Background note on MCAA's application for EHEA Partnership status

Prepared by the EHEA Secretariat for the C BFUG Board meeting in Podgorica, 29th of September 2026

I. Information about the application

On the 24th of August 2026, the **Marie Curie Alumni Association** (hereinafter referred to as 'MCAA') sent an application to the EHEA Secretariat to request obtaining the EHEA partnership status.

The request has included a formal application letter ('**MCAA application**'), which relates to the way EFEE argues the fulfilment of the EHEA partnership criteria.

According to the Rules of Procedure of the European Higher Education Area ('RoP-EHEA'), *'Organisations wishing to become consultative members or EHEA partners need to send an application to the EHEA Secretariat, documenting that they satisfy the listed criteria. The Secretariat then puts the request on the agenda of the BFUG that in turn will assess the application. The decision is taken by the Ministerial Conference for consultative members and by the BFUG for EHEA partners.'* (Annex 4).

The curent EHEA Partners are: EAIE, EUROCADRES, Eurodoc, EuroScience, Association Européenne des Conservatoires and Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen.

Proposed action: The application from MCAA is put on the agenda of the BFUG Board meeting C in Montenegro, with the proposed action to advise the BFUG on the decision to be made in relation to their application.

II. Criteria for EHEA partnership

According to the RoP-EHEA, *'**The BFUG** may grant organisations that **do not fulfil the criteria for consultative membership** an association with the EHEA, as EHEA partners. They are invited to Ministerial Conferences and can be invited to the BFUG meetings as determined by the RoP-BFUG'* (Article II.3).

Their rights are further detailed in the BFUG Rules of Procedure (RoP-BFUG): *'EHEA partners can participate in BFUG meetings or BFUG working structures as observers, upon approved prior request in writing to the Co-chairs. During the BFUG meetings, they may speak on the agenda issues for which they requested participation'*. (Article I.6)

The **admission of EHEA Partners is decided by the BFUG** through consensus. Based on the exceptional voting regime outlined in Article V.3 of the RoP-EHEA, if no consensus can be achieved, a decision can be taken by vote, decided by a majority of the valid votes cast.

The **four cumulative criteria** for consultative membership and EHEA partnership status are stipulated in Annex 4 of the RoP-EHEA: **added value to the Bologna Process, Relevance of**

Co-funded by the European Union

the stakeholder group, Representativeness and Organisational Form. In comparison with consultative membership status, the criteria for EHEA partners are less restrictive.

The four criteria are detailed in the annex as follows:

1. **Added value to the Bologna Process:** *any new consultative member or EHEA partner should provide added value to the Process, meaning that their contribution should have a European scope and be relevant to the work of the BFUG.*
2. **Relevance of the stakeholder group**: *organisations should have higher education as a central field of interest. The stakeholder group should be relevant to the principles, action lines and goals of the Bologna Process. Organisations that may contribute to stronger links between higher education and the labour market are relevant to the Process. Organisations that may contribute to stronger links between higher education and other educational fields may also be relevant. Organisations representing special professions do not fit with the BFUG, which deals with general principles of, and structures in, higher education.*
3. **Representativeness:** *a new consultative member or EHEA partner should not be a sub-organisation of a member or consultative member of the Bologna Follow-up Group.*
4. **Organisational form**: *either be a non-governmental organisation (NGO) or an inter-governmental organisation.*

For comparison, the additional criteria for consultative membership are: their contribution cannot be easily covered by an existing consultative member and cooperation with the BFUG cannot be better covered at another level; be the most representative organisation in its field of interest, be a European organisation or a European branch of an organisation, accept organisations from all the EHEA member States as full members, have full members from no less than 50% of the Bologna countries and have full members from EHEA member States outside the EU/EEA and EU candidate countries; its mandate should reflect its relevance to the Bologna Process and its right to give an opinion on behalf of its members on matters relating to the Bologna Process.