

Minutes of the XCV BFUG meeting

24th – 25th of February 2025

Hosted by Poland in Warsaw

List of participants

Nr.	Country/organisation	Name
1.	Albania	Anila Paparisto
2.	Albania (BFUG Co-chair)	Aleksander Xhuvani
3.	Austria	Stephan De Pasqualin
4.	Azerbaijan	Vusala Gurbanova
5.	Azerbaijan	Samir Hamidov
6.	Belgium Flemish Community	Liesbeth Hens
7.	Belgium French Community	Adriana Gonfroid
8.	Business Europe	Inga Lapina
9.	Council of Europe	Marie-Anne Persoons
10.	Croatia	Dijana Mandić
11.	Croatia	Loredana Maravić
12.	Cyprus	Kyriacos Charalambous
13.	Czech Republic	Michal Karpisek
14.	Czech Republic	Tereza Vengřinová
15.	Denmark	Sofie Linthoe Haastrup
16.	Denmark	Jonas Husum Johannesen
17.	EHEA Secretariat	Horia-Şerban Oniţa
18.	EHEA Secretariat	Lilia Parhomenco
19.	EHEA Secretariat	Oana Alexandra Țințar
20.	EI/ETUCE	Robert Copeland
21.	EI/ETUCE	Agnes Roman
22.	ENQA	Douglas Blackstock
23.	ENQA	Anna Gover
24.	EQAR	Stéphane Lauwick
25.	EQAR	Aleksandar Šušnjar
26.	Estonia	Janne Pukk
27.	ESU	Iris Kimizoglu
28.	ESU	Lana Par
29.	EUA	Michael Gaebel
30.	EUA	Maria Kelo
31.	EURASHE	Jakub Grodecki
32.	Eurodoc	Aleksandra Lewandowska
33.	European Commission	Susanne Maria Conze
34.	European Commission	Kinga Szuly
35.	Eurydice	David Crosier
36.	Finland	Maija Innola
37.	France	Mathieu Musquin

38.	France	Sara Margaret Thornton
39.	Georgia	Maia Shukhoshvili
40.	Germany (Federal)	Andrea Herdegen
41.	Germany (Lander)	Magdalena Klann
42.	Germany (Lander)	Hannah Schmitz
43.	Greece	Alexandra Karvouni
44.	Holy See	Melanie Rosenbaum
45.	Hungary	András Báló
46.	Iceland	Una Strand Vidarsdottir
47.	Ireland	Marie Glynn
48.	Ireland	Stephanie Thompson
49.	Italy	Chiara Finocchietti
50.	Italy	Luca Lantero
51.	Kazakhstan	Aitzhan Kulumzhanova
52.	Kazakhstan	Rauza Mendaliyeva
53.	Latvia	Mārtiņš Upmacis
54.	Liechtenstein	Belgin Amann
55.	Lithuania	Neda Zutautaitė
56.	Luxembourg	Méline Tsui
57.	Malta	Adam Liwak
58.	Moldova	Velisco Nadejda
59.	Netherlands	Arthur Belle
60.	Netherlands	Marianne van Exel
61.	North Macedonia	Borcho Aleksov
62.	Norway	Tone Flood Strøm
63.	Poland	Maria Bołtrusko
64.	Poland (BFUG Co-chair)	Magdalena Maciejewska
65.	Portugal	Cristina Albuquerque
66.	Portugal	Inês Viegas
67.	Romania (Vice Chair)	Daniela Cristina Ghitulica
68.	Romania	Mihai Cezar Haj
69.	San Marino	Remo MASSARI
70.	Slovakia	Peter Ondreicka
71.	Slovakia	Vojtěch Przybyla
72.	Slovenia	Jernej Širok
73.	Spain	Antonio José Navarro Betancor
74.	Spain	Jose Aurelio Llana Villanueva
75.	Sweden	Robin Moberg
76.	Switzerland	Aurélia Natascha Robert-Tissot
77.	Türkiye	Aydın Aslan
78.	Ukraine	Maryna Mruga
79.	Ukraine	Alla Rybalko
80.	UNESCO	Noah Sobe
81.	United Kingdom	Ella Williams
82.	United Kingdom - Scotland	Jacqui Brasted

Andorra, Bulgaria, Montenegro and Eurostudent sent their apologies. Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia were absent. The meeting started at 09:04 CET.

1. Welcome and introduction

1.1 Welcome by the Prof. dr. hab. Andrzej Szeptycki, Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of Science and Higher Education

Prof. dr. hab. Andrzej Szeptycki welcomed everyone to the meeting and recalled the longstanding membership of Poland within the European space for higher education, stemming from the founding of the Jagellonian University, where the BFUG meeting during the previous Polish Presidency took place. The Undersecretary of State also emphasised that achieving the objectives of the Tirana Communiqué of an inclusive, innovative and interconnected higher education was of utmost importance for member states and highlighted that EHEA could only fully develop its missions contingent to holistically respecting its six fundamental values. He then informed members of the goal pursued by the Polish Presidency to further the agenda of the possible joint European degree label as a step towards the future of higher education.

In the context of marking three years since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, members took a moment of silence to honour the victims of the aggression.

1.2 Welcome by the BFUG Co-chairs (Poland and Albania)

The Polish Co-chair welcomed participants to the meeting and presented the priorities of the Polish Presidency, under the framework of seven security dimensions. In Education and Science, the priorities of the Polish Presidency include: the evaluation of the European Education Area and future priorities, cooperation in VET, inclusive education and progressing the work on the Commission's higher education package. The Council would be expected to adopt a Resolution on boosting Europe's competitiveness: higher education for generations of tomorrow (focusing on the European degree label), a Recommendation on the European QA and Recognition system and a Recommendation on digital education and evaluation of the Digital Education Action Plan.

The Albanian Co-chair thanked the Polish hosts and emphasised the shared commitment underpinning the Bologna Process and remarked the key priorities that the current cycle aimed to address, including enhancing quality assurance, promoting internationalisation and mobility, sustainable development and social dimension.

1.3 Welcome by the BFUG Vice-chair (Romania)

The Vice Chair thanked the outgoing and current BFUG Co-chairs for the smooth organisation of BFUG and Board meetings and acknowledged the adoption of the Terms of Reference for the working structures, which also had organised their first meetings. She pointed out that continuous coordination is needed, as the upcoming BFUG meeting would only take place in December. Finally, the Vice Chair expressed her satisfaction with the inclusion of several content discussions during the BFUG meeting.

2 Information from the outgoing BFUG Co-chairs (Hungary and Iceland)

Documents: Minutes of the [BFUG XCII Board meeting](#) (Reykjavik)
Minutes of the [BFUG XCIII meeting](#) (Budapest)
Minutes of the [Coordination meeting between co-chairs](#) (Brussels)

The outgoing Hungarian BFUG Co-chair thanked the Secretariat for their support and appreciated the very good feedback received for the organisation of the BFUG meeting in Budapest. The outgoing Icelandic BFUG Co-chair thanked the Polish hosts and the Secretariat and emphasised the important work of the previous co-chairmanship in having the Work Programme adopted and the working structures established. She raised attention to the publication of the first newsletter and invited members to contribute to the next issue.

The Polish Co-chair concluded that the BFUG took note of the BFUG XCIII meeting minutes.

3 Information about the XCIV BFUG Board meeting in Albania

Documents: [Minutes of the XCIV BFUG Board meeting](#)

The Albanian co-chair gave updates on the discussion points during the XCIV Board meeting in Tirana, emphasising the information given by the Secretariat on the establishment and membership of working structures, the discussion on the Schedule of topics for BFUG meetings, and preparing the adoption of the ToRs. He also mentioned the relevant updates received from working structures and that the Board proposed that the BFUG rejects the EFEE application for partnership status.

ESU mentioned that a couple of countries refused to nominate student unions as additional delegates in the working structures, running counter to the commitments on fundamental values, which state that students should be represented on all levels of higher education policy. ESU expressed their desire to solve the issue and advised their student unions to reach out again to the BFUG representatives in this regard.

Upon a question from the Holy See regarding the interventions of the Icelandic and Finnish representatives in the Board meeting on limiting reporting of working structures in the BFUG to written reports, the Icelandic outgoing Co-chair clarified that it applied only to cases when deemed necessary in order to allow sufficient time in the BFUG meeting for policy discussions.

4 Adoption of the agenda

Documents: Agenda of the meeting

[BFUG PL AL 4 2 All presentations compiled 21.02.2025](#)

[BFUG PL AL 4 3 All documents compiled 21.02.2025](#)

The Polish Co-chair presented the agenda, with no questions or objections raised. Thus, the Polish Co-chair concluded that the BFUG adopted the agenda with no changes.

5. Information from EHEA Secretariat

Documents: [BFUG PL AL 95 5 1 EHEA Secretariat presentation](#)

[BFUG PL AL 95 5 2 Schedule of topics for BFUG meetings 10.02.2025](#)

[BFUG PL AL 95 5 3 Feedback results BFUG XCIII 19.02.2025](#)

[BFUG PL AL 95 5 4 Useful links for BFUG representatives](#)

[BFUG PL AL 95 5 5 Preliminary information Ministerial Conference and GPF 2027 17.02.2025](#)

[BFUG PL AL 95 5 6 Work Programme with ToRs](#)

The Head of Secretariat (HoS) gave updates on their activity, highlighting the support in the elaboration of ToRs and integrating input, the establishment and first meetings of the working

structures and the various coordination meetings and planning activities. He presented a historical overview of working structures and the interlinkages between them in the ToRs, the statistics on the membership in working structures, including geographical distribution and national stakeholder engagement, pointing out that all countries except Serbia and Lithuania had nominated members in working structures but in relation to TPGs, few had taken up the commitment to nominate both ministry representatives and stakeholders. He further gave updates on communications and outreach, including social media activity, the website and external engagements promoting the Bologna Process, and invited members to contribute to the June newsletter and to add events to the website. The HoS informed members about the compilation of the Work Programme with the ToRs and a document with useful links for BFUG members. Finally, he presented the Schedule of Topics for BFUG meetings, which included an overview of the deliverables expected to be received by the BFUG from each working structure the actions proposed to be taken by the BFUG, as well as a tool for observing progress over time and the overload of each BFUG meeting.

The Vice Chair then presented the preliminary information about the Ministerial Conference and Global Policy Forum, including tentative dates between 26th – 27th of May 2027 and preliminary information about the location and practical arrangements. EUA mentioned that dividing the Ministerial Conference in Iasi and the Global Policy Forum in Chisinau would pose risks to the attendance of ministers in Chisinau, suggesting a combination between the two events in both cities. ETUCE inquired about the size of delegations, pointing out to the difficulty of including a staff representative considering the fixed composition of delegations, and the Council of Europe inquired whether side events would be foreseen and potentially organised with partners.

The Vice Chair emphasised that the information was preliminary, the Moldovan and Romanian hosts would work to maximise participation in both cities and, while not considered yet, side events could be organised if requested. She added that the size of delegations would be kept to five, but different arrangements could be discussed in the BFUG.

The Polish Co-chair concluded that the BFUG welcomed the reports, acknowledged the proposed dates for the Ministerial Conference and Global Policy Forum 2027 and adopted the Schedule of Topics for BFUG meetings.

6. Reporting from the BFUG working structures

6.1 WG on Fundamental Values

Documents: [BFUG PL AL 95 6.1 1 WG FV presentation 19.02.2025](#)
[BFUG PL AL 95 6.1 2 Technical Policy Framework of Indicators FV 10.02.2025](#)

The Romanian WG on FV Co-chair presented the technical policy framework, outlining the process through which the group prepared the indicators, the piloting conducted, as well as the rationale behind the structure derived for analysing fundamental values and the choice of indicators. He emphasised that three different elements compose the monitoring of the FV, namely the monitoring framework, the monitoring tool and the monitoring mechanism. In relation to a map presented by the Romanian WG Co-chair, Ukraine requested to avoid marking the Russian Federation as an active EHEA member.

To clarify aspects raised by Switzerland and Belgium-Flemish Community, the Romanian WG Co-chair informed that stakeholders using the online tool for reporting fundamental values

breaches would have to provide a clear source and the input would be validated by the national operators selected by the co-chairs in the supporting project. The stakeholders that would be directly consulted would include student unions, staff unions, HEIs and academics, and their input, including potentially diverging views, would feed into the narrative description of the fundamental value, without a desire to ensure a comparable approach in relation to de facto implementation, as opposed to the traffic light system designed for de jure implementation. In this regard, EURASHE suggested to consider the wide range of HEI stakeholders and cases where universities of applied sciences had separate representation mechanisms, while ETUCE raised the complexity in selecting staff unions, as some are closer to the government. ETUCE also suggested the option of using the online reporting tool anonymously to avoid self-censorship. Furthermore the European Commission pointed out to the difficulty of creating adequate narrative descriptions and proposed that the monitoring takes into account existing initiatives, sources and frameworks to ensure a sustainable approach.

In relation to data privacy and security, the Romanian WG Co-chair further added that data would be collected mainly from public sources and that the project coordinator had extensive experience in ensuring data safety in the case when sensitive data would need to be shared. Furthermore, he emphasised that the BFUG would eventually decide what data would be made public.

Belgium-Flemish Community, supported by EUA, the Holy See and the Council of Europe, emphasised the importance of ensuring that public authorities are also invited to share answers on the outlook questions regarding de jure indicators, as infringements on fundamental values could come from various sources, including institutions themselves, self-censorship, economic imperatives, research funding or purpose. The Holy See and EUA further informed on the intention to send additional input in writing to the WG Co-chairs. The Romanian WG Co-chair stated that the framework would be revised to incorporate the above suggestion.

Upon inquiries from Belgium-Flemish Community and Germany, the Romanian WG Co-chair informed that the national operators would be local higher education experts selected and paid by the project, that are not affiliated with the ministry or stakeholders and are knowledgeable of the national higher education systems. In the case of Germany, the project would look into employing 3-4 operators and use the practices of the WG on Monitoring in analysing the implementation of fundamental values in a federal system, taking into account both their specifics and administrative limitation in data collection and interpretation.

The Council of Europe emphasised the importance of a broad spectre of contributions, in order to shed light on the white spots which could not be fully covered by the indicators, and taking into account the political implications of analysing fundamental values. In this sense, the Council of Europe suggested to clarify the source of definitions incorporated in the tool, some of them coming from Council of Europe acquis or EU reports, as means to assist the interpretation of the values. Supported by Slovenia and Finland, they reflected on the scorecard methodology, which entails a stronger 'name and blame' approach, arguing that based on their experience a more positive approach when addressing difficult issues such as fraud or lack of integrity may work better in supporting the academic community. The Council of Europe appraised the intention of the WG to evaluate the monitoring mechanism in 2027 and offered their support, highlighting their experience, among other aspects pertaining to fundamental values, in mapping the situation of academic freedom at European level.

The Romanian WG Co-chair acknowledged the crucial role of the Council of Europe's work in supporting the elaboration of the statements on fundamental values. However, he pointed out that in their work the WG would reference the statements as such, without relating to their source of inspiration. The Romanian WG Co-chair also informed delegates that the approach taken follows the longstanding successful practice of the Bologna Process Implementation Report, with traffic-light systems having incentivised countries to implement reforms.

In relation to the monitoring procedure, Slovenia inquired who would continue the monitoring after 2027 and whether it would not be more suitable as a thematic analysis, avoiding to burden the regular monitoring exercise with additional indicators. Finland further asked whether the questionnaire would be sent to the BFUG members at the same time as the one for the BPIR. The Romanian WG Co-chair informed the meeting that the WG would propose options on the post-2027 monitoring mechanism and the BFUG would have to decide how to proceed next. He added that the WG on FV would try to integrate questions in the BPIR questionnaire and only send a separate one if needed, alternatively having the national operators prefill the questionnaire if the timeline would not align with the WG on Monitoring.

EUA suggested to the WG to design a system for raising awareness on FV, beyond the BFUG, including on the monitoring report and on the online platform. Norway expressed their support for the document and acknowledged the effort done in devising the indicators considering the politically sensitive nature of fundamental values.

The Polish Co-chair concluded that the BFUG took note of the document and asked the Romanian WG Co-chair to incorporate the comments received.

6.2 WG on Monitoring

Documents: [BFUG PL AL 95 6.2 1 WG Monitoring Presentation 21.02.2025](#)
[BFUG PL AL 95 6.2 2 Bologna Process Implementation Report Proposal 11.02](#)

The Eurydice Co-chair of the WG on Monitoring gave the presentation, outlining the decision taken by the BFUG to prepare a comprehensive BPIR report for 2027, with a reduced number of indicators and incorporating a rotation principle for indicators. He also proposed that the BPIR relies on EHESO data, acknowledging the issue that not all EHEA countries are included, and increasing the narrative description of findings by incorporating information from working structures and supporting projects. The group foresaw that data collection for BPIR would be launched in February 2026.

Iceland, ENQA, Norway, Austria, France supported the approach taken. Iceland asked whether any process of double-checking Eurostat data would be put in place, considering previous problems with their accuracy, while Ukraine also expressed concerns with statistical data collection. The Eurydice WG Co-chair replied that Eurostat does the quality check and Eurydice could not intervene and change it for BPIR. In this sense, issues rested in submitting the data and, in the case of EHESO, expanding its scope and thinking of how countries not in Eurostat could report to EHESO for the purposes of BPIR. He added that it would be acceptable even if only the 36 existing countries in EHESO would be covered.

Belgium-French Community highlighted the importance of maintaining the statistical data, with the Eurydice WG Co-chair stating that data would be covered at least in internationalisation and mobility, thus the idea would be to eliminate the 'key data' chapter in the beginning. ENQA

suggested including indicators on transnational education in BPIR, considering its increasing importance and references in previous communiques, with Italy adding that the Recommendation on TNE to be adopted by the LRC Committee and the LRC Monitoring report could serve as tools for working on BPIR indicators for TNE.

The Vice Chair emphasised the importance of discussing what indicators would be selected and how the indicators would be rotated, making sure that the BPIR remains a source of comparable, core information about the progress of the EHEA over the years. The Vice Chair also asked how projects would be to be referenced in the report be selected and whether the BFUG would have a chance to comment on the indicators for the BPIR at the BFUG in Copenhagen. She also welcomed the intention to involve the BFUG working structures in the development of the narrative part of the report and asked if the TPGs would also be included. Supported by Ukraine, ESU highlighted that it should not be a general rule that only policy commitments under an active working structure would be covered and recommended participation in Eurostudent to the BFUG members. Ukraine also added that some indicators should be maintained consistently in BPIR, and other rotated based on their relevance or potential for changes.

The Eurydice WG Co-chair agreed with ESU and Ukraine and explained that this cycle the policy commitments are neatly related to the working structures. He added that some indicators should be kept in each report and others rotated based on different timeframes. He informed that the selection of relevant projects and the principle for the rotation of indicators would be discussed with each working structure, the latter especially with the TPG D. He added that by the BFUG in Copenhagen there would be limited capacity for changes in what it concerns the framework of indicators and confirmed that the TPGs would also be invited to contribute.

Answering concerns from France (on the length of the report) and from Sweden (on the risk of decreased comparability), the Eurydice WG Co-chair clarified that synthetic narrative text would be increased only for some chapters and that strategic indicators would not be eliminated and only the contextual ones rotated. Austria added that this reduction and rotation would also help ministries follow-up on the results of the BPIR, as a general problem was overburden by the number of surveys.

6.3 WG on Internationalisation and Mobility

Documents: [BFUG PL AL 95 6.3 1 WG IM Presentation 19.02.2025](#)

The Dutch Co-chair of the WG on IM gave the presentation, outlining the main outputs of the group – a Strategy on Internationalisation and Mobility, discussions on mobility targets, recommendations to address identified barriers to mobility and a glossary of terminology. At the first WG meeting in Chisinau, two sub-groups had been created to draft the strategy and the glossary, with the next meeting taking place in Bonn in May. Upon a question from Germany, the Dutch WG Co-chair informed that the glossary would broadly address the topic of internationalisation, seeking to collect input from various sources and present it to the BFUG for approval.

6.4 CG on Global Policy Dialogue

Documents: [BFUG PL AL 95 6.4 1 CG GPD presentation 21.02.2025](#)

The UNESCO Co-chair of the CG gave updates on the activity of CG GPD, highlighting their role in global dialogue with macro-regions, preparing the Global Policy Forum and its Statement. The group would seek to identify sub-topics and stakeholders on four key topics: key commitments, right to education, lifelong learning, respectively digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence. UNESCO also informed about the 2nd Intergovernmental Conference of State Parties to the Global Recognition Convention, that would take place in Paris between 24th -25th June. ETUCE expressed their support in facilitating engagement outside Europe.

6.5 TF on the Future of Bologna

Documents: [BFUG PL AL 95 6.5 TF FoB Presentation 21.02.2025](#)

The Flemish TF Co-chair gave updates on the work of the TF, explaining the choice of lifelong learning as the thematic issue to be debated during the BFUG. She added that each debate would finalise with a concluding document, while some topics may require that discussions are continued from one BFUG to another. In relation to a question from ESU, the Flemish TF Co-chair mentioned that the TF was considering inviting experts for upcoming BFUG meetings, which had not been possible in this case due to the short timeframe.

6.6 Updates from the European Commission on the ECTS Users' Guide revision

Documents: [BFUG PL AL 95 6.6 1 AG ECTS presentation 21.02.2025](#)

The European Commission gave updates on the work of the AG, which started its work aiming to identify areas that need revision in the ECTS User's Guide in consideration of existing trends, provide input to the research in ten countries and 80 HEIs commissioned by the EC and review the draft versions of the Guide. The EC expressed their intention not to overload the Guide and provide a revision considering elements such as short units of learning, including micro-credentials, recognition of prior learning, VET, automatic recognition, blended and virtual mobility, the global dimension and supporting transnational cooperation, including European University Alliances.

Upon suggestions from Holy See and ENQA on possibly inviting representatives from Latin America and Africa as observers, considering their work on credit accumulation systems, the Commission suggested that such engagement remained separate due to the technical nature of the group. The HoS further suggested that the AG ECTS and CG GPD work together on this matter, considering the commitment in the GPF Statement to work on making credit systems more comparable. The Council of Europe also reflected on the unique nature of the EHEA framework in coupling ECTS with Qualifications Framework.

The Vice Chair, supported by Austria, suggested that the AG consider the practical problems for HEIs arising in implementation, focusing on straightforward solutions that could be then directly implemented at the national level. Austria further pointed out to deeper issues in inconsistent implementation despite apparent fulfilment of commitments, giving the example of the link between learning outcomes and calculating ECTS. Austria also considered the revision of the Guide a useful context for reigniting the discussion at the national level on how to implement the ECTS Guide. The European Commission confirmed that the goal of the research would be to map the status quo and identify practical challenges through surveys, interviews and focus groups.

The HoS further added that, from a legal perspective, it had not been clarified whether the ECTS User's Guide only offer loose guidance or serve as the regulation of ECTS itself, comparing

it with the system of standards, guidelines and national legislation in the case of quality assurance.

6.7 Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (30 min)

Documents: [BFUG PL AL 95 6.7 BICG presentation](#)

The EUA Co-chair of BICG gave updates on their work, highlighting the importance of having the national action plans submitted by the 1st of April, as the work of TPGs and their action plans would also be reliant on the national input. She also emphasised the focus of the BICG on implementation, rather than discussing new policy topics, and called for a better coordination between the members of the TPGs and BFUG, including in the elaboration of the national action plans. Iceland recalled the expectation that TPG members should be able to influence policy implementation at national level, and the HoS informed about future steps taken by the Secretariat in relation to the national action plans, while informing that the issue of their follow-up and monitoring was still pending, beyond what TPGs would undergo within each of their remit.

6.8 TF on establishing a long-term Secretariat

Documents:

[BFUG PL AL 95 6.8 1 TF long term Secretariat presentation 20.02.2025](#)

[BFUG PL AL 95 6.8 2 Call for expression of interest for hosting the long-term Secretariat 10.02.2025](#)

The EUA Co-chair gave updates and presented the call, the criteria and the envisaged application process. Türkiye announced that they would be interested in applying.

Italy, supported by Türkiye, asserted that contrary to what was stated in the call, the BFUG had not discussed a regular financial contribution from BFUG members for financing the Secretariat, what implication it would entail and how it would happen. Italy also asked that any financial discussion should consider that countries having hosted the Secretariat had already contributed financially, that EU funds for the Secretariat also come from the contribution of EU member states, the voluntary nature of the process and what consequences could result from non-payment. The EUA Co-chair remarked that the costs were already shared by members through taking turns in hosting and that the BFUG had discussed the cost-sharing model before, which was also included in the Principles presented by the previous TF.

The EUA Co-chair explained that applicants would need to know elements regarding financing when applying and proposed to revise the application by simply stating that the host country would not be expected to fund the Secretariat, which had been the tendency supported by the BFUG members. Iceland appreciated the transparency of the process and supported the proposal, arguing that it was important for potential hosts to clarify that it would not imply a massive financial responsibility, but a collective responsibility to keep the process going

Upon a question from ETUCE on the possibility of considering fundamental values in the assessment of applications, the Czech TF Co-chair emphasised that the rule of law would be considered due to its potential impact on the relation between the Secretariat and the government.

The Holy See requested a presentation of the financial costs of the previous four Secretariats in to better understand what was covered by the host beyond the EU funding. She explained that so far, the voluntary process entailed no costs except for co-chairmanship and physical participation and changing that principle would require additional information to consider.

Italy and the Holy See proposed to eliminate the reference to the financing of the Secretariat altogether, with the Holy See highlighting that the current formulation would prohibit the host to exclusively fund the Secretariat. Italy also considered that the rigid application process might deter applications, even more so considering that the host would not manage the Secretariat. Furthermore, Italy added that the assessment of applications might have diplomatic implications if the approach was too rigid. The EUA TF Co-chair informed that the assessment criteria were a compromise as the Board advised to have scales and weighing systems. In this sense, the EUA TF Co-chair clarified that the criteria would be used to ensure comparability for reviewers.

Norway, Finland, Czech Republic and the European Commission expressed their support in launching the call, with Norway emphasising that the discussion on finances would take place at the BFUG in Copenhagen when more details would be known. In reply, Italy clarified that they would be in favour of the call if it would transparently state that the financial model, mechanism and that the potential amount to be paid by each country had not been decided yet.

The EUA TF Co-chair proposed to discuss separately with Italy to adjust wording, while still making it clear that the host would not be expected to fund the Secretariat themselves. At the end of Day 1, the EUA TF Co-chair presented the changes, which were agreed by the BFUG: deleting the paragraph explaining the financial model and add that hosts are welcomed to contribute to the Secretariat's operations, insert a footnote that the financial framework would be decided in 2026, delete a footnote that 'the main source of funding must not come from the host, but from regular contribution of BFUG members'. In this sense, the sentence would read 'the main source of funding should be contributions by the EHEA members.

The Albanian Co-chair concluded that the BFUG agreed on the Call for expressions of interest.

7. Discussion on the process of revising the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in EHEA

Documents:

[BFUG PL AL 95 7 1 ESG discussion background paper 10.02.2025](#)

[BFUG PL AL 95 7 2 ESG presentation 19.02.2025](#)

ENQA gave the presentation on behalf of the ESG Steering Group, outlining the revision process and the results of the QA FIT project which informed the ESG revision. ENQA highlighted that the basic principles and aims of the ESG remain relevant and key messages were supported among all the stakeholder groups, such as maintaining the applicability of the ESG to diverse contexts, ensuring both accountability and enhancement and that ESG are primarily standards for quality assurance and not for quality itself. ENQA mentioned that the objective of the session was to collect input to be brought to the ESG Steering Group.

Slovakia asked how to improve the uptake of the European Approach for the QA of Joint Programmes (EA) and whether any change in the EA would help in this regard. Supported by Germany, they also inquired about aligning the EA with the European Degree label, to avoid a duplication of systems. EUA clarified that the ESG revision could consider criteria in the European degree label as potential sources of inspiration, however the contexts of the two are different and the ESG served as a baseline on which a label could be developed. As the EA was based on the part I of the ESG, EUA pointed out that the barriers for a label stemmed from national procedures, not the content of EA.

Slovakia further suggested that instead of discussing whether ESG should apply to alternative providers, the principle should be that microcredentials should be quality assured by the same standards irrespective of the provider. Romania considered that ESG should apply to all HE, not only to programmes leading to degrees, while Belgium-Flemish Community asked about what alternative providers were considered when discussing about the applicability of ESG. In this regard, Denmark emphasised that the ESG should not hinder the provision of microcredentials by alternative providers.

Answering a question from France, ENQA stated that while it was unlikely to engage observers from other regions in the ESG revision, the CG GPD discussed a mapping of the various regional QA frameworks that would feed into the ESG revision process. Furthermore, France also informed everyone about proposals to broaden the definition of stakeholders that would be sent in writing.

Romania argued that the ESG should be generic enough to stand the test of time and avoid incorporating in the ESG all changes envisioned for HE. The Romanian representative called for better links between learning and teaching and research (supported by Belgium-Flemish Community and Norway), with Denmark raising the issue of non-research intensive HEIs and the need to apply ESG to all HEIs. Belgium – Flemish Community, supported by the Council of Europe, suggested that the ESG should better link L&T with service to society.

Romania also called for strengthening the social dimension and fundamental values in the ESG, supported by the European Commission, ETUCE, Council of Europe, ESU, EQAR and Norway for fundamental values, questioned by Belgium – Flemish Community and opposed by Denmark, Slovenia and Netherlands, which emphasised that other tools are in place for those topics. Germany suggested to open the ESG to new topics, but in a soft approach, while ETUCE added that the ministers had already agreed in Rome that academic freedom was an indispensable aspect of quality L&T and signalled staff working conditions as an important aspect of the learning environment.

ESU considered there was an artificial division between quality, fundamental values and social dimension, exemplifying through the Principles and Guidelines on Strengthening the Social Dimension which refer to the flexibility of learning paths, like the ESG. ESU also gave the example of offering services for students with disabilities or training on academic integrity as a matter of quality education. Supported by the European Commission, ESU considered that just because some aspects may be more difficult to integrate in QA indicators should not be a reason to exclude them by default. The Commission added that the revision should look into details (such as finding the links between flexibility and social dimension), what aspects could be practically included and focusing not only on broad topics to integrate, but also how. ESU further criticised

a conservative approach to QA, while the BFUG simultaneously discussed opening systems for lifelong learning or the emergence of AI. In the meantime, EQAR supported ESU by clarifying that integrating social dimension or other topics could take two routes, one as a standalone topic and another one based on the interlinks with L&T, in the latter case highlighting clear cases of correlations between the two already reflected in the ESG. The Council of Europe added that an inclusive QA system also contribute itself to quality education.

Sweden emphasised that no big changes should occur (supported by Belgium-Flemish Community), agreeing with the direction taken by the SG and asking for a cautious approach in adding additional elements. On the other hand, the European Commission called for a more ambitious revision, as the ESG should reflect the changing European context and reality for HEIs.

Ukraine considered ESG designed eventually as standards for quality itself, supported by ETUCE, which called for considering wider aspects related to quality and not only quality assurance. Ukraine also raised the necessity to combine the ESG with different qualification frameworks, to reference regulated professions in the ESG and to bring back the focus on evaluating the content of study programmes rather than non-specific, contextual elements surrounding the study programmes.

Slovenia advised against defining quality in the ESG, while Council of Europe emphasised the role of the ESG as a meta-framework for quality assurance, as the concept of quality was relative. Council of Europe also informed about their view on quality, which was linked with the four missions of HE. Pertaining this issue, Netherlands also inquired about the intentions of the SG in revising the definition of quality. EQAR added that the definition of quality in the ESG was relevant in relation to the applicability, purpose, use of ESG, without the intention of establishing a universal definition of quality.

ENQA suggested to keep the ESG to the core of learning, teaching informed by research and assessment, supported by Norway and the Council of Europe. ENQA also considered that the ESG should allow for flexible approaches and innovation in QA, while not making it too difficult for countries still developing the system as 20% of member states still did not have a QA agency aligned with ESG yet. ENQA also highlighted the importance of maintaining the core principles, e.g. independence and student engagement, with the latter unfortunately in some decline.

Italy introduced the topic of TNE in the ESG revision and gave the example of the accreditation of a masters' programme offered by the European University Institute. Italy emphasised that some international organisation faced challenges in recognition and accreditation as they were not part of any national HE system, suggesting more explicit reference in the ESG to elements of international qualifications.

The agenda was revised, with points 10, 11 and 12 discussed during the first day, and point 8 during the second day.

10. Application of the European Federation of Education Employers (EFEE) for EHEA partnership status

Documents: [BFUG PL AL 95 10 1 EFEE Application](#)
[BFUG PL AL 95 10 2 EFEE Statutes](#)

The HoS presented the application, outlining the criteria according to the Rules of Procedure, the rights and responsibilities of EHEA partners and the current EHEA partners. The Albanian Co-chair informed the BFUG on the suggestion of the BFUG Board not to grant the partner status, considering the overlap with other BFUG members. As no comments were raised, the Albanian Co-chair concluded that the BFUG rejected the application of EFEE for partnership status.

11. Information from consultative members (in writing)

11.1 Business Europe

[BFUG PL AL 95 11.2 Council of Europe](#)

[BFUG PL AL 95 11.3 ENQA](#)

[BFUG PL AL 95 11.4 ETUCE](#)

[BFUG PL AL 95 11.5 ESU](#)

[BFUG PL AL 95 11.6 EUA](#)

[BFUG PL AL 95 11.7 EURASHE](#)

[BFUG PL AL 95 11.8 EQAR](#)

[BFUG PL AL 95 11.9 UNESCO](#)

The Council of Europe informed the meeting about their work developing a new legal instrument on automatic recognition, while EUA highlighted that sustainability would be an overarching topic for the year, with the EUA Annual Conference in April focusing on this same topic. EUA also published guidelines on academic freedom from institutional perspective and had been working on publishing key principles for sustainable academic careers.

ENQA invited ministries to discuss measures supporting the alignment with ESG and informed us about two recent reports, on the QA of research and the QA of academic integrity, with a webinar organised on the latter publication. They also invited members to follow the work of the Global Academic Integrity Network, established by QQI and the Australian QA agency. EQAR informed about the registration of two new QA agencies in the register and signalled that the Register Committee encountered issues on the compliance with ESG 3.3 regarding the independence of QA agencies in some national contexts.

ESU shared their positions on the Union of Skills and the multiannual financial framework and invited members to the PLAR-U-PAGs Final Conference. They also expressed their solidarity with students in Europe protesting on the streets for democracy. ETUCE continued by denouncing the democratic backsliding and worrying report on the far-right ideas in higher education and called for maintaining the civic role of higher education on the agenda of the EHEA.

EURASHE updated the BFUG on their work on skills policy and the submission of the project on learning and teaching and lifelong learning. They mentioned their active role with the Sounding Board of the Applied-oriented Alliances, encouraged the BFUG members to meet with them and informed members about the upcoming EURASHE Annual Conference in May in Portugal. Finally, UNESCO informed members about the revision of the 1997 Recommendation on the status of HE Teaching Personnel.

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

12.1 [BFUG PL AL 95 12.1 Liechtenstein BFUG Board XCVI 10.02.2025](#)

12.2 [BFUG PL AL 95 12.2 Denmark BFUG XCVII 18.02.2025](#)

The incoming Liechtenstein BFUG Co-chair gave a presentation about Liechtenstein, its' HE system and policy priorities, announcing that the XCVI BFUG Board would take place on the 4th of November in Vaduz.

The incoming Danish BFUG Co-chair presented the tentative priorities of the Danish Presidency, including VET, student mobility and the new European funding programme for HE, links with international cooperation (e.g. European degree), as well as education and lives between the youth in the digital age. They were also looking forward to the policy developments on competitiveness and skills. The incoming Danish Co-chairs announced the next BFUG XCVII meeting in Copenhagen between 15th-16th of December.

25th of February 2025

11. Artificial Intelligence in the context of Higher Education

Document: [BFUG PL AL 95 9 Artificial intelligence plenary session General background document 18.02.2025](#)

Mr. Kwapisz, researcher at the University of Warsaw, gave a presentation about AI in higher education, emphasising the importance of critical thinking and synthesizing knowledge and the increasing relevance of transferable skills and interdisciplinarity. He argued for the increased need for programmatic thinking, automatization of tasks and personalisation of learning with AI, and teaching students how to ask the proper questions, which had become in his view more important than the answers themselves.

The Belgium-French Community representative inquired about how the gender algorithmic bias could influence educational contexts, with the speaker suggesting the need of building European AI models sensitive of the cultural context, guardrails enacted by asking the AI model to correct itself and awareness of the impossibility to eliminate biases in computer systems completely.

Italy advocated for a digital transformation paradigm that ensuring a holistic and inclusive approach, involving all actors and not only the IT experts involved in digitalisation. The Council of Europe highlighted the human aspect around AI and its links with democracy, human rights and rule of law. They informed members of the transversal work of the CoE on digital transformation and the sectoral response on education and AI in light of their COE Framework Convention on AI and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (2024), which had been signed by most COE member states, including all EU members, and even by some non-European states.

Relating to their work with the EdTech France and the Polytechnic Institute of Paris, France reflected on the recent 2025 French summit which advocated a strong and protective AI based on security, energy sobriety as well as equality, diversity, inclusion. France also mentioned the danger that AI might pose due to individualisation and the isolating effects of algorithms and called for preserving the sense of community in HE in teaching, learning and research. Slovenia further

suggested organising within the BFUG an exchange of practices on how AI is applied, taking the discussion beyond AI regulation and oversight.

The Holy See recalled the BFUG meeting in Malta in 2017, where the BFUG had agreed that traditional academic learning, based on the role of higher education as a public good, is different from training for employees and HEIs delivering service to society beyond employability. The Holy See announced the development of guidelines on AI focusing on human dignity, enhancing teacher-student relationship, critical thinking, cultural encounter and prevailing over delegating decisions to AI, considering education with AI, for AI and living with AI. They also expressed their expectation of a more thorough debate organised within the BFUG on the topic.

Upon questions from Albania on the connection between AI and plagiarism, from Malta on the future of examination, and from UK on teaching people to understand results from AI, the speaker outlined the importance of teaching about AI, the use of AI in administrative tasks to allow time for creativity and adapting examinations methods to the use of AI.

The European Commission informed delegates about the review of the Digital Education Action Plan, which would also look at AI, and the expected publication of a Roadmap on the future of digital education and skills in Q4. The Commission had also been working on a study understanding the application of digital legislation in education, including the AI Act which treated education as a high-risk deployment. Considering the key importance of the adequate use of AI, the Commission had been engaging in cooperation with OECD, CoE and UNESCO.

8. Debate prepared by the Task Force on the Future of Bologna on Lifelong Learning

Documents:

[BFUG PL AL 95 8 2 Background Paper Session on Lifelong Learning Future of Bologna](#)

The Irish TF Co-chair presented the background paper and the aim of the session to discuss the state of play of lifelong learning, barriers, strategies for further integration and relevant tools through a world café method. BFUG members were invited to attend the four subgroups.

For the first topic, focused on the relevancy, opportunities and challenges of LLL, EURAHSE reported that LLL had grown in importance, considering demographic changes and evolving skill demands, and had been concurrently treated also through standalone topics such as microcredentials. In terms of structural barriers, the group identified both lack of resources and the perception within HEIs. The group discussed the interoperability of tools and funding, more integrated tertiary systems to allow flexibility and permeability, as well as recognition of prior learning. They suggested broadening access and funding, better cooperation with stakeholders and a comparative analysis of LLL systems and links with VET.

The second group discussed tools for LLL, with France reporting that existing tools (ESG, ECTS and learning outcomes, QF-EHEA, recognition procedures, diploma supplement, microcredentials, Principles and Guidelines for Social Dimension, student-centred learning commitments) should be leveraged and improved for LLL before creating new ones. They

however discussed about creating better RPL tools specifically for HEIs and better relationship with VET and connection with the labour market.

The third group discussed ways of enhancing LLL in EHEA, with Iceland reporting that microcredentials had been a quick win, albeit resting on already existing practices and still requiring legislative framework adaptation. The group discussed the potential for leveraging LLL in the contexts of ESG and ECTS revisions, the importance of outreach and financial support for disadvantaged regions to bring people back into education. They also considered the need for a more flexible arrangement of QF-EHEA including splitting degrees with work experience, better RPL for flexible access and progress, improving the use of the short cycle and the transparency of skills to employers.

The last group discussed synergies with EEA and ERA, with Czech Republic reporting the need for a better connection with VET dimension of EEA and with the school system and missing guidelines for strengthening the connection with VET. The group discussed the relevance of preparing students to become lifelong learners and the decreasing attention paid to the short cycle due to microcredentials.

The German TF Co-chair thanked the members for the contributions and considered that the discussion on the topic should continue in an upcoming BFUG meeting.

13. Any other business (AOB)

The outgoing Icelandic Co-chair proposed a moment of silence for Tia Lukkola.

The HoS reminded the BFUG members of the deadlines for the national action plans, newsletter and website national information review. He also informed the BFUG about the Maltese request to join the CG GPD, which was consented by the BFUG. Finally, he thanked Douglas from ENQA for his activity in the BFUG, noting his last BFUG in this role.

The Polish and Albanian BFUG Co-chairs thanked everyone for their contributions and fruitful discussions and closed the meeting.

* * *