

Proposal for the Work Programme 2024-2027

I. Introduction

It is expected that the BFUG will adopt the 2024-2027 Work Programme in the XCIII BFUG meeting in Budapest, as the first BFUG meeting after the Tirana Ministerial Conference.

In some cases, in the past, the BFUG had already discussed a draft Work Plan and the working structures to be created in meetings before the Ministerial Conference. For the current working period, the EHEA priorities were discussed in the XC BFUG meeting in Brussels in April 2024 without going further into discussing a draft Work Programme.

When establishing the timeline for adopting the Work Programme, the need to start as soon as possible the implementation of the Tirana Communiqué commitments should be considered. Moreover, the upcoming Erasmus+ call for supporting Bologna reforms is expected to be launched in September. Consequently, to give the opportunity to BFUG working structures to apply for Erasmus+ projects that would support their work, the BFUG would need to agree on the working structures and their co-chairs in September. The timeline is proposed below.

The XCII BFUG Board meeting in Reykjavik discussed the proposal for the Work Programme 2024-2027 and the timeline for its adoption, based on a proposal by the BFUG co-chairs, the Vice-chair and the EHEA Secretariat. The current draft includes the discussions in the BFUG Board.

The proposal for the Work Programme 2024-2027 is based on the commitments included in the Tirana Communiqué. The call from BFUG members to have a leaner structure of the BFUG working structures was also considered.

The working structures are required to operationalise the commitments from the Tirana Communiqué in their Terms of Reference, in order to ensure an outcome-based approach and make it possible to assess the activity of each working structure.

In the 2021-2024 cycle, the BFUG had in total 13 working structures, excluding the Drafting Committee. This implies 2.5 working structures more than the average for the last 6 cycles of the EHEA, which is 11.5 working structures. The cycle with the most working structures has been the 2007-2009 cycle, with 15 working structures.

The proposal for the Work Programme 2024-2027 includes 10 working structures, excluding the Drafting Committee and the two dedicated processes of revising the ECTS Users' Guide and the ESG.

II. Timeline

The proposed timeline should ensure that by the 22nd of November the working structures for the next Work Programme are able to initiate their work.

1. BFUG Board meeting in Reykjavik (3rd of September 2024) and post-Board meeting

The Board agreed on a draft Work Programme to be submitted to the BFUG. Concurrently with sending the draft Work Programme to the BFUG, the Secretariat sends the call for interest in co-chairing the working structures proposed in the draft Work Programme.

BFUG members are invited to fill in the survey and send major comments on the proposal for the Work Programme in writing by September 22nd so that the EHEA Secretariat can compile their contributions and share them before the meeting with all BFUG members.

2. BFUG meeting in Budapest (26th-27th of September 2024)

The BFUG agrees on the Work Programme, including the working structures, co-chairing arrangements, the reference to the Tirana Communiqué in the remit of the proposed working structures and the main expected outcomes.

As opposed to a decision not to establish a working structure proposed in the draft Work Programme, particular challenges can arise if the BFUG members agree on new working structures than those proposed in the draft Work Programme which was circulated ahead the meeting. In this case, it is expected that the BFUG would have to decide whether the co-chairing arrangements are determined on the spot, if possible, or allow for a subsequent online procedure.

3. Call for interest – membership of the working structures: two weeks after the BFUG meeting in Budapest (by 13th of October 2024)

Based on the agreed Work Programme, the EHEA Secretariat launches a call for interest for the membership in the working structures, to be open for two weeks. As has been the case in the past, usually members can join working structures anytime during their operation.

4. Draft ToRs written by the co-chairs - three weeks after the BFUG meeting in Budapest (by the 20th of October 2024)

The co-chairs draft the Terms of Reference for the respective working structures in three weeks after the BFUG meeting in Budapest, by 20th of October, based on a template provided by the Secretariat. The basis of the ToRs are the specific commitments in the Tirana Communiqué in the remit of the respective working structure and the main expected outcomes already agreed by the BFUG.

5. Consultation of the members of the working structure – two weeks after the finalisation of the draft ToRs (by the 3rd of November 2024)

The co-chairs of the working structures will have two weeks to consult the group members on the draft terms of reference by November 3rd. They can either hold an online meeting or conduct the consultation in writing.

An in-person or, if not possible, hybrid meeting of the co-chairs of the new working structures is proposed to be organised after the 3rd of November. Such a meeting was organised in the 2015-2018 working period when the working groups were also not agreed upon before the 2015 Ministerial Conference. In the meeting could be discussed common approaches of co-chairing, fine-tuning ToRs, dissemination plans and points of collaboration and convergence.

6. Adoption of the Terms of Reference, including the membership of the working structures

After the 3rd of November (and the meeting of the co-chairs of working structures, if the case), the BFUG members receive the draft Terms of Reference, including membership in the working structures.

Ten days of online consultation are given, followed by the co-chairs of working structures adapting the Terms of Reference, if necessary.

Once a consensus is reached, the Terms of Reference are sent for adoption by the BFUG via electronic procedure. If consensus cannot be reached, an online BFUG meeting could be considered to discuss the respective matters.

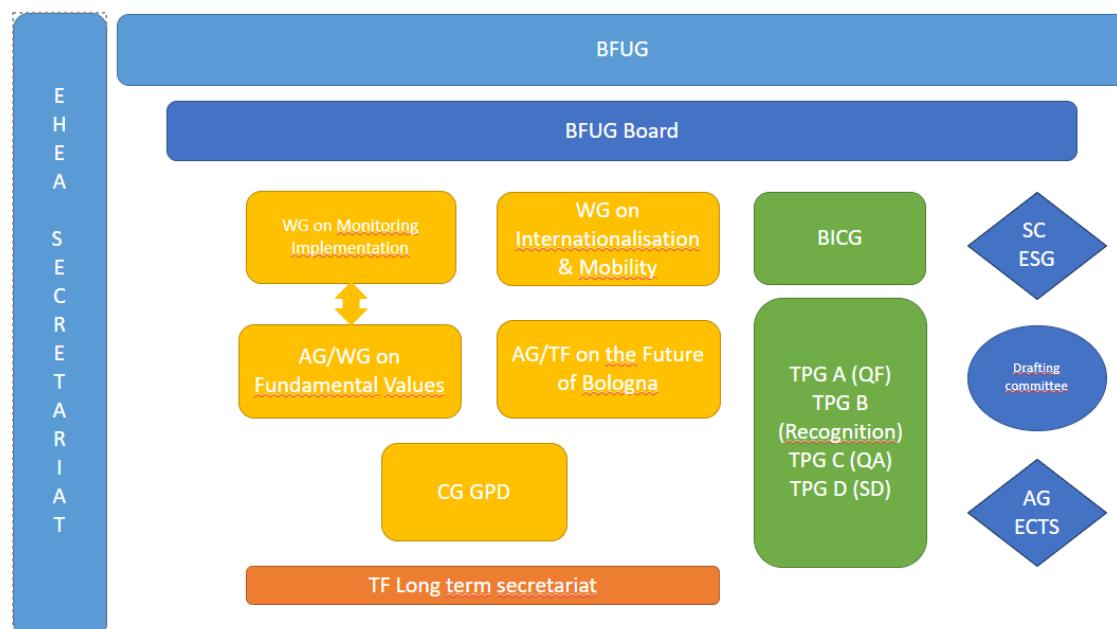
The proposed timeline is summarised in the table below:

Nr.	Activity	Responsibility	Deadline
1.	Agreeing on a draft work programme in the BFUG Board	BFUG Board	3 rd of September 2024
2.	Sending the draft work programme to the BFUG and the call for co-chairs	BFUG co-chairs, Secretariat	6 th of September 2024
3.	Sending written input for the draft work plan and expressing the intention to co-chair a working structure	BFUG members	22 nd of September 2024
4.	EHEA Secretariat collecting the input and sending the consolidated version of the Work Programme (with comments) and the interested co-chairs to the BFUG	EHEA Secretariat	23 rd of September 2024
5.	BFUG adopts the Work Programme and the working structures'co-chairs	BFUG	26th-27 th of September 2024
5bis	Agreeing on the co-chairs of new working structures at a later stage, if needed	BFUG	TBD
6.	Launching the call for interest – membership in working structures and	EHEA Secretariat	30 th of September 2024

	sending the format for ToRs to co-chairs		
7.	Filling in the call for interest for membership in working structures	BFUG members	13 th of October 2024
8.	Preparing draft ToRs	Co-chairs of the working structures	20 th of October 2024
9.	Discussing the draft ToRs with the working structures	Co-chairs of the working structures, members of the working structures	3 rd of November 2024
10.	Meeting with the co-chairs of the working structures	BFUG co-chairs, co-chairs of the working structures, EHEA Secretariat	After 3 rd of November
10.	Sending the draft ToRs to the BFUG	EHEA Secretariat	After the meeting with the co-chairs
11.	Agreeing on the draft ToRs in the BFUG, after a 10-day consultation period	BFUG	By 22 nd of November 2024

III. Proposed working structures

The proposed working structures are presented below:



For each working structure, a working proposal tabled for the BFUG with general expectations related to the commitments they would tackle and expected outcomes are included in the table below:

Nr.	Working Structure	Tirana Communiqué	Outcomes/Comments
1.	Working Group on Monitoring (implementation)	<p><i>'We mandate the BFUG to ensure that policy commitments aiming at creating by 2030 an inclusive, innovative, and interconnected EHEA, mindful of the fundamental values, are properly monitored, including through a Bologna Process Implementation Report that assesses key developments.'</i></p> <p><i>and</i></p> <p><i>'We commit to measuring progress in the implementation of the Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA and ask the BFUG to report back on this in 2027.'</i></p>	<p>The WG would produce the 2027 BPIR Monitoring report.</p> <p>A decision regarding the monitoring approach should be made based on the discussion initiated in the previous semester.</p>
2.	Task Force/Advisory Group on Future of Bologna	<p><i>'We also ask the BFUG to submit to us in 2027 proposals for the main priorities for the next decade, in close cooperation with higher education institutions, staff and students.'</i></p>	<p>The Task Force/advisory group would also ensure outreach towards stakeholders as established by the Communiqué. The group should prepare working methods to organise debates in the BFUG on themes relevant to the future of the Bologna Process, in order to ensure BFUG ownership and bringing back more content discussions within the BFUG.</p> <p>The TF/AG could also work on fulfilling the commitment related to the future-proof development,</p>

			dissemination and possible expansion of key commitments.
3.	Working Group/Advisory Group on Fundamental Values	<p><i>'We welcome the work on creating a technical monitoring framework, and we ask the BFUG to report back to us at our 2027 Ministerial Conference.'</i></p>	Finalisation of the technical monitoring framework, through developing indicators to cover the dimensions included in the fundamental values statements, and finalising the first monitoring of based on the framework. Raising awareness, dissemination and support activities in what it concerns upholding the fundamental values at the national level would also be organised. The group should be linked with the WG on Monitoring.
4.	Working Group on Internationalisation and Mobility	<p><i>'We mandate the BFUG to prepare an action plan to stimulate mobility and internationalisation of higher education and to support measures for achieving a greener, more inclusive, and more balanced mobility'</i> and <i>'We will support higher education institutions in their exploration of practices and benefits of blended mobility and virtual exchanges, and in fostering the internationalisation of the curricula. We commit to supporting transnational cooperation, including for joint programmes and joint degrees, through better implementation of the key commitments and by removing undue administrative and legal barriers'</i></p>	A WG on Mobility was included in the 2007-2015 Action Plan, which developed an Action plan on mobility in 2012. The headline would be how to attain the mobility targets across EHEA and support internationalisation of higher education in general. The WG should have links with all working structures, collecting information on various elements that can impact access to mobility. All working structures should have as one of the aims to outline how their work can foster mobility.
5.	CG GPD	<i>We ask the BFUG and its working structures to</i>	The CG GPD would continue the engagement

		<p><i>continue to develop and strengthen dialogue and collaboration with macro regions on various levels and with appropriate interlocutors.</i></p> <p>and from the Statement</p> <p><i>'We invite all participants in the EHEA Global Policy Forum to continue to engage in global policy dialogue and to identify the themes where synergies can be found between regions, and with global organizations such as UNESCO and OECD, be it at the intergovernmental level, or in transnational exchange and collaboration between higher education institutions and organisations.'</i></p>	<p>with other parts of the world and prepare the statement for the Iași & Chișinău Bologna Policy Forum.</p>
6.	BICG and TPGs	<p><i>'(acknowledging) the important contribution of the Thematic Peer Groups under the guidance of the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group in improving the situation. Therefore, we commit to ensuring that we have, or will devise, and will publish appropriate action plans to address any remaining implementation gaps (...). As the Bologna Process tools have developed throughout the last decade, we mandate the BFUG to work on their future-proof development, dissemination and possible expansion'</i></p> <p>On Social Dimension:</p> <p><i>'We, together with stakeholders and communities, commit to tackling the socio-economic challenges, such as the rising cost of living and difficulty to access student housing, that have impacted access to higher education and student life as a</i></p>	<p>The continuation of BICG and the three TPGs on QF (A), Recognition (B) and QA (C), plus an additional TPG on Social Dimension. The new TPG would work on promoting the Principles and Guidelines on Strengthening the Social Dimension of EHEA, also covering aspects related to student-centred learning.</p>

		<i>whole. We will intensify our efforts to ensure the recognition of qualifications held by refugees and to remove barriers to their enrolment in higher education.'</i>	
7.	TF on long-term secretariat	<p><i>We mandate the BFUG to continue working on the possibility of establishing a long-term, independent, internationally staffed Secretariat to create effective support for the BFUG, and to evaluate the feasibility and sustainability of the related proposals, models, and terms of reference in Spring 2026, to be presented for adoption and implementation at our 2027 Ministerial Conference</i></p>	<p>Working based on the Roadmap developed by the Task Force on Rules and Regulations, with the possible support of the Secretariat in relation to assessing regulations and conditions, drafting procedures and providing legal advice.</p> <p>The TF should be relatively small in terms of members for a more effective and concise process.</p> <p>The co-chairs of the TF should not include any countries/organisations interested in hosting the Secretariat.</p>
8.	Drafting Committee of the Iași – Chișinău Communique		To be set up in January 2026.
Additional structures			
9.	Advisory Group ECTS	<p><i>To support the implementation of the ECTS, including learning outcomes, we invite the BFUG to review the ECTS Users' Guide 2015 by 2027, to strengthen its key features and adapt it to current developments, including micro credentials.</i></p>	Based on the previous practice (see former Ad-hoc group page), it is a smaller-scale technical group, chaired by the European Commission.
10.	Dedicated structures for the revision of the ESG	<p><i>We invite the authors of the ESG to propose a revised version by 2026 to the BFUG, to be adopted by us at our 2027 Ministerial conference, as well as an adjustment, where required, of the European Approach for Quality</i></p>	Process coordinated by the authors of the ESG (E4). The revised version should be finalised by 2026.

		Assurance of Joint Programmes.	
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In addition, a small group of members from the BFUG should be mandated to create the 'Code of Ethics' mentioned in the EHEA Rules of Procedure adopted by ministers.

Other commitments from the Tirana Communiqué can be tackled either transversally or can be best addressed at the national level. Examples are provided below:

- ✓ Commitments that could be addressed transversally:
 - *We ask the BFUG to consider in its work the wider and longer-term impact of the digital transition on higher education in the EHEA, including AI, and in particular with regard to the key commitments and the use of Bologna Process tools.*
 - *Reciprocal referencing of qualifications frameworks and credit systems, ratification and implementation of the UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education, as well as the second generation regional recognition conventions, and alignment and mutual understanding of quality assurance principles.*

- ✓ Commitments that could be tackled at the national level:
 - *We will intensify our efforts to ensure the recognition of qualifications held by refugees and to remove barriers to their enrolment in higher education.*
 - *We will support higher education institutions in strengthening their contribution to society and their local communities, responding to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the green transition in the area of higher education, to the ongoing digitalisation and the combination of physical and online learning and teaching.*
 - *We will also promote more robust and transparent quality assurance of transnational education delivered worldwide, in line with the ESG, to protect the interests of students.*
 - *We are committed to countering diploma and accreditation mills, fraudulent qualifications and academic cheating services, made more accessible through developments in the digital field.*

The BFUG should consider and decide upon the way to best follow on the commitment related to '*we commit to ensuring that we have, or will devise, and will publish appropriate action plans to address any remaining implementation gaps, and to promoting knowledge-sharing activities related to the EHEA*'.

IV. General Guidelines for ToRs

The template for the ToRs will be provided by the Secretariat.

The ToRs should include:

- Name of the working structure
- Period of work (for the whole cycle or other timings)
- Co-chairs
- Members of the working structure
- Reference to the Communiqué

- Purpose and goals/outcomes
- Specific tasks
- Number of meetings and meeting schedule
- Liaison with other working structures or external structures, if the case
- Number and scope of sub-groups, if the case

Working structures should usually foresee one meeting per semester unless the work format calls for other arrangements (e.g., in short-term taskforces). In case more meetings are needed, the BFUG should endorse the change.

Sub-groups created by BFUG working structures are not entitled to secretarial support from the EHEA Secretariat.