



Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia

Working Group on Fundamental Values

Seventh Meeting
Online
3-4 July 2023

Minutes of meeting

List of participants

Country/Organisation	Name	Last Name
Austria	Milica	Popović
Council of Europe	Sjur	Bergan
Croatia	Leonardo	Marušić
European Commission	Svein	Hullstein
EI – ETUCE	Rob	Copeland
ENQA	Anna	Gover
ESU	Matteo	Vespa
EUA	Monika	Steinel
European Commission	Svein	Hullstein
Eurydice	David	Crosier
Finland	Maija	Innola
Germany (Co-Chair)	David	Akrami Flores
Iceland	Una	Strand Viðarsdóttir
Malta	Rose Anne	Cuschieri
Poland	Ewa Agnieszka	Lekka-Kowalik
Romania (Co-Chair)	Mihai Cezar	Hâj
Romania	Cristina	Fit
Sweden	Robin	Moberg
Switzerland	Aurélia	Robert-Tissot
Turkey	Aslı	Günay
King's College London (Guest)	Liviu	Matei
NewFAV Project (Guest)	Elizaveta	Potapova
NewFAV Project (Guest)	Daniela	Craciun
BFUG Secretariat (Head)	Edlira	Subashi
BFUG Secretariat	Jora	Vaso
BFUG Secretariat	Aida	Myrto

* Holy See and Norway sent regrets. France, Italy, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, United Kingdom, United Kingdom (Scotland) did not attend.

1. Welcome remarks

Cezar Hâj (Co-Chair, Romania) welcomed the participants and briefly summarized the meeting's agenda.

2. Introduction and approval of the agenda

Cezar Hâj (Co-Chair, Romania) informed that the 6th meeting minutes were not ready for approval and it was decided to address this matter in the upcoming meeting scheduled for November 6-8, 2023. A general



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suggestion was made to extend the process of the delivery of the minutes to their approval to thirty days, instead of the current fifteen, but no decisions were finalized during the meeting.

The agenda of the meeting was adopted without changes.

For more information, please see: [WG_FV_SE_BA_7_Agenda](#)

3. Updates NewFAV project

Cezar Hâj (Co-Chair) shared updates on the NewFAV Project and provided information on recent presentations and discussions during a cluster meeting in Brussels, focusing on fundamental values. Recognizing the complexity of uniting the numerous public projects dedicated to these values, Mr. Hâj emphasized that the discussions were both productive and positively received. The importance of coordinating different frameworks and monitoring fundamental values within the project was emphasized. Updates on the project's deliverables were provided, highlighting the completion of the mapping and five peer learning activities (PLAs) in Romania and Germany, with three more planned. The team assessed the current indicators' relevance and limitations through discussions with partners and experts, while currently developing a technical policy framework for indicators, expected to be finalized in October 2023. The next steps involve implementing piloting methodology based on the framework and generating piloting reports. Future plans include organizing workshops with stakeholders and public institutions to aid in the practical implementation of these frameworks.

Regarding who might be the responsible parties for coordinating different frameworks, two effective approaches were discussed: maintaining close contact with individuals involved in the development of each framework at the European level as well as engaging the European Commission, as they are actively participating in the ongoing discussions and are also members of this working group. Clarification was given on assessing academic freedom, referring to alignment with the project's objectives in research discussions. It was emphasized that the project is ahead of other frameworks and initiatives in defining fundamental values and indicators and should thus inform all debates held in the EHEA.

Mr. Hâj noted several ongoing initiatives on fundamental values at the European level, emphasizing the importance of alignment and complementarity with parallel initiatives like the [European Research Area](#) (ERA), [Global Information Assurance Certification](#) (GIAC), UNESCO's freedom of research project, as well as UN initiatives. It was proposed to organize an online coordination meeting to foster collaboration among stakeholders involved in different initiatives. Additionally, stakeholders should be informed about ongoing initiatives in this project and WG to facilitate idea exchange among projects.

4. Session 1: Update from the BFUG on the 3 statements

Cezar Hâj (Romania, Co-Chair) mentioned that valuable input on the statements was received from several members after the last BFUG meeting. The input will be assessed and potentially integrated into the approved statements during this session. Colleagues responsible for drafting the statements were invited to present their work.

"Public responsibility of and for higher education" statement

Sjur Bergan (Council of Europe) presented the statement on public responsibility of and for higher education, discussing feedback from various WG members. He stated that he felt the statement was now ready for finalization by the WG, with possible modifications by the BFUG, which, if needed, will be addressed in the WG's November meeting. It was decided that the issue of feedback by the BFUG will be raised at the Board meeting to understand their approach for the upcoming BFUG meeting. The proposal was made to have at least one author of each statement attend the BFUG meeting if a debate is expected. Concerns were





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expressed about late comments from the BFUG and the importance of the BFUG focusing on principles rather than acting as an editorial board. Sending this message from the BFUG Board to the BFUG was deemed crucial.

“Institutional autonomy” statement

David Akrami Flores (Germany, Co-Chair) reported that one comment from Poland regarding the adequate funding of higher education institutions was received and incorporated into the statement. As no other feedback was received from the BFUG members, the statement was deemed final and ready for approval, subject to editorial review.

“Participation of students and staff in higher education governance” statement

Milica Popović (Austria) announced that the comments received from various countries on the statement, which were mostly minor, have been addressed, with some accepted and some not accepted. As a result, the statement is now ready for presentation in the November BFUG meeting.

Comments were made regarding possible language issues, and it was suggested that one person should ideally edit all statements for consistency, as they currently vary in style and structure. Sjur Bergan clarified that in his editing he had focused on language coherence and uniformity across all documents, specifically on clarity for non-native speakers, while trying to avoid editing content, which was defined by individual authors and by the WG. Although an external proofreader was suggested, past experiences with such initiatives were deemed ineffective. A member underlined that cohesive formulation of the statements is not the primary task, as they will be used independently after adoption. The focus was placed on the monitoring system for FVs, aligning with the working group's mandate. The solution proposed by the WG members was to create a document consolidating key elements from all statements for press and promotional purposes, which will be included in the WG's work report.

5. Session 2: Presentation and discussion on the “Academic integrity” statement

Matteo Vespa (ESU) provided an overview of key elements of the statement on academic integrity. He specified three essential elements to consider in further discussion: 1) The statements need to be relevant and recognizable to the communities they serve; 2) Balancing the roles of quality assurance and independent bodies is crucial; 3) Each country has different approaches to upholding academic integrity and this diversity of systems needs to be considered. Mr. Vespa thanked the Holy See's suggestions for including and defining quality culture and stressed the importance of emphasizing such positive elements, rather than punitive measures.

A member raised the need for a simple definition of academic integrity in the introductory paragraph, as the current version assumes prior knowledge. The statement's structure received praise for its comprehensive approach, covering the value's importance, dimensions, and stakeholder obligations and rights. It was suggested to clarify that academic integrity ensures quality in all higher education activities, not just trust. Another proposal was to rephrase the statement to emphasize public authorities' endorsement of financial measures promoting a healthy working environment and discouraging harmful practices.

A member sought clarification on the statement's treatment of the code of ethics and legal measures outside the academic sphere. Emphasis was placed on considering two types of misconduct: penalty-relevant and penalty-irrelevant, highlighting the need for a holistic code of ethics. It was acknowledged that some matters may fall under the jurisdiction of law enforcement authorities.

On the second day of the meeting, Matteo Vespa (ESU) presented the revised statement with the integrated feedback and comments from the WG members, which included beginning the statement with the importance





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of academic integrity, reordering the introductory paragraphs, restructuring the second paragraph to include references to quality and ethical standards, using the terminology from the ESGs, adding information about institutions responsible for tackling misconduct in the code of ethics, among other suggestions. In the following discussion minor changes were suggested, such as moving a reference to early career researchers from the introductory paragraph, ensuring the definition of academic integrity is provided in the beginning, using simple language, methods to properly frame and communicate the qualities linked to academic values, such as honesty and transparency, by referring to academic integrity as a professional duty which includes these elements. After integrating these changes, the statement on academic integrity was adopted as final.

6. Session 3: Proposal for a monitoring framework for the fundamental values of higher education in the EHEA

Liviu Matei (King's College London) presented the proposal for a monitoring framework for the fundamental values of higher education, developed with colleagues Daniela Craciun and Elizaveta Potapova. The report presented here comprises the work done during the second phase of the NewFAV project, its main purpose being to assess the integration and usability of previously identified indicators, discussed during phase one in Berlin, for monitoring the FVs. The report aims to address what to monitor specifically while questions of methodology and actor responsible for monitoring will be tackled in the project's next phase.

Mr. Matei explained that values have been categorized into rights and freedoms (e.g., academic freedom, institutional autonomy, student and staff participation) and obligations and duties (e.g., academic integrity, public responsibility). Monitoring will involve examining infringements, protection, threats, and positive developments for rights and freedoms values and degree of fulfilment for obligations and duties values. Mr. Matei suggested assessing de jure protection as adequate, intermediary, or inadequate for rights and freedom values, and also monitoring the active promotion of these values.

The monitoring framework includes an assessment of the current situation, but also the outlook, done in two phases: when legislation on the protection of values is being considered in a system and in the next cycle, to assess whether the proposed initiative have been implemented. It will distinguish between infringements and threats and assess positive developments, a new feature relative to the existing tools. While treating each value separately, the framework will also consider synergies and tensions among interrelated values, allowing monitoring when the mechanism is established.

Regarding data sources, Mr. Liviu outlined the de jure monitoring method, which includes document analysis, self-reporting from system-level authorities, and cross-checking with experts and participants. Existing reports and initiatives like the academic freedom index, EUA autonomy scorecard, and ESU's Bologna with Student Eyes will also be utilized for appropriate indicators. For assessing the de facto state, existing databases, one-off reports, media analysis for threats, and self-reporting by national authorities will be used, cross-checked with expert input. An important proposal was for the monitoring to be conducted by a consortium rather than a single entity.

Mr. Matei emphasized that operationalizing the framework requires finalizing value definitions and identifying dimensions for each value to convert them into variables. The initiative was described as a monitoring matrix, integrating the monitoring framework and dimensions for each value. In the discussion on operationalization, it was suggested that the working group compile best methods for approaching it with each statement. The distinction between rights and freedoms values and obligation and duties values, as well as the introduction of the outlook component, received praise. The question raised was how to assess the duration of a positive or negative outlook on a country's commitment, considering factors like progress of proposed laws and political will. It was suggested that if a development was indicated as "promising", it would need to have been brought to fruition by the time the following monitoring is conducted to avoid a



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negative mention in this second review. An assessment of “promising” should as a rule not be possible for one and the same development in two consecutive monitoring exercises. It was noted that simply the existence of the outlook as a monitoring tool may serve as a preventive measure, to ensure developments are completed from one monitoring phase to the next.

Regarding the monitoring scale for de jure protection of rights and freedoms values, a suggestion was made to add a category for cases with less than adequate protection, covering situations with no protection or actual assaults on rights. Additionally, there was a proposal to examine less clear-cut and easily measurable issues, like the relationship between public authorities and the academic community. The need for more de facto monitoring and the inclusion of other variables and actors in the process was emphasized, as the current focus is primarily on public authorities.

There was a suggestion to consider an alternative monitoring system for fundamental values rather than the existing one within the Bologna Process. Two options were proposed: incorporating values in the implementation report based on the existing framework or creating a separate monitoring framework with an observatory or assessment body dedicated to fundamental values in the EHEA. While the latter option was considered ideal, it may not be feasible in the next two EHEA work periods due to political sensitivity. Short-term approaches involving existing structures or a consortium were discussed, with consideration for a potential observatory in the longer term, requiring careful consideration, adequate funding, and independence.

It was commented that in some countries academic freedom and autonomy are protected in the Constitution, but the legal protections may not be very detailed, which raises the question as to how the adequacy of this type of protection would be assessed in the de facto monitoring process. It was clarified that this is provisional metrics to help with the development of the actual monitoring tool and data collection. In addition, the monitoring process will use color-coded boxes (green, red, yellow) to indicate the level of protection in different countries. It was argued that accurately measuring a country’s legal protection of a value is challenging, which is why it is crucial to focus on de facto implementation in the longer term.

It was suggested that an important task of the observatory, if it is set up in the future, would be to reduce reliance on self-reporting for assessing the presence of academic freedom in national legislation. However, the importance of starting with self-reporting was also underlined, as it helps gain government involvement for future monitoring exercises, because governments see this as a chance to showcase their commitment to enforcing the legal protection of academic values.

7. Wrap up of first day

Cezar Hâj (Co-Chair) concluded by noting that the first day's session covered all three statements sent to the BFUG, focusing on academic integrity and the monitoring framework with plans to discuss them further on the following day. He stated that, by November, the working group aims to provide indications to the drafting committee for the ministerial communique, including possible monitoring aspects.

Edlira Subashi (Head of BFUG Secretariat) reminded members that if they wish to submit the comments in writing to the BFUG or the Board, the documents need to be ready two weeks in advance, respectively for the Board on September 17th and for the BFUG on November 1st while considering the time needed for their feedback. In addition, the Secretariat will communicate the WG’s request to have one member of the WG invited to the BGUF meeting in Madrid and inform members of the response.

8. Session 4: What degree of granularity for the proposal to be submitted at the Ministerial Conference (How to move forward)





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Liviu Matei (King's College London) presented the starting point of the project, which involves developing a policy framework of indicators, followed by piloting the framework in four countries through stakeholder workshops and drafting pilot reports. The main discussion focused on whether the technical policy framework of indicators, to be presented in the Ministerial Conference 2024, would also serve as a monitoring mechanism and how. Various scenarios and methodologies were presented for feedback, including a proposal without a monitoring mechanism, another with indicators for only a few values, and a third involving a comprehensive proposal for the full monitoring mechanism, subject to modification in later exercises. Mr. Matei emphasized that the framework should be considered a preliminary proposal for further refinement.

Mr. Matei discussed the de jure monitoring aspect and proposed the development of a monitoring framework for the values in the policy framework. He explained that the analysis of de jure protection will involve specific dimensions extracted from the final definitions and use existing indicators, tools, and monitoring initiatives. As an option, he presented a comparative study of European countries as a method of monitoring de jure protection, which includes a scorecard for academic freedom with weighted dimensions, potentially resulting in country profiles for specific values.

The use of a traffic light system (green, yellow, red) to assess and operationalize academic freedom protection and promotion in different countries was explored, along with the inclusion of indicators like constitutional protection, international agreements, and administrative regulations in the monitoring framework matrix. The importance of collecting data on infringement threats and positive developments to determine the outlook for academic freedom in each country was underlined. De facto monitoring was cited as easier as it does not require a traffic light system. However, Mr. Matei acknowledged the complexity of assessing academic integrity due to the involvement of various stakeholders and the need for further discussions and research to determine a feasible approach for monitoring this value. He concluded by saying that a similar approach to the one used for academic freedom will be used.

In the ensuing discussion, the idea of a pilot project was deemed essential in testing alternatives as completely as possible, even if this means piloting a monitoring framework with fewer countries. It was noted that the piloting of the proposed initiatives are projected tasks of the FV WG's next mandate. In the pilot study, several members suggested to opt for more de facto considerations, which will aid in addressing the tensions and interplay between different values, not apparent when examining only the de jure situation.

Regarding the traffic light approach proposed, it was clarified that it involves qualifying systems based on specific dimensions rather than a simple ranking like scorecards. Members agreed that the traffic light system is more suitable as it doesn't require absolute comparability of data, which might not always be feasible. Additionally, the traffic light system aligns better with the tradition of implementation reports, providing consistency and potential benefits in the evaluation process.

Regarding granularity¹, there were differing proposals, with one member suggesting high granularity by focusing on one value while another emphasized the need for reduced granularity to convey the holistic nature of values. For the pilot, it was decided to include two values, with public responsibility for higher education and institutional autonomy as potential options. It was acknowledged that piloting academic freedom and academic integrity might be challenging due to their individualized nature. The need to consider synergies and tensions among values in the pilot approach was highlighted for further evaluation.

It was recommended that the proposal to be prepared for the BFUG meeting include both short-term and

¹ The scale or level of detail in a set of data





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long-term perspectives, focusing on enhancing implementation reporting and monitoring for all values. The presentation should highlight the progressive improvement of the implementation report, coordination efforts, and engagement with other actors working on FV frameworks. The proposal should provide a clear explanation of the progress made, a proposal to pilot certain aspects and ensure the continuation of the WG's work beyond the Tirana conference. Building on this year's reporting exercise was also recommended to facilitate the BFUG's support. It was suggested that the proposal be as clear and practical in order to facilitate the support of the BFUG.

For the first BFUG of 2024, it was recommended to present the WG's results through the texts and annexes used for the communique. Within the communique, the working group would propose the adoption of fundamental value statements with short definitions for each value, while acknowledging the proposed monitoring system and the importance of continuing this work in the next mandate, as well as include the proposed monitoring framework developed by the project. There was a final reminder that no monitoring of the FVs will be provided at the Tirana Ministerial Conference, so the focus remains on finalizing the proposed framework.

9. Next steps towards a monitoring framework of FV

Cezar Hâj (Co-Chair) suggested to include in the WG report the agreed-upon monitoring framework, inclusive of dimensions and the proposed monitoring matrix, the indicators, the short-term and long-term monitoring approaches. The report will be adopted, presented, and validated by the BFUG and, following its acceptance at the Ministerial Conference, it will be referenced in the Tirana Communiqué. Mr. Hâj suggested that in addition to the adoption of the FV statements and overarching description, the Communiqué should make explicit reference to the monitoring proposed by this WG, highlighting the need for its continuation in the next mandate.

10. Conclusions, next meetings and AOB

Cezar Hâj (Co-Chair, Romania) announced that the next FV WG meeting is scheduled for November 6th-8th, 2023, in Bucharest, Romania, with a PLA on the 6th. The agenda will cover discussions on the overarching draft description of fundamental values, the WG's proposed text for the communique drafting committee, the possibility of a joint meeting with representatives from other frameworks monitoring fundamental values, and the next draft of the monitoring framework. The subsequent meeting is planned for the second part of January, aiming to finalize all materials before the May 2024 Ministerial. All statements have been finalized and will be sent to the BFUG Board, with a recommendation to have one author of each statement present at the BFUG, or alternatively, to request written feedback.

Matteo Vespa (ESU) announced that this marked the end of his mandate as President of ESU. He expressed his gratitude for the valuable experience and commended the work accomplished by the FV WG.

Lastly, Mr. Hâj acknowledged the significant milestone achieved in the meeting with the finalization of all four FV statements, now ready for submission to the BFUG for approval. Mr. Hâj expressed his gratitude to all participants, especially the authors, for their dedicated efforts and looked forward to developing a robust technical framework for monitoring fundamental values in the next mandate. The seventh Meeting of the FV WG was successfully concluded.

