

Minutes of the meeting

XCIV BFUG Board meeting

9th of January 2025

Hosted by Albania in Tirana

List of participants

Nr.	Country/organisation/working structure	Name
1.	Albania, BFUG Co-chair	Aleksander Xhuvani
2.	Romania, Vice Chair	Cristina Ghițulică
3.	Iceland, Outgoing BFUG Co-chair	Una Strand Viðarsdóttir
4.	Denmark, Incoming BFUG Co-chair	Jonas Husum Johannessen
5.	Denmark	Sofie Linthoe Haastrup
6.	Liechtenstein, Incoming BFUG Co-chair	Belgin Amann
7.	Council of Europe	Catherine Dolgova Dreyer
8.	ESU	Iris Kimizoglu
9.	EUA, TF on establishing a long-term Secretariat Co-chair	Michael Gaebel
10.	EURASHE	Jakub Grodecki
11.	European Commission	Kinga Szuly
12.	Austria, WG on Monitoring Co-chair	Helga Posset
13.	Malta, WG on FV Co-chair	Rose Anne Cuschieri
14.	Italy, CG GPD Co-chair	Elisa Petrucci
15.	Ireland, TF on the Future of Bologna	Orla Lynch
16.	Finland, BICG Co-chair	Maija Innola
17.	Head of the EHEA Secretariat	Horia Onița
18.	EHEA Secretariat	Oana Țînțar
19.	Poland, BFUG Co-chair (online)	Magdalena Maciejewska
20.	Poland (online)	Maria Bołtruszko
21.	The Netherlands, WG on Internationalisation and Mobility Co-chair (online)	Arthur Belle

The meeting starts at 09:32 CET.

1. Welcome and introduction

Documents: Minutes of the [BFUG XCII Board meeting](#) (Reykjavik) and [BFUG XCIII meeting](#) (Budapest)

The Albanian BFUG Co-chair welcomed participants to the BFUG Board meeting and introduced Prof. Anna Kapaj, Vice Minister of the Ministry of Education and Sports of Albania. The Vice Minister thanked all those contributing to the achievements of the BFUG in the previous working period, culminating with the Ministerial Conference in Tirana.

The Polish BFUG Co-chair expressed their regrets for not being able to join the Board meeting in person and expressed their commitment to the Bologna Process and its working structures, extending their invitation for the BFUG meeting in Warsaw. The Albanian BFUG Co-chair also welcomed the Board members to Tirana, reaffirming their commitment to advancing the goals of Bologna Process and strengthening the European Higher Education Area.

The Romanian Vice Chair thanked Albania for organising the meeting and acknowledged the progress done so far by approving the Work Programme. She emphasised that while the working structures had already conducted their first meetings or are planning to do so, the Terms of Reference had not been adopted yet and their adoption by the BFUG should take place soon. The Vice Chair also considered the big gap between the upcoming two BFUG meetings and the subsequent role of the BFUG Co-chairs in ensuring that work is progressing well.

The Hungarian outgoing Co-chair expressed their satisfaction with the EHEA Secretariat, the previous co-chairmanship and the BFUG meeting in Budapest. The Icelandic outgoing Co-chair also emphasised the successful co-chairmanship and the adoption of the Work Programme. She also recalled the organisation of a useful coordination meeting between the co-chairs of the working structures in November in Brussels and reminded Board members about the EHEA newsletter issued in December.

2. Adoption of the agenda

Documents: [BFUG Board PL AL 2 1 Agenda of the meeting](#)

As there were no comments on the agenda, the Albanian Co-chair concluded that the agenda is adopted.

3. Information from EHEA Secretariat

Documents: [BFUG Board PL AL 94 3 1 EHEA Secretariat presentation](#)
[BFUG Board PL AL 94 3 2 Schedule of topics for BFUG meetings](#)

The Head of the EHEA Secretariat (HoS) gave updates from the EHEA Secretariat, including previous and current activities since the BFUG meeting in Budapest. He added that after some effort, all BFUG members had joined at least one working structure of the current Work Programme.

Upon a question from EUA, the HoS clarified that the EHEA Secretariat would provide an overview of the participation of the BFUG members in all working structures and present it to the BFUG, with the information also to be featured on the individual country section of the website.

ESU and the Finnish BICG Co-chair thanked the Secretariat for the excellent work so far. ESU raised an issue regarding the participation of national stakeholders in working structures. ESU mentioned that some of their national unions of students (NUSes) had encountered difficulties in being nominated as representatives for working structures, even in countries where this had previously been practised. Upon clarification provided by the EHEA Secretariat to ESU at their request confirming that national authorities have the possibility of nominating student

representatives in working structures according to the Rules of Procedure, ESU explained that the national authorities informed NUSes that they are against nominating students in the working structures, with ESU highlighting how this would go against the fundamental values and the engagement of stakeholders. Supported by the Icelandic outgoing BFUG Co-chair, ESU asked the BFUG Co-chairs to follow up on this matter, with the Icelandic outgoing BFUG Co-chair suggesting that the BFUG Co-chairs send a letter to the BFUG on this issue with the support of the Secretariat.

As the Maltese WG on FV Co-chair, EUA, Austrian WG on Monitoring Co-Chair and the Italian CG GPD Co-chair asked for more information about the updates for the EHEA website, the HoS clarified that three processes work in parallel: updating the current website with the current working structures, meetings and documents; collecting information from the countries for the new website (with 29 countries having sent information by the Board meeting) and reviewing the content of the current website; and, finally, working on the design of the new website. The HoS added that the new website should be ready by March.

The HoS then presented the Schedule of topics for BFUG meetings prepared by the EHEA Secretariat, to better streamline the work of the BFUG and its working structures and increase transparency. This was well received by Board members. The Icelandic outgoing BFUG Co-chair, supported by the Finnish BICG Co-chair, suggested to clarify in the Schedule of topics that working structures are to present only written reports to the BFUG when not allotted a separate agenda point, to allow more content discussions in the BFUG meetings. The Finnish BICG Co-chair further supported the reference in the document of bringing the work of the TPGs to the BFUG to support the implementation of key commitments and social dimension, suggesting discussing the situation of the implementation of key commitments in the BFUG meeting in Cyprus or Ireland. The Vice Chair emphasised that the Schedule of topics is created based on collecting input from the expected work of the working structure and should the schedule of the working structure changes, the Schedule of topics should be revised as well. Upon a question from the Austrian WG on Monitoring Co-chair, the HoS proposed to have the document endorsed by the BFUG, with the caveat that it would be a living document.

3.1 Information about the Ministerial Conference

In relation to the Ministerial Conference, the Vice Chair informed the Board about preliminary discussions on scheduling the Ministerial Conference. The Vice Chair raised the possibility of 27th-28th of May 2027 as prospecting dates for the Ministerial Conference, starting with social programme and informal reception on the 26th of May, with the intention to announce tentative dates in the upcoming BFUG meeting and send save-the-dates at the end of the year. The Icelandic outgoing BFUG Co-chair and EUA suggested starting the Ministerial Conference a day earlier, to ensure the attendance of ministers. EUA also asked about the transport between Iasi and Chisinau and whether a document would be prepared for the BFUG meeting. The Vice Chair replied that the proposals would be considered, while certainly the transfer between the two locations would be provided by the hosts. She confirmed that a document would be prepared for the BFUG meeting.

ESU asked whether there would be a possibility of already discussing the working structures of the next cycle in this working period, pointing out to difficulties in deciding the working

structures only after the Ministerial Conference, which also delayed the Erasmus+ projects call. The HoS replied that the Secretariat did not include this in the Schedule of topics due to the discussions in the previous cycle. However, he highlighted that it would eventually be the BFUG Co-chairs of that period to analyse whether to propose such a discussion to the BFUG.

4. Reporting from the BFUG working structures

The HoS announced that all the ToRs for the working structures had been finalised, asking the Board whether they would support sending the ToRs for online silent adoption by the BFUG or waiting for the BFUG in Poland, suggesting the former option. The Board supported the proposal of sending the ToRs for online silent adoption.

The European Commission gave updates on the Erasmus+ call for proposals supporting EHEA, informing the Board members that 22 proposals had been received. Based on the estimative calendar, the Commission expects that the final results will be communicated in Spring 2025, and projects would be able to kick-off in June-July.

4.1 WG on Monitoring

Documents: [BFUG Board PL AL 94 4 1 1 Final draft ToRs WG on Monitoring](#)

The Austrian Co-chair of the WG on Monitoring presented updates for the WG, which had its first meeting online on the 11th of December. The WG would propose to the BFUG that a comprehensive, yet reduced Bologna Process Implementation Report is prepared for 2027, considering the difficulties of collecting and processing data of the scale seen in the previous report. The BPIR would touch upon all the commitments, but through a reduced number of indicators and scorecards and also relying on additional sources of data. The WG on Monitoring Co-chairs were working on a proposal to be presented at the BFUG meeting in Poland.

4.2 WG on Fundamental Values

Documents: [BFUG Board PL AL 94 4 2 1 Comprehensive monitoring framework for fundamental values](#)

[BFUG Board PL AL 94 4 2 2 Final draft ToRs WG on Fundamental Values](#)

The Maltese Co-chair of the WG on FV presented updates for the WG, including their first meeting on the 6th of December, the project application and the comprehensive monitoring report submitted for the meeting. She emphasised that the monitoring framework was piloted and the draft version endorsed by both the previous and the current WG.

The Finnish BICG Co-chair asked whether the co-chairs of the WG on FV plan to prepare a document to the BFUG outlining how the monitoring process would be carried out and what would be expected from BFUG members and consultative members, with the Maltese Co-chair of the WG on FV confirming the approach. The Council of Europe considered that in the section on the public responsibility, several themes such as democracy, solidarity, ethics, transparency, fairness are brought together, while the situation on the ground may call for a more nuanced approach. The Council of Europe also appreciated including in the framework contributions from Council of Europe's work on fundamental values, albeit suggesting that Council of Europe

documents should be explicitly referenced in this case. The Maltese WG on FV Co-chair confirmed that these elements would be considered.

EUA congratulated the WG for the framework, stressing out that its' visibility and sustainability would prove essential. EUA inquired about the results of the piloting survey and whether they are available. The HoS clarified that the WG's agreement with the countries involved implied that the results of the piloting exercise would not be made public. In this regard, EUA pointed out that some reflections stemming from the piloting project would nevertheless be useful.

The European Commission congratulated the WG for the report, while expressing their desire that the BFUG meeting would allow for an in-depth discussion of the document. The European Commission highlighted the importance of maintaining synergies with the work in EU, informing the Board that the European Parliament will soon publish the second Academic Freedom Monitor report, while the Commission will publish a report on supporting academic freedom in Europe. Following up on the issues of synergies with other initiatives, the Danish incoming BFUG Co-chair asked whether coordination has been ensured with the European Research Area in this regard.

ESU pointed out that during the last years there had been synergies between the work of the WG on FV and other initiatives. Nevertheless, ESU also stressed differences between these processes that develop in parallel, explaining that whereas the EHEA and CoE take a broader approach, EU focuses on areas where it has competence, especially related to research. The European Commission mentioned that the European Parliament requested legislative action for protecting freedom of academic research, with DG RTD working on identifying the proper legislative instrument. Furthermore, the Commission stated that since the Charter of Fundamental Rights also references academic freedom, the provision can be used in decision pertaining to EU funding. On another note, the Commission explained that they had also been working on soft law mechanisms supporting fundamental values, in alignment with the EHEA frameworks.

The Council of Europe also detailed outgoing work in the field, which continues a long tradition of engagement on the topic. The CoE representative exemplified through the new project called 'Academic freedom in action', which included a successful conference, appreciated by several members of the Board which attended the event. The Council of Europe announced that a report on threats to academic freedom would be published as a next step. The Council of Europe further presented their approach of also considering legal protections to academic freedom, including by the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights.

On another note, EUA, supported by the Icelandic outgoing BFUG Co-chair, stressed the importance of **promoting** fundamental values as a key task in the ToRs, which should run in parallel with the monitoring exercise. The Polish BFUG Co-chair suggested that a debate is organised during the BFUG meeting about the future work of the WG. Furthermore, they proposed an exchange of views between member states on the state of play of fundamental values in Europe, as different approaches to fundamental values persist. The Finnish BICG Co-chair, supported by the Vice Chair, stated that the BFUG should not to start the work from scratch, as the ministers already adopted statements defining the fundamental values and the BFUG agreed on the mandate of the WG on FV. As such, the Finnish BICG Co-chair proposed that the BFUG concentrates instead on discussing how to promote fundamental values and how the monitoring process would take place. The Hungarian outgoing BFUG Co-chair remarked that common

points should be found between the different fundamental value frameworks in Europe, to ensure consistent promotion and avoiding double standards. The Hungarian outgoing BFUG Co-chair expressed disappointment that the time dedicated to answer member states' questions during the conference organised by the Council of Europe through the new project called 'Academic freedom in action' was insufficient, so many of the questions raised by Hungary remained unanswered. Based on the practicalities of the meeting, the HoS suggested it would be easier to extend the time for the WG on FV during the BFUG meeting rather than including a separate thematic session on FV.

The Icelandic outgoing BFUG Co-chair recalled that fundamental values are not limited to academic freedom, and they should be treated equally and in interaction. The Vice Chair emphasised that the monitoring framework had already been presented to the BFUG and then piloted and, unless there are major concerns, the BFUG should adopt the document and allow the WG to start the monitoring exercise, while the BFUG could discuss how to further promote fundamental values. She suggested that the document is revised to take the format of a BFUG document, also reflecting on the increased number of pages which may not be helpful.

EUA, supported by the Icelandic outgoing BFUG Co-chair, considered that the framework is not in a format suitable for BFUG adoption, as such suggesting that the BFUG takes note of the framework. The Icelandic outgoing BFUG Co-chair further added that the document is an output of the project and as such should be kept separate from the deliverables of the working structure.

The Maltese Co-chair of the WG on FV concluded by thanking everyone for their contribution and seconding the importance of treating fundamental values holistically and ensuring the synergy of the work of the EHEA with other processes. She praised the results of the project as an essential tool to deliver results for the WG. The HoS suggested that a deadline of ten days is given for sending written comments for the monitoring framework, which was agreed by the Board.

4.3 WG on Internationalisation and Mobility

Documents: [BFUG Board PL AL 94 4 3 1 Final draft ToRs WG on Internationalisation and Mobility](#)

The Dutch Co-chair of the WG on Internationalisation and Mobility gave updates from the working group, announcing that the first meeting would take place between 27th – 28th of January in Chisinau. The first meeting of the WG would focus on brainstorming the activities of the WG, agree on a work plan and discuss broad aspects of the action plan that the WG would deliver. There was no intervention from the Board members.

4.4 CG on Global Policy Dialogue

Documents: [BFUG Board PL AL 94 4 4 1 Final draft ToRs CG on Global Policy Dialogue](#)

The Italian Co-chair of the CG GPD gave updates for the CG GPD, presenting the ToRs and announcing the first meeting of the CG GPD on the 30th of January. She emphasised that the key words of the group are dialogue, trust and cooperation. The Italian Co-chair also informed the Board about the project application aimed to support the CG GPD, coordinated by Romania. There was no intervention from the Board members.

4.5 TF on the Future of Bologna

Documents: [BFUG Board PL AL 94 4 5 1 Final draft ToRs TF on the Future of Bologna](#)

The Irish Co-chair of the TF on the Future of Bologna gave updates from the TF, outlining the first meeting of the TF on the 20th of November, taking place online, with an upcoming meeting of the TF set for end of January. The Irish Co-chair of the TF expressed limitations in terms of the capacity of the TF in consideration of the absence of funding and presented the approach of the TF to conclude BFUG debates with an outcome report that would feed both into the contribution to identifying future topics of action for the Bologna Process and improving working methods.

To fit in more topics, the Icelandic outgoing BFUG Co-chair, supported by EUA and the Finnish BICG Co-chair, suggested that the TF could focus on organising two shorter sessions during the first couple BFUG meetings. The HoS further suggested that the debates organised by the TF, in synergy with additional consultations with stakeholders and engagements with BFUG members, strategically feed into discussing the future priorities of the Bologna Process at the BFUG meeting in Ireland.

The HoS, supported by EUA, the Council of Europe, ESU and the Albanian BFUG Co-chair, proposed that the debate at the BFUG meeting in Poland focuses on Artificial Intelligence, as it would be consistent with the priorities of the Polish Presidency, the topics included in the ToRs of the TF and since it was agreed to be a transversal topic in the 2024-2027 Work Programme. The Albanian BFUG Co-chair also suggested cybersecurity and the link to disinformation as specific elements under the broader emergence of AI. Furthermore, the HoS signalled that an outstanding topic from previous discussions is how the working structures would contribute to BFUG debates, either feeding into the work of the TF or organising separate sessions during the BFUG meetings themselves, for example on key commitments.

The Vice-Chair, supported by EUA and the Council of Europe, suggested to consider breakout sessions during the debates, inviting an external expert to give introductory remarks and reflecting on broader socio-economic developments that impact higher education, similar to the previous exercise of discussing future priorities of the Bologna Process in 2019. EUA added that BFUG could also rely on local knowledge when inviting experts. EURASHE informed about the project application on lifelong learning and student-centred learning, arguing for a broader view of changes happening in higher education and interconnected developments. EURASHE further outlined that the project application includes organising back-to-back conferences with some BFUG meetings in 2026 and 2027.

The Austrian Co-chair of the WG on Monitoring expressed support for concluding the debates with an outcome document that could ensure follow-up. Both the Austrian Co-chair of the WG on Monitoring and the Finnish BICG Co-chair inquired about whether the TF would liaise with relevant BFUG working structures that would be able to contribute to the debates organised by the TF, based on their remit. The Italian Co-chair of the CG GPD also supported finding ways in which working structures could contribute to the sessions organised by the TF.

The Finnish BICG Co-chair further pointed out that the TPGs could contribute to the debates since they tackle fundamental aspects of the Bologna Process. In relation to wider topics, such as

digitalisation and AI, the Finnish BICG Co-chair emphasised that the TF should select issues and concentrate on elements which the Bologna Process could tackle in a meaningful way in order to bring added value, since they could be too broad to grasp effectively.

The Council of Europe outlined their focus on artificial intelligence across the whole organisation and the keen interest shown by governments in the topic, exemplifying with the ground-breaking success of the Framework Convention on AI. The Council of Europe emphasised that BFUG should tackle innovative topics of great concern for younger generations, such as AI and sustainability.

The Italian Co-chair of the CG GPD stressed out the importance of structuring the debate and dividing the topic to attain to the desired goals.

ESU considered that a future potential topic of debate would be whether a fourth cycle is needed in the degree structure of the Bologna Process, in line with the developments in lifelong learning, micro credentials and skills policy. ESU argued for identifying ways to further promote harmonisation by identifying topics that would motivate all BFUG members to jointly pursue reforms.

ESU also suggested identifying external facilitators, preparing questions in advance, and organising sessions looking at further actions instead of peer learning activities. They also informed that their project application with E4 includes funding to support the scope of the TF on the Future of Bologna. The Vice Chair preferred maintaining facilitation of sessions within the BFUG and also suggested that one of the debates organised by the TF focuses on the future of key commitments, in line with the mandate given by ministers in Tirana.

The Irish Co-chair of the TF on the Future of Bologna concluded by supporting the contributions of the Board, mentioning that for the BFUG meeting in Poland, due to the short timeframe, only one debate could be organised. She further expressed the desire of the TF to support making the implementation more effective and suggested that the TF would draw up a list of topics for future BFUG meetings while allowing flexibility for new issues to be raised. The Irish Co-chair of the TF on the Future of Bologna also highlighted the possibility of using foresight approaches in designing the methodologies for the debates.

4.6 TF on establishing a long-term Secretariat

Documents: [BFUG Board PL AL 94 4 6 1 Call for expressions of interest for](#)

[hosting the Secretariat](#)

[BFUG Board PL AL 94 4 6 2 Final draft ToRs TF on establishing a long-term](#)

[Secretariat](#)

The EUA Co-chair of the TF on establishing a long-term Secretariat presented the Call for expressions for hosting the Secretariat, pointing out that the Call should be sent to the BFUG after the Board meeting. The EUA Co-chair also informed Board members that a project application supporting the TF had been submitted.

The European Commission inquired about the reason for shortlisting hosts instead of deciding on a single application, expressing the potential risk of having the decision postponed in the case when the potential host would be decided only at the BFUG meeting in spring 2026, in tandem

with the Go/No-Go decision for establishing a long-term Secretariat. The EUA Co-chair of the TF agreed to revise the document to include that the hosting decision would be taken at the BFUG in Copenhagen. Furthermore, the EUA Co-chair of the TF explained that the TF should not necessarily propose a decision but be able to support forming an opinion explaining strengths and weaknesses of the different proposals for hosting.

The Austrian Co-chair of the WG on Monitoring asked whether specific criteria on which grounds the BFUG should make the decision had been devised and, if so, how they would be evaluated. The EUA Co-chair of the TF pointed out that the criteria were included in the call and that the TF would review the applications against the criteria, nevertheless without a full picture yet on how the criteria would be assessed. The EUA Co-chair also clarified that the BFUG would receive access to the applications to form their opinion.

The Vice Chair considered that the criteria were quite general, without clarity, for example on what openness and flexibility of employment regulations mean, which could lead to subjectivity. She also pointed out the difficulty of comparing employment regulations in various countries due to the highly technical knowledge required, arguing for clear statement goals instead, which could be assessed objectively, such as the possibility to hire international staff. The Vice Chair also pointed out that having advantageous fiscal treatment as an in-kind benefit may discriminate some countries where the legislation does not allow it. The EUA Co-chair of the TF replied that the TF would trust the applicants in accurately depicting their legislation in the application. The HoS added that in the first TF meeting, the flexibility criteria were interpreted also considering the number of hours per week required for work permits rather than only on the capacity to employ international staff, and that the fiscal treatment was exemplified in VAT-free regimes for international NGOs. The Icelandic outgoing BFUG Co-chair recalled to the discussions on the ToRs of the EHEA Secretariat and the possibility to support the TF with legal expertise.

The Irish Co-chair of the TF on the Future of Bologna also suggested more specific criteria as well as an explicit vision of a long-term Secretariat, while concurring with the merits of shortlisting applicants so as the BFUG has more options to assess. The Council of Europe suggested revising the criteria for the call in the vein of a tender to ensure an objective evaluation against clear criteria. The Council of Europe, supported by the Icelandic outgoing BFUG Co-chair and the Finnish BICG Co-chair, also proposed that a weighing between criteria is devised to offer applicants an image of the priority given to various sections of the application. The Finnish BICG Co-chair raised the possibility of dividing criteria, delineating between eligibility requirements and items that require a qualitative analysis.

The EUA Co-chair of the TF replied by stating that the TF had already discussed the possibility of having weighed and scoring systems, without a definitive answer yet. He also pointed out that the call already distinguishes between mandatory and optional criteria, however endorsing the suggestion of increased clarity. The EUA Co-chair of the TF raised doubts whether the best way forward would be for the TF to rank the proposals based on best quality, highlighting that the BFUG should hear the applicants and analyse the applications themselves. Furthermore, he outlined the difficulty of weighting the importance of some criteria, giving the example of price accessibility. The EUA Co-chair of the TF inquired whether an option going forward could be that a more explicit set of criteria would be prepared by the TF after the BFUG meeting in Poland,

with the Austrian Co-chair of the WG on Monitoring suggesting that the criteria should be decided along with the call, as otherwise the applicants would find it difficult to prepare their applications.

4.7 Bologna Implementation Coordination Group

Documents: [BFUG Board PL AL 94 4 7 1 BICG presentation](#)
[BFUG Board PL AL 94 4 7 2 Final draft ToRs BICG](#)
[BFUG Board PL AL 94 4 7 3 Template Country action plans](#)
[BFUG Board PL AL 94 4 7 4 Template TPG Action plans](#)

The Finnish BICG Co-chair gave updates from the coordination group, outlining the work on the ToRs and the templates for the action plans, the co-chairs of the TPGs, the upcoming first meeting of the BICG and outstanding issues for the BFUG decision.

EUA stated that different views on what the role of TPGs is had emerged – while there was an agreement on the topics tackled, the purpose of addressing the topics had been unclear. In this sense, EUA suggested clarifying the purpose of the TPGs as supporting policy implementation at national level. The HoS informed that the outgoing BFUG Co-chairs sent a letter to the co-chairs of the BICG and the TPGs in this regard, with the Icelandic outgoing Co-chair adding that alongside the issue of purpose, another problem consisted of the profile of national delegates, which in some cases were not in a position to forward national implementation.

ESU suggested that in the upcoming BFUG meeting the matter of the profile of national delegates in TPGs is addressed, with the Vice Chair and the Austrian Co-chair of the WG on Monitoring recalling that the issue had been raised in multiple BFUG meetings with no avail. The Vice Chair emphasised that it would have been helpful to have ToRs for the TPGs adopted by the BFUG, thus ensuring oversight and regulating their activity. The European Commission added that the full implementation of the Bologna Process is a minimum requirement for the EU enlargement process, providing yet another incentive for supporting implementation.

The Austrian Co-chair of the WG on Monitoring considered that one cause for the divergence in scope would be that when applying for Erasmus+ funding for supporting projects, there is an incentive to include innovative elements as well. The Italian Co-chair of CG GPD replied that the projects and the TPGs could successfully work in complementarity without affecting the purpose of the TPGs, with the Vice Chair adding that innovative topics in the supporting projects are not mandatory and innovation can be assured through the implementation approach.

The Icelandic outgoing BFUG Co-chair inquired about the relation between national action plans for 2025 and those elaborated in 2018, stating that the latter had not been follow-up upon. She further asked whether the two have a similar format and focus and whether there would be an assessment of the current implementation situation in countries based on the commitments taken in 2018. The Austrian Co-chair of the WG on Monitoring replied that the assessment could be determined based on the Bologna Process Implementation Report 2024, which also showed the added value of the TPGs.

The Vice Chair suggested a clarification in the template for the national action plans that BFUG members could add tables for other commitments, as it might be interpreted that the plans could

cover only key commitments rather than the fact that covering key commitments is mandatory. She also recalled that the national action plans should include a table for enhancement knowledge sharing activities, referencing the text of the Tirana Communiqué. For the TPG Action Plans, the Vice Chair asked how the table for topic specific actions correlates with the table in the national action plans and stated that in relation to deadlines, the TPG action plans could not be finalised before the deadline for submitting national action plans. She concluded that, ideally, the two templates should have identical tables.

The Austrian Co-chair of the WG on Monitoring inquired whether the national action plans should not include Bologna Process commitments in general, referring to countries which already had taken such an approach, and in this case the template should not have a prescriptive format. She also distinguished between activities from national action plans, which should be broader in scale, and TPG Action plans which should be more granular, and expert driven. The Austrian Co-chair of the WG on Monitoring further inquired when the data for the topic specific actions in the TPG action plans would be collected, whether the answers would be in one template and who would investigate the national action plans, as it would not be the role of the BICG.

Supported by the Finnish BICG Co-chair, the HoS suggested that the TPG Action Plans should not wait for the national action plans and include the topics and priorities to be addressed by the TPGs. He added that TPGs A, B, C had already sent surveys to their members to collect information that contributes to building the TPG Action Plans. The second phase should be to submit the national action plans, with the HoS, supported by the Finnish BICG Co-chair, proposing a deadline of 1st of April 2025, as no BFUG member requested a longer deadline. He added that after the national action plans are collected, the sections of the national action plans related to each key commitment could then be put together to form an annex of the TPG Action Plans, with the TPG members then being able to materialise the actions into activities.

The Finnish BICG Co-chair further stressed out that finalising the action plans for TPGs is necessary, while acknowledging that ideally it would have been useful to have the national action plans beforehand. She added that once the national action plans are submitted, the work plan of the TPGs could be adjusted if needed. The Finnish BICG Co-chair continued by stating that the template for national action plans already includes the possibility to add other commitments, however she agreed with a last change before the document is sent to the BFUG in the sense of emphasising the role of the knowledge sharing part through a separate table. The Finnish BICG Co-chair agreed with the Austrian Co-chair that it would go outside the mandate of the BICG to take care of all the elements in the national action plans and there should be a consensus in the BFUG on how to follow-up on them.

The Vice Chair added that despite asking for updates from TPG C members in the previous cycle on the implementation of action plans, less than 30% of members answered. She pointed out that the TPGs should keep monitoring the implementation of national activities linked to their remit, suggesting that the table from the national action plans relating to each key commitment is then maintained for overviewing all national activities by the TPGs in a consolidated format. The Finnish BICG Co-chair concluded by stating that the BFUG should decide how the monitoring of the national action plans for actions outside the remit of the TPGs should be pursued. Supported by the Irish Co-chair of the TF on the Future of Bologna and the Vice-chair,

the Finnish BICG Co-chair considered that even the peer pressure from publishing the plan and presenting the situation to the BFUG in a statistical format may already prove to be a relevant incentive.

4.9 Updates for the AG on ECTS User's Guide revision

Documents: [BFUG Board PL AL 94 8 1 Summary for the BFUG Board - AG on ECTS Users' Guide revision](#)

The European Commission presented the document, outlining the intended focus of the revision, the composition of the AG, the timeline and the research to be carried out in the preparation phase of the revision process to ensure an evidenced-based approach. The Commission added that the ToRs should be adopted by the BFUG together with the ToRs of the working structures.

ESU inquired about the criteria for selecting experts to be part of the AG and suggested including members closely connected to current developments in relation to ECTS. EUA complemented by stating that both experts involved in the previous revision and experts with current practice should be part of the group. The Vice Chair, supported by EUA, suggested that the group should remain small, while the proposal of the Commission consisted of more than 20 members. To reduce the number, the Vice Chair recommended to have no more than one expert per country. The Vice Chair further sought clarifications on whether the AG would carry the revision themselves or would be consulted on the revision, as stated in the document.

The European Commission indicated that the 2015 AG was bigger in size, acknowledging the importance of having different viewpoints represented in the group. The Commission clarified that the AG would carry out the revision and that the list of experts proposed is indicative, inviting Board members to recommend experts for further consideration and specifying that no more than one expert per country would be appointed.

Upon questions from EUA and the Austrian Co-chair of the WG on Monitoring regarding ICF's role in the AG, the European Commission replied that ICF would conduct the background study, while the European Commission would chair the AG and the EHEA Secretariat would provide the secretarial functions for the group in the same way as for the other BFUG working structures. The Commission further clarified that the study was commissioned by DG EAC and that the AG could be consulted on the questionnaire if the timeframe would allow it.

EURASHE appreciated that the scope of the review also would include bridging higher education with Vocational Education and Training, thus supporting a lifelong learning perspective. Referencing the Schedule of topics for BFUG meetings prepared by the Secretariat, they also suggested a similar approach for identifying topical overlaps between working structures and their supporting projects, understanding the contribution of each group in such cases. The Irish Co-chair of the TF on the Future of Bologna emphasised that to reach the concrete implementation problems, the study should involve interviewing students. The European Commission confirmed that the intention of the study is to fill the knowledge gap and go beyond anecdotal evidence by providing in-depth overview for a selected number of countries and institutions, using both qualitative data from the Erasmus+ and qualitative contributions through surveys and interviews with students, staff and higher education institutions.

5. Agenda for the XCV BFUG meeting

Documents: [BFUG Board PL AL 94 5 1 Draft agenda for the BFUG meeting](#)
[BFUG Board PL AL 94 5 3 ESG revision consultation session – background paper](#)

The Polish BFUG Co-chair presented the draft agenda of the BFUG meeting in Poland, taking place between the 24th-25th of February 2025 in Warsaw. The Polish BFUG Co-chair announced that the registration for the BFUG meeting would open five weeks prior to the event, with the registration closing two weeks before the meeting. She added that documents and presentations should also be circulated in the two-weeks deadline, if possible. In relation to the draft agenda, the Polish Co-chairs suggested meeting discussion points 8 and 9 and having one debate organised by the Polish presidency on 'digitalisation and artificial intelligence in the scope of synergies between EHEA and EEA', with a duration of 60-90 minutes. The Polish Co-chairs would invite national experts on AI in higher education.

The Icelandic outgoing BFUG Co-chair expressed their regret that the Polish Co-chairs were not able to attend the meeting in person, since the Co-chairs should adapt the agenda based on the Board meeting which prepares the BFUG. The Icelandic outgoing BFUG Co-chair asked the Polish Co-chair for reflections on how the agenda should be revised based on the discussions in the Board and for a deadline for receiving the background paper for the plenary session, recalling that in the previous BFUG meeting there were complaints about the Board not receiving documents that were presented at the BFUG meeting.

The Polish BFUG Co-chair acknowledged the short timeframe between the Board meeting and the BFUG meeting, informing that the documents would be sent as soon as possible, and the Co-chairs would follow-up on the points raised in the Board meeting. The HoS added that the Secretariat would swiftly provide notes from the meeting to form a basis for reviewing the agenda. He pointed out that since the Polish Presidency proposes to organise a session on AI, then it would be important to consider that the TF on the Future of Bologna should prepare another topic and see how they are correlated, as well as the best positioning of the debates on the agenda. The Irish Co-chair of the TF on the Future of Bologna suggested that the TF could support the Polish Presidency in preparing the session on AI, including on the methodological approaches.

The Icelandic outgoing BFUG Co-chair suggested reducing the timing for working structures and reporting in writing where oral presentations would not be needed, to ensure more time for debates.

6. Information by the incoming co-chairs (Denmark and Liechtenstein)

Documents: [BFUG Board PL AL 94 6 1 BFUG Board Meeting XCVI - Liechtenstein](#)
[BFUG Board PL AL 94 6 2 BFUG Meeting XCVII - Denmark](#)

The Liechtenstein incoming BFUG Co-chair presented the upcoming BFUG Board meeting in Vaduz, which will take place on the 4th of November 2025. She also outlined information about Liechtenstein and their higher education priorities.

The Danish incoming BFUG Co-chair presented the tentative priorities of Denmark in the field of education and training: VET, student mobility – anticipating the proposal for the new Erasmus+ programme, and education and lives of children and youth in a digital age. The Danish incoming Co-chair informed the Board that the BFUG meeting will take place between 15th-16th of December in Copenhagen.

7. Any other business (AOB)

7.1 EFEE Application for EHEA partnership status

Documents: [BFUG Board PL AL 94 7 1 EFEE Application](#)

[BFUG Board PL AL 94 7 1 EFEE Statutes](#)

[BFUG Board PL AL 94 7 1 Background note EFEE application](#)

The Head of the EHEA Secretariat presented the application received from EFEE and the criteria for EHEA partnership according to the Rules of Procedure.

The Icelandic outgoing BFUG Co-chair, supported by the Austrian Co-chair of the WG on Monitoring and ESU, considered that EFEE did not meet the partnership criteria, considering their mixed membership, including ministries of education, local governance organisations or universities, potentially creating confusion in terms of overlaps of representation, including in relation to BFUG members. The Icelandic outgoing BFUG Co-chair added that it was difficult to appreciate what gap in representation EFEE would cover.

EUA suggested that at some point it could be worth revisiting the partnership status, including creating a potential group of sympathising organisations, in consideration of increasing number of applications for EHEA membership or partnership, which may also stem from enhanced social media activity.

The Vice Chair considered that it is expectable for a federation of education employers to have a diverse membership and recalled existing EHEA partners which already overlap with BFUG consultative members, thus it could be hardly used an argument for rejection.

The Albanian Co-chair concluded that the Board would not recommend the BFUG to accept EFEE's application for EHEA partnership.

The meeting ended at 16:40 CET

* * *