2nd Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue meeting

21st of February 2025, 09:30 – 11:00 CET

Minutes of the meeting

List of participants

Nr.	Country/Organisation	Name
1.	Italy (Co-chair)	Elisa Petrucci
2.	Moldova (Co-chair)	Nina Putuntean
3.	UNESCO (Co-chair)	Noah Sobe
4.	UNESCO	Leila Loupis
5.	Holy See	Melanie Rosenbaum
6.	EUA	Elizabeth Colucci
7.	Austria	Katalin Szondy
8.	Austria	Michael Roither
9.	Romania	Madalina Matei
10.	Germany	Nils Tensi
11.	France	Mathieu Musquin
12.	Norway	Andreas Snildal
13.	ENQA	Anna Gover
14.	Slovakia	Martina Bedatsova
15.	ESU	Duarte Lopes
16.	Head of the EHEA Secretariat	Horia Onita
17.	Italy (IN-GLOBAL staff)	Marianna Tardioli

The European Commission sent their apologies. Albania, Azerbaijan, Education International – ETUCE, Kazakhstan and North Macedonia were absent.

Meeting started at 09:35 CET

1. **Welcome remarks and introduction to the meeting**

   Documents: CG_GPD_PL_AL_2_Draft agenda

The meeting started with welcome remarks from the UNESCO Co-chair, who introduced himself and apologised for not being able to attend the 1st CG on GPD meeting. The Co-chair welcomed participants and noted the successful organisation of the IN-GLOBAL Final Conference, which took place in Rome the same week and provided an opportunity to review the work of the CG on GPD in the previous mandate. The UNESCO Co-chair further informed the group that the Terms of Reference for the CG on GPD were adopted by the BFUG, and continued with the presentation of the agenda, which included brainstorming sessions on four topical issues identified in the ToRs. He emphasised that the objective of the meeting is to identify subtopics and actions, synergies and stakeholders for each of the four topics.

The agenda of the meeting was adopted by the group.

2. Brainstorming session on Bologna Key Commitments

In relation to recognition, the Italian Co-chair recalled the good practice of the TPG B and previous projects of involving the presidents of the regional recognition convention committees to support coordination and common understanding in relation to regional and global developments.

ENQA gave updates on several initiatives happening at global level in quality assurance, in relation to the regional QA frameworks that work in parallel with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in EHEA (ESG). ENQA mentioned their involvement in an initiative with SIACES (the Ibero-American network of QA agencies), which would include a report, to be published in the upcoming months, on mapping the ESG against the SIACES Principles of Good Practices. The report would be followed by recommendations on potential further alignment between the two frameworks. ENQA also mentioned a comparative study between ESG and the ASEAN QA framework under the SCOPE-HE project coordinated by DAAD and Nuffic, also due to be published soon, and that there was the possibility to produce a similar report covering the ESG and the Africa Standards and Guidelines under the HAQAA Initiative. The representative suggested that a comparative macro-synthesis could be developed, covering the similarities, differences, origins, purpose and coverage of the 4 QA frameworks (Europe, Africa, South-East Asia, Latin America), which would support comparability, recognition and mobility. Such a report, which was welcomed by several members of the CG on GPD, could be created under the framework of the CG on GPD, with ENQA willing to lead the work.

The Head of the EHEA Secretariat (HoS), supported by France and Germany, pointed out that since the ESG are being revised, it would be relevant to consider the comparative overview of other regional QA frameworks as an input of global developments in the revision process. Supported by France, he also suggested to work with TPG C on the QA of transnational education (TNE), which is by its nature a global endeavour. In this sense, he mentioned that in the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) Committee a subsidiary text to the LRC on TNE was being revised, while acknowledging that discussions in recognition are more institutionalised than in the QA policy field. Finally, he mentioned that the CG on GPD could engage global actors on the recognition of refugee qualifications, looking at standardisation of procedures and exemplifying with the UNESCO and European qualification passports for refugees.

France, supported by Italy, further suggested to involve TPG A on discussions related to degree structures and qualifications frameworks (QF) around the world, as well as credit comparison systems. The Holy See suggested that in relation to QF, potential links could be identified with the Asia-Pacific region.

EUA highlighted that creating a comparative study to feed into discussions would also bring a novel approach to the group, which so far had focused on creating spaces for dialogue. EUA also confirmed that an ESG-ASG comparison could be done under the HAQAA Initiative, and that the ASG revision process would start in 2026. EUA also mentioned the topics of QA of doctoral education, and links to research and joint accreditation procedures as existing areas of interest in Africa, which could be subject to comparison with the European QA systems.

ENQA emphasised that should such a comparative study feed into the ESG revision process, the document would have to be delivered quickly. Regarding the remarks of TNE, ENQA informed

the group of an Erasmus+ project application, submitted by ENQA under the Bologna policy support call. If successful, the work of the TPG C on the QA of TNE would be linked with this project, with expected input later in the working period. The Holy See informed members about the work of the Global Recognition Convention Bureau on QA, including TNE, with a guidance document to be discussed at the upcoming Conference in June 2025. Italy added that within the Bologna framework TNE would be tackled transversally by the three Thematic Peer Groups (A, B, C).

The Holy See reminded participants of different approaches in Africa, where QA processes may run detrimental to recognition. Supported by Italy, the Holy See representative suggested that the CG on GPD considered sharing experiences on how QA and recognition reinforce each other.

Norway emphasised the importance of engaging higher education institutions in recognition discussions and, in relation to the recognition of refugees' qualifications, recalled the four Erasmus+ projects working on the topic.

The HoS informed participants about updates in the historical overview of the CG on GPD on the website. He also pointed out that in the GLOBAL-2030 project, submitted by UEFISCDI, one deliverable is a report on global QA developments, which could support the comparison of regional QA frameworks. As the ESG revision would happen in the short term, he suggested that the next in person CG on GPD meeting, which could take place in autumn in Romania back-to-back with the SPHERE Conference, may include invitations to regional QA stakeholders.

3. **Brainstorming session on Lifelong Learning**

Austria emphasised the link between QA and lifelong learning, raising concerns about the limited interoperability between QA frameworks, lifelong learning and continuing education. Furthermore, it was noted that the visibility of lifelong learning within QA concepts is often lacking or not sufficiently prioritised, which may hinder its integration into broader educational and professional development strategies.

The Holy See suggested that the CG on GPD could liaise with Australia and New Zealand on the QA of micro-credentials offered by alternative (non-HE) providers, with EUA adding that relevant developments on micro-credentials are also taking place in the Southern Africa region, giving the example of the PROMISA project. The Italian Co-chair supported the topic and gave examples of developments on micro credentials in Asia (ASEM) and Africa.

On flexible learning pathways, the HoS suggested a potential area of interest in the credit accumulation systems and recognition of prior learning, giving the examples of South Korea and Malaysia highlighted in a recent UNESCO publication on the topic. He also pointed out that the topic could find synergies with the Advisory Group on the ECTS User's Guide revision.

The UNESCO Co-chair informed members that in the follow-up from the UNESCO World HE Conference, a document would be published in spring that would also include lifelong learning.

4. **Brainstorming session on social dimension and the right to education**

The Holy See recommended caution regarding the mandate of the ministries to discuss the right to education, which in some jurisdictions may require prior clearance with the ministries of foreign affairs. The Holy See also pointed out to the significant work of the International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC) on the right to education.

France proposed that academic values are also tackled under this framework, suggesting the involvement of the International Association of Universities (IAU), which organised in 2024 a global conference on the topic.

The UNESCO Co-chair supported the link between the right to (higher) education and academic freedom, institutional autonomy and freedom to learn. He emphasised that these values go beyond freedom of expression and include matters such as freedom of association, open science and the right to share research results publicly. In reply, the Holy See considered that the topic of fundamental values should be postponed for after 2027, as current efforts should focus on the monitoring framework within the EHEA done by the dedicated working group.

The HoS recalled that the right to higher education includes a legal discussion, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights or sectoral conventions, and a policy discussion. On the latter, supported by France, he suggested that the EHEA could promote the Principles and Guidelines on Strengthening the Social Dimension, as the first regional policy framework on social dimension. In this sense, he proposed the World Access to Higher Education Network (WAHEN) as a potential stakeholder.

France added that in the previous CG on GPD cycle, a survey of external stakeholders identified social dimension as the topic of cooperation which they were most interested. Finally, Austria suggested that social dimension could also be connected to lifelong learning.

5. Brainstorming session on digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Germany informed the group about their role as chair of the expert group on digitalisation and AI in the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), suggesting cooperation with ASEF and the ASEM Education Secretariat. Germany also raised the possibility of a potential future meeting between the two groups in the vein of the HAQAA event organised in Barcelona.

The Holy See considered that a starting point for global conversations could be the European regulations on protecting the users of AI, with Europe leading on the topic. She also suggested that the CG on GPD expects the results of the discussion in the BFUG on integrating the topic of AI in the BFUG work.

The UNESCO Co-chair informed the members about previous UNESCO work on the topic of AI (UNESCO Recommendation on the ethical use of AI, competency framework for teachers and students) and current work on an AI competency framework specifically for HE. He added that the group should decide on what dimension of AI would be tackled, such as AI in learning and teaching, research, recognition or others.

EUA highlighted that in the SPHERE project, experts raised the need of further guidance on institutional policies and instructional design in learning and teaching with AI, as well as AI impact on student evaluation.

The Italian Co-chair proposed that AI should be tackled transversally under the other topics already identified – key commitments, lifelong learning and social dimension.

6. Wrap up and conclusions

The Italian Co-chair asked the group whether a regional approach or a topical (multi-region) approach should be taken by the group in organising meetings with macro-regional stakeholders. The group concluded that the best approach was to organise topical meetings, while allowing for flexibility when needed.

The Italian Co-chair also suggested involving stakeholders in a continuous way, by creating a smaller group of stakeholders that would be involved in all meetings and activities and a larger group that would be kept informed and invited to the Global Policy Forum. There were no objections raised for the proposal.

Germany proposed to have a mechanism for members to add information on ongoing projects they are involved in and potential partners for various topics, in order to bring together the wealth of information. The HoS took up the suggestion and informed that the Secretariat would provide a common document on the drive for the four topics, where members could add stakeholders and projects apart from those mentioned in the meeting.

EUA gave updates on the upcoming SPHERE Conference, which would tentatively take place between 1st-3rd of October 2025 in Bucharest. EUA added that they had been liaising with the Secretariat and the Co-chairs on the possibility of inviting the members of the CG on GPD and other appropriate TPGs to the meeting, as well as organising a back-to-back CG on GPD meeting in that context.

There was no other AOB. The Co-chairs thanked the participants for their contributions and closed the meeting.

The meeting finished at 10:53 CET.

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