

Annex to the Communiqué: Long-term EHEA Secretariat. Principles and Roadmap

A. Principles for a Long-term EHEA Secretariat

In order to provide stable and ongoing professional support to the European Higher Education Area's working structures the ministers ask the BFUG to make necessary arrangements for establishing a long-term Secretariat for the EHEA, including the exploration its legal form and its location.

In the implementation of this task the BFUG will need to respect the following principles and conditions.

1. Independence and Accountability

The Secretariat should operate independently from the country and/or organisation (with)in which it is hosted. Its legal, financial and organisational arrangements should ensure its independence, minimise the risk of undue influence.

It should operate under the authority of and be fully accountable to the BFUG including its governing structure arrangements, reporting and appointment of its staffing.

2. Sustainability

The chosen arrangements, especially the funding model, must be sustainable, with a clear perspective on how the Secretariat can function for a longer term. Its main source of funding should be contributions by the EHEA members. Any potential in-kind contributions should not imply any influence on the Secretariat operations and agenda.

3. Staff

The Secretariat must be able to recruit and contract a sufficient number of staff, with suitable profiles and competences, from different EHEA countries. The employment rules of the country in which the Secretariat is based should allow for this, under flexible and fair contracts.

In addition to its own staff, the Secretariat should be able to accept secondments from EHEA members and consultative members, according to clear rules approved by the BFUG, ensuring its independence. This would also regard the secondment of a liaison officer from the host country of the following ministerial conference, who will work under the authority of the Head of the Secretariat.

4. Location

Regulations of the country where the Secretariat will be located must ensure the rule of law, allow its operation without undue influence of the national or local authorities and easy funding from different other EHEA countries.

5. Non-Profit Principle

The Secretariat would operate on a non-profit basis, with any surpluses reinvested into its budget. It may accumulate a reserve, which however should not exceed one annual budget. Otherwise, the fees for EHEA members should be reduced.

B. Roadmap

The Secretariat should be established by 1 July 2027. In order to meet this deadline the ministers mandate the BFUG to proceed in accordance with the following high-level roadmap:

No	Year	Step / milestone	Note
1	2024	Call for proposals for hosting country / organisation	BFUG
2	2024 - 2025	Evaluation of applications & exploration of regulations and conditions of applicant countries / organisations	BFUG
3	autumn 2025	Selection of the potential host / location	BFUG
4	spring 2026	Decision on a feasibility of the long-term secretariat, model, terms of reference <i>Based on the Secretariat model concept including legal and organisational aspects and funding model</i> <i>Alternatively, a call for a "rotating secretariat" linked to the next host of the ministerial conference 2030</i>	BFUG
5	autumn 2026	Approval of the statutes of the new legal entity and selection of the Head of Secretariat	BFUG
6	spring 2027	Official launch of the EHEA secretariat	During the Ministerial conference
7	1 July 2027	EHEA Secretariat full operation	Take over of the agenda of the previous secretariat

Explanatory detailed roadmap for the BFUG members (not to be a part of the Annex)

The following, more detailed roadmap, proposed by the Task Force, should serve the BFUG for better information on sequence of proposed steps and would not be a part of the Annex to the Communiqué. The Annex would only include the table above, which contains only the bold lines of the following detailed roadmap.

No	Date	What	Who
1	2024	Call for proposals for hosting country / organisation	BFUG
1.1	Jun / Sep 2024	launch a call for proposals for host of the Secretariat, incorporating the principles above	BFUG Draft TF
1.2	Sep 2024	establish a dedicated BFUG Task Force for the period 2024 – 2027 to oversee implementation	BFUG
1.3	Dec 2024	deadline for expressions of interest	
2	2024 - 2025	Evaluation of applications & exploration of regulations and conditions of applicant countries / organisations	BFUG
2.1	Jan / Feb 2025	evaluate proposals and propose shortlist for the BFUG	TF
2.2	spring 2025	review proposals for location and shortlist no more than 3	BFUG
2.3	Apr / Sep 2025	address the BFUG's questions with the shortlisted countries / organisations, further review of proposals for the BFUG decision	TF
3	autumn 2025	Selection of the potential host / location	BFUG
		Based on analysis and report from the Task Force (see 2.3)	TF
4	spring 2026	Decision on a feasibility of the long-term secretariat, model, terms of reference	BFUG
4.1	Nov 2025 – Mar 2026	Specification of legal, financial, organisational details respecting the relevant regulations and circumstances including the funding model. Plan for the Head of the Secretariat recruitment	Host TF
4.2	Spring 2026	GO / NO GO DECISION Alternatively, a call for a “rotating secretariat” linked to the host of the next ministerial conference 2030	BFUG
4.3	Nov 2025 – autumn 2026	Drafting Statutes, review of EHEA Rules of procedure and identification of potential necessary changes Capacity specifications, resources	Host TF
5	autumn 2026	Approval of the statutes of the new legal entity and selection of the Head of Secretariat	BFUG
5.1.	May / Jun 2026	Founding the new legal entity in the chosen location / other relevant step	BFUG, TF, Host

No	Date	What	Who
5.2	<i>Spring / autumn 2026</i>	<i>Recruitment of the Head of the Secretariat</i>	<i>Body mandated by the BFUG</i>
5.3	<i>First half of 2027</i>	<i>Recruitment and training of further staff Organisational preparation</i>	<i>Head of Secretariat</i>
6	spring 2027	Official launch of the EHEA secretariat During the Ministerial conference	Ministerial Meeting
7	1 July 2027	EHEA Secretariat full operation Take over of the agenda of the previous secretariat	Secretariat

Draft