



Bosnia and Herzegovina
Ministry of Civil Affairs

Working Group on Fundamental Values

Sixth Meeting
Berlin, Germany
16-17 March 2023

Minutes of meeting

List of participants

Country/Organization	Name	Last Name
Austria	Milica	Popović
Council of Europe	Sjur	Bergan
Croatia	Leonardo	Marušić
DAAD (Guest)	Bettina	Rosen
DAAD (Guest)	Hans	Leifgen
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
Germany - Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Germany (Guest)	Maria	Hochstadter
Holy See	Melanie	Rosenbaum
Iceland	Una	Strand Viðarsdóttir
Norway (Co-Chair)	Tone Flood	Strøm
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 (Deputy Head)*	Edlira	Subashi
BFUG Secretariat	Jora	Vaso
BFUG Secretariat	Aida	Myrto

*Online participation

France, Italy, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, United Kingdom (Scotland) did not attend the meeting. Malta sent regrets.

1. Welcome remarks

David Akrami Flores (Co-Chair, Germany) welcomed the participants and briefly summarized the meeting's agenda, which focused on the discussion and revision of the different draft statements that the WG has been developing.

Subsequently, Maria Hochstadter from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) made a short introductory statement on the current state of academic freedom in the world. She praised the achievements of the WG and recommended that the drafted statements be further streamlined in length and structure. She pointed out that European-level institutions are planning to implement monitoring systems for scientific freedom and urged the group to think about linking these with the ongoing discussions within the Bologna Process to avoid having multiple unaligned instruments.

The WG members expressed their agreement on building synergies with the EU-level monitoring initiatives and proposed to invite the relevant people in future meetings.

2. Introduction and approval of the agenda

The 4th and 5th meeting minutes were adopted. The agenda of the meeting was adopted without changes.

For more information, please see: [WG FV SE BA 6 Agenda](#)

3. Updates NewFAV project

Cezar Hâj (Co-Chair) provided an overview of the new developments regarding the NewFAV Project and introduced the entire team present at the meeting. Mr. Hâj also shared that the NewFAV project team has organized task forces to assess the relevance and limitations of current indicators and is closer to developing a technical policy framework for monitoring fundamental values. Mr. Hâj listed the two PLAs that have taken place as part of the NewFAV project:

- in Bucharest on Dec 5th, 2022 on institutional autonomy
- on March 15th, 2023 on academic freedom and integrity

4. Session 1: Presentation of final draft of "Public responsibility of and for higher education" statement

Sjur Bergan (Council of Europe) presented the statement on public responsibility of and for higher education. Mr. Bergan began by reminding participants that the statement pertains to two distinct yet interrelated values and that the statement's length reflects this, with approximately one page dedicated to each value. Mr. Bergan then presented in detail the numerous comments as well as the accepted and not accepted revisions made on the statement.

The ensuing discussion focused on the appropriateness of using "substantial responsibility" rather than "leading responsibility" in relation to public authorities' provision of financial support for HE funding, and whether this could convey a message that they are exempt from such responsibility. It was underscored that this terminology has been adopted by the Council of Europe¹ and should not be altered. There was consensus among members to maintain the existing phrasing.

¹The terminology has been adopted by the Council of Europe in Recommendation (2007)6 on the public responsibility for higher education and research and has therefore been approved by all CoE members and States party to the European Cultural Convention at the time.

The Holy See clarified its legal competencies as a system and not a country and thus suggested that the phrase "public authorities" be amended to "competent public authorities."

It was agreed there would be an editorial review of all statements, without touching on content, to ensure linguistic and stylistic coherence. A last comment addressed the order of the two values in the title of the statement not corresponding to the order in the body of the text.

Co-Chairs Tone Flood Strøm (Sweden) and Cezar Hâj (Romania) emphasized that the current statement will be considered the final draft and no further suggestions from the group will be accepted. This statement will be submitted for review to the BFUG and feedback will be addressed accordingly.

5. Session 2: Presentation and discussion on "Institutional autonomy" statement

David Akrami Flores (Co-Chair) presented revisions made and members praised the statement while suggesting further streamlining for improved flow and coherence, choosing American or British English for consistency, organizing the text by actors and tasks, adding a paragraph on specific duties of public authorities, and including a clear definition of institutional autonomy in the first paragraph.

The text was noted to have a defensive tone that could benefit from a more positive approach but it was argued that some defensive language may be necessary given the current political climate. Other suggestions included rephrasing several recommendations in softer language. It was suggested that explicitly referring to institutional autonomy as a precondition for academic freedom can create a hierarchy among fundamental values, which are equal. A solution was to specify the links among all values instead of singling out the relationship between institutional autonomy and academic freedom. It was also clarified that the introductory text to all statements clarifies that there is no order of values.

Regarding the statement that institutional autonomy must be consistent with systems of public responsibility and accountability, it was argued that it could also be understood the other way around - that systems of public responsibility and accountability must be consistent with institutional autonomy. Some members suggested that the term strategic autonomy be reconsidered, because of its differing meaning at the EU policy level, while others suggested it could be beneficial to retain it and define it² for the purposes of this WG. Some suggested renaming it strategic direction.

It was recommended that campus integrity be included as a responsibility of universities under the principle of institutional autonomy to ensure safety on campus but, it was also noted that it does not only refer to physical safety but also to protection from undue intervention by public authorities.

It was suggested that a balance needs to be struck between autonomy and public responsibility when referencing funding and related topics, so that autonomy does not become autarchy. It was agreed that using the term funding instead of financing is more appropriate. Additionally, the representative of Sweden stated that that in Sweden, HEIs are considered public authorities,³ which could cause confusion and that it is important that most contexts are considered in the statement. Lastly, it was suggested that additional references to QA are unnecessary, as it is clear that institutional autonomy is consistent with systems of public responsibility and accountability, which includes QA.

The Co-Chairs thanked members for their suggestions and requested specific comments in writing. They

² "The right and freedom of the institution to decide on the direction of their activities within the framework of national laws and policies."

³ Though, the term does not refer to public authorities as responsible for the education system, which is the sense in which public authority is used in the statement.

noted that an updated draft statement with incorporated comments will be shared with the members before the WG's next meeting or, tentatively, before the Board meeting. The statements, except for academic integrity, will be presented at the upcoming Board and BFUG meetings. The academic integrity statement will be presented in the BFUG in November.

6. Session 3: Presentation of final draft of "Participation of students and staff in higher education governance" statement

Tone Flood Strøm (Co-Chair) introduced the session and clarified that this statement is a provisional final version to be presented at the BFUG, where additional comments will be made and incorporated into the final version of the statement.

Milica Popović (Austria) presented the comments received, indicated whether they had been accepted or not in the provisional final version of the statement, and provided the reasoning for each decision.

It was noted by EUA that the broad scope of the text, which treats governance at many levels, may make the statement prescriptive, with requirements at all levels, while another praised the statement's broad scope, noting the importance of keeping all levels as has been done in the previous Communiqué. It was noted that more specification is needed on the distinctions of the different types and levels of participation of students and staff, as these two will be involved in different processes. Regarding language and terminology, overarching definitions were recommended to make the statement more easily accepted by ministers and a few suggestions were brought forth to soften the language.

There were suggestions to either eliminate the specific categories of the types of academic staff or to recategorize staff as full time, part time, fixed term, and permanent staff. The explicit reference to the rights of staff and students to initiate debates and table proposals was deemed absolutely necessary.

It was commented by EUA that the definition of student and staff participation is prescriptive and that the text, in terms of the level and kind of student and staff participation to which it aspires, is not realistic as very few institutions in the EHEA are currently in line with this characterization. To this, it was argued that the statement aims to be both realistic and aspirational, with recommendations that are both guides for the future and reflections of current reality. This is already the practice, it was argued, for other Bologna texts and commitments, including those for which a monitoring framework is being developed. It was also argued that the commitment to student and staff participation at all levels has been agreed upon in the previous Ministerial Communiqués and, thus, the current text specifies but does not go beyond that mandate.

In conclusion, the author stated that the distinction between institutional and system level would be clarified in the text and that the revised statement would be circulated among WG members.

7. Wrap up of first day

Cezar Hâj (Co-Chair) announced that written comments on the three statements would be circulated among members by March 22nd so statements can be finalized. He clarified that no other comments will be accepted other than the ones during these sessions. He emphasized that the authors will work together on giving the statements a unified tone and language. Additionally, Session 5: Debate on the "shared introduction" was moved to the end of the first day.

8. Session 4: Presentation and discussion on the "Academic integrity" statement

Matteo Vespa (ESU) provided a detailed summary of the statement on academic integrity. Following the

presentation, working group members agreed that the text has been improved but needs more revision before it reaches its final form.

In the introduction, it was advised to provide a clear definition of academic integrity and highlight its significance. One approach could be to emphasize its important role in fostering a culture of integrity.⁴ It was reminded that academic integrity is not only about building trust, but also promoting efficient work in accordance with quality standards and creating a humane working environment. Several members supported the notion of framing the text around the idea of a culture of integrity. It was suggested that the text should include information on how violations of academic integrity should be managed, as well as specific measures that promote academic integrity. The principle of proportionality was recommended as a guiding principle for punitive measures.

Participants asked for further elaboration on the description of the code of ethics and the existence of other guidelines. It was also recommended that the proposal refrain from suggesting new bodies or actors and prioritize utilizing existing ones. It was recommended to briefly reference international cooperation, like the Council of Europe (CoE), to avoid placing sole responsibility on public authorities.

There was consensus among members that the statement should be revised once more before being circulated for comments. The authors were tasked with sharing a revised version by April 22nd to allow for feedback from WG members. That version will then be presented for further discussion during the WG's June meeting. The finalized statement will then be discussed during the November BFUG meeting.

9. Session 5: Debate on the "shared introduction"

Sjur Bergan (Council of Europe) explained that the introduction was developed jointly by himself and Milica Popović and added that the purpose of the introduction is to frame and connect the different statements that will be submitted as a whole to the ministers for adoption in the appendix.

Following Mr. Bergan's presentation on the recommended edits to the introduction, mainly provided by the Holy See, members shared their thoughts. The introduction was praised for its conciseness and further suggestions and comments were made. There was a suggestion to explain how values relate to one another and even contradict one another. Further, it was suggested the introduction make explicit that all values are of equal importance.

It was argued that the elements of the interplay of values, the de facto aspect of indicators, and the commitments of public authorities are missing from the text. The language of commitments was recommended while, at the same time, it was argued that this language is appropriate only for the Communiqué. It was confirmed by the Co-Chair that there is space reserved in the Communiqué for commitments on fundamental values while the statements that will be adopted by the ministers serve as guidance to the commitments.

There was general consensus that academic freedom should be included in the full list of academic values in the introduction with a footnote, even though the statements on the five other values were developed later. It was emphasized that it is important to list all existing values, regardless of their time of adoption. Finally, the definition of academic freedom in the Rome Communiqué was brought up as an example of how to define all other values.

10. Next steps towards a monitoring framework of FV

⁴ Integrity was defined as ethical attitudes and behaviors among members of the academic community who conduct their research and teaching with personal conviction and integrity.

Liviu Matei (King's College London) expressed gratitude to his colleagues and the advisory board for their support and work on the project, before outlining the two phases of the project. The first phase involved creating an inventory of existing indicators, tools, and efforts in the area of fundamental values through literature review and expert consultations. The second and current phase involves task force consultations, which has been completed, whose aim is to test the feasibility of using existing indicators to monitor the fundamental values.

From these consultations, it was concluded that only the Academic Freedom Index indicator was deemed effective. Two indicators were added to academic freedom and one to student and staff participation. Mr. Matei confirmed that there is a need to develop new indicators but, as this will take time, existing indicators will be used while new ones are being developed.

It was suggested that indicators should be tailored to the commitments given to ministers, used for comparison among countries, and take into account the interplay of FVs. De facto data gathering and crowdsourcing data were cited as important. It was suggested that the most practical approach forward is to use existing sources for the monitoring purposes. It was emphasized that the existing tools should be carefully assessed in terms of feasibility and legitimacy. The most accurate sources should be taken into account, especially when addressing de facto indicators which need more qualitative measures.

Group members discussed how the remit of the WG goes beyond monitoring but how monitoring is a step toward the improvement of a situation. It was recommended that, due to the significance of the task at hand, the WG needs to devise a framework that is unassailable. The observatory on history teaching, developed by the CoE, was brought forth as an effective longitudinal monitoring approach.

It was emphasized that several tasks of the WG have been fulfilled, such as some indicators for de jure monitoring have already been agreed upon, and the objective of better defining the fundamental values is being accomplished. What still needs to be done is developing options on the de facto monitoring of FVs including the types of data, and recommend indicators, for the entire framework, which should take account both de facto and de jure aspects for each value. It was argued that of importance at this point is the way in which the FV indicators will be proposed and collected and specifying the actors who will support this process. A main output is to provide color-coded scorecards, which is what ministers prefer.

It was emphasized that the relational aspect between values and indicators is delicate so an indicator on one value cannot be established before the rest of the values have also been thought through. It was confirmed that the work of this WG represents a transitional phase and that the ministerial communique will not include indicators and that the WG's goal is to propose a set of indicators for the next mandate, which can be adopted and modified by the monitoring working group, which is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Bologna Process.

11. Conclusions, next meetings and AOB

Cezar Hâj (Co-Chair) announced that the WG's next meeting will take place in June, another is planned for October and that the WG will have a meeting next year to finalize the report for the ministerial. He reminded members that March 22nd is the deadline for the last round of comments, followed by a month's time to deliver the new version to members. Regarding the statements, he noted that there will be no further comments by WG members accepted for the statement on public responsibility. Feedback is expected for the statements on institutional autonomy and on student and staff participation, which will be revised based on this meeting's discussions and language will be made uniform across statements.

David Akrami-Flores (Co-Chair) thanked the participants for the fruitful discussion and the sixth Meeting of the FV WG was successfully concluded.