

Minutes of the XCIII BFUG meeting

Budapest, Hungary

26th – 27th of September 2024

Venue: Moholy-Nagy University of Arts and Design, 9 Zugligeti St, Budapest, 1121

Nr.	Name	Country/Organisation
1.	Mar Martinez	Andorra
2.	Jordi Llombart	Andorra
3.	Mariana Sargsyan	Armenia
4.	Stephan De Pasqualin	Austria
5.	Helga Posset	Austria
6.	Vusala Gurbanova	Azerbaijan
7.	Samir Hamidov	Azerbaijan
8.	Liesbeth Hens	Belgium – Flemish Community, outgoing Co-chair
9.	Caroline Hollela	Belgium – French Community, outgoing Co-chair
10.	Loredana Maravić	Croatia
11.	Kyriacos Charalambous	Cyprus
12.	Tereza Vengřinová	Czech Republic
13.	Michal Karpisek	Czech Republic
14.	Jonas Husum Johannessen	Denmark
15.	Anita Damsgaard Jensen	Denmark
16.	Janne Pukk	Estonia
17.	Vanessa Debiais-Sainton	European Commission
18.	Svein Hullstein	European Commission
19.	Maija Innola	Finland
20.	Mathieu Musquin	France
21.	Maia Shukhoshvili	Georgia
22.	Hannah Schmitz	Germany
23.	Alexandra Karvouni	Greece
24.	Melanie Rosenbaum	Holy See, outgoing Co-chair
25.	András Báló	Hungary, BFUG Co-chair
26.	Zsolt Dános	Hungary
27.	Una Strand Viðarsdóttir	Iceland, BFUG Co-chair
28.	Marie Glynn	Ireland
29.	Padraig Hennigan	Ireland
30.	Luca Lantero	Italy
31.	Chiara Finocchietti	Italy
32.	Aitzhan Kulumzhanova	Kazakhstan
33.	Liene Levada	Latvia
34.	Belgin Amann	Liechtenstein
35.	Méline Tsui	Luxembourg
36.	Philip Vella	Malta
37.	Nadejda Velišco	Moldova
38.	Arthur Belle	Netherlands
39.	Magdalena Maciejewska	Poland, incoming Co-chair
40.	Inês Viegas	Portugal

Nr.	Name	Country/Organisation
42.	A. Oliveira-Martins	Portugal
43.	Daniela Cristina Ghițulică	Romania, Vice-chair
44.	Mihai Cezar Hâj	Romania
45.	Remo Massari	San Marino
46.	Vojtech Przybyla	Slovakia
47.	Martina Kokavec Bedatsova	Slovakia
48.	Jernej Širok	Slovenia
49.	Alejandro Luis De Pablo Serrano	Spain
50.	Robin Moberg	Sweden
51.	Aurélia Robert-Tissot	Switzerland
52.	Serkan Gül	Türkiye
53.	Aydın Aslan	Türkiye
55.	Inga Lapina	Business Europe
56.	Catherine Dolgova Dreyer	Council of Europe
57.	Anna Gover	ENQA
58.	Péter Levente Lakatos	ENQA
59.	Aleksandar Šušnjar	EQAR
60.	Stéphane Lauwick	EQAR
61.	Iris Kimizoglu	ESU
62.	Arno Schrooyen	ESU
63.	Lana Par	ESU
64.	Michael Gaebel	EUA
65.	Maria Kelo	EUA
66.	John Edwards	EURASHE
67.	Jakub Grodecki	EURASHE
68.	David Crosier	Eurydice
69.	Horia Onița	Head of EHEA Secretariat
70.	Lilia Parhomenco	Deputy Head of EHEA Secretariat
71.	Petrișor Țuca	EHEA Secretariat
72.	Edlira Adi Kahani Subashi	Outgoing Head of BFUG Secretariat
73.	Aleksandra Lewandowska	Eurodoc
74.	Peter Molnar (Guest)	Director of the Design Institute, Moholy-Nagy University of Arts and Design

Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Norway, North Macedonia, Serbia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United Kingdom (Scotland), ETUCE and UNESCO sent their apologies.

Lithuania was absent.

1. Welcome and introduction

1.1 Welcome by the Ministry of Culture and Innovation of Hungary

The Hungarian Co-chair opened the floor and wished for a fruitful meeting. He gave the floor to the director of the Design Institute at the Moholy-Nagy University of Arts and Design, highlighting their practical experience with the implementation of the Bologna Process.

Péter Molnár presented the university as one of forward-looking designers, valuing creativity, innovation, positive social impact and project-based learning. He explained the reforms introduced in the university as part of the Future University Initiative 2022-2024, including a non-linear approach between cycles.

1.2 Welcome by the BFUG Co-chairs (Hungary and Iceland)

The Icelandic Co-chair expressed her excitement for the new working period, looking forward to the upcoming discussions.

1.3 Welcome by the BFUG Vice-chair (Romania)

The Romanian Vice-chair thanked the organisers for the informal dinner and expressed the great honour to be nominated as Vice-chair. She mentioned being involved in the BFUG since 2012 and her experience co-chairing different working structures. The Vice-chair highlighted the confidence in a great Ministerial Conference in three years.

2. Adoption of the agenda

Documents: [Agenda of the meeting](#)

Proposed action: Adopt the agenda

The Hungarian Co-chair concluded that the agenda was adopted by the BFUG without any change.

3. Information from the outgoing BFUG Co-chairs (Belgium Flemish and French Community, Holy See)

Documents: Minutes of the [BFUG Board LXXXIX meeting](#) (Vatican City), [BFUG XC meeting](#) (Brussels), [Extraordinary BFUG Board XC/II meeting](#) (online) and [BFUG XCI meeting](#) (Tirana)

Proposed action: Acknowledge the minutes of the BFUG XC meeting (Brussels) and BFUG XCI meeting (Tirana)

The Belgium-Flemish Community outgoing Co-chair thanked the BFUG members for their cooperation and recalled the 25 years anniversary of the Bologna Process organised during the BFUG XC meeting in Brussels. She was joined by the Belgium French-Community outgoing Co-chair, who thanked everyone for their support during their co-chairmanship.

The Holy See outgoing Co-chair thanked Belgium for their cooperation and recalled the three Board meetings organised during their co-chairmanship. She ended wishing for a smooth working period ahead.

4. Information about the XCII BFUG Board meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland

The Icelandic Co-chair emphasised that despite the tight timing between the Board and the BFUG meeting, the Board was very productive in preparing the agenda of the BFUG, especially the documents related to the Work Programme.

5. BFUG Rules of Procedure (RoP-BFUG)

Documents: [Draft Rules of Procedure-BFUG](#)
[Background note – RoP BFUG](#)

Proposed action: adopt the draft Rules of Procedure-BFUG

The Head of the Secretariat introduced the point on the agenda.

The European Commission raised a point about respecting the Rules of Procedure, which related to the provision that the documents submitted to the BFUG should be first reviewed by the Board. The Commission expressed their regret that one of the preparatory documents of the BFUG meeting was not priorly discussed in the Board. The Hungarian-co-chairmanship reassured the Commission on the importance of following the Rules of Procedure.

As there were no objections, the Hungarian Co-chair concluded that the BFUG Rules of Procedure were adopted.

6. Final report of the 2022-2024 Task Force on the Review of the Rules and Regulations for the Governance of the European Higher Education Area

Documents: [Final report of the Task Force](#)
[Annex 1 – Draft ToRs for a Task Force on the establishment of a long-term Secretariat](#)

Proposed action: Adopt the final report of the Task Force

The former Co-chair of the Task Force, from EUA, introduced the report, which gave an account of the activities carried out by the Task Force. Since the Task Force worked until the Ministerial Conference, the report was submitted for the BFUG in Budapest. The report also included an annex with the proposal for the ToRs of a Task Force on establishing a long-term secretariat. The former Co-chair expressed the desire to adopt the annex during the BFUG meeting, along with an updated roadmap.

Italy expressed concern that the section on the long-term Secretariat could be interpreted as if a decision had already been taken to establish such a structure, which was not the case, as the Communiqué mentions the possibility of establishing a long-term Secretariat. Italy suggested that the Task Force should also include critical voices in its structure and asked for more time to discuss the ToRs.

The Belgium-French Community outgoing Co-chair recalled their point from the Board meeting that in the roadmap the call intended for Spring 2025 should be named *Call for expressions of interest for the Secretariat* instead of *Call for hosts*, which the former Co-chair of the Task Force confirmed they would integrate.

The Hungarian Co-chair concluded that the Final Report was adopted by the BFUG.

7. Feedback on the organisation of the Ministerial Conference from the outgoing Albanian BFUG Secretariat and reporting on the 2021-2024 work period

Documents: [Presentation from the outgoing Albanian BFUG Secretariat](#)
[Evaluation report for the Tirana 2024 Ministerial Conference and Global Policy Forum](#)
[Report for the 2021-2024 work period](#)

Proposed action: taking note of the two reports

The outgoing Head of BFUG Secretariat presented the activity report of the Albanian Secretariat. She mentioned noteworthy initiatives such as three reports, the analysis of the Ministerial Communiqués, three newsletters, the social media of the EHEA being restructured, the revamping of the EHEA website and the final work report.

The Council of Europe and the Belgium-French Community outgoing Co-chair thanked the outgoing Secretariat for their work. The Vice-chair thanked the outgoing Secretariat for the support throughout the handover process.

Italy congratulated Greece for the ratification of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

The Icelandic co-chair mentioned that since Albania was not present at the BFUG meeting, the reports on the Ministerial Conference and Global Policy Forum would not be further debated.

The Hungarian Co-chairs concluded by considering the two reports acknowledged by the BFUG.

8. Information from the EHEA Secretariat

Documents: [Presentation from the EHEA Secretariat](#)
[Draft Terms of Reference for the Secretariat](#)
[Draft Guidelines for minuting and formatting of documents](#)
[Co-chairing arrangements for the BFUG 2024-2030](#)
[Outlook and requirements for the revised EHEA website](#)
[Structure of the membership profiles on EHEA website](#)
[General rules for secondments](#)

Proposed action:

- Agree on the Terms of Reference for the Secretariat, Guidelines for minuting and formatting of documents, Co-chairing arrangements, Membership profiles on EHEA website, General rules for secondments
- Advise on the Outlook and requirements for the revised EHEA website

The Icelandic Co-chair gave the floor to the Head of Secretariat, appreciating the very good work relationship and being impressed on the work of the new Secretariat.

The Head of the Secretariat briefly introduced the Secretariat handover process and their activities since July 2024 and expressed his confidence for a successful activity of the Secretariat until 2027. The presentation included the staff, the division of roles and headquarters, tasks carried out so far, coordination meetings, new initiatives and future short-term activities. He carried on by presenting the documents prepared by the Secretariat for the BFUG meeting. The

Head of the Secretariat also responded to issues raised by the Italian delegation in writing prior to the meeting.

Italy wished good luck to the new Secretariat and mentioned that their only concern regarding the ToRs is the point related to the legal services, since this is a service that each member state carries out itself. Regarding the guidelines, they suggested adding in the preamble a sentence stating that the Guidelines are to be treated as such, in the spirit of consensus. Finland expressed their satisfaction with the handover and the work of the new Secretariat and emphasised their appreciation for adding proposed actions in the draft agenda. For the Guidelines on minuting and formatting of documents, they highlighted their understanding of using the Guidelines in a flexible manner. The Holy See outgoing Co-chair joined Italy and Finland on complimenting the Secretariat for the good start, suggesting a more flexible approach in the General rules for secondments in relation to the duration of the secondments, with at least 12 months considered too restrictive. Austria commended the Secretariat for the ambition, asking how to make sure that the demands of co-chairs to the Secretariat are not overwhelming and expressing their expectation that when the Secretariat represents the BFUG, they should consult with the co-chairs, while asking whether a report would be produced on such occasions.

The Head of Secretariat replied by mentioning they would include the reference mentioned by Italy, Finland and Holy See on the flexibility of the Guidelines for minuting and formatting of documents, as well as the suggestion of Holy See regarding the secondments. On the legal services, he clarified that these are not meant to replace the legal services of member states but rather to offer support for the Task Force if they so require. The Secretariat would discuss with the co-chairs of working structures to clearly delineate what the Secretariat can provide in terms of policy support based on the availability and in consideration of the needs of the working structures. Finally, while the Secretariat attends events to promote the Bologna Process and its policies without being considered as to represent the BFUG in such cases, in the exceptional cases where the Secretariat would carry a mandate to represent the BFUG they would seek approval of the co-chairs for the mandate and report back to the Co-chairs.

On the website, the Holy See outgoing Co-chair reiterated their suggestion for the RSS functionality (being informed when documents are uploaded on the website via email) and asked for a stronger emphasis on the historical overview when presenting the Communiqués, while questioning the live chat facility. The Belgium-Flemish Community outgoing Co-chair asked for making the results of the Bologna Process more visible on the website, while ESU commended the work of the Task Force on enhancing knowledge sharing and suggested to work on adapting the website for the target audiences. ESU also suggested including student support services and ombuds systems in the membership profile of member states and creating a continuous line of EHEA events on the website by ensuring that events of all working periods are displayed together.

The Icelandic Co-chair mentioned that ensuring the website and its archive are functional increases its importance and ensures its longevity.

The Head of Secretariat replied by stating they would take on board all suggestions, while for the RSS functionality the Secretariat was still working on identifying the best option and, when established, would circulate a survey to BFUG members to identify those interested. The survey for revising information on the website would also be sent in the upcoming weeks, together with a Google Forms for adding events on the website.

The Icelandic Co-chair concluded that the documents were adopted with the small adjustments agreed in the meeting.

The Secretariat presented the list of BFUG countries for Semester Chairmanship. As the Republic of Moldova's co-chairmanship would have been during the period when they co-host the Secretariat, the Republic of Moldova and Norway reached an agreement to swap places, which would imply the Republic of Moldova taking the co-chairmanship role in the second semester of 2027, after the Ministerial Conference. Since there was no opposition, the Icelandic co-chair concluded that the co-chairing arrangements were adopted by the BFUG.

8. Roundtable discussion on implementing the Tirana Communiqué

Proposed action: BFUG members are invited to share information about the present or future follow-up national actions for implementing the commitments in the Tirana Communiqué, including on the elaboration of the action plans

The Icelandic Co-chair introduced the topic, inviting BFUG members to share their work and ideas on how to implement the commitments of the Tirana Communiqué at the national level, including how to promote the results of the Bologna Process.

The **Belgium-French Community** outgoing Co-chair started by updating the BFUG members about a conference on the evolution of higher education policies which they would organise at the beginning of November, where they would present the results of the Belgian Presidency and the last working period of the Bologna Process, including the Bologna Process Implementation Report, to the higher education institutions. She thanked everyone for their cooperation, as this was her last BFUG meeting as a Belgium-French Community representative.

The **Belgium-Flemish Community** outgoing Co-chair emphasised communication within the ministry and with higher education institutions on the Tirana Communiqué, waiting for the Work Programme to be adopted in order to discuss further actions.

Andorra stated their aim to focus on digitalisation (working on digital diplomas and a platform for credential evaluators to check accredited institutions) and microcredentials (creating a code of good practice for higher education institutions), expressing their slight disappointment that these issues are not tackled in the Work Programme.

Armenia presented a changing higher education landscape, with a new law on higher education being developed and relying on Erasmus+ projects in the field of microcredentials and greening education.

Austria published their national EHEA implementation report and was coordinating talks with all departments in the ministry which would be responsible for implementing Tirana Commitments in order to devise an action plan. Discussions would take place in the national BFUG, which was scheduled to take place one week after the BFUG in Budapest.

Azerbaijan mentioned they did not sign the Communiqué and thus there is nothing to report.

Croatia had prepared a national implementation action plan and would propose Erasmus+ projects. They consider activities on learning and teaching, with another important topic being fundamental values. They are also considering implementing vouchers for microcredentials.

Cyprus was incorporating the Tirana commitments in the national 5-years strategy, with a focus on microcredentials, digitalisation and social dimension, while also working with the higher education institutions to disseminate information and receive feedback.

The Czech Republic adopted a strategic plan and a strategy for internationalisation, while also organising meetings to discuss topics such as microcredentials and social dimension.

Denmark had organised meetings with stakeholders and was planning a forum to discuss the Tirana Communiqué, with priorities being the quality assurance system and the structure of degrees.

Estonia had been focusing on several policy topics, notably learning and teaching, artificial intelligence, connection between higher education and research, inclusion and automatic recognition.

The **European Commission** gave updates on the European Education Area, including the European Universities Alliances (with 64 Alliances in total so far) and with the European degree strongly placed on the political agenda. The President of the European Commission had presented the priorities for the next period, including a step-by-step approach for the European degree, for which countries would consult internally, including with the national Quality assurance agencies. On mobility, the Council adopted the Recommendation 'Europe on the move', which includes a target of 23% mobile higher education students by 2030, in line with the Bologna targets.

Finland mentioned they decided to reactivate a more formal dialogue process with students and higher education institutions on international cooperation, while regular engagement also happened before. One of the mandates of their working group would be to implement the National Action Plan on higher education, which would be developed also based on the Tirana Communiqué. In this sense, Finland suggested it would be useful to determine a deadline in the BFUG for approving the national action plans, incentivising countries to work better and faster. **France** announced a review of the implementation of key commitments and of social dimension policies. While planning to work on the national action plan, they believed the next BFUG meeting would be too soon of a target to have the action plans adopted. They were also planning a new French Conference on the Alliances and the European degree for the next year.

Georgia translated the Communiqué in Georgian and during summer changed the law in relation to digitalisation, with new regulations on hybrid/fully online provisions, while planning to establish a national BFUG. They introduced three-year bachelor's and one-year master's and doubled the state scholarships for merit and need-based grants and the number of beneficiaries. **Germany** developed a strategy on internationalisation, aiming to promote recruiting international students and researchers. They also mentioned a focus on research, optimisation of automatic recognition procedures and infrastructure development.

Greece emphasised their intention to develop a national mechanism for the implementation of the Tirana Communiqué together with the higher education community and the research sector. They expressed their determination to develop a national action plan and raise awareness of the Tirana commitments towards stakeholders. Some of their priorities include social dimension and recognition of prior learning.

Ireland circulated the Communiqué towards stakeholders and were in the process of refreshing their national coordination structure to assist in the implementation of Tirana objectives. Their strategy focuses on internationalisation, digitalisation, green skills and learning and teaching enhancement.

Italy translated the Communiqué in Italian and referenced a new international strategy which had been adopted by the relevant authorities. Priority areas include the role of Artificial Intelligence in internationalisation, specifically for access, recognition and combating education fraud, in compliance with the new EU regulation. They published a database to support automatic recognition, established a network with Adriatic and Mediterranean countries to support recognition and included microcredentials in the National Qualifications' Framework.

They informed the BFUG about the upcoming establishment of the Council of Europe's Centre on Countering Education Fraud in Italy.

Kazakhstan disseminated the Communiqué with higher education institutions and within the Bureau of the Central Asia Higher Education Area. They were in the process of establishing a working group to implement the key commitments, planning numerous workshops. Some priority areas which Kazakhstan mentioned were recognition of microcredentials and regulating Artificial Intelligence.

Business Europe expressed their wishes to engage more actively in the BFUG, tackling transversal topics with a focus on quality assurance and qualifications. Their priorities include employability issues, particularly through microcredentials, and internationalisation.

Council of Europe introduced their updates by stating that CoE's contribution to EHEA was discussed in their Subgroup on Higher Education, where it stands as a regular agenda point. They expressed their interest in establishing direct links with the co-chairs of various working structures. The areas of focus for Council of Europe include recognition, since they are providing the co-secretariat of the ENIC-NARIC networks with UNESCO and the European Commission. The next ENIC-NARIC annual meeting next year would be held in Tirana, for the first time in a non-EU country. They also work on automatic recognition, aiming to bring a proposal to the Steering Committee for Education (CDEDU) to develop a legal instrument to support automatic recognition. Another priority issue for CoE is ethics and transparency, where they operate the ETINED platform and aim to create an Observatory for Countering Education Fraud. They launched a new project on democratic mission focusing on academic freedom, with a Conference in November touching upon fundamental values from the lenses of human rights.

ENQA stated that the most relevant activity for them is the revision of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in EHEA (ESG), which the E4 and the other consultative members had initiated. They gathered evidence on the implementation of the ESG through the QA FIT project, which was soon concluding. In terms of other activities, ENQA highlighted two active working groups, one on academic integrity (who will publish their report in the first week of October) and the second on the QA of research.

EQAR informed the BFUG about the improvement of DEQAR, where Quality assurance agencies can upload information about microcredentials. They appointed a new director, with the upcoming General Assembly taking place in February 2025 in Warsaw in conjunction with the BFUG meeting. They shared the invitation to attend the EQAR Members' Dialogue, taking place between 28th-29th of October online.

ESU highlighted the cooperation with the E4 on Quality assurance topics, presenting other priorities such as the recognition of prior learning, digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence. ESU urged member states to look into the housing crisis for students and gender-based violence, asking for working structures to analyse the issue. They also work on fundamental values, sustainability, student participation and learning and teaching.

EUA informed the BFUG about their Trends 2024 publication and the intention to develop a project on student-centred learning, considering that a new working group on learning and teaching would not be established. They suggested that demographic changes should be a point of focus, where lifelong learning policies take higher priority. According to Trends publication, three fourths of higher education institutions expected a higher intake on foreign students based on diminishing domestic numbers. Furthermore, the higher education institutions rated the Bologna Process as an important drive for higher education institutions, just after Erasmus. EUA also published a report on the digital transformation of HEIs and would celebrate in autumn the 30 years anniversary of the Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP), one of the oldest QA initiatives in Europe.

EURASHE presented as priorities the digital transition, coordination with the employers to connect higher education to the insertion in the labour market and the required skills in study programmes, work-based learning, lifelong learning, as well as cooperation between countries, especially when there are issues related to recognition.

Eurydice invited Georgia and other countries which translated the Bologna Process Implementation Report to send them the translations in order to upload them. According to the available data, the Bologna Process Implementation Report had numerous downloads, but unevenly distributed across countries. Many downloads came from Belgium, Italy and Spain, however with very few downloads from some countries. They called for a better promotion of the document at the national level.

Latvia informed that they had been working on microcredentials and supporting flexible learning, as well as the implementation of ECTS. They were in the process of changing the quality assurance system, leaning more towards institutional accreditation instead of program accreditation. They also disseminated the Tirana Communiqué with stakeholders.

Luxembourg did not have an action plan to implement the Communiqué yet, however their focus lies on quality assurance, microcredentials, protection of academic titles and finding ways to offer student aid to vulnerable groups.

Malta published close to the BFUG meeting a report on the higher education system, where they also introduced the Tirana commitments.

The **Republic of Moldova** announced that in September they had a common meeting of Rectors councils of Romania and Moldova in Chişinău, where the Tirana Communiqué was also referenced. They focus on academic integrity, with a survey being distributed within the higher education system. They also created an e-admission system for higher education institutions.

Netherlands referred to their national BFUG, working on the implementation of key commitments. The group was funded through an Erasmus+ project finishing in 2024, and they would investigate how to consolidate this group later. They would organise a symposium to celebrate the 25 years of the Bologna Process later in 2024, discussing the European dimension of higher education.

Portugal presented new policies in line with the Communiqué, including establishing a legal framework for microcredentials. They also prioritise mobility and cooperation between stakeholders. Portugal emphasised that their government believes the main principles governing higher education should be academic freedom and integrity, social dimension and the application of the subsidiary principle.

Romania published different analyses on how the commitments are implemented in the national legislation. On fundamental values the content of the Communiqué was included in the new Law on higher education. On social dimension, they were drafting an analysis about university dropout and had initiated the project 'The first student in the family'. The student scholarship subsidies had been pegged to the medium income per country, and they included virtual and blended mobility in the legislation to allow funding them. A new internationalisation framework was put in place, which would continue the practice of financially supporting the participation of universities in Alliances. On Quality assurance new responsibilities for the QA agency for evaluating transnational programmes had been established.

San Marino mentioned they continue working on the remaining items in relation to Bologna commitments, while most had been tackled through the Working Group on the Roadmap for San Marino's accession to EHEA in the previous cycle. They established a group to draft the self-certification and focus on microcredentials, social dimension and automatic recognition.

Slovakia informed about a conference organised before the BFUG meeting with different stakeholders. They were working on improving the communication about the commitments and, while they do not have a concrete action plan for the implementation of the Communiqué, they put in place sectoral plans, for example, on internationalisation. In the performance funding model for universities, some key performance indicators are also linked to internationalisation and mobility.

Slovenia already included some of the commitments in the national legislation, except for the automatic recognition where the situation had been more difficult as the ENIC-NARIC is a small centre within the ministry. They promote the provision of study programmes in English and try to attract foreign students, also transferring the scholarship fund from the Ministry of Social Affairs to the Ministry of Higher Education. To promote innovative higher education, they were looking forward to good outcomes from several projects on curriculum development and research. Because of the resources required, they considered the inclusiveness objective as the most difficult to achieve.

Spain introduced new priorities in the law, including European Universities Alliances (where 44 universities are members, accounting to 50% of the system), microcredentials, European Degree, automatic recognition – where they were also working on a tripartite agreement with Portugal and Andorra.

Sweden reflected on the different approaches for implementing the commitments in the higher education systems, with mobility and internationalisation as a top priority for them, and the quality assurance as a second priority. The minister changed recently, which might also determine new initiatives.

Switzerland mentioned they are preparing the next funding period for the following four years on education, research and innovation. . The focus themes for education are among others digitalisation and international cooperation.

Poland informed that the Tirana commitments are present in their legal system. The ministry was cooperating with the academic community on the revision of the national law on higher education. Since May they translated the documents adopted at the Ministerial Conference and published them online. They focus on diploma mills, microcredentials, and on promoting mobility and recognition together with the national agency on internationalisation. The minister named a plenipotentiary for quality assurance. They were looking forward to taking the presidency of the Council of the EU. They would organise the BFUG meeting in Warsaw in February and a European Alliances Conference in June.

Holy See explained they have several universities in different EHEA countries, but also across the globe. Therefore, they were translating the Tirana commitments in global setting as they are a global player. Holy See expressed their expectation that the BFUG would translate the Tirana commitments into specific recommendations for sectoral issues, focusing on primary topics that matter for students instead of discussions suiting more those in the BFUG rather than the process or the beneficiaries. They also highlighted the importance of evaluating the impact of past initiatives and determining whether they were successful or not.

Liechtenstein stated they started working on the action plan, with a focus on microcredentials. They were revising their law on scholarships to make them more inclusive. In February they would have elections which will determine future plans.

Iceland was working on ensuring that stakeholders understand developments within EHEA and EU, to avoid confusion between different initiatives, and on making student loans more accessible. They adopted a new funding model for universities and made changes to the Qualifications Framework to include microcredentials. They focus on transparency and quality

assurance and aim to separate the ENIC-NARIC centre, which had been functioning in the largest higher education institution.

10. EHEA Work programme 2024-2027

Documents: [Draft Work Programme](#)

[Presentation of the Work Programme](#)

[Presentation of the expressions of interest for co-chairing](#)

[Information on ESG revision process](#)

Proposed action: adopt the Work Programme and the co-chairs for each working structure and agree on the next steps for adopting the ToRs and establishing the working structures

The Icelandic Co-chair presented that at the BFUG Board meeting, the Board had lengthy discussions about the Work Programme, aiming to balance between the call for a leaner model and the calls for specific working structures. She highlighted that the Board felt a need to move away from technical discussions and go back to what is relevant for the members, focusing on policy developments. A transversal issue developed by the Board was to reflect on how each working structure promotes enhancing mobility within EHEA.

The proposal for the Work Programme emphasised that some topics not covered by the working structures would be tackled transversally by the BFUG and its working structures, such as digitalisation, AI, or sustainability. On the other hand, other commitments would be better tackled at national level, together with stakeholders.

At the end of the presentation, Holy See proposed a procedural point on adopting the Work Programme after the breakout discussions during Day 2.

Austria took the floor stating their support for the creation of a TPG D on Social Dimension, echoed by Romania, the European Commission, the Vice-chair and Croatia, while not being convinced of the need to establish the Task Force on the Future of Bologna, considering the call for a leaner structure and since the BFUG had discussed the topic several times. Secondly, while they agreed with not creating a different working structure for Learning and Teaching, Austria suggested to still address the topic of student-centred learning, integrating it with TPG A. They also suggested that working structures do not create subgroups.

Andorra specified it was not clear how digitalisation and microcredentials, topics prioritised in the previous session by several delegations, would be tackled transversally, whether all working structures would address them and who would coordinate it. While the proposal suggested tackling microcredentials at the national level, Andorra informed that TPG A concluded it was important to continue working on the issue at the European level. They also inquired the Council of Europe whether by not continuing the Network of Qualification Frameworks' Correspondents they would also not support anymore the member states in their work on qualifications, since they deemed the support of CoE very useful when they self-certified their National Qualifications' Framework.

Ireland highlighted the importance of keeping the Work Programme connected with the priorities at the national level, and this would entail maintaining the Working Group on Learning and Teaching. Furthermore, not tackling microcredentials at the EHEA level could create

disproportionate implementation gaps among countries. Finland, joined by Sweden and Denmark, emphasised their position to avoid creating any new working structures in addition to those in the proposal. Finland strongly backed the WG on Internationalisation and Mobility and suggested looking at advanced technology that enables blended learning, the emergence of mobility within Alliances and different patterns for mobility between cycles. Finland also suggested setting deadlines for the national action plans, which Denmark and Netherlands opposed as it may impose a bureaucratic exercise. In turn, Denmark suggested that the BICG supports member states with the action plans.

Responding to Andorra's question, the Council of Europe emphasised overlaps between TPG A and the Network of Correspondents and thus little rationale for maintaining the Network. Nevertheless, they would continue their consultative role towards member states. They suggested common meetings between TPGs and a reflection on the complementarities with the Lisbon Recognition Convention bodies and the ENIC-NARICs. They argued for a single, unified EHEA rather than multi-speed implementation within. They also called for links between the TF on the Future of Bologna and the TF on establishing a long-term Secretariat, which was supported by France and the Holy See, and better engagement at global level with clearer objectives, supported by the European Commission.

Denmark, supported by the European Commission and the Holy See, highlighted that the TF on the Future of Bologna should ensure the discussions take place in the BFUG rather than in the Task Force itself. They also called for early and extensive engagement of member states in the ESG revision, which was supported by Netherlands. ENQA replied that in the roadmap for the ESG revision they would include the means of engagement with the BFUG.

France, recalling the arguments of Ireland and supported by Romania, the Vice-chair and ESU, suggested the creation of a TPG on Learning and Teaching to focus on student-centred learning, while also adding that the group should look into how students are trained for the green transition. They also supported the written comments of Finland on including in the Terms of Reference better linkages with the European Research Area.

Italy opposed the creation of a TPG on Social Dimension under the BICG, supported by Netherlands and the Holy See, as the BICG was created for key commitments, and suggested social dimension being tackled by the TF on the Future of Bologna or transversally. They also asked for not considering the Steering Group on ESG and the AG on ECTS as additional structures of the BFUG, supported by the European Commission and the Holy See.

The European Commission supported the WG on Internationalisation and Mobility, while asking for synergies with the work in the EU. In the debate on the type of working structures, Romania asked for the group on Fundamental Values to be a Working Group. Netherlands welcomed the work on the revision of the ESG and the ECTS Users' Guide and called for synergies between working structures.

ESU highlighted that social dimension tackles the most important reason why individuals cannot study in higher education, so turning a blind eye at European level for social dimension would send a negative signal. They mentioned the same would apply for learning and teaching, especially considering developments in digitalisation that EHEA could not ignore, while student-centred learning as long-standing commitment was yet to be fully implemented. ESU criticized transforming the idea of reducing the working structures as an objective in itself instead of

focusing on how the work should be more efficient and suggested to look rather into the number of meetings and supporting projects to finance the work.

EUA argued that the WG on Internationalisation and Mobility should not look only at the mobility benchmark but follow a broader approach. They called for the co-chairs to be included in the discussions on the Future of Bologna and clarified that the project they seek to apply to on student-centred learning would not be an umbrella project to support national initiatives on learning and teaching. They mentioned that while it is regretful there cannot be a working structure on learning and teaching, the topics of digitalisation, AI and learning and teaching should still be tackled transversally.

Belgium-Flanders called on the co-chairs of working structures to design the Terms of Reference efficiently and ensure more collaboration and focus, not creating new topics just because of their appeal.

The Holy See questioned whether the TF on the Future of Bologna should be established for the whole duration of the Work Programme. They asked the BFUG delegations to also nominate ministry representatives in the TPGs, and to reflect on the purpose of the BICG. They also suggested that all Terms of Reference clearly specify not only outcomes, but also expected membership and their commitments, recalling previous experiences of large working structures where only a handful attended. The Holy See asked whether the group on Fundamental Values would require the whole cycle to complete its work, since it would finalise the monitoring framework, and suggested to create it as a Task Force. For the WG on Internationalisation and Mobility, they expressed their wish to work on mainstreaming mobility at the level of the whole EHEA. Finally, the Holy See suggested that BFUG representatives should also participate themselves in the working structures and avoid issues of lack of coordination between different delegates in working structures.

The Head of Secretariat intervened clarifying a distinction between the revision of the ESG and the ECTS Users' Guide in the Communiqué, as for the revision of the ESG the ministers called for the authors of the ESG to propose a new version, while for the revision of the ECTS Users' Guide the ministers mandated the BFUG itself. In the previous revision, the AG ECTS was similar to any other working structure but chaired only by the European Commission. Including the group somewhere in the chart would imply this connection as the established practice has shown. The Commission underlined that this is an ad-hoc group that will report to the BFUG, and that the Commission will provide the organization of the AG ECTS. The EUA replied that since the BFUG is adopting the documents, they strongly advise to keep the group in the chart.

Croatia called for more online meetings, as they are easier to attend for smaller delegations, while Czech Republic asked for a focus on microcredentials and better communication between the working structures and the community.

EUA emphasised that overlaps between working structures are normal, but they need to be communicated properly. They also suggested that co-chairs of the working structures should ideally also be BFUG representatives in order to ensure a robust link, with Italy disagreeing stating that countries have the co-chairmanship role, not individual representatives, with the possibility to nominate whoever they see fit.

The Vice-chair considered it would be difficult to imagine how the Bologna Process could be relevant without tackling social dimension and learning and teaching, also as the BFUG gives a political support to a certain topic when it establishes a working structure.

The Hungarian Co-chair reflected that each working structure means additional time for reporting during the BFUG meetings, which would take time from other activities such as policy related dialogue between Member States and stakeholders. The Icelandic Co-chair considered that a compromise is to maintain the TPG D on social dimension. She mentioned several delegations spoke about learning and teaching, but not as to establish a working structure on the topic as a priority. However, she emphasised it would be important to introduce this and other topics transversally when designing the Terms of Reference, especially finding a place for student-centred learning. The Terms of Reference should ensure the outcome-based approach discussed when deliberating the Work Programme. The Icelandic Co-chair also mentioned that when attending meetings of working structures, it would important that the members carry out the mandate of their ministries and are able to ensure the connection. The Icelandic Co-chair asked the Secretariat to redraw the chart for Day 2, adapting it to the discussions carried out during this agenda item.

Italy, supported by the Netherlands and Holy See, reiterated they are against a TPG D on Social Dimension since Social Dimension is not a key commitment, and ministers should have decided on such a designation before a TPG on Social Dimension could be put under BICG. The opposite view was supported by Iceland, Austria, Czech Republic, EUA, Belgium-Flemish Community, European Commission and France, arguing that the TPGs are manifesting a peer approach supporting the implementation of commitments and should not be rigidly confined to the key commitments. Furthermore, the Icelandic Co-chair mentioned that the Paris Communiqué does not restrict the peer support approach to the key commitments, which were just the focus of the 2018-2020 working period, an explanation which Italy accepted.

The Head of Secretariat presented the expressions of interest for the co-chairmanship of working structures, mentioning they would prepare for the second day a list including the number of applications for each member/consultative member and whether their nominees are BFUG representatives.

Italy informed they withdraw their intention to co-chair the BICG, while EUA volunteered for it.

The Icelandic Co-chair asked the Secretariat to provide a revised version of the Work Programme, based on the discussions during Day 1, to be approved by the BFUG during Day 2.

End of day 1

26th of September 2024

Start of day 2

10. Continuation on the EHEA Work Programme

The Icelandic Co-chair presented the updated chart for the EHEA Work Programme, based on the discussions during Day 1, with a proposal for a typology of working structure for each group. The AG on ECTS was maintained in the chart but not referred to as an 'additional structure'. It is an ad-hoc group chaired by the EC, that will report to the BFUG. As there were no further interventions on the Work Programme, the BFUG decided to adopt the revised Work Programme at this point. The Co-chairs concluded that the Work Programme was unanimously adopted in the form presented.

The Head of Secretariat presented the co-chairing arrangements as updated and the statistics on the number of applications for co-chairing and the BFUG representative status. Italy, supported

by the Council of Europe, expressed their opinion that the TF on establishing a long-term secretariat should be co-chaired only by EHEA members, but the proposal did not gain the support of the BFUG.

Due to the large number of applications for co-chairing and the fact that not all applicants were participating in the BFUG meeting, the Icelandic Co-chair asked those interested in co-chairing the Working Group on Internationalisation and Mobility and the Task Force on the Future of Bologna to liaise among themselves after the BFUG meeting, in order to decide on the co-chairing arrangements for these two groups via online procedure in the BFUG.

The Icelandic Co-chair concluded that the co-chairing arrangements (excluding the WG on Internationalisation and Mobility and the TF on the Future of Bologna) were adopted by the BFUG.

The Head of Secretariat presented the next steps for the establishment of the working structures, as indicated in the timeline accompanying the proposal for the Work Programme.

11. Networking session on the future working structures

Documents: [Background note on the networking session](#)

Proposed action: informal discussion on the focus and output of the working structures

The participants split into several groups discussing the objectives and activities of the established working structures. The discussions were designed to help the co-chairs of working structures to develop the draft Terms of Reference for their groups. One moderator of each session presented the summary of the discussions in the plenary.

The BICG was presented by the EUA, with the group discussing the purpose of the BICG and the TPGs. They considered that the BICG should be a connection point between TPGs, not duplicating the work of the Board and the BFUG. It was proposed to have the action plans sooner than the next BFUG or at least agree on a format of those plans, with the BICG volunteering to work on such a template, so by the deadline of the call for Erasmus+ projects countries know what to do. EUA added that it would be important to bring back content discussions on the topics of the BICG in the BFUG, having a session for each of the TPGs in the next BFUG meetings.

The WG on Monitoring was presented by Eurydice, and the co-chair emphasised that the task of the group is preparing the Implementation Report, covering all of the policy commitments. As the process is extensive for member states, the group would look into how to offer support. The group should also consider the nature of reporting and the use of data, including for the development of action plans. As some countries had already done this, the process should be scaled to all countries. Eurydice explained that the BPIR is also a way for the wider world to understand EHEA agenda. As the workload would require more co-chairs with experience in the BFUG, Austria offered to co-chair the working group, which the BFUG Co-chairs concluded was agreed by the BFUG.

The WG on Fundamental Values was presented by Romania, introduction the main objectives of the WG: finalise the monitoring framework and the associated indicators, do a first round of implementation of the third framework, raise awareness and knowledge sharing about fundamental values. He added the latter can materialize in various ways: develop content for presentations or organizing events. The WG should have strong connections with the WG on

Monitoring, but also with the TPGs, as parts of fundamental values are already included in other documents such as the ESG, Principles and Guidelines on Social Dimension etc. The group should ensure strong connections with organisations working on the topic, such as the European Parliament, the European Commission, initiatives in the European Research Area and so on. Romania presented the need for a diverse and balanced membership of the working group. To the Holy See's question of whether the discussion clarified if the structure should be a working group, task force or advisory group, Romania replied that the status of the Working Group was agreed in the Work Programme.

The CG GPD was presented by Italy, with discussions focused on various actions to be conducted by the CG GPD: contacting with macro-regions, identifying countries more interested in the Bologna Process, mapping relevant actors and initiatives, drafting the Bologna Policy Forum Statement 2027. The CG GPD would focus on supporting mobility, keeping the global dimension in mind as a transversal issue and identifying topics of common concerns (e.g. key commitments). The CG GPD should foster cross-linkages between different working structures and organize joint meetings between the CG GPD and working structures on global affairs, organise sessions at BFUG with regional level counterparts and identify cross-regional platforms where Bologna countries are already active. In order to identify the synergies, at the beginning of the mandate the group should discuss common priorities with regional counterparts. Other activities would include a compendium of key commitments with global lenses.

The TF on Future of Bologna was presented by Belgium-Flemish Community. From the discussions it resulted that the group should define how to bring to the BFUG reflections on the long-term view for enhancing a strong EHEA, marking a joint vision and thinking of the next key commitments. They continued with the importance of reaching out outside the BFUG to make better links with academia, experts and researchers to gather more information and support identifying trends in society and education. The group should have connections with the BICG and the TF on establishing a long-term Secretariat.

The WG on Internationalisation and Mobility was presented by Netherlands. He appreciated that the group had fruitful discussions, starting with the Tirana commitments of creating an action plan for greener, more inclusive and balanced mobility. One of the elements carried out by the WG should be a mapping of the sectors and barriers in language, finance, recognition, differentiation between cycles, scholarships and others. The group should not only look at how to attain the mobility target, but also how to foster internationalisation at home and internationalisation of the curricula. There discussion reflected the need for complementarity with the work done within the European Union and clear links with the TPGs, including on social dimension and flexible programmes.

12. Information from the European Commission on the new call for Erasmus+ project supporting the implementation of the Bologna Process

Documents: [Presentation from the European Commission](#)

The European Commission presented the Erasmus+ call supporting EHEA. For the first time, there is a dual call jointly for EHEA and ENIC-NARICs. The total budget for the call is 9 million euros, out of which 6 million euros are dedicated for the EHEA strand. Among those, 750.000 euros were earmarked for the Secretariat. The criteria for the Secretariat were aligned with the

ToRs adopted by the BFUG. Applications for transnational cooperation projects should respect a threshold of maximum 500.000 euros per project.

There is an indicative number of 10 projects to be financed for the transnational activities. The normal duration of a project should normally be two or three years. The Commission emphasised that working structures are invited to apply for the call, which supports the implementation of the Work Programme. The Commission invited those interested to join the information session about the call, scheduled for the 15th of October.

13. Application from Eurodoc to become a consultative member of EHEA

Documents: [Eurodoc application](#) and [Eurodoc Statutes](#)
[Background document – Eurodoc application](#)

Proposed action: decide on the future process regarding the application of Eurodoc, considering the advice of the BFUG Board

Eurodoc presented their application for consultative membership. They explained their status as an international federation of national organisations representing doctoral candidates, with members from 24 countries. Their mission is to represent the third cycle candidates. Through their application, they expressed their objective to bring diversity in the BFUG. While acknowledging the excellent work of ESU, third cycle differs significantly, with doctoral education being research-based, following the Salzburg Principles. In this sense, Eurodoc believed they could support the BFUG in closing the gap between education and innovation.

Italy asked how many individuals are involved in Eurodoc activities, reflecting that in Italy students officially registered to the national union of students UDU, part of ESU, represents only 0.58% of the HE students in Italy. ESU replied that there are different ways in which student representation works, and in the last three cycles UDU won the student elections in Italy, a remark with which Italy agreed. Eurodoc mentioned they do not have the exact numbers in this regard, but their membership includes almost all EHEA countries.

The Council of Europe mentioned that Eurodoc is an observer in their CDEDU Bureau, and they found the voice of young researchers very refreshing. Furthermore, they saw scope in Eurodoc improving the BFUG links with ERA.

The Icelandic Co-chair introduced a background paper prepared by the EHEA Secretariat, mentioning the reasons why Eurodoc was rejected the last time. The Board felt that the conditions did not change and proposed to the BFUG not to accept the application. Since there was no opposition, the Icelandic Co-chair concluded that the application of Eurodoc is rejected.

14. Plenary session on the European Degree (label) and the European Higher Education Area

Documents: [Background document by the Hungarian Presidency](#)

Proposed action: discuss on potential synergies between the European Degree (label) and the EHEA tools and potential challenges

The Hungarian Co-chair introduced the topic, mentioning that the Board had designated a time slot for a plenary session and decided to talk about the European Degree (label). He presented an introduction to the plenary session, emphasising that in the Higher Education package, the Commission explains that not all Bologna tools are implemented by all countries, and many obstacles to transnational cooperation are not addressed by any Bologna tool. The Hungarian co-chair thus believes that the BFUG should debate the European Degree (label), how it could be related to non-EU member states, synergies with Bologna tools and possible challenges. He presented the questions put forward for debate.

The floor was given to the European Commission, which presented the initiative. They clarified that the Commission put forward an overall vision of what a European Degree could be, without presenting the European Degree itself yet. The Commission mentioned that transforming the vision into practice would require a step-by-step approach together with the member states and stakeholders and welcomed the discussion of the topic in the BFUG where also non-EU countries attend.

The Hungarian Co-chair agreed with the remark of the Commission that any such process could only be through a step-by-step approach. France mentioned their support for the European Degree, welcoming the pragmatic approach of the Commission. France pointed out that the European Degree could foster mobility and commit to making this vision a reality in a couple of years. ENQA commented it is a very wide topic, and it would be useful to put more focus on technicalities. They highlighted that the European Degree should boost the implementation of EHEA tools. EQAR stated that the possible introduction of a European Degree would not harm in any way the possibility to use the European Approach for the Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, which is one of the main achievements of the EHEA, as it would be part of the European criteria for a European degree (label).

Iceland disagreed with the question implying there is a challenge related to the linguistic diversity. They believed there is a lot of value to be gained by enhancing collaboration. They expressed their disappointment that the European Approach is not employed enough, despite being fit for purpose, and in this sense the EHEA website should better promote the results of the Bologna Process and how they can be used.

Holy See considered that any tool fostering mobility is in their interest. They stated that the value of the initiative would rest in the technical details which can heavily impact the result. They stressed that a potential European Degree should not impose an exclusive use of EU tools, like for example the ECTS, which could create political problems, sometimes even considered imperialistic. In this sense, a potential European Degree should ensure the possibility of global usage of such an instrument.

The Commission thanked the delegations for their contributions and assured them of the ample opportunities for discussions in this regard.

15. Information by the incoming co-chairs (Poland and Albania)

Documents: [Presentation from Albania for XCIV BFUG Board meeting](#)
[Presentation from Poland for the XCV BFUG meeting](#)

Poland informed the delegations of the upcoming Polish co-chairmanship of the BFUG, with the upcoming BFUG meeting scheduled for 24th-25th of February 2025 in Warsaw. They looked

forward to a good cooperation with the Albanian co-chairmanship and the Secretariat in preparing the meeting.

As the Albanian delegation was not present, the Head of the Secretariat informed the BFUG of the upcoming Board meeting in Tirana, scheduled for the 9th of January 2025. The deadline for sending documents would be the 26th of December 2024, thus suggesting that the co-chairs of working structures send the documents for the Board meeting before the Christmas break.

16. Reports from the consultative members (in writing)

- 16.1 Business Europe
- 16.2 [Council of Europe report](#) and [presentation](#)
- 16.3 Education International
- 16.4 [ENQA](#)
- 16.5 [EQAR](#)
- 16.6 ESU
- 16.7 [EUA](#)
- 16.8 [EURASHE](#)
- 16.9 [UNESCO](#)

The consultative members also presented verbal updates during the roundtable session on Day 1. During the meeting, EQAR introduced its new director, Aleksandar Šušnjar, who was looking forward to a good cooperation with the BFUG.

17. Any other business (AOB)

ESU informed that while many countries have good practices on student involvement, there is still work to do. Some delegations did not bring a student representative at the Ministerial Conference in Tirana, which goes against the fundamental values of EHEA. They experienced issues with the social programme and the accommodation, with some countries not supporting student delegates in finding solutions. In this case, many student delegates had to fund the costs themselves, while in some cases the same costs were covered by the ministries for higher education institution representatives. They expressed their hope that the EHEA will take seriously these issues in the future. The Head of Secretariat replied that according to the new RoP-EHEA, bringing a student delegate is mandatory and the invitation for the Iași-Chișinău Ministerial Conference will include the request to cover for the costs of student delegates.

Belgium-French Community informed that 7 years ago she attended the first BFUG meeting in Tartu, being impressed by the cooperation within the BFUG and the atmosphere. She suggested a welcome pack to support new delegates in the BFUG, while informing the BFUG on taking a new role in the cabinet of the prime minister, and therefore leaving the BFUG.

The Head of Secretariat thanked the BFUG Co-chairs for the good cooperation and invited delegations having translated the Communiqué in their national language to submit the documents to the Secretariat in order to upload them on the website.

End of meeting

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