WG members agreed that the issues should be reported in the BFUG Board meeting in October.

It was noted that Eva Meirer is the new representative of Liechtenstein replacing Daniel Miescher and she will participate in the next WG meetings.

The Co-Chairs concluded the opening of the meeting by thanking the San Marino representatives for hosting this meeting in-presence and for providing online link for the Secretariat.

For more information, please see: _Agenda of the meeting_

2. Overview of the state of play of the implementation of San Marino Roadmap

Remo Massari (San Marino) presented the current state of play on the implementation of the Roadmap for San Marino. Mr. Massari informed that the first draft of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is ready and has been presented to the stakeholders and the Minister of Education. Additionally, two foreign experts have been nominated to work on the drafting of the NQF. Next steps included the NQF to be presented to the government and parliament commission and the involvement of experts in the drafting of the new law.

It was confirmed that the primary internal QA guidelines and associated indicators have been established, the testing of the participatory assessment has begun, and alignment of the system with the ESG is progressing. The first Independent Assessment Body (IAB) report on teaching quality is due in December 2022, a mock review is planned to evaluate the internal QA procedure, and an agreement with an external QA agency will be established.

With regard to the recognition of qualifications, it is intended to encourage the assessment of prior learning by adhering to the University of San Marino's (UNIRSM) policies and the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC). Additional actions will include meetings between San Marino and Italian partner universities and a review of legislation, if necessary.

The majority coalition was given the first draft of the new university law proposal regarding HE Governance. Additional actions include starting to design the law on higher education and passing the new University of San Marino (UNISRM) law before November 2023.

Lastly, the university's stakeholders took part in the effort to increase awareness of the social impact of higher education. Next steps included the development of guidelines for putting social dimension policies into practice and expanding the representation of underrepresented groups.

3. Governance of higher education and state of play of the higher education legislation reform

Laura Gobbi (Director, Ministry of Education in San Marino) presented the timetable of the roadmap, noting that the first draft proposal of the new university law was completed at the end of July. She stated that the legislative process is projected to start on January 1, 2023, and the new law should be ratified by November 1, 2023. Additionally, the plan was presented to the majority coalition three weeks ago, and the first reading in parliament is planned to kick off the formal legislative process in November 2022. The academic senate and staff were informed of the provisions of the new law. A parliamentary commission will review the law. The parliament's adoption will be the last step, and it's estimated that it will happen by November 2023.

The proposed new law aims to further expand the institutional autonomy of the UNISRM considering suggestions from the BFUG Working Groups and, more specifically, the participation of students and staff, including technical staff, in all governance bodies with the right to vote. A change was announced wherein three professors, one from each department in University of San Marino, will participate in the University Council. The representatives of the University will have the majority in the composition of the University Council.

The new draft plan provides the academic senate more autonomy when selecting the Rector and complete autonomy when creating university regulations. Currently, the university creates the regulations, which are then adopted by the government. However, the aim is full autonomy for the university. Moreover, it was informed that the state contributes 50% of the university budget. In the proposed law, the nomination of the Rector was described as a procedure in which the

academic senate appoints the Rector and the parliament subsequently approves or have the right to express its satisfaction (*gradimento*) with the nomination. In the current law, the parliament appoints the Rector based on a proposal of the academic senate.

It was stated that public financing in HE should not be utilised as a justification for reducing the autonomy of the university, such as by giving outside authorities a strong role in the governance of the institution or the appointment of its leadership. It was noted that there are two main governance models in higher education in Europe: the traditional model, in which the academic community, through its representative body or an assembly elected for this specific task, elects the Rector, who is typically a member of the institution, and the alternative model, in which the Rector is hired by the institution, and the Rector is not necessarily a member of the institution. A presentation on the organisational structure of university governments throughout Europe, particularly on the selection of Rector, could be helpful for the meeting with the parliamentary commission. It would be desirable if the formality of the approval by the Parliament could be abolished, but it was acknowledged that it might be now too big step politically considering historical and cultural background of the University governance. The members of the working group advised San Marino to consider what would happen if the Parliament would not give its agreement to the appointment of the rector. Even if this case seems unlikely, it could lead to an institutional crisis. Members of the WG therefore considered that the proposal is an improvement over the current arrangements, but that it is not entirely satisfactory. They did, however, understand the background for the proposal and underlined that it will be important for San Marino to explain this background to its EHEA partners if the proposal is adopted as it stands. The WG should also do so in its report to the BFUG.

Ms. Gobbi anticipated that the bill will pass, stressing the necessity of continuing institutional debate and the critical value of autonomy. As a decree is easier to alter than the law, it was suggested that the procedure of endorsement be defined in the regulation, rather than in the law. She highlighted further achieved results in governance transparency, expansion of research activity and third mission and equal opportunities provided by the University. The University staff is hired through public competitions. Also, all university acts are published. The expansion of research activities and provision of scholarship options for students who desire to pursue research are the main changes. It would be very beneficial to have tangible examples from the research, possibly in the report to draw attention, as this would enable to make adjustments that are more effective and obvious. Projects are funded by the university, so faculty members have the ability to conduct research on particular subjects. They occasionally involve students, which is an excellent opportunity for their participation in research. Since the UNIRSM is so far, the only higher education institution in the country, it was concluded that having everything posted on its website was a good practice, as publishing university actions is vital.

Ms. Elena D'Amelio stressed that the new legal amendments will be considered for the following meeting. According to the roadmap, the legislative procedure should be completed by the end of 2023, depending on the parliament, thus it was observed that there has been considerable progress in this regard, also related to the developments of the law related to the University of San Marino, the law on NQF and the law of Higher Education.

4. Implementing San Marino's NQF

4.1. Presentation of the current draft and work towards NQF and micro-credentials

Maria Elena D'Amelio (San Marino) presented the state-of-play of the San Marino NQF development. The first actions since the last WG meeting included holding a meeting with UNIRSM stakeholders to focus on the "Dublin Descriptors" of the EHEA-QF levels 1-2-3 (which correspond to NQF levels 6-7-8). The San Marino National Qualifications Framework (NQF) draft was presented to all UNIRSM stakeholders, and there were broad consultations with the faculty. These consultations have primarily focused on the EHEA three cycles, and the NQF draft has been updated to reflect the opinions and suggestions of the stakeholders accordingly. Additional consultations on the San Marino NQF with other relevant stakeholders, such as the Labor Office, the Representative of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Representative of the Minister of Labour, and school principals, have been held in order to better understand what should be incorporated into the NQF in terms of the relationship with labor and the worker in the accreditation of micro-credentials.

Additional initiatives included the nomination of two foreign specialists, Miquel Nicolau (Rector, University of Andorra) and Luca Lantero (CIMEA, Italy), who would participate in the SM NQF's final draft. They have only recently formalized their commitment and are currently in the process of beginning their work. The next steps include participation of the foreign experts in the last development of the NQF; self-certification and presentation of the draft San Marino NQF to the parliament. It was agreed to provide feedback on how to continue in terms of the timeframe after discussing the timeline for including the foreign experts in the NQF and presenting the NQF draft statute to the parliament. More specifically, the WG members advised to include foreign experts as early as possible in the work to ensure that NQF of San Marino is comprehensible and readable by all.

Monica Cavalli (San Marino) presented the situation involving San Marino's higher education micro-credentials as a vital instrument for lifelong learning to support workers on the job or undergoing career transitions. A clear and transparent assessment of the learning outcomes criteria, portable and shared certification, and a foundation of quality assurance were recognized as essential fundamental prerequisites for the implementation of the SM NQF. It was presented that San Marino is already running short courses, which probably satisfy the requirements of the Council [Recommendation](#) 2022/C 243/02, especially in relation to: identification of the learner; title of the micro-credential; country of issuer; date of issue; and workload in ECTS.

The formal higher education qualifications were highlighted as being of variable length, intended to meet local labor demands, of interest to other countries, typically addressed to first and second cycle post-graduate students rather than first and/or second cycle certification, and intended to foster professional skills and competence. The challenge was to find a model to apply in order to correctly relate micro-credentials to NQF levels.

4.2.   Stakeholders' views and discussions

Representatives from the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Labour Office, school representatives, and Student Union representatives participated in the discussion and an overview of the challenges and opportunities of the implementation of the San Marino NQF was given by the stakeholders. Mr. Emanuele D'Amelio, representative from the Ministry of Labour, emphasized how San Marino has gradually become integrated into the Italian educational system.

According to other relevant stakeholders, the San Marino academic system is avant-garde and provides students with the skills and thorough preparation they need to succeed in university. It was discussed that San Marino already fulfil Lisbon Recognition Convention, but it needs to reform some laws to further facilitate recognition to access the labour market. Therefore, many of these issues will be resolved by participating in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) as full member.

The recognition of the qualifications earned at vocational professional schools was cited as crucial for the introduction of young people into the labor market, as was the recognition of the qualifications of those who study abroad. It was pointed out that use of the QF helps this process. It was mentioned that access requirements to public service are based on specific diplomas and titles, more so than on learning outcomes. It was also determined that though this issue may not specifically pertain to education law, it is worthwhile paying attention to it when San Marino revises the education-related aspects of legislation.

The stakeholders considered the current draft of the NQF useful and acceptable. It was suggested that the current draft on the NQF should be shared amongst stakeholders, as it is relevant for society and the requirements of the labor market.

Issues with the recognition of professional studies were reiterated, as was the importance for SM to implement NQF in order to grant international recognition in the EHEA system for programs of the third level. A synergy between the labor market and the educational system was deemed necessary, in order to direct young people to choose the educational path.

The importance of making a correction in the graph pertaining to the transition from 1st and 2nd level Master programs to the 3rd level of Doctoral Studies was underlined. Further clarification of three elements on the San Marino school system is needed. These include how to gain access to a study program, how to achieve the stipulated learning outcomes, and what possibilities a specific qualification offers for work and further study. It was highlighted that the Qualifications Framework, more than a collection of descriptions of individual qualifications, is a guide on how

to move between different qualifications. The necessity of engaging foreign experts as early as possible was underlined.

5. Peer learning activity – Alternative pathways to higher education (examples of different approaches)

5.1. Case Finland

Maija Innola (Finland) provided an overview of the Finnish educational system as well as an outline of how Finland deals with alternate pathways to higher education. One of Finland's most significant educational innovations in recent years has been the extension of the mandatory schooling period. Currently, the age of 18 or completion of a secondary education qualification marks the conclusion of compulsory education. Students who complete comprehensive school proceed on to upper secondary school and have the option of either general education or vocational education and training. Before upper secondary education, pupils might, if necessary, participate in a preparatory education program. A fundamental premise of education policy has been to avoid educational dead ends.

The national matriculation test, foreign degrees, and credentials from other countries that grant admission to higher education in the issuing country give Finnish universities and universities of applied sciences general eligibility. Higher education institutions make decisions about student admission, as well as about the criteria. Selection of students is dependent on their prior academic performance or results of an entrance exam.High demand of higher education combined with demanding entrance requirements has led to a situation where some students now have to wait several years before beginning their higher education studies.

There was also discussion of the entry points into higher education. The primary admissions pathway to universities and universities of applied sciences is the national matriculation examination, which concludes upper secondary general education. In accordance with the legislation, higher education institutions have the right to choose students even if they lack formal credentials if they believe the applicant possesses the necessary abilities and competencies for the study. Actually, this option is not frequently implemented. Studying at an Open University or Open University of Applied Science is the most popular second chance route to higher education. Under the Open University system, universities offer courses to everyone, regardless of age or educational background. Taking part on these courses give students an opportunity to demonstrate their skills and eligibility for higher education studies.

Additionally, Ms. Innola highlighted a few strategies that support access of under-represented groups and untraditional learners. She emphasized that there is no preferential treatment that reduces the standards for admission, quotas, etc. HEIs are required to have policies in place for prior learning recognition. Furthermore, there are preparatory programs designed specifically for students from immigrant backgrounds; nevertheless, completion of the program does not guarantee admission to a university. She concluded by mentioning that the aim of the government is to promote diversity, inclusivity and accessibility in higher education.

5.2. Case Andorra

Jordi Llombart (Andorra) gave an overview of the country's general access to higher education system, emphasizing the two types of degrees—the upper secondary leaving certificate, which has an open curriculum, and the upper secondary vocational training certificate. He mentioned that there are three adaptable paths: candidates at a slower pace; recognition of prior learning; candidates over 25 who do not receive a diploma but only a certificate. For candidates at a slower pace, the student must be an Andorran or a resident of Andorra, be at least 16 years old, and hold a secondary education degree. Additionally, the target group consists of secondary level drop out students who entered the labour market, students who are hospitalized, students who are sportmen and sportwomen at elite level or who get professionalized in other sectors like music.

In the past ten years, Andorra has made an attempt to transform the focus of its educational subjects from being mostly content-based to competences. The level of assistance provided to candidates at a slower pace is comparable to a long-distance learning program. There is a platform where students may interact, complete assignments and communicate with teachers in person or online. Additionally, students who are sportsmen and sportswomen receive more support thanks to the funds from the Ministry of Sports.

The second flexible pathway is recognition of prior learning. In order to qualify for an Upper Secondary Vocational Training certificate, the requirements to be met are for the student to be Andorran or resident in Andorra. The primary linked fields of study include those related to social community service, childcare, computers, multilingual secretariats, and sports. Prior learning is acknowledged by first conducting an interview to ascertain requirements, enlighten on the program's competencies, and, if necessary, reorient. Then comes a year-long process of writing the competencies within a dossier that contains a list of competencies that are explained in learning outcomes. Afterwards, the students present themselves in front of a jury at the end of the year.

The third flexible pathway is the certificate to access higher education for people over 25 years old. The goal of the test is that the students show that they are able to speak in both their native language and a foreign language. Students must show critical thinking and scientific knowledge.

Mr. Llombart called attention to how briefly the subjects are split. Concerning the native language test, they must be able to read and write specialized literature in Catalan, as well as carry on a formal discussion. Concerning foreign language, students must be able to read and write specialized texts, but not necessary to speak it.

There are two aspects to critical thinking: the ability to reason about philosophical and practical issues, as well as conflicts with critical and autonomous thought, and the ability to analyze contemporary social issues while taking into account the socio historical, territorial and socio-cultural context. Regarding scientific reasoning, one must be able to use mathematical graphics and apply them, as well as use them to address current problems. The target group for this program is dropout candidates who left school to enter the labour market and wish to advance their professional status. To qualify for a certificate allowing admission to HE, applicants must be over 25 years old.

6. Recognition of qualifications

6.1. Implementation of measures in the University Guidelines

Marica Montemaggi (UNISRM Students' Office) introduced the topic of UNISRM's student and teacher regulations by stating that they are in accordance with the LRC. UNISRM also has a bilateral agreement with Italy for mutual recognition of qualifications and agreements with other universities for recognition in the international community, following ECTS guidelines for the higher education area.

Ms. Montemaggi further explained the recognition of qualification to access the university. International students must provide qualifications issued by a recognized school in the education system of the issuing country for a minimum of 12 years of study, although San Marino uses a system of 13 years of study. Students with foreign qualifications should submit the Declaration of Value taken through Italian diplomatic representations and other related documents. There is not needed for the schools recognized as belonging to the Italian education system.

It was clarified that UNISRM accepts alternative paths of recognition, for secondary level qualifications obtained for less than 12 years of study, as long as they are accompanied with other partial studies, non-academic or academic courses, that fulfills some certain conditions, and the required documentation is provided.

To the question as to whether San Marino has an appeal procedure for complains against the non-recognitions of the qualifications, Remo Massari clarified that the ENIC Center has the legal framework to recognize or not, but both the labor office and UNISRM have the final say on recognition. Moreover, the recognitions of qualifications by Cimea in Italy are recognized in San Marino too.

The declaration of value was cited as the only document needed to recognize other systems and that, though not experts on the education system, embassies are the sole authority to authenticate qualifications. In order to avoid any potential problems with the requirements of the Italian Universities, UNISRM applies the embassy's same qualification validation procedure. It was clarified that since 80% of UNISRM students are Italian, the validation process of qualifications facilitates the recognition process and employment in Italy.

It was commented, however, that UNISRM has to regulate and implement the possibility to appeal against a resolution related to the recognition of the prior learning, which is not in compliance

with the Lisbon Recognition Convention. It was underlined that there is a [recommendation](#) adopted by the LRC Committee on criteria and procedures, ensuring that the individual must have a possibility to appeal within the legal system. As such, it is absolutely necessary to implement the procedure to appeal against a resolution. It was suggested that San Marino representatives should work on officially declaring a specific legal body responsible for the appeals, as this has not yet been done.

It was added that the legal basis regarding the appeals procedure is included in Article 3.5, based on which, the Lisbon Recognition Committee considered that 3 - 4 months would be a reasonable time to come up with a decision about the appeal. San Marino representatives were reminded that the body responsible for the appeal should not be the same as the one that makes the recognition decision.

7. Lifelong learning/ Social dimension of higher education

7.1. Assessment of the specific needs – progress of the working group

Paola Cenci presented on lifelong learning and the social dimensions of HE and introduced the group to the Territorial Pact. Ms. Cenci stated that lifelong learning strategies have been introduced gradually into the San Marino HE system with the goal of assisting both students and interested external users in improving their skills, in better using technology, and in stimulating competitiveness and improving social cohesion. All higher education programs may be followed by external users as single modules.

High levels of interest were noted for professional courses, as they lead to immediate employment upon completion. As such, institutions have asked UNISRM to include specific courses due to the immediate need for professional experts in institutions. The weekend courses are designed for adult and/or already employed students. It was clarified that both degree courses and professional courses are recognized through ECTS, allowing for micro-credential assimilation.

Two of the goals cited in the San Marino Roadmap were to encourage the inclusion and participation of underrepresented groups in the academic program and to support them financially so as to prevent the high risk of dropout. To this end, the number of grants issued by UNISRM has increased. UNISRM offers individualized academic programs for university employees, as well as a part-time program and individual assistance for students with learning disorders. Other services at UNISRM include psychological support, recorded lectures, free language courses and a new interdepartmental laboratory focused on gender identity.

The Territorial Pact was introduced, explaining that it consists of an advisory board led by the Rector and composed of various representatives of UNISRM, local administration, professionals and trade unions of San Marino. It was explained that this pact enables stakeholders to suggest programs to the university according to current market demand as well as encourages fundraising. The Third Mission Project was introduced, and it was cited as having raised awareness of the social dimension aspect and improved interactions within the territory, particularly those between participating teachers and students.

Plans for the future of lifelong learning and the social dimension of HE intend to include a close monitoring of the learning and teaching process in each university course, in order to gauge whether the financial and environmental structures organized thus far have been effective, if underrepresented groups are included, and if the learning and teaching processes are related to dropout rates. To strengthen the social dimension and recognition of qualifications, working groups with the labor office will be organized.

The WG members noted that there are many good practices and examples of actions in San Marino. It was suggested that San Marino could check the actions against the Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA approved in the Rome 2020 Ministerial Conference. Also introducing a timeframe for actions could be helpful. It was agreed that the Territorial Pact could be highlighted as a good practice in the final report of the WG. This would promote sharing of good practices among the EHEA countries.

The Territorial Pact was emphasized as a way to organize stakeholder cooperation within San Marino that could be applied to a city or community and therefore be of interest to other countries. It was mentioned that the parties engaged are not just concerned with labor relations and economic policy, thus the territorial pact's agenda might serve as a comprehensive model for others. To properly complete the presentation of this pact, providing illustrations of the different

examples was recommended.

8. Peer Learning Activity - Quality assurance

The goal of this session was to carefully examine what has happened at the national level, so as to create the national frameworks and relate them to QA at the university level.

8.1. QA system and national framework in Luxembourg

Isabelle Reinhardt (Luxembourg) presented an overview of the legal basis for the higher education system and the quality assurance procedures in Luxembourg's public and private HEIs. It was emphasized that the legal basis is still being revised. Additionally, private HEIs were given a presentation on current accreditation practices and evaluation standards for advanced technician's diploma BTS short cycle HE offers. The main methodological distinction for private HEIs relates to joint accreditation. Although Luxemburg is now developing a new legal framework for internal and external quality assurance, the overall design of the HE system will not change.

The legislation amendment aims to strengthen careers in higher education, analyze governance issues thoroughly, and improve certification processes. In close cooperation with NVAO, with whom a framework agreement is in effect, the new law aspires to establish monitoring mechanisms specifically for specialized HEIs and short cycle education providers.

Following the overview, a few remarks were made. Firstly, if the accreditation status for private HEIs changes, the principle of offering to the students the opportunity to complete their studies cycle before the end of the validity through transitory measures, is applied. Moreover, although there are distinct ministerial legislation, criteria and precise and complete features to look at each instance, such as short cycle programs that are professionally focused, the accreditation process for private HEIs has some legal similarities to that of public HEIs. QA is connected to ECA registration, ESG compliance, and the Benelux treaty on the recognition of HE diplomas, with the Benelux countries' cooperation to be consolidated in the future.

8.2. Legislative framework of San Marino

Remo Massari (San Marino) presented the legal basis of the HE system in San Marino, with three main articles related to QA. Article 23 states that the University adopts an internal quality assurance system that carries out systematic monitoring and overall evaluation of activities. In addition, all data, documents and information relating to internal quality assurance system needs to be publicly accessible. Article 24 outlines that The Secretariat of State is authorised to sign agreements with quality assurance agencies for external quality assurance. External quality assurance implies the periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance process. All documents are public. Article 25 states that all costs of the external evaluation are borne by the university. It was confirmed that there were no current plans from the Ministry of Education of San Marino to amend the law and update the mentioned articles.

8.3. Connecting legal framework and internal methods for QA

Maria Kelo (EUA) highlighted the need for an overall framework of the QA system that defines the objectives, methods and operations of the national QA requirements. The principles should be defined for all universities. For example, referring to operating in line with the requirements of the ESG. The consequences and outcomes of the external QA process, as well as the frequency of external evaluations, should also be defined.

Internal systems can be developed while completely observing national standards and the ESG. Internal QA system should make sense for internal needs of the institution and support the development of quality culture within the institution. It is important to view the entire QA process as an opportunity, and to share it with students and other audiences to improve global participation and collaboration.

Participants made some remarks regarding the selection of a QA agency, focusing on the adequate period to choose an agency, whether it is a national or international agency; and in a reasonable balance between flexibility and stability. Participants also suggested finding an agency willing to work again a second time, to set up the system and inform of what was said and done in the previous round. It was also mentioned that San Marino could consider rephrasing of the Article 24 in the current legislation as it now mentions that agreements with external quality

bodies or agencies recognised by competent international public authorities are possible. Better formulation could be found by introducing the requirement of ESG compliance here.

8.4. Institutional internal QA approaches: Mapping internal QA methods and criteriawith the requirementsof the ESG in the UNIRSM

Leonardo Tagliente (Independent Assessment body, UNISRM) delivered the most pertinent updates on the adoption process of internal QA complying with the ESG and a synopsis of the developments since the last meeting of this WG. Improvements to the UNISRM quality assurance system were discussed, including the adoption of a new analysis model based on the Student Management System ESSE3, prudent expenditures in relevant online applications, and the creation of the first IAB report on teaching quality (expected by December 2022). The hallmarks of participatory evaluation are high student involvement, satisfaction surveys, collaboration between students, teachers, and the Student Guarantor. The emphasis of participation assessment is on systematic improvement actions, the timing of didactic material acquisition, a balance between theoretical lessons and exercises or laboratory activities, supplementary didactic activities, and the relative and overall teaching load. The anticipated outcomes include systematic and ongoing assessment of students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness and corrective actions.

The testing phase (2022–2023) of participatory assessment was described. It will begin with one subject for each degree programme, chosen by the IAB in consultation with the Student Guarantor and taking into account the recommendations of the degree programme directors. In 2023, the testing will be expanded to include additional degree programme subjects. The Student Guarantor will be in charge of ensuring proper implementation and preparing periodic reports to the IAB during the testing phase (2023–2024) for all degree programmes and courses. This phase will propose an operational mechanism and timeline for improvement activities.

Compliance with the ESG (updates) was displayed, followed by the alignment with the Roadmap's objectives. The latter included improvements in the transition from an informal to a more formalised QA system; identification and use of the key internal QA guidelines and related indicators. It was noted that it ought to be an entity that complies with the ESG, not necessarily an EQAR-registered agency.

There were comments made regarding the relationship between QA and the creation of quality culture, the challenges of creating a quality culture inside an institution, and the insufficient human resources available to QA to meet all of the UNISRM's requirements. They also concentrated on staff and student understanding that creating a quality culture is more significant than fulfilling an external obligation. It was also mentioned that the ESG's mapping process takes time, that tangible steps must be taken to implement these improvements, and that decisions must be made regarding what is most important and urgent. Thus, the concept of creating a workplan to accomplish goals was covered. It was also underlined how crucial it is to create a community structure to uphold and enhance quality, and that in order to do so, the QA system needs time to be discussed, tested, and piloted.

9. Next steps

The Co-Chairs summarized the meeting's discussions and reiterated that the BFUG Board Meeting LXXXI will be informed of all the WG's progress. They further elaborated that the roadmap is on the right track and San Marino has made significant progress in several of the subjects it covers.

Regarding the timing of the next meeting, the SM representative will announce when the first reading of the law will take place in the parliament in December. This will allow for the organization of the next WG meeting with the possibility to include discussion with the parliament members.

It was emphasised that while reporting to the BFUG, it is crucial to be transparent about both strengths and limitations. It was underlined that the Working Group's draft report ought to be finalised prior to the BFUG meeting in November/December 2023. It was agreed that the structure of the final report will be introduced at the following WG meeting, along with some basic or introductory texts for the final report. The necessity of beginning the work on the final report early enough was emphasised.

The Co-Chairs asked the San Marino representatives to communicate comments or questions they had before the meeting. Additionally, they suggested that a European University Association (EUA) representative participate in the session with the parliament. The parliament could find it

useful to comprehend the governance models of higher education in the European context.

The date of the next meeting was left open. An in-presence meeting in San Marino would best support the legislative process and allow discussions with the Parliament members and other stakeholders. Thus, it was agreed that the schedule of the San Marino parliament would determine when the next meeting will be held. Hence, the San Marino representatives would inform on the WG as soon as they have more information about the schedule when the best timing would be. Based on the estimation of the San Marino representatives, a doodle poll of the dates will be circulated to WG members.

No other business was brought forward, therefore, the fourth meeting of the WG on San Marino Roadmap was concluded.