



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

Third meeting, Online
10 March 2023

Minutes of Meeting

List of Participants

Delegation/Organization	First Name	Last Name
BFUG Vice-Chair	Linda	Pustina
Czech Republic (Co-Chair)	Michal	Karpíšek
EQAR	Colin	Tück
EUA (Co-Chair)	Michael	Gaebel
Germany	Frank	Petrikowski
Romania	Irina	Geantă
BFUG international expert	Sjur	Bergan
BFUG Secretariat	Edlira	Subashi

European Commission and Italy sent regrets.

1. Welcome remarks and approval of the agenda and MoMs

Michael Gaebel (Co-Chair) welcomed everybody to the third meeting of the Task Force (TF). The agenda of the meeting and the minutes of the second meeting were approved, and for the later, it was decided to keep the MoMs as short as possible.

For more information, please see: [TF ROP SE BA 3 Meeting Agenda](#)

2. Discussion about the Statutes for Ministers

Michael Gaebel thanked Sjur Bergan for drafting the statute document and the members of the subgroup for giving their contribution to it. Michal Karpíšek (Co-Chair) listed a few items that needed clarification before sending the statutes to the BFUG Board members. The first item concerned the concept of membership and specifically where "consultative members" fit in with "BFUG members" and their status, especially with voting and financing related topics. The second item was related to the list of consultative members as part of the BFUG Board. Michael Gaebel commented that the membership of the BFUG is subject to changes and redefinition.

Colin Tück (EQAR) emphasized the need to consider the provisions related to the finances of the Permanent Secretariat. Mr. Tück suggested that it should be specified what should be included in the Articles of the Secretariat Association. Although the statutes might not have much formal implication,



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some considerations should be included in the statutes of the association that needs to be funded. Sjur Bergan reminded everyone about the relevance of the EHEA budget to the Permanent Secretariat, stating that the Statutes should clearly outline the principles for financing the Permanent Secretariat. Mr. Bergan further suggested that the Statutes should be limited to the essentials, as they need to be adopted by the ministers.

Linda Pustina (Albania BFUG Co-Chair) raised a question about the coordination and organization of the Permanent Secretariat, specifically regarding the financial aspect of the membership engagement. Mr. Gaebel suggested that this was a topic for the BFUG Board meeting, but it was generally understood that members would have to contribute financially. Sjur Bergan pointed out that there cannot be a Permanent Secretariat without a financing arrangement, which comes, in part, from the BFUG members. A previous discussion with Kinga Szuly (European Commission) confirmed that the European Commission (EC) is prepared to finance part of it.

Mr. Karpíšek recommended that the TF RoP should raise the issue of the Permanent Secretariat's structure and organization at the BFUG Board meeting without going into too much detail. The discussions at the BFUG Board should include also the roadmap which should be discussed at the TF RoP.

In principle the Statutes are to be adopted by ministers, who make a basic commitment, which is then operationalized through the Permanent Secretariat Association articles¹. Therefore, a placeholder should be included in the Statutes for a reference to more detailed provisions concerning the Secretariat provided there is agreement on the Permanent Secretariat. This could be integrated into Article 10.4, where there is currently detail on the one-off payment. The key takeaway was that there needs to be a reference on the annual financial commitment from the BFUG members, but the details (contributions, payment modalities) go into a separate document.

Ms. Pustina suggested another financing alternative for the discussion of the Permanent Secretariat in the BFUG Board, where the country hosting the Permanent Secretariat would offer the rest of the necessary funds that go beyond the European Commission financing for the Secretariat. Mr. Tück stated that they had previously discussed this option, but opted to avoid it because it would create a dependent relationship between the country and the Secretariat, which could threaten the sustainability and independence of the Secretariat. He reiterated that paying for the Secretariat creates a sense of commitment and ownership.

Sjur Bergan discussed the provisions regarding the Secretariat reference group, which was intended to be separate from the BFUG Board in order to have a more stable group of people to oversee and assist the Secretariat. He suggested that the terms of the members of the group should be longer than the three semesters and that there should be an incentive for members to remain for the duration of their term. In order to ensure that discussions at the Board meeting would focus on the principle behind the Secretariat, rather than the financing, it was suggested not to include the text on the Secretariat and financing.

¹ After extensive legal framework research done by the Task Force, the model of Association was found to be a legal model that could be easily applied to different contexts. The name of the legal arrangement might be subject to change.





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Colin Tück advised to find a better name for the 'reference group' and suggested that it should be linked to the association's statutes. He proposed the removal of Article 9.2 or having a placeholder for it until the Secretariat reference group is defined in the statutes of the Secretariat association.

Participants in the meeting debated whether to present a general overview or a more detailed outline of the Permanent Secretariat proposal. It was emphasized that the TF's role is to facilitate discussion for the BFUG Board and to provide concrete proposals. As a result, Section 9 of the text was removed and only the headlines were included for the discussion. The Co-Chairs agreed that the Board meeting would be an opportunity to present the TF's proposed direction and receive input about it.

While the composition of the BFUG Board would be maintained, a question was whether every incoming Co-Chairs and Co-Chair of working group have to attend all Board meetings. The current proposal foresees that the Board could meet more frequently, but Working Group Co-Chairs would attend Board meetings only when required in view of the issues brought forward by the pertinent Working Group. Mr. Bergan recommended adding this point to the discussion, and the Co-Chairs could raise the issue during their presentation in the Board.

In relation to the article 6.3², Ms. Pustina emphasized that the BFUG would have the authority to call for an Ministerial Conference.

Two paragraphs from Section 9 of the document regarding the Secretariat would be taken out, leaving only the headlines. Mr. Michael Gaebel and Mr. Sjur Bergan would review the document and prepare the final draft.

3. Discussion on the document on the Secretariat

Michal Karpíšek (Co-Chair) commented on the draft on the Permanent Secretariat which should spell out the tasks of the Secretariat, such as preparation of the work plan, budget, and reports on accounts and activities. Mr. Tück agreed that the document needed more development, also regarding background and rationale, and raised questions about the budget, criteria for host selection and the appropriate contribution of the host country. Also, the tasks, capacity and general composition of the Secretariat and the roadmap for its instruction and transition need further discussion.

Sjur Bergan suggested that the document presented a solid basis for discussions at the BFUG, and recommended creating a cover document highlighting points that require feedback, such as the issue of the timetable. The BFUG should determine the type of Secretariat it wants, which would serve as the basis for offers of hosting the Secretariat. He added that financing principles should be established.

Mr. Tück and Mr. Karpíšek proposed to hold a dedicated session for BFUG members interested in learning more about the proposal. The main priority would be the principal decision, with a focus on important issues like the budget, for which countries would need to make provisions. Colin Tück mentioned the paper from Sjur Bergan and Irina Geantă, which explored different alternatives and concluded that a nonprofit association (or a similar structure) was the only feasible model. He would use

² "Extraordinary meetings of Ministers shall be held by decision of the co-chairs or when requested in writing by at least 1/3 of the ministers and duly authorized representatives of the European Commission and consultative members."





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this as a starting point and provide more details about the different alternatives for the organization structure. It was suggested to be include in the report, the amount that the EC commits along with estimations of member states' contributions. Irina Geantă proposed a one-page slide for the BFUG Board to be sent to them before the meeting, introducing the topic of the Permanent Secretariat. She suggested that the committed amount from the EC could finance the transitory period until there is a call for financing from all countries.

It was also stated that a presentation on the main topics should be made during the BFUG Board meeting, with consideration given to the call for the next Secretariat and country host of the Ministerial Conference.

Ms. Pustina raised questions about the legal framework of the host country and the details of the call for the next Secretariat. Mr. Bergan added that a host country should be chosen in which the legal framework does not have a provision where an association being financed in part from foreign resources is considered a foreign agent; this would exclude some EHEA members. It was agreed that the BFUG in Stockholm would have to indicate whether a Permanent Secretariat is an option, and also provide some indication on its rules and frameworks, which could then be further developed by the TF. The mandate of the group was once more clarified in that it is to explore a Permanent Secretariat, by developing a proposal as concrete as possible, with clear financing details.

4. Exchange on how to include the TF to the Board

Edlira Subashi (BFUG Secretariat) informed the participants on the draft agenda for the BFUG meeting in Stockholm, which includes the breakout sessions, as asked by the TF RoP Co-Chairs and also provision of a room for a meeting of the TF RoP on May 13, Saturday in Stockholm, the day after the BFUG meeting. She also informed on the Call for hosting the 2027 Ministerial Conference, as an item in the agenda for the Board meeting, with December 2023 foreseen as the deadline to send to the Secretariat the candidature for the call.

Mr. Karpíšek stressed that the EC needed to know about the funding of the Secretariat in the summer, adding pressure to clarify the hosting country for the next conference. Mr. Tück agreed that a specific proposal was necessary for discussion with the Board, suggesting the creation of a slide deck with key issues. Mr. Bergan suggested finalizing the document after the Board meeting, with budget estimates. Finally, Mr. Tück offered to provide the final budget estimation and emphasized the importance of discussing the call for hosts for the next Ministerial to ensure everyone is aware of the options available.

A summary of the discussions was given, which included that an international nonprofit association was the most reasonable solution, with a focus on key new ideas. The members agreed to review the document and consider a joint meeting before submitting it to the BFUG. The group discussed the format for the BFUG sessions, with the suggestion to follow a world café format and have a wrap-up at the end. Mr. Petrikowski proposed that the Statutes and Secretariat should not be presented as separate discussions, as the issues are both interlinked and complementary to each other. Mr. Karpíšek suggested proposing to the BFUG Board that they run a workshop on these topics and create a format based on the Board's feedback. The Co-Chairs agreed to reach out to the Swedish BFUG Co-Chairs to discuss the plan for this session's format.



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5. Agenda and preparation for the Stockholm BFUG

It was agreed that a doodle would be prepared for the next meeting in May. The group also discussed the next steps, including developing a report that would include the work plan and a few notes about the proposed Secretariat. The report would reference the statutes, which would be reviewed by Mr. Gaebel, Mr. Bergan and Mr. Karpíšek. Once completed, the report would be sent to the BFUG Board. The group working on the Secretariat would continue to develop the format, and the others would provide feedback. It was noted that the document on the proposed Secretariat should have more precise and specific concepts when submitted to the BFUG. The group also discussed the need for a mid-April meeting to reflect on what had been achieved, the reactions from the Board, and how to prepare plans for the BFUG. They also agreed to have a brief online meeting before the BFUG meeting in Stockholm, and to plan the meeting settings in Stockholm and the running workshops. No other business was brought forward; therefore, the third meeting of the TF was concluded.



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