

## Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue (CG GPD)

10th Meeting, 17 January 2024, 15:30 to 18:30, Barcelona

Sala Ramon i Cajal, Historic Building of the University of Barcelona

### Minutes of meeting

#### List of participants

Country/Organization	Name	Surname
Albania (Co-Chair) *	Linda	Pustina
Belgium French Community	Adriana	Gonfroid
Belgium French Community*	Caroline	Hollela
France	Mathieu	Musquin
Romania	Madalina	Matei
Germany	Nils	Tensi
EUA	Elisabeth	Colucci
EI-ETUCE*	Hanna	Tanskanen
European Commission*	Bianca	Busuioc
ENQA	Anna	Gover
Holy See*	Melanie	Rosenbaum
Ireland	Orla	Lynch
Italy (Co-Chair)	Ann Katherine	Isaacs
Italy*	Vera	Lucke
Italy	Teresa	Morales de la Fuente
Italy*	Sibeles	Chiari
Kazakhstan	Rauza	Mendaliyeva
Malta*	Jon	Vercellono
Montenegro*	Dunja	Bulajic
The Netherlands	Jenneke	Lokhoff
Romania	Madalina	Matei
UNESCO	Vanja	Gutovic
United Kingdom*	Ella	Ritchie
BFUG Secretariat (Head)*	Edlira	Subashi
BFUG Secretariat	Enis	Fita
BFUG Secretariat	Manjola	Hasa

Austria, Belgium Flemish Community, Cyprus, ESU, Spain did not attend the meeting.

\*Online attendance.

### 1. Welcome

The Co-Chair, Ann Katherine Isaacs, welcomed all the participants, present and online, to the 10th meeting of the Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue, held in the remarkable Ramon i Cajal room in the University of Barcelona's historic building. She introduced the meeting and its objectives.

The agenda of the meeting was adopted.

*For more detailed information, please see CG\_GPD\_BE\_VA\_10\_Agenda*

## **2. Purposes of the meeting**

Ann Katherine Isaacs (Co-Chair) underlined the main objectives and the key priorities of the meeting, which were to move forward with the organization of the Global Policy Forum and with the Draft of the Global Policy Statement.

## **3. Organization of the Global Policy Forum**

Linda Pustina (Co-Chair) gave a presentation concerning the organizational or the logistical aspects of the Global Policy Forum which had been discussed in the GPF subgroup the previous week. It was foreseen that the Global Policy Forum will take place in the same space as the Ministerial in a sandwich format: The first day would comprise the Ministerial itself; the GPF would take place in the morning of the 2nd day, until 1 pm, after which the EHEA Ministerial Conference will have its final session. The plenary room will have the same seating plan or room setup. The discussion developed, according to the proposals made, on the possibility of having four parallel breakout sessions after an opening plenary session. This possibility has been discussed with the government company responsible for the logistical organization, which confirmed the availability of rooms for the 4 parallel sessions: one of which would be the same as that used for the plenary session and there would be three further rooms for the breakout sessions. The focus of the discussion was on the main logistical points according to the orientation of the last meeting of the GPF subgroup: some logistical constrictions regarding the number of heads of delegations to be positioned in the first row were described, restrictions due to protocol considerations by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that requests that all heads of delegation be in the first row. It was pointed out that several options were given in the GPF subgroup last week, and some of them related to the decision about having 75 first row seats in the main plenary hall for the heads of delegations, and considering that the EHEA members plus consultative members will be around 67 and if all invited heads of delegations attend, the available places for other non-EHEA delegations will be very restricted. It was noted that several options have been discussed, to be shared in this meeting, such as: One option was to set a certain number of delegations for EHEA countries in the main table and a certain number of delegations from non-EHEA countries; and the other option was to have all the delegations from EHEA countries and the main organizations from non-EHEA regions in the main table in the plenary room and the others in a second room. It was emphasized that for all the options that will be discussed at the meeting, the Albanian hosts, i.e. the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Ministry of Education (ME), must go through it finally and take a decision and then give an answer. The need to discuss how many invitations can be sent to non-EHEA countries was underlined, noting that the revised list of non-EHEA countries, with the recommendations of the MFA has already been sent to the Co-Chairs of the CG GPD based on the proposal sent by CG on GPD which was about 10 countries per area and 10 organizations from each of the three areas from non-EHEA countries. The list includes a group of 60 non-EHEA countries and organizations and the exact number of non-EHEA countries and organisations to be invited will be decided at the BFUG Board on 23 January 2024. It was pointed out that, if around 60 non-EHEA countries /organisations are invited and confirm their participation, the total, along with the 67 EHEA heads of delegations, would be around 127 heads of delegations participating in the GPF.

Ann Katherine Isaacs (Co-Chair) pointed out that everyone was aware of this very strategic problem, since it is not known how many invitations will be accepted, which makes it difficult to know how many can be invited. She emphasized the importance of the discussion by opening the floor for observations, questions and recommendations.

There were several questions, comments and proposals: one question was whether a distinction can be made between heads of delegation who are ministers, or those who, while being the head of a delegation, are for example a head of division; it was discussed that considering that confirmations have not yet been received as to who will be the heads of delegations as Ministers, the Ministry of Education has foreseen that all heads of delegations will be considered ministers. A distinction could be made in a second phase, after receiving confirmation as to who will act as heads of the delegations. A question was posed regarding the selection criteria for the EHEA countries that will be invited to the Forum, and it was asked whether invitations had been made for non-EHEA countries, and whether there would be different stages of invitations or save the dates. Linda Pustina (Co-Chair) underlined that the non-EHEA countries and organizations have not yet been invited, and that in the CG on GPD it has been suggested that there should be two rounds of invitations, the first round of invitations to understand how many countries will accept the invitation and if there are not enough countries to fulfil the number, there will be another round of invitations. Regarding the EHEA countries, Albania naturally will not make any kind of distinction between the EHEA countries. Ann Katherine Isaacs (Co-Chair) explained that the list that the CG has sent as a proposal for each regional subgroup, contains 2 versions with the countries and organizations that will participate in the GPF: the first list and the second list. The lists have been verified by the Albanian MFA which has introduced some changes, both moving some countries from the second list to the first and removing some countries altogether (for diplomatic reasons). The MFA-approved lists are available in the share folder and, while no invitations have been sent yet, an effort is being made to understand how many can be sent, considering the restrictions mentioned. Albania will not limit the invitations for the 47 EHEA countries, but if there is not full participation of the heads of the EHEA delegations in the Forum, this will create the opportunity to see how many places can still be filled in the main room and so it remains to be seen how many non-EHEA invitations will be sent. There was a proposal to first understand which countries intend to participate. Linda Pustina proposed another option, asking the CG subgroups to find out whether the countries on the list are interested in eventually participating in the Tirana Forum, thus obtaining a first expression of interest through the CG subgroups. This would give a clear indication of the number of non-EHEA countries willing to participate. Also, it was highlighted by several members of the CG that it is important to take into consideration the issue of time in sending invitations. Especially for representative countries and organisations from outside of Europe (i.e. non-EHEA participants), a considerable advance notice will be needed if participation in the GPF shall be a realistic option. Linda Pustina pointed out that she was not in the right position to decide on such diplomatic issues, therefore she proposed that the CG should formulate some proposals in such a way that they can be officially sent to the Ministry of Education for a response, as well as to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for approval.

For the format of the GPF the following proposals were discussed:

*First proposal:* The availability of the venue results in the possibility to accommodate 75 delegations in the front row. After consultation with the Albanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, following the protocol for these cases, it is recommended that all Heads of Delegations (HoD, both EHEA and non-EHEA reaching to the 75 mentioned seats) should be seated only in the front row, while in the second and the third row there will be the other part of the delegation. Other participants will be accommodated in the 300 seats in both sides of the main table. CG GPD suggest that non-EHEA countries participate also during the Ministerial Conference with observer status: this should be decided by the BFUG. The revised list of non-EHEA countries, with the recommendations of the MFA has already been sent to the Co-Chairs of the CG GPD. The list includes a group of 60 non-EHEA countries and organizations and the exact number of non-EHEA countries and organisations to be invited will be decided at the BFUG Board on 23 January 2024.

*Second proposal:* The CG GPD proposes to hold the Global Policy Forum not in the main hall, to avoid seating issues (only 75 seats possible in front row there) and the feeling of "first class

delegations" vs "second class delegations" if used the main plus one secondary room. Instead, the GPF should take place in 2-3 different but electronically interconnected (audio & video) rooms, seating as further light conference table arrangements. This would allow for: 1) an interconnected plenary throughout all rooms; 2) then break-out sessions with suspended connection, and 3) then again, a plenary session with adoption of the Global Policy Statement (GPS). All the while being able to mix delegations between EHEA and non-EHEA, and guaranteeing every HoD a seat at the table in one of the rooms.

*Third proposal:* Board and BFUG decide on the number of delegations from the EHEA and non-EHEA countries in the front row, based on that the Secretariat will ask the EHEA countries to express interest as to whether they want to participate at the GPF within a deadline decided by the Board and BFUG. This way allowing more space for the non-EHEA countries to participate at the GPF. EHEA countries not participating at the GPF could attend bilateral meetings.

*Forth Proposal:* First try to understand which non-EHEA countries intend to participate. This could be asked via the CG GPD subgroups, as to those countries that are in the list, their interest to participate in Tirana ministerial eventually. This would give a clear indication of the number of non-EHEA countries willing to participate and try to decide based on the number received from the subgroups.

*Fifth proposal:* GPF to be organised completely in breakout sessions and with no plenary. This seems very complicated to have a major meeting without a plenary session.

Conclusion: The discussion ended with the agreement that the different proposals would be presented, together with the revised list for non-EHEA invitee list (countries and organizations), at the BFUG Board Meeting LXXXVII on 23 January 2024 at the Vatican City. After this decision, save-the-dates should be sent out to the approved non-EHEA invitees as soon as possible for the stated reasons.

#### **4. Draft of the Global Policy Statement**

Ann Katherine Isaacs (Co-Chair) presented the most recent draft of the Global Policy Statement (Version 4.0) that had been finalised by the drafting subgroup on 15 January.

During the subsequent discussion, the importance of references to the green transition, climate change, and environmental issues in the statement were emphasised, highlighting the need to be sure that the concept of sustainability is adequately articulated.

It was proposed to condense the list of bullet points related to global dialogue topics while ensuring clarity and seeking input to refine statements in both the "moving forward" and introductory sections.

Ms. Isaacs highlighted the shift from discussing topics to focusing on actionable items. She expressed concerns about the clarity of the statement and proposed an immediate meeting of the drafting subgroup to address recent comments.

The need to avoid a detailed line-by-line discussion was emphasized.

Ms. Isaacs underscored the importance of explaining the historical context of the Forum and its development, emphasizing the collective effort behind the statement.

It was suggested that the bullet points could be presented to gather feedback on the content of the statement, and the importance of endorsement from the African delegations present and reflections on any pertinent missing points was pointed out.

Ms. Isaacs expressed the desire to avoid creating a document drastically different from the ASEF document. The Holy See representative clarified a statutory point, emphasizing that

neither ASEF nor HAQAA has a say in the Global Policy Forum statement, as it primarily belongs to ministers, underscoring the need for alignment with ministers' perspectives in May.

Another online meeting, to work on the text after receiving contributions was proposed. The ongoing collaborative nature of the development of the statement was highlighted, and valuable inputs from various sources, including ASEF were welcomed and acknowledged. The statement is work in progress shaped through a consensus-building process.

Ms. Isaacs noted the challenges of unexpected inputs but appreciated the positive aspects of broadening understanding, especially within the Americas subgroup. She clarified the need to share the document with the BFUG Board by Tuesday and suggested immediate submissions of suggestions to adjust the document urgently. While acknowledging the possibility of future detailed discussions, she stressed the importance of presenting the adjusted document.

It was recommended to consult HAQAA on the topics indicated for discussion, without focussing on the specific formulations of the text. It was agreed that the current document (Version 4) would be presented to the BFUG Board with the information that this is still work in progress, as a base for discussion, emphasizing the informal nature of the process and allowing time for further revisions. The Co-Chair encouraged everyone to send comments and reiterated presenting the document as work in progress, highlighting the ongoing collaborative efforts. It was agreed that comments would have to be added by the members of the CG GPD to the latest version of the statement on the share folder by 23 January the latest, allowing the drafting committee to create an updated version.

How to include the fundamental values in the draft statement was discussed, in order to keep the formulations sufficiently general to respond to the understandings in other world areas. There was a proposal to strengthen the mention of inclusion in higher education also with regard to teachers. The UNESCO representative informed the group about two UNESCO recommendations on teachers, including one on higher education teaching personnel. She mentioned a forthcoming feasibility study on revising these recommendations but stated that the mentioned recommendation remains relevant, also suggesting that UNESCO would send its suggestion with regard to this recommendation. Another point was raised, emphasizing the global reach of the statement and emphasizing the need for consensus on fundamental values among all global partners.

The road ahead: It was reminded that a draft document would have to be submitted by 4 February to the BFUG, for tabling at the BFUG Meeting LXXXVIII on 19 & 20 February in Brussels. Accordingly, it was agreed that comments would have to be added by the members of the CG GPD to the latest version of the statement on the share folder by 23 January the latest, allowing the drafting subgroup to create an updated version at its next meeting. A date was set for the next meeting of the drafting subgroup: 24 January, at 11:00.

## 5. AOB

There was discussion about the organization of the upcoming CG on GPD meetings. An initial offer was to hold another (and last before Tirana) CG meeting in person in Germany, possibly in the beginning of May 2024. Additionally, it was informed that on the 7th of March 2024, UNESCO would convene an extraordinary session of the Intergovernmental Conference of the States Parties to the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in Paris, and thus suggested to hold an in-person meeting on the 8th of March in Paris. It was agreed to postpone further discussion on the next meetings until more information on the preparations of the GPF and the GPS will be available, with the Co-Chairs being asked to make corresponding arrangements. A doodle would be created to determine the timing for future CG meetings.



The need to revise the BFUG's 2022 Brno roadmap "Toward the Ministerial Conference" was reiterated. Further, it was noted that the statement would be adopted at the Global Policy Forum during the Tirana Ministerial Conference with pre-approval targeted at the second BFUG meeting on 11-12 April. The deadline for submission is no later than the 27th of March, preferably having passed the BFUG Board review before its deadline at the end of February. Thus, the latest meeting date useful for documents to be presented to the BFUG at the April meeting would be 27 March.

*Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.*