

Minutes of the 1st Working Group on Fundamental Values meeting Online 6th of December 2024

List of participants

Nr.	Name	Country/Organisation
1	Milica Popovic	Austria
2	Lukas Dorfegger	Austria
3	Monika Steinel	EUA
4	Jelena Drca	Council of Europe
5	Jorunn Dahl	Education International - ETUCE
6	Mia Wallin Hansen	European Commission
7	Iris Kimizoglu	ESU
8	David Akrami Flores	Germany
9	Tilman Dörr	Germany
10	Sarolt Luca Fehér-Mártonffy	Hungary
11	Tim Conlon	Ireland
12	Andris Teikmanis	Latvia
13	Rose Anne Cuschieri	Malta (Co-chair)
14	Tatiana Pasa	Republic of Moldova
15	Anne-Kari Johansen	Norway
16	Maria Carla Proença	Portugal
17	Cezar Hâj	Romania (Co-chair)
18	Liviu Matei	United Kingdom
19	David Crosier	Eurydice (Co-chair of the Working Group on Monitoring the Implementation of the Bologna Process)
20	Daniela Crăciun	Guest (Expert NewFav project)
21	Cristina Fiț	Guest (NewFav project)
22	Horia Onița	Head of the EHEA Secretariat
23	Oana Țiņțar	EHEA Secretariat

Croatia, France, Kazakhstan, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, San Marino, Spain and Turkiye were absent.

The meeting starts at 10:05 CET.

1. Introduction from the WG co-chairs

The Romanian Co-chair opened the meeting by introducing himself and gave the floor to the Maltese Co-chair for her introduction.

The Romanian co-chair mentioned that in the future, the Co-chairs would like to have as many in-person meetings as possible because they are more productive than online meetings.

2. Adoption of the agenda

Documents: [WG FV 1 HU IS 2 Agenda](#)

The Romanian Co-chair invited the participants to raise any possible questions or concerns with regard to the proposed agenda. As the participants did not raise any issues, the agenda was adopted as proposed by the Co-chairs.

3. Tour de table

The Romanian Co-chair invited the participants to introduce themselves.

4. Presentation of the Terms of Reference for Working Group on Fundamental Values

Documents: [WG FV 1 HU IS 4 Draft ToRs WG on Fundamental Values](#)

The Romanian Co-chair briefly presented the draft Terms of Reference of the Working Group on Fundamental Values, mentioning that the feedback received during the coordination meeting between the co-chairs of the working structures and from the BFUG had been integrated.

The Austrian representative mentioned that one of Austria's suggestions had also been part of the feedback received from the BFUG (adding the European Parliament's Forum on Academic Freedom in the section on 'Correlation with initiatives outside the Bologna Process') and welcomed its integration. She also explained that Austria proposed to add "quality assurance" as a transversal topic to be tackled under the work of this working group. Furthermore, the last point raised by the Austrian representative was that one of the main goals ("Coordinate the first round of the implementation of the monitoring tool in accordance with the agreed framework and indicators and report back to the BFUG") could be perceived as unclear given that it is not explicitly mentioned in the document who would be the entity that will be conducting the process. She emphasised that Austria believes that it is essential that the working group decides who should be recommended as monitoring experts to the BFUG for the first round of monitoring.

The Romanian Co-chair explained that quality assurance was not included in the section on transversal topics because it is a topic to be liaised with the Thematic Peer Group C, referred to in the section “Liaison with other working structures”, in line with the discussions at the coordination meeting.

The Romanian Co-chair pointed out that Eurydice, as co-chair of the WG on Monitoring, clarified that they do not have the capacity to do the first monitoring round while they also do the comprehensive monitoring for the 2027 Ministerial Conference, as they are mutually exclusive in terms of capacity. As the BFUG decided they want a comprehensive report for 2027, the responsibility to carry out the FV monitoring for 2024-2027 was given to the WG on FV as the only solution in order to have a report on fundamental values by the Ministerial Conference, as mandated by the ministers. The WG would be consulted and have a say in generating the monitoring report. Still, the activities would be carried out in the upcoming NewFav project, as the working group does not have the capacity to do the actual monitoring itself. The Romanian Co-chair also informed the participants that an application for EHEA project grants had been developed to support the activities of the working group and the output of that project would be presented to the BFUG.

The Austrian representative reiterated that since the working group proposes a monitoring system for fundamental values, it is very important that the WG defines the actors involved and the manner in which the monitoring of FV is carried out, which will also imply a solution post-2027.

The Romanian Co-chair explained that the BFUG itself has to take a decision on this issue. He pointed out that each working structure would elaborate a report with recommendations for the next Ministerial Communique and the Working Group on Fundamental Values could include in its report a proposal for the system of monitoring the fundamental values after 2027.

The EUA representative stated that the draft ToRs are fit for purpose and complete. She welcomed the integration of the European Parliament’s Forum on Academic Freedom in the “Correlation with initiatives outside the Bologna Process” section and the addition of a goal on knowledge sharing and promotion of fundamental values. She suggested explaining the concept of knowledge-sharing in the ToRs, including peer learning activities. The Romanian Co-chair included the suggestion in the document.

The Eurydice representative and Co-chair of the Working Group on Monitoring the Implementation of the Bologna Process emphasised that in the last cycle, there were too many demands from ministries to provide information, which impacted the possibility of gathering reliable, evidence-based answers. Moreover, he briefly presented the options offered to the BFUG: maintaining an extensive monitoring of the implementation of the Bologna Process or having an in-depth report on one thematic topic for a period of time followed by a more comprehensive report in the next period. He explained that the BFUG decided that comprehensive monitoring could not be sacrificed for in-depth thematic monitoring. Thus, the WG on Monitoring the implementation of the Bologna Process was mandated to identify and propose a feasible mechanism for comprehensive monitoring, by reducing the amount of collected information. Furthermore, in terms of the methodology for monitoring the fundamental values, he emphasised that it would be important to develop a sustainable model based on experimental work.

5. Comprehensive framework for monitoring the implementation of the fundamental values of the EHEA - monitoring tool and indicators

Documents:

- [WG FV 1 HU IS 5 1 Presentation Monitoring the Fundamental Values of Higher Education in the EHEA](#)
- [WG FV 1 HU IS 5 2 Technical Policy Framework of Indicators for Fundamental Values of Higher Education in the EHEA: Framework of Indicators and Monitoring Tool](#)

The Maltese Co-chair gave the floor to the United Kingdom representative to present the Comprehensive framework for monitoring the implementation of the fundamental values, along with the monitoring tool and indicators.

The United Kingdom representative gave an overview of the work of the WG on FV in the previous mandate, outlining some key aspects:

- Policy context and timeline
- The purpose of the EHEA monitoring framework
- The design and development process of the framework and tool
- The indicators of the monitoring framework
- The general presentation of the monitoring tool
- The detailed presentation of the monitoring tool (full questionnaire, technical instructions for answering, coding instructions)

The Maltese Co-chair opened the floor for questions.

The Austrian representative asked whether the data would be provided by the ministries or by the higher education institutions and to whom the questionnaire would be addressed. The United Kingdom representative explained that in the piloting phase, the proposal was that the BFUG representative would recommend who should reply to the questionnaire on behalf of the national or system-level public authority. The questionnaire would be prefilled by the national operator from within the NewFav project and then given to representatives of public authorities to correct, confirm and complete the information.

The ETUCE representative requested more information regarding the actual contribution of the WG on FV, given that the actual monitoring process would not be carried out by the group. The Romanian Co-chair explained that the role of the WG would be to assist, provide feedback, discuss the outputs of the monitoring exercise at each step and enhance knowledge sharing.

6. Presentation of the project application to support the activity of the Working Group on Fundamental Values

Documents: [WG FV 1 HU IS 5 1 Presentation Monitoring the Fundamental Values of Higher Education in the EHEA](#)

The Romanian Co-chair briefly presented the proposal for the project aimed to support the work of the Working Group on Fundamental Values. He explained that the members of the working

group would be part of the decision-making process for all the project events. He outlined the following main points:

- The project overview
- The key project partners
- The work packages of the project
- The timeline and key deliverables of the project
- The impact and expected outcomes of the project

The Romanian Co-chair opened the floor for discussion.

The Austrian representative requested more details about the data collection platform. The Romanian Co-chair explained that the main purpose of the platform would be to support the monitoring framework by giving members of the academic community from each country the possibility to provide feedback or comments, report infringements of fundamental values or offer different perspectives. He emphasised that this would be a mechanism for ensuring a transparent way of receiving information from the higher education systems instead of the usual data collection through national authorities. The information obtained would be analysed by the national operators and the project team and then by the country itself.

The Norwegian representative asked whether the working group would make recommendations based on the monitoring results or if there would be any follow-up plan. The Romanian Co-chair explained that two types of recommendations are envisaged: those related to a sustainable monitoring system of the fundamental values at EHEA level after 2027 and those based on the results of the report. He added that a concrete direction would depend on the results of the report and on how the discussions would progress until 2027. The United Kingdom representative clarified that the recommendations would be discussed and formulated within the working group, based on the monitoring report, but emphasised that the monitoring report itself would not contain recommendations. The Romanian Co-chair pointed out that if the WG would identify ways to improve the methodology during the implementation process, the report could **also** include methodological recommendations.

The EUA representative appreciated that the project proposal showed a serious focus on peer learning activities, dissemination and enhancement of the common understanding of fundamental values. She mentioned that she would be in touch with the Romanian Co-chair regarding the potential participation of EUA as a partner in the project. Furthermore, she suggested trying to engage a wide target audience (higher education institutions, national rectors councils, students unions, university associations) in the peer learning activities. The Romanian Co-chair confirmed that they are open to organising as many online events as possible, if the working group finds them useful.

7. Next Working Group on Fundamental Values meetings - timeframe and objectives

The Romanian Co-chair briefly informed the participants about the following meetings at EHEA level, which the co-chairs would attend:

- 9th of January - BFUG Board meeting in Albania
- 24th of February - BFUG meeting in Poland

He pointed out that in the BFUG meeting, there would be a section dedicated to the Working Group on Fundamental Values in which the co-chairs would present the main ideas from the

current meeting and the monitoring framework. Furthermore, he mentioned that another coordination meeting between the co-chairs could be organised by the end of spring.

With regards to the Terms of Reference, the Romanian Co-chair mentioned that the EHEA Secretariat would send it soon to the BFUG for adoption through silent procedure.

Moreover, he informed the participants that the next meeting of the Working Group on Fundamental Values should be held in Malta, probably in March or April, explaining that after the BFUG Board meeting or the BFUG meeting the EHEA Secretariat would send a Doodle. He added that until the next meeting, the Co-chairs would share the project application with the members. He also pointed out that the deadline for submitting the project application is the 18th of December, and the results should be available by February-March. The Co-chairs plan to officially start the project in May 2025. The Romanian Co-chair also mentioned that they might be invited to participate in the next meetings of the Working Group on Monitoring the Implementation of the Bologna Process or in the meetings of other working structures (for example, TPG C and TPG D), depending on the discussed topics. The Co-chairs would report back to the members of the Working Group on Fundamental Values at the next meeting.

8. Dissemination and knowledge sharing of the Working Group's activity

The Romanian Co-chair opened the floor for ideas to better promote fundamental values within the EHEA, including the results of the working group. He offered an example, mentioning that some individuals recognised within the EHEA or within the national context could provide short interviews about fundamental values, depending on the location of the next meetings. He explained that short videos about the meaning of fundamental values could be created and used for promoting fundamental values and enhancing knowledge sharing. The Co-chairs also proposed to create some promotional materials within the project, such as brochures that explain in simple words the meaning of fundamental values to the whole EHEA community.

The United Kingdom representative emphasised the importance of nontraditional ways of disseminating information and communicating the results. Furthermore, as an example, he presented the idea of organising a student hackathon about the fundamental values, which was also considered at the national level. One of the topics he considered for the hackathon was academic freedom for students. Moreover, he added that it would be important to find ways to involve participants that would not usually participate in this kind of activities. For example, he mentioned that they invited the Mayor of London to attend one of their seminars about academic freedom in the UK, who remained committed to helping the cause.

The Romanian Co-chair pointed out that the activities should have a broader public (academic communities, students, higher education institutions) to reach the common knowledge of fundamental values.

The EUA representative affirmed that there might be a need to start with basic dissemination. She explained that EUA gives regular Bologna updates at the national rectors conferences, which they consider very helpful since they are not exposed to this information regularly.

The Austrian representative mentioned that the academic community and students are aware of their problems in the field of fundamental values, highlighting that it would be very important to think about activities which could open the dialogue between them and the EHEA. She suggested learning from the academic community, not only disseminating ideas.

Furthermore, she suggested providing a small budget line within the project for activities to be financed through applications from institutions or countries, if possible. The Romanian Co-chair agreed with the first suggestion and replied that the Co-chairs would look into the feasibility of including a budget line for the applications.

9. Good practices on fundamental values at national level

The Romanian Co-chair invited the participants to share any good practices on fundamental values, mentioning that this exercise was done at the BFUG as well. He explained that each country presented its perspective of implementing the Tirana Communiqué and the steps they had already taken towards implementing the Bologna commitments. He proposed replicating this exercise at the level of the working group through a section about good practices in each meeting.

The Romanian Co-chair proposed issuing a call for the members who want to present good practices on fundamental values in the next meeting of the working group, which was agreed by the WG.

The Irish representative pointed out that Ireland had defined academic freedom and institutional autonomy in its national legislation for probably 40 years, but there is no common understanding of those concepts. He welcomed all the presentations and highlighted that it is very important for them to understand what fundamental values mean in practice.

The Romanian Co-chair mentioned that the Co-chairs also want to have some updates from other frameworks on FV, depending on the progress made, for example by inviting speakers from the European Commission, the EAA, the Council of Europe or the European Parliament.

The United Kingdom representative agreed that there is a need to learn from others who are not members of the working group and working in this area, also creating contexts from which they could learn. He pointed out that there are two dimensions of exchange of experience and learning about good practices in the context of fundamental values: the first one, within the working group, which could be organised along the lines proposed by the Co-chairs, and the second one, involving people who are not part of the working group. He inquired whether doing broader work in disseminating all the policy and practical developments about the fundamental values is part of the working group's mandate, which the Co-chairs confirmed.

Furthermore, the Romanian Co-chair pointed out that if a member wants to organise an event about fundamental values, it could be done within the working group, and the working group could also contribute to the development of different outputs which aim at sharing common understanding regarding fundamental values. Furthermore, the WG could give presentations about fundamental values in EHEA at other events. Moreover, he reminded the members that the EHEA newsletter and the Facebook page could be used for knowledge sharing, mentioning that each member has its own channels that could also be used.

The Romanian Co-chair highlighted that the focus for the next meeting should be on how to better structure the session on good practices, mentioning that, as a pilot approach, the co-chairs would probably send an invitation to the members in order to identify who wants to present good practices at national level. He thanked everyone for the participation and reminded that the EHEA Secretariat would get back to them with information related to the next meeting.

The Maltese co-chair expressed her gratitude to all the participants and assured them that their contribution would make a difference.

There was no other business. The meeting ended at 14:06 CET.