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## BFUG BOARD MEETING LXXII

4 September 2020

Online, hosted by United Kingdom (Scotland)

### Minutes

#### List of participants

	Delegation	First name	Family name(s)
1.	BFUG Co-chair (Germany)	Peter	Greisler
2.	BFUG Co-chair (Germany)	Anja	Diek
3.	BFUG Co-chair (Germany)	Frank	Petrikowski
4.	BFUG Co-chair (United Kingdom (Scotland))	Michael	Watney
5.	BFUG Co-chair (United Kingdom)	Pamela	Wilkinson
6.	BFUG Co-chair (United Kingdom)	Emma	Brodie
7.	BFUG outgoing Co-chair (Croatia)	Leonardo	Marušić
8.	BFUG outgoing Co-chair and BICG Co-chair (Croatia)	Ana	Tecilazić Goršić
9.	BFUG outgoing Co-chair (Ukraine)	Olexandr	Smyrnov
10.	BFUG outgoing Co-chair (Ukraine)	Kateryna	Suprun
11.	BFUG incoming Co-chair (Portugal)	Maria de Lurdes	Correia Fernandes
12.	BFUG incoming Co-chair (Portugal)	Ana	Mateus
13.	BFUG incoming Co-chair (Andorra)	Jordi	Llombart
14.	BFUG Vice-chair (Italy) and CG1 on Global Policy Dialogue Co-chair	Ann Katherine	Isaacs
15.	Council of Europe	Sjur	Bergan
16.	ESU and AG1 Co-chair	Robert	Napier
17.	EUA	Michael	Gaebel
18.	EURASHE	Michal	Karpíšek
19.	European Commission	Klara	Engels-Perenyi
20.	European Commission	Kinga	Szuly

	<b>Delegation</b>	<b>First name</b>	<b>Family name(s)</b>
21.	AG1 on Social Dimension Co-chair (Croatia)	Ninoslav	Šćukanec Schmidt
22.	AG2 on Learning and Teaching Co-chair (The Netherlands)	Tessa	Bijvank
23.	AG2 on Learning and Teaching Co-chair (France)	Philippe	Lalle
24.	BICG Co-chair (Austria)	Helga	Posset
25.	CG1 on Global Policy Dialogue Co-chair (Belgium Flemish Community)	Magalie	Soenen
26.	WG1 on Monitoring Co-chair	David	Crosier
27.	WG1 on Monitoring Co-chair	Tone Flood	Strøm
28.	BFUG Secretariat	Rocío	Iglesias de Ussel Rubio
29.	BFUG Secretariat	Luca	Lantero
30.	BFUG Secretariat	Vera	Lucke

Due to the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, this Board meeting was held online.

## **1. Welcome and introduction**

### 1.1 Welcome by the current BFUG Co-chairs: United Kingdom (Scotland) / United Kingdom / Germany

The Scottish BFUG Co-chair opened the meeting and welcomed the Board.

### 1.2 Welcome by the BFUG Vice-chair (Italy)

The Vice-chair welcomed the new BFUG Co-chairs, mentioned that this was her last Board meeting as Vice-chair, because the work period 2018-2020 was coming to an end and thanked for the positive, although sometimes challenging experience.

## **2. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda was adopted.

*Attachment: BFUG\_DE\_UK\_72\_2a\_Draft\_agenda.pdf*

*Attachment: BFUG\_DE\_UK\_72\_2b\_Draft\_annotated\_agenda.pdf*

### **3. Feedback from the last meetings**

#### 3.1 Report from the online BFUG Board meeting hosted by Ukraine (2 April 2020)

The Ukrainian outgoing BFUG Co-chair thanked for the active participation in the first totally virtual Board meeting and mentioned that the minutes are online on the [EHEA website](#).

#### 3.2 Report from the online BFUG meeting hosted by Croatia (25 June 2020)

The Croatian outgoing BFUG Co-chair reported that it was challenging to discuss and find agreement at this first completely virtual BFUG meeting. The draft minutes for this BFUG meeting are not yet on the EHEA website, as there are still discussions among the outgoing BFUG Co-chairs on the parts of the minutes about the Terms of Reference for the next work period 2021-2024. Some BFUG members had commented those paragraphs of the minutes as well. Until now, the ToRs were discussed and adopted at the first BFUG meeting after a Ministerial Conference, the establishment of the new work plan was in the hand of the BFUG Co-chairs of the first semester after a Ministerial Conference together with the new BFUG Secretariat. The BFUG agreed at its last meeting that the future Terms of Reference should already be discussed at the Berlin BFUG meeting and some delegations would like to already approve some ToRs at the Berlin BFUG meeting and not after the Ministerial Conference as it would be usual. The Board discussed solutions to speed up the transition from this work period to the next and also discussed the procedures that could be followed. To not re-discuss the ToRs again after the Ministerial Conference, the BFUG could be electronically consulted directly after the Rome Ministerial Conference to adopt the already discussed ToRs with eventual changes on the basis of the Ministers' decision or the BFUG could propose the ToRs to the Ministers and if they approve, implement the new ToRs. The responsibility of the ToRs that would not need much change directly after the Ministerial Conference would be in the responsibility of the current BFUG Co-chairs Germany and the United Kingdom, whereas the responsibility for new ToRs to be added to the work plan would be in the responsibility of the incoming BFUG Co-chairs Portugal and Andorra. As no agreement was reached, the minutes will be adopted at the BFUG meeting in Berlin.

### **4. Information by the BFUG Secretariat**

The Head of the BFUG Secretariat announced that the Rome 2020 Ministerial Conference will be completely virtual due to a Ministerial Decree on the emergency status due to COVID-19. Further information will be given to the Board and BFUG as soon as possible.

### **5. The implications of COVID-19 to the Bologna Process**

#### 5.1 Report from the outgoing BFUG Co-chairs (Croatia and Ukraine) on the discussions of the parallel sessions during the last BFUG meeting

The Croatian BFUG Co-chair reported that in the parallel sessions there were important debates on the basis of a discussion paper taking into account the students' and HEIs' perspective. The focus of the sessions was to discuss what public authorities can do to overcome the crisis and how they can support each other. A focus was on international

mobility endangered by this crisis as well as on quality of education, equity and social dimension. The written report is attached to the Split BFUG meeting minutes. It is still to be discussed how these discussions can feed into the Rome Ministerial Communiqué.

For the students' perspective the discussion showed the need to distinguish between immediate, mid-term and long-term impact of the disruption caused by the lockdown and to create policy measures accordingly. Measures go from flexibility in studying, extra support and resources to long-term public investment in higher education. Governments should intervene in the fields of mobility, quality, recognition and social dimension. Obstacles for virtual mobility should be addressed by the ministers, as well as free movement of students and academic staff. Flexibility for recognition is necessary and the quality of online learning and teaching is important. The discussions emphasised digital gaps of students and teachers, which should be addressed by the governments.

The Ukrainian BFUG Co-chair reported on the discussion on the Higher Education Institutions' perspective. Various functions and operational procedures within HEIs are impacted by the crisis and the HEIs went into emergency and risk management mode. Those who succeeded to implement flexibility and leadership, supported the management of processes in teaching and learning. There are financial implications caused by the crisis and mobility is developed subsequently as good opportunity to work together in a virtual learning and teaching environment. The BFUG could support HEIs in implementing policy measures concerning resilience, digital capacity, redesign of curricula and upskilling of digital skills of teachers. The group also discussed increased unemployment and agreed that mental health should be addressed.

The outgoing BFUG Co-chairs recommend that these findings inspire the Draft Rome Communiqué and the discussion could be updated in the next months.

*Attachments: Board\_DE\_UK\_72\_5\_1\_Report\_parallel\_sessions\_Covid-19.pdf*  
*Preliminary survey results from ESU (version of end June):*  
*BFUG\_HR\_UA\_71\_8\_1\_Survey\_results.pdf*  
*Update on the survey results from EUA (in writing):*  
*Board\_DE\_UK\_72\_5\_3\_EUA\_survey\_Covid-19.pdf*

## **6. Rome 2020 Ministerial Conference and Bologna Global Policy Forum**

### **6.1 Draft Concept for the Rome 2020 Ministerial Conference**

The Head of the BFUG Secretariat explained that the Ministerial Conference 2020 will be held completely online. Next week the BFUG Secretariat will send an e-mail asking the BFUG members for information on technical restrictions and for a technical contact person. It would be good if the whole delegation participated in the Conference from one place all together. The languages of interpretation at the Ministerial Conference are Italian, English, French, Spanish, Russian and German. Some contributions can be pre-recorded. The Board was asked whether the event should be streamed for the general public. The draft agenda was shared and commented. The last short BFUG meeting (about 1 hour) before the Ministerial Conference will be held the day before (18 November) instead of the morning just before the Conference. The EHEA Ministers will be asked to speak for 2-3 minutes and their speeches can be pre-recorded. The keynote speeches will be shortened. As the Rome

Ministerial Conference will discuss the vision for the next decade in higher education, the Ministers will be asked to speak about their vision and ideas. After the Ministers' speeches, the Rome Communiqué will be approved.

The Board discussed whether Ministers would participate in an online Conference and agreed that a half-day meeting would be reasonable (3,5 hours). The Communiqué should be adopted directly after they discussed it. Concerning the streaming, the higher education community should be involved at least in some parts. It should be taken into account that some Ministers have translators.

The BFUG Secretariat will amend the draft agenda for the Ministerial Conference and send it to the Board and BFUG for comments and approval.

## 6.2 Report from CG1 on the Bologna Global Policy Forum

There is a timeslot of one hour for the Global Policy Forum (GPF) on the first day at noon (to reach as many time zones as possible). The Board discussed how and whether it is possible to include non-EHEA Ministers in the GPF under agenda item 7.4.

## **7. Final Reports from the AGs, CGs, WG1 and EHEA Network of NQF Correspondents**

### 7.1 AG1 on Social Dimension (AG1) - Final Report

The final version of AG1's Final Report will be ready for the Berlin BFUG meeting.

*Attachment: Board\_HR\_UA\_71\_6\_1\_AG1\_Final\_Report.pdf*

### 7.2 AG 2 on Learning and Teaching (AG2) - Final Report

The AG2 Co-chair (The Netherlands) explained that the group had one online meeting after the Split BFUG meeting and agreed that it is too early to include learnings from the COVID crisis. Concerning the ToR for the next work period 2021-2024 the group came up with a first draft. The Final Report includes an updated version of the good practices with a map. The AG is still discussing some details and the last version of the Final Report, without major changes, will be submitted for the Berlin BFUG meeting.

The Council of Europe commented that the report has improved. The formulations of the discussed question "How to equip teachers to better teach in an involving environment" should be reformulated using more concrete terms. The set of recommendations are good, but concerning the overall recommendations, it needs to be said how the EHEA can achieve the goals, by saying what Ministers or higher education leadership can do about it. The language should be revised in some points of the draft report.

The recommendations will be formulated more clearly to indicate who should take which actions. AG2 has written a short version of the document with concrete recommendations that are formulated for Ministries and proposes to annex it to the Rome Communiqué.

*Attachment: Board\_DE\_UK\_72\_7\_2\_AG2\_Final\_Report.pdf*

### 7.3 Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG) - Final Report

The Austrian BICG Co-chair explained that the BICG had several meetings to improve this final report, also on the basis of the BFUG's comments and the feedback survey that was sent to the BFUG in spring 2020. An additional survey to the BFUG was sent out to collect the expression of interest to participate in the BICG and TPGs of the next work period 2021-2024.

The BICG suggests continuing in the next work period with the BICG and with the three key commitments. All the main results of the work within the peer groups have been added to the final report.

The Council of Europe commented that the report reads well and that it is good to see that all countries were involved. A conclusion would be that the BICG and TPGs should be continued in the future. The question whether a strong involvement of member states increases implementation at national level is not raised and answered in the report, as two years of work is a short time. It would be useful to include a reflection on this in the report and the future work. It seems that the next work period will focus on the same areas, but general reflections on peer support as working method that could be suitable for other policy areas should be included.

*Attachment: Board\_DE\_UK\_72\_7\_3\_BICG\_Final\_Report.pdf*

### 7.4 CG1 on Global Policy Dialogue (CG1) - Draft Final Report

The CG1 Co-chairs have drafted their Final Report to summarise all the activities that were carried out by the Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue.

If a Global Policy Forum will be organised, it would be in a completely different way to what was originally imagined and to what is usually carried out. As it seems unrealistic to have a real forum with both, European and non-EHEA Ministers, the Board discussed the possibility to organise a meeting of HE stakeholders and experts from all over the world on the global dimension of the EHEA. The event could be streamed for the general and global public.

The Board agrees that a part on the global dimension should be organised together with the Ministerial Conference and that it should be around noon to be as inclusive as possible concerning different time zones.

The BFUG Secretariat gives the possibility to organise parallel sessions, a roundtable or pre-recorded or spontaneous speeches from different ministers or macro-regional organisations and stakeholders. The event concerning the global dialogue could be organised either after the official part of the Ministerial Conference or on the next day. Another option would be to present the work carried out by the different groups during the work plan 2018-2020 to the general public around the world.

The Board agreed that it will not be possible to approve a Global Statement as the participation of ministers from all over the world will not be possible in an online meeting.

Postponing the Global Policy Forum to 2021 might be difficult, because of the unsure situation concerning the pandemic and also because funding is unclear.

The CG1 will have a meeting the week after and will draft a proposal to organise something on the global dimension of the EHEA that is interesting, relevant, significant and innovative and will report to the BFUG at its Berlin BFUG meeting.

*Attachment: Board\_DE\_UK\_72\_7\_4\_CG1\_Final\_Report.pdf*

#### 7.5 WG1 on Monitoring (WG1): Final Bologna Process Implementation Report

The Co-chair of WG1 (Eurydice) updated the Board on the developments. During summer, the BFUG members were asked to provide comments on the draft circulated in June. He thanked all the colleagues who had sent contributions to improve the BPIR. The WG1 Co-chairs will finalise the report in September and will send the final version to the BFUG for information and internal circulation. The final version will be published some days before the Ministerial Conference.

#### 7.6 EHEA Network of NQF Correspondents - Final Report

The Final Report of the NQF Correspondents Network will be updated after the network's meeting on 11 September.

*Attachment: BFUG\_HR\_UA\_71\_6\_4 Network NQF Correspondents Final Report*

### **8. Proposals for Terms of Reference for the work plan 2021-2024**

#### 8.1 AG1 on Social Dimension (AG1) - Draft ToR 2021-2024

The Croatian Co-chair of AG1 presented the draft Terms of Reference with a vision on how the future work on this topic should be developed. The group working on social dimension in 2021-2024 should develop a system and methodology for monitoring the implementation of the principles and guidelines at national level.

The Board commented that the links to WG1 on Monitoring and to Eurostudent should be better described and that instead of "review" the emphasis should be put on peer learning.

*Attachment: Board\_DE\_UK\_72\_8\_1\_Social\_Dimension\_Draft\_ToR\_2021-2024*

#### 8.2 AG2 on Learning and Teaching (AG2) - Draft ToR 2021-2024

The Co-chair of AG2 (Netherlands) presented the draft Terms of Reference. The future group should reflect on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis and on how they impact learning and teaching in the EHEA. The proposed guidelines should be made more concrete and the group should discuss how the implementation of the guidelines at national level could be monitored. In addition, the group should discuss how countries can help each other via peer support for learning and teaching.

The Council of Europe commented that "full" members should be corrected with Members and Consultative Members, as the EHEA does not have "full" members.

*Attachment: Board\_DE\_UK\_72\_8\_2\_Learning\_and\_Teaching\_Draft\_ToR\_2021-2024*

### 8.3 Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG) - Draft ToR 2021-2024

The Croatian BICG Co-chair presented draft Terms of Reference for the BICG in 2021-2024 including three Thematic Peer Groups (TPGs). The BICG proposes to keep the existing structure and the purpose and tasks also for the future. She emphasised the need for continuity and explained that the BICG had already launched a survey to ask the BFUG for their expression of interest to participate in the TPGs and BICG and to eventually co-chair. She presented the preliminary results and added that the deadline for expression of interest had been extended to 16 September 2020. The BICG will meet again before the next BFUG meeting and will propose the composition and co-chairing arrangements of the BICG and TPGs to the BFUG.

The Council of Europe commented that the co-chairing arrangements of the BICG and TPGs and the composition of the BICG need to be decided by the BFUG. The composition of the TPGs remain flexible as countries might want to join or drop out during the work period.

The incoming BFUG Co-chair Portugal commented that the work plan 2021-2024 should still remain flexible as new groups might need to be added after the Ministerial Conference.

*Attachment: Board\_DE\_UK\_72\_8\_3\_BICG\_Draft\_ToR\_2021-2024*

### 8.4 CG1 on Global Policy Dialogue (CG1) - Draft ToR 2021-2024

The Co-chairs of CG1 will, at the next BFUG meeting, present draft Terms of Reference for a group to work on Global Policy Dialogue in 2021-2024 on the basis of what will happen with the preparations for the global dimension at the Ministerial Conference and the discussions within the Coordination Group in the coming weeks.

*Attachment: Board\_DE\_UK\_72\_8\_4\_Global\_Policy\_Dialogue\_Draft\_ToR\_2021-2024*

### 8.5 WG1 on Monitoring (WG1) - Draft ToR 2021-2024

The WG1 Co-chair (Eurydice) presented draft Terms of Reference for the work period 2021-2024 and suggested adding a sentence to the Rome Ministerial Communiqué to request a Monitoring Report for 2024. The links to the different other groups still needs to be added on the basis of the future work plan. The composition and co-chairing of this and all the other groups needs to be discussed in the BFUG.

*Attachment: Board\_DE\_UK\_72\_8\_5\_WG\_on\_Monitoring\_Draft\_ToR\_2021-2024*

### 8.6 WG on Monitoring Fundamental Values - Draft ToR 2021-2024

The WG1 Co-chair (Norway) presented draft Terms of Reference for the work period 2021-2024 for a working group on fundamental values. The ToR is based on the guidelines that were drafted by the task force. The main task of the group is to develop a comprehensive framework for monitoring fundamental values in the EHEA, both concerning the *de jure* and *de facto* situation. The group should be based on the same methodology used by the task force and should especially discuss the remaining fundamental values that were not yet

treated. Peer learning activities on this issue should be developed and the work with the experts and researchers in the field should continue. For the composition, there should be a balance between members and consultative members and the group should work closely with the working group on monitoring to be able to feed information into the Bologna Process Implementation Report 2024.

*Attachment:*

*Board\_DE\_UK\_72\_8\_6\_WG\_on\_Monitoring\_Fundamental\_Values\_Draft\_ToR\_2021-2024*

### 8.7 EHEA Network of NQF Correspondents - Draft ToR 2021-2024

The Council of Europe presented the draft Terms of Reference for the work period 2021-2024 based on the ToR for the current work period. Concerning the composition, the Network is open to all Members and Consultative Members. The Council of Europe suggests adding the task of “advising on how and to what extent smaller, flexible units, including those leading to micro-credentials, can be defined, developed and implemented within the QF-EHEA and national qualification frameworks” and to also add “developing proposals for arrangements to strengthen the per review of national self-certification reports and processes” to the next work period’s ToR.

*Attachment: Board\_DE\_UK\_72\_8\_7\_Network\_NQF\_Correspondents\_Draft\_ToR\_2021-2024*

The Board discussed how to proceed with these draft ToRs and with the establishment of the composition of all the groups. The composition of all groups needs to respect a workable size and needs to be decided by the BFUG. It could be done via electronic consultation either before or after the Ministerial Conference or at the first BFUG meeting in 2021. The draft ToRs will be presented to the BFUG at its next meeting on a standardised format without a proposal for the composition and co-chairing arrangements (except from the TPGs).

The Board discussed how and when additional groups could be established in the work plan 2021-2024. They should be discussed at the BFUG meeting in Portugal in spring 2021. Ideas for additional new groups are micro-credentials, digital transformation, changes in mobility.

The Council of Europe commented that the Communiqué sets the work programme for the next period and that the BFUG can decide how to address the topics. Themes that are not covered by the Communiqué should not be added to the work plan.

## **9. Report from the Drafting Committee on the Ministerial Communiqué**

The BFUG Vice-chair, in her capacity of coordinator of the Drafting Committee, quickly presented the draft 5xxx as of 24 August 2020. The Board was asked whether a larger section on the COVID-19 situation should be added and concluded that not much more

needs to be said about this. The Council of Europe would like to add an acknowledgement that the COVID pandemic has drastically upset the world of higher education and that ministers are determined to help enable higher education to fulfil all its functions also in situations of emergency. The online Ministerial Conference should be mentioned in the first sentence and the role of the Italian host should be acknowledged. The part on the Global Policy Forum should also be changed according to the new decisions. The annexes should be approved by the BFUG at its next meeting.

The Board was asked to send further written comments by Monday, 7 September. The Drafting Committee will take all the comments into consideration during their next Drafting Committee meeting on 9 September.

*Attachment: Board\_DE\_UK\_72\_9\_Draft\_5xxx\_Rome\_Communique.pdf*

## **10. Update on Belarus**

The BFUG Co-chair (United Kingdom) introduced this item, saying that the developments in Belarus were worrying and that the BFUG Co-chairs had informally discussed what, if anything, the EHEA could say or do to support academic freedom in Belarus. It is likely that Ministers will address this issue at the Ministerial Conference.

The BFUG Vice-chair reported on progress in EHEA implementation by Belarus and said that although many items of the roadmap of 2015 have still not been completed, she sees some progress since 2018. The NQF has been approved, the documents are now available on the Belarusian website and people seem to read them. Belarus has made small steps forward and the participation in the TPGs has been important and was constant, active and useful.

The ESU reported on students that were prosecuted and arrested in isolation centres according to their information. ESU calls the BFUG to react on this situation, suspend Belarus from the Bologna Process and will put a detailed report on the prosecutions online later on the day.

The Council of Europe commented that the implementation report shows that some progress was made, but that one of the elements of the roadmap was to respect fundamental values. The BFUG should think about what Ministers can do and check actions with their political authorities. Countries could encourage each other to e.g. provide scholarships for students. The Belarusian Minister should be confronted with the situation at the Ministerial Conference instead of not being invited.

The European Commission agreed that the citizens would benefit from being kept in the Bologna Process and that the BFUG could show solidarity with the academic community.

The German Co-chair added that the BFUG should send a clear signal to all countries that are not respecting fundamental values and that Ministers are free to address this in their speeches. There are deficits on fundamental values not only for Belarus and it would be important for the BFUG to keep dialogue.

The Board agreed to put this issue on the agenda of the Berlin BFUG meeting to discuss it when Belarus is present. The BFUG should not talk about the implementation report, but only about the situation. The BFUG Co-chairs will draft a brief document to explain why the issue is put on the agenda and what the discussion should be about. Besides that, the Board will continue to follow the implementation of the action plan.

*Attachment: Board\_DE\_UK\_72\_10\_Update\_Belarus.pdf  
Board\_DE\_UK\_72\_10\_Update\_Belarus\_Workplan\_2020.pdf*

## **11. Draft agenda for the next BFUG Meeting in Berlin, Germany (24-25 September 2020)**

The German BFUG Co-chairs will organise a hybrid meeting. Colleagues who want to travel to Berlin can participate face-to-face and some social activities will be organised respecting social distancing measures. The whole BFUG meeting will be streamed for the members who will follow from distance. On 23 September the platform can be tested.

The invitation to this BFUG meeting has been sent out to the BFUG.

The German host was reminded that BFUG members participating from distance should have equal access to comment and make contributions to the meeting. The German host will guarantee that everybody, face-to-face and online participants, will be given the possibility to discuss in any moment of the BFUG meeting.

The draft agenda is set and was approved.

*Attachment: Board\_DE\_UK\_72\_11\_BFUG\_LXXIII\_Draft\_Annotated\_Agenda.pdf*

## **12. Information by the incoming Co-chairs**

### 12.1 BFUG Board Meeting in Andorra (spring 2021)

The incoming BFUG Co-chair (Andorra) will announce the date and modality for the Board meeting as soon as possible.

### 12.2 BFUG meeting in Portugal (spring 2021)

The incoming BFUG Co-chair (Portugal) will announce the date and modality for the BFUG meeting as soon as possible.

## **13. AOB**

The BFUG Board meeting was closed with the handover ceremony from the Croatian and Ukrainian BFUG Co-chairs to the BFUG Co-chairs from German and the United Kingdom, United Kingdom (Scotland).