



Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Ministry of Civil Affairs

## Task Force on the Review of the Rules and Regulations for the Governance of the European Higher Education Area

Fourth meeting, Online

19 April 2023

14:00-16:30 CET

Minutes of Meeting

### List of Participants

Delegation/Organization	First Name	Last Name
Albania (BFUG Vice-Chair)	Linda	Pustina
Czech Republic (Co-Chair)	Michal	Karpíšek
EQAR	Colin	Tück
European Commission	Kinga	Szuly
Germany	Frank	Petrikowski
Romania	Irina	Geantă
BFUG international expert	Sjur	Bergan
BFUG Secretariat (Head)	Edlira	Subashi
BFUG Secretariat	Ana	Zhibaj

Michael Gaebel (EUA Co-Chair) and Luca Lantero (Italy Co-Chair) sent regrets.

### 1. Welcome remarks and approval of the agenda and minutes

Michal Karpíšek (Co-Chair) opened the meeting by welcoming all participants. An outline of the agenda was provided, which was adopted without any changes. Following the meeting, the Secretariat would provide a brief, bulleted document outlining tasks and responsibilities to the members, to expedite the document reviewing process.

For more information, please see: [TF RoP SE BA 4 Agenda of the meeting](#)

### 2. Report from the BFUG Board meeting, feedback on the documents and sessions in Stockholm

Michal Karpíšek (Co-Chair) presented updates from the BFUG Board and feedback on the two working documents (EHEA Statutes offering the legal framework for implementing the Permanent Secretariat and the Permanent Secretariat document). It was noted that the work of the Task Force (TF) was generally appreciated, and the interactions regarded minor comments. While the structure of the two-layered document was welcomed, the board requested for a more fleshed out format of the thematic group discussion, focusing on how to proceed with the full document and get the feedback from the proposed members. Overall, it was noted that there was a consensus over the need for a definitive agreement regarding the Secretariat. While a Board member made comments on risks of permanent secretariat changing the character of EHEA (CoE), this alternative was welcomed for further discussion, yet more details would be needed and well in advance prior to the BFUG in order to allow BFUG members consultation within their institutions. While some decisions should be taken at the BFUG Meeting in Madrid, it was reported that trying to get any definite agreement on a Permanent Secretariat at the BFUG meeting in Stockholm would be seen too urgent and could potentially bring more confusion and counterproductive reactions.



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During the discussion of the updates and comments received (some delivered a day before the TF meeting), it was emphasized that for the future BFUG meetings, there should be set a deadline in writing for receiving feedback. It was also emphasized that the received comments should focus at this stage on the main issues, and the detailed comments should be reserved for later. For the BFUG meeting presentation in Stockholm, it was suggested to include a timeline of previous discussions regarding the topic of the Permanent Secretariat, as a measure to guide a constructive discussion. Concerns over the timeline, specifically if 2024 is a realistic date for the start of the Secretariat, were raised. The board's concerns over the financial aspects and member contributions were noted as well.

### **3. Finalization of the BFUG documents for Stockholm**

#### 3.1. Overall report

Mr. Karpíšek presented an outline of the documents for the upcoming BFUG meeting and the workplan. The Secretariat reminded the members that the documents for the BFUG should be ready by April 25, at the very latest, although the members of the TF were willing to strive to complete the documents early (by April 24), to provide more room to discuss many of the major themes (like the financial and independence aspect of the secretariat). It was emphasized that the documents should highlight that they are working drafts, not finalized, and open to discussion. This would be emphasized in the opening session. The discussion also emphasized the need to balance more general, urgent comments that needed to be addressed soon, and more specific comments that could be addressed at a later stage. It was suggested that the Statutes, the Permanent Secretariat, and the thematic block input should be annexes to the overall report.

#### 3.2. Statutes

Mr. Karpíšek announced that there were minor comments for the Statutes documents. Sjur Bergan suggested that the document could be sent out as is, and some comments could be reflected on the following drafts of the document, since they are more detailed.

#### 3.3. Permanent Secretariat

Colin Tück (EQAR) informed that the comments for the Permanent Secretariat were mainly editorial. He recommended that the discussion would concentrate on determining what information should be presented to the BFUG at this stage and what details could be deferred for later stages due to their highly specific nature. The TF members congratulated Colin Tück and Irina Geantă (Romania) on their work drafting the document. The suggested revisions were as follows:

- Background and rationale — the linkage between the Permanent Secretariat and hosting the Ministerial was deleted for the moment and would be discussed at a later stage.
- Tasks and responsibilities — replacement of the word "overseeing" with "supporting implementation of the workplan", regarding the role of the Secretariat. There were revisions to the BFUG's role of representing EHEA "representation of the EHEA at external events/ meetings, as mandated by the BFUG co-chairs".
- Staff of the Secretariat — As the current document was deemed too detailed, it was suggested that there should be a rough estimation (eight people), without further detailing their engagement. It was agreed that the version would have a description of the functions and the total staff number.
- Suggested legal form — It was agreed that there should be an emphasis on describing the



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rationale of the NGO decision (outlining that three models were considered), since this setup was the most ubiquitous, as it was similar in most jurisdictions. The suggestion for the contributions of the host country (in office space) would be added in the footnote, and they should be phrased more positively, to emphasize what the host country could do, instead of what it could not do. During the discussion, the question of hosting by international organization was raised, but it was agreed that in reality, it would not be feasible. Finally, it was agreed that the independence of the Secretariat would be emphasized in the chapter that follows.

- Governing structure — Sjur Bergan drew attention to the fact that there should be a noted distinction between consultative members and members. The EQAR general assembly was brought forth as a good example, where the general assembly immediately follows and is not part of the meetings. It was suggested to mention that the members of the association are the same as the members of the BFUG (a similar logic would apply to the consultative members), to provide more clarity. Furthermore, it was suggested to simplify the structure of the members through bullet points. Finally, since the discussion of the "Governing structure" heavily revolved around the "Suggested legal form", it was suggested that both chapters be merged, and "Governing structure" would be further simplified. Colin Tück and Irina Geantă agreed to revise the chapters, as discussed.
- Host Country Arrangements — It was suggested that this chapter needs to be simplified for the BFUG discussion in Stockholm. Finally, other details (such as staff nationality requirements) would be removed from this version, as they were too detailed, and would be addressed in the following versions. The host country's criteria were deemed relatively clear and were not subject to any changes.
- Budget — The staff numbers would be reduced (to eight) to reflect the discussion, and it was suggested that the budget have a margin of  $\pm 20\%$ , with Belgium as a reference. The budget would provide a rough indication, and not too much detail, and the Italian scenario would be removed.
- Implementation — It was agreed that this chapter would be discussed, depending on the initial discussion in the BFUG meeting in Stockholm, outlining the two scenarios (2024 and 2027 roadmaps).

#### **4. Thematic block in the BFUG (concept, key issues, division of tasks)**

Michal Karpíšek introduced the proposed structure for the thematic block in the BFUG meeting in Stockholm, beginning with the plenary session (where the Task Force would present the report, documents, Permanent Secretariat concept, and thematic group instructions), before splitting into thematic groups (feedback on the proposal) and finally, the plenary discussion on conclusions and feedback would take place the next day. The TF members emphasized the need to make the discussion environment as inclusive as possible.

There were two options considered for the format: three parallel sessions with identical assignments and the world café format (three tables focused on specific issues). The members agreed that the parallel session would be more appropriate, as an option that would allow the BFUG members to discuss all the issues and explore their interconnectedness. It was also agreed that each group would have a facilitator — to make sure all members are included, and the discussion is constructive and focused on the principles and documents of the Permanent Secretariat — and group rapporteurs, who would feed into a one, joint report to present in the conclusion's discussion at the plenary BFUG session a day after. It was suggested that the TF members would speak to the Co-Chairs of the working groups to work out group compositions that would promote communication and inclusivity of generally silent voices. The option for regional



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working groups was explored, and Michal Karpíšek concluded that the TF Co-Chairs would discuss the group composition among themselves and inform the members accordingly. It was suggested that the TF members serve as rapporteurs.

Edlira Adi Kahani Subashi (Head of the BFUG Secretariat) announced that there would be three members of the Secretariat present at the BFUG meeting, and the Swedish host had announced that there would be employees from the Ministry to facilitate the breakout sessions. The Secretariat announced that they would reach out to the hosts of the BFUG Stockholm meeting to coordinate in this aspect.

Michal Karpíšek concluded the discussion by announcing that he would communicate with the other Co-Chairs to agree on the final details and get in touch with the TF members to communicate the results.

## **5. Next meetings and AOB**

It was agreed that the Secretariat would send out a doodle for the last week of June and the first week of July. It was requested that the meeting room reservation for the thematic sessions to be held in the first day of the BFUG meeting would be extended to two hours, keeping in mind to keep the meeting as brief as possible, and the Secretariat announced that they would express this request to the hosts.

The members outlined their tasks and responsibilities:

- Michal Karpíšek would finalize the proposal into one overarching document with annexes (EHEA Statutes, model of Permanent BFUG Secretariat, Thematic block concept), circulate it to the members of the Task Force, and try to send it to the BFUG on April 24. The general direction for the document would be for them to serve as input for the BFUG discussions and leave out detailed comments for the following versions.
- Sjur Bergan would work on the revisions of the EHEA Statutes, in line with the formal proposal and integrate the received comments.
- Irina Geantă and Colin Tück would develop a revised version of the document on the Permanent Secretariat, focusing on the main principles and features (emphasizing the need for an international association, simplified capacity of posts with less FTE, revised Belgium budget + showing a possible range of costs in other countries). The models for implementation (fast track in 2024, or moderate track between 2025-2027) should be indicated but not have too much detail.
- Thematic Sessions: There would be three parallel session regional groups. The allocation of participants would be proposed by Co-Chairs of groups and fine-tuned on May 8 meeting. The focus of the discussion should be on key issues (EHEA bodies, two-layer regulations, Permanent Secretariat feasibility) and it should be emphasized that no decisions or voting should occur. The members would agree on the TF member roles on May 8, based on the Co-Chairs' proposals. The Secretariat would ask the hosts for one local notes-taker for each group. On May 11, after the parallel tracks, the rapporteurs would summarize the conclusions into one summative report with some key, analytical points. The summary would be presented on May 12, with minor additional comments from individual groups to allow around 40 minutes for the BFUG adoption and decision on key directions.

The Task Force expressed preference to meet on Friday, May 12 (15-18:00), allowing necessary space for the Saturday morning small groups, if necessary.

The Co-Chair thanked the guests and members for their contributions and input to the meeting. No other business was brought forward; thus the fourth meeting of the TF was successfully concluded.