

## BFUG Meeting LXXXII

11-12 May 2023  
Stockholm, Sweden

Minutes of Meeting

### List of participants

Delegation/Working structures	First Name	Last Name
Albania (BFUG Vice-Chair)	Linda	Pustina
Andorra	Jordi	Llombart
Andorra	Maria Del Mar	Martínez
Armenia	Tatevik	Gharibyan
Armenia	Elina	Asriyan
Austria/ BICG Co-Chair	Helga	Posset
Austria	Stephan	De Pasqualin
Azerbaijan	Vusala	Gurbanova
Azerbaijan	Samir	Hamidov
Belgium Flemish Community/CG on GPD Co-Chair	Liesbeth	Hens
Belgium French Community	Caroline	Hollela
Belgium French Community	Justyna	Nerkowska
Bosnia and Hercegovina	Babic	Branko
Council of Europe	Villano	Qiriazzi
Council of Europe	Catherine	Dolgova-Dreyer
Croatia	Dijana	Mandić
Croatia	Vlatka	Blažević
Croatia/WG on Social Dimension Co-Chair	Ninoslav Šćukanec	Schmidt
Cyprus	Yiannis	Kasoulides
Czech Republic (Outgoing BFUG Co-Chair)	Karolina	Gondkova
Czech Republic/TF on RR Co-Chair	Michal	Karpíšek
Denmark	Jonas	Johannesen
Education International (EI/ETUCE)	Andreas	Keller
ENQA	Anna	Gover
ENQA	Øystein	Lund
ESU/ WG on Social Dimension Co-Chair	Horia-Şerban	Onita
ESU	Katrina	Sproge
ESU	Matteo	Vespa
EUA	Maria	Kelo
EUA	Michael	Gaebel
EURASHE	Armando	Pires
EURASHE	Jakub	Grodecki
EQAR	Karl	Dittrich
EQAR	Magalie	Soenen
EQAR	Melinda	Szabo
Estonia	Janne	Pukk
European Commission	Vanessa	Debiais-Sainton
European Commission	Kinga	Szuly
EURYDICE/ WG on Monitoring Co-Chair	David	Crosier
Finland/ WG on San Marino Roadmap Co-Chair	Maija	Innola
Finland	Jonna	Korhonen

France (Outgoing BFUG Co-Chair)	Patrick	Nédellec
France	Mathieu	Musquin
Georgia (Incoming BFUG Co-Chair)	Maia	Shukhoshvili
Germany	Andreae	Lisette
Germany	Achim	Weber
Greece	Alexandra	Karvouni
Greece	Ioannis	Katsanevakis
Holy See	Melanie	Rosenbaum
Hungary	Julia	Csiszerne Komlovszki
Iceland	Una Strand	Viðarsdóttir
Ireland	Adam	Bluett
Ireland	Padraig	Hennigan
Italy/ TF on RR Co-Chair	Luca	Lantero
Italy/CG on Global Policy Dialogue Co-Chair	Ann Katherine	Isaacs
Kazakhstan (BFUG Co-Chair)	Kuanysh	Yergaliyev
Kazakhstan	Aitzhan	Kulumzhanova
Kazakhstan	Aidos	Mukhatayev
Latvia	Daiga	Ivsina
Latvia	Madara	Kārklīga
Luxembourg	Patricia	Marx
Norway/WG on Monitoring Co-Chair	Tone Flood	Strøm
The Netherlands	Marianne	van Exel
The Netherlands	Arthur	Belle
Romania/TF on Enhancing Knowledge Sharing Co-Chair	Daniela Cristina	Ghițulică
Romania/WG on Fundamental Values Co-Chair	Mihai Cezar	Haj
San Marino	Remo	Massari
Slovak Republic	Peter	Ondreicka
Slovak Republic	Marcel	Vysocký
Slovenia	Mateja	Robič
Slovenia	Jemej	Širok
Spain	Angel	Pazos
Spain (Incoming BFUG Co-Chair)	Margarita	de Lezcano-Mújica
Sweden (BFUG Co-Chair)	Robin	Moberg
Sweden	Kristina	Haskas
Switzerland	Aurélia	Robert-Tissot
Turkey	Gürhan	Demirel
Ukraine	Maryna	Mruga
Ukraine	Alla	Rybalko
UNESCO	Andreas	Snildal
United Kingdom	Pamela	Wilkinson
WG Learning & Teaching Co-Chair	Phillipe	Lalle
BFUG International Expert	Colin	Tück
BFUG International Expert	Irina	Geanta
BFUG International Expert	Sjur	Bergan
BFUG Secretariat (Head)	Edlira	Subashi
BFUG Secretariat	Jora	Vaso
BFUG Secretariat	Kristina	Metallari

Business Europe, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malta, Montenegro, Poland, Portugal and UK (Scotland) did not attend the meeting.

## **Welcome Addresses**

Therese Ahlqvist, Director General of the Ministry of Education and Research, welcomed all participants and expressed gratitude to the Co-Chairs and the BFUG Secretariat for their support to the organization of the meeting. She highlighted that Sweden has been actively involved in the Bologna Process since its declaration in 1999 and noted the high participation of higher education institutions (HEIs), staff, and students in Sweden in adopting and implementing the Bologna tools, leading to its successful implementation in the Swedish system. She emphasized the significance of the Bologna Process in safeguarding academic freedom, student and staff participation, and public responsibility for higher education and acknowledged the challenges Europe is facing and stressed the need for international cooperation.

### **1. Welcome and Introduction**

#### **1.1. Welcome by the BFUG Co-Chairs (Sweden and Bosnia & Herzegovina)**

Robin Moberg (BFUG Co-Chair, Sweden) extended warm greetings to all participants and acknowledged the contributions of the BFUG Chairs and the Secretariat in supporting the organization of the meeting. Mr. Moberg extended his well wishes for a speedy recovery to the Bosnian Co-Chair and acknowledged the great cooperation and success of the previous Board meeting held in Sarajevo. In conclusion, Mr. Moberg expressed his hope for a productive meeting.

Mr. Branko Babić (Embassy of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sweden) greeted all attendees on behalf of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Co-Chair. He acknowledged the country's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of joining the Bologna Process and the achievements made in the past two decades. He stated that the minister of education in BiH recently endorsed the Statement on Transformative Education, which aims to accomplish SDG 4 goals for education. Finally, Mr. Babić stressed the importance of developing a common strategy to shape the future of higher education by developing synergies and inviting national and European stakeholders to act complementarily.

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

Linda Pustina (BFUG Vice-Chair) expressed her gratitude to the Co-Chairs for their support in organizing the meeting and wished the Bosnian Co-Chair a speedy recovery. She drew attention to the challenges that higher education faces due to the ongoing war and emphasized the necessity to address the impact of rapidly advancing technological developments. Ms. Pustina stressed the importance of education for future generations and its impact in social and environmental development, considering the ongoing climate changes. She acknowledged that finding effective solutions to these complex issues will require joint efforts and careful consideration.

### **2. Adoption of the Agenda**

The agenda was adopted without changes.

For more information, please see: [BFUG SE BA 84 2a Agenda of meeting](#)  
[BFUG SE BA 84 2b Annotated agenda of meeting](#)

### **3. Information by the outgoing BFUG Co-Chairs (Czech Republic and Kazakhstan)**

#### **3.1. BFUG Board Meeting hosted by Kazakhstan, Astana, 5 October 2022**

Kuanysch Yergaliyev (Outgoing BFUG Co-Chair, Kazakhstan) welcomed all attendees and highlighted Kazakhstan, with its twelve-year membership, as the only country in Central Asia with membership in the EHEA. He underscored the importance of being part of the Bologna Process, allowing for the implementation of the latest advancements in higher education at the local level. Mr. Yerlagiev provided an overview of the Board meeting held in Astana, and discussed the Central Asia Higher Education Area (CAHEA), its member countries, and the benefits of their collaboration. He announced a ministerial conference and a forum for directors of universities of Central Asia to be held in Tajikistan in September, inviting participants to attend as guests. Mr. Yerlagiev concluded by stressing the importance of promoting Bologna principles and ideas in Central Asia and beyond and expressed gratitude for the support provided by the BFUG.

#### **3.2. BFUG Meeting hosted by Czech Republic, Brno, 7-8 November 2022**

Karolina Gondkova (Outgoing BFUG Co-Chair, Czech Republic) expressed appreciation for the Kazakhstan colleagues and the BFUG Secretariat's cooperation. Despite the challenging circumstances in Ukraine and the economic crisis affecting higher education, she acknowledged BFUG's ability to demonstrate its support for democratic values. Ms. Gondkova informed on the BFUG meeting held in Brno, which covered various topics, including the reporting of working structures, a review of the Rules of Procedure for EHEA, and the formation of a Task Force<sup>1</sup>, supporting efforts on

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<sup>1</sup> Task Force on the Review of the Rules and Regulations for the Governance of the European Higher Education Area.

Ukraine, and preparing for the upcoming Ministerial Conference and Global Policy Forum in Tirana in 2024. Ms. Gondkova concluded by expressing hope for productive discussions and progress on the topics covered.

#### **4. Information on the BFUG Board Meeting (31 March 2023)**

Robin Moberg gave an overview of the BFUG Board Meeting, hosted by Bosnia and Herzegovina, in Sarajevo, where updates from BFUG working structures were provided. The meeting also included discussions on the BFUG meeting agenda, the inclusion of an item on support for Ukraine at the request of the Swedish co-chairmanship, which received the Board's support. Other topics addressed included a discussion on an official correspondence from Armenia and the call for the 2027 Ministerial Conference, among others.

#### **5. Update from the BFUG Secretariat**

Eldira Subashi (Head of BFUG Secretariat) expressed her gratitude for the support received from the BFUG since assuming her role. She provided updates on the tasks completed, such as alignment meetings with BFUG Chairs and coordination meetings with Working Structure Co-Chairs to enhance collaboration. She noted that the EHEA website is undergoing a refreshing process, with collaboration from the TF on Enhancing Knowledge Sharing and the IN-Global project, and that the Secretariat maintains a Twitter account to share BFUG activities. Expressions of interest for BFUG working structures have been received and shared with BFUG members. Ms. Subashi thanked the participants, Chairs, and the Secretariat for their collaboration and support and received congratulations and well wishes for her new role.

For more information, please see: [BFUG SE BA 84 5 BFUG Secretariat Update](#)

#### **6. Updates from the Working Groups and Task Force**

##### **6.1. Working Group on Monitoring the Implementation of the Bologna Process**

David Crosier and Tone Flood Strom (Co-Chairs, WG on Monitoring) reported that the Bologna Process Implementation Report (BPIR) would draw on various sources including the BFUG questionnaire for qualitative indicators, Eurostat data for quantitative indicators, and other sources for specific issues. Mr. Crosier announced that the WG on Monitoring plans to introduce ten new indicators related to the Social Dimension Principles and Guidelines. Next to that, a new scorecard indicator was proposed, on four elements of degree structures. Mr. Crosier explained that the completion of the requirements for Bologna degree structures would be indicated by:

- the presence of workloads of over 90% of programs in the first and second cycles, respectively, meeting the agreed ECTS values,
- less than 10% of students enrolled in integrated long programs, and
- the absence of programs outside the Bologna degree structure except for integrated programs.

Regarding the 10% threshold for the degree structure indicator, Mr. Crosier explained that it was based on the majority of countries' data and served as a reasonable benchmark to ensure adherence to the commitment of organizing higher education qualifications in cycles. Several BFUG members raised objections against the degree structure indicator regarding the 10% threshold on students enrolled in integrated long programs. Albania opposed the indicator citing country-specific circumstances and the insufficiency of the Bologna system for professions like doctors, veterinarians, and architects and added that efforts of increasing admissions to address brain drain in Albania would be harmed by this indicator. Italy shared similar concerns in the medical field, emphasizing the need to remove the 10% threshold. The Holy See highlighted the aim of harmonization rather than unification of systems across countries and supported removing the indicator. ESU suggested resolving the issue by shifting from absolute numbers of students to percentages of courses in long programs.

The WG proposed to separate the indicator for automatic recognition from the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) indicator, debated whether automatic recognition decisions should be made by a system-level body or by higher education institutions (HEIs), and considered representing the state of automatic recognition in a three-level scorecard. Regarding automatic recognition, the connection between it and the LRC was not always evident, as exemplified by Greece's implementation of automatic recognition without ratifying the convention. Therefore, the suggestion was made to have an indicator for automatic recognition, without making LRC adoption a condition.

In the discussion, BFUG members stressed that recognizing the LRC principles is essential in any automatic recognition procedure, that both automatic recognition and the LRC principles should be considered when establishing procedures for recognition and that creating separate systems contradicts the fundamental basis of LRC principles. The need to send a clear message to the EHEA countries on the implementation of LRC principles was emphasized, but also that there should not be any reason for countries not to implement automatic recognition, even if the LRC has not been ratified. Conducting evaluations of country progress was recommended.

A proposal was made to provide a precise definition of automatic recognition in the table or scorecard. The Council of Europe (CoE) acknowledged the need to embrace the diversity of automatic recognition systems and announced the establishment of a working group to develop a standard text on the topic.

The WG further suggested removing the light green category (that had indicated demonstrated ESG alignment without EQAR registration) in the external quality assurance (QA) section was proposed, as it would contradict the commitment to align with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) through EQAR registration. On QA, further discussions were deemed needed to determine the way forward, while other proposed indicators include Article 7 of the LRC and the European approach to QA of joint programs, which may be transformed into a scorecard format.

BFUG members raised concerns about the light green category, which before the suggested revision did not require registration with EQAR. Some members recommended keeping the green light indicator as it aligns with the BFUG's objectives. EQAR suggested removing the light green category, which would then impose consequences for EHEA countries that fail to meet ESG compliance. Ukraine, in its efforts to establish an ESG-compliant system but having not done so yet, proposed rephrasing the light green category instead of removing it. The WG suggested to eliminate the light green category and use the orange category to indicate non-registration in EQAR.

The issue of EQAR's evaluation acceptance from ESG-compliant and EU countries exclusively was also considered problematic by the CoE. It was emphasized by various BFUG members, including the Holy See, that while an ESG-aligned QA system is preferred, it is not the only approach. ESG alignment could always be demonstrated through ENQA membership or EQAR registration, but exclusivity was discouraged. Retaining the light green category, which allows for ESG alignment without EQAR registration, was suggested.

Mr. Crosier agreed to revise the indicators based on the discussions. Further, the WG will further discuss the approach for addressing the issues raised regarding the automatic recognition and LRC, as well as explore the differing views on QA. A future meeting will be scheduled to discuss the proposal for another indicator on the European approach to quality assurance of joint programs, which will be presented in a scorecard format.

For more information, please see: [BFUG SE BA 84 6 1 WG Monitoring Report Indicators for 2024 BPIR](#)

## 6.2. Working Group on Fundamental Values

N.B. The draft statements were made accessible to the BFUG members at the session and, therefore, they could not be discussed.

Mihai Cezar Haj and Tone Flood Strom (Co-Chairs of the WG on FV) provided updates on the meetings and progress made regarding statement proposals. They mentioned that the draft statements on 'Responsibility of and for higher education,' 'Student and staff participation in higher education,' and 'Institutional autonomy' are ready to be presented by the WG members, while the 'Academic integrity' statement will be presented at the next BFUG meeting. The Co-Chairs mentioned that consultations with stakeholders and experts have taken place to determine the use of existing indicators or the creation of new ones for the monitoring framework. Challenges related to data within the countries of the EHEA are being addressed.

Ms. Strom highlighted that the statements developed by the WG and experts exhibit variations and repetitions due to interconnected elements. To address this, a common introduction will be developed to emphasize the interlinkages between the different fundamental values. While the statements were initially proposed for discussion during the BFUG, the co-chairs agreed to receive written comments from the members within a two-week deadline, as the documents had been made available to the BFUG too close to the start of the meeting.

The European Commission (EC) acknowledged the interest from the European Parliament in the topic and their respective studies and surveys. They emphasized the importance of avoiding overlaps and ensuring complementarity with the work done within the Bologna process. They expressed eagerness to build on the outcomes of the WG and develop guiding principles to provide support and peer learning to member states for the practical application of these principles. They also highlighted the need for monitoring and expressed their intention to integrate the mapping of data sets and monitoring tools from several of their projects into the European Higher Education Observatory.

The CoE mentioned that upon reviewing the statements, they observed a significant reliance on two CoE legal instruments<sup>2</sup>. The CoE proposed, that it would, along with its Education Committee, responsible for higher education policies, recommend monitoring approaches and collaborate with the WG on FV, aligning with CoE's key priorities. It

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<sup>2</sup> The recommendation on public responsibility of higher education (2007/6) and the recommendation on academic freedom and institutional autonomy (2012/7)

could also conduct implementation reviews of these recommendations, which could provide valuable insights on the experience of the 46 CoE member states.

The Co-Chairs expressed openness to considering the proposal for a concise summary of each statement, which would be referenced in the communique text. Similar to the approach taken with academic freedom, the statements would be proposed, and efforts would be made to avoid duplication with other relevant initiatives, including those by the EC. The WG would welcome feedback from the BFUG members in writing within a two-week deadline. Practical matters were discussed, including a request for written comments on the statements, with a two-week deadline.

For more information, please see: [BFUG SE BA 84 WG FV Update](#)  
[BFUG SE BA 84 6 2 WG FV Statement on Institutional Autonomy](#)  
[BFUG SE BA 84 6 2 WG FV Statement on Student and Staff Participation](#)  
[BFUG SE BA 84 WG 6 2 FV Statement on Public Responsibility for and of Higher Education](#)

### 6.3. Working Group on Social Dimension

Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt and Horia Onita (Co-Chairs, 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 and provided evidence that some EHEA countries have started to implement the principles into their national policies. They presented the comprehensive policy framework, including ten principles, guidelines, indicators, and explanatory descriptors. In collaboration with Eurydice, indicators have been developed for PAG, and feedback from BFUG meetings has been considered on the indicators. This revised version will be open for further consultation until the next BFUG meeting in Madrid, with the proposal to ultimately adopt it as an annex to the 2024 Tirana Communique.

The WG was praised by many members for their work. Some concerns were raised about including the indicators in the annex of the communique, as it might mix policy instruments with monitoring tools, and may result in a lack of flexibility if future changes are required. The flexibility of the indicators tailored to each country's needs was appreciated, but it was observed that some indicators seemed more suitable for larger countries with national strategies. To address this, a revision of the wording was proposed.

A solution proposed was referencing the indicators in the communique without adopting them as an annex. However, the co-chairs explained that the WG discussed this issue and the WG believes that the policy framework, which includes both the principles and guidelines and the indicators, would not achieve its purpose without the political ambition and commitment which requires adoption as an annex. They underlined that concrete progress has been achieved only when the document was adopted as an annex in Rome Communique and, that technical documents such as the Diploma Supplement or the QF were adopted by ministers as an annex.

The EC committed to supporting member states in implementing the guidelines, proposing the establishment of a centralized repository for existing data. The CoE emphasized that the social dimension and education responsiveness would be a pillar in their new strategy until 2030 and mentioned integrating certain principles and indicators into the strategy, particularly diversity and inclusion in education. EI ETUCE commended the progress made in addressing the social dimension and involving students, academics, and staff members. They emphasized the need to enhance working conditions and academic career paths to promote equity and equality.

Another remark highlighted the possibility of making adjustments over time even after its adoption in the communique. Furthermore, the importance of strong political commitment and implementation was emphasized, advocating for the recognition of the WG's work and prioritizing social dimension the Bologna political agenda. The Co-Chairs acknowledged the feedback received and assured that they would consider it to improve the document.

For more information, please see: [BFUG SE BA 84 WG SD 6 3 Update](#)  
[BFUG SE BA 84 WG SD 6 3 Principles and Guidelines](#)

### 6.4. Working Group on Learning & Teaching

Phillipe Lalle (Co-Chair, WG on L&T) reported that the Irish Co-Chair has been recently replaced and announced that the WG is currently focusing on system-level initiatives across the EHEA. He mentioned that the PLA on staff development held in Paris last October tackled skills for teachers in higher education, teaching and digitalization, teaching support, and academic careers. Based on the PLA outcomes and sixth WG meeting, proposals for the Ministerial Communiqué included effective support systems for teachers and continuous professional development. He added that a PLA on the topic of student-centered learning was for June 7<sup>th</sup> 2023 in Bucharest, and encouraged BFUG members to join the event. Ongoing activities include the preparation of concrete policy actions for the implementation of micro-credentials in the EHEA, as well as the establishment of a new subgroup on "Ethics and digitalization" in higher education focusing on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) by students, use of learning analytics.

An extensive list of topics and possible indicators was submitted to the WG on Monitoring, and a landscape scanning exercise was conducted to identify transferable practices. A suggestion was made to remove references to teaching in certain sections of research-related content on academic careers. Furthermore, it was suggested to address the ethical aspects of AI and its relationship with digitalization. A suggestion was made to prioritize exploring effective ways of utilizing AI in education, including its application in student learning, teacher support, and instructional methods.

For more information, please see: [BFUG SE BA 84 WG LT 6 4 Progress Report](#)

#### 6.5. Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue

Ann Katherine Isaacs (Co-Chair, CG on GPD) provided an update on the activities of the CG and its subgroups<sup>3</sup>. Ms Liesbeth Hens, the new Co-Chair from the Flemish Belgium community, was introduced. Ms. Isaacs reported the CG members' active involvement in expanding the mapping of organizations, country systems, and macro-regional organizations, particularly outside the EHEA.

Ms. Isaacs informed the BFUG that the Africa subgroup of the CG had organized three online EHEA conversations on recognition, featuring experts from the EHEA and Africa. The Americas subgroup planned a second Colloquium with Latin American countries focusing on quality. In Asia, events like the Conference of Central Asian Ministers of Education and in ASEAN the EU-SHARE conference on micro-credentials took place. A joint meeting of the CG with Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) is scheduled for September 2023 in Venice, Italy. Regional and Functional Subgroups of the CG are actively engaged in their respective activities, with the Global Policy Statement subgroup finalizing Draft 2 of the GPS after four meetings. She noted that plans for regional conferences in the fall semester are in progress, supported by the In-Global project. Education International recommended engaging global regions and stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, to facilitate a comprehensive global dialogue, and highlighted the potential of stakeholders within the EHEA to assist in identifying suitable partners for policy dialogues in different regions.

For more information, please see: [BFUG SE BA 84 CG 6 5 Update](#)

#### 6.6. Working Group on San Marino Roadmap

Maija Innola (Co-Chair, WG on SMR) updated on the WG's support to San Marino's progress in implementing their Roadmap. The country has shown commitment and capability in developing their higher education system to align with the EHEA commitments. Stakeholder meetings, including with members of Parliament, supported in the development of a new law on Higher Education and a decree for the University of San Marino. San Marino has also joined the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees project. The WG plans to present a final report in the autumn BFUG meeting, assessing reforms, highlighting good practices, and providing conclusions and recommendations. They also proposed initial recommendations for the Tirana Communique, suggesting systematically including support for new countries with a clear roadmap and a dedicated Working Group from the BFUG to assist in their reform efforts.

Remo Massari (San Marino) expressed gratitude to the Co-Chairs and WG members for their support and provided an update on the Law on Higher Education. The law emphasizes adherence to the principles of the EHEA and the LRC. QA in San Marino's HE system is a priority, with discussions underway to establish an agreement with a Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) aligned with the ESG for the external evaluation of the University of San Marino. The law also includes provisions to protect the denominations associated with higher education. The Law on Higher Education establishes the foundation for developing statutory decrees in key areas, including the establishment of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in San Marino, that aims to provide a standardized structure for classifying and recognizing qualifications within the country's higher education system.

For more information, please see: [BFUG SE BA 84 WG SMR 6a Update](#)  
[BFUG SE BA 84 WG SMR 6b Report](#)

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

Daniela Cristina Ghitulica (Co-Chair of the TF on EKS) provided an overview of the TF's composition, previous meetings, and implementation of the action plan, as well as future steps. She underlined the support received from the In-Global project and emphasized the effective collaboration between the project, the TF members, and the BFUG Secretariat. The presented Action Plan includes various activities such as videos, podcasts, newsreels, event support, and an EHEA newsletter to enhance awareness and understanding of the EHEA. The TF, with the support of the Secretariat, has initiated social media accounts, assisted in website redesign, and is preparing to launch the EHEA newsletter. An email will be sent to the BFUG members to send contributions. Experts in HE, data analysis, and communication will assist in implementing these activities. The final objective is to provide comprehensive recommendations for BFUG members.

<sup>3</sup> Two functional groups: The Global Policy Forum; the Global Policy Statement; Three regional subgroups: Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

Ms. Ghitulica informed BFUG members about an upcoming electronic survey aimed at gathering best practices and knowledge on disseminating information about the Bologna Process. The survey will be divided into two parts, for EHEA members and global partners. She stressed the importance of input from recipients, including students and staff, and requested members to share the survey with their HEIs. The TF's focus groups have been successful in sharing knowledge, and support was sought from consultative members for organizing the next focus group events. Thematic breakout sessions on knowledge sharing are also planned for the Madrid BFUG meeting to allow participants to share their activities and challenges on the topic.

For more information, please see: [BFUG SE BA 84 TF 6 7 Update](#)  
[BFUG SE BA 84 TF 6 7 Report](#)  
[BFUG SE BA 84 TF 6 7 Action Plan](#)

#### 6.8. Update from the EHEA Network of QF National Correspondents

Katia Dolgova Dreyer (CoE) announced that the upcoming meeting, scheduled for September 2023, will address several important agenda items. One recurring theme from the previous meeting that will continue to be a focal point is the challenge of micro-credentials. The main question to be addressed is whether micro-credentials should be incorporated into the QF for Higher Education. Another significant point of discussion will be the role of Qualification Frameworks (QFs) in relation to debates on automatic recognition. The meeting should emphasize the importance of examining the inclusion of Level 5 qualifications in these debates. Furthermore, reference was made to the Council of Europe's framework of competencies for democratic culture.

### **7. Welcome Address by the Swedish Minister of Education and Research**

Mats Persson (Swedish Minister of Education and Research) expressed his honour in representing the Swedish co-chairmanship of the BFUG. He highlighted the success and unique collaboration within the Bologna process between public authorities and higher education stakeholders. Mr. Persson stressed the importance of recognizing the achievements of the process in building trust, improving education quality and ensuring access to future skills. He affirmed Sweden's strong support for the Bologna process, emphasizing the synergies between the EHEA and the European Education Area. He also emphasized diversity as a key theme, leveraging cultural and linguistic differences to foster quality, transparency, mobility and innovation in higher education. Mr. Persson highlighted the significance of the Bologna process in upholding fundamental values and mentioned Sweden's recent membership in EQAR to contribute to maintaining the quality of higher education. He concluded by pledging support for Ukraine to assist its higher education sector.

### **8. Drafting Committee for the Tirana 2024 Ministerial Communiqué**

Melanie Rosenbaum (Co-Chair, DC) recalled the responsibilities of the Drafting Committee (DC) in preparing the Draft Communiqué for the Ministerial Conference, comprised in the Terms of Reference. She informed that the DC is meeting regularly according to a Roadmap and that minutes of the DC meetings would be published only when the meeting is not convened exclusively for working on the draft text of the Communiqué.

The Co-Chair outlined that the Tirana Communiqué is suggested to be a concise document consisting of an introduction, a section on progress made and goals for the future, priorities beyond 2027, conclusions, and appendices. The third section will cover the priorities of the EHEA beyond 2027, including the contribution of the EHEA to realizing the SDGs 2030/sustainability and the influence of the EHEA on the future SDG realization. The conclusion section of the Tirana Communiqué will cover a few lines on the good implementation status of the WG on SMR and the announcement of the place and date of the next Ministerial Conference. Finally, the Tirana Communiqué will include appendices with additional information. In order to make more specific comments, the draft text which contains the contributions of several WGs would be provided shortly.

It was explained that the document's introduction will provide an overview of the Bologna Process/EHEA, emphasizing higher education's role in democratic societies, social cohesion, inclusion, and the impact of the pandemic and geopolitical changes. The second section will focus on progress, achievements, and future plans until 2027, assessing current work plan topics, setting objectives for 2024-2027, and considering international discussions and trends. The third section will cover priorities beyond 2027, including the EHEA's contribution to the SDGs 2030/sustainability. The conclusion will mention the WG on SMR's implementation status and announce the next Ministerial Conference. The Tirana Communiqué will include appendices with additional information.

The presented draft structure (document BFUG\_SE\_BA\_84\_8c\_Drafting Committee\_Draft Structure Communiqué), is available for comments until 26 May 2023, given the next DC meeting in June, and the first draft ("draft zero") of the Tirana Communiqué, taking into account the contributions from various WGs, will be provided to the next BFUG (November 2023) for more specific comments.



For more information, please see: [BFUG SE BA 84 8a Drafting Committee Terms of Reference](#)  
[BFUG SE BA 84 8b Drafting Committee Draft Roadmap](#)  
[BFUG SE BA 84 8c Drafting Committee Draft Structure Communiqué](#)

## **9. Update from the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG)**

Helga Posset (Co-Chair, BICG) provided an update of the BICG, focusing on the Thematic Peer Groups (TPGs) and their state-of-play. Ms. Posset highlighted the aim of the BICG to facilitate the coordinated implementation of the three key commitments of the EHEA, through close collaboration with the TPGs, and informed that six online meetings have been organized thus far. Ms. Posset 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.

For more information, please see: [BFUG SE BA 84 9 Bologna Implementation Coordination Group Update](#)

## **10. Updates on the call for the host of the 2027 EHEA Ministerial Conference and Secretariat**

Edlira Subashi (BFUG Secretariat, Head) announced that all recommendations from the Board were thoroughly reviewed and integrated into the call, which can be found on the website. The document builds on previous experience and aims to outline the responsibilities and role of the host country. Ms. Subashi explained that the document provides an overview of the selection process for choosing both the host country of the upcoming Ministerial Conference and the BFUG Secretariat, and includes information on the voting procedure, deadlines for each stage of the process, and guidelines for managing multiple applications. Ms. Subashi encouraged inquiries to be sent via email to the Secretariat, in case further clarifications are needed.

For more information, please see: [BFUG SE BA 84 10 Procedure for the Selection of 2027 Ministerial Conference Host and BFUG Secretariat](#)

## **11. Thematic discussion on Rules of Procedures: plenary**

### **11.1. Discussion on the Expressions of Interest**

In an email consultation prior to the BFUG Meeting, the Council of Europe had expressed interest in joining the Task Force (TF). In response to the consultations, one BFUG member, Iceland, and two consultative members (EUA and ENQA) requested to discuss the Council of Europe's expression of interest at the BFUG meeting. Before giving the floor to the TF Co-Chairs, the Chair of the session, Mr. Moberg, informed the BFUG that Mr. Villano Qiriazzi would be the CoE representative to join the TF.

The BFUG Vice-Chair confirmed that the RoP generally permits electronic written procedure for applications to join working structures of the BFUG, and wondered whether the request of Iceland to instead discuss this expression of interest in the BFUG was to be considered as a request of changing the rules and procedures on electronic voting, since there was no formal objection to the CoE's express of interest. She also sought clarification on whether keeping the TF small meant keeping it closed. She emphasized that the approved TF ToRs do not include provisions restricting the acceptance of additional applications, that the focus should be on addressing the CoE's application represented by Mr. Villano Qiriazzi and, if there is an objection, discussions based on the RoP can be initiated. If not, the discussion should tackle how similar applications should be handled in the future.

Iceland informed that it deliberately submitted an email expressing its objection, which is based on the explicit guidelines established during the formation of the TF, which emphasized the importance of maintaining a small team of experts. The Secretariat provided a technical update on the correspondence regarding the CoE's interest to join the TF, specifically to the message received from Iceland. Council of Europe's response was circulated among the BFUG Chairs, the TF Co-Chairs, and Iceland all of this within 48 hours. Subsequent steps taken after the initial email from Iceland have been carried out in synchronisation with the BFUG Co-Chairs through coordinated communication. At this point, following Iceland's clarification, the floor was opened for discussions as by the RoPs.

Iceland, Germany and Norway, in their interventions, emphasized the importance of maintaining a small TF with experienced individuals from the BFUG and highlighted the need to adhere to agreed criteria and follow the Rules of Procedures (RoP). The European University Association (EUA) sought clarification on the CoE's interest in joining the TF, emphasizing the importance of focusing on individuals rather than organizational representation. EUA raised concerns about making an exception for the CoE, which could raise questions about equal opportunities for others. Three options were presented: maintaining the status quo, including only the CoE, or opening the TF to all other

interested parties. However, the latter option may compromise the TF's specialized nature and require careful consideration to avoid reorganization and delays.

The Holy See highlighted the legal perspective regarding a procedure closed at the last BFUG meeting in Brno, referring to the minutes of the BFUG meeting in Brno that approved the ToRs and the selection of experts.

The CoE explained that their expression of interest in joining the TF was a direct result of the TF's work, which had been presented at the BFUG Board meeting in Sarajevo. The CoE expressed its opinion that the TF's scope extended beyond the RoP, and encompassed other dimensions as well. Based on this broader involvement, the CoE made the decision to submit their application and contribute to this work. The CoE emphasized the belief that policymakers should play a vital role in shaping the future governance of the EHEA since it is a policy-driven process. CoE expressed their motivation to contribute to this work and provide member states with a range of options for the future. While acknowledging that member states ultimately have the authority to make decisions, the CoE proposed offering multiple pathways rather than a singular approach. They stressed the importance of organizations like the CoE, which represents its 46 member states, all of whom are also members of the EHEA, having a voice in shaping the EHEA for the next 10 to 15 years. The Swedish Co-Chair announced a technical break to enable a brief meeting of the delegations that had taken the floor in the debate to develop a proposal that could be accepted by the BFUG. The CoE clarified that if the BFUG aligns with the approach and interpretation of the ToRs approved in Brno, it would withdraw its application. Following the CoE's statement, the discussion on the CoE's participation in the TF was concluded without any further deliberation.

### 11.2. Introduction to the TF Work plan and proposal

The TF Co-Chairs provided an overview of the TF's progress. Their proposal suggests a two-layered approach: firstly, is a proposal for "EHEA statutes" that encompass broader principles and values to be adopted by the ministers and secondly, the revised operational RoP that allow for flexibility and fall within the decision-making authority of the BFUG. They proposed to discuss at this BFUG, the overall approach and direction, and the key principles, in order to give the TF an indication on how to continue, and allow to present a more developed and detailed approach at the upcoming BFUG meeting in Madrid, where it would have to be agreed on the principle approach, also regarding a permanent secretariat, while the ultimate decision would be left to the ministers. Additional online consultations may be necessary, to enable more opportunities for BFUG members to provide feedback, given that the time at BFUG meetings is limited.

In the BFUG Meeting in Brno, the question of the potential establishment of a permanent secretariat was raised again. The TF collected information and explored various solutions for its structure, funding, and legal framework and suggested that the secretariat would consist of around eight full-time positions with diverse expertise. Staff capacity and budget matters were addressed, including possibly membership fees and financial support from the European Commission. Emphasis was placed on ensuring that the secretariat retains a technical rather than a political role to maintain independence.

The Co-Chairs noted that the three documents, the RoP, the statutes for ministers, and the permanent secretariat concept, are interconnected and require further exploration. They added that the task at hand was to revise the RoP and propose recommendations for any necessary EHEA structural reforms as aligned with identified needs. The presented documents served as scenarios intended for open discussion. While no final decisions were to be made at the meeting, it was underlined that these discussions would play a pivotal role in shaping future work.

The Holy See requested as a point of order the modification of the agenda and proceedings: that the discussion be conducted solely in a plenary session due to the significance of the issue and the concern that valuable contributions could be lost in smaller breakout groups. The request aimed to honour the CoE's appeal and align with the collective interest of all participants who wish to be fully informed and involved in the process. The TF Co-Chairs stated that due to the importance of the topic, conducting breakout sessions could be more useful and suggested that there will be a specific point on reporting to be discussed the next day, allowing for dedicated time on that matter. They also referenced the use of a similar structure in the past for this reason. The Holy See responded by highlighting the nature of the TF as a technical expert group that has transitioned into a political mediator role, stressing the need for an initial general discussion on the three documents' structure and content before addressing specific questions. Ultimately, it was so decided that the plenary session was to continue without any breakout sessions for both days.

### 11.3. Plenary session: First day

The TF Co-Chairs encouraged participants to discuss on the questions put forth by the TF. One element that needed clarification was the distinction between 'Rules of Procedure' and 'Statutes'. It was pointed out that the proposals presented thus far were not regarding the Rules of Procedure, as assumed, but rather focused on the statutes of the EHEA, which focused on whether a two-layered system of regulations is needed.

It was argued that the term "statute" was inappropriate and would be avoided in the revised documents of the RoP. It was acknowledged that the EHEA was established through the Bologna Process, which originated as an informal gathering rather than an international treaty. The foundation of the EHEA relied on the political commitment of the ministers involved, rather than on a legally binding agreement. This aspect needed to be taken into consideration when further exploring different aspects of the EHEA. For example, when discussing the establishment of an association, the tangible nature of this commitment and the implications of having statutes were also considered as separate discussions.

The question of whether a permanent secretariat should be established or not was raised again. ESU expressed their support for having a permanent secretariat, which would contribute to the stability of the process and ensure a consistent and reliable capacity that the Secretariat should possess, as well as to the proposal of a two-layered system of regulations. However, it was noted that a comprehensive analysis of the implications, costs and benefits of all three proposed options was lacking. Before the BFUG made a decision regarding any of the three options, it was proposed that the TF should conduct a thorough assessment of all three procedures, without rushing through the decision-making process.

The issue of the Secretariat was discussed, highlighting both the challenges and benefits with the structure as is now. It was requested that a review by an expert in International Public Law is made to address the legal contradictions identified.

The need for further revision and comprehensive financial analysis of all options was highlighted. Decision-making by ministers for rules with political implications and by the BFUG for other matters was also suggested.

#### 11.4. Plenary session: Second day

Robin Moberg (Co-Chair, Sweden) introduced the day's agenda, emphasizing that the purpose of the discussion was not for the BFUG to make final decisions, but rather to provide an indication to the TF on how to continue its work, in view of the structure of the RoPs and on the permanent secretariat.

##### 11.4.1. Discussion on the Rules of Procedures

Robin Moberg (Co-Chair, Sweden) introduced the day's agenda, emphasizing that the purpose of the discussion was not for the BFUG to make final decisions, but to provide support to the TF on guiding principles. Members agreed to hold two separate discussions, on the structure and future of the RoPs and one on the permanent secretariat.

ESU provided several specific recommendations for the RoP which included not adding provisions that may involuntarily lead to consultative members not being able to constructively criticize Bologna policies, maintaining the category of Bologna Partners for stakeholder organisations which are not consultative members, clarification of the BFUG's responsibility for developing the work program while ministers determine political priorities, a more prominent role for Co-Chairs in external representation, a comprehensive description of the Vice Chair's role, systematic categorization of BFUG Working Structures and the role of WG co-chairs in the BFUG Board, clear voting procedures in accordance with the decisions in Brno, clarification of the role of policy officers in the permanent secretariat, among others.

The Holy See agreed with most of the recommendations made by ESU and requested that further revisions be taken into account for the current text of the 2020-2024 RoP of the BFUG, as the mandate of the TF RoP had been a revision of the RoP and not the formulation of new and imminently political texts. The CoE suggested to set aside Articles 1, 2, and 3 of the current RoP text and instead focus on the RoP for the existing bodies within the Bologna process, as well as suggested that the RoP include an ethical code for the BFUG, outlining ethical principles to prevent unethical behaviour and conflicts of interest. On Article 7.8, it was suggested to include a representative from each WG in the Board for regular updates and to maintain the current dynamic. The proposal to grant the Board decision-making power on certain issues raised some concerns. Using more generic language, streamlining the existing RoP, and eliminating annexes were proposed for the revision of the document for the BFUG in Madrid.

A recommendation was made to reverse the current statement on voting, suggesting that a two-thirds majority should be the general rule for BFUG decisions, with a majority vote being the exception for other matters. It was also emphasized that consensus should be explicitly stated as an important principle. Another point was made that some articles were deemed too general, such as Articles 5.3 and 6.7, regarding significant violations and procedures for judging members' actions (Article 5.3). Michael Gaebel (Co-Chair, TF on RoP) noted that the current document of the "Statutes" is incomplete as it only includes the articles for the Ministers, but not yet the revised RoP for the BFUG. In view of the general agreement that there should be only one ROP document, comprising rules for the Ministers and the BFUG, he emphasized the need for the BFUG to have the flexibility to change working structures without having to amend them through ministerial endorsement.

#### 11.4.2. Discussion on the Permanent Secretariat

Regarding the permanent secretariat and how the TF should explore it further, it was noted that the final adjustments to the RoP could be made once there is agreement on the permanent secretariat.

Sjur Bergan (International TF RoP expert) listed the three potential scenarios<sup>4</sup> for the permanent Secretariat and clarified that there is no intention to change the Secretariat arrangements until 2027. There was a need to consider available options and assess pros and cons before making a decision. The majority of members supported the idea of developing a SWOT analysis of the current situation and on the advantages and disadvantages of the current situation, potential options for the secretariat and added value.

Pros and cons of a permanent Secretariat were discussed. A central point of concern revolved around the financial responsibilities to be borne by participating countries. The establishment of a permanent Secretariat would render necessary careful considerations of the type of organization that requires specific legal entity clearance, the kind of involvement expected by the hosting country of the Ministerial conference, the impossibility of some organizations and countries to participate, and the lack of direct involvement of countries in the management of the BFUG process, among others issues, while some positive aspects included the continuity of the secretariat and the centralized data access. Also, some ideas on the potential location of the permanent secretariat were discussed but with no specific conclusions.

As in 2016, the BFUG had formally decided to not further pursue a possible project of a permanent secretariat, and as the documentation furnished by the TF RoP had not taken into account various considerations and objections made at that time, the Vice-Chair requested the circulation of the 2016 documents<sup>5</sup> prepared on the proposed permanent secretariat to all BFUG members to provide background and context for members who were not present at that time and suggested that the TF work on a comparative analysis. It was emphasized that the TF should explore different options on the structure and organization of the permanent secretariat.

Robin Moberg acknowledged the general agreement on the TF's work, emphasizing the need for revised RoP, clarifying the roles of the BFUG, the importance of consensus and avoiding excessive definitions. A revised proposal was requested from the TF for the BFUG meeting in Madrid, with an emphasis on exploring different options of a permanent secretariat and their implications.

## 12. Update from the Consultative Members

Robin Moberg (Co-Chair) invited consultative members to add any updates or comments to the written reports that were already shared by them with the BFUG members.

### 12.1. European University Association

Michael Gaebel (EUA) announced that the EUA Autonomy Scorecard had been published and was available on the EUA website. Additionally, participants were informed about the launch of the Trends 2024 survey and were encouraged to support its dissemination to HEIs in their systems.

For more information, please see: [BFUG SE BA 84 12 1 EUA Report](#)

### 12.2. European Students' Union

Matteo Vespa (ESU) informed members that during the ESU Board meeting held in Georgia, several actions and policy documents were discussed and approved. These included the election of a new team, the approval of documents such as the statement on the future of Bologna and education for sustainable development, the creation of a conference for student councils of European University alliances, and the adoption of resolutions supporting Faroe Islands' membership in EHEA, the UK's association to Erasmus+, Georgia's European Union candidacy, and the topic of artificial intelligence. The Bologna with Student Eyes Survey data collection was also highlighted as a final priority for the participating unions.

For more information, please see: [BFUG SE BA 84 12 2 ESU Update](#)

### 12.3. European Association of Institutions in Higher Education

Armando Pires (EURASHE) mentioned that the written report highlights the organization's activities over the past six months. EURASHE has adopted a strategic framework with five thematic priorities: skills and talent for the future, quality assurance, innovative institutions, challenge-based research, local and regional impact, and Europeanization and internationalization and is actively engaged in communities of practice and project partnerships. Two upcoming events

<sup>4</sup> A not-for-profit organization or association foundation, an existing international organization, or a new intergovernmental organization.

<sup>5</sup> [https://ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/20161208-09-Bratislava/81/4/BFUG\\_SK\\_ME\\_52\\_8\\_ArrangementsSecretariat\\_669814.pdf](https://ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/20161208-09-Bratislava/81/4/BFUG_SK_ME_52_8_ArrangementsSecretariat_669814.pdf) and [https://ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/20161208-09-Bratislava/00/5/BFUG\\_SK\\_ME\\_52c\\_Minutes\\_Bratislava\\_720005.pdf](https://ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/20161208-09-Bratislava/00/5/BFUG_SK_ME_52c_Minutes_Bratislava_720005.pdf)

were mentioned: the EURASHE annual conference on skills for Europe in June at the University POLITEHNICA from Bucharest and a PLA on student-centred learning organized with the BFUG Working Group on L&T.

For more information, please see: [BFUG SE BA 84 12 3 EURASHE Update](#)

#### 12.4. European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education

Magalie Soenen (EQAR) announced that the mandate of Mr. Karl Dittrich as EQAR President would end on July 1<sup>st</sup> and that the newly elected President will assume the role from the same date. The speaker expressed gratitude to Mr. Dittrich for his contributions to EQAR and the BFUG over the past years. Additionally, Ms. Soenen acknowledged the transition of roles from Colin Tück to herself as the current Director, taking the opportunity to thank Mr. Tück for his 15 years of work as Director and his contributions to the Bologna community.

For more information, please see: [BFUG SE BA 84 12 4 EQAR Update](#)

#### 12.5. Council of Europe

Villano Qiriazzi (CoE) provided information on the upcoming 26<sup>th</sup> session of the standing conference of ministers of education, which will take place in Strasbourg in September. The Education Committee has prepared five resolutions for adoption by ministers, focusing on strategy, renewal of civic mission of education, digital transformation and artificial intelligence in education, right to education in times of crisis, and the possible establishment of a European Year of digital citizenship education in 2025. Mr. Qiriazzi added that the resolution on AI in education could potentially lead to the development of a legal binding instrument regarding the use of AI in education systems in Europe.

Andorra expressed gratitude for the CoE's work in various projects, as in the National Qualifications Framework correspondence project and the digital citizenship project, as well as expressed interest in hosting an event in Andorra.

For more information, please see: [BFUG SE BA 84 12 5 CoE Report](#)

#### 12.6. UNESCO

Andreas Snildal (UNESCO) provided an update on the recent invitations sent out for the first intergovernmental conference of the States Parties to the global convention on the recognition of qualifications concerning higher education. The speaker emphasized that the meeting is open to all UNESCO member states and stakeholders in higher education, and while only the 21 States Parties participate in a voting capacity, all other member states are cordially invited. The conference is scheduled to take place at UNESCO headquarters on July 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>.

For more information, please see: [BFUG SE BA 84 12 6 UNESCO Report](#)

#### 12.7. Education International

Andreas Keller (EI-ETUCE) highlighted the importance of the European sector social dialogue in education, which was established in 2010 under the EU treaty. He mentioned the involvement of social partners representing education sectors in EU countries, including the European Federation of education employers, the national worldwide umbrella organization of teacher organizations. He emphasized the significance of encouraging employer organizations to join the social dialogue if they are not yet represented, as not all EU countries currently have employer representation. Ongoing projects were mentioned such as promoting quality of academic teaching and management, and directed participants to their website for more information.

For more information, please see: [BFUG SE BA 84 12 7 ETUCE Report](#)

#### 12.8. European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Anna Gover (ENQA) highlighted the organization's ongoing work as the primary provider of external reviews of quality assurance agencies in the EHEA. At-a-glance fact sheet about the past year's activities is included as an annex to ENQA's written report to the BFUG.

For more information, please see: [BFUG SE BA 84 12 8 ENQA Report](#)

### **13. Update on the possible support and coordination on Ukraine**

Michael Gaebel (EUA) emphasized the importance of proactive support for Ukraine's HEIs and proposed shifting from emergency aid to more systematic and sustained support that could contribute to institutional and system-level reforms.

Mr. Gaebel also stressed the importance of ensuring access to digital infrastructure for Ukrainian colleagues and expressed EUA's willingness to support Ukraine by recommendations and conducting a survey to map initiatives.

Maryna Mruga (Ukraine) expressed gratitude for BFUG countries' support, acknowledging progress in Ukrainian education despite the ongoing war. She explained that Ukraine has adopted distance learning with academic autonomy and that the EC and European universities played a vital role in ensuring academic mobility by hosting Ukrainian students and faculty. She explained that an online admission campaign for Ukrainian refugees was organized successfully, with support from ministries and universities. She highlighted Germany's initiatives to maintain university connections, provide enrolment opportunities, and extend distance learning opportunities. Ukraine highlighted the need for assistance for international and Ukrainian students studying abroad, proposing to grant them status to access higher education in different countries as well as exchanging information about enrolled students between ministries to facilitate their participation in educational programs abroad.

France expressed support for Ukraine's higher education with plans to provide digital teaching resources, establish partnerships for distance learning, and collaborate on mathematics research through an international research centre. Italy announced the official approval of a declaration against Russia and Belarus by the LRC Committee. Germany emphasized supporting Ukrainian students to continue their studies within the country and mentioned a digital learning program in collaboration with Ukrainian universities. ESU mentioned its support for students in Ukraine and the work done with the member union from Ukraine, and reiterated the need to find solutions for the international students trapped at the border. The CoE expressed strong support for Ukraine's education system, adopting statements and creating a dedicated web page with resources, as well as finalizing a manual for evaluating credentials from Ukraine. Ukraine applied to become an observer to the Council of Europe Observatory on History Teaching. The Council proposed establishing a register to document damage caused by Russian aggression. The EC reaffirmed its readiness to support Ukraine, with allocated funding for reshaping the higher education system. Cooperation proposals have gained interest, with evaluation and projects expected to begin after summer. Ms. Mruga expressed gratitude for the support and assistance from the BFUG.

For more information, please see: [BFUG SE BA 84 13 Update on possible support and coordination on Ukraine](#)

#### **14. Information by the Incoming Co-Chairs**

##### **14.1. [BFUG Board Meeting LXXXV \(Georgia\)](#)**

Maia Shukhoshvili (Incoming Co-Chair, Georgia) commended the successful organization of the BFUG meeting and the productive discussions. She highlighted Georgia's active participation in the Bologna Process and the EHEA, which led to significant reforms, including the implementation of a three-cycle education system and a diploma supplement. Ms. Shukhoshvili mentioned that Georgia adopted a comprehensive strategy for Higher Education and Science last year, emphasizing the country's commitment to integration and participation in the EHEA. Georgia recently hosted important events, such as the ENQA Members Forum and the ESU Board meeting, demonstrating its dedication to collaboration. She expressed her pleasure in serving as BFUG Co-Chair alongside Spain, and highlighted the ongoing preparations for the upcoming Board meeting, scheduled for October in Tbilisi. Ms. Shukhoshvili concluded by expressing gratitude for the support and opportunity provided.

##### **14.2. [BFUG Meeting LXXXVI \(Spain\)](#)**

Margarita de Lezcano-Mújica (Incoming Co-Chair, Spain) extended a warm welcome to everyone and provided an overview of the key priorities of the Spanish presidency. The main focus areas include advancing European values and fostering democratic citizenship, promoting the development of the EHEA, driving digital transformation in education, and advocating for a gender perspective in digital education. Several notable events were listed as part of the Spanish presidency, including a conference for the European Universities Alliance in Barcelona, an informal meeting of ministers in charge of education in Zaragoza, a conference addressing gender-based violence in academia in Bilbao, and a Council of Education Ministers' meeting in Brussels. Ms. Lezcano-Mújica concluded her remarks by extending a warm invitation to all participants to join the upcoming BFUG meeting in Madrid.

For more information, please see: [BFUG SE BA 84 BFUG Meeting LXXXVI Information](#)

#### **15. Automatic Recognition European Commission**

Kinga Szuly (European Commission) provided an update on the implementation report on automatic recognition and highlighted the importance of the council recommendation on automatic recognition for developing a European education area. Necessary legislation, EU and Bologna transparency tools, and the LRC were identified as crucial for automatic recognition. Ms. Szuly presented findings from the analysis of member states' implementation of automatic recognition, noting that 12 member states currently allow for automatic recognition, with an additional three member states in the process of implementing it. She emphasized the importance of national guidance for institutions, which is currently



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provided by academic recognition centers in only 14 member states. Data from the Erasmus+ program indicated that 48.4% of mobilities resulted in full automatic recognition, but there is a lack of data on recognition outside the program, highlighting a need for systematic monitoring.

Ms. Szuly proposed giving competence for automatic recognition to a dedicated body at the national level to ensure consistency in decision-making and the need for a more systematic quality assurance procedure for learning periods abroad. Ms. Szuly mentioned the support provided by the European Commission through the Erasmus Plus programs and the Swedish presidency's adoption of conclusions on further steps to make automatic recognition a reality. Lastly, she emphasized the importance of automatic recognition in reducing administrative burdens, promoting equal access, equitable quality education, and facilitating mobility.

For more information, please see: [BFUG SE BA 84 15 EC Automatic Recognition Report](#)

## **16. AOB**

The Armenian representative took the floor to read *verbatim* an official letter sent to the BFUG Co-Chairs. ESU mentioned that the Board of ESU recently adopted a resolution calling for upholding human rights, and especially the right to education in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Furthermore, the Head of the BFUG Secretariat informed the members that an email was sent to the BFUG to submit written feedback on the statements of the WG on FV with deadline May 25, 2023. Additionally, Ms. Subashi reminded everyone that further comments and written feedback on the draft structure of the Communique and the roadmap should be submitted to the Secretariat by May 26, 2023. Furthermore, in response to the request of the BFUG Vice-Chair, the documents from the 2016 Bratislava BFUG meeting would be circulated among the BFUG members. Ms. Subashi also informed the BFUG about the confirmed dates for the upcoming Board and BFUG meetings in the next semester. The Board meeting is scheduled to take place in Tbilisi on October 2, 2023, while the BFUG meeting will be held in Madrid on November 16-17, 2023. To ensure compliance with the existing rules and procedures, Ms. Subashi kindly requested the BFUG working structures to provide the necessary documents to the Board members no later than September 17, 2023, and to the BFUG members by November 1, 2023. This timeline allows time for consultation by both the Board members and BFUG members. Ms. Subashi expressed her gratitude for the BFUG's cooperation and kindly asked the working structures to adhere to these deadlines.

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.



**Albanian BFUG Secretariat  
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