

# Report from the Task Force for the establishment of the Long-term Secretariat (LTS)

BFUG Board, Oslo, 5 February 2026

## *Introduction*

This report

- I. summarizes the activities of the TF since the BFUG (15-16 Dec 25),
- II. shares progress on some open questions and identifies some new ones
- III. makes suggestions for the session at the Nicosia BFUG.

## I. Activities

Since the BFUG meeting in Copenhagen, the TF met three times. Germany joined as a new member, so that now all three applicants for the hosting of the long-term Secretariat (LTS) are part of the TF. In addition to their BFUG representatives, colleagues from their administrations are welcome to attend, and have done so, to provide information on the hosting arrangement, or follow up on questions and requests. The TF also requested and received further written clarifications from the three candidates.

### *TF meeting 16 December*

The TF discussed the outcomes of the BFUG meeting, in particular, how to respond to the request for additional clarification and details on fees, their levels and their collection, the size of the budget, also to ensure sustainability of the LTS, the contract of the head of the LTS, and the governance approach. The three shortlisted candidates were invited to provide further reflections regarding the national association rules (DE, RO), the arrangement that would regulate the relations between the BFUG and the host (CZ), and more concrete information on the practical arrangement for the LTS, including in kind contributions. The EC informed that scenarios for financing the Secretariat's activities or providing support for the payment of the membership fees are considered.

### *Additional information from candidates*

A written request was sent on 23 December 2025, and all three candidates provided [responses](#) by the deadline, on 14 January 2026.

*TF meeting 15 January*

The meeting was attended by all three candidates, along with colleagues from their respective administrations and. The colleagues who are not the BFUG and did not attend the last TF meeting were informed about the results of the BFUG's discussions and the resulting questions and requests.

It was concluded that, in consideration of the additional responses provided by Germany and Romania, it appears that there should be no discernible obstacle for the establishment of the LTS in DE or RO, nor for its governance. It is for the BFUG to decide on how to align the governance requirements stipulated by national association rules with the ones of the BFUG,

Specifically for Romania, the RO Ministry of Education (MoE) can meet the requirements within the allotted time frame. It should be mentioned that Ro MoE acts based on the additional legal checks and permissions that may require time. Therefore, the membership of a Romanian university in the association has been proposed, which would considerably accelerate the process. The university would act as an inactive member, and once the association has been established, could even end its membership. *Nota bene:* it does not have to be the same university, that is chosen to host the premises of the LTS.

While the estimated time required for establishing an association in either country is well under three months, the process should be started early, as gathering the necessary documentation, including signatures by the founding members confirmed by a notary, establishment of a bank account, etc require time.

Regarding the Czech Republic, it was discussed how to establish an agreement that would guarantee maximum independence of the LTS and its staff. CZ colleagues confirmed once more that there would be only minor regulatory requirements and restrictions for the LTS in the framework of the DZS. They also underlined their readiness to develop together with BFUG an agreement tailored to the needs and requirements of the LTS, including for the governance (see below).

Transfer of fees to and the establishment of a budget for the LTS is, from the perspective of DZS, not a problem: similar as for European Union funded projects, it could establish a separate budget line for the LTS. But the question emerged on whether other BFUG members, including the EC, in consideration of their own rules and regulations, could easily transfer a financial contribution to the DZS.

In addition, the exchanges addressed selected issues of the hosting arrangements; DZS offers the LTS to participate in its general IT infrastructure and services, but with an independent network, but anything beyond, such as PCs, laptops would have be purchased from the LTS budget. This raised the question whether and how the LTS would

be independent in terms of its IT system. The LTS would have its own IT system according to the offers provided by RO, and DE (even if hosted at DAAD premises).

### *TF meeting 21<sup>st</sup> of January*

The TF discussed the report for the BFUG Board meeting, which was agreed by the TF. The European Commission recalled the pending question on whether it would be problematic for the EC to transfer the funds to the Czech Erasmus+ Agency (DZS), and confirmed that from the EC side there would be no issues in this regard. However, the EC noted that the situation might be different for BFUG members in consideration of their national legislation. The TF agreed that this remains an open issue with the Czech colleagues following-up with potential solutions pending discussions with their lawyers. The TF further discussed how to plan the session for the BFUG meeting in Cyprus.

## II. Open issues

The following open issues have been identified. Some are quite urgent, to be clarified before and decided at the Nicosia BFUG. Others are less pressing, but it would be preferable to receive feedback from the BFUG already at an early stage. Therefore, all of them, and probably additional ones, will be included in the report for Nicosia BFUG.

1. Association
  - a. Governance

The TF will present further thoughts on this to the BFUG in Nicosia, along the following lines:

- For the General Assembly, the easiest is to have it as much as possible aligned with the BFUG. BFUG members who do not pay would be excluded from voting; they could either have no status in the association, or along with consultative members be associates or observers.
- The Executive Board could be:
  - o the BFUG Board, which might pose problems, due to frequent change of some Board members
  - o a subset of the BFUG Board, namely its longer-term members (Vice-chair, EU, CoE, ESU, EURASHE, EUA). However, most of them are consultative members, who do not have a member status in the association
  - o integrated into the BFUG Board, consisting of a subset of the Board longer-term members, and 1-2 additional BFUG members.

- a separate executive board, with members appointed by the BFUG: While the relationship with the BFUG/GA is relatively simple, the one with the BFUG Board would need to be explored.
- Profile of Executive Board members
  - appointed ad personam
  - some of them would have special tasks (President/Chair, Vice President/Vice Chair, Treasurer)
- *Status: This along with other issues is part of the work on the statutes of the association, to be finalised in Autumn 2026.*

## b. Financing the LTS

Considering the discussions in both Brussels I and Copenhagen, it seems that the BFUG agreed that the LTS would be funded through contribution from BFUG members, but there are several issues which require further discussion such as:

- a. Fee levels: would all members pay the same contribution, or according to the size and wealth of the system? Both models will be presented ahead of the Nicosia BFUG.
  - *Status: decision at the Nicosia BFUG.*
- b. Potential fees paid by consultative members: at the Copenhagen BFUG, the proposal was made, to open the possibility of changing the status of the consultative members to full members, and have them paying fees.
  - *Status: None - this is not a matter for the TF to explore .*
- c. Measures in the case of non-payment
  - In case a member cannot pay for a certain period, for well-established reasons, the payment can be delayed (detailed rules to be developed).
  - One could argue that the establishment of LTS, funded through membership contributions, as any other decision taken by BFUG, has to be considered and implemented by all members.
    - *Status: If the BFUG in Nicosia decides to establish the LTS, this would also include a commitment for individual members to contribute financially.*

## 2. CZ hosting arrangement

As the LTS would legally be a part of the CZ DZS, no additional legal form will be established. Instead, an agreement between the BFUG and the DZS must set out all matters regarding the governance of the LTS, its staffing and its financing.

- a. Governance: governance structures could be designed fit for purpose, with similar structures as for an association, i.e. an executive board.

b. Financial issues

- The DZS would establish a separate budget line for LTS
- BFUG members would transfer their contributions for the LTS to the DZS, where they will be administered by HoLTS, formally in the legal framework of the DZS, but supervised by the Executive Board established by the BFUG.
- As there is no association, the financial contribution is not a membership fee, and the legal basis would still need to be defined. (CZ to check if VAT is applicable in the case of transfers)

c. What form will the agreement with the DZS take?

- While the DZS should be able to sign a legally binding contract, the BFUG can not, as it is itself not a legal entity.
- The solution could be that the DZS signs contracts with all BFUG members, or that a consortium agreement would be established.

*Status: The TF in collaboration with the Czech colleagues will try to clarify this matter further, and share information before the Nicosia BFUG. BFUG members would need to check with their home administrations whether the solutions that will be proposed would be feasible and acceptable for them, in consideration of their own laws and regulations.*

3. Membership of the TF

With the Nicosia BFUG, the TF's work will enter into a new phase. In case the BFUG decides in favour of the LTS, the TF may require enforcement with relevant expertise and knowledge, be it from BFUG members, or from experts, in particular for the preparation of statutes, exploration of legal issues, etc. This may include experts hired under the Erasmus+ EHEA Sec project.

### III. BFUG meeting in Nicosia

The session for the go-no-go decision should last less than one hour (between 30-45 minutes). Most members will arrive with instructions regarding the decision to be taken. There has been opportunity for submitting inquiries and receiving answers before the BFUG.

However, the TF proposes to allocate a full hour, in case

- there are questions that stills needs to be answered
- if the opinion poll is not sufficient, but instead or in addition, a vote is required
- after opinion poll, have some time for discussing the further work of the TF.

Therefore, the following approach is suggested:

## A) Decisions on the establishment of the LTS, and the hosting arrangement

1. Report of the TF and presentation of the proposal of the LTS, regarding the go-no-go decision (8 min)
2. Presentation of the hosts (5 min each)
3. Q&A on the go-no-go decision & the hosting arrangement (15 min)
4. Vote on the go-no-go decision and membership fees, combining cast and collection of two ballots at once:
  - Ballot 1:
    - Q1: Do you agree to the proposal of establishing to LTS (yes, no, abstention)
    - Q2: Regardless your response on Q1, if the LTS is established, would you prefer
      - a. all members to pay the same fee
      - b. fee levels adjusted to size and the wealth of the country
  - Ballot 2 (Opinion poll) Rank the hosts as follows:
    - a. First choice: 2
    - b. Second choice: 1
    - c. Third choice: no score

### For the evaluation

- Ballot 1 will be counted out first. In case of a no-go decision, there is no need for counting out.
- Ballot 2:
  - The scores that each candidate received will be added, with the candidate with the highest score chosen.
  - In case of a fairly even distribution of scores between the candidates, or an even score of the two candidates with the higher score, there will be an additional poll between the two higher scoring candidates (ideally still on the same day).

## B) Further questions and suggestions for the work on the LTS

If time allows.