



Ministry of Education and  
Science of Georgia

07.11.2023

**Task Force on the Review of the Rules and Regulations  
for the Governance of the European Higher Education Area (TF RR)  
Cover document: report and input to the BFUG discussion**

### Introduction

This document provides a background information for the proposals of the Task Force on the Review of the Rules and regulations for the Governance of the European Higher Education Area (“TF RR”). Following the objectives set in the Terms of Reference of the Task Force, reflecting the discussions within the BFUG in Stockholm, BFUG Board in Tbilisi, the Task Force submits the following documents for the BFUG meeting in November 2023 in Madrid:

- Rules of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and of the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG), a revised version (“EHEA Rules”)
- A reference list of changes in these rules, referring to integration and proposed adjustment of the current Rules of Procedures 2021 - 2024
- Permanent EHEA Secretariat. Concept note for the Madrid BFUG.

### Proposed focus of the discussion of the BFUG in Madrid

While the Task Force welcomes the feedback on all these documents and there will be an invitation for written comments after the BFUG (the preferred deadline by 6 December), it proposes that the main focus of the BFUG discussion should regard the concept of the EHEA structures, mainly the overall idea of introduction of the “permanent” EHEA Secretariat and the the principles such an arrangement should respect. However, no discussion on details of the three alternatives proposed in the document on the Permanent EHEA Secretariat is expected, as at this stage, they serve mainly illustration and indication of potential solutions and need further



Albanian BFUG Secretariat  
2021-2024



Ministry of Education and  
Science of Georgia

exploration, in two cases also in a more thorough consultation with the respective BFUG members, CoE and EQAR.

The Task Force invites the BFUG to decide whether the EHEA's future priorities and activities require a permanent support structure and to agree whether the ministers should discuss this issue during the 2024 Ministerial conference in Tirana, giving the BFUG a mandate to prepare the launch of the "permanent" EHEA secretariat within the next EHEA cycle. This mandate might be based on a set of proposed principles.

- **EHEA Permanent Secretariat**

There are not many proposals for the change for the EHEA governance structure by the TF RR. The main issue for consideration regards the status and arrangement of the secretariat and finding an optimum solution for its effective and consistent support of EHEA developments and BFUG work. The current, rotating arrangement has some advantages and disadvantages, as explained in the document on the Permanent Secretariat. Therefore, the TF RR focused on providing the basis for a discussion on possible change towards a more permanent arrangement. The TF proposed a set of principles and requirements, developed three concrete options how a permanent secretariat could be setup and organised in line with those. While the implementation of any of these options would require agreement of some additional details, the options illustrate that a permanent arrangement is feasible and there are different ways to realise it.

It appeared clearly that any structural change would require a profound discussion and preparation, thus a possible introduction of the permanent secretariat is not feasible on a very short-term basis.

The status of the secretariat, its role and the required capacity should be linked to a more principal discussion on the further EHEA development, the role it should play in European higher education transformation and cooperation. This is closely related to the overall discussion on further priorities of the EHEA, expected actions and initiatives – and the support and capacity necessary in a long term. In this aspect it is linked to the discussion on the communique concept, arguments for political support of the changes.

The TF RR will review the background document - reflecting the conclusions from the BFUG discussion – in order to develop a basis for the ministers' discussion. It should focus on a broader context, arguments for potential changes and general indication of possible direction of further steps. This document will be presented at the next BFUG (February 2024) together with the proposal of a relevant short text for the communique.

- **Rules of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and of the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG), a revised version ("EHEA Rules")**

The TF RR further developed the previous draft of the rules of procedures considering most of the comments agreed upon within the BFUG and BFUG Board discussions or submitted in a written form. The EHEA Rules restructure the existing Rules of Procedures (2021 – 2024) into two parts: an overall framework of more general Rules for the EHEA and the operational part of the Rules of the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG). The



Albanian **BFUG** Secretariat  
2021-2024



Ministry of Education and  
Science of Georgia

TF RR proposes that the first part is adopted by the Ministers, whereas the competence for changes of the second part would remain with the BFUG.

The BFUG members are invited for further concrete comments to the draft of the EHEA Rules by 6 December 2023. The TF RR will prepare a revised version of the EHEA Rules for the next BFUG in February 2024 which then will reflect also the discussion on the secretariat arrangement.

- **The proposed focus of the BFUG discussion**

The TF RR therefore proposes that the limited time for the discussion within the BFUG should be used for:

- A more conceptual discussion on the role of the secretariat and governing structures in the further EHEA development, the aspects relevant for the ministers' discussion, reflecting also scope of BFUG and its working structures activities. More precise understanding of possible views of the BFUG members would substantially help the TF RR to progress with the further work on recommendations regarding the secretariat.
- A general discussion on the new version of the EHEA Rules, the concept of EHEA Rules and BFUG Rules, general comments as there will be an invitation for the more detailed written comments and the Rules might be discussed in more details in the next BFUG meetings.

### **Workplan, activities and steps to follow**

The TF RR has met since the BFUG in Stockholm 4 times:

- 12 May 2023, Stockholm. Debriefing from BFUG, agreement on further division of work among the sub-groups
- 19 July 2023, online: review of progress, concept of Permanent secretariat and further specification of alternatives, revised draft of EHEA Rules
- 6 September 2023, online: finishing documents for the BFUG Board, preparation for the BFUG Board, consultation of alternatives for the secretariat, schedule
- 10 October 2023, online: reflection of the BFUG Board conclusions, review of existing drafts – review of the secretariat preparation, draft EHEA Rules, preparation for the BFUG



Albanian **BFUG** Secretariat  
2021-2024