BOLOGNA THEMATIC PEER GROUP C ON QUALITY ASSURANCE
SECOND MEETING
Limassol (Cyprus), 27-28 May 2019

<u>Minutes</u>

List of participants

Delegation	First Name	Surname
Albania	Linda	Pustina
Armenia	Syuzanna	Ghazaryan
Armenia	Varduhi	Gyulazyan
Austria	Achim	Hopbach
Belgium Flemish Community	Axel	Aerden
Belgium Flemish Community	Mark	Frederiks
Belgium Flemish Community	Magalie	Soenen
Bulgaria	Kristiana	Dedikova
Bulgaria	Asya	Stoyanova
Croatia	Mina	Dordevic
Croatia	Durdica	Dragojevic
Croatia	Damir	Markučić
Cyprus	Stelios	Christophides
Cyprus	Terpsa	Constandinidou
Cyprus	Panikos	Giorgoudes
Cyprus	Erato	Ioannou
Cyprus	Yiannis	Kasoulides
Cyprus	Leonidas	Neocleous
Cyprus	Christianna	Nicolaidou
Cyprus	Andreas	Papoulas
Cyprus	Marina	Zervou
Czech Republic	Martina	Vidlakova
EI - ETUCE	Karin	Åmossa
ENQA	Maria	Kelo

EQAR	Melinda	Szabo
EQAR	Colin	Tück
ESU	Gohar	Hovhannisyan
ESU	Beatriz	Soler
EUA	Tia	Loukkola
EURASHE	Vaidotas	Viliunas
European Commission	Klara	Engels-Perenyi
France	Marie-Jo	Goedert
Georgia	George	Vashakidze
Germany	Katrin	Mayer-Lantermann
Hungary	Levente	Göncző
Italy	Alberto	Ciolfi
Kazakhstan	Aidos	Mukhatayev
Kazakhstan	Farkhat	Zhumabayev
Liechtenstein	Daniel	Miescher
Lithuania	Andrius	Zalitis
Montenegro	Milica	Kavedzic
Montenegro	Tijana	Stankovic
The Netherlands	Lineke	Van Bruggen
North Macedonia	Borcho	Aleksov
Poland	Jakub	Brdulak
Portugal	Cristina	Sin
Romania	Antonela	Toma
Serbia	Tatjana	Cvetkovski
Slovak Republic	Andrej	Piovarci
Sweden	Stella	Annani
Sweden	Loulou	Von Ravensberg
Moldova	Nadejda	Velisco
BFUG Secretariat	Rocío	Iglesias De Ussel Rubio
BFUG Secretariat	Edlira Adi	Kahani Subashi

Apologies from Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Greece, Latvia, Malta, Moldova, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, UNESCO and United Kingdom (Scotland).

1. Welcome address by the Minister of Education and Culture of Cyprus, the President of the Quality Assurance Agency of Cyprus and the 3 co-chairs of the peer group.

The Co-chair of Cyprus, Andreas Papoulas, opened the meeting and thanked the other Co-chairs and the Secretariat for the organization of the meeting. Director of the Deparment of Higher and Tertiary Education Dr Terpsa Constandinidou delivered the speech on behalf of the Minister of Education and Culture, who apologized for not attending the meeting. He welcomed and encouraged any activity and initiative regarding Quality Assurance (QA), which is an issue of high importance in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the Bologna Process, as reflected in the participation of so many countries in this meeting. It is for this reason that the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus has included the subject of Quality Assurance in Cyprus Higher Education in the Ministry's Strategic Plan. He wished a productive work for all participants.

Professor Mary Koutselini, president of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education, highlighted the fact that after 20 years of the Bologna Process and the work done during this period, there is still the need to a shift from external quality assurance into internal quality development, from detailed regulations into improvement action plans; from economic profits via an increase in student intake into education that cares for students' individual differences by differentiating teaching and provisions. Ms. Koutselini hoped that this meeting would be full of ideas and suggestions for new actions and proposals that will contribute to quality development in the EHEA.

The Georgian Co-chair, George Vashakidze, welcomed the new members that have joined the group, and is positive about the greater participation in this meeting compared to the first one. He thanked the other Co-chairs for the organization of the meeting. Co-chair Magalie Soenen from the Belgium Flemish Community expressed the will to have an interesting meeting.

2. State of play of the peer group, messages from BFUG and BICG, presentation of the projects and staff mobility project, monitoring/implementation report 2020.

Magalie Soenen explained the composition of the group with 37 countries and 8 stakeholders, with the possibility for other countries to join the group at any time. The group is guided by 3 Co-chairs. The mix of participants gives new opportunities and challenges for the group. Three overall meetings are foreseen for the group, the first one took place in December in Tbilisi, this is the second one, and the third will be in 16-17th January 2020 in Ghent, Belgium. She announced that the Secretariat has created a webpage for this group in the EHEA website, where all documents of the meetings and the work done by the group can be found.

The first meeting took into account the needs of the member countries and the creation of a workplan was started. The objective was to find the way on how the group was going to work. It was decided to have a Peer Learning Activity (PLA) on European approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, as it is a topic with a lot of demand from many countries and this is the reason why this meeting is going to be followed by a PLA on the mentioned topic.

The aim of the second meeting is to setup cooperation, based on the action plan and on concrete initiatives that started during the first meeting, as well as to try to find different matches for the staff mobility among group members and to discuss QA.

Magalie exposed the 6 subthemes the group is working on:

- A legislative framework in line with the ESG;
- ensuring effectiveness of internal quality assurance arrangements, including the use of QA results in the decision-making process and quality culture as well as links to learning and teaching;
- external QA;
- the role and engagement of stakeholders in QA (students, teachers, employers);
- cross-border QA;
- European Approach to accreditation of joint programmes.

She explained that the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG) has been established by the BFUG as a coordination body that organizes the three Thematic Peer Groups (TPG). The Action Plan of the TPG C on QA was sent to the BICG last February, and an interim report will be produced by October 2019, with a final report around February/March 2020 to be sent to the BICG.

As time until the next Ministerial Conference is very short, it is important that things move as fast as possible, starting initiatives is necessary in order to reach tangible results.

Klara Engels from the European Commission expressed the importance of putting the efforts more in the implementation. The main action happens outside these meetings, in every country. Strong coordination at national level is important. The group is represented by ministries and agencies, and at a national level this cooperation is very important, and the feedback from the country and the national authorities is crucial.

David Crossier of EURYDICE apologies for not attending the meeting, and Magalie presented on his behalf the "Bologna Process Implementation report 2020".

The key indicator is the level of developments of the QA system, with different colours representing in what level the countries are on the implementation aspect.There are many countries in green, but some countries are still in yellow and red. The presentation and the message carried out was that even though there are countries with a high level of implementation, in green colour, there is still a lot of things to be done.

In the 2020 report, people collecting data will not make a completely new report, but it will consider the EHEA long-term changes (achievements and challenges and make use of existing data as far as possible. The methodology of this new report is to combine statistical data from 2000-2018 to see the evolution, and qualitative data to see the current state of play in meeting policy commitments.

The deadline to submit the data of qualitative indicators is 11 June 2019, while statistical data collection is still ongoing, and indicators are expected in October. A narrative text will be drafted by October, and a first draft of the report is expected by the end of 2019.

Participants were presented with the results of the KA3 Projects selected for funding by the EC. This group applied for 4 projects in total, for peer support. The start of financing began in May 2019.

The first project was submitted by the Co-chairs to support the organization of the group, travel costs and accommodation costs. Travel reimbursements will come in due time, it was asked to keep all invoices of expenses to be covered. A maximum of 360€ for travel cost and 120/day for accommodation will be reimbursed. Three meetings will be covered by the project: 2 days for the meeting in Georgia, 3 days for the meeting in Cyprus, and 2 days for the one in Belgium.

The second project is dedicated to QA staff mobility. The aim is to support the professional development of staff by offering a work placement at another QA agency, ministry or organization to further develop its QA competencies through job shadowing, observation periods and training at the partner QA agency, ministry or organisation abroad.

A report from the staff that made the mobility will be needed.

Two members of each country for a maximum of 14 days per person will be covered by the project. It is not possible (for the moment) to send more members for a shorter time. It will be possible to add the new members that recently joined the group to be covered by the project funds.

The matching will be made in September, and members can start going and receiving partners between October 2019 and 31 May 2020.

It is important to specify on what topics the staff mobility will be based in order to make a good matching between the offer of certain countries and what other countries want to learn.

Applicants can be from ministries and agencies, universities cannot apply.

The project staff mobility is intended for the people, who are part of the Thematic Peer Group, not for other external people.

The third project is "Developing a European Approach for Comprehensive QA of (European) University Networks" which aim is to support QA agencies in addressing evolving methodological challenges by developing supra-institutional QA procedures. Many countries are part of this project, through the ministry or the QA agency.

The fourth project is coordinated by Romania and focuses on the involvement of stakeholders in QA. Project partners are the Romanian ministry of education, 3 European organizations (ENQA, EURASHE and ESU), and 5 QA agencies from Romania, France, Bulgaria, Denmark and Moldova.

Attachment: TPG_C_QA_RO_MK_2_Presentations

3. Creation of the action plan and discussion.

Flemish Belgium Co-chair Magalie Soenen presented the Action Plan, with its first part as a general one, while focusing on the second part, the country page, which is flexible and can be updated at any time with new developments.

Attachment: TPG_C_QA_RO_MK_2_Action Plan

4. Tour de table of follow up of engagements of the different countries.

Following the discussions on the action plan, the Georgian Co-chair explained the procedures for the tour de table, with all countries, according to alphabetic order, explaining their action plan, while the action plan was projected on the screen.

5. Round table on smaller projects/cooperation between different countries with similar needs or need/offer between countries.

The participants were divided in different groups to discuss on the different topics:

- Legal framework and ESG;
- European approach to accreditation of joint programmes;
- Stakeholders engagement;
- Internal QA;
- External QA: institutional and program accreditation;
- Cross-border QA.

6. Outcomes of the round tables

Moderators of the round table groups took the floor to summarize the discussions within their small groups, and presented the outcomes.

The **1st round table** was focusing on the legal framework. Discussions raised the topic of the regulation of legal frameworks. Important conclusion on the legal framework is the development on external QA, and participants emphasized the importance to have separate by-laws. Sometimes legal framework is legally-binding by the constitution and the changing framework could be very difficult.

The ENQA representative reported on the discussions of a smaller group with the main clusters of topics on:

- Independence of QA agencies with potential of few countries which were explored
- The extension of legal framework regulating the QA procedures
- Proposals for future projects on QA for Ph.D. programs.

The **2nd round table** was on European approach on accreditation of joint programs

The rapporteur informed that during its gathering, the group focused its discussions on two clusters:

Legal issues and the implementation of European approach on legal issues: how does HE get the opportunity to use the European approach? Other aspects discussed, include the traps and challenges on the topic cross-border cooperation and the number of joint programs and the importance of European approach should be mentioned in the application form. The idea of a survey to set up a methodology and use of other sources of information was discussed. The collection of the information should be linked to the EQAR database, this way joint programs could be related to EQAR. Basically, the discussions were on the inventory of joint programs, a topic which discussions has been going on for a long time. Sweden, Flanders, Croatia, Poland and Armenia expressed interest in participating in the survey

- Procedure aspects

Flemish Belgium Co-chair pointed out that the discussions and the topic raised would be a good start for another project.

The **3rd round table** was about the discussions on the stakeholders' engagement. They highlighted two main groups of stakeholders, identified by the countries as problematic;

students and employers. And there were two directions for discussions - structural engagement, meaning creation of procedures through which stakeholders could be engaged, and also discussions for capacity building of students and employers.

Discussions also raised the topic on how to build the capacity of stakeholders. After identifying these two subjects, the participants were divided in small groups for matchmaking needs.

The matchmaking list, as derived from the discussions on the challenges and needs:

- Czech Republic and Hungary talk with ESU on students' capacity building
- NVAO and Lithuania are interested on staff mobility
- Italy would like to learn from Portugal on the stakeholders' engagement to become an expert
- Lithuania is checking the possibility of an incoming call for staff exchange on the subject of student engagement
- Cyprus and Serbia with ESU on capacity building of students
- Cyprus, Serbia and Sweden, together with EURASHE and ESU engaging on a round table on student capacity building
- Romanian project concerning the role of stakeholders on QA agencies. It is possible to enlarge the countries to participate in the project. EC mentioned the fact of not adding partners to an already selected project, as it might change the project and according to the rules it cannot be possible.

The **4th round table** focused its discussions on the external QA. The discussions came clear with the fact of most countries relying on internal QA processes. No one of them has concrete activities or plans to do beyond the already existing experience. Even though, some ideas were thrown on the table for thought and hopefully some ideas for future projects could come up.

Considering that most countries have a combination of the program and/or institutional approach, participants agreed on the best solution of having both program and institutional approach. Discussants came up with some ideas and the idea of staff mobility is something to be further developed.

The **5th round table** was dedicated to the cross-border QA – most popular on the actions plan shown during the meeting.

Participants raised the issue of challenges for the topic of cross-border cooperation such as, different HE systems, non-accredited HEIs, and how to deal with this phenomenon. For the issue of non-accredited HEIs, it was suggested that the first place to address to is ENIC NARIC network and their black list of non-recognized/accredited HEIs. Participants raised also the need to collect legal challenges in regard to incoming mobility on the cross-border QA and the necessary solutions. A good example for the potential solution is within the group and there is the need to adjust the best solution for the specific country in this aspect. Participants also pointed out that there is no certainty for the cross-border programs, which in some cases might not be quality assured in their specific country.

The Flemish Belgium Co-chair emphasized that the staff mobility programme is not meant for organizing conferences or inviting experts, rather to a peer to peer experience of learning and teaching.

Participants proposed the idea of staff mobility on European approach of joint programs. The idea is to use staff mobility to discuss in some preselected topics and discuss on how to implement the European approach on joint degrees, etc.. Albania is willing to create an application of inbound mobility with several countries and interested countries could attend the mobility in Albania. There would be two topics highlights: European approach and Cross-border QA. One could stay for one topic or for the entire period.

Flemish Belgium Co-chair suggested a small and effective group rather than a large one, missing out on experience sharing.

As per matchmaking exercise, Cyprus found common ground with Austria, Romania and Germany on the legal framework, especially on the independence of the QA agencies.

7. Forward looking discussion on QA within the Bologna.

During the BFUG in Bucharest there were breakout sessions enabling the discussions on some of the BP topics such as digitalization, inclusion, etc.

QA is one of the key commitments of the BP and there is common belief it will stay as a key commitment in the future. There is the need of the QA in the future of the BP. QA also could help to address the BP issue on social dimension. There is the need to bring to the attention of the BFUG the success of some standard guidelines. Participants expressed also the concern that the EHEA is in the need to address its global dimension, as it is losing its students and looking for students from abroad (foreign students).

There is the need to tackle the assurance that HEIs give access to the young adults within the EHEA. Important topics are: recognition of prior learning, mobility, stepping away from focusing on the study program and focus more on enabling students to study and get any sort of qualification at the end of these studies, etc.

Challenges on a global scale also require to be prepared for smart and intelligent specializations and future jobs; innovative for L&T, reduction of bureaucracy and maintaining the QA. This could be done by updating the guidelines, interdisciplinary programs, etc. There is the need to think of some procedures to take into consideration especially into the interdisciplinary programs.

There is also the need on how to get rid of standardization by keeping the standards in such a flexible environment. There are a lot of new forms of learning: e-learning, MOOCs, etc. and there is the need to catch up, as there are lots of things evolving with respect to the QA. This should be seen as an extra role for the QA Agencies to tackle these topics and as to whether the ESG are already enough/sufficient to cover such evolvements. Therefore, there is the need for the QA to adjust to the new types of learning, and it is interesting to see if the ESG could be applicable to all kinds of provisions, with a need for flexibility.

Participants also raised concerns on the different issues and problematics at QA, considering that not all countries are in the same situation and compliance with ESG, therefore giving priorities on solving the problems several countries face rather than coming up with new ideas.

8. Wrap up of the second meeting.

- The call for staff mobility project has been sent to all of the members of this group, application is expected by 31 August.
- The matchmaking committee will be held in Georgia at the beginning of September.
- The staff mobility project will start in October.
- A report for the BICG will be made in September. Some of the participants will be contacted in order to make the report for the BICG and BFUG. Although timing is not ideal in accordance with the staff mobility programme, the main result is what has been done until now and the many cooperation that have been reached until now (from this meeting and the previous one).
- The projects from the new Call of the European Commission for cooperation within KA3 will start in January 2020.
- The third meeting of the Bologna Peer Support Group on QA will take place in Ghent on 16-17 January 2020.
- Any suggestions and topics for the third meeting can be sent to Magalie.

Flemish Belgium Co-chair wrapped up the meeting, thanking all participants for attending and getting involved to ensure a productive outcome, and reached out to all participating countries to find the topics for potential future projects, which would add more on the peer to peer learning and expertise sharing among participating countries on such important topic as QA

9. AOB.

Several participants at the meeting asked the BFUG Secretariat to have the list of participants. In compliance with the GDPR regulations, the Flemish Belgium Co-chair raised the issue for discussion and with no objection from none of them, the BFUG Secretariat was asked to forward the list via e-mail. (This will be sent together with the Minutes).

This meeting was followed by a Peer Learning Activity on the European Approach to the QA of Joint Programmes, the day after.