

Minutes of the XCVIII BFUG Board meeting

Oslo, Norway

5th of February 2026

List of participants

Country/Organisation	Name	Last Name
Norway, BFUG Co-Chair	Tone	Flood Strom
Norway	Niclas	Lindahl Trosdahl
Cyprus, BFUG Co-chair	Kyriacos	Charalambous
Liechtenstein, outgoing BFUG Co-chair	Rachel	Guerra
Denmark, outgoing BFUG Co-chair	Anita	Damsgaard Jensen
Romania, BFUG Vice-chair	Luminița	Matei
Ireland	Padraig	Hennigan
Ireland, incoming BFUG Co-chair	Siobhan	Sleeman
Montenegro, incoming BFUG Co-chair	Aleksandra	Gogic
European Commission	Kinga	Szuly
ESU	Daciana	Pop
EUA, Co-chair of the Task force on establishing the long-term EHEA Secretariat	Michael	Gaebel
EURASHE	Jakub	Grodecki
EHEA Secretariat (Head)	Horia Serban	Onita
EHEA Secretariat	Lilia	Parhomenco
EHEA Secretariat	Oana Alexandra	Tintar
WG on Monitoring (Malta)	Stefan	Sant
WG on Fundamental Values (Romania)	Cezar Mihai	Haj
WG on Internationalisation and Mobility (The Netherlands)	Arthur	Belle
CG on Global Policy Dialogue (Italy)	Elisa	Petrucci
Task Force on the Future of Bologna (Belgium – Flemish Community)	Liesbeth	Hens
Task Force on establishing the long-term EHEA Secretariat (Iceland)	Una	Strand Vidarsdottir
Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (Finland)	Maija	Innola

Meeting started at 9:04 CET.

1. Welcome and introduction

The Norwegian BFUG Co-chair welcomed the BFUG Board members to Oslo. The Cypriot BFUG Co-chairs thanked Norway for hosting the meeting and the EHEA Secretariat for their support. The Cypriot BFUG Co-chairs further emphasised the priorities of their EU presidency, including a more inclusive and resilient education landscape.

Ms. Sigrun Aasland, the Norwegian Minister for Research and Higher Education, welcomed everyone to Oslo and highlighted the importance of the Bologna Process for Norway. The minister considered that in times of uncertainty, alliances and standardisation processes such as the EHEA are key to both our shared prosperity and safety. She expressed Norway's commitment to more mobility and common approaches and highlighted the importance of the Bologna key commitments and fundamental values, as well as their implementation to maintain a functional and credible EHEA. On mobility, the minister mentioned

Norway's target of 50% mobile graduates. Finally, she noted that in Norway the pursue a better balance between the academic and VET pillars of higher education and thus support opening up the ECTS to VET.

The Romanian BFUG Vice-Chair thanked the Norwegian hosts and emphasised how the cultural programme shed light on the societal mission of universities in producing and sharing knowledge. She further thanked the co-chairs of the working structures for their work and noted the establishment of the structures responsible for drafting the upcoming ministerial communiqué and global policy forum statement.

The Danish and Liechtensteiner outgoing BFUG Co-chairs thanked the hosts and recalled the progress during their co-chairmanship at the BFUG Board meeting in Vaduz and BFUG meeting in Copenhagen. The Liechtensteiner outgoing BFUG Co-chair also informed that as a follow-up of their BFUG co-chairmanship, they recently held a meeting with higher education institutions and other stakeholders to discuss further activities. The BFUG Board acknowledged the minutes of the XCVI BFUG Board meeting in Vaduz.

2. Adoption of the agenda

Documents: [BFUG Board CY NO 98 2 Draft agenda 24.01.2026](#)
[BFUG Board CY NO 98 Draft annotated agenda 02.02.2026](#)

With no comments received or issues raised, the Norwegian BFUG Co-chair concluded that the draft agenda was approved.

3. Information from EHEA Secretariat

Documents: [BFUG Board CY NO 98 3 EHEA Secretariat Presentation 02.02.2026](#)

The Head of the EHEA Secretariat gave updates on the activity since the BFUG meeting in Copenhagen. He noted that all working structures planned their meetings for the first semester, with work progressing smoothly according to the Work Programme. He pointed out the support given by the EHEA Secretariat in the establishment of the Drafting Committee for the Communiqué, including preparing the draft ToRs and Roadmap, as well as preparing an analysis together with EQAR on the results of the public consultation on the revised Standards and Guidelines on QA in EHEA (ESG). The EHEA Secretariat also prepared a comparison table of definitions for aligning the terminology of the documents to be approved at the upcoming Ministerial Conference. The HoS further informed about the launch of the December 2025 issue of the EHEA Newsletter and presented the new EHEA website, available in the beta format. He highlighted that the new website would be formally launched at the BFUG meeting in Cyprus and presented the new features and functionalities. While the ongoing work was focused on final checks and adjustments, both the BFUG delegations and the working structures would be invited to further finetune their sections and the 'Bologna policies'.

Upon a question from the Norwegian BFUG Co-chair, the EHEA Secretariat clarified that the archive of documents had been successfully migrated, with missing documents from two BFUG Board meetings and one BFUG meeting (before the Ministerial Conference in Paris). He further informed that few documents could not be recuperated, notably translations of previous Communiqués.

4. Updates on the organisation of the Ministerial Conference and Global Policy Forum

Documents: [BFUG Board CY NO 98 4 Update Note Ministerial Conference](#)
[BFUG Board CY NO 98 4 Draft agenda MC 02.02.2025](#)
[BFUG Board CY NO 98 4 3 Draft Invitations MC+GPF 02.02.2026](#)

The Romanian Vice-chair introduced the draft tentative agenda and draft invitations for the Ministerial Conference and Global Policy Forum, with the Board members appreciating their timely preparation. The Vice-chair informed that sending the save-the-dates had unfortunately been slightly delayed due to a recent change of leadership in the Romanian Ministry of Education and Research. Furthermore, the Vice-chair highlighted the proposal to have a composition of six representatives for EHEA delegations and four representatives for non-EHEA delegations and emphasised that the BFUG members and consultative members would be invited to organise side events in Iași and Chișinău.

The Finnish Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG) Co-Chair, EUA and the Icelandic TF on establishing a long-term Secretariat (LTS) Co-chair mentioned that while preparations were progressing well and the information conveyed so early was considered helpful, the BFUG and the hosts should work on developing an attractive and interactive agenda for ministers, convincing them to attend two full days.

On the same note, EUA and the Icelandic TF LTS Co-chair pointed out that the BFUG should further articulate the political importance of the event and consider giving additional opportunities for exchanges between ministers, including through the proposal of panels and speaking roles. Similarly, the Icelandic TF LTS Co-chair noted that even the transfer between Iași and Chișinău could be an opportunity for informal discussions. The experience of BFUG representatives was also mentioned as a resource for preparing the programme, topics and contributions of ministers. Considering that part of the event is in an EU accession country, the European Commission suggested to involve the Moldovan side on focused discussions regarding the EU accession process, which could further support a longer participation of their Vice President.

The Belgian TF on the Future of Bologna (FoB) Co-chair supported the references to the future of Bologna and offered the support of the TF in the preparations for the event and its content. The Italian Co-chair of the CG on Global Policy Dialogue (CG GPD) also supported the draft agenda and brought up the intention to organise a side event.

EURASHE underscored the importance of including higher education institutions and students both in the delegations and within the programme, maintaining the collaborative spirit and strong stakeholder engagement of the Bologna Process. The Romanian Vice-chair informed that free accommodation would be available for student delegates, with the Icelandic TF LTS Co-chair and ESU supporting the inclusion of references to student delegates in the invitation. ESU further informed about their side event and recalled that BFUG delegations should support the travel costs of student delegates.

Finally, in contrast with the organisation of the Global Policy Forum, in which case the CG GPD supports the organisation of the event, the EUA noted that no similar body was typically established for the Ministerial Conference itself. EUA thus suggested to consider whether the Board could meet in separate, online occasions to discuss the organisation of the event when needed or if a separate structure could be established in this regard. The Romanian Vice-chair thanked everyone for their contributions and informed that all the proposals would be analysed in due course.

5. Reporting from the BFUG working structures

5.1 Working Group on Monitoring

Documents: [BFUG Board CY NO 98_5.1 WG Monitoring Presentation](#)

The Maltese Co-chair of the WG on Monitoring informed that after the list of indicators for the 2027 edition of the Bologna Process Implementation Report had been agreed by the BFUG in Copenhagen, Eurydice worked on preparing the surveys for BFUG members, to be launched in late February 2026. He further mentioned the request sent to the co-chairs of the working structures to nominate authors for the narrative sections of the BPIR chapters and he finalised the reporting by providing the revised indicative timeline of the group until the Ministerial Conference in 2027.

Upon a question from EUA, the EHEA Secretariat clarified that only the working structures with a corresponding chapter in the BPIR 2027 were invited to nominate an author for the narrative texts. Further questions were received from EUA and the Dutch WG on Internationalisation and Mobility (WG on IM) Co-chair about the role of the narrative authors and whether they would refer to the data collection or describe the individual figures. The Dutch WG on IM Co-chair also asked if there was a desire to limit the level of detail in analysing the indicators.

The EHEA Secretariat recalled that Guidelines for narrative texts were presented by the WG on Monitoring at the BFUG meeting in Copenhagen, which mentioned that the narrative sections should describe the main activities of the groups and projects that support implementation, including existing advances, factors and evidence. Therefore, these authors would not be involved in the analysis of the indicators, which would be conducted by Eurydice. Nevertheless, supported by Icelandic TF LTS Co-chair, the Finnish BICG Co-chair and the Norwegian BFUG Co-chair, he pointed out his understanding that the narrative section of the chapter would still relate to the data collected, with guidance from the WG on Monitoring. The Head of Secretariat suggested nevertheless that the WG clarifies the role of the narrative authors and the role of Eurydice in the narrative description.

Upon a question from the Finnish BICG Co-chair, the Maltese WG on Monitoring Co-chair confirmed that countries would receive the first draft to check whether the data was recorded correctly. Furthermore, the Norwegian BFUG Co-chair noted that a timeline of two months may be too short for filling in the surveys, even if they were already pre-filled. The European Commission emphasised the importance of the BPIR as a reference tool, including for assessing implementation in the EU accession countries, and suggested to consider how to ensure that information is received also from countries which are less involved in the BFUG.

5.2 WG on Fundamental Values

Documents: [BFUG Board CY NO 98 5.2 FV Presentation 30.01.2026](#)

The Romanian Co-chair of the WG on Fundamental Values gave updates on behalf of the group, informing that the training of the first group of national operators for fundamental values had already taken place, while the national operators for the countries where their confirmation/nomination was still pending would be trained in a separate second round. He anticipated that by the beginning of March the pre-filled surveys would be sent to the BFUG members, with the end of March as the first deadline for submitting the questionnaires. He recalled that the de jure situation would be collected through the Working Group on Monitoring, with the various data collection streams integrated in the report prepared by the WG on FV. Finally, he informed of the new website fundamentalvalues.info, which aims to promote the common understanding of fundamental values across EHEA.

Upon a question from the Dutch WG on IM Co-chair on the link between the FV website and the EHEA website, the Romanian WG on FV Co-chair pointed out that their website served a different purpose than the EHEA website by presenting the state of the project and monitoring exercise, as well as detailed information on the EHEA fundamental values and associated events. He argued that while other topics were more broadly known, the statements on fundamental values were both new and complex and thus, for the time being, required additional strategic communication. Nevertheless, the Romanian WG on FV Co-chair noted that the EHEA website would still contain references to their website, and their website would be handed over to the EHEA Secretariat at the end of the project, if they considered it appropriate. On the same note, the EHEA Secretariat emphasised that it would create a precedent if a project website would be completely integrated in the EHEA website, creating additional workload for the future Secretariats without a general agreement in this regard.

The European Commission informed that their Report on guiding principles on academic values had been recently published. They highlighted that the issue of fundamental values had gained momentum, with the EHEA fundamental values mentioned in the European Degree Label criteria and the future ERA Act serving as a potential binding instrument on the freedom of scientific research. Supported by EUA, the Commission thus emphasised the necessity of having an accurate monitoring of the de facto implementation of EHEA fundamental values. She asked how to avoid a process where self-evaluation might lead to reported challenges exactly for countries that take the issue seriously, whereas cases in which academic freedom was infringed would remain unnoticed. Furthermore, EUA highlighted that the BFUG should refrain from publishing a report if it does not reflect the information accurately.

On the same note, the Italian CG GPD Co-chair emphasised a similar case with education fraud, where the countries more active in tackling the phenomenon seem to have more issues due to approaching it more seriously. She highlighted the role of awareness raising and commended the work on the website to raise sensitivity on the issue.

The Romanian Co-chair of the WG on FV noted the difficulties of conducting the monitoring process and recalled that the BFUG would decide whether to accept the report prepared by the WG, which would nevertheless be based on the BPIR methodology and the available and reliable data. He added that the information provided by the national operators would be cross-checked with other sources and the WG would not publish national reports or individual questionnaire results, but maps with traffic-light systems.

5.3 WG on Internationalisation and Mobility

Documents: [BFUG Board CY NO 98 5.3 1 WG IM Discussion Paper 30.01](#)
[BFUG Board CY NO 98 5.3 2 WG IM Presentation 30.01.2026](#)

The Dutch WG on IM Co-chair informed that the two sub-groups on the Action Plan and on the Note on Terminology had met once since the BFUG meeting in Denmark. As the first draft structure of the Action Plan had been discussed at the WG meeting in Hague in autumn 2025, the WG prepared a short discussion paper for the BFUG meeting in Cyprus, requesting strategic advice from the BFUG on the direction to be taken by the WG when drafting the Action Plan on Internationalisation and Mobility. The Dutch WG on IM Co-chair introduced the proposed questions from the discussion paper, focusing on the mobility targets - whether the EHEA target of 20% should be revised, in which way and whether focus should be on removing existing barriers instead; the possibility of considering national targets for mobility and how to move towards more balanced mobility by opening systems and considering both incoming and outgoing mobility. He further presented questions on the distinction between EHEA and non-EHEA mobility approaches, considering both geopolitical developments and the way mobility is used as a strength to improve international awareness and solidarity.

Supported by the European Commission and the Norwegian BFUG Co-chair, the Belgian TF on FoB Co-chair requested clarifications on the exact questions to be asked to the BFUG and what would be the expected outcome at the end of the session. On the same note, the EHEA Secretariat suggested clarifying that the discussion during the BFUG is aimed to give strategic guidance to the WG, without decisions expected at the meeting in Cyprus. Supported by the Norwegian BFUG Co-chair, he further proposed that BFUG members are also invited to answer the questions in writing, allowing for more thorough and nuanced contributions.

Supported by the Icelandic TF LTS Co-chair, the Finnish BICG Co-chair proposed that the discussion does not focus on mobility targets as other issues should be prioritised, such as the political context for internationalisation. Supported by the Italian CG on GPD Co-chair, EUA suggested synergies with the CG GPD on the global perspective of internationalisation and the role of mobility to support global

cooperation. EUA further expressed hesitations about the possibility of covering all questions at the BFUG meeting in Cyprus, while endorsing a discussion on mobility targets, including virtual components.

ESU suggested prioritising the first two questions, namely revising the mobility target and tackling the existing barriers hindering access to mobility, most notably the social dimension. On the mobility target, the Icelandic TF LTS Co-chair considered that 3 ECTS would be too little to become a threshold for counting mobility towards the target, representing 5% of an academic year. She also recalled that the data on the mobility flows may be inaccurate due to the way the statistical agencies report it. The Norwegian BFUG Co-chair pointed out that the questions were too specific and would lead into bottlenecks during discussions.

The Danish outgoing BFUG Co-chair mentioned that while the background paper raised important and relevant discussions for peer learning, certain conditionalities that impact mobility flows, including systems of tuition fees or financial public support, go beyond the remit of the ministries of higher education and shape the arena of possible choices. Relatedly, the European Commission emphasised that the discussion should prioritise actions that are implementable by higher education ministries, reflecting on the sensitive topic of mobility targets considering different scenarios and push-and-pull factors based on EU, Erasmus or EHEA membership. They also raised the topic of data availability and accuracy in certain cases outside EHEA, and informed of the upcoming EU study on balanced mobility which should be launched in spring 2026, pointing out that the definitions between the two documents should be aligned.

The Dutch WG on IM Co-chair suggested having written comments after the BFUG meeting, while mentioning that the objective was to grasp the perspective of the BFUG without expecting definitive answers but rather guidance and recommendations. He agreed that the questions could be more open and considered that despite the political-heavy and sensitive issues around global cooperation, the communiqué and the action plan could still offer specific, implementable recommendations for ministers.

5.4 CG on Global Policy Dialogue

Documents: [BFUG Board CY NO 98 5.4 CG GPD Presentation 30.01.2026](#)

The Italian Co-chair of the CG on GPD gave updates on the activity of the group, informing that the drafting group for the Global Policy Forum Statement had its first online meeting, with the first draft to be discussed at the upcoming CG GPD meeting which would take place in Rome later in February. The proposed structure of the Statement included the introduction, vision, actions and outlook. The proposed main themes were consistent with the priorities of the group, namely Bologna key commitments and tools, lifelong learning, right to education, digitalisation and artificial intelligence. The CG GPD meeting would also be accompanied by a global peer learning activity on the topic of lifelong learning, with different angles such as skills, flexible learning pathways, qualifications frameworks and credit transfer systems.

5.5 TF on the Future of Bologna

Documents: [BFUG Board CY NO 98 5.5 1 TF FoB Background paper ERA 26.01.2026](#)
[BFUG Board CY NO 98 5.5 2 TF FoB Presentation 27.01.2026](#)

The Belgian TF on FoB Co-chair informed the group that the discussion paper on the EHEA interconnectedness with the ERA, prepared for the BFUG meeting in Denmark, would be used for the next BFUG meeting in Cyprus. She noted that the TF had an online meeting to discuss the outcome of the BFUG's discussion in Denmark on the interconnectedness with VET and presented the key takeaways. In this sense, she highlighted that various approaches to the interconnection with VET had been identified, both in relation to higher VET and the transition from secondary VET. In several countries the short cycle programmes serve as a bridge, with the use of similar tools (qualification frameworks, ECTS, in some countries quality assurance) further promoting permeability. The discussions evidenced the need for

stronger links between the learning outcomes of HE and VET, as well as more mobility opportunities. The discussions also emphasised that creating new tools should be avoided, and that existing ones – such as the ECTS User's Guide, might be used to further promote compatibility. Furthermore, the TF recommended a call to action by setting up a meeting between relevant bodies to discuss the links between the Tirana Communiqué and the Henning Declaration. The European Commission also suggested that the ESG may also be considered a Bologna tool that could support the link between HE and VET.

5.6 Bologna Implementation Coordination Group

Documents: [BFUG Board CY NO 98 5.6 BICG Background paper 27.01.2026](#)
[BFUG Board CY NO 98 5.6 2 Revised ToRs BICG 28.01.2026](#)

The Finnish BICG Co-chair presented the Discussion paper prepared for the BFUG meeting in Cyprus, starting by mentioning that the BICG proposed to mandate the TPG A to handle the QF-EHEA self-certification process. In this sense, the BICG would ask the BFUG to revise the BICG Terms of Reference accordingly, to endorse the Guidelines prepared by TPG A on the procedure and to consider a ten-year framework as a recommendation for countries to revisit their self-certification report and assess whether reviews are needed. Secondly, the BICG proposed for the BFUG meeting in Cyprus a discussion on the implementation and future-proofing of the Bologna key commitments, an issue which ministers also had mandated the BFUG to tackle through the Tirana Communiqué. The Finnish BICG Co-chair mentioned that the topics addressed include the use and monitoring of national action plans, assessing whether the peer-learning working method was fit-for-purpose, as well as the potential revision of Bologna tools such as the QF-EHEA. On this matter, the BICG requested guidance from the Board on the questions to be prioritised at the meeting in Cyprus.

The Board strongly supported a discussion on the implementation of Bologna key commitments at the BFUG meeting in Cyprus and the topics suggested. The Norwegian BFUG Co-chair suggested to limit the number of questions, with the Icelandic TF on LTS Co-chair and EUA proposing to focus on identifying causes for implementation gaps. Upon a question from the Icelandic TF on LTS Co-chair, the Finnish BICG Co-chair confirmed that the BICG would ensure that the conditions which warrant a new self-certification report when changes in the national QFs occur would be made clear for the BFUG.

On the national action plans, EUA supported their role and highlighted that it may be difficult to already grasp their impact considering their recent introduction. They also wondered whether in the long-term the TPG A would be the appropriate body for the self-certification process, with the Finnish BICG Co-chair pointing out that currently all relevant stakeholders were part of TPG A, without excluding the possibility of having a different group for this purpose in the future.

5.7 Task Force on establishing a long-term Secretariat

Documents: [BFUG Board CY NO 98 5.7 TF LTS Report 26.01.2026](#)
[BFUG Board CY NO 98 5.7 TF LTS Presentation 30.01.2026](#)

The Icelandic and EUA TF on LTS Co-chairs presented the work of the Task Force since the BFUG meeting in Denmark. The Task Force had three meetings in which it addressed the issues raised by the BFUG members, most notably the governance and financial arrangements. The TF requested additional information from the three shortlisted candidates, and in the meanwhile received the withdrawal of the German application, thus leading to two hosting proposals from the Czech Republic and Romania to be considered. The TF Co-chairs explained that in the case of an association, the governance (general assembly and steering committee/executive board) and financial issues (payment of membership fees) were rather clear. However, the Czech colleagues would send additional information on the adaptations for the Czech proposals. The TF identified that since there would be no legal entity established in the Czech case, more clarity would be needed on financial independence, the legal basis for BFUG members to send

funds to the DZS (Czech Internationalisation Agency) and the potential need to sign contracts with each BFUG member individually. The TF proposed to take two decisions at the BFUG meeting in Cyprus – one decision on whether to establish the long-term Secretariat (Go/No-Go decision) accompanied by a decision on the financing model (equal fees or differentiated fees), and a second decision on the hosts.

The European Commission mentioned that instead of contributing directly to the Secretariat, the Commission could support BFUG members in covering their contributions with grants, highlighting the expected enhanced flexibility of the upcoming multiannual financial framework. However, the Board considered that a new alternative proposal would further complicate the discussion and concluded that the contribution from the Commission should be marked separately.

The Belgian TF on FoB Co-chair asked if the BFUG members would be able to vote in favour of the LTS and yet against both hosting proposals, with the TF on LTS Co-chairs clarifying that such a case would not be available as a separate option on the ballot regarding hosting. The outgoing Danish BFUG Co-chair and the Belgian TF on FoB Co-chair proposed to clarify the concrete financial contributions of each BFUG member in both financing models, with the Belgian representative highlighting that the concrete contributions would be needed in preparation for 2027 public budgets.

As the incoming Irish BFUG Co-chair and the Belgian TF on FoB Co-chair suggested to separate the Go/No-go decision from the discussion on the financing model, the TF on LTS Co-chairs clarified that the 'equal fees' model had been requested by Italy at the BFUG meeting in Denmark and the TF could not identify a different way to decide on this matter. However, they considered that an opinion poll could also be sent in advance to the BFUG to agree on a proposal before the BFUG meeting in Cyprus.

The Dutch WG on IM Co-chair and the Finnish BICG Co-chair considered that only one of the proposed financing models would be functional, suggesting that the Board proposes the differentiated fees model to the BFUG. On the other side, the Italian CG on GPD Co-chair suggested that both options are put to the decision of the BFUG. All the voting BFUG Board members (Norway, Cyprus, Denmark, Liechtenstein, Ireland, Montenegro, Romania and the European Commission) agreed that the Board would propose to the BFUG the differentiated fees model.

The Icelandic TF on FoB Co-chair suggested that the EHEA Secretariat communicates the proposal of the Board with Italy, with the EUA emphasising that an opinion poll might eventually still be needed at the BFUG meeting in Cyprus. Answering a question from the Norwegian BFUG Co-chair, the EHEA Secretariat mentioned that the Rules of Procedure do not establish a right that a request to go to a vote is entertained by default, with the RoP mentioning that if no consensus could be reached despite the best efforts of the co-chairs, a decision could be taken by vote. He emphasised that no precedents were available and that it would be a matter of appreciation by the BFUG Co-chairs to determine when consensus could not be reached, the weight of the issue and how to put the decision to a vote.

6. Discussion on the Draft 2 of the ECTS User's Guide

Documents: [BFUG Board CY NO 98 6 ECTS Presentation 03.02](#)

The European Commission gave an overview of the main changes in the Draft 3 of the ECTS User's Guide, based on the oral and written feedback of the BFUG. The Commission mentioned that the most sensitive issue had been the use of ECTS outside higher education, particularly in the area of VET, which nevertheless had already taken place in certain countries. In order to accommodate the concerns raised, the new draft specified that the use of ECTS outside higher education remained voluntary, to be decided by each BFUG member, and based on rigorous quality assurance. Furthermore, only formally recognised education providers may award credits, which should be accompanied by EQF/QF-EHEA level. On the same time, the recognition of such credits would remain under the autonomy of each higher education institution. The Commission also noted that the BFUG may still want to discuss whether the use of

EQAVET for the QA of VET would be enough or if the use of ESG should be required in all cases. A second issue was the grading conversion, which instilled long discussions in the Advisory Group even if it remained uncontroversial for the BFUG. The Commission clarified that the new draft suggests two routes, with either grade distribution or the use of the reference grade available for grade conversion. The presentation also recalled that the BFUG may still discuss the format of the Guide, where to host it and how to operate changes in the Guide.

The Norwegian co-chair underlined that given that the documents for this item on the agenda had arrived very late, the majority of Board members would not have had the time to read the documents. Given this situation, the Board agreed with the proposal that the Board could not have a substantial discussion of the document during the meeting, but rather take note of the presentation from the EC.

Upon a question from the Icelandic TF on LTS Co-chair on the levels for which the ECTS would be extended (all VET or only higher VET), the Commission pointed out that ECTS could also be used at secondary education if EQAVET is used; however only higher VET could award ECTS credits if the BFUG decides to require the use of ESG. The Icelandic TF on LTS Co-chair further remarked that the recognition between levels may not be possible due to legal regulations and that it should be made clear what legal changes would be required in order to implement the new ECTS User's Guide after the Ministerial Conference.

Answering a question from the Norwegian BFUG Co-chair on the potential postponement of the decision for the BFUG meeting in Ireland, the Commission expressed their desire to find a compromise on the expansion of the ECTS to other sectors at the BFUG meeting in Cyprus and thus adopt the Guide at the meeting. The Commission noted that changes such as restricting the ECTS based on requiring ESG compliance would imply only small changes in the text.

7. Update on the Draft 1 of the Standards and Guidelines for QA in EHEA

Documents: [BFUG Board CY NO 98 7 ESG Presentation 30.01.2026](#)

ESU gave updates on the revision of the ESG on behalf of the ESG Steering Committee (SC). They informed the Board of the recent SC meeting where they revised the draft based on the 322 responses received during the public consultation phase. The Steering Committee would send the new draft for the BFUG meeting in Cyprus, where they would suggest a discussion standard by standard. If the allocated time in Cyprus would not be sufficient, the group also considered circulating a pre-final version for written comments with the BFUG during summer.

The European Commission inquired about the publication of the analysis of contributions received in the public consultation phase, with ESU pointing out that the issue would be addressed in the Steering Committee. The European Commission also considered that the ESG should be updated to properly reflect the structurally different HE landscape. They suggested to better articulate that all learning opportunities offered at higher education level should fall under quality assurance, and that cross-border provision and digitalisation should be significantly strengthened. The Commission also proposed that fundamental values, the link between recognition and QA and artificial intelligence are better integrated, in the latter case with specific references to the AI impact on the assessment of learning outcomes, data analysis and external quality assurance. EURASHE resonated with the importance of adequately reflecting cross-border provision and digitalisation in the revised draft.

8. Updates from the Iași-Chișinău Communique Drafting Committee

Documents: [BFUG Board CY NO 98 8 1 Draft ToRs Drafting Committee 28.01.2026](#)
[BFUG Board CY NO 98 8 2 DC Roadmap 28.01.2026](#)

The BFUG Vice-Chair informed the Board about the first meeting of the Drafting Committee and presented the terms of reference and Roadmap, prepared with the support of the Secretariat. The ESU

Drafting Committee Co-chair presented the timeline and highlighted that an in-person meeting of the DC would be organised by the Romania in Bucharest in June to prepare the Draft 1 of the Communiqué.

9. Agenda for the XCIX BFUG meeting

Documents: [BFUG Board CY NO 98 9 Draft BFUG Agenda 02.02.2026](#)

The EHEA Secretariat presented the draft agenda for the XCIX BFUG meeting in Cyprus. ESU and EURASHE requested more time for the ESG discussion, with the Cypriot BFUG Co-chair recalling the limited time availability and the possibility to continue discussions at the BFUG meeting in Ireland. Supported by the Norwegian and Cypriot BFUG Co-chairs, the EHEA Secretariat suggested that the Steering Committee groups together the standards which received fewer comments. The Belgian TF on FoB Co-chair and the Icelandic TF on LTS Co-chair further suggested that some working structures only report in writing, allowing more time for debates.

10. Information from the incoming BFUG Co-chairs

Documents: [BFUG Board CY NO 98 10 1 Montenegro 03.02](#)
[BFUG Board CY NO 98 10 2 Ireland 30.01.2026](#)

The incoming Montenegrin BFUG Co-chair presented the higher education system in Montenegro, including the strategic priorities for higher education for the 2024-2027 period and the contribution of the Bologna Process to national and institutional policies in Montenegro. They invited Board members to the C BFUG Board meeting, taking place in Podgorica on the 29th of September.

The incoming Irish BFUG Co-chair presented information about the Irish tertiary education system, including statistical data, current policies and strategic priorities. They also emphasised the potential priorities on the Education portfolio under the Irish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, which may include Erasmus+, Council Conclusions on STEM education and Council Conclusions on Skills and Competencies for AI. They invited the Board members to the CI BFUG meeting, to take place tentatively in Dublin between the 5th-6th of November.

11. AOB and closing remarks

There was no AOB. The Cypriot BFUG Co-chairs thanked Norway for their hospitality and looked forward to the BFUG meeting in Cyprus. The Norwegian BFUG Co-chair thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions and closed the meeting.