

Rules of Procedures ~~for~~ the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and ~~for~~ the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG)

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DRAFT – 27 March 2024, revised in consideration of feedback received from the BFUG members at and after the Brussels BFUG

The present document comprises the rules of procedure by which the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) will be governed. It includes two major sections:

- **Part 1** sets out the Rules of Procedure for the European Higher Education Area (RoP-EHEA), which provide the overall framework. Any change of these rules shall be subject to the decision of Ministers.
- **Part 2** sets out the Rules of Procedures of the Bologna Follow-up Group and its sub-structures, ~~(RoP-BFUG)~~. It can be subject to changes, decided by BFUG, as far as these are in full compliance with the RoP-EHEA (Part 1). Otherwise, such changes require ~~change in the RoP-EHEA and~~ endorsement by Ministers. The RoP-EHEA shall prevail over the RoP-BFUG.¹

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The RoP-EHEA shall come into force when adopted by Ministers. The RoP-BFUG shall come into force when adopted by the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) following the 2024 Ministerial Conference.

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PART 1 RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA - RoP-EHEA

We, the Ministers responsible for higher education of the States, which are members of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), meeting in Tirana on 29 and 30 May 2024;

Considering that over its 25 years of existence, the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area have provided a successful and unique model for coordinated policy reform, taken forward through cooperation between public authorities, higher education institutions, students and staff, respecting the roles and prerogatives of each;

Reaffirming our continued commitment to the European Higher Education Area through cooperation on and coordination of higher education reform and policy development across Europe with the participation of public authorities, higher education institutions, students, and staff through their representative organisations; as well as cooperation with international institutions and governmental and non-governmental organisations with competence in higher education;

Reaffirming that the aim of the European Higher Education Area is to enhance the quality of higher education as well as academic mobility and cooperation;

Reaffirming that the aim of the European Higher Education Area is to strengthen the role of higher education, in and its contribution to our societies, to make them more inclusive, sustainable and resilient, to maintain and strengthen a culture of democracy and human rights, and to build peaceful relations marked by mutual confidence across Europe, and with global partners;

Reaffirming that through its policies and practice, the European Higher Education Area fosters and consolidates the fundamental values of higher education: academic freedom, academic integrity, institutional autonomy, participation of students and staff in higher education governance, and public responsibility for and of higher education;

Considering that at its present stage of development, the European Higher Education Area requires an enhanced framework to fulfil its ambitious mission and achieve the changes that our higher education sectors but also our societies require;

ADOPT these Rules of Procedure for the European Higher Education Area. Its provisions apply to the Ministerial Conferences, the Bologna Follow-up Group and its working structures, including the Secretariat of the European Higher Education Area.

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I GUIDING PRINCIPLES

I.1 A process built on European cooperation

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is a voluntary intergovernmental process, built on the Bologna Process, through which its members and consultative members jointly develop policies and soft-law commitments, adopted by the competent public authorities of its member States and implemented within each education system, in collaboration with and consultation of the representatives of the higher education community, institutions, students and staff.

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I.2 Policies and instruments

Ministers identify the policy areas and measures through the declarations and communiqués they adopt at their regular Ministerial Conferences or in any other setting they may find appropriate for decision making. They may decide to establish frameworks, standards, guidelines, and other mechanisms to further and ensure implementation through coordination, cooperation and mutual support at European level.

I.3 The Bologna Follow-up Group

Between Ministerial Conferences, the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG), where all members and consultative members are represented, develops, adopts and implements the work programme of the EHEA, in accordance with the priorities set by Ministers.

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I.4 Co- and Vice-Chairs

The EHEA and its structures are chaired by two Co-Chairs appointed for a period of six months, normally from 1 January to 30 June and from 1 July to 31 December. One Co-Chair represents a European Union member State and the other a non-European Union member State of the EHEA.

The order of the European Union Co-Chairs shall normally follow the order of Presidencies of the Council of the European Union, that of the non-European Union Co-Chairs the names of the States in English alphabetical order. The order may nevertheless be modified by the BFUG in agreement with the State members concerned.

The Vice-Chair of the European Higher Education Area represents the State member hosting the forthcoming Ministerial Conference and holds office for the period between two Ministerial Conferences, and during the Ministerial Conference organised by the respective member State.

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I.5 Ethics

The EHEA shall be developed, maintained and governed in accordance with its fundamental values and in observation of high ethical standards. The BFUG develops a specific Code of Ethics for its own work and its working structures, including the Secretariat.

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I.6 Implementation of agreed policies

All members commit to act in good faith and as such do their utmost, within their respective education systems and contexts, to further the implementation of policies and decisions adopted by Ministers.

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II MEMBERSHIP

The European Higher Education Area has members and consultative members, as listed in Annex 1.

II.1 Members

States party to the European Cultural Convention are eligible for membership of the EHEA provided their willingness to pursue and implement the objectives and commitments of the Bologna Process in their higher education systems². The European Commission is equally a member of the EHEA.

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II.2 Consultative members

European level representative organisations with a legitimate interest in and commitment to higher education, and intergovernmental organisations representative of public authorities with competence in higher education policy at European level, are eligible for consultative membership of the EHEA.

II.3 EHEA partners

The BFUG may grant organisations that do not fulfil the criteria for consultative membership an association with the EHEA, as EHEA partners. They are invited to Ministerial Conferences and can be invited to the BFUG meetings as determined by the RoP-BFUG. Any decision to grant EHEA partner status shall be communicated to Ministers and shall be considered in Annex 2 to these Rules of the EHEA, which lists the EHEA partners.

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II.4 European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education

The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) was established under the Bologna Process, with a mandate related to quality assurance. It may participate in the BFUG and its structures, without voting rights.

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III ACCESSION, WITHDRAWAL AND EXCLUSION

III.1 Accession

Ministers have the exclusive competence to accept new members and consultative members of the EHEA, usually at the regular Ministerial Conference. Applications for membership and consultative membership are to be submitted to and supported by the BFUG and will be examined in accordance with the provisions detailed in the RoP-BFUG.

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The BFUG may grant organisations that do not fulfil the criteria for consultative membership an association with the EHEA. Any such decision shall be communicated to

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Any member, consultative member or EHEA partner may withdraw from the EHEA upon notification in writing duly signed by its appropriate authority, to the Secretariat of the EHEA, in attention to the Co-Chairs. Withdrawal will be effective one month after the receipt of the notification by the Secretariat.

² Cf Berlin Communiqué.

III.2 Suspension and exclusion

Ministers ~~or the BFUG~~ may decide to suspend ~~temporarily~~ a member or consultative member, ~~from some or all activities of the EHEA~~, should it pursue policies or actions that significantly contradict the commitments of the EHEA, constitute a significant violation of its values or confirm an ~~explicit publicly expressed intention to do so~~. ~~Only Ministers can exclude a member or a consultative member. Under the same criteria, the BFUG may suspend or exclude an EHEA partner.~~

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IV GOVERNING BODIES

IV.1 Governing bodies of the European Higher Education Area

The EHEA has the following governance bodies:

- The Ministerial Conference;
- The BFUG, which comprises its Board, the two Co-Chairs, and the Vice Chair.

IV.2 The Ministerial Conference

Role and composition

The Ministerial Conference is the highest decision-making authority of the EHEA. It is composed of Ministers responsible for higher education of the ~~State~~ members of the EHEA ~~or their representatives~~, and of representatives of the highest possible rank with competence in higher education policy of the European Commission and of the consultative members. Delegations representing countries/education systems ~~also include a leader of a higher education institution and a democratically elected student representative.~~

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Process and schedule

The Ministerial Conference ~~meets~~ in regular session at least every three years, and as far as possible in physical presence. Extraordinary meetings ~~are held by decision of the Co-Chairs or when requested in writing by at least one third of the Ministers and duly authorised representatives of the European Commission and the consultative members.~~

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Competences and tasks

The Ministerial Conference sets its own agenda and ~~takes~~ decisions as ~~appropriate~~. It has exclusive competence in matters concerning:

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- Determining the major goals and priorities of the EHEA.
- The adoption of declarations and communiqués.
- The adoption of standards, guidelines, and other instruments, which have been formally agreed and are therefore considered as binding on the EHEA and its members.
- The admission or exclusion of members and consultative members of the EHEA.
- The decision on host and venue of Ministerial Conferences and Global Policy Fora.

- Any modification of the RoP-EHEA.

IV.3 The Bologna Follow-up Group

The BFUG oversees and directs the development of the EHEA between Ministerial Conferences, ensures the implementation of commitments adopted by Ministers, develops its work programme on this basis and prepares issues for discussion and decision by Ministers. It is made up of duly authorised representatives, with competence in higher education policy matters, of the members and consultative members of the EHEA.

The BFUG, its Board, its Co-Chairs and Vice-Chair, the EHEA Secretariat and its other working structures conduct their work in accordance with the Rules of Procedure for the EHEA, and the Rules of Procedure for the BFUG, that it adopted itself.

The BFUG Board is an advisory committee of the BFUG to support it in its activities, including the preparation of its meetings, to enhance efficiency in the management of the EHEA, and ensure its continuity. As such, the responsibilities of the Board consist of coordinating and monitoring the effective implementation of the work programme.

The members of the Board are the present, outgoing, and incoming Co-Chairs of the BFUG, the BFUG Vice-Chair, the European Commission, the Council of Europe, EUA, ESU, EURASHE. One of the Co-Chairs of each of the BFUG working structures according to the work plan of the respective period is invited to participate in Board meetings.

IV.4 Working language

The working language of the EHEA is English. The host of the Ministerial Conference may, at its discretion, enable the use of other languages.

V DECISION MAKING

V.1 Consensus

At all levels, decisions concerning the EHEA are, as far as possible, to be made by consensus.

V.2 Voting

If, in spite of the best efforts of the Co-Chairs, no consensus can be achieved, decisions can be taken by vote. Votes are limited to the members of the EHEA. Each member has two votes and indicates to the Co-Chairs who will cast the votes on its behalf. There shall be no vote in absence (by proxy). But where a delegation is made up of more than one legal constituent, one of these may vote on behalf of the other constituent provided the latter expressly authorises it to do so by indicating this to the Co-Chairs.

In physical and online meetings, votes are cast publicly, unless at least one delegation requests a secret ballot, with due controls ensuring that only those entitled to cast a vote are able to do so, When voting

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~~in presence is not possible, voting may take place by correspondence (letter, email or another electronic means), to be organised by the Secretariat. In this case, the vote cannot be taken by secret ballot.~~

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V.3 Voting regime

Votes shall be decided by a majority of the valid votes cast.

On matters concerning the following, decisions nevertheless require two thirds of the valid votes cast:

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- Adoption of the priorities of the EHEA³.
- Adoption of communiqués, standards, guidelines, and binding policy instruments or goals.
- The admission, ~~suspension~~ and exclusion ~~§~~ members or consultative members.
- Any decision on the financing of the EHEA.⁴
- Modifications of the ~~Rules~~ of the EHEA.

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The quorum for all votes shall be two thirds of the members entitled to voting. In case no quorum is reached, voting takes place at the following ordinary session or, if the matter needs to be decided sooner, at an extraordinary session, held in physical presence, or online, to be called with a notice of a minimum of two weeks, ~~or by correspondence. No quorum will then be needed.~~

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VI GLOBAL POLICY FORUM

~~Throughout its work, the BFUG seeks to establish dialogue on policies and actions of common concern with partners in other regions.~~

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A Global Policy Forum, ~~which invites international government representatives and organisations~~ is organised, ~~usually~~ in conjunction with Ministerial Conferences. ~~The international partners~~ should be involved in the preparation of the Forum ~~and of the statement that it is to adopt~~. Invitations should be agreed by the BFUG, which shall consult the host of the Ministerial Conference.

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Countries and organisations, that are or will be invited to participate,...

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The BFUG shall seek to establish dialogues on policies and actions of common concern with partners in other regions during the work period between Global Policy Fora.[¶]

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VII EHEA SECRETARIAT⁵

The Secretariat ~~provides neutral, administrative and operational support to the Ministerial Conference, the BFUG and its Board, chairs and working structures~~. It operates under the authority of the BFUG, ~~is~~ fully accountable to it, and ~~independent~~ of the country or organisation within which it is located.

It should be appropriately equipped, in terms of staff and resources, and sustainable, especially regarding its funding model, and should be strictly non-profit. The Secretariat should be able to accept secondments from EHEA members or consultative members.

⁴ Pertinent only if there is a decision to have an EHEA budget, most likely in the case of a permanent Secretariat.

⁵ These are generic principles and requirements are valid for any Secretariat. However, once the decision on the future model of the Secretariat has been taken, this section may require some revision.

Further details are laid down in the RoP-BFUG.

VIII FINAL PROVISIONS

VIII.1 Adoption and modification of Rules of Procedure for the European Higher Education Area

The present Rules of Procedure for the EHEA were adopted at the Ministerial Conference of the EHEA in Tirana, taking place on 29 and 30 May 2024. They may subsequently be modified by the Ministers.

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VIII.2 Safeguarding and dissemination of the Rules to members and consultative members

The Rules of Procedure for the EHEA are made public on the EHEA website. The EHEA Secretariat provides the competent authorities of all members and consultative members with a certified copy.

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PART 2 RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP – RoP-BFUG

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The present Rules of Procedure of the BFUG (RoP-BFUG) have been adopted by the BFUG at its meeting on DATE/ in VENUE.

They build on and complement the Rules of Procedure for the European Higher Education Area (RoP-EHEA) adopted by Ministers at the Ministerial Conference in Tirana, taking place on 29 and 30 May 2024. Should a provision of the RoP-BFUG be considered to contradict a provision of the RoP-EHEA, the latter shall prevail.

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I BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP

I.1 Role and responsibilities

The Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) oversees and directs the development and implementation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) between the Ministerial Conferences. It meets at least once under each Co-Chairmanship. Regular meetings are as far as possible to be held in presence. Extraordinary meetings of the BFUG can be held by decision of the Co-Chairs or when requested in writing by at least one third of the BFUG (members and consultative members), They are called with at least two weeks' notice and can consider only the issues for which they were called.

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I.2 Competences

The BFUG acts and decides on all matters not reserved to the decision of Ministers, including:

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- The development, adoption and implementation of its work programme based on the priorities decided by the Ministerial Conference.
- The organisation of its work, in order to implement the work programme, including by setting up working structures, (see Annex 3), conducting or commissioning studies and projects, and collaboration with any other parties, such as policy makers, organisations, experts etc. in the field of higher education, or related issues.
- Preparation of the draft communiqué for the Ministerial Conference and the draft statement for the Global Policy Forum;
- Invitations to any participants other than members and consultative members to the Ministerial Conference and the Global Policy Forum, in agreement with the hosting country, as well as the status of any such participants at the conference. (see RoP-EHEA VI);
- The sequence of Co-Chairs of the BFUG, including any modifications
- The representation of the BFUG towards third parties.
- Examination of and support to requests to join the EHEA, and preparation of a recommendation for the decision of Ministers (Annex 4).

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- The association of organisations with the EHEA, ~~as EHEA partners~~, and the criteria and rules for such association (Annex 4).
- Regulations and guidelines for its own work and that of its subordinate bodies, including the Secretariat.
- Oversight and steering of the work of the Secretariat, and the right to select, and dismiss the Head of Secretariat⁷.
- Oversight of the finances of the EHEA, and the budget of the Secretariat.

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I.3 Preparation of the Ministerial Conference and the Global Policy Forum

The BFUG ~~oversees~~, in cooperation with the authorities of the host country, the organisation of the Ministerial Conferences and the Global Policy Forum and ~~advises~~ Ministers on all matters put before the Ministerial Conference or otherwise referred to the Ministers for decision.

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I.4 Implementation of the EHEA work programme

The BFUG develops and implements the EHEA work programme according to the priorities adopted by Ministers. The work programme shall be completed until the following ministerial meeting, and the BFUG ~~reports~~ to Ministers on its implementation. It may entrust the implementation of parts of the work programme to Working Groups and similar structures (see Annex 3 Annex 3), the terms of reference of which ~~are~~ adopted by the BFUG. All working structures ~~report~~ and submit their proposals to the BFUG, in ~~line~~ with the ~~schedule of the work programme~~.

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I.5 Minutes of Meetings

In follow-up of all meetings of the BFUG, the BFUG Board and working structures, the Secretariat drafts the minutes, and submits them within 10 days to the relevant Co-Chairs, for comments and endorsement within 10 days. Afterwards the Secretariat circulates them to the participants for feedback within 10 days, and, if necessary, recirculates them for adoption. Once finalised, the Secretariat publishes them on the EHEA website. The exchanges usually take place by electronic consultation. In the case of diverging views on the meeting reports and the decisions made, the meeting reports shall be adopted at the following meeting.

I.6 Participation in and representation at the BFUG

~~Members~~ and consultative ~~members~~ of the EHEA ~~designate their~~ BFUG representatives. ~~They are~~ represented by a maximum of two representatives at ~~BFUG~~ meetings and shall make every effort to attend. ~~They~~ notify the EHEA Secretariat of any changes in their representation, ~~in order to keep the list of representatives up-to-date~~.

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Members and consultative members of the BFUG shall have the right to speak to and submit proposals under all items on the agenda. EHEA partners can participate in BFUG meetings or BFUG working

structures as observers, upon approved prior request in writing to the Co-chairs. During the BFUG meetings, they may speak on the agenda issues, for which they requested participation.

I.7 Rights and suspension of members and consultative members

The right to vote is reserved to members and to be conducted in accordance with Article V of the RoP-EHEA.

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The BFUG may decide to suspend the right of representation in the governing bodies and participation in the work programme of any member or consultative member judged to have acted in ways warranting their exclusion from the EHEA under Article III.3 of RoP-EHEA. Unless the BFUG would decide to revoke the suspension, it would continue, until such time that Ministers, at a regular Ministerial Conference or otherwise, decide to prolong or lift the suspension, or to exclude the said member or consultative member.

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I.8 Preparation of the BFUG meetings

BFUG meetings and Board meetings are scheduled at least 6 months in advance.

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A draft agenda is circulated at least one month before the meeting, for comments and suggestions.

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The documents for meetings of the BFUG, the BFUG Board, and other BFUG structures are circulated by the Secretariat to all delegations at least two weeks prior to the meeting, unless imperative reasons dictate otherwise. Delegations are encouraged to submit major changes in writing to the Co-Chairs and the Secretariat⁸ at least 5 days prior to the meeting. who circulate any proposed amendments to all delegations before the meeting.

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The BFUG Co-Chairs, in consultation with the Board, may invite experts to contribute to BFUG meetings under specific agenda items for which they have the required expertise.

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II THE BOARD OF THE BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP

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II.1 Role and responsibilities

The Board of the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG Board) is an advisory committee, that supports the BFUG in its activities, to ensure the efficiency and continuity of its management and organisation. The BFUG Board shall prepare the meetings of the BFUG and oversee the work between the meetings of the BFUG.

The Board

- coordinates and monitors the effective development and implementation of the work programme;

- provides consultation and support to the BFUG Co-Chairs;
- prepares and follows up the meetings of the BFUG, including proposition of the agenda, collection of feedback from the working structures, and review of the documents, to ensure that they are adequate for discussion and decision making at the BFUG;
- provides advice to the BFUG, in particular on complex and contested matters, in sharing its deliberations.
- takes up specific tasks, roles and ~~makes decisions, that~~ delegated to it by the BFUG.

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Beyond these tasks, the Board itself does not take decisions, but contributes to preparing the decisions of the BFUG. However, in exceptional situations which require immediate action, and do not leave time for consultation of the BFUG, the Board, led by the Co-Chairs, may take the necessary steps. These actions and decisions shall be shared with the BFUG as soon as possible, ~~by the latest within 5 working days~~, for endorsement (either in written procedure or during an extra-ordinary meeting). The BFUG may revoke the decision taken by the Board.

II.2 Composition

The Bologna Board is made up of the Co-Chairs of the BFUG in the semester concerned, the Co-Chairs in the immediately preceding and following semesters, the Vice-Chair, and representatives of the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the European University Association, the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education, and the European Students Union (the Board members). ~~In addition, one Co-Chair of each BFUG working structure participates in the meetings of the Board, to report on progress.~~

~~If a vote is required, the past, present and incoming BFUG Co-chairs, the Vice-chair, and the European Commission are intitled~~ to vote.

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II.3 Working methods

Regular meetings of the BFUG Board shall be held at least once under each Co-Chairmanship, ~~if possible~~ in presence, and usually at least one month, preferably six weeks before the BFUG meeting. ~~They are~~ hosted by one of the BFUG Co-Chairs.

Additional ordinary BFUG Board meetings may be held, in presence or online, as judged preferable. Extraordinary meetings of the BFUG Board ~~can~~ be held by decision of the Co-Chairs or when requested in writing by at least one third of the members and consultative members represented in the Board and ~~can~~ consider only the issues for which they were called.

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III THE BFUG CO-CHAIRS AND THE VICE-CHAIR

III.1 Roles and responsibilities

The BFUG Co-Chairs, in close collaboration with the Vice Chair and assisted by the Secretariat, are responsible for the diligent and timely preparation of the BFUG ~~Board~~ and of the BFUG. ~~They take~~

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the necessary actions to ensure this, such as communications with Board members, preparatory meetings etc.

The Co-Chairs and the Vice-Chair must exercise their chairing tasks with the necessary neutrality. Whenever they speak and act in their capacity as national BFUG delegates, they have to make clear that their intervention reflects their country's position.

III.2 Time in office and tasks of the Co-Chairs

Countries take turns in Co-Chairing, by designating the person in charge of the tasks of the chairmanship for the mentioned semester, following the agreed schedule (see RoP-EHEA Article I.4). The Co-Chairs open and close the BFUG and BFUG Board meetings, chair the discussion of all items of the agenda, and summarise outcomes and decisions at the end of each agenda point. They lead the way towards decision-making, and finding the necessary compromises, and if required, organise votes in accordance with the rules (see RoP-EHEA Article V).

III.3 Time in office and tasks of the Vice-Chair

The Vice-Chair is assigned by the State member(s) hosting the forthcoming ministerial conference and serves for the duration of the work period concerned. The Vice-Chair in particular ensures the liaison between the BFUG and the authorities of the hosting country of the Ministerial Conference and the Global Policy Forum, as well as continuity between co-chairmanships. The Co-Chairs consult the Vice-Chair as appropriate in the preparation of the meetings of the BFUG and Board. Should two or more States members jointly organise the Ministerial Conference, they appoint one Vice-Chair acting on behalf of all the host countries.

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IV DRAFTING COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIQUÉ AND THE GLOBAL POLICY FORUM STATEMENT

The Ministerial Conference adopts a Communiqué, which presents the state of play, achievements and challenges of the past working period, and sets out the main goals for the next period. The BFUG establishes a drafting committee to assist it in drafting the Communiqué, to be submitted to the Ministerial Conference for adoption.

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The Drafting Committee starts its work during the first semester of the year preceding the Ministerial Conference and the Global Policy Forum. It is composed of the Co-Chairs of the three semesters before the Ministerial Conference, the Vice Chair, and one consultative member who is proposed by the consultative members and subject to the approval of the BFUG. The BFUG may appoint the chair(s) or leave it to the Drafting Committee to decide on the chairing arrangements at its first meeting. The Drafting Committee submits a roadmap for its work to the BFUG for approval.

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The Global Policy Forum adopts a statement outlining its main topics and results, and, if appropriate, plans and goals for the next working period. The BFUG decides on its drafting arrangement, also in consideration of the interest and participation of international partners.

V WORKING STRUCTURES

V.1 Remit and terms of reference

The BFUG may establish working structures, such as Working Groups, Task Forces, Thematic Peer Learning Groups and similar (see Annex 3 for a typology). Such structures have no decision-making authority but submit proposals and provide advice to enable the BFUG to take decisions, develop recommendations, reports, instruments, etc. for Ministers to adopt. The BFUG may also commission research or launch projects to assist it in implementing the work programme and in preparing decisions on matters within its competence.

The working structures are usually set up at the beginning and for the duration of the work programme. They can nevertheless be established at any time and for any period necessary for them to fulfil their terms of reference subject to the BFUG's decision. The terms of reference of the working structures are developed on the basis of the communiqué, the work programme and discussion and decisions of the BFUG. They specify the purpose and goals, main tasks and ways of working, and also the tentative schedule and the profile of participants **and number of Co-Chairs**.

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The BFUG **has** the final decision-making authority on all matters concerning working structures, including whether to discontinue them, or to redefine their purpose, tasks and format.

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V.2 Participation in BFUG working structures

Participation in working structures, and any modification thereof, shall be subject to the approval of the BFUG, in consideration of the terms of reference, and the requirements of the work programme.

In principle, all BFUG members and consultative members may participate in any working structure. However, the BFUG may decide to limit participation in a working structure and stipulate in the terms of references how and by what criteria the participants are to be selected.

Interest in participating in a working structure **is** normally be expressed when the group is established. It may, however, also be expressed in the course of the work of the group, and the request for participation **is** then decided by the BFUG at its earliest opportunity. This may be done by way of written procedure, by circulating the request to the BFUG members (silent procedure). **Commonly, BFUG members and consultative members participate themselves in the working structures, but can appoint a representative with a suitable profile. In any case, they have the duty to** ensure regular participation, as far as possible by the same person, **and that** their ministry, institution or organisation **is** duly informed of the work of the group.

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V.3 Working arrangements

Working structures are chaired by one or several chairs, **normally not more than three**, either appointed by its members, or by the BFUG. At least one Co-Chair of each working structure shall represent a member or consultative member of the BFUG.

The chairs, in collaboration with the group’s participants and with the support of the Secretariat, are responsible for the smooth, consistent and efficient work of the group, among others to

- plan and implement its workplan and schedule, in close collaboration with the working structure’s members, and in line with its terms of reference;
- facilitate the working structure’s collaboration, through proper preparation and follow-up of meetings, and by any other means that the structure perceives as fit for purpose and is deemed useful for its work, such as, for example, exchanges with other structures, expert hearings, good practice sharing. In case these exchanges and collaborations are a more regular arrangement, they should be approved by the BFUG in advance;
- ensure that collaboration with dedicated projects is effective and appropriate, and does not lead to a deviation from the structure’s goals, tasks and work plan;
- ensure that the working structure’s activities, such as meetings, result into accurate and clear minutes prepared by Secretariat, which contain conclusions and decisions, but also open issues and points of disagreement within the structure;
- report progress to the BFUG and the BFUG Board, and also indicate any major changes in the structure’s workplan and schedule;
- represent the structure’s work to outside parties, or delegate this task, while clearly distinguishing between the structure’s preliminary results, and adopted policies and positions of the Bologna Process.

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VI DECISION MAKING

Decisions are made, as far as possible by consensus, and, if despite the best efforts of the Co-Chairs, consensus is not possible, may be taken by vote - in full accordance with Article V of the Rules of Procedure for the EHEA.

VII SUPPORT TO NEW MEMBERS

VII.1 Assessment of applications for membership and consultative membership

The BFUG shall assess applications for membership and consultative membership, on whether they meet the goals and purpose of the Bologna Process, and its values, and in such as case, recommend Ministers to formally include them.

The BFUG establishes a Task Force, to assist it in the preparation of recommendations to Ministers on any application of a new member. The Task Force shall guide the applicant during the entire admission process. Its reports shall enable the BFUG to provide recommendations and advice to Ministers on the application. The BFUG shall select the participants of the Task Force according to their institutional and individual expertise and capacity.

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VII.2 Roadmap

The admission of new members shall be accompanied by a Roadmap for the period between the Ministerial Conference at which the new member is admitted and the following Ministerial Conference. The purpose of this Roadmap is to guide the competent public authorities of the new member in implementing the necessary reforms to fulfil the requirements of an EHEA member. The implementation of the Roadmap shall be supported by a **Task Force** consisting of BFUG members, with the suitable institutional and individual expertise, and representatives of the new member. The group shall report to the BFUG.

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VIII EHEA SECRETARIAT

VIII.1 Role and tasks

The EHEA Secretariat **provides** neutral, administrative, technical and operational support to the BFUG, the BFUG Board, Co-Chairs, BFUG Working Groups and other structures and initiatives established by the BFUG.

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While the BFUG and its working structures are responsible for and in charge of the strategy and implementation of the work programme of the EHEA, the Secretariat shall provide at all stages support and neutral advice, in particular to the Co-Chairs, pointing to potential administrative/organisational short-comings and risks, but also to opportunities for enhancement of the overall planning and schedule, and its specific actions and activities.

The Secretariat contributes to the overall planning, and to **the** preparation and implementation of meetings and events. It draws up the minutes of meetings and may be tasked to contribute to analysis and background papers.

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It has a central role as contact point for all communications and ensures **the** dissemination of information and documentation to the BFUG and its working structures. **It** is also **the** external contact point for the EHEA and may also represent the BFUG in settings and on occasions to be agreed with the Co-Chairs. The Secretariat further supports the preparation of the EHEA Ministerial Conference and the Global Policy Forum and maintains the EHEA website.

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The BFUG **adopts** specific Terms of Reference related to the Secretariat applicable to the work period for which the Secretariat is established.⁹

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The Secretariat shall meet the following general requirements:

Independence and Accountability

The Secretariat shall be independent of the country or organisation within which it is located. It **operates** under the authority of the BFUG and **is** fully accountable to the BFUG. If a member or

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⁹ This may need re-consideration depending on the final decision on how the Secretariat will be established in the future, and possibly also a transition clause.

consultative member provides the Secretariat, or actively contributes to it, specific provisions need to be in place to prevent conflicts of interest.

The Secretariat reports to the BFUG. The BFUG **approves** the appointment and, if needed, **may** request the dismissal of the Head of the Secretariat. It may appoint a group to oversee the work of the Secretariat.

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Sustainability

The arrangements for Secretariat, including its organisation and its funding model, shall be sustainable and shall be in place for the foreseen period of operation. (see RoP-EHEA PART 1VII)

Staff requirements, profiles and competences

The Secretariat shall have a sufficient staff in terms of numbers and qualifications to carry out its tasks. The Secretariat arrangements shall make it possible for the Secretariat to define and recruit **according to** its required staff profiles and its competence requirements (e.g. knowledge and understanding of European higher education policy, management and administrative competence, a high level of English, etc.), **not limited** by standard post descriptions or competence requirements of the hosting organisation/country.

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Secondments

In addition to its own staff, the Secretariat shall be able to accept **secondments from members or** consultative members. Secondments should follow rules approved by the BFUG, ensuring a reasonable geographic balance as well as securing the independence of the Secretariat from seconding members or consultative members.

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Relation to the country hosting the Ministerial Conference

The Secretariat **cooperates** closely **with the authorities of the host country regarding** the organisation of the ministerial conference. The authorities of this country shall second a staff member to the Secretariat to act as a liaison for the organisation of the ministerial conference, in accordance with the rules established for all secondments to the Secretariat.

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Legal framework and location

The Secretariat **is to** be established within a legal framework and in a location that allows for the various requirements to be fulfilled, **not only concerning the rule of law, but also the possibility to receive external funding and the guarantee** that the secretariat **will be able to** operate without undue external influence.

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Deleted: The country in which the Secretariat is located shall not have legal regulations that prevent the receipt of external funding.

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The cost of the Secretariat shall be borne by EHEA members according to the decision of the Ministers.

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Non-profit principle

If the Secretariat is provided by or hosted within an existing organisation, this organisation **must** not gain a profit or surplus out of the Secretariat's operation. Any surpluses remaining from the income allocated to the Secretariat exceeding the costs of it shall be reserved for the Secretariat and cannot be allocated to other functions/parts of the organisation.

IX HOST AND VENUE OF THE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE AND GLOBAL POLICY FORUM

A year in advance, the BFUG shall invite expressions of interest in hosting the forthcoming Ministerial Conference and Global Policy Forum. The call includes the deadline and the terms of reference, the conditions to be fulfilled by the host and information to be provided by the prospective host. The Ministerial Conference and the Global Policy Forum may be hosted jointly by several EHEA members. The BFUG makes a recommendation on the selection of the host to Ministers.

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X EHEA COMMUNICATION

X.1 General tasks for BFUG and Secretariat

The BFUG, supported by the Secretariat, is in charge of and responsible for the internal and external communication of the Bologna Process and the EHEA, which shall be transparent, accountable, and therefore appropriately documented and accessible.

This includes, among others:

- ensuring that all BFUG members and all participants of working structures receive all relevant and necessary information in due course, and usually at the same time;
- ensuring that information shared, whether internal or external, is clearly worded, based on reliable facts, and as much as possible neutral and objective. It should leave no ambiguity about what has been agreed by the BFUG or one of its bodies or structures, and about what was expressed publicly as the view of an individual or a group of members or participants;
- publishing all documents for BFUG meetings and BFUG Board meetings, at least two weeks in advance, as well as notifying BFUG/BFUG Board members of the publication;
- provision of secure spaces for sharing draft documents, internal calendars etc., either established by the Secretariat, a hosting party, or through a reliable service provider;
- provision of appropriate information and information materials for the European and international higher education community and stakeholders, and for the general public;
- organisation of events on its work, engaging stakeholders at European and national levels
- updating the pages of BFUG Working Groups and other structures, in collaboration with the Co-Chairs;
- inviting members and consultative to update the information on their systems, organisations and representatives at least once a year;
- organisation of the handover of relevant documents and information and the transfer of the website to the incoming Secretariat, and assistance during the transition phase in order to guarantee a seamless continuation of the work of the BFUG;

The Secretariat shall ensure in close collaboration with the BFUG Co-Chairs:

- the availability of the appropriate physical and virtual infrastructures and means for meetings and events;
- prompt and timely information transfer, before, during and after events, including registration procedures, and participants' lists etc.;
- coordination of scheduling processes to avoid collision of meetings of the BFUG, BFUG Board and of other BFUG structures.

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X.2Website

The BFUG is responsible for the development and regular update of the EHEA website www.ehea.info. It **includes** all recent documents of the BFUG and its working structures, and make them accessible to the wider public, unless **the BFUG decides for** compelling reasons not to do so. It **ensures** access to the archive of the EHEA.

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X.3Information sharing through the BFUG

Relevant information provided by individual members and consultative members may be disseminated to the BFUG and published on the website. In principle, this service is also open to other parties, which are not BFUG members or consultative members. The decision on what information to circulate and publish shall be taken by the **BFUG** Co-Chairs.

X.4Calendar

The website's calendar shall contain all events organised by the BFUG and its working structures. External events may be published provided they are relevant and related to the EHEA, **if** organised or supported by a member or a consultative member.

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Annexes

Annex 1 EHEA members ~~and consultative members~~

The countries, institutions and organisation listed below have been accepted as members ~~or~~ consultative members. Membership of the EHEA is governed by Article II of the RoP-EHEA.

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Members
Albania
Andorra
Armenia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Belarus (suspended from participation in the EHEA work programme and representation in all EHEA governing bodies as of 12 April 2022)
Belgium Flemish Community
Belgium French Community
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Bulgaria
Croatia
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
European Commission
Finland
France
Georgia
Germany
Greece
Holy See
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Italy
Kazakhstan
Latvia
Liechtenstein
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Malta
Moldova
Montenegro
Netherlands
North Macedonia
Norway
Poland

Portugal
Romania
Russian Federation (suspended from participation in the EHEA work programme and representation in all EHEA governing bodies as of 12 April 2022)
San Marino
Serbia
Slovak Republic
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Türkiye
United Kingdom
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Kingdom (Scotland)
Ukraine
Consultative Members
BUSINESSEUROPE
Council of Europe
Education International
European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)
European Students Union (ESU)
European University Association (EUA)
European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE)
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
As an independent institution established by the EHEA, participating without voting rights with similar status as consultative members
European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)

Annex 2 EHEA PARTNERS

Partners
Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC)
European Association for International Education (EAIE)
Council of European Professional and Managerial Staff (EUROCADRES)
European Council for Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers (EURODOC)
EUROSCIENCE

Annex 3 Working structures of the BFUG

As stated in Article V RoP-BFUG, the BFUG may establish Working Groups and other structures, in order to fulfil its tasks. The following table lists the most common types of working structures and their functions. It does not exclude different use of existing, and development of new types of working structures.

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Approach	Description	Example
Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> usually a larger group open to participation of all BFUG members and consultative members established to conduct work on core tasks, and to contribute to policy development some are standing WGs, or continue over several working cycles 	Working Group on Monitoring Working Group on Social Dimension Working Group on Values
Coordination Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversees and coordinates activities, also in collaboration with parties or stakeholders who are not BFUG members 	BFUG Coordination Group of Implementation of key commitments (BICG) Coordination Group on Global Dialogue
Advisory Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accompanies a verification process and/or elaborates a document for the BFUG, to advise Ministers for decision taking. 	Advisory group Support of the Belarus Roadmap, Advisory group for the Social Dimension Advisory group for Learning and Teaching in its 2018-2020 work programme.
Ad Hoc Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> established as such or be a substructure of a WG by the decision of the BFUG. established to explore or fulfil certain limited and concretely described tasks 	Ad hoc group on Fundamental Values in the 2018 – 20 work programme
Task Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> established to explore or fulfil certain limited and concretely described tasks limited in duration may be limited in participation, to ensure expertise on the issues and fast results. 	Task Force on Knowledge Sharing Task Force for the revision of the Rules of Procedure A Task Force is also established to assist aspiring members and consultative members
Support to the Roadmap of new members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> established to assist a new member or consultative member during its first period of membership participants are representative of the new member, and of the BFUG, selected due to their individual and institutional capacity. 	There have been two roadmap groups, for Belarus in 2015-2018 (Advisory Group), and for San Marino (Working Group), in 2021-2024

Thematic Peer Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● established to enable mutual learning and enhance implementation of key commitments at national level ● usually requires the creation of action plans from members in order to pursue objectives related to the implementation of the key commitments ● Possible involvement of experts and stakeholders next to the BFUG delegates. 	
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Annex 4 PROCEDURE AND CRITERIA FOR MEMBERSHIP

I. Requirements for membership of the EHEA

Applicant countries are requested to confirm their adherence to the following principles:

- International mobility of students and staff;
- Autonomous higher education institutions;
- Academic freedom and integrity;
- Student participation in the governance of higher education;
- Public responsibility for higher education;
- The social dimension of higher education

The application has to be complemented by a Report, detailing the higher education policies of the country in the light of the Bologna Process and outlining how the principles and objectives of the Bologna Process had been and/or would be implemented. The Report should cover the following topics:

- General information on the higher education system and partnership with stakeholders
- Degree System
 - Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle,
 - Stage of implementation of the third cycle,
 - Relationship between higher education and research,
 - Access and admission to the next cycle,
 - Employability of graduates/cooperation with employers,
 - Implementation of national qualifications framework
- National Implementation of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG)
 - Review of the the QA system with respect to the ESG and national support for implementation
 - Internal quality assurance in higher education institutions
 - Stage of development of external quality assurance system
 - Level of student participation
 - Level of international participation
- Recognition of Degrees and Study Periods:
 - Stage of implementation of Diploma Supplement
 - National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
 - Stage of implementation of ECTS
- Lifelong Learning

- Recognition of prior learning
 - Flexible learning paths
- Joint Degrees
 - Establishment and recognition of joint degrees
 - Removing obstacles to student and staff mobility
 - Portability of loans and grants
- The Attractiveness of the EHEA and Cooperation with other parts of the world
 - Implementation of strategy
- Future Challenges
 - Main challenges for higher education
- Social Dimension of higher education
 - Current state of affairs
 - Progress towards a more inclusive higher education system (strategy for the future)
 - Information on the national responsibility for the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the national strategies.

The application has to be signed by the (national) Minister responsible for higher education, submitted by a given deadline, and be complemented by the required National Report.

When an application is received, a confirmation of receipt is sent to the applicant country and the BFUG Chairs, assisted by the Bologna Secretariat, verify that the application satisfied the prescribed procedures.

The BFUG (with support from Co-chairs, Vice- Chair, Secretariat, Council of Europe and/or the BFUG Board) assesses the application with the accompanying national report on the basis of the criteria for admission described above and agrees on the recommendation to be given to the Ministers.

II. Requirements for consultative membership and EHEA partners

The criteria for consultative membership are defined as follows:

- Added value to the Bologna Process

Any new consultative member or EHEA partner should give the process an added value, meaning that their contribution should have a European scope and be relevant to the work of the BFUG. Additional criteria on added value for new consultative members: their contribution cannot be easily covered by an existing consultative member and cooperation with the BFUG may not be better covered at another level.

- Relevance of the stakeholder group

Organisations that may contribute to stronger links between higher education and the labour market are relevant to the Process. Organisations that may contribute to stronger links between higher education and other educational fields may also be relevant. Organisations representing special professions do not match the BFUG, which deals with general principles and structures in higher education. Organisations should have higher education as a central field of interest. The stakeholder group should be relevant to the principles, action lines and goals of the Bologna Process.

- Representativeness

A new consultative member or EHEA partner should not be a sub-organisation of a member or consultative member of the Bologna Follow-up Group. Additional criteria on representativeness for new consultative members: be the most representative organisation in its field of interest, be a European organisation or a European branch of an organisation, accept organisations from all the Bologna member states as full members, have full members from no less than 50 % of the Bologna countries and have full members from countries outside the EU/EEA and EU candidate countries.

- Organisational form

Either be a non-governmental organisation (NGO) or an inter-governmental organisation. Additional criteria on organisational form for new consultative members: its mandate should reflect its relevance to the Bologna Process and its right to give an opinion on behalf of its members on matters relating to the Bologna Process.

Organisations wishing to become consultative member or EHEA partner need to send an application to the Bologna Secretariat, documenting that they satisfy the listed criteria. The Secretariat then puts the request on the agenda of the BFUG that in turn will assess the application. The decision is taken by the Ministerial Conference for consultative members and by the BFUG for EHEA partners.