Recruitment of the Head of the EHEA Secretariat

BFUG, 5-6 November
Dublin

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1. Introduction

This document sets out the proposed procedure for recruiting the Head of the Secretariat (HoS) for the long-term Secretariat (LTS) in Bucharest, Romania.

The role of HoS is important within the EHEA and the BFUG. The HoS will work under the authority of the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG). The EHEA association will provide the financial framework and the legal personality for the establishment of the Secretariat. It also has to ensure that the Secretariat's operations respect the legal framework (Romanian law) and regulatory rules (EHEA and BFUG Rules of Procedures, Statutes of the Association, any additional rule to be agreed).

As the Secretariat has yet to be established, the HoS will play a role in this, regarding preparation of the office, the recruitment of staff, and bureaucratic, administrative, and organisational matters.

As the present 2024-2027 EHEA SEC would still be in charge until end of June, if recruited early, the future HoS could benefit from a period of initiation and briefing. This would help to ensure a smooth and full transition and handover of the tasks on 1 July 2027.

Therefore the recruitment procedure has to start as early as possible, hopefully allowing to contract the HoS by March-April 2027. This schedule is ambitious, but feasible, as detailed below.

To be noted:

- Certain details of the vacancy note may still need further adjustment and alignment, also in view of the proposed review grid. The TF did not have enough time to discuss them in all detail.
- On some issues, the Task Force did not manage to establish unanimous agreement. The document includes therefore an alternative proposal (in section 2).

The BFUG is invited to consider the documents and to

1. endorse the proposed recruitment procedure, including the division of tasks and the proposed selection criteria, and mandate the TF to take it forward;
2. establish a Selection Panel to conduct the interviews, and select one or several candidates for the post of the HoS to the BFUG for final decision.
3. mandate the TF to organise the process of recruitment, as proposed in this document

4. comment on the vacancy announcement and the profile and criteria it comprises, and – once finalised and launched - contribute to its dissemination, in addition to its publication in relevant media.

2. Who does what

Task Force	- responsible for preparing and supporting the recruitment and selection process - administrative compliance check - pre-review of applications
Selection Panel	- to be established by the BFUG - review of all eligible applications - structured interviews with shortlisted candidates online (up to 12) and in person (up to 5) - propose one or a ranked list of up to three candidates to the BFUG, on which the BFUG will take the decision.
EHEA Secretariat project funded by the EC, to support the work of the TF, and the establishment of the Secretariat	- EU-funded project under the Bologna Call 2024, to ensure funding support for the work of the TF, and for the establishment of the EHEA Secretariat Association. - implemented by EUA & Czech National Agency - covers cost for expert work, including legal expertise - travel and accommodation costs of applicants & Selection Panel members - other costs (such as advertisement, legal registrations, etc.) - provision of training for the Secretariat staff - supports the Task Force in a secretarial capacity (Czech Agency) - potentially to be joined by the EHEA Secretariat Association, which would allow – required – contribution to costs, such as first salaries of the newly hired HoS
Role of the host (Romania)	- confirmation of the formal employer/legal arrangements regarding the Secretariat - information on the Secretariat's facilities and hosting arrangement

Members of the Task Force and of the Selection Panel would declare any actual or potential bias or conflict of interest, as soon as it emerges.

The BFUG and the BFUG Bord will be regularly informed on the progress of the process.

Selection panel

Composition and Profile of the Panel members

The BFUG establishes a Selection Panel consisting of 7 members, drawn from the BFUG members, including one consultative member. Naturally, the Panel may include BFUG Board members.

Selection panel members

- have experience in the BFUG and its work over 2 working periods;
- are familiar with the work of the Secretariat from own experience of interacting with it;
- have relevant experience in recruitment, ideally also in an NGO/non-profit context.

In consideration of the time schedule proposed below, BFUG members, who are will to take up this task, are invited to indicate this to one o the co-chairs, before (e.g. by email) or during the BFUG meeting.

The TF, based on the suggestions, would compose a panel, in consideration of geographical diversity, gender and age balance, and propose this to the BFUG.

If not possible during the BFUG meeting in Dublin, this can be done through the silent procedure within two weeks.

How the Selection works

The Selection Panel will organise itself in appointing two co-chairs.

The co-chairs would prepare, supported by the TF the activities of the Panel, including the meetings.

Within the framework proposed in this document, the Selection Panel would agree on its working methods and approaches, minute them, and maintain them consistently throughout the process. It will

- conduct and oversee the recruitment process;
- work mainly through written exchanges, online meetings (about 3) and one in-person meeting in Brussels or Prague for the final selection round.
- Review applications based on the review grid that the BFUG has endorsed (see below)
- conduct the structured interviews based on approach and method that it will agree on, in considerations of the suggestions provided by the TF
- agree and document any additional approaches and criteria they may deem necessary;
- establish the longlist (list 2) and shortlist (list 3);

- determine the final shortlist of 1-3 (ranked) finalists (list 4), and submit it with a reasoned recommendation to the BFUG for decision.

Estimated workload

Each panel member would be

The workload depends on the number of applications received, but also on how the Panel organises its work, for e.g. if it does two independent reviews per application or three, whether at least three or all members have to be in online interviews etc.

	Estimated workload per panel member
3-4 short online meeting for briefing and debriefing	3-6 h
review of 4-8 applications on paper, including scoring and short report	2-6 h
participation in 4-8 online interviews of 20-30 min	3-6 h
participation in 1 interview round in physical presence	8-12 h (1-1.5 days – without travel)
Total workload (working time, excluding travel)	16-30 h

Apart from a short online meeting in beginning to mid Dec., the review and selection will take place in January to March 2027.

Romanian hosts

The hosts will provide the necessary information on the Secretariat's facilities and hosting arrangement – as this might come up during the interviews. They will also provide the information and confirmation on issues concerning the formal employer and other relevant legal arrangements. It would be important to signal very clearly that the Secretariat, while based in Romania, is independent.

Role of the Task force

The TF supported by the CZ National Agency will prepare and support the selection and recruitment process, as follows:

- reception and registration of applications and compliance check

- pre-review against criteria, resulting in a full list (List 1) with a score and written comments, to prepare the work of the Selection Panel.
- two members of the TF, usually the chairs, will support the Selection Panel in a secretarial capacity.
- if requested by the Selection Panel, preparation of reports and documentation etc.

Support from EU-funded EHEA Secretariat project, led by CZ and EUA

- The project has been established with the sole purpose to support the work of the Task Force by contributing funding and resources for the establishment of the Association and the Secretariat.
- The Czech National Agency will collect the applications, and assist in the registration and the organisation of the interviews, in close coordination with the chairs of the TF.
- The project will provide funding for the recruitment and selection process, including for advertisement, legal expertise if needed, travel and subsistence cost for the candidates of the final interview round, and – where needed – travel cost of Selection Panel members.

Alternative proposal by one TF member

- Applications are gathered by the Lithuanian Ministry, via a mailbox or online platform.
- Lithuania would hand the applications over to the TF.
- The TF registers them and conducts a compliance check, but does not pre-review them.
- The Selection Panel is composed of members of the BFUG Board at the time of the selection: Ireland, Montenegro, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Greece, Republic of Moldova, the European Commission (excluding the Vice-chair, Romania, and consultative members).
- The BFUG Board would review all application, and establish a short list of up to 3 candidates, who will be invited for interviews.
- There will be one interview round carried out online or hybrid, with the BFUG Board Members gathering in physical presence, and the candidates participating online.
- The Board would this interview round either in Bucharest, or in Skopje, back-to-back with the Board Meeting.
- This would allow the Panel to conclude its work in January, which potentially allows for an earlier recruitment of the Head of Secretariat, and subsequently an earlier recruitment of the other Secretariat staff.

This proposal is summarised here, but has not been included in the process outlined below.

4. Proposed recruitment approach

The objective is to ensure an international, transparent, merit-based and professionally conducted recruitment process that reflects the role of the Secretariat in serving the European Higher Education Area and operating under the authority of the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG). It should invite and enable applications from candidates from across the EHEA and beyond. This also requires consideration of visa requirements of applications, and provided their successful candidature, their Romanian work permit and an resident permit respectively long-stay visa.

Applications have to be submitted in English language, including a motivation letter and a tabular CV (Europass format). For further details, see the vacancy note in Annex.

All applications and assessments shall be treated confidentially.

Vacancy announcement and the selection process will fully comply with European and national law (cf. Directives 2000/43, 2000/78, 2006/54 and Romanian OG 137/2000) regarding equal opportunities.

Personal data shall be processed in accordance in compliance with GDPR. Candidate information shall only be accessible to persons directly involved in the recruitment process.

I. Publishing of Vacancy (Nov/Dec 2026)

- The vacancy will be published internationally at the end of November 2026, on the EHEA website, and in relevant media. BFUG members and consultative members are also encouraged to contribute to dissemination.
- It will announce a first deadline of 5 January 2027 by which all applications are to be submitted to an online platform or a functional mailbox that is accessed by the Tasks Force chairs and the Czech Agency.

II. Establishment of the Selection Panel (Nov/Dec 2026)

- As outlined above
- Pre-meeting of the Selection Panel – to brief, discuss open matters and finetune the approach
- The exact dates below are tentative, and subject to adjustment by the Selection Panel , in coordination with the Task Force.

III. Registering, compliance, pre-review (6 to 11 January 2027)

1. The TF supported by the Czech Agency will register the applications and conduct a compliance and eligibility check.
2. Every eligible application will be assessed by at least two TF members against the review grid, checking whether the candidates meet the profile regarding their skills and work experience, as indicated in their applications.
3. The TF will provide the Selection Panel members with the full list (**List 1**), comprising the reviewed applications with scores and written comments. For transparency, it will also share the applications which did not pass the compliance and eligibility criteria. All Panel Members will have access to all applications.

IV. 1st Selection Panel Meeting (online - 14 January 2027)

The Selection Panel organises its work.

- It would decide whether the applications in number and quality provide a sufficiently strong pool of candidates. Otherwise, it may decide to prolong the application period.
- It would organise its review with at least two individual reviews per application.
- It would decide whether to review all applications, or to base its work on the pre-review of the TF, in considering only applications which received a higher score. This might be an option or even necessary if a high number of applications has been received. But it can also decide to ignore the review provided by the TF. (**List 2**)

V. Individual reviews by Panel members (document-based – 14-19 January 2027)

Panel members will review a certain number of applications, and submit them with a score and comments (short report).

The TF prepares an overview of the results and shares it with the entire Panel.

VI. 2nd Selection Panel Meeting (online - 21 January 2027)

The Panel discusses the relevant applications and establishes a shortlist of 5-10 candidates (**List 3**), which will be invited for an online interview.

Ideally all, but at least three Selection Panel Members will be present.

VII. 3rd Selection Panel Meeting (online – end February 2027)

After the interviews, the Selection panel agrees on maximal 5 candidates (**List 4**), who will be invited for an interview in physical presence.

VIII. 4th Meeting, Final interview round with up to 5 candidates (physical presence, Brussels or Prague – 1.5 days in beginning to mid March 2027)

The interview

Ideally all, but at least three Selection Panel Members will be present.

It is suggested to conduct the interviews either in Prague, in the premises of the Czech National Agency, or at the European University Association in Brussels. Both venues can provide the appropriate conditions.

Selection panel will on its **recommendation to the BFUG**, and propose a first and second, possibly a third candidate, with a clear report on the reasons of their decision.

IX. March/April 2027 – BFUG takes the final decision on the appointment

The BFUG will consider the recommendation from the Selection Panel, and make its decision. This could be done in by circulation, in order to speed up the process, and allow to start the contracting process. Otherwise, the decision will be taken at the BFUG meeting.

Contract and arrangements are to be agreed with the General Assembly of the Association. Subsequently, the Association will offer the successful candidate the position HoS.

Failure to identify a suitable candidate

If no suitable candidate is identified at any stage, the Selection Panel may recommend:

- continuing the existing recruitment;
- undertaking additional targeted international outreach;
- reopening or republishing the vacancy;
- revising the recruitment strategy.

Annex: review and assessment criteria and approaches

1. Short vacancy notice

Head of the Secretariat of the European Higher Education Area

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is recruiting a highly skilled professional with strong expertise in European cooperation for the post of the **Head of its Secretariat**.

The Head will lead a team of 5–7 staff to support and coordinate the work of the Bologna Process Follow-up Group and its working structures in the further development of the European Higher Education area.

Key responsibilities include:

- Managing the Secretariat and its staff, budgets and administrative operations, and ensuring effective reporting and accountability, and also the EHEA website and its archive.
- Providing optimal support for the work of the BFUG, its working structures and other related activities.
- Preparing policy documents, reports, meetings and high-level events.

The candidate will bring

- Higher education degree (usually, Master or comparable)
- strong leadership and organisational skills - with at least 3 years experience in senior management, preferably in leading an organisation
- proven experience in European higher education policy, and the Bologna Process
- experience in intergovernmental collaboration
- excellent personal skills, and ability to work with diverse stakeholders on complex tasks
- English proficiency and excellent communication and drafting skills

The Head of the Secretariat will be based in Bucharest, Romania, and is expected to travel frequently. The position offers a competitive international salary (Salary range to be mentioned) under a renewable 18-month contract (with a 6 month probation period, which can be prolonged) by the EHEA Secretariat Association, a non-profit organisation under Romanian law.

More information on the vacancy, and on the application requirements and process are is available here

2. Long vacancy notice (PDF download)

Note: could repeat the above short vacancy note as an introduction

1. CONTEXT

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) brings together 49 countries and a broad range of stakeholder organisations committed to strengthening cooperation in higher education through the Bologna Process. Since 1999, the EHEA has supported the development of compatible degree structures, quality assurance frameworks, recognition of qualifications, and policies that facilitate student and staff mobility and promote international cooperation across Europe and beyond. More information can be found at the EHEA website.

The key body of the EHEA is the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG), an executive body overseeing and directing the development of the EHEA between Ministerial Conferences. The BFUG is currently in the process of setting up a long-term EHEA Secretariat, located in Romania (Bucharest), which will serve to provide administrative, operational and communications support to the BFUG.

The Secretariat will

- work closely with BFUG co-chairs, working groups, task forces and consultative members;
- support the development and delivery of the EHEA work plan;
- organise and coordinate meetings and activities;
- manage communications and information resources.

The Secretariat will contribute to cooperation and policy development across the European Higher Education Area, and ensure its continuity, and institutional memory.

It will provide professional support for the EHEA's programme of work, and work in close collaboration with the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG), its Board and its working structures.

While the Bologna Process has been under operation for almost 30 years, this will be the first secretariat with long-term-hired staff. The Head will have the opportunity to shape this secretariat, by establishing a dynamic, flexible and multinational team, and setting the strategy and approach for its contribution to Europe's higher education reform and cooperation agenda for the coming years.

The Head of Secretariat plays a central role in this work, making this a unique opportunity to contribute to one of the most significant intergovernmental higher education cooperation frameworks in the world.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

In particular, the Head of Secretariat is expected to:

- Manage the Secretariat and its internal processes, including financial management of the organisation and its initiatives, with responsibility for financial accounts and other relevant financial reports;
- Recruit, evaluate, support, and (if necessary) dismiss the Secretariat staff, in line with the organisation's budget, in coordination with the administrative board;
- Ensure effective, timely and complete execution and follow-up of BFUG decisions;
- Prepare and coordinate the preparation of meetings BFUG, BFUG Board, and working structures including supporting the drafting of agendas, documents, and other relevant materials;
- Contribute in close collaboration with the host to the preparation of the of the Ministerial Conference and Global Policy Forum.
- Represent the EHEA Secretariat in close coordination with the BFUG and in the limits of the given mandate.
- Be fully accountable to the Association and the BFUG and undergo annual appraisals.

3. Profile

the BFUG is looking for a highly motivated and accomplished candidate, with the following profile :

- higher education degree (usually a Master's or comparable)
- Knowledge of and experience in European or international higher education
- experience in European and/or international higher education policy
- strong leadership and organisational skills, with at least 3 years experience in senior management, preferably in leading an organisation, including management of staff and finances (preferably at the European or international level);
- Willingness to travel frequently, mainly within the European Higher Education Area;

- Experience in working with public authorities and stakeholder bodies, ideally also in international or intergovernmental levels;
- Full proficiency in English, both written and spoken;
- Excellent organisational and communication skills;
- Proven ability of working in an international, multicultural environment;
- Proven capacity of working in and leading international teams and collaboration initiatives;
- Strong decision-making and problem-solving skills;
- Ability to perform under pressure, and manage a wider range of complex and diverse activities and initiatives;

The successful candidate is expected to reside in Bucharest (full-time basis), where the EHEA Secretariat will be located. The start of contract is envisaged for April-May 2027.

4. Conditions

The selected candidate will be offered a contract of 36 months, renewable, and with probation period of 6 months, which can be prolonged. The contract is subject to Romanian law regarding employment conditions, labour rights, taxation and social contributions[1].

The following benefits will be offered to the candidate:

- A salary in the range of (salary bracket), in consideration of experience and seniority;
- Attractive package of benefits including: [additional benefits to be added here, such as supplementary health insurance, supplementary pension investment, office laptop or other hardware, transportation allowance, allowance for child education etc.];

5. APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

Applicants are invited to submit their CV (not more than three pages) together with a motivation letter to [email address] latest by [date].

A Selection Panel will invite shortlisted candidates for an online (January-February), and a final in-person interview in [location] on 16-17 March (tentatively)[2]. As the final decision with taken by the Bologna Follow-up Group, The successful candidates will be informed latest by mid April.. All other candidates will be informed in due course.

How to apply

Applications have to be submitted in English language, including a motivation letter 2 pages max), a tabular CV (Europass format) and relevant references and proves of work.

All applications and assessments shall be treated confidentially.

Vacancy announcement and the selection process will fully comply with European and national law (cf. Directives 2000/43, 2000/78, 2006/54 and Romanian OG 137/2000) regarding equal opportunities.

Personal data shall be processed in accordance in compliance with GDPR. Candidate information shall only be accessible to persons directly involved in the recruitment process.

Your application and all related matters will be handled confidentially.

In case of any questions, please contact [email address].

1 [link to relevant regulation]

2 Travel costs will be reimbursed to the invited candidates.

3. Review grid

Submitted applications that have passed the administrative compliance check shall be assessed against the following criteria first by the Task Force, then by the Selection Panel.

Criterion	Expectation	**weighting**
Strategic leadership and management	Senior experience in strategic leadership and management; Ability to develop and manage an international professional team;	20%
International higher education policy experience	Experience of in international higher education policy and cooperation, and in working in governmental and intergovernmental processes, and with stakeholder organisations;	20%
Knowledge of the EHEA and Bologna Process	Knowledge and understanding of Europe, and European political processes, and ideally, of the European Higher Education Area, the Bologna Process and the respective European Union processes;	15%
Independence, neutrality and ability to work across diverse interests	Proven ability to operate impartially and effectively in a diverse international political and institutional environment;	15%

Organisational, financial and team management	Team leadership, organisational and financial management;	25%
Proven ability to develop institutional and organisational structures, and manage complex multilateral processes		5%
Communication and representation	Excellent communication and representation skills;	Pass or fail
Languages/international working capacity	Excellent command of English;	Pass or fail

2. Online interviews

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to a structured online interview.

The interview should address:

- strategic leadership;
- understanding of the EHEA and Bologna Process;
- management experience;
- stakeholder relations;
- experience in international and politically diverse environments;
- communication;
- organisational and financial management;
- approach to establishing a new permanent Secretariat.

3. Final interview in physical presence

Up to 5 candidates will proceed to the final assessment.

Final candidates will:

- give a short oral presentation: **"How would you develop the EHEA Secretariat as an effective, independent and service-oriented institution during its first three years?"**

- undergo a structured interview, exploring once more their skills profile, based on their application, responses in the previous round and their presentation;
- respond to questions from the panel;
- do a short written or practical exercise (financial literacy).

4. Proofs of prior work and experience

All applicants/ all short-listed candidates (list 3) will be invited to provide:

- a list of relevant publications (not more than 10)
- personal references that the selection panel may contact

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3. Recruitment schedule

2026		
5 Nov	**Approval of the procedure and documents**	
	• approval of the job description and selection criteria;	BFUG
	• agreement on the recruitment procedure and the vacancy note;	BFUG
	• confirmation of the formal employer/legal arrangements, and on the SEC facilities	RO
	• establishment of the Selection Panel	BFUG
Nov	**Launch of recruitment**	
	• publication of the vacancy	TF
	• targeted dissemination through BFUG members, EHEA stakeholder organisations, international higher education networks and relevant professional networks; advertisement	TF & BFUG
Dec	• briefing meeting of the Selection Panel	
	• rolling receipt of applications.	TF / CZ NA
2027		
5 Jan	**(first) deadline for submission of applications**	
6 Jan	**Start of initial assessment**	TF - Czech NA
	• eligibility and completeness check	TF - Czech NA
	• preparation of a full list of applications (List 1), with a scoring against the agreed criteria	TF - Czech NA
14 Jan	**1st Meeting (online): Longlist (list 2)**	Selection panel
	• Decision on how many applications to review and establishment of a longlist (list 2)	Selection panel
	• decision whether to proceed with the candidate pool or continue recruitment	Selection panel
	• individual reviews (at least 2 per applications)	Selection panel members
21 Jan	**2nd Meeting (online): Analysis of reviews – establishment of a short list (list 3) + first interview round (online)**	
	• Invitation of candidates for online interview (with alternative slots) and to reserve 10-11 March for a potential physical presence interview (only those who get selected)	
	• First online interview round: structured interviews, with all or at least 3 Panel members	Selection panel
18-19 Feb	• Update report to BFUG	Selection panel chairs / TF Chairs
25 Feb.	**3rd Meeting (online): Selection of up to 5 candidates for interviews in physical presence (list 4).**	Selection panel
16-17 March	**4th Meeting: Interviews in physical presence – Brussels or Prague**	
	• final candidates participate in a structured interview in physical presence • short presentation on their vision for the EHEA Secretariat; assessment against the agreed final selection criteria.	Selection panel
March April	**BFUG Decision**	
	• a ranked and reasoned recommendation for 1-3 candidates circulated to the BFUG	Selection Panel
March/ April	• possibility of decision by circulation	BFUG
April	**Appointment**	
12-13 April	• Final decision on the appointment;	BFUG
	• the successful candidate is offered the position by the relevant employing legal entity;	TF
	• contract and arrangements for taking up the position are concluded.	EHEA Secretariat Association