BFUG Meeting LXXI

25 June 2020

online, hosted by Croatia

<u>Minutes</u>

List of participants

#	Delegation	First name	Surname
1	Albania	Linda	Pustina
2	Andorra	Jordi	Llombart
3	Armenia	Gayane	Harutyunyan
4	Armenia	Samvel	Karabekyan
5	Austria	Stephan	De Pasqualin
6	Austria (BICG Co-chair)	Helga	Posset
7	Azerbaijan	Shahin	Bayramov
8	Azerbaijan	Yashar	Omarov
9	Belarus	Elena	Betenya
10	Belgium/Flemish Community	Dora	Scott
11	Belgium/Flemish Community	Magalie	Soenen
12	Belgium/French Community	Caroline	Hollela
13	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Aida	Đurić
14	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Petar	Marić
15	Bulgaria	Ivana	Radonova
16	Croatia (Minister of Science and Education)	Blaženka	Divjak
17	Croatia (BFUG Co-chair)	Leonardo	Marušić
18	Croatia (BFUG Co-chair)	Ana	Tecilazić Goršić
19	Croatia	Ana	Dragičević
20	Croatia	Ana	Jerković
21	Croatia	Mateja	Maljuga
22	Croatia	Loredana	Maravić
23	Croatia	Mirjana	Vila
24	Croatia (AG1 on Social Dimension Co-chair)	Ninoslav	Šćukanec Schmidt
25	Cyprus	Panicos	Giorgoudes

#	Delegation	First name	Surname
26	Czech Republic	Tomáš	Fliegl
27	Czech Republic	Lenka	Skrabalová
28	Estonia	Janne	Pukk
29	European Commission	Vanessa	Debiais-Sainton
30	European Commission	Klara	Engels-Perenyi
31	Finland (outgoing BFUG Co-chair)	Maija	Innola
32	Finland (TPG A on QF Co-chair)	Carita	Blomqvist
33	France	Denis	Despréaux
34	France	Hélène	Lagier
35	France (TPG B on LRC Co-chair)	Hélène	Bekker
36	Georgia	Lasha	Margishvili
37	Georgia	Khatia	Tsiramua
38	Germany (incoming BFUG Co-chair)	Anja	Diek
39	Germany (incoming BFUG Co-chair)	Peter	Greisler
40	Germany	Frank	Petrikowski
41	Greece	Alexandra	Karvouni
42	Greece	Yiannis	Katsanevakis
43	Holy See	Melanie	Rosenbaum
44	Hungary	Beatrix	Borza
45	Hungary	Ernő	Keszei
46	Iceland	Una	Strand Viðarsdóttir
47	Ireland	Joe	Gleeson
48	Italy	Vincenzo	Zara
49	Italy (BFUG Vice-chair)	Ann Katherine	Isaacs
50	Italy (TPG B on LRC Co-chair)	Chiara	Finocchietti
51	Kazakhstan	Gulzhan	Jarassova
52	Kazakhstan	Rauza	Mendaliyeva
53	Kazakhstan	Banu	Narbekova
54	Latvia	Daiga	Ivsina
55	Liechtenstein	Daniel	Miescher
56	Lithuania	Andrius	Zalitis
57	Luxembourg	Isabelle	Reinhardt
58	Malta	Rose Anne	Cuschieri
59	Malta	Tanya	Sammut-Bonnici
60	Moldova	Nadejda	Velisco

#	Delegation	First name	Surname
61	Montenegro	Kristina	Ljuljdjuraj
62	Netherlands	Tessa	Bijvank
63	North Macedonia	Borco	Aleksov
64	Norway	Joakim	Bakke
65	Norway	Tone Flood	Strøm
66	Poland	Ilona	Juszczyk
67	Portugal	Maria Lurdes	Correia Fernandes
68	Portugal	Ana Isabel	Mateus
69	Romania	Cristina	Ghiţulică
70	Romania	Mihai Cezar	Haj
71	Romania	Antonela	Toma
72	Russian Federation	Nadežda	Kamynina
73	Serbia	Tatjana	Cvetkovski
74	Serbia	Tanja	Radošević
75	Slovak Republic	Jozef	Jurkovič
76	Slovenia	Duša	Marjetič
77	Spain	Margarita	de Lezcano-Mújica
78	Sweden	Robin	Moberg
79	Switzerland	Aurélia	Robert-Tissot
80	Turkey (outgoing BFUG Co-chair)	Tuncay	Döğeroğlu
81	Turkey (outgoing BFUG Co-chair)	Elif	Huntürk
82	Ukraine (Deputy Minister of Education and Science)	Yegor	Stadny
83	Ukraine (BFUG Co-chair)	Olexandr	Smyrnov
84	Ukraine (BFUG Co-chair)	Kateryna	Suprun
85	United Kingdom (incoming BFUG Co-chair)	Pamela	Wilkinson
86	United Kingdom (Scotland) (incoming BFUG Co-chair)	Michael	Watney
87	Council of Europe	Sjur	Bergan
88	ENQA	Christoph	Grolimund
89	ENQA	Maria	Kelo
90	EQAR	Colin	Tück
91	ESU	Gohar	Hovhannisyan
92	ESU	Robert	Napier
93	ESU	Sebastian	Berger
94	ETUCE	Agnes	Roman
95	ETUCE	Andreas	Keller

#	Delegation	First name	Surname
96	EUA	Michael	Gaebel
97	EUA	Tia	Loukkola
98	EURASHE	Michal	Karpíšek
99	EURASHE	Stéphane	Lauwick
100	UNESCO	Liliana	Simionescu
101	UNESCO	Peter	Wells
102	AEC	Lucia	Di Cecca
103	EURODOC	Beata	Zwierzynska
104	EURODOC	Eva	Hnatkova
105	EUROSTUDENT	Kristina	Hauschildt
106	EURYDICE (WG1 on Monitoring Co-chair)	David	Crosier
107	BFUG Secretariat (Head)	Luca	Lantero
108	BFUG Secretariat	Edlira Adi	Kahani Subashi
109	BFUG Secretariat	Rocío	Iglesias de Ussel Rubio
110	BFUG Secretariat	Vera	Lucke
111	Guest (Croatia, Researcher)	Kresimir	Krolo

Apologies from Denmark and BUSINESSEUROPE.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this BFUG meeting was held completely online for the first time ever.

1. Welcome and introduction

1.1 Welcome by the current BFUG Co-chairs: Croatia/Ukraine

The Croatian Co-chair welcomed all the participants to the very first completely virtual BFUG meeting. In this unprecedented and historic situation, it becomes even more important that we keep our cooperation and the Bologna spirit alive. She emphasised that all EHEA countries have registered for this BFUG meeting.

Prof. Blaženka Divjak, Minister of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia, on behalf of Croatia, the country holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU, welcomed the participants to the LXXI BFUG online meeting. Croatia and the whole EU have worked very closely in a coordinated effort to address the unforeseen and unforeseeable challenges caused by COVID-19. The EU Ministers responsible for education have met on a monthly basis to discuss and find common ground and solutions to cope with the effects of the pandemic. COVID-19 has impacted heavily on physical mobility and cross border cooperation and society must be innovative and creative to cope with the challenges caused by the situation. This period should be seen as a time to turn challenges into opportunities by implementing a digital transformation at all educational levels. It is the responsibility of policy makers and the higher education (HE) community to lead the developments and ensure sustainability of HE in the EHEA and our societies. The EHEA countries should strengthen the competitiveness of HE and promote high quality and excellence in HE and research. There is a need to provide peer support in the implementation of the Bologna key commitments, very important for the future of the Bologna Process. Proposals for more ambitious EHEA goals and

commitments in HE are welcomed, especially for inclusion, equity, innovative learning and teaching, tailor made short programs, etc. Excellence and equity do not compete with each other; they rather go hand in hand, and it is very important that these two goals and the processes to achieve them are seen as equally important and support each other. Enhancement of the social dimension and student-oriented learning, strengthening the link between teaching and innovation, promotion of more community engagement of HEIs, new ways of promoting mobility and cross border education as well as facilitating the recognition of qualifications and periods of studies will enable a more successful EHEA in the future. Ensuring the quality of Learning and Teaching is a major goal in the EHEA: special attention should be devoted to teachers. This topic has been one of the priorities of the Croatian EU Presidency, resulting on the EU Council's conclusion on European teachers and trainers for the future, already published, with a conference to be held on 29 June 2020, which everyone is invited to attend. It is very important to address teachers' digitals skills as well. Many HEIs have proved their adaptability and creativity with respect to their response to COVID-19, finding innovative ways to implement online teaching, and this should be taken as a valuable practice for further accelerating the digitalization of HEIs by creating virtual campuses, joint provision of degrees and small learning units and strengthen close cooperation. Minister Divjak thanked the BFUG working groups for the work carried out, pushing further the implementation of Bologna key commitments and creating the vision of the future for the EHEA, as well as the Italian BFUG Secretariat for the work carried out. Final thanks went to the Croatian team for their hard work.

Yegor Stadny, Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine welcomed the BFUG participants to the first virtual BFUG meeting in the history of the Bologna Process. In March 2020 Ukraine hosted for the first time a BFUG meeting (the 69th) and it was an honour to have so many colleagues and guests participating at the meeting in Kyiv, which also provided an opportunity to discover the great potential and interest of Ukraine in the intergovernmental cooperation with regards to higher education policy. COVID-19 has profoundly impacted our professional and personal lives in a variety of ways. We are witnesses to the historic changes in economy and politics, rapidly enforced scientific developments and transformation of transnational education. The current crisis has proved the growing need for interconnectedness, innovation and inclusion in higher education. With all the changes in education systems and global economies, the Bologna Process has this historic chance to contribute its joint intellectual potential to tackling the present and future issues. Deputy Minister Stadny expressed his gratitude to the BFUG Members, Consultative Members and Partners, the BFUG Secretariat, the BFUG Vice-Chair, and the BFUG Co-Chairing Team from Croatia and Ukraine for the excellent work they have been doing during this challenging semester. Through joint efforts and work all have successfully managed with the current temporary mode of operation, and ensured the ongoing implementation of the Bologna Process commitments.

1.2 Welcome by the BFUG Vice-chair (Italy)

The BFUG Vice-Chair welcomed all the participants and thanked the BFUG Co-chairs and BFUG Secretariat for the preparation of this online meeting. The BFUG meeting should be considered an unprecedented meeting, and what has happened in the past months has shown that the EHEA is very much alive, resilient and creative in face of the present difficulties. It also shows the flexibility and strategic approach of the EHEA and BFUG.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Attachment: BFUG_HR_UA_71_2a_Draft Agenda BFUG_HR_UA_71_2b_Draft Annotated Agenda

3. Feedback from the last meetings

3.1 Report from the BFUG meeting in Kyiv (4-5 March 2020)

The Ukrainian Co-chair welcomed the BFUG participants and informed that the minutes and materials of the previous 69th BFUG meeting in Kyiv are online on the meeting's webpage.

3.2 Report from the online Board meeting (2 April 2020)

The minutes of the online 70th Board meeting (ex Lviv), hosted by Ukraine are online on the meeting's webpage.

4. Information from the BFUG Secretariat

The Head of the BFUG Secretariat reminded the BFUG that three decisions have been taken electronically in the past months: 1. As incoming BFUG (EU and non-EU) Co-chairs, Germany and the United Kingdom – including the United Kingdom (Scotland) – have been added to the Drafting Committee of the Ministerial Communiqué; 2. The Italian BFUG Secretariat's and Vice-chair's mandate has been extended until December 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the postponement of the Rome Ministerial Conference to 19-20 November 2020; and 3. In this context, and in line with the application of Albania to host the next Ministerial Conference, to be submitted for the EHEA Ministers' approval in Rome, the proposal that Albania takes over the BFUG Secretariat and BFUG Vice-chairmanship from January 2021 was approved by the BFUG.

Attachment: BFUG_HR_UA_71_4_Information BFUG Secretariat

5. Parallel sessions on the Bologna Key Commitments

The Croatian BFUG Co-chair introduced the three parallel breakout sessions, one for each of the Bologna key commitments. The participants had chosen one of the sessions during their registration and the parallel sessions were moderated by the Co-chairs of the TPGs who reported back to the plenary after the breakout sessions.

5.1 Thematic Peer Group A on Qualifications Frameworks

The Czech Co-chair of TPG A reported about the parallel session for TPG A. There were three main outcomes from the discussion in this session:

1. The peer support approach was a big success and brought real and useful outcomes;
2. The topic of coordination and division of competences of different structures that deal with the topics (QF-EHEA, ECTS, short cycle) was discussed, considering that there is the EHEA Network of NQF Correspondents coordinated by the Council of Europe. Stronger coordination is needed with the network as well as with the AGs, trying to avoid overlap in the work of the groups;

3. The group has seen that there are differences at national level even among those countries where the structural reforms have been implemented successfully. All the reforms adopted are meant to assist HEIs to deliver higher quality education and should be put into practice. There is strong belief that there is work to do at HEIs' level and that the national authorities have the great responsibility of supporting the reforms at the level of HEIs, and coordinating activities with HEI representatives, even though on an operational level it might not be easy. More work needs to be done to motivate the HEIs to implement fully. For the future there is a need for seminars/workshops for HEIs to discuss the Bologna tools and how they can be implemented on HEI level, for instance about the concept of learning outcomes in practice.

5.2 Thematic Peer Group B on Lisbon Recognition Convention

The French Co-chair of TPG B reported on this parallel session. The participants were introduced to the work carried out in a short period of time, by the TPG B as well as to the activities, outcomes and recommendations of the TPG B. According to the input of the EUA, emphasis was on the effectiveness of the peer support approach in advancing the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) especially in regard to the state of play in different EHEA countries. The discussion focused largely on further developments in the EHEA context, in particular on the following elements:
1. Establishment of a core set of indicators to define substantial differences;
2. Further development of the topic and concept of automatic recognition;
3. The topic of digitalization, related to recognition and the role of the new Europass (which is expected to be launched in July 2020), with some synergies to be developed in this regard;
4. The discussions on the quality of recognition were linked to chapter 1 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG);
5. Micro-credentials and flexible pathways;
6. Synergies with the LRC Committee Bureau (LRCCB) and dialogue on the global level in the view of the UNESCO Global Convention on Recognition. The current work of the LRCCB was introduced, with emphasis on the work on the next subsidiary text on digitalization, as well as the new questionnaire to be sent out to all parties of the LRC.

5.3 Thematic Peer Group C on Quality Assurance

The Co-chair of TPG C, from Belgium Flemish Community, reported on the parallel session. She first focused on the work of the TPG C and its projects. The staff mobility project's deadline has been prolonged until November 2020, due to COVID-19, therefore BFUG members interested are welcome to express their interest in joining to use it for peer support. In general, for the method used, the idea of having representatives of both QA agencies as well as national authorities jointly at the meetings was good. The participants expressed their enthusiasm for the results of the work carried out in a short time and the variety of methods used during the meetings, as well as in the projects. The staff mobility project aimed at facilitating learning about innovative practices was considered valuable and the need to have future blended staff mobility and practice, both face to face and online, was confirmed. Some member countries expressed their concern about the heavy workload for the TPG co-chairs, and the need to find ways to lighten workload and to ensure sustainability. The Action Plan, as a concrete good practice, was considered a gentle push to have more development of QA in a country. The TPG C has worked on six thematic topics during the last two years: The implementation of legal frameworks should be ensured by good cooperation and efforts of national authorities and QA agencies, further independence of QA agencies and internal QA mechanism of QA agencies. For the European approach to joint programmes, legal changes should be made and

procedural aspects which hindered implementation should be addressed. Stakeholder engagement is necessary, particularly with involvement of students and employers. Regarding internal QA, the need to develop a quality culture was underlined, while for external QA, the problem of overburdening HEIs was mentioned. The topic of new study programmes and flexible pathways was discussed as important for the future and for the publication of external QA results. With regard to cross-border QA, the idea of collecting data on legal challenges for incoming cross-border QA, as well as examples to demonstrate the usefulness of cross-border QA, was mentioned.

Other topics considered for discussion within the TPG C, linked to the current six topics, are the QA of e-learning linked to innovative learning and teaching, MOOCS and micro-credentials (through the MICROBOL project), which can be addressed in future work. With regard to COVID-19, discussions were focused on online QA procedures, for example considering a blended QA process in the future, and how to deal with the QA of online courses. Other topics were: teaching by non-traditional providers, community engagement, work based learning, open science and doctoral learning. The overall message emphasizes the need to keep working on the implementation of key commitments: peer support should continue in the future.

5.4 Report from the parallel sessions on the Bologna Key Commitments

The Ukrainian Co-chair summarized that there seems to be broad agreement and understanding among BFUG members that the peer support should continue in the future and should be updated and continued. All TPGs have reported back in terms of legislative framework, approach to COVID-19 pandemics, etc.

5.5 Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG) Draft Final Report

The Croatian BFUG Co-Chair introduced the BICG's draft final report and informed the participants about the novelties in the latest version. It now contains an executive summary, examples of good practice and recommendations of all three TPGs on the way forward. The current report also contains a proposal for the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the BICG in the next work period based on the existing set up. The BICG Final Report will be discussed at the Berlin BFUG meeting. The report is not final yet, since it should reflect also the input from the TPG B on LRC, which had its final meeting on 18 June 2020, and the TPG members' most recent reports on the outcomes of their work at the national level. Written comments by the BFUG to the BICG draft final report are welcome by 8 July 2020. The BFUG members were also invited to express their interest in participating in the future TPGs and the BICG for the next BFUG work period. Expression of interest would be welcomed until 26 July 2020 [*later postponed to 14 August*].

The BFUG Secretariat underlined the fact that an expression of interest does not mean a country's participation will be approved by the BFUG in its meeting in the 1st semester of the next BFUG after-2020 work period. The BFUG Secretariat also drew attention to the previous common practice, where the ToRs were not included in the reports, but discussed and approved at the first BFUG meeting of the next work period, and pointed out that the ToRs cannot be approved before the Rome 2020 Ministerial Conference, although, of course, they can be proposed and discussed preliminarily by the BFUG.

The BFUG praised the results achieved by the peer groups within the short time for their activities, leading to legal changes in a number of countries. The discussants underlined that the BICG was established for a reason, on how to deal effectively with the implementation of the Bologna Key Commitments. The success of the work of the BICG on furthering implementation should be

described more precisely. The report should reflect the following issues: to what extent the BICG and TPGs have focused on their main mandate of implementation, rather than policy making; reflection on whether the BICG and the peer approach are applicable to other policy areas of the Bologna Process and why; and explore possible synergies of the BICG with other BFUG groups. However, it should also be taken into consideration that the BICG started as a pilot project and so far the results of the work carried out so far are promising, but it might be too early to open the peer support approach to other Bologna policy areas.

Attachment: BFUG_HR_UA_71_5_5_BICG Draft Final Report

6. Final Reports from the AGs, WG1 and the EHEA Network of NQF Correspondents (in writing)

This time, due to the virtual format and shorter BFUG meeting, there were no presentations of the reports by the groups' Co-chairs and all written reports were uploaded on the website in advance, making it possible to read them and to comment on specific issues if desired. Some groups included in their report their proposals for the Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the next work period based on the experience gained during 2018-2020. Those ToRs can be discussed separately from the reports in the Berlin BFUG meeting and provisional indications given for their future approval.

The final report would be presented to the BFUG meeting in Berlin for adoption, whereas the part related to the proposed ToR for the next work period would be presented as a separate document for discussion and orientation on future adoption.

6.1 AG1 on Social Dimension (AG1) – Final Report

The participants were informed about the structure of the presented document, with the ToR not to be discussed at present, in light of the information received by the BFUG Secretariat.

General feedback from the participants was that AG1 has done an excellent job. A couple of comments on the proposed ToR were made. It should be noted that 'social dimension' refers not only to students but also to academic staff.

The discussants suggested that there should still be some minor technical work on the document to enable inserting the feedback received by the BFUG. The final report would be presented to the BFUG meeting in Berlin for adoption. The proposal of the ToR for a future AG on social dimension will be discussed as a separate document.

Attachments: BFUG_HR_UA_71_6_1_AG1 Final Report
*   BFUG_HR_UA_71_6_1_AG1 Annex Communique*

6.2 AG2 on Learning and Teaching (AG2) – Draft Final Report

AG2 was advised by the BFUG to also focus on the COVID-19 pandemics crisis in their report. The Dutch Co-chair informed the participants about the documents presented for the current BFUG meeting as well as the update on the effects of the COVID-19 and the response of AG2 in this regard. The Final AG2 report, taking into the account the feedback from the BFUG meeting, will be presented to the BFUG in the Berlin meeting.

The discussants praised the document prepared by the AG2 which would provide a good basis for further work. The COVID-19 situation has raised the question of how it has accelerated changes that were happening already, such as the move to digital learning and teaching. There is a need to look

at how to support students and staff in light of the longer-term changes. The next iteration of AG2 should focus very much on managing the 'new normal', and supporting staff in teaching and mentoring students online as well as supporting students, especially the ones that are particularly vulnerable due to the digital divide. For the ToR of the next BFUG work period, emphasis should be on the importance of concrete terms of reference to steer the group's work.

Attachments: *BFUG_HR_UA_71_6_2_AG2 Draft Final Report*
BFUG_HR_UA_71_6_2_AG2 Annex Communique
BFUG_HR_UA_71_6_2_AG2 Update

6.3 WG1 on Monitoring (WG1) – Bologna Process Implementation Report

The participants were informed about the BPIR report and told that comments on the version of the BPIR presented are welcome until 4 September 2020. The final version of the BPIR will be presented to the BFUG meeting in Berlin. Attention should be given to chapter 6, as it focuses on the future and as a result of the current COVID-19 pandemics it has been updated to reflect the new reality.

Attachment: *BFUG_HR_UA_71_6_3_BPIR*

6.4 EHEA Network of NQF Correspondents Final Report

The report was adopted as presented, without any discussion or comment.

Attachment: *BFUG_HR_UA_71_6_4_Network NQF Correspondents Final Report*

7. Recommendations from the Ad Hoc Group on the application of San Marino to join the EHEA

The Finnish Chair of this ad hoc group presented the draft report including also a National Report on the Higher Education system of San Marino. San Marino fulfils the criteria for admission to the Bologna Process as outlined in the Berlin Communiqué. The ad hoc group has worked in a constructive and positive way with the San Marino authorities. Based on the national report provided by San Marino and following the discussions with its authorities, the ad hoc group recommends that the BFUG, through the Ministers, admits San Marino to the EHEA with a road map for the next BFUG work period. A road map would enable San Marino to implement the Bologna key commitments quite swiftly. The roadmap prepared by the ad hoc group together with San Marino should be discussed at the Berlin BFUG meeting in September 2020.

Some BFUG participants requested further clarification of the admission with a roadmap for San Marino. The BFUG Secretariat confirmed to the BFUG that the admission of San Marino to the EHEA is not meant to be conditional: San Marino would become a full member, but would fulfil some further, commonly agreed steps which will be laid down in a roadmap and would support the implementation of the Bologna key commitments. This concept was agreed by the Sammarinese authorities.

Following the discussions, the BFUG approved the proposal to the EHEA Ministers to admit San Marino to the EHEA, as suggested by the ad hoc group.

Attachments: *BFUG_HR_UA_71_7_Ad Hoc San Marino Report*
BFUG_HR_UA_71_7_San Marino National Report

8. Parallel sessions on the implications of COVID-19 to the Bologna Process

Two parallel sessions took place, to discuss the implications of COVID-19 to the Bologna Process from two different perspectives took place.

Attachment: BFUG_HR_UA_71_8_Parallel sessions COVID 19 Background paper

8.1 The students' perspective (moderated by ESU and Council of Europe)

Please see Annex 1.

Attachment: BFUG_HR_UA_71_8_1_Survey results

8.2 The Higher Education Institutions' perspective (moderated by EUA and EURASHE)

Please see Annex 1.

Attachment: BFUG_HR_UA_71_8_2_Survey results

9. Draft Rome Ministerial Communiqué

The document presented is the version 5 of the draft communiqué, and comments received by several BFUG members just before the BFUG meeting had not been included yet. Further written comments by the BFUG would be accepted until noon on Monday, 29 June 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic perceptions and views should be reflected in the communiqué and the report from the breakout session would be useful on this aspect. The BFUG Vice-Chair informed the participants on the content of the Draft Communiqué and the comments received.

A selection of written comments already received were discussed in line with the text in version 5 of the Draft Communiqué, divided by sections. The BFUG was informed about the comments received for each of the sections and further discussions took place in light of these comments. All the feedback and suggestions were received and recorded and will be reflected by the drafting committee in the next version of the draft communiqué.

Attachment: BFUG_HR_UA_71_9_Draft 5 Rome Communiqué

10. Rome 2020 Ministerial Conference and Global Policy Forum

10.1 Draft Concept for the Rome 2020 Ministerial Conference and the Bologna Global Policy Forum

The BFUG was informed with an e-mail on 5 June 2020, that due to the uncertainty related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Global Summit on Higher Education (planned to take place in November 2020 in Rome) was postponed to a date to be decided in 2021. The Head of the BFUG Secretariat presented the updated information in regard to the Ministerial Conference, related to changes made due to the COVID-19 situation, following the e-mail message forwarded to the BFUG on 5 June 2020. Following discussions with the Italian Authorities as well as the BFUG Troika and international organizations, the November 2020 meeting will be organized in a blended modality. The proposal is to have a limited number of participants (max. 250) physically present at the Rome Ministerial Conference. The rest of the ministerial conference would be virtual, with the use of the high-level technology. There will be follow up information on the topic, taking into account information from the BFUG representatives on their availability to travel to Rome in November 2020. Considering the

feedback received and possible further developments, the ministerial conference should take place in any case in November in the proposed dates with no further delay, and the right solution must be found in response to all conditions posed by the relevant Italian authorities. The BFUG thanked the Italian team and BFUG Secretariat for all the hard work done during the COVID-19 pandemic and expressed solidarity with them.

Attachments: BFUG_HR_UA_71_10_1_1_Ministerial Conference
BFUG_HR_UA_71_10_1_2_Global Summit on HE

10.2 Bologna Global Policy Forum

The Coordination Group (CG1) on Global Policy Dialogue has been working over the past two years to organise to the best of its abilities the 'Global Policy Forum' which was to be integrated, as a central aspect, in the EHEA's Ministerial Conference in June, now postponed until 19-20 November 2020. The Flemish Co-Chair of the CG on GPD presented the outcomes of the discussion in the CG and the options proposed for the Global Policy Forum. The CG presented five options for organizing the Global Policy Forum, considering the current COVID-19 situation:

1. Adhere as closely as possible to the existing plan, although in virtual or blended form: Plenary virtual meeting including EHEA and non-EHEA Ministers during the November Ministerial Conference as planned. This includes keynotes (Italian Minister, Jeffrey Sachs), and space for the Ministers attending to make brief statements

2. Use the existing plan as a basis, but modify it with a view to optimizing participation: The centrality of the Global Policy Forum with regard to the Ministerial Meeting could be emphasized by giving the GPF a (virtual) space as planned during the Ministerial Meeting, but modifying the schedule so that it falls in the central hours of 19 or 20 November, to facilitate participation by Ministers from all time zones.

3. Abolish the parallel sessions: Plenary virtual meeting including EHEA and non-EHEA Ministers at a short Forum meeting including brief keynotes (Italian Minister, Jeffrey Sachs), and space for the Ministers attending to make brief statements. The keynotes and other materials might be presented (virtually) beforehand.

4. Keep the Global Forum within the Ministerial Conference but hold the parallel sessions before and/or after: If possible the parallel sessions could be held in the weeks before the Ministerial Conference as a kind of 'build-up'.

5. Postpone part or all of the Global Policy Forum to coincide with the "Global Summit" to be held in 2021: On the afternoon of 20 November and on 21 November a number of events were planned as a "Global Summit". Italy has now postponed this until a date to be decided in 2021, and to be held in Italy. It may be possible to hold a special Global Policy Forum in conjunction with the Global Summit on Higher Education.

The delegations considered the proposed solutions by the CG on GPD. Considering the fact that inviting non-EHEA countries to personally attend would be impossible, due to strict COVID-19 regulations by the Italian national authorities, the BFUG Secretariat proposed to postpone the Global Policy Forum to 2021. The non-EHEA ministers and relevant stakeholders would be invited to follow a short online session during the Ministerial Conference in which the Statement could be discussed. In conclusion, it was agreed that the CG on GPD would discuss the item again, taking into account all the feedback received and would suggest to the BFUG a possible approach. This proposal would be sent to the BFUG and a decision would, if possible, be taken following an online consultation in summer, before the September 2020 Board and BFUG meetings.

11. Draft Bologna Global Policy Statement

The Statement has been drafted very carefully, but since there are no objections and because this item is dependent on the decisions relating to the Global Policy Forum, the Chairs did not open a discussion on this topic.

Attachment: BFUG_HR_UA_71_11_Draft 3 Bologna Global Policy Statement

12. BFUG governance after the Ministerial Conference 2020

The prolongation of the term of office of the Italian BFUG Secretariat and Vice-Chair until December 2020, gives Albania the possibility to start its BFUG Secretariat and Vice-chairmanship term in January 2021. The Board asked Albania for its availability to host the following Ministerial Conference either in November 2023 or May/June 2024. Albania gave its availability for both dates with a preference for the date of May/June 2024. On that basis, the BFUG was asked to discuss the dates and approved to recommend to the EHEA Ministers that the Ministerial Conference should take place in May/June 2024 in Albania. The recommendation of the date proposed by Albania (May/June 2024) was approved by the BFUG with no objection.

Attachment: BFUG_HR_UA_71_12_BFUG Governance after 2020

13. Updates from the Consultative Members (in writing)

Updates from BFUG Consultative members were available online several days before the meeting. The BFUG did not have comments on these reports.

13.1 Update from BUSINESSEUROPE

13.2 Update from the Council of Europe

Attachment: BFUG_HR_UA_71_13_2_CoE

13.3 Update from Education International / ETUCE

Attachment: BFUG_HR_UA_71_13_3_ETUCE

13.4 Update from ENQA

Attachment: BFUG_HR_UA_71_13_4_ENQA

13.5 Update from EQAR

Attachment: BFUG_HR_UA_71_13_5_EQAR

13.6 Update from ESU

Attachment: BFUG_HR_UA_71_13_6_ESU

13.7 Update from EUA

Attachment: BFUG_HR_UA_71_13_7_EUA

13.8 Update from EURASHE

Attachment: BFUG_HR_UA_71_13_8_EURASHE

13.9 Update from UNESCO

Attachment: BFUG_HR_UA_71_13_9_UNESCO

14. Information by the incoming BFUG Co-chairs

14.1 BFUG Board Meeting in Edinburgh, United Kingdom (4 September 2020)

The incoming Co-chair (United Kingdom (Scotland)) gave information on the situation related to COVID-19, with regard to the possibility of holding a physical meeting of the Board. The Board meeting would be a blended meeting, with physical as well as virtual meeting for those not able to participate physically.

14.2 BFUG meeting in Berlin, Germany (24-25 September 2020)

The German incoming Co-chair informed about the BFUG meeting in Berlin in September 2020. If a physical meeting should not be possible, two other options are considered: a full online meeting or a blended meeting, for those willing and able to attend physically. Feedback from the BFUG participants indicated keeping options open for both, either a blended or a physical meeting. According to the regulations for the German EU Presidency, physical meetings can only have up to 100 participants; therefore, this factor must be taken into consideration when registering. German colleagues would circulate a message among the BFUG members in regard to the preparations for the BFUG meeting in Berlin.

15. AOB

The Croatian and Ukrainian BFUG Co-chairs wrapped up the meeting by thanking all the participants for attending the meeting, and the BFUG Secretariat for all the technical and hard work. Since there were no other topics to discuss, the meeting was closed.

Annex 1

Split BFUG meeting: Report from the discussions on the parallel sessions

on the implications of COVID-19 for the Bologna Process

The BFUG, in its online meeting hosted by Croatia in June 2020, was invited to discuss the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for the HE systems of the member countries as well as on the European Higher Education Area in its entirety. The two parallel sessions were held, one focusing on the students' perspective and informed by the preliminary findings of the survey carried out by the ESU, Institute for Development of Education, Croatia and the University of Zadar, Croatia and the other focusing on the HEIs perspective informed by the preliminary findings of the survey carried out by the EUA.

The background for the discussion was that the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 outbreak has had unprecedented impact on higher education systems across the European Higher Education Area: HEIs have been forced to close their campuses, switching overnight to online learning and teaching, on a very large scale. As the pandemic unfolds and new challenges arise, we see that some aspects of this transformation may become permanent, bringing us to think that a 'new normal' will be here to stay.

The crisis has brought different issues to the foreground, affecting policy developments and funding of higher education. These range from new forms of teaching and learning, which must be quality assured, and fully recognised cross-border mobility, to guaranteeing adequate safety measures for reopening of institutions, while assuring equity and equal learning opportunities for all, and in particular for the most vulnerable groups of students.

The discussion was structured around the following questions:

1. What can governments do to overcome the impacts of the crisis, to anticipate further disruptions and to support HEIs and students in the aftermath of COVID-19? How can we support one another to leverage the lessons learned and improve our ability to face similar crises in the future?

2. What can be done to support the recovery of international student mobility, encouraging new forms of international cooperation and mobility, in order to consolidate a key feature of the European Higher Education Area?

3. How can we best deal with the challenges to assuring the quality of teaching and learning for all groups of students in the new and alternative forms of delivery, ensuring that institutions look at the effects of the measures they take through the lens of equity?

4. Do you see a potential for digital solutions supporting efficient administrative procedures in all policy areas? Where, specifically?

Several messages can be drawn from the discussions at the parallel sessions.

COVID-19 Implications from the students' perspective

The preliminary results of the Survey were presented and the participants were asked to discuss what public authorities can do to support students, teachers and institutions i.e. what policy recommendations can the BFUG take forward to secure a resilient EHEA and what can ministers do to strengthen European HE in face of the COVID pandemic.

The crisis caused by the COVID-19 outbreak accentuated current challenges. The switch to remote teaching and learning was efficient but this was, however, education in the time of emergency and not a sustainable switch to proper distance education. The work of the BFUG AG on social dimension becomes even more relevant.

The following list of measures came out from the discussion:

- The ESU survey demonstrated that the students feel lack of stability and a significant number report to face mental health problems and losing work opportunities (including work placements) and considerations about the future. Therefore, the governments and the institutions need to cater for the wellbeing of their students and teachers. A support to teachers and counselling of students needs to be assured.

- The BFUG has been working for a long time on removing obstacles to physical mobility. Now, we are faced with some new obstacles for mobility and they need to be addressed as well by the ministers.

- However, safe physical mobility is still important for students to acquire European values. Commitment to allow free movement needs to be highlighted in the Rome Communiqué because restrictions for free movement caused by COVID-19 have become an issue for mobile students.

- There is a need to improve the quality of online learning and teaching since it seems reasonable to expect that the future will bring a necessity to integrate at a large scale online learning and teaching with more traditional forms.

- If the study period is extended funding needs to be assured. Scholarships should be prolonged where possible.

- There is a challenge of an adequate infrastructure for accessibility of a good quality of teaching and learning resources. There is a need to provide right devices to all the students.

- There is a digital gap between the institutions and the teachers within institutions. Therefore, the digital skills of teachers need to be improved.

- Consequently, a sustainable public investment in HE is needed so that students have access to digital tools to reduce inequalities caused by the crisis and to have professional development of academics.

- Teachers and students need to have access to a good quality learning material.

- We need to take a holistic approach when looking for students' conditions for studying. Quality teaching is important but also what kind of support they have (financial support,

leaving conditions). Looking at the social structure of students we see that students, who depend on jobs have been losing them.

- We need to distinguish between immediate and mid- to and long-term impact of disruption caused by COVID and create the measures accordingly.
  - Short term solutions: flexibility in study times and extra support that students can pick up their studies and resources and reformed guidance to students
  - Medium- and long-term solutions – importance from moving from emergency responses to long term investments
- There is a need to continue with research on the impact of COVID on studying.
- There is a lot to be done in terms of improving quality of online teaching and learning and in particular in relation to skills development and practical elements of curricula and appropriate assessment methods.
- There is a need to assure flexibility in recognition because the effect of pandemic should not be an obstacle to recognition.
- We may expect a gradual return to normal – the new normal will have a higher degree of blended learning and hopefully, not total switch to online learning.

COVID-19 Implications from the Higher Education Institutions' perspective

The parallel session commenced with presentation of the preliminary results of the survey on digitally enhanced learning carried out under the DIGI-HE project by EUA and partners during April-June 2020. Following that, the participants were invited to discuss prospective ways in which the Bologna Process can contribute to mitigating the impact of the crisis on the higher education sector and enhancing learning and teaching within the frame of a 'new normal'.

As demonstrated, COVID-19 has impacted all missions and actions of higher education institutions. Despite the lack of previous online teaching experience for most teachers, HEIs have coped quite well with the emergency remote teaching mode. Enabling factors for universities became their resilience to undergo a number of organisational changes, which required leadership, flexible and supportive management and participatory approach, and which was possibly due to institutional autonomy – which in some places seems to have increased during the crisis, and the fact that higher education is a public responsibility.

Flexibility is important at other levels as well. Primarily at the governmental level, to allow the HEIs and students to adapt to the new situation, which may include the possibility to prolong the academic year, if that is required to complete all the requirements. More flexibility is needed in the Erasmus programme, by means of blended mobility, especially with the aim to create virtual international environment in order to reach the goal of 100% mobility, including virtual. Finally, everyone involved needs to be especially flexible in regard to disadvantaged students.

The role of the Bologna Process in ensuring further resilience of HEIs in the EHEA could be seen in advocating against funding cuts for HEIs as well as higher education becoming collateral of the recovery processes.

The crisis is seen by many HEIs as an opportunity to enhance their digital capacity and redesign their curricula. In some institutions, students are heavily involved in this, by contributing to the development and testing. There is also an urgent need to ensure proper digital upskilling for teachers and students. The blended approach is currently considered as the key learning mode for the next academic year, especially as some students are reluctant to be on campus. In addition to that, the unemployment made it harder for the students to find part time work, sometimes necessary to help finance their studies.

A sharp shift to distance and blended education modes also necessitates revisiting of quality assurance mechanisms, transparency tools, and recognition procedures. Fair learning assessments have to be enabled in the digital learning environment. Also, the ECTS needs to be fully utilized to reflect properly the students' workload in the distance and blended learning environment.

In case of professional higher education, a 'new normal' has facilitated a novel balance among conceptual theoretical learning, hands-on training, and digital opportunities. This balance has promising implications for lifelong learning provision and the potential rise in entrepreneurial professionals as opposed to the employed.

Another beneficial discovery of the crisis relates to the concept of microcredentials: their characteristics have been reflected in the competence-based, short, and diversified provision of higher education.

Virtual mobility is still perceived differently among various higher education stakeholders. With that, there is an understanding that virtual international environments are to be created as a complementary approach to physical mobility of students and staff.

A surge in unemployment led to various admission patterns across the EHEA countries: some experience increased enrolment rates that could potentially be disruptive in terms of their financial and human resource sustainability in the long run; others face shrinking interest on the side of prospective students. As regards attracting and retaining international students in the next academic year, it is largely contingent upon cooperation between ministries of education and ministries of foreign affairs.

It is of utmost significance to consider the mental health of HEIs staff who are put under substantial pressure and made to work harder to find solutions to the emerging issues.

There is a shared understanding that students' services, social security mechanisms and measures to secure their well-being, especially with regard to the disadvantaged, have to be redefined. The crisis has also had negative implications on doctoral candidates, i.e., their funding prospects, mental health, laboratory work, international cooperation, and potential freeze in job opportunities after graduation.

Note by the Croatian and Ukrainian Co-chairs of the BFUG:

We recommend that the results of the discussion feed into the draft Rome Communiqué and that the discussion continues under the co-chairmanship of Germany and United Kingdom/United Kingdom-Scotland. We believe that, as the situation unfolds, and due to the fast-changing nature of the crisis, these topics will need to be continuously revisited and examined from different viewpoints, considering both current and potential future developments.