

## Minutes of the 14<sup>th</sup> Task Force on establishing a long-term Secretariat meeting

Online, 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2026

### List of participants

Country/Organisation	Name	Last Name
Czech Republic, Co-chair	Michal	Karpisek
EHEA Secretariat	Horia Serban	Onita
EUA, Co-chair	Michael	Gaebel
European Commission	Hugo Miguel	Pinto de Abreu
Germany	Michaela	Böhme
Iceland, Co-chair	Una	Strand Viðarsdóttir
Romania	Luminița	Matei
Türkiye	Aydın	Aslan
Project expert (Guest)	Colin	Tueck

EQAR sent its apologies. Hungary, Italy and Kazakhstan were absent.

The meeting started at 15:04 CET.

#### 1. Welcome remarks

The EUA TF Co-chair welcomed the participants and thanked the TF members for the good attendance at the meeting. He informed the members that Michal resumed his role as TF co-chair following the BFUG decision on the hosting country, and thus the co-chairing would continue with Czech Republic, EUA and Iceland.

The EUA Co-chair introduced the agenda, which was adopted without any changes. He introduced Colin Tuck as an expert financed through the Erasmus+ project supporting the Task Force in its future work on the EHEA Secretariat association's statutes and organisation. Colin introduced himself and expressed his eagerness to continue working on the topic, recalling his membership in the previous Task Force on Rules and Regulations.

#### 2. BFUG conclusions and following reactions

The EUA Co-chair informed the TF members about the decisions taken by BFUG, namely to proceed with establishing a long-term EHEA Secretariat to be hosted by Romania. He recalled the wide majority of BFUG members that agreed with the 'Go' decision (80% in favour).

The TF co-chairs pointed out that the BFUG co-chairs replied to the issues raised after the meeting by Italy and the Council of Europe through written correspondence to the BFUG. In this sense, the BFUG co-chairs reassured that a BFUG decision had been duly taken, including on the funding model, and that the BFUG members were asked to receive a mandate for taking a decision at the XCIX BFUG meeting. Furthermore, the BFUG co-chairs clarified that some matters still had to be discussed, including the governance arrangements, the revision of the Rules of Procedure and the transition from the current arrangement. On the apparent contradiction between the Roadmap and the Tirana Communique, it was noted that the Roadmap had been unanimously approved by the BFUG at its meeting in Budapest.

The Czech Co-chair added that the TF should emphasise that preparations should take place according to the Roadmap as a necessity for ensuring that the new Secretariat can take over on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2027. The EUA Co-chair highlighted that a contingency plan looking at extending the current arrangement beyond the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2027 would need the agreement of Romania and most likely have financial implications. Romania replied that the current Secretariat's mandate ends on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, and that the financial arrangements from the 1<sup>st</sup> of July would need to be clarified as soon as possible.

The Czech TF Co-chair suggested that the TF further communicates with the BFUG on the next steps, including a detailed Roadmap on the planned discussion on governance and Statutes. Supported by the European Commission, the Head of Secretariat suggested to organise two sessions, with the one focusing on finances before the summer period. On another note, the Icelandic TF Co-chair added that the TF should emphasise in its communication to the BFUG that concrete discussions on governance depended on deciding the model and the host country.

The TF agreed to send a communication to the BFUG on the next steps and organise two info sessions with the BFUG members. The first webinar (June 2026) would focus on financial aspects and budget calculations for the financial year 2027, with the second webinar (September 2026) focusing on governance and setting up the association. Furthermore, the BFUG would be consulted on intermediate steps, making it easier for BFUG members to prepare further decisions which may require consultations in their ministries.

### 3. Overview of key tasks and steps

- Romania-based association planning schedule

The TF concluded that, even if it would take longer, establishing the long-term Secretariat without the involvement of a higher education institution would be better suited to the purpose of the association.

- Governance principles and integration into EHEA structure

The TF noted that the governance model proposed to the BFUG seemed to be overwhelmingly accepted, while additional explanation might be needed, e.g., in relation to the association's steering committee as part of the BFUG Board instead of being established as a new structure. Nevertheless, the TF would discuss the extent to which the RoP would require to be revised in consideration of the long-term EHEA Secretariat.

- Association Statutes

The HoS suggested discussing who the founding members would be, as it would be impractical to have many BFUG members acting as founders. TF discussed approaches for identifying the association's founding members, including a call for volunteers, inviting the future BFUG co-chairs and/or TF members.

The TF agreed to send an invitation to the incoming BFUG co-chairs, explaining the TF proposal on founding members and asking them whether their ministry could and would be interested to be involved. The message would also include clarification on what the process would entail. The TF would inform the BFUG that no advantages/disadvantages are associated with the founding member status. Based on the option of incoming BFUG co-chairs and potentially other TF members volunteering to act as founders, the proposal would be sent to the BFUG for endorsement.

The EUA Co-chair informed that Colin would support the TF in drafting the association Statutes, while additional help would be needed from the Romanian colleagues.

- Profile of the Head of the Secretariat/association

The call and procedure for the HoS selection would be dealt with in autumn and discussed with the BFUG.

#### o Budget specification

The TF discussed whether the proposed fees for 2027 would be equivalent to half a year's contribution or higher. The EUA Co-chair suggested to clarify that the fees would consider 2027 prices and might change for 2028 onward. In order to build reserves, the Czech Co-chair proposed to charge more than half-a-year's fee for 2027, while the Icelandic Co-chair proposed to charge the full fee. She further pointed out that the fees agreed by the BFUG should not change for a couple of years, unless unexpected issues occur.

The European Commission and Romania remarked that some countries have multi-annual budgetary commitments and thus a three-year projection might be necessary. The Commission further emphasised that since the programme, type and beneficiary are known, the BFUG members should normally be able to plan their financial contribution in the budgets once the amount is known. Furthermore, he clarified that introducing an amount in the budget does not imply the obligation to spend it.

The TF agreed to provide ahead of the June 2026 info session proposals to the BFUG on the financial contribution for 2027 and a projection for the upcoming three years.

#### 4. EHEA SEC project support

The Czech Co-chair gave updates on the Erasmus+ project, noting that, so far, the project activity had been pending for the BFUG decision. He added that the project partners (DZS and EUA) would plan the upcoming activities after the Go decision, including support for the association's statutes, the call for the Head of Secretariat and job descriptions, as well as financing capacity building and training for new EHEA Secretariat staff. A separate meeting would be organised with Iceland and Romania to discuss how they can be involved in the project, with an option also being that the new association becomes a project partner.

#### 5. Roadmap and its specification

The TF agreed to prepare a detailed roadmap, including the info sessions and additional steps based on Romanian administrative procedures. The Czech Republic co-chair would be able to contribute to a first draft, with Romania including the necessary steps for establishing the association. The Romanian representative informed that a call for the premises would be launched for the public higher education institutions in Bucharest, with the results and the concrete headquarters expected to be known in the autumn.

#### 6. Potential expert capacity and profile

The TF Co-chairs recalled that Colin was selected as an expert for the Erasmus+ project and informed about his experience both in the BFUG and as EQAR director. They informing that additional experts might be required based on the identified needs.

#### 7. Next meetings

The TF agreed to have meetings on the last Monday of the month, in the afternoon. The next TF meeting will take place on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April starting at 15:30 CET. The TF co-chairs will liaise with Romania for an in-person TF meeting in Romania around mid-September.

#### 8. AOB

There was no AOB. The meeting ended at 16:17 CET.