



Bosnia and Herzegovina
Ministry of Civil Affairs

BFUG Board Meeting LXXXIII

Hosted by Bosnia & Herzegovina
31 March 2023

Minutes of meeting

List of participants

Country/ Institution	First Name	Last Name
Albania (BFUG Vice-Chair)	Linda	Pustina
Bosnia & Herzegovina (BFUG Co-Chair)	Aida	Duric
	Goran	Janjic
Council of Europe (CoE)	Villano	Qiriazzi
	Katia	Dolgova-Dreyer
Czech Republic (Representative of Outgoing BFUG Co-Chair)/ Task Force on Rules and Regulations Co-Chair	Michal	Karpíšek
EURASHE/Working Group on Learning and Teaching Co-Chair	Ana	Tecilazic
European Commission (EC)	Kinga	Szuly
European Students' Union (ESU)/Working Group on Social Dimension Co-Chair	Horia	Onita
European University Association (EUA)	Maria	Kelo
Georgia (Incoming BFUG Co-Chair)	Maia	Shukhoshvili
Kazakhstan (Representative of Outgoing BFUG Co-Chair)	Indira	Abilmazhinova
Sweden (BFUG Co-Chair)	Robin	Moberg
Bologna Implementation Coordination Group Co-Chair	Helga	Posset
Working Group on Monitoring the Implementation of the Bologna Process Co-Chair/ Working Group on Fundamental Values Co-Chair	Tone Flood	Strom
Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue Co-Chair/ Taskforce on Enhancing Knowledge Sharing in the EHEA community Co-Chair	Ann Katherine	Isaacs
Working Group on Supporting the Implementation of the Roadmap for San Marino's Accession to EHEA Co-Chair	Maija	Innola
Drafting Committee Co-Chair	Melanie	Rosenbaum
BFUG Secretariat (Head)	Edlira	Subashi
BFUG Secretariat	Kristina	Metallari

BFUG Incoming Co-Chair (Spain) sent regrets for not being able to attend the meeting.

Welcome Addresses

Ms. Biljana Čamur Veselinović (Secretary of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, Bosnia and Herzegovina) extended a warm welcome to everyone to the 83rd BFUG Board meeting, marking the 20th anniversary of Bosnia and Herzegovina's official membership in the BFUG since 2003. While acknowledging significant progress made over the past two decades in creating new institutions, enacting legislation, and adhering to Bologna principles, she stressed that there is still much work to be done on the path towards full membership in the European Union and the European Education Area. The Secretary expressed gratitude towards the European Commission and the Council of Europe for their constant support in these efforts. Given the current political, socio-economic, and democratic challenges, the Secretary emphasized the critical role of higher education in addressing issues such as economic crisis, migration and technological advancement. She highlighted the significance of collaboration within the European



Albanian BFUG Secretariat
2021-2024



*Bosnia and Herzegovina
Ministry of Civil Affairs*

Higher Education Area (EHEA) to develop knowledge and solutions to modern societal problems. Furthermore, the Secretary shared that Bosnia and Herzegovina has committed to transforming education to ensure access to quality and inclusive education that meets the needs of the 21st century. She called for a unified strategy to shape the future of higher education, inviting all stakeholders to work together in a complementary manner. The Secretary concluded by wishing the participants a successful meeting and a pleasant stay in Sarajevo.

1. Welcome and Introduction

1.1. Welcome by the BFUG Co-Chairs (Sweden and Bosnia & Herzegovina)

Aida Duric (BFUG Co-Chair, Bosnia & Herzegovina) greeted all participants and conveyed her gratitude to the BFUG Troika and the Secretariat for their valuable contribution and assistance in organizing the meeting. She ended her remarks by wishing for a productive and successful meeting.

Robin Moberg (Co-Chair, Sweden) expressed appreciation to the Bosnian Co-Chairs for their efforts in organizing the meeting. Mr. Moberg highlighted the significance of fundamental values and automatic recognition as the top priorities for the Swedish presidency in the higher education sector. He concluded by expressing his hope for a fruitful and constructive meeting.

1.2. Welcome by the BFUG Vice-Chair (Albania)

Linda Pustina (Vice-Chair) extended a warm welcome to all members and consultative members attending the meeting and expressed her gratitude to the Co-Chairs for their support in organizing the meeting. Ms. Pustina announced the appointment of the new Head of the Secretariat, Ms. Edlira Subashi, who has been serving as Deputy Head since January 2023 and is now assuming the role of Head. She expressed her hope for a strong collaboration between BFUG and the Secretariat and wished for meaningful and constructive discussions during the meeting.

1.3. Information by the outgoing BFUG Co-Chairs (Czech Republic and Kazakhstan)

Michal Karpisek (Representative of Outgoing BFUG Co-Chair, Czech Republic) welcomed the participants and expressed his gratitude for the organization of this meeting. Mr. Karpisek acknowledged the importance of the organization of learning and teaching thematic blocks at the BFUG meeting in Brno, in helping the BFUG Working Groups to improve their focus and make further progress. He also showed appreciation for the successful implementation of organizational issues during their co-chairmanship, such as the introduction of the Task Force on the Review of the Rules and Regulations for the Governance of the EHEA and the Roadmap to the Ministerial Conference. Moreover, Mr. Karpisek expressed his satisfaction that the remarks regarding Secretariat's flexibility and accuracy have been resolved. Finally, he wished the BFUG Co-Chairs a collaborative and successful tenure.

Indira Abilmazhinova (Representative of Outgoing BFUG Co-Chair, Kazakhstan) extended a warm welcome to everyone and highlighted Kazakhstan's twelve-year membership as the only country in Central Asia with full membership in the EHEA. She emphasized the advantages of being a part of the Bologna Process, including staying current with the latest advancements in higher education and successfully implementing them at the local level. She then discussed the Central Asia Higher Education Area, outlining its member countries and the mutual benefits they derive from their cooperation. She mentioned a recent forum held in Astana after the Board Meeting, resulting in a joint statement. In conclusion, Ms. Abilmazhinova stressed the importance of these activities in promoting Bologna principles and ideas in Central Asia and beyond, expressing gratitude for the support provided by the BFUG Secretariat and Chairs, and wishing for a productive meeting.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

A proposal was made to shift the placement of item 6 in the meeting agenda to follow item 7. This proposal was accepted, and as a result, the agenda was adopted with the mentioned changes.





Bosnia and Herzegovina
Ministry of Civil Affairs

For more information, please see: [BFUG Board SE BA 83 2.1 Draft Agenda](#)
[BFUG Board SE BA 83 2.2 Draft Annotated Agenda](#)

3. Update from the BFUG Secretariat

Edlira Subashi (Head of BFUG Secretariat) expressed her pleasure to be in her new role. She noted her prior work in the BFUG Secretariat and experience with the ENIC NARIC Network, expressing gratitude for the BFUG's support regarding the Secretariat's work since January 2023. Ms. Subashi proceeded to provide updates on the tasks performed since the previous BFUG meeting. Such included holding alignment meetings with BFUG Chairs and coordination meetings with Working Structures Co-Chairs to enhance collaboration and support. Furthermore, she informed the Board that the EHEA website was undergoing a refreshing process. Ms. Subashi concluded by thanking the Board members, BFUG Co-Chairs and Vice-Chair as well as the entire BFUG Secretariat team for their outstanding collaboration and support, and received congratulations from entire Board members, wishing her success in her new role.

4. Update from the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG)

Helga Posset (Co-Chair, BICG) provided an update of the BICG, focusing on the Thematic Peer Groups (TPGs) and their state-of-play. Ms. Posset highlighted the aim of the BICG to facilitate the coordinated implementation of the three key commitments of the EHEA, through close collaboration with the TPGs, and informed that six online meetings have been organized thus far. Furthermore, an overview of the work of the three TPGs was provided, as well as information on organization of meetings and establishment of working groups within each TPG to further their work. Ms. Posset also brought up several points for discussion and reflection related to ensuring TPGs' success, with particular focus on how to encourage more active participation in TPGs activities by all countries, and emphasize the necessity of coordination among the various representatives (in different TPGs) of each country. Furthermore, despite the natural inclination to focus on innovative themes, it was underlined that the TPGs' emphasis should be focused on ensuring that the basis of the Key Commitments remain at the center of the TPGs' attention. Hence, a balance between innovative themes and the Key Commitments (KCs) must be achieved.

During the meeting, the topic of inviting certain countries to join TPGs, particularly TPG A on QF, was discussed due to the group's small size and lack of benefits for all countries. It was emphasized that the KCs for the functioning of EHEA should remain the main focus. A suggestion was made to create written guidance for the self-certification process, taking into account the San Marino case.

It was cautioned that TPG members who work in Quality Assurance Agencies, ENIC NARIC centers, or institutions instead of the ministry may have poor national coordination with the ministry. It was also stressed that projects should not be mixed with the group's work as they exceed the group's ToRs. Coordination among all stakeholders, not just TPGs and ministries, was also highlighted as crucial.

The implementation of key commitments was acknowledged as a persistent issue, but the efforts to address relevant topics such as short cycle and micro-credentials in the communique were appreciated. The next steps involve addressing concerns and including recommendations in the communique, with an emphasis on encouraging active participation of countries in the TPGs that leads to implementation of KCs. The BICG will provide a report for the Ministerial Conference which includes the reports from the TPGs. For the contribution to the Tirana Communique the BICG recommendation will also include recommendations from the TPGs.

For more information, please see: [BFUG SE BA 83 4 Bologna Implementation Coordination Group Update](#)

5. Updates from the BFUG Working Structures

5.1. Working Group on Monitoring the Implementation of the Bologna Process

Tone Flood Strom (Co-Chair, WG on Monitoring) informed that the Bologna Process Implementation Report (BPIR) will rely on various sources, including the BFUG questionnaire for qualitative indicators, Eurostat data for





*Bosnia and Herzegovina
Ministry of Civil Affairs*

quantitative indicators, and other sources (i.e., ENQA, EQAR, ESU, EUA, Eurostudent) for specific issues. The BFUG questionnaire has been sent out as of mid-March, with a deadline of mid-May for submission at the BFUG meeting in Stockholm. A dedicated Eurydice team is available to assist with any technical difficulties. A specialized company, Agilis, has been contracted by EACEA to collect statistical data and the first meeting for this contract took place concurrently with the BFUG Board meeting. Eurostat data will be used for all countries within the European statistical system, while data from other countries will be collected from their respective national statistical offices. BFUG members may be called upon for assistance if communication issues arise.

The next steps involve organizing a WG meeting towards the end of April, where the work of the statistical data collector will be discussed. Possible changes to qualitative indicators, such as new Scorecard indicators or modifications to categories, will be considered. The proposals will be forwarded to the BFUG for review.

It was reiterated that the WG on Monitoring will take into account other sources such as the Lisbon Recognition Convention of the Council of Europe and the Bologna with Students' Eyes by ESU. In terms of the scorecard indicators for the KCs, the BICG Co-Chairs are currently considering the possibility of comparing if there has been any improvement in the implementation and will reach out to the WG on Monitoring.

For more information, please see: [BFUG Board SE BA 83 5 1 WG Monitoring Update](#)

5.2. Working Group on Fundamental Values

Tone Flood Strom (Co-Chair, WG on FV) emphasized that the four fundamental values should be viewed as six separate values due to the distinct issues they present. These values include academic freedom and integrity, as well as public responsibility for and of higher education. The WG has drafted statements on these values with the support of experts in the field. Since the last BFUG meeting, two WG meetings have taken place, supported by PLAs, which have provided valuable feedback to the WG's work. The statements received have different layouts, lengths, and styles, but the WG has developed a common introduction to avoid repetition, and they are also working with an editor to ensure consistency in the statements' style and length. Ms. Strom informed that the statement on public responsibility for and of higher education is considered a finished draft, while the statement on student and staff participation has received minor comments, and the statement on institutional autonomy still requires work. However, the statement on academic integrity is less developed and requires further work due to a later starting time. All statements except for academic integrity will be presented at the upcoming BFUG meeting.

The WG needs to be pragmatic on the de facto component and focus on external sources, despite the challenge of identifying the best indicators. The NewFav project, which supports the work of this WG, has carried out mapping on existing indicators, and various scenarios have been presented, with the WG to provide an update on this at a later time. The group was advised to create synergies as several EU initiatives are ongoing in this area, but it is crucial to avoid overlap and find complementarities, such as through stakeholder collaboration.

Robin Moberg as member of the WG FV added that significant progress has been made on the statements' work from December until now, and reiterated that this topic is a priority for the Swedish presidency. Kinga Szuly (EC) informed of the recent study on [academic freedom](#) presented to the European Parliament, and mentioned that a proposal was put forth to establish a monitoring mechanism and platforms for academic freedom. She also highlighted the Bologna Process's efforts towards academic freedom and emphasized the need to avoid overlap and instead focus on complementary actions to strengthen the work.

Board members recognized the efforts put into the statements, particularly regarding the public responsibility of higher education. Nonetheless, there was apprehension about the student and staff participation statement, to be forward-looking and ambitious, not just in the writing part but also in the indicators used. It was agreed that during the BFUG meeting, further deliberation and feedback collection would take place.





*Bosnia and Herzegovina
Ministry of Civil Affairs*

CoE announced its preparations for the upcoming Summits of Heads of State and Government, scheduled to take place on May 16-17 in Reykjavik. The CoE has received two working documents for the summit, containing elements of interest that the WG may explore further. One of these elements pertains to education for democracy, which could potentially become a priority for the CoE's new program in the next four years. The second element, which is expected to receive more attention in the final results of the summit, involves the heads of state requesting that the CoE develop a new legal instrument on education for democracy to aid future efforts in education and higher education. The CoE has also revealed plans to review the implementation of existing recommendations on public responsibility for academic freedom and institutional autonomy next year, as well as establish a new observatory in education focusing on academic integrity, ethics, and transparency, as a follow-up to last year's recommendations.

5.3. Working Group on Social Dimension

Horia Onita (Co-Chair, WG on SD) gave an overview of the WG on SD's progress to date, emphasizing the importance of the updated definition of SD, the Principles and Guidelines (PAGs), and the need to build a framework for the PAGs' implementation. The Work Plan for 2021-2024 was presented in January 2022, which included objectives, work methods, timelines, resources, and communication channels. The next WG meeting is scheduled to take place in-person on April 24-25.

To create indicators for SD principles, three subgroups were formed, and their goals and work procedures were outlined. Collaboration with other BFUG WGs has also been established, including the WG on Monitoring and the WG on Learning and Teaching. Mr. Onita provided a brief summary of the conclusions reached during the previous WG meetings and reported on progress made in the discussion on indicators linked to Quality Assurance (QA). This included two meetings between the Co-Chairs and ENQA in December 2022 and a presentation by ENQA during the February 2023 WG meeting. The WG discussed the input provided by ENQA and will hold further consultations with stakeholders (E4+EQAR) during the next meeting.

The issue of whether to include the final list of PAGs indicators in the BPIR or recommend it in the Communiqué was discussed. It was clarified that only indicators (not the explanatory descriptors) would be monitored through the BPIR, and there has been an agreement between the WG on SD and the WG on Monitoring on this. Additionally, it was noted that the document required a language check. The Council of Europe expressed strong support for the work on the social dimension and informed the members that they are developing an education strategy, with the WG on SD Co-Chairs closely coordinating their efforts.

Mr. Onita stated that the number of indicators and descriptors has been significantly reduced, and the document now only includes indicators that member states will monitor. However, he acknowledged that some developments may not be still captured. He mentioned that the proposals regarding the monitoring of indicators will be more concrete in June. Some members expressed reluctance to introduce a large framework of indicators as an annex to the Communiqué. They viewed the indicators more as a reference or toolkit for improving the social dimension or adopting the PAGs and did not see the adoption of such a technical document by ministers as very effective.

5.4. Working Group on Learning and Teaching

Ana Tecilazic (Co-Chair, WG on L&T) provided an overview of the state-of-play of the WG, including background information, reference to the Rome Communiqué and the thematic framework. Moreover, she informed on the implemented activities, including the organization of WG and subgroup meetings, and that the WG is planning and carrying out its activities around the topics listed in the thematic framework and always looking at the system level (not the institutional) initiatives and practices relevant across the EHEA. Ms. Tecilazic added that one PLA on the topic of staff development has been held in Paris, on 26-27 October 2022, where it was discussed on the skills for teachers in higher education, teaching and digitalization, as well as teaching support and careers.





Bosnia and Herzegovina
Ministry of Civil Affairs

Based on the outcomes of the PLA and the sixth WG meeting, proposals were made for the Ministerial Communiqué on staff development which included effective support systems for teachers in their practice and continuous professional development. Additionally, it was suggested to give value to effective professional development for teaching and to include all required professional development as an integral part of the academic workload. Lastly, it was noted that reforming takes time.

Feasible indicators for monitoring the progress of learning and teaching in the EHEA were extracted by the WG on Monitoring. Evidence of good examples of ministerial recommendations implementation was gathered systematically and standardized. A landscape scanning exercise was conducted to identify transferable practices, and a short overview of the findings was provided. The results will be discussed at the next WG meeting on 5 April. Upcoming activities include the organization of a PLA on student-centered learning to be held in Bucharest on 7 June 2023, as well as a PLA on innovative learning and teaching in 2023. During the event, proposals for the Ministerial Communiqué on this topic will be discussed. It was noted that the Irish Co-Chair has been replaced and the WG Co-Chairs will be meeting soon.

One suggestion given was to consider presenting the WG's proposed text as an annex if it is deemed too lengthy, in order to prevent overburdening the communiqué. In a separate matter, the CoE raised a question about whether the WG had taken ethics and values into account in their work up to this point, to which it was noted that it was not a specific area of focus for the group. Furthermore, the CoE introduced the idea of incorporating AI into classroom settings and promoting responsible use of technology while also considering disciplinary concerns.

For more information, please see: [BFUG Board SE BA 83 5 4 WG LT Update](#)
[BFUG Board SE BA 83 5 4 WG LT Report](#)

5.5. Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue

Ann Katherine Isaacs (Co-Chair, CG on GPD) provided an update on the activities of the CG and its subgroups. She reported that the regional subgroups have been working on mapping exercises, such as the establishment of a contact list of global partners, mapping of regional events and activities, and mapping of themes and regions.

Reflecting on the AU-EU Innovation Agenda, the Africa subgroup prepared three online EHEA conversations featuring experts from the EHEA and Africa, focusing on recognition. An article on the first webinar on academic recognition held on December 2022, was published on the EHEA website. The Americas subgroup organized several events and activities¹, with a second Colloquium between CG/EHEA and Latin American countries planned for June with a focus on quality. In Asia, various events and activities were held, such as the Conference of Central Asian Ministers of Education and the EU-SHARE conference on micro-credentials. The ASEM process had an ISOM meeting and an expert group meeting, and speakers from CAHEA and ASEAN attended the CG meeting. The Regional Subgroups of the CG are continuing with their various activities, while the Functional Subgroups have also started their work. Plans for large "regional" conferences in the fall semester have been made, also with support from the IN-GLOBAL project. There is also a proposal to organize dialogues and meetings on matters of common interest between global interlocutors and the BFUG WGs. In the IN-GLOBAL project, it is foreseen that there can be four large 'in presence' events, one for each of the macro-regions. The CG and the Subgroups are now discussing organizational aspect of holding these events. The CG has also begun discussing the possibility of organizing 'dialogue' between the BFUG Working Structures, in cases where there is a common interest.

The Co-Chair expressed concerns about coordination issues among subgroups due to differences in delegation and organization subgroup representation compared to the representation at the CG. Nonetheless, efforts were discussed to improve communication and coordination among the subgroups. Furthermore, the CG has recently

¹ "Global Dialogue on Micro-Credentials" event hosted by the DAAD Bologna Hub; First Colloquium between CG/EHEA and Latin American countries; CG/EHEA Session at the CHEA Annual Conference.





Bosnia and Herzegovina
Ministry of Civil Affairs

enlarged its membership by adding Cyprus, and a new co-chair for the Flemish community has been appointed to the group. In addition, it was proposed to promote a joint initiative between the WG on SD and global stakeholders.

For more information, please see: [BFUG Board SE BA 83 5 5 CG GPD Update](#)

5.6. Working Group to support the Implementation of the Roadmap for San Marino's accession to the EHEA

Maija Innola (Co-Chair, WG on SMR) provided an overview on the state-of-play of the WG's work in supporting San Marino in implementing their Roadmap to join the European Higher Education Area. The group is working closely with Sammarinese authorities to assist them in developing policies and achieving their goals. The progress of the work is on schedule and San Marino has demonstrated willingness and ability to develop their higher education system. The group has met with relevant stakeholders and decision makers, including some members of Parliament. San Marino has drafted a new law on Higher Education and a statutory decree for the University of San Marino. They have also reviewed their policies and actions against Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education. San Marino has also joined the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees project aiming to strengthening the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, Article 7. The WG plans to present a draft final report in the autumn 2023 BFUG meeting. The report will assess the implementation of reforms in various areas related to higher education in San Marino and highlight good practices found. The final report will also present conclusions and recommendations. The WG agreed on the structure of the report during their meeting in February 2023, and will meet in September 2023 in Andorra to discuss and agree on the final report. If needed, extra online meetings may be held to finalize the report. Depending on the progress of the implementation in San Marino, minor additions and updates may be needed in early 2024.

Ms. Innola suggested that it would be advantageous to showcase the positive practices observed in San Marino as useful models for other countries to adopt. Additionally, the WG proposed initial recommendations for the Tirana Communique. The first recommendation involves ministers acknowledging San Marino's achievements in following the agreed-upon roadmap, while the second recommendation is to aid new members of the EHEA by providing them with a well-defined roadmap and a Working Group from the BFUG to aid them in their reform endeavors.

For more information, please see: [BFUG Board SE BA 83 5 6 San Marino WG Report](#)

5.7. Task Force on Enhancing Knowledge-Sharing in the EHEA community

Ann Katherine Isaacs provided an overview of the Task Force on Enhancing Knowledge Sharing in the EHEA Community, including its aim, scope, and composition. She also briefed the participants on the previous meetings and their outcomes. Ms. Isaacs highlighted the importance of the support provided by the In-Global project in carrying out the TF activities, as well as those of the CG on GPD. She emphasized the effective collaboration between the project, TF, and the BFUG Secretariat. Experts focused on higher education, data analysis, and communication will provide support to complete the TF activities. The Action Plan and activities were presented, as well as the TF's contribution to the Tirana Communique, which aims to improve communication regarding the Bologna process between higher education stakeholders. The TF has surveyed existing methods and proposed new ways of achieving more effective knowledge sharing, and its work emphasizes the need for ongoing efforts and the adoption of new modalities. She informed that the next TF meeting will be held in Rome on April 5.

Ms. Isaacs asked for the Board and BFUG's support in the TF's attempt to connect the different levels vital for higher education. She also informed that the TF requested to have thematic breakout sessions in the BFUG meeting in Stockholm, and if not possible, to be included at the BFUG meeting in Madrid.

A remark was made that one of the TF's objectives is to improve communication with a wider audience within the EHEA, allowing academics and students to exchange information and receive updates on the discussions held in the BFUG working structures, especially TPGs. It was also suggested establishing a communication structure among BFUG working structures to facilitate input provision. Further, the EC acknowledged the clarification of





Bosnia and Herzegovina
Ministry of Civil Affairs

governance and the division of responsibility between the TF and the IN-GLOBAL project. Ms. Isaacs responded by pointing out that few countries still have working structures like those in earlier EHEA phases, however the TF's Action Plan aims to support Bologna hubs, good practices that have persisted over time, and Bologna experts to disseminate content. Finally, she expressed her gratitude for everyone's feedback and emphasized the good collaboration with the project that had been established. Linda Pustina informed that she had to resign from certain BFUG working groups and her position as Co-Chair of this TF due to work obligations. She has introduced the new Albanian Co-Chair, and further information on the new Co-Chair will be provided to the Board by the Secretariat.

For more information, please see: [BFUG Board SE BA 83 5 7 TF Update and Action Plan](#)

5.8. Update from the EHEA Network of QF National Correspondents

Katia Dolgova Dreyer (CoE) informed on the meeting held on September 2022 in Strasbourg, where she stated the state of affairs of the NQF, micro-credentials, the presentation of the European Learning Model project, and the framework of competences for democratic culture as the key topics of the meeting agenda. Ms. Dreyer also provided an overview of a declaration issued by the Committee of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, expressing deep concern over the impact of Russian aggression against Ukraine and the involvement of Belarus. She mentioned that Russia had been excluded from the CoE in March 2022, and that the legal bodies and committee of ministers were working on different modalities of operation. It was eventually decided that some conventions would be opened to non-member states of the CoE, including the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC). At a November LRC meeting, a question from the Ukrainian delegation was raised regarding the participation at the LRC in light of the CoE committee decision, leading to an extraordinary session. As a result, it was decided that representatives from Russia and Belarus would not be elected as Bureau members, chairs, or vice-chairs of the LRC until their participation was reconsidered. The Committee urged all parties to explore additional measures that could be taken to limit the participation of representatives from Russia and Belarus in LRC meetings and related activities and structures. Ms. Dolgova Dreyer noted that any further information or updates on this matter would be provided at the BFUG meeting.

6. Update from the Task Force on the Review of the Rules and Regulations for the Governance of the EHEA

Michal Karpíšek (Co-Chair, TF on RR) provided an overview of the composition, key tasks, and meetings held thus far. He highlighted the document Principles & Expected Outputs, which included the proposal of the adoption of revised rules of procedures for the entire EHEA structure, including the EHEA Statutes, a key document outlining the mission, principles, values, structures, main decision-making principles, and key membership issues, to be adopted by the ministers. He also discussed the creation of revised detailed rules and procedures within the competence of BFUG, and any additional documents reflecting potential structural changes, such as establishing a permanent Secretariat within a specific legal entity, that would be potentially included within the above documents. He presented the expected outcomes for the upcoming BFUG meetings and Ministerial Conference.

Mr. Karpíšek focused on the issues to be considered for the BFUG meeting, which included a proposed structure of two levels of documents: EHEA Statutes and Operational Rules of Procedures. He also discussed bringing forward the topics of EHEA membership, including issues on the status, competences, type of members (including consultative members), and their accession, withdrawal, and exclusion, as well as the issue of EHEA structures and their competences.

Regarding the Secretariat, Mr. Karpíšek discussed the current situation and the potential establishment of a permanent Secretariat, including institutional provisions, form, tasks, governance, management, capacity, financing, hosting country/institution role and criteria, sustainability, independence, and transition roadmap. Financing was a major issue that they would address with some estimations to make the discussion more concrete. Harmonizing the statutes of EHEA would be essential in this regard, in order to discuss this further and seek





*Bosnia and Herzegovina
Ministry of Civil Affairs*

guidance from the BFUG Members. As for the Tirana 2024 Ministerial Communiqué, the Co-Chair noted that the TF plans to comment on it at the beginning of next year. Also, their recommendations for structural development would depend on whether the Permanent Secretariat is favored. The TF has some preliminary ideas and proposals, which would be presented before the Stockholm meeting, but they are still a working draft, and do not expect to delve into the details at this moment. The group proposed to discuss in the Stockholm meeting whether the two levels were acceptable. They had experience with EQAR as the only institution founded within the EHEA and discussed ways to ensure the Secretariat's independence from the hosting country. While this was their proposal of topics to be discussed, there were several other issues on the agenda as well.

Finally, he introduced the organization and structure of the BFUG Thematic block proposal of the Task Force. The proposed plan is to have a discussion on the key concepts, issues, directions, and mandate. The structure proposed is to start with a plenary introduction that includes alternatives and proposals. This will be followed by a discussion in smaller groups, such as a world café or three parallel sessions. By the end of the day, there will be a brief reporting from the groups. The final discussion will be focused on the legal framework, which will view the new structure of rules and procedures, including different approaches to voting. The agreement is that there might be different rules for voting for different decisions. The aim is to respect what was agreed upon in the previous BFUG, where voting should regard procedural issues. The TF will be seen more as facilitating the discussion and hearing for the prevailing views. Moreover, he informed that the TF agreed to have an additional meeting after the BFUG.

Appreciation was expressed for the progress made by the TF, and some members found the idea of having two layers as positive. Moreover, due to limited time at the upcoming BFUG meeting, it was advised that for the thematic block sessions to focus on specific points and structure the discussion. It was proposed to have a thorough discussion on the direction of the EHEA at the BFUG meeting and that all participants should have access to a discussion paper in advance. This would enable them to prepare and position their views and understand the implications of different options.

The idea of having a permanent secretariat was considered a complex point that requires further discussion. The Council of Europe expressed their concerns about the proposed structure and the financial costs associated with it. They also questioned the need for change and whether a monitoring and evaluation process had been conducted prior to putting forward the proposals. Additionally, they highlighted the potential implications for the existing international organizations involved in higher education.

The Vice-Chair suggested that the BFUG, rather than the Board, is the appropriate body to discuss and approve the statutes. She recommended that the TF prepares a comprehensive overview of the pros and cons of the statutes and the financial implications. She emphasized that this is crucial so that country members are well-prepared and seek approval for the BFUG meetings, as they may not always have the authority to make final decisions. It was also highlighted that the significant changes should be deliberated in the Board, and then the document should be drafted in a way that doesn't divert attention from the essential points by getting lost in minor details. The main changes should then be discussed at the BFUG meeting, and based on the outcome, the TF can prepare a draft for presentation at the consecutive meeting. It was also emphasized that the statutes should be approved by the ministers, and the rules and procedures by the BFUG. The majority of members stressed the significance of producing a discussion paper that outlines the possible directions to take and available options.

Mr. Karpisek thanked the Board members for their input and expressed his agreement about not discussing the details of the statutes and rules, but rather demonstrating a complex approach to the issue. He emphasized that the process of creating the statutes and rules does not depend on the decision regarding the permanent secretariat, but rather on reshaping the structure of the organization. Michal Karpisek proposed that the BFUG meeting in Stockholm should not be the venue for making a final decision. Instead, he suggested that the meeting should serve as an opportunity to indicate the direction for further discussion. He stated that there are pros and cons to both permanent and non-permanent Secretariat solutions, and that the structure of the organization should also be taken into consideration. He suggested that it would be reasonable to implement governance





*Bosnia and Herzegovina
Ministry of Civil Affairs*

changes in a step-by-step process, by proposing a roadmap and implement it gradually after the next working period.

In conclusion, the members emphasized the need for thorough preparation and thoughtful discussion on how to structure the discussion at the next BFUG meeting. Any comments on the documents would be sent to the Secretariat and TF Co-Chairs.

For more information, please see: [BFUG Board SE BA 83 7 TF RR Update](#)

7. Drafting Committee for the Tirana 2024 Ministerial Communiqué

Melanie Rosenbaum (Co-Chair, DC) introduced the role of the DC in preparing the Draft Communiqué for the Ministerial Conference. She highlighted the meetings and progress made by the DC, including the approval of the Terms of Reference and the collection of initial input from BFUG Working Structures. She noted that a meeting is planned in April followed by one in June, after the BFUG meeting, to be held in-presence. Ms. Rosenbaum presented the draft structure of the Tirana Ministerial Communiqué, which consists of four main sections: Introduction, Progress in implementing agreed reforms, Priorities of the EHEA beyond 2027, and Conclusions. She also listed the topics that will be tackled and mentioned that some of them are recurring transversal topics of several BFUG Working Structures such as micro-credentials and AI, and encouraged members to suggest other topics that have not been included in the document.

The DC Co-Chairs were thanked for their work, and a suggestion was made to include common goals and not just challenges in the introduction. Consultative members will also be consulted regarding the initial drafts to push overarching issues and include new trends and new issues. The CoE suggested underlining key elements such as the role of higher education for democracy, social cohesion and inclusion in the introduction, and noted that the SDGs are mentioned too many times without a clear link in the different BFUG Working Structures. Recent advancements in achieving SDGs were also reported, including the Transforming Education Summit last year, and another one planned for next year focusing on the 'future of societies'. The CoE emphasized the importance of member states and institutions making a clear call for the role of HEIs in transforming education.

The Vice-Chair suggested that an initiative presented during a meeting in Tirana with the Swedish Embassy, which focused on sustainable development goals related to relationship skills and social skills, could be included in the communiqué. Ms. Rosenbaum encouraged members to send brief input regarding HE's role towards democratic societies to be included in the document, and noted that members could provide any topics that have not been included.

8. Update on the application of European Network of Ombuds in Higher Education to join the BFUG

The European Network of Ombuds in Higher Education (ENOHE) submitted a request to become a consultative member of the BFUG. The Board received the request letter and held a discussion regarding the matter. It was observed that the former Head of Secretariat's involvement in the application process and communication with ENOHE did not adhere to standard procedure, which was deemed irregular. The Board emphasized that the decision to accept ENOHE as a consultative member lies with the BFUG and then with the ministers, and the Board can only recommend points on the topic to be presented at the BFUG. It was also mentioned that ENOHE's request for consultative membership was limited in scope and lacked specific information. Additionally, the organization appeared to focus more on peer learning activities rather than policy making. The CoE offered to provide guidelines on admission process of observers, so that specific information can be requested from organizations that wish to join the EHEA.

It was also pointed out that the organization had initially expressed interest in being an associate for observers, and later to become a consultative member. There was some confusion regarding the recommendation from the former Head of Secretariat to apply for consultative membership, and it was suggested that more clarity was needed on this matter. Further discussion ensued on the concept of consultative membership and the need for





Bosnia and Herzegovina
Ministry of Civil Affairs

crucial and clear applications. The TF on RR proposed to bring forward recommendations to the BFUG on the matter of instruments for admission procedures. Ultimately, the Board required more information to make an informed decision on whether to consider the application.

The Vice-Chair informed that, due to exclusion from regular correspondence, she was informed at a later stage on this and sought clarification from the previous Head of Secretariat without receiving a clear answer. Upon looking into this matter with the current Head, she agreed with the need for more information before presenting the application to the BFUG. Consequently, the Board decided to request that the former Head of Secretariat provide within two days from the date of the Board meeting a written information on the specific points raised during the discussion to gain a better understanding of the application process. Afterward, consultations with the BFUG Co-Chairs would be conducted to decide whether to request further information from ENOHE for a more comprehensive application. The Board postponed further discussion on this matter until the next Board meeting, once more information on ENOHE was available, rather than presenting it at the upcoming BFUG meeting. The Secretariat was tasked with informing ENOHE that their request had been discussed, and to notify them at a later time whether more information was needed.

9. Update on the possible support and coordination on Ukraine

Robin Moberg (BFUG Co-Chair) emphasized this item as a topic supported by the Swedish leadership to be presented in the upcoming BFUG meeting. Members of the Board expressed their support for the initiative, but it was also noted that there is already a significant amount of work and support being provided to Ukraine in various forms. As a result, it was suggested that the introduction of this topic in the BFUG meeting be reviewed to avoid duplicating efforts. Specifically, it was recommended that a definite topic on this initiative be included in the discussion, in order to provide added value towards Ukrainian HE from the EHEA perspective and guide the BFUG meeting's discussions.

For more information, please see: [BFUG Board SE BA 83 10 Update on the possible support and coordination on Ukraine](#)

10. Addressing the Official letter of Armenia to the BFUG Co-Chairs

An official correspondence from Armenia was disseminated upon reception by the Secretariat to the BFUG Co-Chairs. Subsequently, the letter was circulated to the Board, prompting a discussion. Although it was acknowledged that the matter in question exceeded the jurisdiction of the BFUG, it was nevertheless decided that the BFUG Co-Chairs would transmit the letter to the BFUG members for informational purposes. However, it was suggested that the item not be included on the agenda of the upcoming BFUG meeting. Accordingly, the BFUG Co-Chairs will compose a letter to accompany the Armenian correspondence and forward it to the BFUG Members, solely as a notification.

11. Updates on the call for the host of the 2027 EHEA Ministerial Conference

The BFUG Secretariat informed the Board that the document for the call of the 2027 Ministerial Conference followed the same outline as the previous one elaborated by the Italian Secretariat, and mentioned that the call would be circulated to the BFUG members, with the deadlines already specified in the document.

In regards to the section 'Proposal for a timeframe for the selection of post 2024 Ministerial Conference', a remark was made that as the BFUG does not make decisions on this matter, the first sentence² should be revised. It was suggested to either find another word for 'decision' or to reformulate the sentence as 'The decision of the proposal...'.

² The decision regarding the host of the next Ministerial Conference and BFUG Secretariat is expected to take place during the 2024 BFUG meeting in Brussels (April 2024).





Bosnia and Herzegovina
Ministry of Civil Affairs

Another comment made was to include throughout the document that the country hosting the Ministerial Conference will also be hosting the BFUG Secretariat. The EC also raised the point that it needs to know the hosting country by November 2023, and the timing for the next working period.

Members advised against making changes in the middle of the secretariat tenure, as it could create challenges with the handover process and operational issues. Additionally, it was highlighted that a transitional period would still be necessary even if agreement is reached on the Permanent Secretariat. The hosting country should be made aware of this and clarification from the Commission, which has been providing support, is needed. Therefore, it was proposed that the next period should be three years long, as two years would be too short to accomplish anything significant. The matter should be discussed at the BFUG, and the duration of the Secretariat term could be determined based on the proposal put forth by the BFUG to the ministers. It was also stressed that there is no need to rush into terminating the Secretariat term midway.

It was also suggested to include the number of delegations (100) and the maximum number of participants (5) for each delegation. On this note, concerns were raised regarding the minimum requirements for the conference venue, as there are very few venues in Europe that can accommodate 500 people with additional rooms, which could disadvantage some states.

It was concluded that the document on the call for the 2027 Ministerial Conference would be revised taking into consideration the comments from the Board, and would be circulated to the BFUG.

For more information, please see: [BFUG Board SE BA 83 11 Procedure for 2027 ministerial conference host](#)

12. Discussion of the Draft Agenda for the Upcoming BFUG Meeting LXXXIV

The preliminary draft agenda of the upcoming BFUG meeting was presented and it was decided to extend the initial allocated time for BFUG Working Structures' reporting. The Secretariat will contact the Co-Chairs of each Working Group to ask for the time needed. The Secretariat was also asked to contact the Ad-hoc TF on increasing synergies among the EHEA-ERA-EEA to provide an update on the progress made since their end of mandate. It was also mentioned to include an item on "Updates from consultative members".

The topic of automatic recognition was discussed and it was decided that it be included as a reporting from the European Commission's side, as a separate agenda item.

The item on Ukraine would be moved to day 2 of the meeting, and it was suggested to decide on a specific topic for this item and send the proposal to the BFUG for feedback. The feedback would then be elaborated into a document and presented to the Board for review.

Regarding the thematic discussion on fundamental values, it was decided to incorporate it as part of the reporting of the WG on FV, and the reporting of this WG would be extended. Therefore, thematic and breakout sessions would only be assigned for the TF on the Review of the Rules and Regulations for the Governance of the EHEA. The request for the thematic breakout sessions made by the TF on Enhancing Knowledge Sharing in the EHEA would be included at the BFUG meeting in Madrid, and the Secretariat would notify the Incoming Spanish BFUG Co-Chairs of this decision. The BFUG Secretariat would reflect and incorporate all these changes accordingly and present a revised draft agenda.

For more information, please see: [BFUG Board SE BA 83 12 Draft BFUG Meeting Agenda](#)

13. Information by the Incoming Co-Chairs

13.1. [BFUG Board Meeting LXXXV \(Georgia\)](#)

Maia Shukhoshvili (Incoming BFUG Co-Chair) expressed gratitude to the BFUG Co-Chairs for organizing the meeting and shared that the upcoming Board meeting in Georgia is scheduled for October 2, 2023. She also





*Bosnia and Herzegovina
Ministry of Civil Affairs*

mentioned that Georgia is hosting several international events related to higher education during that time, which are organized by ENQA, ESU, and other organizations.

13.2. BFUG Meeting LXXXVI (Madrid)

The BFUG Secretariat sent regrets on behalf of the Spanish Incoming BFUG Co-Chairs for being unable to attend the meeting. Ms. Subashi informed that coordination with Spain is ongoing to support the upcoming Co-Chairmanship. The dates for the BFUG meeting in Madrid were announced to be on November 16-17, 2023 and further details will be shared during the BFUG meeting in Stockholm.

14. AOB

It was communicated that the dates for the Ministerial Conference have to be announced without delay. Additionally, it was revealed that the EHEA website would have a back office available for the BFUG Board's internal use. The BFUG Secretariat inquired whether meeting documents for the Board meetings should be uploaded to the website prior or after meetings. The Board discussed transparency and accessibility of documents. The BFUG Chairs suggested that the decision of whether to upload the documents after the Board meeting should be made during the Board meeting instead of uploading everything beforehand. The Board also deliberated on whether politically sensitive documents discussed by the Board should be made public and when a working document should be considered final. One proposal was to allow the public to track the development of the documents and not just view the final draft. It was suggested that maximum reasonable transparency should guide the decision of whether to upload the documents, and that it should be the responsibility of the Co-Chairs to exercise discretion regarding the publication of the documents before the Board meeting. The Head of Secretariat also suggested that a restricted area be made available on the website specifically for such documents.

No other business was brought forward, thus the Board meeting was successfully concluded with special thanks to the Bosnia and Herzegovina BFUG Co-Chairs for the organization of the meeting.

