

Task Force on establishing a long-term EHEA Secretariat

Financial Model of the Long-term EHEA Secretariat

(for the BFUG information session, 30 June 2026)

Introduction	1
Required resources	1
Staff.....	2
Travel/meeting costs.....	3
Other costs.....	3
Reserve fund.....	3
EHEA member contributions	4
Fee levels.....	4
Approval and changes of the fee levels.....	5
Operational considerations.....	5
Risks	6
Delayed or non-payment.....	6
Annex: fee calculation and list	7

Introduction

At its 9/10 March 2026 meeting, the BFUG decided to go ahead with establishing a long-term EHEA Secretariat (LTS) in Romania. The LTS needs to be operational from 1 July 2027 and the new LTS arrangements should be re-evaluated in 2033.

Based on the choice of host country, the resource needs were reviewed for this final model. The financial contributions by EHEA members were calculated on this basis.

In addition, some operational details are explained further below.

Required resources

The future long-term EHEA secretariat (LTS) will continue to support the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the BFUG and its working structures. That is, the LTS will have essentially the same tasks as the present Secretariat. See [March 2026 BFUG document](#) for a detailed breakdown.

The resource needs were estimated based on those tasks. The estimate below is an update of the earlier version, taking into account the decision on the host country and the in-kind contributions according to Romania's hosting proposal.

Budget estimates can only take into account the experiences/costs of previous secretariats to some extent. Firstly, especially salary costs vary greatly depending on the country. Moreover, there has been no explicit reporting of the actual costs covered by host countries, e.g. in-kind contributions such as office space or staff covered by national budgets.

Staff

The LTS should be staffed by individuals hired on longer-term work contracts. The Head of Secretariat needs to be an experienced professional, leading a small team of appropriately qualified staff from different EHEA countries. The LTS is accountable and reports to the BFUG, which selects the Head of Secretariat.

Based on the experiences of the previous Secretariats, the estimated staffing needs are the following:

1. Head of Secretariat

- is the team leader and overall coordinator;
- to be filled by a highly skilled professional with strong expertise in European cooperation, understanding of higher education policy and experience in managing a small, dynamic team;
- entitled to recruit the necessary staff (in line with the budget agreed by the BFUG);
- to be recruited through an Europe-wide open and advertised competitive selection process, transparent, inclusive, and merit-based, and appointed by the BFUG, or with its approval;
- fully accountable to the BFUG, and to undergo an annual appraisal.
- for an initial contract of five to six years, renewable.

2. **4-5 Policy Officers** – support BFUG/working structures both in terms of policy and logistics. In most cases, one officer supports two/three working structures, therefore 4 or 5 officers are usually required;
3. **Communications Officer** – responsible for overseeing both internal and external communication;
4. **Administrative Officer** - managing administrative tasks in the country hosting the Secretariat.

This leads to approximately 7 FTE staff, to manage the present tasks and workload. Obviously, the staff numbers can be adjusted to changing workloads, resulting either permanently or temporarily in higher or lower staff costs. It is also necessary to bear in mind that the capacity of the Secretariat and scope of its support to the EHEA structures will depend on the financial capacity, thus non-payment of members' contribution may affect the implementation of the respective Work plan.

Seconding staff should in principle be a possibility open to all BFUG members and consultative members. The host country of the next Ministerial Conference should second one staff member to the Secretariat to facilitate liaison with the local organising team. In addition, the Secretariat

host country may second one further staff member. Staff should be seconded for at least 1 year, but preferably for the full duration of the work programme, for example to support a certain number of working structures over the entire working period, or for specific tasks.

The Task Force advised a ratio of no less than two-thirds contracted staff to one third seconded staff, and only provided that continuity can be secured through commitment to a reliable and binding schedule for secondment.

As the intention is to employ staff from different EHEA countries, salaries and employment conditions must be sufficiently attractive to potential staff members based in other European countries at the moment.

Travel/meeting costs

The costs have been estimated at 950€ per person and meeting, considering approximate travel costs of 550€ and 400€ for accommodation and various costs at the destination.

The following meetings have been considered:

- BFUG meetings: 2 meetings/y x 3 persons
- Board meetings: 2 meetings/y x 2 persons
- WG/TF/CG/TPG meetings: 12 groups x 2 meetings/y x 2 persons
- Other meetings: 10 various meetings / year

Ministerial conferences occur only every 3 years and have been considered to be covered by the “other meetings” line.

Other costs

Other costs include various operational costs beyond the premises (which is an in-kind contribution by Romania), such as IT equipment, website hosting, software licenses, insurances, office consumables. The amount was estimated based on the experience of comparable organisations, e.g. EQAR.

Reserve fund

Following the conclusions of the BFUG in Copenhagen, the budget reflects a need to develop a reserve fund which should allow for the handling of unexpected financial situations or temporary problems with the collection of some members’ contributions, ensuring that such events do not disrupt the operation of the LTS.

It is proposed to allocate 15% to the reserves initially. To build up reserves more quickly initially, the full fee would be charged in 2027 despite the LTS only starting to operate as of 1 July 2026. This ensures that the LTS has an adequate amount of reserves initially.

Once sufficient reserves have been built up, the amount allocated to the reserves can be gradually decreased. Provided that all EHEA members pay their envisaged contributions, reserve allocations can be phased out starting in 2030.

Item	Costs (EUR)
Staff:	614 250 €
• HoS (1 FTE) – 11000€ gross	150 150
• Senior policy officers (2 FTE) – 7000€ gross	191 100
• Junior policy officers (3 FTE) – 4000€ gross	163 800
• Communications officer (1 FTE) – 4000€ gross	54 600
• Administrative officer (1 FTE) – 4000€ gross	54 600
<i>(annual cost estimate = monthly gross x 13 x 105%)</i>	
Travel/meeting costs (BFUG structures, occasional representation)	64 600 €
Office space	0 € <i>(in-kind contribution by Romania)</i>
Other administrative costs	45 000 €
Total	723 850 €
Reserve building (approx. 15 %)	108 577 €
TOTAL SUM	832 427 €

Figure 1 – Estimated annual budget

EHEA member contributions

The proposal assumes that the European Commission would continue to contribute to the funding of the EHEA Secretariat (currently ca. EUR 250 000 per year through the Erasmus+ programme).

The TF found no other feasible model for covering the remaining costs of the LTS than contributions from EHEA members. This has been presented at the BFUG in Copenhagen (Dec 2025) and met the agreement of the BFUG. The fees for countries would have to cover approximately 600 000 €.

Item	Contribution (EUR)
<i>EU annual contribution (Erasmus+)</i>	250 000 €
<i>EHEA members' contributions</i>	582 427 €
TOTAL SUM	832 427 €

Figure 2 – Income sources

Fee levels

In order to share the costs of the Secretariat fairly and to ensure sustainable funding, the TF recommends that the Secretariat be financed by annual contributions by EHEA countries, differentiated based on the GDP and GDP per capita, similar to the system currently used by EQAR (see [EQAR website](#)).

The BFUG considered both this option as well as undifferentiated fees (i.e. same amount for all countries). At its 9/10 March 2026 meeting, the BFUG concluded that the differentiated approach was preferable.

The calculation is based on the current number of active BFUG members (47 - excluding the EC and the 2 suspended countries). It does not include contributions from consultative members, which would not have voting rights. For a division per country, see the detailed annex below.

Annual contributions per country			
	Members per group	Membership fee [EUR]	Sum of fees per group
Group 1 countries	11	20 804	228 844
Group 2 countries	8	15 603	124 824
Group 3 countries	16	10 402	166 432
Group 4 countries	12	5 201	62 412
Total	47		582 512

Figure 3 – Contributions per BFUG member

The BFUG has to assume that principally all EHEA countries would be willing and able to contribute financially. This matter has been addressed on several occasions, in particular at the BFUG meetings in Warsaw and in Copenhagen.

Approval and changes of the fee levels

The initial proposal for fees should be endorsed by the November 2026 BFUG meeting.

In order to ensure that the Secretariat remains sustainably resourced and mirroring the practice adopted by EQAR, the fees should be indexed annually in line with the official consumer price index for Romania (see details in the annex below).

The system of fees should be reviewed more broadly along with the evaluation of the LTS arrangement as a whole in 2033.

Operational considerations

The TF found that in the case of non-profit associations there should be no obstacle in paying membership fees, considering also that the overwhelming majority of BFUG members are also members of EQAR.

Where required, the member of the LTS association could be another organisation than the ministry itself (e.g. an agency in charge of internationalisation, a private law organisation etc), as long as the competent ministry officially designates this organisation for this role.

The LTS would issue annual invoices to the members. Regularly, invoices should be issued in January with a payment deadline of 2 months.

For 2027, the invoices would be issued in March or April with a payment deadline of 15 June 2027. As all arrangements are contingent on the ministers' final endorsement of the transition to the LTS, payment would not be required before the 2027 Ministerial Conference.

At the same time, countries are encouraged to make payments before the Ministerial Conference in order to ensure that the newly founded LTS association does not experience cashflow challenges in the beginning of its activity. Any fees paid would be reimbursed in case ministers decide to proceed differently.

Risks

Delayed or non-payment

While every member is expected to timely pay their membership fee, this would not exclude the possibility that in exceptional cases the BFUG may grant an individual member a delay of payment (e.g. during national crises).

Persistent non-payment of the fee would lead to the country losing voting rights in the LTS General Assembly and losing eligibility to serve on the LTS steering committee. This means, the country will have no say in any decisions that concern the LTS. At the same time, countries will retain their voting rights in the BFUG.

Annex: fee calculation and list

EHEA members pay a contribution based on an index calculated as follows:

$$Index = \frac{1}{2} \cdot \left(\frac{GDP}{AverageGDP[EHEA]} + \frac{GDPpercapita}{AverageGDPpercapita[EHEA]} \right)$$

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

Averages: Arithmetic mean of the GDPs (per capita) of all EHEA states

Based on the index, four fee categories shall be established:

Index	Fee (base)
≤ 0.25	5 201 €
≤ 0.75	10 402 €
≤ 1.50	15 603 €
> 1.50	20 804 €

The Gross Domestic Products (GDP) and GDP per capita (GDP p.c.) will be taken from the [IMF World Economic Outlook](#) or a similar reliable data source. The current values and resulting indexes and fee levels are in the table below.

The fee is indexed annually based on the Romanian consumer price index for services (<http://statistici.insse.ro/shop/?page=ipci>, “IPC pentru servicii”). The fee levels for the following year are established and communicated to all members, as soon as the index for August becomes available (, according to the following formula:

$$Fee_{YearN+1} = Fee_{YearN} \cdot \frac{Index_{AugNref.AugN-1}}{100}$$

The GDP data and the resulting assignment of countries to the above fee levels should be updated at least every five years; the updated assignment is presented to the General Assembly for its endorsement.

ISO	Country	GDP Bill. USD	p.c. USD	Index	Fee [EUR]	Group
DEU	Germany	4 230.172	50 788	4.8307	20 804	1
GBR	United Kingdom	3 108.416	46 200	3.6721	20 804	1
FRA	France	2 940.428	45 028	3.4920	20 804	1
LIE	Liechtenstein	6.613	193 618	2.6761	20 804	1
ITA	Italy	2 120.232	35 585	2.5609	20 804	1
CHE	Switzerland	810.830	93 515	2.0811	20 804	1
IRL	Ireland	516.253	102 394	1.9159	20 804	1
LUX	Luxembourg	83.771	131 302	1.8922	20 804	1
ESP	Spain	1 439.958	30 537	1.8271	20 804	1

NLD	Netherlands	1 007.562	57 715	1.7796	20 804	1
RUS	Russia	1 647.568	11 273	1.7642	20 804	
NOR	Norway	445.507	82 244	1.5690	20 804	1
SWE	Sweden	622.365	58 639	1.4162	15 603	2
DNK	Denmark	396.666	67 920	1.3238	15 603	2
BEL	Belgium	581.848	50 413	1.2632	15 603	2
AUT	Austria	481.209	53 793	1.2116	15 603	2
FIN	Finland	296.016	53 523	1.0270	15 603	2
ISL	Iceland	25.476	68 844	0.9741	15 603	2
TUR	Turkey	795.952	9 407	0.9069	15 603	2
POL	Poland	655.332	17 318	0.8787	15 603	2
SMR	San Marino	1.728	50 934	0.7040	10 402	3
CZE	Czech Republic	276.914	25 806	0.6262	10 402	3
PRT	Portugal	251.709	24 457	0.5830	10 402	3
AND	Andorra	3.213	40 417	0.5604	10 402	3
ROU	Romania	287.279	14 864	0.4854	10 402	3
GRC	Greece	211.645	19 827	0.4800	10 402	3
SVN	Slovenia	60.890	28 939	0.4585	10 402	3
MLT	Malta	16.695	31 997	0.4575	10 402	3
HUN	Hungary	180.959	18 528	0.4322	10 402	3
CYP	Cyprus	26.546	29 486	0.4325	10 402	3
SVK	Slovak Republic	116.748	21 383	0.4088	10 402	3
EST	Estonia	36.039	27 101	0.4089	10 402	3
LTU	Lithuania	62.635	22 412	0.3702	10 402	3
KAZ	Kazakhstan	194.024	10 145	0.3293	10 402	3
LVA	Latvia	37.199	19 539	0.3057	10 402	3
HRV	Croatia	63.399	15 808	0.2799	10 402	3
UKR	Ukraine	181.038	4 384	0.2372	5 201	4
BGR	Bulgaria	77.907	11 332	0.2323	5 201	4
SRB	Serbia	60.669	8 794	0.1805	5 201	4
BLR	Belarus	65.754	7 032	0.1612	5 201	
MNE	Montenegro	5.494	8 838	0.1272	5 201	4

AZE	Azerbaijan	52.645	5 167	0.1227	5 201	4
BIH	Bosnia and Herzegovina	21.692	6 648	0.1128	5 201	4
MKD	North Macedonia	13.885	6 712	0.1061	5 201	4
ALB	Albania	16.770	5 837	0.0969	5 201	4
GEO	Georgia	17.846	4 808	0.0837	5 201	4
MDA	Moldova	12.396	4 792	0.0782	5 201	4
ARM	Armenia	13.612	4 595	0.0766	5 201	4
VAT	Holy See	n/a	n/a	n/a	5 201	4

Source of GDP and GDP per capita: IMF WEO October 2021, USD, current prices,
<https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/weo-database/2021/October>, retrieved 2022-03-23