



Ministry of Education and
Science of Georgia

BFUG Board Meeting LXXXIII

Monday, 02 October 2023
Tbilisi, Georgia

Minutes of Meeting

List of participants

Delegation/Organization	Name	Surname
Albania (BFUG Vice Chair)	Linda	Pustina
Belgium Flemish Community (Incoming BFUG Co-Chair)	Liesbeth	Hens
Belgium French Community (Incoming BFUG Co-Chair)*	Caroline	Hollela
European Commission (EC)	Kinga	Szuly
EURASHE/WG on Learning and Teaching Co-Chair	Ana	Tecilazic
European Students' Union (ESU)/WG on SD Co-Chair	Horia	Onita
European University Association (EUA)/TF on RR Co-Chair	Michael	Gaebel
Eurydice/WG on Monitoring Co-Chair*	David	Crosier
Georgia (BFUG Co-Chair)	Maia	Shukhoshvili
Holy See (Incoming BFUG Co-Chair)/ Drafting Committee Co-Chair	Melanie	Rosenbaum
Holy See (Incoming BFUG Co-Chair)	Antonella	Sciarrone Alibrani
Spain (BFUG Co-Chair)	Margarita de Lezcano	Mujica Nunez
Spain (BFUG Co-Chair)	Ignacio	Bianco
Sweden (BFUG Outgoing Co-Chair)	Robin	Moberg
BICG Co-Chair*	Helga	Posset
WG on Fundamental Values Co-Chair	Mihai Cezar	Haj
CG on Global Policy Dialogue Co-Chair*	Anne Katherine	Isaacs
WG on San Marino Roadmap Co-Chair	Jordi	Llombart
TF on EKS Co-Chair	Daniela Cristina	Ghitulica
BFUG Secretariat (Head)	Edlira Adi	Kahani Subashi
BFUG Secretariat	Ana	Zhibaj

Note: Online participation*

Welcome Addresses

Dr. Nodar Papukashvili, Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Georgia, welcomed all Board members to Tbilisi. He gave an introduction to the higher education scenery in Georgia, its current developments and importance given by the government to the latest development on national and EHEA level and wished a fruitful meeting.

1. Welcome and Introduction

1.1. Welcome by the BFUG Co-Chairs

Margarita De Lezcano-Mujica Nuñez (BFUG Co-Chair, Spain) extended warm greetings to all participants and expressed her hope for a productive meeting.



Albanian BFUG Secretariat
2021-2024



Ministry of Education and
Science of Georgia

Maia Shukhoshvili (BFUG Co-Chair, Georgia) welcomed everyone to the meeting, and expressed her gratitude to the Spanish Co-Chair, Vice-Chair and BFUG Secretariat for their support in organizing the meeting.

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

Linda Pustina (BFUG Vice-Chair) welcomed everyone, expressing gratitude to the BFUG Co-Chairs for their support in organizing the meeting. She informed the Board on the recent amendments to the existing government decision approved by the Albanian government, enhancing flexibility for the Secretariat in preparation for the upcoming ministerial conference. She also mentioned the creation of a Working Group, ordered by the Prime Minister, to coordinate the Ministerial Conference and the Global Policy Forum. Furthermore, the BFUG Vice-Chair noted the appointment of a new Minister of Education and assured that more details about the Ministerial Conference would be provided later. She concluded by wishing all a productive meeting.

1.3. Information by the outgoing BFUG Co-Chairs (Sweden and Bosnia & Herzegovina)

Robin Moberg (Outgoing BFUG Co-Chair, Sweden) extended greetings to all participants and shared that he had recently communicated with the Bosnian Outgoing Co-Chair, who is currently in a period of recovery but is expected to participate in the upcoming BFUG Meeting in Madrid. He commended the strong collaboration and achievements of the previous BFUG meeting held in Stockholm and committed to his continued involvement as a member in the BFUG Working structures.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

For more information, please see: [BFUG Board ES GA 85 2.1 Draft Agenda](#)

[BFUG Board ES GA 85 2.2 Draft Annotated Agenda](#)

3. Update from the BFUG Secretariat, including update on the call for the host of the 2027 EHEA Ministerial Conference

Edlira Subashi (Head of BFUG Secretariat) provided several updates since the previous BFUG meeting. Key points included amendments to the bylaws related to the Secretariat aimed at streamlining collaboration processes with the Ministry and the Working Groups, as well as an overview of the Secretariat's composition and its coordination efforts including collaboration with various stakeholders and alignment with the Task Force for Enhancing Knowledge Sharing. Notable website enhancements, including an accessible meeting materials archive, were highlighted. The newsletter was prepared for circulation, and an analytical communique review was produced to support the Drafting Committee's work. It was emphasized that the Secretariat actively participated in multiple working structures' meetings, maintained communication and produced meeting minutes and supplementary reports, during a working period that saw an unprecedented number of WGs and meetings that exceeded the initial plans.

It was noted that the Brno Roadmap document foresaw the drafting of the Terms of Reference for the next work period at the April BFUG meeting, and the Head of the BFUG Secretariat informed on the state of art of the call for hosting the Secretariat and the Ministerial. She stressed the importance of meeting deadlines, particularly for the upcoming BFUG meeting, with a November 1 deadline. She expressed gratitude for the support of the BFUG Chairs and working structures.



Ministry of Education and
Science of Georgia

Melanie Rosenbaum (Holy See/DC Co-Chair) inquired about the composition of the staff, with a specific focus on the Deputy Head of Secretariat's role and the current responsibilities of the former Head of Secretariat. Additionally, she requested that meeting minutes refer to the delegation, instead of to the individuals. The Holy See DC Co-Chair also inquired about the newsletter and the content that would be promoted in it. With regard to the next host for the Ministerial Conference, as no proposals had been submitted, the Holy See DC Co-Chair suggested that the Troika or an ad hoc group reach out to potential host countries to encourage them to consider hosting the Secretariat and the Ministerial Conference. This proactive approach was suggested as there had been volunteers in the past, but actively seeking hosts may be necessary. The Head of BFUG Secretariat clarified that the Deputy Head position is currently vacant, and the former Head now holds a senior expert role. The request regarding the reference to countries or organizations rather than to individuals at the meeting minutes would be incorporated. It was also explained that the newsletter content is a compilation of information received from BFUG members, BFUG Working Structures, and consultative members, developed in close collaboration with the Task Force on Enhancing Knowledge Sharing in the EHEA.

Michael Gaebel (EUA) inquired about technical aspects of the website's archive section and the purpose of the document analyzing communiques. He also questioned the selection process for the next Secretariat and raised concerns about the proposed sealed envelope method, suggesting that candidates should traditionally present themselves in the BFUG for discussion. The Secretariat would address the technical concerns about the website and encouraged participants to report any future issues. Regarding the document analyzing communiques, it was explained that it was a review of past communiques with regard to concept and style, made at the request of the DC. The DC Co-Chair shared that the DC requested that such document be produced to have a clearer overview of commitments from past Communiques, overlapping and diverging themes.

Regarding the suggested procedure for selecting the next host from the Holy See representative, the importance of having detailed information about the economic aspects of hosting a ministerial conference was emphasized.

Horia Onita (ESU) stressed the need for consistency in the newsletter and suggested that the Secretariat and TF create a plan to ensure this. On the topic of the host selection procedure, he echoed EUA's concerns and emphasized the Board's supervisory role, citing a lack of documented conditions. He suggested that the Troika would be the appropriate structure for discussing potential applicants and reporting to the Board.

Jordi Llobart (WG on San Marino Roadmap, Co-Chair) expressed his support for the Holy See DC Co-Chair's proposal to increase awareness and proactively reach out to potential candidates for hosting the Ministerial Conference and Secretariat. He raised a query about the criteria for identifying these potential candidates. Additionally, he acknowledged the importance of obtaining more information about the budgetary aspects.

The Holy See DC Co-Chair suggested to add the point on the next host under AoB, which was agreed.

For more information, please see: [BFUG Board ES GA 85 3.1 BFUG Secretariat Presentation](#)

4. Update from the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG)

Helga Posset (BICG Co-Chair) delivered an update on the activities of the BICG, highlighting that they have organized seven online meetings so far. She specifically focused on the Thematic Peer Groups (TPGs) and their current activities, along with the progress made by the subgroups within each. The BICG Co-Chair reported that the TPGs are operating effectively in accordance with their work plans, and cooperating on topics spanning



Albanian BFUG Secretariat
2021-2024



Ministry of Education and
Science of Georgia

all three. Additionally, a joint document on micro-credentials from the TPGs is in the works. She also brought up several points for discussion and reflection related to ensuring the TPGs' success, with particular focus on how to encourage more active participation in TPGs activities by all countries, regardless of their perceived level of implementation, and the necessity of coordination among the various representatives of each country in different TPGs. Additionally, she emphasized the importance of ensuring that the Key Commitments remain at the centre of the TPGs' attention and balancing innovative themes with these commitments.

In response to the recommendation for the Tirana Communiqué, a persistent gap in implementing the Key Commitments within the EHEA was acknowledged. It was emphasized that achieving the full and consistent implementation of these Key Commitments by all EHEA members is imperative for the EHEA to realize its envisioned potential. The BICG proposed that, following each Ministerial Communiqué, all countries develop and publish a concrete plan for implementing the Key Commitments agreed upon, in order to guarantee the effectiveness of the ministerial actions to address and close the implementation gap.

The San Marino WG Co-Chair recommended a collaborative approach to address the implementation gap in specific countries with the Working Group on Monitoring and making use of their report to identify countries that are not meeting their commitments and request that they provide a roadmap outlining their planned timeline for implementing the essential elements. However, the BICG Co-Chair noted that they would like the countries themselves to come up with a plan, that is particularly focused on the Key Commitments.

The importance of coordinating the thematic substructures of working groups within each TPG that address similar thematic areas when developing Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the future was underscored.

There was a query regarding whether the recommendations and guidelines generated by the TPGs and their various substructures would be incorporated into the BICG Report. The BICG Co-Chairs suggested to have a point in the BFUG meeting in Madrid to showcase and report on the TPGs' work, which would also be included in the BICG report.

Regarding coordination among TPGs, a suggestion was made to hold joint meetings not only between TPG Co-Chairs but also between substructures from all TPGs working on similar themes, such as micro-credentials. The importance of how reporting on the work is done was also highlighted. Communication and stakeholder participation issues across national levels were underlined, as were possible limits posed by institutional autonomy. Further, it was recommended to distinguish between the requirements of the EU-funded projects and the main objectives of the TPGs' and the BICG's work. Projects are not the primary focus of the TPGs and BICG; the emphasis should be on the Key Commitments. The Bologna Process Implementation Report (BPIR) provides a comprehensive overview of the situation, and country action plans detail the implementation plans. However, it was noted that the two instruments complement each other and do not overlap.

For more information, please see: [BFUG Board ES GA 85 4 Bologna Implementation Coordination Group](#)

5. Updates from the Working Groups and Task Forces

5.1. Working Group on Monitoring the Implementation of the Bologna Process

David Crosier (WG on Monitoring, Co-Chair) provided an update on the BPIR. He raised concerns about the level of engagement from countries both in the questionnaires used for the BPIR and in the TPGs. One notable example was Serbia, which failed to submit a questionnaire, marking the first instance of a country not



Albanian BFUG Secretariat
2021-2024



Ministry of Education and
Science of Georgia

providing any information for the report. Furthermore, some countries submitted questionnaires late, with less than 40% of the needed information received by the extended deadline set at the last BFUG meeting in Sweden. This delay hindered data analysis and addressing missing questions. The WG on Monitoring Co-Chair hinted that this problem might be tied to countries' lack of engagement in the broader Bologna Process and expressed support for the BICG's proposal on country plans.

Despite the engagement challenges, he noted that significant progress had been made in terms of Key Commitments. This progress is likely attributed to the work taking place in the TPGs. He emphasized the effectiveness of the current model but pointed out that without active country engagement, it could result in a two-tier situation, with some countries actively participating and catching up on basic implementation while others are lagging behind. He emphasized the importance of examining the underlying reasons for countries' lack of engagement. He also expressed agreement with the idea of implementation plans, stating that while efforts should not duplicate reporting mechanisms, there is value in transparently showing what countries plan to do in the next stage of EHEA development. This could serve as a useful transparency tool, highlighting the link between the implementation plan and the gaps identified in the implementation report.

He mentioned that the initial draft of the report will be sent to the BFUG at the end of October. The report will introduce new chapters on fundamental values and present an innovative approach to the social dimension, complete with indicators for monitoring the implementation of principles and guidelines. Furthermore, a comprehensive chapter on learning and teaching has been crafted in close cooperation with the respective WG. The report will also encompass a consolidated chapter on key commitments and a statistical section that compiles crucial data regarding the EHEA. While the latter chapter might not be available in the initial draft, work is underway to gather data from the contractor, and it will be included in the second draft if not in the first. In addition, there will be a dedicated chapter on internationalization and mobility, also shedding light on how EHEA countries have responded to the situation in Ukraine.

A question was raised regarding the intention to address the three "Is" - innovation, inclusivity, and interconnectedness. It was clarified that these connections will be integrated into the executive summary and the conclusions of the chapters. Various aspects related to the three "Is" will be woven into different chapters. However, it was noted that the initial draft would not include the executive summary or chapter conclusions. The WG Co-Chair expressed openness to receiving feedback on this matter.

There was also an inquiry about whether the WG on Monitoring would have the scope to focus not only on reporting but also on future considerations, such as organizing monitoring efforts and addressing systematic non-implementation. The response indicated that these topics will be covered and reflected upon within the WG, although this will occur at a later stage.

5.2. Working Group on Fundamental Values

Mihai Cezar Haj (WG on FV, Co-Chair) delivered updates on the meetings and progress made regarding the statements. The three statements on fundamental values have been completed and submitted to the BFUG for feedback, which has been integrated into the statements. These statements are now ready to be forwarded to the BFUG as final versions. The academic integrity statement has also been finalized and will be sent to the BFUG for feedback. In addition, the WG has prepared the annex to the ministerial communique, with the introduction still pending validation by the WG. The text for the Ministerial Communique has also been prepared, with plans to send it after the meeting scheduled for the beginning of November to validate the proposal. The WG has commenced work on the report, with a draft expected to be ready by the 8th of



Ministry of Education and
Science of Georgia

November. However, the final version will require additional time to include the monitoring framework reference. The next steps involve obtaining feedback on the academic integrity statement and continuing efforts on the monitoring framework for fundamental values.

In the upcoming meeting, the group will discuss a draft framework with the intention of finalizing it and proposing it to the BFUG. Due to the complexity of covering all aspects of fundamental values, the framework will not be overly detailed at this stage, and work in this area is expected to continue into the next BFUG mandate. Additionally, there's a need to address the challenges associated with the interconnections and overlaps between different initiatives, such as the EU, ERA, and EHEA initiatives, particularly concerning the monitoring aspect and how these initiatives can collaborate effectively. The WG Co-Chair recommended making academic integrity the central topic for the BFUG discussion now that feedback on other statements is included. Additionally, he proposed having multiple WG representatives at the BFUG to better handle any feedback efficiently if required, however this request was not granted.

It was inquired that statements be recirculated to look at how the feedback has been reviewed and incorporated. The Secretariat would send all the revised statements including the academic integrity statement, to the BFUG well in advance of the upcoming meeting.

A concern was raised about the coordination of individuals within the BFUG and its working structures. The original idea was for these groups to primarily consist of BFUG delegates who communicate and collaborate, promoting cohesion. However, there is a current practice where countries send different representatives to various groups, which can lead to coordination issues. Additionally, there was a suggestion to revisit this coordination issue in the context of rules and procedures to address the growing coordination problems.

For more information, please see: [BFUG Board ES GA 85 5 2 WG FV Update](#)

5.3. Working Group on the Social Dimension

Horia Onita (Co-Chair, WG on SD) gave an overview of the WG on SD's progress on the Principles and Guidelines (PAGs) for the social dimension in the EHEA. He mentioned that substantial work had been undertaken on refining the indicators and explanatory descriptors, in close coordination with Eurydice. He noted that the document went through several iterations with valuable discussions involving members of the BFUG, along with multiple rounds of feedback. Following the BFUG meeting in Sweden, feedback was received, primarily concerning the procedural steps and approval processes rather than the content of the document. Subsequently, during the WG on SD meeting in June, the group incorporated the feedback and discussed the next steps, as well as clarifying the structural aspects. The document now has a thorough framework with integrated indicators and explanatory descriptors. The Co-Chair emphasized that the descriptors serve to offer policy context rather than gauge indicator implementation.

After the WG meeting, Belgium and the EUA provided written feedback, and editing took place, resulting in a new version in July. To expedite the process, the group held an online consultation with the BFUG on September 6th. This consultation covered finalizing indicators and descriptors, as well as procedural discussions on adoption. It saw significant participation, with positive feedback and some minor suggestions, but no specific written feedback on these suggestions yet. On the procedural side, there was unanimous support for adoption of the document by ministers, however with the need of still assessing the document's political significance to consider whether it should be an annex of the communique.



Albanian BFUG Secretariat
2021-2024



Ministry of Education and
Science of Georgia

The document presented in this meeting was from July, as the next WG meeting would aim to incorporate final comments received from member states and other members following the September meeting and this board meeting. Additionally, the DC received the WG's input for the draft communication, which would be a subject of discussion in the October meeting. The group intended to continue working on defining future commitments and elements within the social dimension in higher education in upcoming meetings.

The EUA representative suggested including the PAG in the annex. He also mentioned a lack of clarity and observed that funding was a recurring theme throughout the document, despite having a dedicated principle for it. He emphasized the need for a more structured and concise approach. The document's voluntary nature raised questions about what would occur after potential adoption and how follow-up would be conducted. The WG Co-Chair informed that the updates on all pertinent elements would be presented during the forthcoming WG meeting and integrated accordingly. He underscored that the guidelines encompassed multiple principles, resulting in repetitive themes, but emphasized the importance of efforts to eliminate redundancies and enhance conciseness. The WG Co-Chair also highlighted the document's need for adoption by ministers to gain political significance, ideally as an annex, though the final decision on this matter would be addressed in the BFUG meeting in Madrid.

The European Commission representative raised questions about the added value of including the document as an annex in the communique, especially since the PAG had already been adopted in the Rome communique. She expressed the view that the document served as a supporting resource rather than introducing new policy elements. The representative stressed the importance of making the document visible, possibly on the EHEA website, but expressed uncertainties about its inclusion as an annex in the communique.

For more information, please see: [BFUG Board ES GA 85 5 3 WG SD Update](#)

[BFUG Board ES GA 85 5 3 WG SD Principles and Guidelines](#)

[BFUG Board ES GA 85 5 3 WG SD Consultative meeting with BFUG](#)

5.4. Working Group on Learning & Teaching

Ana Tecilazic (WG on L&T, Co-Chair) delivered an update on the group's ongoing progress and initiatives. She highlighted the three subgroups within the WG, which concentrated their efforts on creating indicators for staff development, student-centred learning, and innovative teaching and learning. In response to an initiative from the Council of Europe, an ad hoc group was established to draft a statement concerning ethics and digital technologies in teaching and learning. The WG also organized peer learning activities (PLA) to promote the exchange of knowledge among its members. These PLAs covered staff development in Paris, student-centred learning in Bucharest, and a forthcoming one in Ireland scheduled for October, focusing on Transformative Approaches to Learning & Teaching. Proposals for the ministerial communique were put forward to the DC. These proposals encompassed staff development, student-centred learning, and a call for the establishment of a thematic peer learning group dedicated to student-centred learning. This group's focus would be to bring together institutions from across the EHEA to exchange and learn from each other, to work towards a commonly shared and operational definition, and to propose concrete actions of how to enhance the implementation. Additionally, the group presented commitments related to digitalization and artificial intelligence. She further noted that a new Co-Chair would be joining the WG and indicated that this meeting would mark her final one as Co-Chair.

For more information, please see: [BFUG Board ES GA 85 5 4 WG LT Progress Report](#)



Albanian BFUG Secretariat
2021-2024



Ministry of Education and
Science of Georgia

[BFUG Board ES GA 85 5 4 WG LT Update](#)

5.5. Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue

Ann Katherine Isaacs (CG on GPD, Co-Chair) provided an update on the CG's activities and its subgroups. She introduced the new Co-Chair, Ms. Liesbeth Hens from the Belgium Flemish Community, and informed that the EC Co-Chair, Ms. Fiorella Perotto, had retired. Additionally, she shared that Montenegro has become a new member of the CG. Ms. Isaacs informed about the activities of the Africa subgroup within the CG, which organized two EHEA conversations. The article for the first conversation on academic recognition is available on the EHEA website, and work is in progress on finalizing the article for the second conversation on recognition for lifelong learning. The possibility of a third conversation is under consideration. In the Americas subgroup, a meeting with UNESCO IESALC and regional UNESCO representatives took place on occasion of the second Assembly of the UNESCO Global Recognition convention to discuss future interactions. Furthermore, a second Colloquium between the CG on GPD and Latin American countries is being planned for the fall of 2023 or early spring of 2024. The Asia subgroup held a joint meeting with the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) in Rome in September 2023, where they worked on the recommendations of ASEF for the Ministers of Education meeting and collaborated with Asian representatives on the group's statement and ideas for organizing the Global Policy Forum in Tirana.

The functional subgroups have been actively working on various aspects. The GPForum subgroup discussed a draft program during the Joint CG-ASEF meeting, and the GPStatement subgroup presented its Draft 3 Statement for discussion. A functional workstream, focusing on communications, invitations, and content fine-tuning, is in the process of being established. A large-scale consultation was conducted to gather perceptions of the EHEA and ideas for collaboration with stakeholders, authorities, students, and teachers in countries outside the EHEA. The results are currently being analysed and will contribute to the statement and proposals for the Tirana Communiqué. Future plans for the CG include additional regional conferences in the fall of 2023 and early spring of 2024, supported by IN-GLOBAL. A new regional subgroup for Arab states/Middle East and North Africa is proposed, with plans for a regional meeting in conjunction with UNESCO in the spring. The CG has also proposed organizing dialogues and meetings on shared interests between global interlocutors and the BFUG Working Structures.

The EC representative informed the group that a new member of the Africa subgroup will be introduced soon and appreciated the work done with third countries interested in the Bologna Process.

The Holy See Drafting Committee Co-Chair inquired about potential overlaps between the Global Policy Forum statement and the presented zero draft for the Tirana Communiqué. She also sought information on the elements that the CG intends to include in the Tirana communiqué and whether there are plans to prepare something for the EHEA global dialogue partners. The CG Co-Chair expressed the desire to include EHEA global dialogue partners in the communiqué. It was agreed that the CG Co-Chairs would send the draft of the Global Policy Statement to the Secretariat for sharing with the BFUG.

The Head of the Secretariat noted that several BFUG Working Structures have expressed their inability to finalize the final report for the BFUG Meeting in Madrid within the established deadline from the BFUG meeting in Brno. It was suggested to discuss this matter in the AOB agenda item.

For more information, please see: [BFUG Board ES GA 85 5 5 CG GPD Update](#)



Albanian BFUG Secretariat
2021-2024



Ministry of Education and
Science of Georgia

5.5. Working Group on San Marino Roadmap

Jordi Llobart (WG on SMR, Co-Chair) presented the draft final report of the WG to support implementation of the roadmap for San Marino accession to the EHEA. The WG conducted meetings in San Marino and engaged with relevant stakeholders, fostering an exchange of information and addressing concerns. Additionally, they organized peer learning activities covering various topics. Significant progress was achieved by San Marino, including the implementation of a new higher education law in April 2023 and a university decree in June 2023. The group's focus extended to the development of a National Qualifications Framework, set to be finalized by the first semester of 2024. San Marino obtained approval for its internal quality assurance system from the University Senate and initiated collaboration with the Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP), an international Quality Assurance Agency. The WG also addressed lifelong learning and the social dimension, with San Marino introducing flexible study programs and through its established Territorial Pact, an advisory body aimed at collaboration with stakeholders for progress within the Republic of San Marino. In terms of recognition of qualifications, the WG organized peer learning activities on recognition of prior learning and flexible pathways to access higher education. The recommendations for the communique underscored the significance of providing a precise roadmap to support any country seeking accession to the EHEA. This roadmap would provide guidance and support, offering clarity on the steps and challenges involved in aligning with the EHEA's goals and principles, addressing the critical issue of the implementation gap.

For more information, please see: [BFUG Board ES GA 85 5 6 WG San Marino Roadmap](#)

[BFUG Board ES GA 85 5 7 WG San Marino Roadmap Report](#)

5.6. Task Force on Enhancing Knowledge-Sharing in the EHEA community

Daniela Cristina Ghitulica (TF on EKS, Co-Chair) provided an update on the TF's activities and meetings. She said that a recent addition to the group was Montenegro. The most recent meeting in Bucharest primarily centred on the implementation of the action plan. The discussion revolved around various activities and documents produced, and the meeting also featured a visit to the EURONEWS Romania headquarters to discuss the communication strategy among the TF members, IN-GLOBAL, and the BFUG Secretariat.

It was informed that translation of the Rome Communique has begun, and it's already available in 11 languages. Concerning the action plan, it is divided into two main components — drafting recommendations for BFUG members, while the other focuses on creating communication tools related to the Bologna process. To develop these recommendations, supportive activities are being conducted. Firstly, a questionnaire was distributed to assess stakeholder perceptions of the EHEA. Over 2500 responses were received from EHEA countries, along with 600 responses from non-EHEA countries, and this data will be used to formulate recommendations. Additionally, focus groups were organized, involving government representatives, quality assurance agencies, national unions of students, ENIC-NARICs, promotion agencies, and higher education institutions. Insights from these focus groups will be integrated into the recommendations. The discontinuation of funding for the Bologna experts' network was a topic of concern, with some countries managing to sustain it independently. There was a consensus that the reestablishment of the experts could significantly contribute to the implementation of the Bologna process, but sustainability should not depend on funding from specific projects. Lastly, an in-depth discussion with BFUG members is planned to address recommendations and tools for promoting the Bologna Process, including content creation for various media, event guidelines, and a common slogan. The TF had also provided contributions to the communique.



Ministry of Education and
Science of Georgia

A question was raised about the sustainability and future of the project, highlighting the challenges in both initiating and maintaining such activities. The question arose of whether working structures within the Bologna Process would consistently contribute to these efforts, and the suggestion was made to explicitly outline this in their terms of reference or guidelines. The need for a structured approach and systematic review with selection criteria to ensure the quality and coherence of the project's outcomes was emphasized. In response, the TF Co-Chair stressed the importance of continuing these activities. She explained that the project offers tools and recommendations for countries that wish to focus on knowledge sharing. She recognized the widespread agreement on the necessity of dissemination and collaboration in the context of the Bologna Process. She also pointed out that some activities can be sustained with the resources of the Secretariat, while others may require additional funding. The project aims to provide various tools, including videos and podcasts, catering to different resource requirements. She supported the idea of a structured approach and suggested that expectations for contributions from working structures be included in their terms of reference. Such an approach would ensure the project's instruments remain coherent and easy to access while adhering to specific criteria, ultimately enhancing its overall effectiveness.

The Holy See DC Co-Chair emphasized the role of the EHEA as a meta-level organization and highlighted the primary responsibility of national governments for information dissemination. She sought clarification on whether specific objectives were better suited for national implementation rather than being transferred to the EHEA, thereby ensuring that each country manages its respective responsibilities. The TF Co-Chair acknowledged that while specific tasks primarily fall under the purview of national governments, there has been a lapse in addressing these responsibilities. Consequently, offering models, guidelines, and recommendations related to the Bologna Process can be a valuable resource for national governments, highlighting the evident demand for such assistance in the present context.

The ESU representative emphasized the importance of clarifying the Bologna Process's scope and its added value to grassroots stakeholders. He pointed out that misconceptions exist about its rigidity, which can be addressed by better explaining the process's true nature and commitments. He noted the Of revitalizing a sense of the importance of the Bologna Process, expressing ESU's commitment to supporting the TF's efforts to reach a broader audience.

For more information, please see: [BFUG Board ES GA 85 5 8 TF EKS Update](#)

5.9 Task Force on the Review of the Rules and Regulations for the Governance of the EHEA

Michael Gaebel (TF RR, Co-Chair) gave an update of the two documents, the Rules of Procedures and on the Permanent Secretariat. He explained that after the BFUG meeting in Stockholm, the documents had undergone revisions based on existing rules of procedure, with an effort to consolidate them into a single document, eliminating redundancy. He acknowledged the presence of footnotes in the draft documents, which were intended to highlight considerations, potential disagreements, and alternative perspectives.

Regarding issues related to the Secretariat and budget, he acknowledged that these matters remained open and posed the question of whether these issues could be addressed in a single document, recognizing that the document would undergo a two-step adoption process involving the ministers and the BFUG voting regime. He also addressed the topic of voting and the challenge of drawing a clear line between content-related and non-content issues. He clarified that voting should not be categorically excluded, especially in exceptional circumstances where the BFUG or ministers deem it necessary. Additionally, the document addressed budget



Ministry of Education and
Science of Georgia

considerations, even in cases where a permanent secretariat might not be in place, reflecting discussions within the task force.

The Holy See DC Co-Chair expressed concerns about the document's legal implications and budgetary considerations, as it potentially attributes legal personality to the EHEA, which it currently lacks. She stressed that legal revisions are necessary to address issues related to the EHEA's status, budgeting, and institutional bodies. Additionally, there was a request for a section on working conduct, and it was suggested that the revision of the Rules of Procedure (RoP) should be based on the existing RoP with track changes. There were concerns about the absence of a section on the conduct of business for the BFUG and voting for the ministers.

The Belgium Flemish Community incoming BFUG Co-Chair provided technical suggestions regarding the secretariat, emphasizing the need for criteria regardless of whether it is permanent or non-permanent. She suggested a more comprehensive overview of the secretariat's responsibilities and functions in the document. The TF Co-Chair explained that the TF analysed the pros and cons of the permanent secretariat situation and identified key principles that could be applicable to any secretariat. They considered four different scenarios and subsequently proposed three specific options¹. The TF Co-Chair emphasized the need for a clear decision at the BFUG meeting in Madrid, specifically regarding whether the BFUG wishes to continue exploring the concept of a permanent secretariat.

The funding for the permanent secretariat would come from BFUG members, possibly through fees or membership contributions. It was suggested that the BFUG should decide in Madrid whether they want a permanent secretariat under the specified conditions, considering the financial and governance implications, and provide directions for the TF's future work. This could involve discussions on concrete models, although time constraints might necessitate further discussions in the next phase.

It was suggested that the BFUG members may instead seek an alternative approach. The possibility of an overlooked alternative was considered, but it was also noted that the BFUG could choose to maintain the current approach without a permanent secretariat. There was a suggestion to focus on revising the existing process to make the rotating secretariat model more sustainable and efficient.

The Belgium Flemish Community incoming Co-Chair inquired about how the funding aspect would affect the members' relationships, way of working, and how is this going to influence their process. She also added for the Head of the Secretariat role, to rather go for a mandate function rather than a permanent contract. She also expressed concern about the timing as there is a lot of legal aspects to be covered by the end of 2024. She highlighted the need that a contingency plan would be developed promptly, as even if the BFUG votes in favour of proceeding with the permanent secretariat, it is crucial to consider the sensitivity of the matter and the possibility that ministers might ultimately reject the proposal. Therefore, she stressed the importance of carefully discussing how to present this topic to the BFUG in a thoughtful and constructive manner.

The ESU representative emphasized that even if the BFUG decides on establishing a permanent secretariat, it could not be set up in 2024 due to the existing call for the next host. He highlighted the importance of maintaining coherence and capacity, suggesting a timeline for 2027. Regarding the issue of voting, he raised concerns about the proposed quorum and majority for decision-making, which could potentially allow a minority to decide on significant matters. The ESU's preference is to maintain consensus and have a higher majority

¹ The creation of a private non-profit legal entity; the establishment of an external office of the Council of Europe; the integration of EQAR and the Secretariat.



Ministry of Education and
Science of Georgia

requirement for decisions, preferably three-fourths vote with two-thirds of all members present rather than only votes cast. He suggested that an analysis of different voting options should be presented by the TF to evaluate their impact on the process's coherence and commitments and emphasized the need for a comprehensive analysis of the voting issue in the upcoming BFUG meeting.

The EC representative reiterated the Secretariat's role as a technical support team to assist the Bologna Process, with important decisions remaining under the purview of the BFUG members, adding that separating the Ministerial Conference and the administrative support strengthens the guiding role of member states in the process. Thus, she did not consider limiting the mandate of the Head of the Secretariat as necessary because this role would be primarily administrative and not political or strategic. She also acknowledged the importance of discussions around membership fees and whether the BFUG should function as a fee-based organization, and its implications. Regarding the idea of integration with EQAR, the representative saw it as a possibility to extend the mandate of an existing nonprofit organization to provide technical support to the process, avoiding the need to establish a new organization. They stressed the importance of being ambitious with the timing, especially if building upon an existing structure, to prevent delays until 2027 for administrative changes.

Holy See Drafting Committee Co-Chair asked that the characterization of groups be refined and that correct terminology is used. She referred to the minutes from the previous BFUG meeting in 2016, which were brought up during the last meeting in Stockholm. The decision made in 2016 to maintain a rotating Secretariat was emphasized, and she questioned the factors that had changed since 2016, necessitating a re-evaluation of the permanent Secretariat's establishment. Additionally, it was highlighted the Council of Europe's suggestion to focus on existing entities and implement an ethical code. The Holy See DC Co-Chair suggested incorporating an ethical code into either the rules of procedure or the Secretariat's provisions.

The usage of the term 'permanent' secretariat was raised, indicating a requirement for improved terminology. It was also pointed out to reexamine the financial estimations and number of staff.

For more information, please see: [BFUG Board ES GA 85 5 9 1 TF RR Update](#)

[BFUG Board ES GA 85 5 9 2 TF RR Rules of the EHEA and BFUG](#)

[BFUG Board ES GA 85 5 9 3 TF RR Permanent Secretariat CN](#)

6. Drafting Committee for the Tirana 2024 Ministerial Communiqué

The Holy See, DC Co-Chair provided an update on how the DC came to the zero draft. She acknowledged that in 2024 there will be the 25th anniversary of the Bologna Process. Over the years, ministers have made commitments in Communiqués, some of which have not been adequately addressed in recent policy discussions. The DC emphasizes the need to address various topics more systematically and proposes that the current Communiqué has a distribution of about 40% on implementation, 30% on projections for 2024-2027, and around 20% for an outlook to 2027-2030 and beyond, with an additional 10% for introductory and concluding sections.

Although not all working structures provided input, the DC received diverse contributions. The DC found the follow-up from Rome Communiqué lacking and formulated four questions for each working structure chair to discuss during the Board meeting. These questions address current situations, commitments for the next three years, and the period leading up to 2030. General questions on accomplishments, future goals, and any overlooked areas were shared. Specific questions were directed to each working structure Co-Chair.



Ministry of Education and
Science of Georgia

The WG on Monitoring Co-Chair discussed that the forthcoming Communique should not introduce numerous new challenges but rather build on the defining work done in 2020. However, for the interim period from 2024 to 2027, they suggested a more focused approach to reporting, concentrating on key areas to avoid burdening countries with another comprehensive reporting exercise. The aim is to prioritize essential matters during this specific period while still maintaining key indicators for all topics.

The EURASHE representative emphasized that the Bucharest communique strongly underscores the importance of fair academic and professional recognition, including non-formal and informal learning, as a core element of the EHEA. She clarified that this matter is distinct from professional higher education and should not be conflated with EURASHE's contributions. In her capacity as the Co-Chair of the Working Group on Learning and Teaching, she underscored the significance of future work in implementation, focusing on the learning and teaching indicators and utilizing data from the BPIR. She also highlighted the need to examine how this group could be restructured, potentially as a thematic peer group or as another structure.

The CG Co-Chair discussed the prepared text for the communique, highlighting achievements in establishing productive relationships with various global regions and organizations and expressed their goal of further strengthening these connections and bringing fresh perspectives to shared themes. Additionally, she mentioned willingness to share it for compatibility checks with the communique, although DC Co-Chair requested official sharing of it in order to be considered for inclusion.

The DC Co-Chair proposed to hold parallel sessions at the upcoming BFUG meeting to discuss the vision of the Bologna Process, exploring focus areas and thematic group discussions. She proposed organizing breakout sessions with three groups², each addressing a set of questions. These discussions will be centred on general questions that help shape the future of the Bologna Process, focusing on the short-term goals between 2024 and 2027 and the long-term vision until 2030.

To conclude, the DC Co-Chair asked that the working structures answer in written form on the questions directed, latest until 12 October 2023.

For more information, please see: [BFUG Board ES GA 85 6 1 Drafting Committee Presentation](#)

[BFUG Board ES GA 85 6 2 Drafting Committee Draft-0-BOARD](#)

[BFUG Board ES GA 85 6 3 Drafting Committee Parallel Sessions](#)

7. Update on the application of ENOHE to join the BFUG

An update regarding the European Network of Ombuds in Higher Education's (ENOHE) application to join the BFUG was provided. The BFUG Co-Chairs reported that they had received two documents: ENOHE's application request to join the EHEA and a report from the Secretariat. In September 2023, ENOHE reached out to the Secretariat to inquire about the status of their application.

During the Sarajevo Board meeting, it was decided that the Head of the Secretariat would seek more information from the former Head of Secretariat regarding ENOHE's application. However, this information had not been provided. It was noted that a prior decision had been made, determining that ENOHE's request for

² 1. BICG (with TPG A, B, C); 2. Social Dimension & Teaching and Learning; 3. Fundamental Values & Enhancing knowledge.



Ministry of Education and
Science of Georgia

consultative membership couldn't be approved due to its limited scope and focus on peer learning activities rather than policymaking. This misalignment with the rules of procedures for consultative membership led to the recommendation that ENOHE should be asked for additional information, with clarification that they qualify only for partner status.

The discussion also raised concerns about irregularities in the application process, particularly regarding the extent to which the BFUG could recommend actions to the Secretariat concerning staff issues, internal discipline, and the code of ethics. In conclusion, it was suggested that ENOHE's letter alone might not be sufficient, and a new communication should be sent to ENOHE requesting further information and explicitly notifying them that partner status is the only qualification in this context.

8. Discussion of the Draft Agenda for the Upcoming BFUG Meeting LXXXIV

The Spanish BFUG Co-Chair provided logistical information for the BFUG Meeting, stating that each country or organization would initially be invited to send two representatives. If there is available room closer to the meeting date, a third representative from specific countries and organizations may be allowed to join.

She discussed the draft agenda items and mentioned that, for the updates by working structures, a maximum of 15 minutes would be allotted for each structure. Initially, a thematic session on "Enhancing Knowledge Sharing/ 'The Future of Bologna' in the EHEA community" was proposed. However, in response to the DC's request for breakout sessions during the upcoming BFUG meeting, the TF EKS Co-Chair suggested postponing the thematic discussion to a later BFUG meeting. The DC informed the group that one of the three parallel groups in the breakout sessions would focus on recommendations and future steps related to the BICG and TPGs. Consequently, it was suggested to invite the TPG Co-Chairs to the BFUG meeting.

The duration of reporting time for the BFUG working structures was discussed, with concerns that 15 minutes would be insufficient due to the need for discussions for each working structure. It was decided to revise the agenda to adjust the duration of specific items, determine the thematic session topic, as well as undetermined themes. The BFUG Co-Chairs encouraged written comments to be submitted within the next week regarding this matter.

For more information, please see: [BFUG Board ES GA 85 8 Draft BFUG Meeting Agenda](#)

9. Information by the Incoming Co-Chairs (Belgium and Holy See)

9.1. BFUG Board Meetings LXXXVII and LXXXIX (Holy See, the Vatican City)

Antonella Sciarrone Alibrani (Holy See Incoming Co-Chair) extended a warm welcome to all attendees and shared details about the upcoming Board meetings scheduled for 2024. Both meetings will occur in or around the Vatican City. The first BFUG Board meeting is planned for 23 January 2024, with a handover ceremony on the evening of January 22. The second BFUG Board meeting is scheduled for 12 March 2024.

9.2. BFUG Meetings LXXXVIII and LXXXX (Brussels, Belgium)

Caroline Hollela (Belgium French Community Incoming Co-Chair) welcomed everyone and shared information about the two BFUG meetings scheduled for 2024. These meetings will be held in Brussels, organized by the French, Flemish and German communities. The first BFUG will take place on February 19 and 20, while the second BFUG is scheduled from April 11 to 12. She also mentioned that the general assembly of a Quality



Ministry of Education and
Science of Georgia

Assurance organization will be held on the 12th of April in the afternoon. The plan is to have two delegates per country, with more flexibility for the first BFUG and two delegates for each country at the second BFUG.

10. AoB

The BFUG Co-Chairs informed that a letter by ENQA was received asking to be member of the BFUG Board. They proposed deferring this matter to the next working period, pointing out that making an informed decision would require additional information at this time.

Reference was made to the 2003 Berlin communique, where EUA, EURASHE, ESU, and the Council of Europe were recognized as stakeholders within the academic community and were part of the BFUG Board based on a ministerial-level political decision. However, it was mentioned that the decision to include BFUG Working Structure Co-Chairs in the Board was not formally documented in any communique; it had evolved as a practical necessity for discussions with the Co-Chairs.

A suggestion was made to address these situations in the Rules of Procedure (RoP) when they are revised. The final decision was deferred, and during this time, a thorough analysis would be prepared, outlining reasons for and against the proposed inclusion of ENQA.

In addition, the Head of the Secretariat informed that Eurodoc³, a BFUG partner, had requested participation in the BFUG meeting in Madrid. It was emphasized that the Rules of Procedure specify that EHEA partners may participate in the meeting if they can provide a rationale for their presence and specify the point of the agenda for which their contribution is required. As a result, it was decided that the Secretariat should communicate Eurodoc's partner status and explain their role to them. It was emphasized that attendance in Madrid would be subject to post availability due to the restricted situation, and confirmation would be provided only after all delegations have registered.

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.

³ European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers (Eurodoc) is an international federation representing PhD candidates and early-career researchers from 23 countries of the European Union and the Council of Europe.