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DE CULTURA ET EDUCATIONE

Dicastery for Culture and Education
of the Holy See

BFUG Meeting XCI

29 May 2024
Tirana, Albania

Minutes of meeting

List of participants

Country/Institution	First Name	Last Name
Albania (BFUG Vice-Chair)	Linda	Pustina
Albania	Anila	Paparisto
Andorra/WG on San Marino Roadmap Co-Chair	Jordi	Llombart
Austria	Stephan	De Pasqualin
Austria/BICG Co-Chair	Helga	Posset
Belgium French Community (BFUG Co-Chair)	Caroline	Hollela
Belgium Flemish Community (BFUG Co-Chair)/CG on GPD Co-Chair	Liesbeth	Hens
Bulgaria	Ivana	Radonova
Council of Europe	Catherine	Dolgova Dreyer
Croatia/WG on Social Dimension Co-Chair	Ninoslav	Šćukanec Schmidt
Cyprus	Kyriacos	Charalambous
Czech Republic	Tereza	Vengřinová
Czech Republic/TF on RR Co-Chair	Michal	Karpíšek
Denmark	Jonas Husum	Johannesen
EURASHE/WG on Learning and Teaching Co-Chair	Jon	Altuna
EURASHE	John	Edwards
European Commission	Vanessa	Debiais-Sainton
European Commission	Kinga	Szuly
Education International	Andreas	Keller
Estonia	Janne	Pukk
ENQA	Anna	Gover
EUA/TF on RR Co-Chair	Michael	Gaebel
EQAR	Stéphane	Lauwick
ESU/WG on Social Dimension Co-Chair	Horia Șerban	Onita
Eurydice/WG on Monitoring Co-Chair	David	Crosier
Finland/WG on San Marino Roadmap Co-Chair	Maija	Innola
France	Mathieu	Musquin
Georgia (Outgoing BFUG Co-Chair)	Maia	Shukhoshvili



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Greece	Alexandra	Karvouni
Holy See (BFUG Co-Chair)	S.E. Mons. Paul	Tighe
Holy See (BFUG Co-Chair, Drafting Committee Co-Chair)	Melanie	Rosenbaum
Hungary (Incoming BFUG Co-Chair)	András	Báló
Iceland (Incoming BFUG Co-Chair)	Una	Strand Vidarsdottir
Ireland	Padraig	Hennigan
Italy	Luca	Lantero
Kazakhstan	Rauza	Mendaliyeva
Liechtenstein	Belgin	Amann
Luxembourg	Patricia	Marx
Moldova	Nadejda	Velisco
The Netherlands	Arthur	Belle
Norway/WG on Monitoring Co-Chair	Tone Flood	Strøm
Romania/TF on Enhancing Knowledge Sharing in EHEA Co-Chair	Cristina	Ghițulică
San Marino	Remo	Massari
Slovakia	Peter	Ondreicka
Slovenia	Jernej	Širok
Spain (Outgoing BFUG Co-Chair)	Margarita	de Lezcano-Mújica
Sweden	Robin	Moberg
Switzerland	Aurélia Natascha	Robert-Tissot
Ukraine	Maryna	Mruga
BFUG Secretariat (Head)	Edlira Adi	Kahani Subashi
BFUG Secretariat	Kristina	Metallari
BFUG Secretariat	Aida	Myrto

Azerbaijan, Armenia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Türkiye, United Kingdom, United Kingdom (Scotland) and UNESCO did not attend the meeting.

1. Welcome and Introduction

The BFUG Co-Chairs welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda of the meeting was adopted without changes.

For more information, please see: [BFUG BE VA 91 Draft Agenda](#)

3. Discussion and Adoption of the RoP EHEA

Melanie Rosenbaum (BFUG Co-Chair, Holy See) informed that the Rules of Procedure (RoP) document had been circulated to the BFUG for adoption following the BFUG meeting in Brussels. She noted that while there



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were minor language corrections, some articles had undergone material changes. The question arose whether to revisit the decision made in Brussels or revert to the text adopted in Brussels for the specific modified paragraphs II.4, V.1, and V.2-3. A clean version of the document with these paragraphs was unavailable, necessitating the TF on RR to produce one.

ESU noted that some changes decided in Brussels, such as the voting matter on the Communiqué, were not reflected. The Holy See suggested that if there was agreement to use the Brussels adopted version, incorporating changes made by the TF but without amending paragraph II.4, consensus could be reached on a revised document.

Michael Gaebel (Co-Chair, TF on RR) stated that the discussion should focus on the last version sent to the BFUG via email on 22 May 2024, which had received member comments. He suggested proceeding with that version and addressing proposed changes.

Iceland proposed only reopening the discussion if there were strong objections to the suggested changes, otherwise proceeding with the majority view.

The Holy See emphasized that the essential decision taken in Brussels involved language changes, and a version reflecting further changes by the TF was circulated for consensus. Without consensus on those changes, the original Brussels version should stand. If there were objections to the circulated version, the floor would need to be reopened, and adoption seemed unlikely.

The TF on RR Co-Chair confirmed that the version circulated on 22 May contained all proposed changes, and further comments from parties needed addressing. The Holy See noted the lack of incorporation of PowerPoint version changes by the TF and suggested returning to the Brussels text.

The European Commission (EC) clarified that the document circulated on 22 May reflected the discussion results of the Brussels BFUG and suggested not reopening concluded matters, also given time constraints. The Belgium Flemish Community Co-Chair recommended proceeding with the current version and revisiting issues in the next mandate.

ESU raised concerns about changes to the voting procedure in paragraph V.2, stressing the importance of ensuring that decision-making by vote is possible is needed, rather than leaving this at the discretion of the BFUG Co-Chairs. Romania emphasized the need for clarity in the text regarding decision-making competencies and suggested deferring such matters to the BFUG RoP for future clarification. Albania supported reverting to the version adopted in Brussels without new changes. The Council of Europe (CoE) agreed with ESU's comments on the voting process. Italy underscored the importance of consensus, noting they lacked the mandate to alter previously made decisions without prior national consultation. They expressed strong confidence in the BFUG Co-Chairs to establish a straightforward working method and reiterated that no changes could be accepted. Hungary maintained the position that the BFUG should vote on the communiqué and was in favor of reopening the discussion. Sweden reflected on the extensive discussions held in Brussels, noting that delegates currently lacked the mandate to discuss any changes. They highlighted the agreement and consensus reached in Brussels.

The Holy See emphasized that there should be no voting on the adoption of the Communiqué, and the final RoP version should reflect this consensus, as the latest document did not fully implement the agreed changes due to objections. The EC stated that the TF on RR has accurately reflected everything discussed in Brussels, making the situation clear.

The Holy See opposed the inclusion of the modification to Article II.4, as it did not match the version agreed upon in Brussels. The objection was based on the newly added text giving a mandate to EQAR, which was seen

as interference in the internal affairs of organizations or consultative members. While not blocking consensus, they wanted their opposition recorded. The BFUG then approved the document prepared by the TF, with revisions made after Brussels, to be subsequently presented to the ministers.

4. Possible further information by delegations regarding the Tirana Communiqué and the Global Policy Forum Statement

4.1. Discussion on the Tirana Communiqué

S.E. Mons. Paul (BFUG Co-Chair, Holy See) highlighted the Holy See's abstention from the original decision to suspend the participation rights of the Russian Federation and Belarus. It was requested that the existing footnote to the Communiqué, referencing the BFUG decision of 2022, be amended to reflect this abstention, emphasizing that this addition would not alter the Communiqué's content but would acknowledge the Holy See's position, namely that the Holy See, in conformity with its particular mission, maintains a policy of strict neutrality in international affairs while favouring all efforts to promote peace. The EC recognized that the Holy See was not alone in its concerns and noted that such issues were recorded in the BFUG meeting minutes. The Holy See Co-Chair stressed that without an amendment of the footnote, they were under orders to oppose the Communiqué, as the Holy See must maintain its neutral stance and cannot agree to text suggesting it supported a decision it did not take at all.

Austria noted – supported by Norway and Finland – that at the BFUG meeting in Brussels, it was clearly agreed no footnotes displaying positions of individual BFUG members should be included into the Communiqué. Iceland, supported by Finland and France, expressed its opposition to reopening the discussion, suggesting that reflecting the Holy See's opposition in the minutes should be sufficient. Hungary supported the addition of the footnote and highlighted that their request for inclusion in the footnote during the BFUG meeting in Brussels had been turned down. The Holy See reiterated its position, stating that it had a mandate not to adopt the Communiqué unless the proposed clarifying addition to the existing footnote was approved. France proposed that the Holy See make a written statement alongside the Communiqué in order to explain its position. Italy noted that the Holy See could make a statement at the Ministerial Conference in front of other delegations regarding the Communiqué.

4.2. Discussion on the Global Policy Forum Statement

The Holy See requested a change in the text from "basic human rights" to "fundamental human rights." They asked to request an amendment to the bullet point on environmental climate change, suggesting it be revised to "*Promote the development of training and education in integral ecology by favoring a cultural model of development and sustainability, based on [fraternity and] the alliance between the human being and the environment.*" The BFUG did not agree to reopen the Statement text at all, but that the minutes would include the pronounced statement on gender equality, namely that "without prejudice to the principles of institutional autonomy and academic freedom, the Holy See reserves its right and duty to safeguard and consolidate the catholic identity of Ecclesiastical Faculties and Catholic Universities all around the world, and the Holy See reiterates its well-known position regarding the term "gender", which is to be understood as grounded on the biological sexual identity that is male and female", reflecting the Holy See's adherence to the positions of Turkey and Hungary, to be recorded in the meeting's minutes.

No other business was brought forward, thus the meeting was concluded.