

Change in order of co-chairing of the BFUG - follow-up on example of the Holy See mentioned

As the Holy See co-chairing arrangement of 2014 was mentioned in the Background note of the Co-chairs, distributed by the Secretariat on 17 November 2021, we would like to recall the following:

The co-chairing agreement belongs to the foundation principles of the BFUG, one “Co-chair” following the order of the EU presidencies, the other from a non-EU country following alphabetical order. This is not to be confounded with the decision to accept an invitation to host a ministerial conference (“Vice-chair”) by the BFUG.

In the case of the Holy See, the first occurrence of a change in the board composition sequence, the procedure and conditions were clarified in detail, as pertinent minutes should display.

At that time, the Holy See was informed that the following preconditions existed for an amendment/change of order in co-chairing:

1) Unanimity/consent among all states concerned, i.e. all those directly affected by the change, from the first to the last country/semester “shifted” up or down.
The Holy See obtained and submitted this agreement before the matter was tabled for discussion in the BFUG.

2) Consensus of all BFUG members to the agreement.
This consensus was established after a short discussion (without any objections).

If those rules should change, so that for the future a vote among the BFUG members present was sufficient for a change of co-chairing, alliances could form, and for political, tactical and/or economic reasons enforce decisions against the minority and against the further countries concerned.

Such a precedent of abandoning the principle of consensus would touch at the foundations of the Bologna Process and the consequences should not only be considered carefully, but – as we believe – be approved by a Ministerial meeting, as the BFUG itself is not able to change fundamental principles of the EHEA and the related Bologna Process.

22 November 2021

Holy See
BFUG Delegation