



Task Force Enhancing Knowledge Sharing in the EHEA community

10th meeting
Malta
8-9 January 2024

Minutes of Meeting

List of participants

Country	Name	Last Name
Albania (Co-Chair)	Bizena	Bijo
Belgium Flemish Community	Liesbeth	Hens
European Commission*	Svein	Hullstein
ETUCE	Petri	Mäntysaari
EUA*	Michael	Gaebel
Germany	Tim	Maschuw
Italy*	Ann Katherine	Isaacs
Italy*	Vera	Lucke
Italy	Teresa	Morales de la Fuente
Malta	Adam	Liwak
Montenegro	Dunja	Bulajic
Netherlands	Robert	Wagenaar
Romania (Co-Chair)	Cristina	Ghitulica
United Kingdom	John	Reilly
BFUG Secretariat*	Edlira Adi	Kahani Subashi
BFUG Secretariat	Jora	Vaso
BFUG Secretariat	Blerina	Caslli

*online participation

EQAR, ESU - European Students' Union and Ukraine did not participate.

1. Introduction

Rose-Anne Cuschieri, Director of Malta Further & Higher Education Authority, extended a warm welcome to all members and expressed her hopes for a fruitful meeting. Following her, Cristina Ghitulica (Co-Chair, Romania) and Bizena Bijo (Co-Chair, Albania) expressed gratitude to the host and wished for a successful meeting. The Co-Chairs emphasized the primary objective of finalizing recommendations for the ministerial, aimed at enhancing academic community involvement.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda of the meeting was adopted without changes.

3. Tour de table





A tour de table followed, during which participants introduced themselves and explained their respective roles within the institutions they represent.

4. Approval of Minutes of the 8th and 9th Meeting

The approval of minutes from the 8th and 9th meetings was discussed, with a decision made to await member comments by December 14th before final approval.

5. Information on recent developments

During the BFUG meeting in Madrid, there were few comments regarding the TF EKS materials, most notably from EUA suggesting the need for guidelines for the newsletter that has been distributed among BFUG members. It was noted that there has been no additional feedback on the TF EKS materials from BFUG members outside of the TF EKS.

6. Update from the IN-GLOBAL project

Teresa Morales (In-Global Project Expert) provided a summary of the In-Global project updates. A report was presented on the EHEA promotion activities of the Bologna Process, based on three focus groups with stakeholders. It was noted that there are sixteen ongoing translations of the Communique on the In-Global site. Participants in the meeting were encouraged to notify if they wanted events highlighted on the in-Global website. Social media accounts were also mentioned for promoting events. In-Global support was acknowledged for the Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue, and the Co-chair Romania expressed gratitude to CIMEA for their assistance.

7. Implementation of the action plan

Co-Chair Romania initiated a discussion on the Tirana Ministerial, focusing on the organization of side events outlined in the TF EKS action plan. The group aimed to determine the type of event and gather venue details and scheduled events to plan TF EKS side events accordingly. The afternoon of May 30th, the 2nd day of the Ministerial, was suggested for breakout sessions, provided the forum concludes at noon.

The discussion emphasized the need to identify the target audience for the side events and develop captivating posters to engage attendees. It was noted that besides ministers and rectors, university professors, researchers, and teachers were key targets. Careful scheduling of seminars during opportune moments in the agenda was stressed. A draft agenda of the Ministerial would be presented at the Board for further input.

There was a recommendation to highlight how members could utilize the Communique in their specific contexts post-adoption, emphasizing the need for implementation at the national level. Concerns were raised about potential lack of attention to annexed materials once the Communique is adopted, suggesting the importance of a significant closing event on the second day to maintain engagement. There was a proposal to reflect the 25th anniversary of the BP in the event as well as to have the adoption of the Communique on the second day.





The group outlined action items resulting from the discussion, including developing a proposal for the events to be shared with the BFUG Secretariat, methods to engage ministers, and preparing a document with recommendations for distribution during the Ministerial. Discussions also encompassed the use of videos and ideas for posters or screen messages to highlight key topics. Action points were established, such as setting deadlines for poster ideas and coordinating with a designer to create selected messages.

Regarding the newsletter, discussions centered on content criteria and challenges faced by co-chairs in submission of content. The group considered the newsletter's frequency, suggesting circulation after each BFUG meeting or every six months. Guidelines for the newsletter's content were proposed to streamline the process. It was agreed to proceed with drafting guidelines to be circulated among BFUG members before the next TF EKS meeting, with plans to issue a call for submissions by March and aim for the next release after the Ministerial in June.

Organizing breakout sessions during the April BFUG meetings was briefly discussed, with options for venue locations considered, and follow-up actions to confirm details with co-chairs within a week. The sessions will focus on deciding the ministerial recommendations and addressing newsletter-related issues. Four rooms will be needed, each accommodating 20-25 participants to discuss the recommendations. The format will be informal, presenting the recommendations and facilitating discussions and each room will have a central rapporteur to share outcomes.

- *Presentation of the Stakeholder's Perception on the Bologna Process Survey Results, Colin Tück - IN-GLOBAL project external expert*

Colin Tück (In-Global Project External Expert) presented the findings of a survey conducted as part of the In-Global initiative. The presentation provided the stakeholders' perceptions of the Bologna Process (BP), evaluating the process' impact.

According to this survey, the BP enjoys an overall predominantly positive perception, where at least 3/4 of respondents believe that it has had at least some beneficial effects. However, there was some criticism concerning its goals and implementation and perceived high level of bureaucracy. In addition, the core mission of the BP, promoting international cooperation and facilitating mobility, was evaluated as better addressed than the social dimension aspect, flexible learning paths or promoting inclusiveness.

In relation to the preferred activities of the BP, the majority of the respondents communicated more familiarity with conferences, trainings and workshops, PLAs, Europe-wide events or social media, in comparison to specific projects, like the Bologna Hub, the media or newsletter or the EHEA governing structure and website.

The study suggested some good practices based on the EHEA survey results, citing the national BFUG as useful, as well as regular internal meetings and discussions in HEIs, national annual conferences and support projects, PLAs, and showcasing success stories in visually attractive and accessible ways. Challenges to the study included a low participation from countries in Southeast Europe, that without a national structure, there may be limited interest in participation, and an acknowledgment of not distributing the questionnaire as widely as desired.





The distribution of the questionnaire randomly in certain countries and the honest responses from students were noted as positive aspects, however, as it ensured a diverse range of perspectives rather than solely relying on experts' opinions. Concerns were raised regarding the limited engagement of HE faculty with the EHEA website. There was concern on unclear answers, and it was suggested consulting stakeholders on answers where there are doubts or a need to understand the underlying reasons.

A discussion followed the presentation giving the members' feedback on the results of the survey. The importance of protecting academics and teachers, who are vital for high-quality education, was highlighted, emphasizing a bottom-up approach allowing them to participate more in the decision-making process. It was noted that the majority of responses come from academics and students, emphasizing the importance of these individuals in the process.

In conclusion, the TF members were tasked to read the report and provide feedback to ensure the best possible report for presentation by the BFUG meeting in February 2024, with the deadline for providing feedback on January 28th, 2024. It was clarified that content from this survey is already incorporated in the TF's recommendations, but that more may be included from the final report.

- *Guidance for activating Bologna experts' networks and for starting national and local level Bologna hubs*

During the discussion, the gap between policy-making and daily operational challenges in higher education (HE) was noted as well as the need to bridge this gap. It was acknowledged that an effective instrument which stimulates countries to adopt measures agreed upon by HE ministers is needed. Reinvigorating the Bologna expert framework was proposed, as this would facilitate communication and information sharing among experts across different countries, thereby enhancing collaboration and knowledge exchange in HE. The need to set clear criteria for selecting experts and to align experts at the national and HE levels was emphasized.

Questions were raised on how this initiative actually addresses the gap between policy makers and higher education institutions (HEIs) at the national level. The effectiveness of the network of Bologna experts was questioned. One of the suggestions made was that BFUG members should be involved in the initiative, specifically someone at the EHEA level working with policy makers and HEIs. One participant highlighted the interconnectedness of BP and policies, clarifying that ministers may not refer to the BP specifically but they do prioritize specific policy elements related to the BP. It was emphasized that academics are best positioned to support each other in the implementation process, as they offer practical insights that policymakers may lack.

The need for revisions to improve clarity of the document Bologna experts and hubs was acknowledged. Clarification was sought on the target audience of the recommendations, which was confirmed to be academics and students. Additionally, there was debate about differentiating between Bologna experts and Bologna hubs, with the latter serving as country-level stakeholder groups. Developing comprehensive guidelines for ministers regarding the recommendation of experts was suggested. This document would encompass an introduction, composition, attribution, and resources, along with administrative details on initiating the process.





Concerns were raised about the lack of coordination among initiatives and a holistic approach to avoid duplication of efforts was recommended. The importance of uninterrupted knowledge sharing and improved coordination among HEREs and Erasmus+ national offices was noted.

In conclusion, the group agreed to have the feedback received integrated in the document, with a focus on a more positive tone and collaborative approach rather than a top-down directive. There was a discussion on how to include an informative supplemental paper in the recommendation documents, whether as part of the main text or as an annex. It was agreed that the authors will revise the paper, and a decision on its incorporation will be made later. The deadline for the document revision was set for January 20th, 2024 with feedback from the group expected by January 29^t. The text would be finalized to ensure that recommendations are ready for presentation at the BFUG in February.

- *Recommendations for BFUG members to encourage active involvement of the academic community in developing and addressing EHEA goals*

Co-Chair Romania presented the draft document and initiated the discussion for feedback. It was announced that five recommendations from the BFUG meeting were expanded to six, with one recommendation split into two parts for clarity. Best practice examples from Austria were incorporated, along with innovative knowledge-sharing approaches. Additionally, an annex on expert teams and the Bologna Hub Peer support system from DAAD and EUA were included.

Feedback highlighted the need for a concise executive summary, as the detailed document might be overwhelming for wider distribution. It was also acknowledged that the detailed document offers valuable insights and extends beyond the initial topic to encompass broader sectoral developments. In addition, there were queries regarding the target audience of the document. Some participants advocated for a concise version of the draft instead of an executive summary, accompanied by supplemental papers.

The importance of a robust executive summary was emphasized, considering its role in providing a record of the work undertaken, even if it may not be extensively read. Concerns were raised about the lack of specificity in the fifth recommendation, which represents the primary objective of the TF EKS. It was clarified that the recommendations were structured to integrate national-level policies and TF-related aspects.

It was suggested to move the recommendations to the top of the document and have the preamble and explanations follow. Some members suggested merging recommendations 2 and 3 and reorganizing the structure to ensure clarity and focus. There was agreement that recommendation 6 did not belong in its current form and should be revised. The suggestion was made to condense the recommendations to three, with a preamble, while retaining the detailed version for archival purposes. Participants also emphasized the need to highlight future recommendations derived from surveys and other research findings. Focusing the recommendations on what needs urgent improvement was encouraged.

Concerns were raised about the vagueness of certain expressions and the lack of specific action points. Suggestions included specifying stakeholders in recommendation 5 and merging recommendations 1 and 5, as well as 2 and 3, while keeping 4. It was decided that there would be





four total recommendations. Finalizing the document by early February for submission to the BFUG meeting was urged. It was agreed to incorporate feedback from the discussion and revise the document accordingly, with a focus on clarity, conciseness, and presentability.

8. Contribution to the Tirana Communiqué

There were suggestions to revise and streamline certain sections of the document, including shortening the first sentence and removing certain terms. It was proposed to emphasize more effective collaboration between policy-makers and the higher education community. An additional recommendation was made to include a statement prioritizing the development of national action plans outlining BP-related reforms and tools for all EHEA countries. Advocating for the joint development of action plans by ministries and the HE sector were discussed. It was noted that, especially if published, this collaboration in developing an action plan for Bologna Implementation would benefit the entire sector. It was agreed to circulate the document promptly for finalization before the upcoming BFUG Board meeting.

9. Report of the Task Force

Romania Co-Chair provided a concise overview of the TF EKS report, aiming to ensure that all TF members are informed about the documents shared with the BFUG. The structure of the report was outlined, encompassing the TF EKS's activities for the 2020-2024 working period. Additionally, the annexes were shared, containing various materials developed as part of the TF EKS action plan, including survey results, papers, and scripts for media materials.

10. Next meeting

It was decided to hold an online meeting, before the April BFUG and Board meetings. There was deliberation on scheduling the meeting between February 26th and March 1st, 2024. However, a final decision on the meeting date was not reached.

11. AOB

No other business was brought forth and the 10th meeting of the TF EKS was successfully concluded.

