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## BFUG MEETING LXXXVIII

19 – 20 February 2024  
Hosted by the Kingdom of Belgium

### Minutes of meeting

### List of participants

Country/Institution	First Name	Last Name
Albania (BFUG Vice-Chair)	Linda	Pustina
Albania	Anila	Paparisto
Andorra/WG on San Marino Roadmap Co-Chair	Jordi	Llombart
Andorra	Mar	Martínez
Austria	Stephan	De Pasqualin
Austria/BICG Co-Chair	Helga	Posset
Azerbaijan	Vusala	Gurbanova
Azerbaijan	Samir	Hamidov
Belgium French Community (BFUG Co-Chair)	Caroline	Hollela
Belgium French Community	Justyna	Nerkowska
Belgium Flemish Community (BFUG Co-Chair)	Liesbeth	Hens
Belgium Flemish Community	Rana	Mirzak
Minister of Higher Education, Belgium French Community	Françoise	Bertieaux
Council of Europe	Villano	Qiriazzi
Council of Europe	Catherine	Dolgova Dreyer
Croatia	Dijana	Mandić
Croatia/WG on Social Dimension Co-Chair	Ninoslav	Šćukanec Schmidt
Croatia	Vlatka	Blažević
Cyprus	Kyriacos	Charalambous
Czech Republic	Tereza	Vengřinová
Czech Republic/TF on RR Co-Chair	Michal	Karpíšek
Denmark	Jonas Husum	Johannesen
European Commission	Vanessa	Debiais-Sainton
European Commission	Kinga	Szuly
Education International	Andreas	Keller
Education International	Agnes	Roman
Estonia	Janne	Pukk
ENQA	Anna	Gover
ENQA	Douglas	Blackstock
EURASHE	Hannes	Raffaseder
EURASHE	John	Edwards
EQAR	Magalie	Soenen
EQAR	Stéphane	Lauwick
European Students' Union (ESU)/WG on Social Dimension Co-Chair	Horia Șerban	Onita
European Students' Union (ESU)	Iris	Kimizoglu
European Students' Union (ESU)	Tanguy	Guibert
European University Association (EUA)	Maria	Kelo
European University Association (EUA)/TF on RR Co-Chair	Michael	Gaebel



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Eurydice/ WG on Monitoring Co-Chair	David	Crosier
Finland/WG on San Marino Roadmap Co-Chair	Maija	Innola
Finland	Jonna	Korhonen
France	David	Itier
France	Mathieu	Musquin
Georgia (Outgoing BFUG Co-Chair)	Maia	Shukhoshvili
Germany	Marit	Metternich
Germany Lander	Woldemar	Venohr
Greece	Alexandra	Karvouni
Holy See (BFUG Co-Chair)	Paul Desmond	Tighe
Holy See (BFUG Co-Chair)	Melanie	Rosenbaum
Hungary (Incoming BFUG Co-Chair)	András	Báló
Hungary	Zsolt	Dános
Iceland (Incoming BFUG Co-Chair)	Una	Strand Vidarsdottir
Ireland	Adam	Bluett
Italy	Luca	Lantero
Italy	Chiara	Finocchietti
Italy/CG on Global Policy Dialogue Co-Chair	Ann Katherine	Isaacs
Kazakhstan	Aitzhan	Kulumzhanova
Kazakhstan	Alibek	Madibekov
Latvia	Inta	Jaunzeme
Liechtenstein	Eva	Meirer
Lithuania	Andrius	Zalitis
Luxembourg	Patricia	Marx
Luxembourg	Méline	Tsui
Malta	Philip	Vella
Moldova	Nadejda	Velisco
Moldova	Lilia	Parhomenco
The Netherlands	Sophie	Duijser
The Netherlands	David	van Maaren
Norway/WG on Monitoring Co-Chair	Tone Flood	Strøm
Norway	Ingrid	Skrede
Portugal	Maria Carla	Dias
Portugal	Ines	Viegas
Romania/WG on Fundamental Values Co-Chair	Mihai Cezar	Hâj
Romania/ TF on Enhancing Knowledge Sharing in EHEA Co-Chair	Daniela Cristina	Ghițulică
Romania	Alex Cristian	Cretulescu
Romania	Adriana	Stoian
San Marino	Remo	Massari
Slovakia	Peter	Ondreicka
Slovenia	Jernej	Širok
Spain (Outgoing BFUG Co-Chair)	Margarita	de Lezcano-Mújica
Sweden	Robin	Moberg
Switzerland	Aurélia Natascha	Robert-Tissot
Türkiye	Aydın	Aslan
Ukraine	Maryna	Mruga



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Ukraine	Oleksandra	Laktionova
UNESCO	Borhene	Chakroun
UNESCO	Vanja	Gutovic
United Kingdom	Pamela	Wilkinson
BFUG Secretariat (Head)	Edlira Adi	Kahani Subashi
BFUG Secretariat	Kristina	Metallari
BFUG Secretariat	Jora	Vaso

Armenia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Bulgaria, Business Europe, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Serbia and United Kingdom (Scotland) did not attend the meeting.

## Welcome Address by the Belgian French-Community Minister of Higher Education

Ms Françoise Bertieaux, Minister of Higher Education, Belgium French Community, welcomed participants to the meeting, commemorating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bologna Process (BP). She stressed the transformative impact of this initiative on higher education reforms and emphasized the significance of student mobility, reaffirming Belgium's ongoing commitment. Acknowledging the necessity for increased awareness about the Bologna Process, she introduced a promotional video tailored for final-year secondary school students explaining Bologna key commitments. Concluding her remarks, she wished for a productive meeting ahead<sup>1</sup>.

### 1. Welcome and Introduction

#### 1.1. Welcome by the BFUG Co-Chairs (Belgium and Holy See)

Caroline Hollela (Belgium French Community, Co-Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting, and expressed hope for fruitful and productive discussions.

Liesbeth Hens (Belgium Flemish Community, Co-Chair) extended warm greetings to all participants, expressing hopes for a collaborative and constructive meeting leading to fruitful outcomes.

Paul Tighe (Holy See, Co-Chair) expressed gratitude to the Belgian hosts for their hospitality and organization of the meeting. He concluded by wishing for a collective exploration of future prospects and a productive meeting ahead.

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

Linda Pustina (BFUG Vice-Chair) extended greetings to all participants and conveyed gratitude to Belgium for hosting the meeting. With the Ministerial Conference approaching, she emphasized the importance of reaching consensus on key agenda items and messages on the Communiqué. She expressed gratitude to the BFUG Co-Chairs and outgoing Co-Chairs for their collaboration, and she wished for a fruitful meeting ahead.

### 2. Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda of the meeting was adopted without changes.

For more information, please see: [BFUG BE VA 88 2.1 Draft Agenda](#)  
[BFUG BE VA 88 2.2 Draft Annotated Agenda](#)

### 3. Feedback from the last meetings

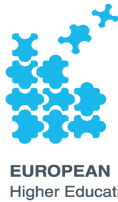
#### 3.1. Report from BFUG Meeting hosted by Spain, 16 - 17 November 2023

Margarita de Lezcano-Mújica Núñez (Outgoing BFUG Co-Chair, Spain) recounted the discussions held at the BFUG meeting in Madrid, and she concluded by expressing her wishes to the current BFUG Co-Chairs.

#### 3.2. Report from BFUG Board Meeting hosted by the Holy See, 23 January 2024

Melanie Rosenbaum (BFUG Co-Chair, Holy See) outlined the discussions from the January Board meeting, focusing, among others, on organizational issues within BFUG's work such as representation in working groups, meeting frequency, scheduling conflicts, and deadlines, as well as the perspectives for the upcoming next working period. Co-Chairs of Working Structures were tasked to address these concerns in their presentations, including an outlook for in the next working period, to be discussed further under agenda item 10 of the current meeting.

<sup>1</sup> [Launch of the video: The Bologna Process](#), Belgium French community production, February 2024



#### **4. Update from the BFUG Secretariat, including update on the call for the 2027 EHEA Ministerial Conference and BFUG Secretariat host**

Edlira Subashi (Head of BFUG Secretariat) provided updates since the previous BFUG meeting, that included ongoing collaboration and coordination with BFUG Chairs, along with support for the BFUG Working Structures. Firstly, Ms. Subashi announced her appointment as member of the Albanian working group responsible for the preparations for the Ministerial Conference. She then discussed the circulation of a list of non-EHEA countries for the Global Policy Forum (GPF) to the BFUG (sent end of January 2024 to the BFUG), with feedback forwarded to the Co-Chairs of the Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue (CG on GPD). The approved list was subsequently sent to Albania to initiate the invitation process. She then shared details on the social media strategy (active on Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, X), including content publication, and outlined the Secretariat's responsibilities for preparing the EHEA Newsletter in accordance with the Task Force on Enhancing Knowledge Sharing in the EHEA community Action Plan. Finally, she informed about the letter of interest received from Moldova and Romania to co-host the next Secretariat and Ministerial Conference. She concluded that BFUG Working Structures were to present final reports and provide information for the upcoming working period at the April BFUG meeting. Secretariat recalled that documents need to be uploaded on time and asks countries to comply with the deadlines.

Concerns were raised regarding the dissemination of some documents of the Task Force on the Review of Rules of Procedure for the Governance of the EHEA (TF on RR), which per on hold by email of the EHEA Secretariat on 5 February, and reinstated only on 15 February. The Secretariat explained that this was due to the fact that the documents would not have found the consensus of the TF on RR, as two of its members had distanced themselves from the documents. The matter has been brought to the BFUG Co-Chairs, who instructed the Secretariat to inform the BFUG that the documents were put on hold.

The TF on RR Co-Chair explained that the documents had been produced and agreed by TF on RR, over a longer of time, through several rounds of discussions during several meeting. One TF did not voice any dissent, the other one only at a very late stage, once the documents had been concluded and were to be submitted. He also voiced his concern that the documents had been put on hold due to complaints of 2 of TF members, but without any prior consultation or even just notification of the rest of the TF, including two of its Co-chairs. The European Commission highlighted the importance of clarifying the roles of BFUG Co-Chairs and Vice-Chair, stating that their role was to facilitate discussion rather than censor documents. The Commission stressed that to its understanding, all active member were agreeing with the documents, which means consensus.

The BFUG Co-Chairs indicated that the discussion on TF on RR would be resumed under the respective agenda item, and announced that that the deadline for working structures to submit documents for the upcoming Board meeting would be extended to March 4<sup>th</sup> to accommodate for more flexibility.

Furthermore, there was a request for information on a document concerning attendance in working structures, which the Secretariat confirmed would be included in the final report presented at the April BFUG meeting. It was suggested that overlapping meeting times among BFUG Working Structures be included in this report as well.

For more information, please see: [BFUG BE VA 88 4 BFUG Secretariat](#)

#### **5. Host of 2027 EHEA Ministerial Conference and BFUG Secretariat candidacy of Romania/Moldova**

Lilia Parhomenco (Moldova) expressed Romania and Moldova's joint interest in co-hosting the 2027 EHEA Ministerial Conference and BFUG Secretariat. She provided insights on the active participation of both countries in the BFUG and its working structures, and an overview of their respective higher education systems and priorities. The proposed structure of the Secretariat, including its composition and tasks, was also discussed. Upon questions, Daniela Cristina Ghitulica (Romania) added that the 2027 Ministerial Conference and the Global Policy Forum are planned to take place in two locations across both countries, with the distance (several hours) to be bridged by provided transport.

Germany raised the question of whether Romania and Moldova would consider extending their Secretariat beyond the next Ministerial Conference if the BFUG decided to proceed with the proposal for a permanent Secretariat for the subsequent working period. Romania stated that they would consider the possibility if it became necessary.

Thanking both countries for the expression of interest, it was noted that a decision would be made at the next BFUG meeting.

For more information, please see: [BFUG BE VA 88 5 Host of 2027 EHEA and BFUG Secretariat Presentation](#)

#### **6. Proposal and programme for the Tirana Ministerial Conference and Bologna Global Policy Forum 2024**

Linda Pustina (BFUG Vice Chair) provided an overview of the draft programme for the Tirana Ministerial Conference, detailing key thematic topics, the four parallel session themes and logistical information. The Global Policy Forum (GPF), on May 30, 2024, was described as following a sandwich model with emphasis on the themes of the plenary and parallel sessions. It was mentioned that the Ministry of Education of Albania is preparing a practical information



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note to be disseminated to the BFUG at a later stage. The plenary session of the Ministerial Conference is scheduled to be held in the main hall accommodating approximately 400 participants, while the GPF will take place in the concert hall, with a capacity of up to 2000 attendees. Additionally, it was suggested by the CG on GPD that non-EHEA countries could participate in the BFUG Meeting as observers, deferring the decision to the BFUG. The timing of organizing the BFUG meeting on the day of or before the Ministerial Conference was also left for the BFUG to determine. Ms. Pustina posed the question of whether the entire event or specific parts of it should be live-streamed.

It was emphasized that the topics of the Ministerial Conference should be aligned with the work of the BFUG, in particular the priorities outlined in the Draft Communiqué, and the work accomplished by the BFUG Working Structures. Therefore, sessions focusing on fundamental values and the social dimension were deemed necessary, due to the significant progress made in these areas.

Clarification was requested on the content of sessions titled 'Balancing Academic Excellence and Social Equity: Navigating Fundamental Values in Education,' as its title would imply a conflict between academic excellence and social equity, and 'Building Bridges: Advancing Innovation, Quality and Partnerships' which seemed too general. Concerning the latter, the Vice-Chair clarified its focus on fostering connections and collaborations across sectors and disciplines to enhance the quality and impact of innovation.

On the inclusion of artificial intelligence (AI) at the Ministerial Conference, broadening the scope of discussion to enable addressing various innovative aspects in education was suggested. The Vice-Chair stressed the importance of AI for the future, considering its benefits, risks, and ethical implications.

UNESCO stressed the promotion of the Global convention on recognition, suggested aligning the Ministerial Conference's agenda with the Sustainable Development Goals' Agenda to reflect global priorities, emphasized addressing HE in Africa as 2024 is the Year of Africa and of Education.

EUA proposed a discussion encompassing challenges, benefits and achievements of the implementation of Bologna Process key commitments, recommended presenting the results of the Bologna Process Implementation Report (BPIR), and suggested that consultative members should be included in the conference's discussions.

ESU emphasized the importance of maintaining a dedicated session on the future priorities of the Bologna Process and advocated for a broader perspective on societal and personal development needs beyond the European workforce. There was some concern about holding bilateral meetings throughout the Ministerial, particularly during the adoption of the Communiqué. Further, they proposed to invite Belarusian Students' Association as an organisation for the GPF, considering it is a democratic student organisation in exile which fights for European and EHEA values. Ukraine requested a thorough review of the union's affiliations and Ukraine's approval for their participation at the Ministerial. The Vice-Chair noted the need to address this with the Minister of Foreign Affairs due to diplomatic considerations and ESU was urged to provide a written request.

The WG on Social Dimension Co-Chairs suggested a topic on 'Fostering an inclusive EHEA' as a parallel session of the Ministerial Conference, and proposed another topic for the GPF parallel session: "Ensuring Equity and Inclusion in Higher Education: Global Cooperation as a bridge to overcoming barriers, to which the Vice-Chair agreed. The CoE suggested that the Ministerial working group prepare concise introductory discussion papers for each topic, including two or three key questions to guide discussions, and so to enhance the BFUG's comprehension of the topics' alignment with the Communiqué. This suggestion was welcomed by the Vice-Chair.

Regarding the live-stream, the Vice-Chair noted that it is the decision of the BFUG whether it would be exclusive to participants or open to the public. The possibility of televising the conference's opening live was put forth if the BFUG agreed. Romania advocated for maximizing public coverage of the event to increase engagement from the academic community and draw public attention to the Communiqué. They also suggested acknowledging the 25 years anniversary of the Bologna process and outlining future visions.

EUA voiced concerns about live streaming, as this might discourage in person attendance, in particular not only of ministers. ESU suggested striking a balance between live streaming and recording certain parts of the event and suggested analyzing which sessions would benefit from streaming for promotional purposes. EUA further inquired about the final list of international organizations and timeline for sending out invitations. The Vice-Chair explained that the list had been forwarded to the Albanian Ministry of Education for further clarification regarding one country, that the save-the-dates and invitations will be dispatched shortly, and that the initial list of invitations was already sent to BFUG, with the additional proposals received to be discussed during this BFUG. The Vice Chair also noted that a platform would facilitate the registration of bilateral meeting requests.

It was decided that the BFUG Meeting would be held on the 29 May, an hour before the Ministerial Conference will begin, having as its only purpose to clear up newly arisen issues. The Vice-Chair thanked members for their feedback, and encouraged written proposals to be sent to the Secretariat by February 27<sup>th</sup>.

For more information, please see: [BFUG BE VA 88 6 MC and GPF Presentation](#)



## 7. Task Force on the Review of Rules of Procedure for the Governance of the EHEA community

The Belgium Flemish Community Co-Chair introduced the discussion by giving the word to the persons who has been involved in the work of the Task Force,

Michael Gaebel (TF on RR, Co-Chair) provided an overview of recent developments regarding the documents submitted to the BFUG. He clarified that the 5 documents presented to the BFUG had been jointly developed and were supported by all seven "active" TF members, next to a document produced by the two TF on RR members who had dissociated from the other documents.

He suggested that to focus discussion on the TF's text proposal for the Communiqué. Regarding the proposed long-term Secretariat, he highlighted the positive feedback it received by many members at the Madrid BFUG. He outlined the suggested actions for the Tirana Communiqué, and emphasized the need for the BFUG to take a clear stance proposal on the long-term Secretariat and the RoP, and urged in particular those BFUG members who so far had remained silent to express their views and positions. Michal Karpisek (TF on RR, Co-Chair) elaborated on the proposed legal form of the long-term Secretariat, pointing to new options presented in the documents, in response to the concern of some BFUG members regarding membership and financing arrangements. He stressed the need to adhere to the scheduled proposed in the roadmap, if the goal should be to establish the Secretariat by 2027.

Luca Lantero (Italy) thanked the TF on RR Co-Chairs and members for their inclusive approach throughout the TF's work. He emphasized that it shouldn't be assumed that the majority of countries had agreed on establishing a long-term Secretariat and that this remains to be discussed among members. He stated that Italy's position is neutral until further details on budget implications and legal structures are clarified. He pointed out concerns about potential duplicative costs, especially considering the European Commission's (EC) willingness to contribute to the costs of the Secretariat and the fact that EU countries contribute to European Commission's budget. He brought up the proposal made by the Council of Europe (CoE) on hosting the long-term secretariat and the role of the European Commission in it. He emphasized the need for a strong decision by countries and their ministers regarding the establishment of such a structure.

Linda Pustina (BFUG Vice-Chair) also underlined the importance of thoroughly deliberating diverse positions before the Ministerial Conference and echoed the importance of not assuming unanimity among countries, advocating for her proposal, initially raised during the Stockholm BFUG and subsequent TF meetings, to concentrate discussions on key points rather than presenting an extensive document, which could lead to confusion and lack specificity. She underscored the TF's agreement made already at the BFUG Board to prepare a concise two-page document outlining main discussion topics which should be presented at the Ministerial, aiming for consensus on crucial matters like financial considerations for the Secretariat.

Iceland raised concerns about the delays caused by hand-overs of rotating Secretariats and proposed prioritizing majority agreement over complete unanimity, supporting a long-term Secretariat. Denmark, Finland, ESU, France, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, Czechia, Slovenia and Austria advocated for addressing political decisions before discussing financial details, expressing support for a long-term Secretariat and the recommendations of the TF on the Secretariat to the Tirana Communiqué.

The CoE emphasized broader governance challenges within the EHEA, proposing discussions on the process' future post-Tirana Ministerial Conference considering that after 25 years of existence there is probably a need for a thorough evaluation or impact analysis of the bologna process that should examine in how far the key objectives have been reached. The CoE mentioned that the bologna process is and should remain a voluntary process while there is a need for the recognition of diversity within the higher education area, as the capacities of the countries are quite diverse to follow all the different activities of the bologna process. CoE supports a decision of principle on the length on long term establishment of a secretariat and suggest to open a discussion after the ministerial in Tirana for having a task force on the future to continue the work done by the TF RoP. As far as the Secretariat issue is concerned, the CoE highlighted that their involvement depends on member states' preferences and stated their intent to explore the issue further before making concrete feasible proposals. The issue of the Secretariat should be disconnected from the issue of a possible creation of new international organization. . Italy proposed a monitoring mechanism to assess BFUG decisions' impact on education, suggesting its inclusion in the Communiqué. Slovenia posed questions about the legal and organizational framework of the Secretariat, emphasizing the importance of maintaining consistent power dynamics among the Secretariat, Board and member states. The Holy See asked for the clarification regarding the proposal mentioned earlier for co-hosting and co-financing the Secretariat by the CoE and the EC, aligning with for the character of the Bologna Process as a voluntary intergovernmental approach and not an international organisation. Finally, in the capacity of Drafting Committee Co-Chair, she affirmed readiness to incorporate TF proposals into the Communiqué in line with BFUG decisions.



Of the delegations that addressed the establishing of a long-term secretariat, 12<sup>2</sup> expressed support, 1<sup>3</sup> voiced opposition, and 8<sup>4</sup> did not commit or take an explicit position, stating a need for consultation at their ministries, further clarity on specific issues, particularly financial implications and legal repercussions. Some delegations without a firm position indicated that they would clarify their stance by the next BFUG meeting.

Regarding the Rules of Procedure, some BFUG members shared their reservations about the proposed voting regime, in that major education issues such as the adoption of Communiqués, should not be subject to vote, but decided by consensus.

ESU stressed the importance of retaining Annex IV and V, supported by the Holy See. Hungary advocated for specific rather than general RoP, adding that BFUG should focus on suspension rather than exclusion of members, and suggesting changes to membership requirements. Slovenia sought further clarification on the proposed introduction of a code of ethics. The Holy See emphasized the necessity of ensuring clarity and precision in RoP, to mitigate potential governance challenges arising of formulations, and argued against segregating politically different but legally equal elements and competences, such as that of ministers and of duly authorized delegates in the BFUG.

The TF on RR Co-Chairs took note of the concerns regarding voting and committed to exploring solutions ahead of the next BFUG meeting in April. EQAR has been cited the proposal as an example on how to design a funding model for the Secretariat, considering GDP and country size. The Co-Chairs affirmed the perceived need of the BFUG for consulting legal experts on the RoP.

The CoE explained that they had been tasked with making a proposal during the Stockholm BFUG meeting by one of the TF members. After consulting with their EC counterparts, the CoE had submitted the proposal. However, the TF would have evaluated and subsequently removed the proposal from BFUG consideration. The CoE expressed discomfort with this evaluation from a small group and emphasized the need for broader discussions. The CoE highlighted that their involvement depends on member states' preferences and stated their intent to explore the issue further before making concrete feasible proposals. The TF on RR Co-Chairs pointed out that the CoE had requested at the Madrid BFUG to have its proposal to be taken of the documents prepared by the TF on RR. After the Madrid BFUG, TF on RR Co-chairs had invited CoE to provide clarifications on the proposal but had not received any. Therefore, as requested by CoE, the proposal has been removed from the text.

Italy emphasized the necessity for member countries to receive clear questions on three key points: whether there was support for a long-term Secretariat, willingness to contribute financially, and agreement with the proposed legal structure. They underscored the importance of these questions in helping member countries formulate concrete positions, and urged the BFUG to promptly decide on formulating and sending these questions to member countries. The TF on RR Co-Chairs proposed having another round of discussion during the next BFUG meeting to clarify essential questions.

The Belgium Flemish Community Co-Chair concluded that the TF on RR would continue addressing the voting issue raised during discussions. She mentioned that the code of ethics has not been addressed, but that it should be something to take into consideration for the next meeting. She urged all delegations to submit their written comments by February 27<sup>th</sup>, to facilitate progress in the upcoming BFUG meeting. Additionally, she emphasized the need for expressing concerns or questions on whether a long-term Secretariat is needed to effectively address any existing issues. She stressed the need to promptly address any remaining issues to facilitate the final decision-making process by the ministers, suggesting that concerns should be brought to the TF's attention if they haven't been raised already.

For more information, please see:

[BFUG BE VA 88 8 TF ROP Presentation](#); [BFUG BA VA 88 8 TF ROP doc1 LongtermSecretariat](#); [BFUG BA VA 88 8 TF ROP doc2 BriefingNote](#); [BFUG BA VA 88 8 TF ROP doc3 ExplanatoryNote](#); [BFUG BA VA 88 8 TF ROP doc4 RoPEHEAafterMadrid](#); [BFUG BA VA 88 8 TF ROP doc5 TFroPforTiranaCommunique](#); [BFUG BA VA 88 8 TF ROP doc6 Members-Questions](#)

## **8. Presentation of the final reports from the Working Groups and Task Forces**

### **8.1 Working Group on Roadmap for San Marino's accession to the EHEA**

Maija Innola (WG on SMR, Co-Chair) informed that the draft final report was presented at the Madrid BFUG meeting. The WG then integrated a new proposal for the Tirana Communiqué into the draft final report, which was also shared with the DC. Positive progress had been observed in San Marino's implementation efforts, including the adoption of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) and ongoing self-certification processes. She highlighted that the group's tasks have been completed and there is no need for it to continue into the next working period. However, she

<sup>2</sup> Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, ESU, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland.

<sup>3</sup> Albania.

<sup>4</sup> Azerbaijan, Croatia, Holy See, Hungary, Italy, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom.



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recommended that the BFUG address issues related to the development of policy guidelines on transnational providers and student protection in future work, though not necessarily as a standalone WG. ESU mentioned the initiated contact with student representatives from San Marino University and anticipate ongoing collaboration, expressing satisfaction with the progress thus far. The BFUG expressed agreement with the WG on SMR report under the perspective that the new developments regarding the San Marino NQF would be integrated into the text, and congratulated the WG on their work. The updated report would once more be presented during the upcoming BFUG meeting, incorporating the latest developments.

For more information, please see: [BFUG BE VA 88 9 1 WG San Marino Roadmap Report](#)

## 8.2 Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG)

Helga Posset (BICG, Co-Chair) outlined the thematic orientations of the TPGs, noted that most meetings were held online, with one hybrid, and suggested that, for the next working period, more in-person meetings should be included in the Terms of Reference. She commended the blend of TPG meetings with peer learning activities, highlighting their effectiveness for engaged countries. She noted the establishment of sub-working groups within all three TPGs, whose outputs were summarized or integrated into the report. The success of staff mobility experiences, especially in TPG B and C, was underscored. She shared achievements of the TPGs and presented progress slides for each key commitment, acknowledging positive movement but at a slow pace. Notable progress was observed in the areas of Qualifications Framework development and Lisbon Recognition Convention implementation, while Quality Assurance (QA) related issues presented a mixed picture with opportunities for improvement (e.g. regarding the participation of BFUG delegates next to QA experts from agencies). A need for increased engagement from member countries and willingness to independently implement key commitments was noted, as well as for complete and compatible implementation across all EHEA commitments to ensure the success of HE initiatives. Also noted was the integration of BICG suggestions into the Communiqué, like the proposal for countries to develop publishable implementation plans for key commitments.

ESU firmly advocated for the adoption of a publishable implementation plan, stressing the need for stakeholder involvement in its development. Their collaborative analysis with national unions had uncovered a significant lack of awareness and engagement among stakeholders regarding actions submitted to the TPGs, especially concerning the three key commitments. EQAR highlighted the need for national governance involvement in the work of TPGs, emphasizing the importance of experts from ministries or national levels. They suggested that this point be strongly emphasized in the Communiqué. Finland supported the publishable plans, suggesting they could serve as advisory tools to understand the support needed by countries with clear implementation plans.

The BICG Co-Chair announced that the report would be finalized by the next BFUG meeting.

For more information, please see: [BFUG BE VA 88 9 2 BICG Report](#)  
[BFUG BE VA 88 9 2 BICG Presentation](#)

## 8.3 Working Group on Monitoring the Implementation of the Bologna Process and Bologna Implementation Report

Tone Flood Strom (WG on Monitoring, Co-Chair) noted that Eurydice had been actively engaging in dialogue with countries to address received feedback from the BFUG meeting in Madrid. On the key issues raised during the previous BFUG meeting, such as the Key Commitments and Social Dimension chapters, and the accuracy of some questionnaire responses on social dimension policies in some countries, proposed solutions had been extensively discussed in the WG as well as data collectors are actively working to address them.

David Crosier (WG on Monitoring, Co-Chair) presented solutions proposed by the WG to address the main issues raised by the BFUG. Regarding the indicator for assessing the implementation of the three-cycle degree structure, particularly the threshold of 10% of students enrolled in integrated or long programs, he proposed setting the threshold at 20% for the current report in order to address concerns raised in previous BFUG meeting by some delegations regarding a possible interference into their national education policy for long programmes e.g. in medicine or law. Concerning objections about removing the light green category from the indicator assessing external QA systems, thus de facto rendering obligatory the EQAR registration for obtaining a "not red" category, he maintained the solution that the text of the report would highlight the countries with agencies that are ENQA members but not registered on EQAR. On the representation of countries with mainstreamed strategies for social inclusion, he proposed replacing two scorecard indicators with a general mapping of issues to ensure fair representation.

ENQA underlined the voluntary aspect of the EQAR register, emphasizing independence and transparency as outlined in the London Communiqué. While advocating for agencies to both join ENQA and be registered on EQAR, ENQA stressed the importance of preserving the voluntary nature of both. The Holy See supported this and highlighted that full membership in ENQA necessitated proven ESG alignment compliance. Italy emphasized the importance of





incorporating into the minutes of the BFUG Madrid meeting the solution of the explanation in the text as a compromise suggested by ENQA if an agreement over the scorecard indicators could not be reached.

ESU pointed out concerns regarding the financing indicator, highlighting discrepancies between the scorecard and the actual situation. Regarding long-term monitoring, they proposed the inclusion of a reference to the future of monitoring in the current Communiqué draft, advocating for monitoring progress towards achieving an inclusive, innovative, and interconnected EHEA by 2030. They emphasized the importance of having both thematic analysis and long-term indicators for various topics in future monitoring exercises.

To address concerns regarding the 10% or 20% threshold, the BFUG Vice-Chair suggested considering the application of the Bologna Process across study programs by setting a threshold on the number of *programs* with a long-term structure instead of the number of *students*. This approach aimed to provide a clearer understanding of how the Bologna Process is implemented across programs, as the number of students could vary between different programs. Education International noted that currently even the 10% threshold was not being met in many countries, emphasized the need for transparency in assessing adherence to Bologna Process policies and recommended distinguishing between programs covered by the policy and those that are not. The Holy See clarified that as long as a country offers any long-cycle programs alongside others fully Bologna compliant, the Bologna structure is technically implemented. The Holy See also expressed interest in understanding the rationale behind making long-term decisions regarding the proposed monitoring variants, as the BFUG has previously decided on thematic or other monitoring approaches based on the needs identified at the end of each working period.

The WG on Monitoring Co-Chairs clarified that with the constant addition of new commitments and limited resources in Eurydice, sustaining the current reporting mechanism was not feasible, hence the proposal for future monitoring approaches: Either systematic monitoring of specific thematic areas, a comprehensive approach with limited indicators and data, or alternating between thematic and comprehensive monitoring rounds. A survey to gather feedback was planned and the need for a definitive decision on this by the autumn BFUG meeting for the 2027 report was noted.

For more information, please see: [BFUG BE VA 88 9 3 1 WG Monitoring Future Monitoring](#); [BFUG BE VA 88 9 3 2 WG Monitoring Executive Summary BPIR](#); [BFUG BE VA 88 9 3 WG Monitoring Update](#)

#### 8.4 Working Group on Fundamental Values

Mihai Cezar Haj (WG on FV, Co-Chair) outlined the group's mandate, detailing the meetings and peer learning activities conducted and presented the outcomes of the Working group's efforts, such as developing statements on fundamental values and a pilot monitoring framework. Feedback from the Stockholm and Madrid BFUG meetings had been integrated into the proposed statements and the WG report. The Working Group is initiating the piloting phase of the monitoring framework, planning to suggest amendments based on the results for the next mandate, as it will not be ready for adoption in the current Communiqué, thus proposing that the Communiqué adopt the statements and acknowledge the finalization and implementation of the piloting framework in the next mandate. Looking ahead, the WG recommended continuing their work on supporting the enhancement of the EHEA's fundamental values, further developing the monitoring framework, and collaborating with relevant structures.

EUA expressed concerns about the labor-intensive nature of the initiative, also as monitoring would naturally require periodic reports. They emphasized the importance of assessing the initiative's impact and recommended also to put emphasis on promoting FVs through dialogue and awareness-raising activities, as state in the TOR of the WG. The CoE questioned whether the new technical monitoring of fundamental values would be integrated into the existing BPIR or would run parallel to it. The WG on FV Co-Chair suggested that ideally, the technical monitoring framework would be integrated into the BPIR, pending decision by the BFUG.

Germany highlighted the connection between ongoing discussions about the WG's future and the WG on Monitoring's proposal for a thematic report on FVs for the next Ministerial meeting. They proposed that the work on FV should be a continuous effort, that could transition into more peer learning activities over time.

On questions about the criteria for selecting countries for piloting the monitoring framework the Co-Chair explained that geographical representativeness, data availability, and higher education system typology were considered and clarified that due to limitations, only four countries could be covered by the project. National data operators would be contacted in each country to pilot the framework and the results would determine its usability.

For more information, please see: [BFUG BE VA 88 9 4 1 WG FV Report](#)  
[BFUG BE VA 88 9 4 2 WG FV Statements](#)  
[BFUG BE VA 88 9 4 3 WG FV Presentation](#)

#### 8.5 Working Group on Social Dimension

Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt (WG on SD, Co-Chair) gave an overview of the WG on SD's progress on the Principles and Guidelines (PAGs) for the social dimension in the EHEA. He noted room for improvement in implementing social



dimension principles based on Eurydice report data. The Co-Chair highlighted ongoing efforts to refine indicators and descriptors, emphasizing their non-prescriptive nature to accommodate diverse national higher education systems. The development process involved extensive consultation, spanning 12 cycles and 20 iterations. Following feedback from the Madrid BFUG meeting, the WG on SD Co-Chairs convened with Nordic countries, Germany, and the BFUG Co-Chairs Belgium and Holy See, and Eurydice on 10 January 2024 to gather further input. A new version of the document was prepared, highlighting the “toolbox approach” and flexibility in the use of principles, guidelines, and indicators, as well as the new title. Horia Onita (WG on SD, Co-Chair) emphasized the goal of adopting the document as a standalone endorsed by ministers, providing a clear reference to its adoption in the Communiqué. He also highlighted the proposal to continue the WG on SD for the period 2024-2027, with objectives to develop national action plans, policy recommendations, and improve the glossary with a focus on staff-related terms.

Iceland raised a question regarding the possibility of integrating the SD work into other WGs. The WG on SD Co-Chair recognized SD's transversal nature but cautioned against losing momentum without a dedicated body for interlinkages. They concluded by anticipating ongoing consultations on potential work areas for the future cycle.

The BFUG endorsed the document “Indicators and Descriptors for the Principles of the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA”, with the WG Report set for presentation at the next BFUG Meeting.

For more information, please see: [BFUG BE VA 88 9 5 1 WG SD Report](#)  
[BFUG BE VA 88 9 5 2 WG SD Indicators and Descriptors](#)  
[BFUG BE VA 88 9 5 WG SD Presentation](#)

### 8.6 Working Group on Learning & Teaching

John Edwards (EURASHE), on behalf of the WG on L&T Co-Chairs, reported on the recent WG meeting where it was agreed on a timetable to finalize their report before the April BFUG meeting. The WG has formulated two recommendations for the Communiqué, focusing on recognizing staff development policies in the section on an innovative EHEA and foreseeing a TPG on L&T for the next cycle which would operationalize WG recommendations, demonstrating the centrality of L&T in Higher Education, and addressing the need for innovative, student-centered pedagogy. EURASHE advocated for BFUG support of this proposal, believing that the TPG format would yield more tangible results.

On the WG's proposal for a TPG, the BICG Co-Chair inquired if it would fall under the umbrella of the BICG. Additionally, she sought EURASHE's willingness to serve as Co-Chair for this TPG and urged participants to consider co-chairing a TPG or providing support to agencies interested in assuming this role. EUA expressed support for a more practice-based initiative like the TPG, with a clearer thematic focus, such student-centered learning, which may then include also related aspect of assessment an AI.

ENQA underscored concern over rapid changes in learning, teaching, and assessment and noted potential benefits of AI but expressed worry about academic staff lacking necessary skills for quick adaptation. ESU echoed concerns about the challenges posed by AI, calling for a deeper analysis by the WG on these topics and emerging trends like micro-credentials and sustainability. UNESCO stated its intent to update its recommendation on the teaching profession in HE from 1997 where they plan to integrate considerations like AI skills and teacher career development, thus expressing interest in engaging with the WG for future initiatives.

France supported a European-level platform for discussing practices like green transition training. Education International appreciated the emphasis on teacher roles and professional development, urging further acknowledgment of their contributions, including career opportunities and working conditions. ESU advocated for a stronger emphasis on L&T in the Communiqué, particularly from a student-centered perspective. The EC highlighted discussions from the Madrid BFUG meeting on the significance of academic careers in facilitating automatic recognition, transnational cooperation, mobility, and addressing AI, green and digital skills in higher education. They stressed the importance of reinforcing this aspect in the Communiqué proposal.

EURASHE expressed the need for a structure, be it a WG or TPG under the BICG, and expressed interest in co-chairing in the upcoming period, emphasizing the need for a mix of institutional and policy perspectives. He noted that the suggestion to include a more explicit link to academic careers would be integrated into the final report and proposed to the DC to include them in the Communiqué.

For more information, please see: [BFUG BE VA 88 9 6 1 WG LT Report](#)

### 8.7 Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue

Ann Katherine Isaacs (CG on GPD, Co-Chair) provided updates on the Coordination group's activities and its subgroups, which have engaged in various activities within their respective macro-regions. Functional subgroups have made progress, with the Global Policy Statement subgroup producing a Draft 5 statement, and the Global Policy



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Forum subgroup preparing a draft program for the GPF. There was an inquiry about the potential hosting of a GPF for 2027, which was confirmed by the countries expressing interest in hosting it for the next period.

A large-scale consultation on perceptions of the EHEA and ideas about collaboration involving stakeholders outside the EHEA was conducted, that did not lead to representative results, though. Initial results indicate a general lack of awareness and interest in the EHEA globally, confirming the CG's strategy to promote dialogue among macro-regions rather than present the EHEA as a blueprint for others. For the next work period, the CG recommends continuing and strengthening efforts to consolidate dialogue with appropriate countries and macro-regional organizations, creating contacts and links between BFUG Working Structures and international dialogue partners, and organizing a GPF in 2027. Additional recommendations under consideration include closer collaboration with UNESCO and aligning with the SDGs. Looking ahead to 2027, UNESCO expressed their intent to actively contribute expertise and resources to advance the global dialogue on higher education.

Iceland raised concerns about the outcomes of the GPF and its limited uptake, especially from countries outside the EHEA and suggested conducting an evaluation following the GPF in Tirana. They also proposed exploring the consolidation of efforts in global policy dialogue and knowledge sharing under a unified structure to improve focus and audience reach in the future. The CG Co-Chairs acknowledged potential overlap between the two structures but emphasized their independence.

For more information, please see: [BFUG BE VA 88 9 7 1 CG GPD Draft Final Report](#)  
[BFUG BE VA 88 9 7 CG GPD Presentation](#)

## 9. Thematic discussion: Task Force on Enhancing Knowledge Sharing in the EHEA Community

Daniela Cristina Ghitulica (TF on EKS, Co-Chair) provided an overview of the scope and meetings of the TF. She also outlined the TF's recommendations, based on surveys, consultations and focus groups, to encourage active involvement of the academic community in developing and addressing EHEA goals. These recommendations include preparing and publishing a national implementation plan reflecting national priorities related to BP reforms and tools, ensuring greater consistent engagement of HE stakeholders with the BFUG Working Structures and activities, the establishment of national Bologna expert teams and Bologna hubs as well as of a Coordination Group within the BFUG.

The TF on EKS is also creating dissemination tools and videos on the history and key aspects of the BP, with the slogan "EHEA: Transforming Education together," and a logo for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the BP, awaiting approval from the BFUG. Further, the TF on EKS has recently launched a YouTube channel, organized regional events and maintains a newsletter, though its continuation hinges on commitment from BFUG members for content generation.

The TF Co-Chair informed that they intend to finalize recommendations and the report for the next BFUG meeting. The importance of prioritizing key recommendations was highlighted, advocating for clear initial implementation steps. Additionally, there was an emphasis on the necessity of national-level outreach to engage the HE community, suggesting a model-based approach and prioritizing step-by-step improvements based on national priorities. Overly prescriptive recommendations for ministers were cautioned against.

Concerns were voiced regarding the implementation of new action planning and reporting procedures, with a cautious stance against overly bureaucratic systems. Instead, there was an emphasis on the need for flexible approaches in organizational setups and a suggestion for rephrasing to address these concerns. Germany and Norway shared successful experiences with national Bologna groups, advocating for cautious progression in outreach efforts and proposing integration into the Secretariat's responsibilities over time.

ENQA supported efforts to enhance understanding of the BP beyond academic circles, emphasized the importance of prioritizing materials for broader accessibility and acknowledged their potential impact beyond Europe. However, they stressed the need to carefully consider the level and volume of priorities for effective implementation. ESU emphasized adaptable improvement strategies tailored to specific contexts, stressed stakeholder engagement at the national level and prioritized promoting tangible student benefits. Austria supported the idea of organizing parallel sessions during BFUG meetings for practitioners to discuss implementation issues in HEIs.

Belgium French Community noted that the 2 minutes video on the BP broadcasted at the start of the BFUG meeting<sup>5</sup> was an initiative by the current presidency to raise awareness about Bologna process, notably amongst students, and encouraged future presidencies and Co-Chairs to expand upon this initiative, to better connect our work at EHEA level with local stakeholders. The CoE emphasized the significance of communication strategies, including multimedia products and a web-based Knowledge Hub, citing examples like UNESCO's SDG agenda platform. They highlighted their efforts in creating video clips and platforms related to the Lisbon Recognition Convention and academic integrity, proposing the establishment of a web-based Knowledge Hub for sharing results among delegations and BFUG Working Structures.

<sup>5</sup> [Launch of the video: The Bologna Process](#), Belgium French community production, February 2024



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The TF EKS Co-Chair acknowledged the importance of national specificity in deciding dissemination and knowledge-sharing activities and that the proposed tools based on available resources do leave the choice of adoption to individual countries. She highlighted the past effectiveness of Bologna expert networks, in particular, and highly advocated their reinstatement. In light of the proposal from the BICG for an action plan, it was suggested that both plans be discussed together with the BFUG tasked with a final decision. The Co-Chair stressed the importance of determining the future of the newsletter, as there are plans to issue a call for the third edition before the Ministerial. Seeking its continuation, she proposed sharing newsletter guidelines with the BFUG and inviting feedback on the guidelines. Additionally, a logo was voted on and the Co-Chair urged the BFUG to use the slogan whenever applicable.

For more information, please see: [BFUG BE VA 88 10 TF Enhancing Knowledge Sharing](#)

## **10. Conclusions from the current work plan, update of the current BFUG roadmap, and repercussions of the reports on the future workplan and BFUG structures**

Based on the previous discussions and WG presentations, Melanie Rosenbaum (BFUG Co-Chair, Holy See) presented a draft powerpoint, as a tentative to summarize information raised during the meeting and with the aim to initiate a discussion on the future of the BFUG and its structures. She suggested prioritizing content over structure, proposing that the BFUG first identify main topics for 2024-2027 before deciding on the structure to address them. She highlighted insights from the Working Structures' reporting while also emphasizing their recommendations for future action, and raised the question regarding the number of focus areas the BFUG can effectively manage, as well as the question for the possible added value if addressed on BFUG level.

ESU highlighted the importance of aligning focus areas with the overarching priorities set by ministers for 2030, and suggested that topics be structured to correspond with these priorities. ESU also emphasized the importance of efficiency in achieving objectives without reducing the scope of activities and the importance of addressing mobility issues through a working structure, particularly regarding the ambitious commitments on international experiences in the Rome Communique and barriers related to inclusive mobility and recognition. ESU proposed the formation of a Task Force to investigate future policy directions of the Bologna Process and provide recommendations to the BFUG, supported by the CoE. The CoE also acknowledged the complexity of the current BFUG workplan, suggesting a thorough evaluation to return to its key commitments. They highlighted their longstanding work on FVs and recognition, cautioning against duplicating these efforts. The UK highlighted the need to update Bologna process tools like the ESGs and ECTS to adapt to evolving circumstances. Iceland highlighted progress made, particularly through the 2020 implementation report, and expressed optimism about the collaborative process of developing the work plan under their Co-Chairmanship.

It was stressed that priorities for future work should be reflected in the Ministerial Communiqué, which would then be basis for establishing the necessary working structures under the 2024-2027 work programme. Furthermore, there was an emphasis on streamlining working structures to ensure clear added value at the EHEA level. Support for the BICG and the TPGs was expressed (cf. "closing the implementation gap"), alongside a call for a focus on the social dimension, fundamental values, mobility, brain drain, micro-credentials, and AI and green transition in L&T. Not every topic could or should be translated into a working group, but some could be addressed through thematic sessions at BFUG meetings, for example.

Reference was made to the next Erasmus+ EHEA call, expected in June, highlighting the need to initiate discussions on future working structures sooner to facilitate project applications. It was suggested that the application deadline should follow after discussions at the next BFUG meeting under the Hungarian presidency.

The Holy See Co-Chair highlighted the key priorities discussed, which encompassed mobility; technical areas such as monitoring, and implementation verification; along with thematic areas including the social dimension, fundamental values, quality assurance, AI, and innovation. Emphasis was placed on the future of the EHEA, particularly regarding the three "I" and the added value at the EHEA level. Moving forward, the focus would be on prioritizing themes over structures, with an emphasis on efficiency and quality while avoiding duplication of work with other stakeholders' work. It was suggested to interconnect or liaise substructures for better coordination. Further discussions in upcoming BFUG meetings would delve deeper into these topics, including government structures, rules of procedure, and interaction within working structures.

For more information, please see: [BFUG BE VA 88 10 Future of Bologna](#)

## **11. Draft for the 2024 Tirana Ministerial Communiqué**

Melanie Rosenbaum (Drafting Committee, Co-Chair) presented the draft 1.1 of the Communiqué with minor revisions subsequent to the Board meeting of 23 January 2024, and she proposed a systematic review of each paragraph to solicit feedback.



### 11.1. Introduction

It was proposed that the introduction ought to adequately reflect the accomplishments of the past three years. It was advised to shift away from historical references and focus more on the current situation. Moreover, there was a plea for a more robust paragraph highlighting the role of higher education institutions in addressing various challenges and how the Bologna process can assist in this regard. Suggestions were proposed to either broaden the list to include additional collaborators or mention stakeholders without enumeration. ESU stressed the significance of stakeholder involvement in decision-making, particularly the collaboration between academia and external parties, while also acknowledging the risks associated with commodification. EUA advocated for recognition of organizations' roles and representation. They pointed out the drawbacks of enumerations and specifications, such as when pointing to academic staff this would give the impression of omitting administrative staff.

ESU underscored the significance of addressing political challenges, polarization, inequality, and the role of higher education in a democratic society. However, they pointed out the absence of specific actions or guidance in the Communiqué regarding higher education's contribution to transformative societal changes. It was noted by others that the phrase "a peaceful and prosperous world" lacked relevance to the EHEA and appeared out of context. Germany recommended removing sentences referring to decisions from previous Communiqués and focusing instead on actionable items and suggested including a statement emphasizing the importance of HEIs as diverse and tolerant environments, advocating for non-violence, peaceful exchange of perspectives, and inclusivity. The EC also stressed the importance to strengthen the points related to current challenges higher education faces.

There was a call for stronger language concerning aggression from Russia and Belarus. Additionally, it was suggested that merely acknowledging the BFUG's decisions on Russian aggression was insufficient; clear directives for ministers on addressing it were necessary. Proposals were made to elucidate changes and showcase the EHEA's support for Ukraine, with a suggestion to relocate suspension from the introduction.

### 11.2. Fundamental Values

Suggestions were made to strengthen language specifying member states' commitments, with a clear endorsement from ministers. EUA expressed doubts about the practicability of involving students and staff in all meetings and decisions, proposing shortening of passages with a reference to the actual value statements. ESU highlighted a discrepancy regarding participation in governing bodies and questioned which bodies should be involved. Education International stressed the need to define public responsibility, including funding for HE, and opposed changing wording on student and staff participation. ESU cautioned against redefining fundamental values, emphasizing that sentences in the Communiqué were derivative from previously accepted statements. The WG on FV Co-Chairs advised against delving into agreed text details, suggesting to consult the annex references for further definitions. Iceland emphasized the need to avoid assuming the existence of a working structure in the next period. Germany proposed welcoming the framework only, without specifying the working group, and leaving piloting to the BFUG.

### 11.3. Key Commitments

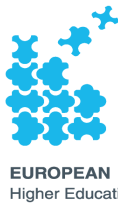
ENQA suggested using the official denomination of the ESGs, i.e., "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area". Germany proposed revisiting the wording used in the Paris Communiqué for the first bullet point, specifically mentioning the implementation of the three-cycle system and the ECTS for first and second cycles. EC emphasized the need to highlight automatic recognition more prominently in the section as it promotes mobility.

There was a suggestion to reconsider the paragraph, to align it more closely with the EHEA's key commitments beyond just student mobility. Another proposal involved reflecting on the key commitments and updating them to align with the latest developments of the EHEA. ESU suggested broadening the monitoring of key commitments to include coherence and relevance of degree structures, calling for a stronger emphasis on implementation and alignment with qualification frameworks, and insisting to keep the learning outcomes mentioned.

It was proposed to include in the text "revising the ECTS User's Guide" and updating related tools. ENQA welcomed the invitation to strengthen the ESG within a rapidly changing system. They highlighted barriers to ESG alignment in certain regions and proposed strengthening statements in the Communiqué addressing government obstacles. Additionally, ENQA suggested separating the mentioning of transnational education qualifications from fraudulent ones and emphasized the need for greater transparency in quality assurance. They endorsed efforts to combat fake institutions and qualifications and emphasized the role of quality assurance agencies in this endeavor.

The BICG Co-Chair suggested alternative wording to acknowledge the achievements of the TPGs while also proposing steps to address the uneven implementation of key commitments.

Concerns were raised about duplicating efforts with individual implementation plans already in place in some countries. It was suggested to adopt a more flexible approach in the wording regarding these plans, considering specific national needs. Alternatively, it was proposed that, given the EHEA's commitment to these plans as part of the



TPGs, countries should document their focus for the future. This may involve rephrasing or reaffirming the previous commitment to this effort.

#### 11.4. An Inclusive EHEA

Strong support for gender equality was expressed as opposed to the second option proposed by some countries (equality of women and men), noting that it was already a commitment within the EHEA since the Yerevan Communiqué of 2015. EURASHE emphasized the importance of recognizing diversity within HEIs and programs, advocating for its inclusion in the discussion. It was suggested separating discussions on the COVID-19 pandemic and gender equality to address their distinct impacts.

#### 11.5. An innovative EHEA

It was suggested mentioning the update of the European Area of Recognition (EAR) manual, which took place last year. Further, it was underscored the need to highlight the work done by ENICs and NARICs in assisting refugees, and to emphasize the importance of the European University Alliances Initiative in fostering innovation in pedagogy and research. Regarding joint programs, it was suggested to enhance the paragraph to include interdisciplinary approaches addressing green and digital transitions.

ESU emphasized the need for more ambitious goals related to sustainability and the green transition in higher education. Switzerland proposed the inclusion of new or adapted assessment methods in the paragraph addressing AI. The lack of clarity regarding concrete commitments, particularly in areas such as digitalization and AI was highlighted. France stressed the need to highlight the innovative role of European universities before calling for greater synergies on societal challenges with the European Research Area. It was suggested developing clearer commitments within member states and expanding cooperation within the EHEA, particularly in areas like AI, lifelong learning, and sustainability.

The DC Co-Chair clarified that all suggestions for further commitments would have to be agreed upon, and that the proposal by the WG on L&T to establish a thematic peer learning group will be omitted, as the BFUG had agreed that determinations of future working structures would not be included in the Communiqué.

#### 11.6. An Interconnected EHEA

Iceland emphasized prioritizing mobility in future efforts and suggested reinforcing a ministerial commitment to inclusive and balanced mobility. Additionally, new phrasing was suggested, specifically the term 'virtual exchange', to clarify that physical mobility may not be replaced with virtual mobility. Concerning digital tools, it was suggested to include more emphasis on their role in promoting mobility, learning exchanges, and credit transfers. It was also recommended adding the mention of joint transnational programs.

EURASHE expressed the desire for a distinct commitment to addressing brain drain. EURASHE expressed the desire for a distinct commitment to addressing brain drain. EC announced that it had put forth a new mobility benchmark of 25%<sup>6</sup> covering diverse formats and including both short-term mobility without a minimum duration and degree mobility. It is important to reaffirm the commitment of the Rome communique for 100% of students to have some kind of international experience during studies. The European Universities initiative and the European degree acting as booster for the implementation of the bologna tools, it would be worth mentioning their role as catalysts for higher education transformation within the EHEA. Highlighting the significance of a strong QA system, particularly with the introduction of new mobility formats, would also be fundamental.

The EC proposed reaffirming the commitment to facilitating international and intercultural competence for all learners and suggested moving the commitment to automatic recognition of qualifications and learning periods abroad to the key commitments section.

ENQA welcomed the use of DEQAR as a transparency tool, but cautioned about generalising its applicability, and suggested EQAR provide guidelines for the use of DEQAR, particularly considering the different report types depending on whether a system uses programme or institutional level external quality assurance. Adding a commitment to foster synergy between the EHEA and EEA was suggested. Additionally, a suggestion was made to incorporate a call for increased synergies with ERA. Since no information was available from the Ad Hoc Task Force on Increasing Synergies, it was suggested to have them forward proposed wording on this matter to the DC.

#### 11.7. Outlook

Overly technical lines were proposed to be removed from the Communiqué. Regarding the 2027 BPIR, the WG on Monitoring Co-Chair announced revisiting the sentence before the April BFUG meeting based on ongoing discussions, and they would present a revised wording proposal to the DC.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Proposal for a Council Recommendation 'Europe on the Move' - learning mobility for everyone



For more information, please see: [BFUG BE VA 88 12 Draft 1.1 Tirana Communiqué](#)

## **12. Draft for the 2024 Bologna Global Policy Forum Statement**

Ann Katherine Isaacs (CG on GPD, Co-Chair) presented an overview of draft 5 of the GPS. Two comments were received, one from Hungary and another from the WG on SD. The suggestion from Hungary had been adopted and discussed with UNESCO. The feedback from the WG on SD comprises a lengthy passage, which would require careful consideration to incorporate into the statement while maintaining brevity. She noted the collaborative efforts of the drafting subgroup and encouraged all members to share their comments and suggestions.

### 12.1. Introduction

ESU highlighted the lack of a firm commitment to adapt systems for a diverse student body, advocating for a stronger stance. Additionally, they noted the absence of student participation in fundamental values, urging its inclusion alongside staff participation. Education International supported this, suggesting that incorporating these values would enhance dialogue beyond the EHEA.

### 12.2. Moving forward

ESU proposed separating the discussion into distinct bullet points for ethical principles, values, and effective quality assurance practices. They appreciated the inclusion of student-centered learning and suggested mentioning informal and non-formal education. Additionally, they proposed adding a bullet point focused on sustainability.

### 12.3. Continuing dialogue

ESU questioned the nature of the Bologna Process cooperation with the Berlin Process, expressing uncertainty about its relevance to the EHEA, given the Berlin Process's focus on EU enlargement in the Western Balkans. Italy underscored the importance of the Berlin Process, especially in the Balkan region, and highlighted a specific educational aspect, advocating for deeper integration to deliver a targeted and impactful message for the area.

The CG on GPD Co-Chair outlined the bullet points as potential themes for future discussion, suggesting that some could form the basis for breakout sessions aligned with the statement. They also acknowledged the significance of connecting the statement with these sessions. Addressing the Berlin Process, they noted it had been emphasized by Albania and involved EHEA members, making it somewhat unique among regional processes.

For more information, please see: [BFUG BE VA 88 13 Draft 5 Global Policy Statement](#)

## **14. Update from the Consultative Members**

Only the Council of Europe and Education International had submitted written updates.

### 14.1. Council of Europe

Catherine Dolgova Dreyer (CoE) highlighted the establishment of a new CDEDU subgroup on higher education policy, which convened its inaugural meeting with 25 members representing diverse stakeholders. She noted progress in automatic recognition, with an ad hoc WG conducting its initial consultation with students and announced an upcoming online consultation session with higher education institutions in cooperation with EUA and EURASHE, urging for participation. Thirdly, she mentioned an upcoming consultation session during the CoE steering committee for education on March 20-22, designed as a hybrid meeting for online cooperation. Finally, she highlighted the second call for projects supporting ENICs, with four selected projects including initiatives in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as support for a project in Ukraine aimed at enhancing information provision and counter-education fraud measure.

Inquiries were made regarding the subgroup on higher education policy, focusing on member selection criteria and its purpose. Questions were raised about potential emphasis on specific areas or topics and its relation to the steering committee on education. Additionally, there was an inquiry about whether the subgroup would be open to other members or solely selected by the CoE.

The CoE explained that, originally established as a steering committee for higher education research in 2006, it later merged with a steering committee for education, resulting in the current structure. To address representation challenges, the subgroup was formed to guide the CoE's activities in higher education. Its members, selected from various projects, aim to ensure geographical and competency balance. Currently, membership is limited to 25 individuals due to financial constraints, with a focus on agility and advisory support to the education committee. Terms of Reference and mandates are determined by the steering committee for education, aligning with strategic objectives set by the Committee of Ministers. These efforts prioritize learners and advance higher education policies as outlined by Council of Europe member states.

For more information, please see: [BFUG BE VA 88 14 1 CoE](#)



## 14.2. Education International

Andreas Keller (Education International) focused on the attractiveness of the academic profession, emphasizing the importance of not only inviting but also retaining teachers and researchers within the educational system, acknowledging shortages in certain subjects and regions. He highlighted their engagement on different levels, including global efforts with trade unions worldwide. They mentioned ongoing projects, such as their collaboration with ESU on school leadership to enhance the quality of learning and teaching. Additionally, they anticipated a Conference on Artificial Intelligence in Brussels, showcasing the breadth of topics addressed within EI's work in the BFUG.

For more information, please see: [BFUG BE VA 88 14 2 Education International](#)

## **15. Information by the Co-Chairs (Belgium and Holy-See)**

### 15.1 BFUG Board Meeting LXXXIX (Holy See)

Melanie Rosenbaum (BFUG Co-Chair, Holy See) provided information on the Holy See's higher education system contact points, and concluded by extending an invitation to the BFUG Board members to visit the Vatican City for the upcoming Board meeting on 12 March 2024, emphasizing the importance of adhering to the deadline for document submission (4 March 2024).

### 15.2 BFUG Meetings XC (Belgium)

Liesbeth Hens (BFUG Co-Chair, Belgium French Community) conveyed that the save-the-date for the BFUG meeting on 11-12 April had been sent to the BFUG. She mentioned that invitations and PINs would be sent shortly to the DAOs and concluded by extending a warm welcome to all for the upcoming BFUG meeting scheduled to be held in Brussels in April 2024.

## **16. AOB**

The deadline for feedback on documents presented by the BFUG Working Structures was reiterated as February 27<sup>th</sup>. Also, the deadline for submission of documents by the BFUG Working Structures for the upcoming BFUG Board meeting was restated as March 4<sup>th</sup>.

It was announced that during the next BFUG meeting, the decision on hosting the next Ministerial Conference and Secretariat for 2024-2027 will be made. If the BFUG co-chairmanship of Moldova and Romania is confirmed, adjustments to the order of BFUG Co-chairmanships will have to be made, as customarily a country hosting/Vice-Chair should not be BFUG-Co-Chair in the same working period, but only from the second semester afterwards, such as is the case for Albania. The Secretariat will contact the concerned countries to agree on a new order, to be then proposed to the BFUG for approval and adoption.

No other business was brought forward, thus the meeting was successfully concluded with thanks to the BFUG Chairs, BFUG Secretariat and the members for their contribution and support.