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BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP (BFUG) PROCEEDINGS 2018-2020

This document outlines how the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) operates for the 2018-2020 period, in terms of governance, structure, meeting management and communication. The provisions set out in this document are to be considered as guidelines for the BFUG proceedings and its sub-structures (the Board, Working Groups, Advisory Groups and the BFUG Secretariat).

With regard to the prior periods, the document in Annex 1 reports an historical overview of the BFUG proceedings since the BFUG has been established. The documents in Annex 4, Annex 5, Annex 6 and Annex 7 are also historic documents provided for information purpose.

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I. Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG)

a. Role

The BFUG is the executive structure supporting the Bologna Process in-between the Ministerial Conferences. It is in place since autumn 1999. The BFUG is entrusted with preparing the Ministerial Conferences, policy forums and with overseeing the Bologna Process between these, including taking forward matters that do not need to be decided by the Ministers or that have been delegated by the Ministers. The BFUG meetings play an important role in overseeing the implementation of the Ministerial Communiqués as well as in developing the European Higher Education Area.

The BFUG has the possibility to set up Working and Advisory Groups in order to deal with specific topics in more detail. The BFUG and consultative members are invited to express their interest in participating in one or more Working Groups (WGs) or Advisory Groups (AGs) and as co-chair by completing a declaration of participation, provided by the Secretariat. All WGs/AGs foresee the participation of BFUG members, experts nominated by national authorities and consultative members. The groups can invite international experts on specific topics if necessary. The composition of the groups should reflect the diversity of the EHEA, respect a reasonable maximum number of members and has to be in line with the Terms of Reference approved by the BFUG for each WG/AG.

On the basis of the Paris Communiqué, the BFUG work plan 2018-2020 is restructured in three Working Groups - WGs and two Advisory Groups - AGs (for more details, see Annex 2). The BFUG decides on the Terms of Reference of the Working and Advisory Groups and decides which of the recommendations of the Working/Advisory Groups are to be proposed to the EHEA Ministers. The BFUG provides an opportunity for all members and consultative members to express their views on the recommendations and reports.

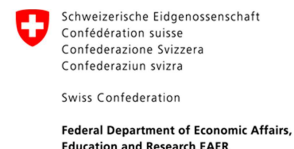
According to the mandate by the EHEA Ministers in Paris, the BFUG has set up the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG) in order to organise the three Thematic Peer Groups (TPG), possibly organised in sub-groups, focused on the three key commitments of the EHEA (for more details, see Annex 2 and Annex 9).

b. BFUG Membership: the current three categories

BFUG membership is based on the membership of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The EHEA currently has three categories: member, consultative member and partner.

- **EHEA/BFUG Member:** the members are the 48 countries and the European Commission (listed in Annex 3). To become a member of the EHEA, countries have to be party to the European Cultural Convention and to declare their willingness to pursue





and implement the objectives of the Bologna Process in their own systems of higher education. The document in Annex 4 details the procedure to become an EHEA member. Only country members and the EC have the right to vote within the BFUG and to approve and adopt the final documents.

- **Consultative member:** this is a non-voting category of members who represent most relevant stakeholder organisations and other institutions that have a European scope to their work and are instrumental in the implementation of the Bologna Process. The explicit criteria for consultative membership can be found in Annex 4. The current eight EHEA consultative members are: Council of Europe (CoE), UNESCO, European University Association (EUA), European Association of Institutions of Higher Education (EURASHE), European Students' Union (ESU), European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), Education International (EI) and BUSINESS EUROPE. The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) was founded in 2008 from an initiative of the Bologna Process. EQAR has a similar status to the consultative members (non-voting member of BFUG), but has so far not been officially named consultative member.
- **Partner:** organisations that wish to be associated with the Bologna Process/the BFUG but are not included in the Consultative member category. At present, the following four organisations are BFUG partners: the European Association for International Education (EAIE), The Council of European professional and managerial staff (Eurocadres), Eurodoc, the European Association for Promotion of Science and Technology (Euroscience). They can, upon request, attend BFUG events and may be invited by a WG/AG to send an expert who will participate in some part of the work.

Further technical experts, such as Eurostat, Eurostudent or Eurydice, may be associated to the BFUG and invited to events upon specific request.

c. Chairmanship: BFUG Co-chairs and BFUG Vice-chair

The current chairing arrangements foresee that the Bologna Process will be co-chaired by the country holding the EU presidency and a non-EU member country (see the document in Annex 5). Moreover, the host country of the next Ministerial conference is nominated as the Vice-chair. The following chairing arrangement is due to be applied in the period 2018-2020:

Semester	Co-chair from EU-Presidency	Co-chair from non-EU country	Vice-chair
1 July – 31 December 2018	Austria	Switzerland	Italy



1 January – 30 June 2019	Romania	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Italy
1 July – 31 December 2019	Finland	Turkey	
1 January – 30 June 2020	Croatia	Ukraine	

Each country is responsible for nominating a person who will be in charge of fulfilling the tasks of the chairmanship. The Chairs, with the support of the Secretariat, have the joint responsibility to take forward the aims and actions laid down by the Ministers responsible for Higher Education in the Bologna Declaration and subsequent Communiqués of Ministerial conferences. The Co-chairs, in close cooperation with the Vice-chair and supported by the BFUG Secretariat, chair the Bologna Ministerial Meetings and the Bologna Policy Forum as well as the sessions of the BFUG and the BFUG Board. In the decision-making process, the Chairs and the BFUG Secretariat assume the responsibility for leading the way towards compromise and for providing political impetus for moving the Bologna Process forward. The Vice-chair, in close cooperation with the Secretariat, ensures continuity between the rotating chairmanships. Both the Co-chairs and the Vice-chair can speak representing their country, but need to announce explicitly that their intervention reflects their country’s position and that they are not speaking as chair in this specific moment.

d. BFUG Secretariat

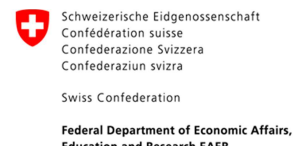
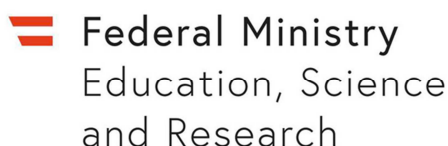
The Bologna Follow-Up Group Secretariat (BFUG Secretariat) provides neutral support to further the consolidation of the EHEA under the exclusive authority of the BFUG. The main tasks of the BFUG Secretariat are to support the BFUG, the BFUG Board, Chairs and WGs/AGs in their work, to act as an external and internal contact point for the EHEA also representing the EHEA in national and international meetings, to prepare the EHEA Ministerial Conference and the Bologna Policy Forum, and to maintain the EHEA website (<http://www.ehea.info>).

The Terms of Reference related to the BFUG Secretariat (Annex 9) outline more specifically the tasks of the BFUG Secretariat for the 2018-2020 period.

e. Functioning of the BFUG meetings

BFUG meetings are in principle hosted by one of the EHEA Co-chairs and are convened at least once every six months. The working language of the BFUG is English (see Annex 6 for more details).

All EHEA/BFUG members and consultative members may attend each BFUG meeting. Each



EHEA/BFUG member country and consultative member has the authority to designate its BFUG representatives, according to internal procedures. Each EHEA member and consultative member sends a maximum of 2 representatives to the BFUG meetings. On every agenda point, each BFUG delegation is invited to express the position of the country, institution or organisation in question on the respective matter. The Chairs, in consultation with the Board, have the authority to invite experts/individuals to contribute to BFUG meetings under specific points for which they have the required expertise.

The BFUG Co-chairs, supported by the BFUG Secretariat, lead the discussions on all points of the agenda as well as declare the meeting open or closed. The Co-chairs, supported by the BFUG Secretariat, sum up the conclusions whenever they deem necessary. The Chairs maintain the right to speak and to vote in their capacity as BFUG delegates, but need to announce explicitly that their intervention reflects their country's position.

The current decision making procedure within the BFUG is based on a consensual understanding that the Co-chairs of the BFUG, supported by the BFUG Secretariat, summarise at the end of each agenda point. In exceptional circumstances and when the BFUG so decides, a decision through vote may be used. During those exceptional cases, voting procedures are organised and driven by the Secretariat, according to its neutral role.

As a general rule, the BFUG meeting documents should be circulated by the BFUG Secretariat in a congruent time prior to the meeting, after being prepared by the Chairs of the BFUG and by the BFUG Working and Advisory Groups. All comments or significant changes proposed by the BFUG members to these documents have to be submitted at least five days prior to the meeting. This rule is proposed so that every BFUG delegation has enough time to circulate the BFUG meeting documents within its specific consultation structure.

The BFUG Secretariat is in charge of drafting the minutes of the meetings of the BFUG/AG/WG/Board. All the BFUG/AG/WG/Board meetings can be recorded if necessary. These minutes are then circulated to the members (BFUG/AG/WG/Board) for feedback. The members have the possibility to within 15 days send amendments to the minutes, which will be taken into consideration by the BFUG Secretariat in the process of finalising the minutes. Minutes of the meetings (BFUG/AG/WG/Board) generally should be adopted by e-mail after the meeting: only if there should be too many diverging comments, the adoption will be postponed until the meeting by the BFUG. The same procedure is applied also for other documents produced that need to be approved by the BFUG in case there are too many diverging comments.

The day before each BFUG meeting, the Chairs and the Secretariat will organise a Preparatory BFUG meeting in order to finalise organisational aspects, to check all the documents, to divide competences and tasks, and to check the agenda of the upcoming BFUG meeting.



II. BFUG Board

a. Role and composition

The BFUG Board is an advisory committee established in order to support the BFUG in its activities and has the mandate to provide efficiency in the management of the EHEA, at the same time assuring its continuity. As such, the responsibilities of the Board consist of coordinating and monitoring the effective implementation of the work programme. The responsibilities of the Board were defined by the BFUG during its meeting in Rome (see Annex 7).

The members of the Board are:

- the BFUG Co-chairs double Troika (the outgoing, present and incoming Co-chairs of the BFUG); □
- the BFUG Vice-chair;
- the BFUG Secretariat; □
- the European Commission; □
- four of the consultative members (Council of Europe, EUA, ESU, EURASHE); □
- one of the Co-chairs of each Working and Advisory Group.

The Co-chairs and Vice-chair of the BFUG are the same for the Board.

b. Functioning of the BFUG Board meetings

The Board usually meets at least one month (preferably six weeks) before each BFUG meeting. The host of the Board is normally one of the EHEA Co-chairs. The minutes of the Board meetings are taken by the BFUG Secretariat.

The day before each Board meeting, the Chairs and the Secretariat will organise a Preparatory Board meeting in order to finalise organisational aspects, to check all the documents, to divide competences and tasks, and to check the agenda of the upcoming Board meeting.

III. Ministerial Conferences

Within the governing period 2018-2020 the Ministerial Conference, hosted by Italy, will take place at the end of the first semester 2020. The country hosting the upcoming Ministerial Conference acts as a Vice-chair of the Bologna Process / European Higher Education Area. As agreed by the Ministers in the Berlin Communiqué (2003), the country organising the upcoming Ministerial Conference also hosts the BFUG Secretariat between two consecutive



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ministerial meetings. This applies to the governing period 2018-2020 in which Italy hosts the BFUG Secretariat.

In connection with the Ministerial Conference, since 2009, a Bologna Policy Forum (BPF) is organised, which comprises countries and regional higher education organizations from around the world.

Ministers decide at Ministerial Conferences about the central aspects of the EHEA, including its further developments and commitments by its member countries. The Ministerial Conference also decides on new applications for membership to the EHEA as well as any other main changes to the process. A Communiqué is adopted at each Ministerial Conference that outlines decisions taken by the Ministers. The Ministerial Conferences are prepared by the BFUG.

For the preparation of the Draft Communiqué for the next Ministerial Conference 2020 in Italy, a Drafting Committee composed by the Co-chairs chairing in the first semester of 2020 (Croatia, Ukraine), the two outgoing Co-chairs of that period (Finland, Turkey), the former Co-chairs (Romania, FYROM), the Vice-chair (Italy) and the BFUG Secretariat will be set up. The Drafting Committee will be in charge from spring 2019, and will be supported and chaired by the Secretariat.

During the governing period 2018-2020, the host for the next Ministerial Conference in 2023 will be selected. The procedure for the Selection of the 2023 Ministerial Conference host can be found in Annex 8. Each member country of the EHEA can apply to host the Ministerial Conference and is expected to provide the necessary logistical and financial support to ensure the successful organisation of such an event.

IV. EHEA Communication: EHEA Website and Backoffice

As part of the EHEA communication efforts, with the launch of the European Higher Education Area, a EHEA website www.ehea.info was established. The website will be further developed and updated by the BFUG Secretariat with support from the BFUG and its sub-structures.

As a general rule, all relevant documents that are not explicitly excluded will be published on the website. Documents distributed for BFUG meetings will be published on the website in advance of the meetings unless the Chairs have decided otherwise.

The country pages of each BFUG member will be partially edited under the responsibility of the member. The pages concerning BFUG Working Groups and other substructures will be edited by the BFUG Secretariat, in close cooperation with the Co-chairs of the concerned WGs/AGs.





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For the internal use of the BFUG members or that of WGs/AGs, the Secretariat has created a password for a protected website area, generically called “the Backoffice”. This area allows for document storage and exchange, registration for events, setting up the calendar. In September 2016, a new website was launched which offers public access to the full archive with exception of only those documents which it has been decided to keep confidential. A new version of the website is under construction in order to allow the present and future Secretariats to manage it in a more dynamic way.

The EHEA website contains an open calendar of events, organised by the BFUG Working and Advisory Groups as well as by the EHEA member countries and organisations. For an external event, to be published on the official EHEA website, it must be strictly related to the Bologna Process and should be organised and supported by one of the countries or organisations participating in the Bologna Process. Moreover, the event should in principle be open to participants from all Bologna countries and should be in line with the priorities of the BFUG work plan. Invitations, presentations, reports and conclusions can be published on the website and forwarded to the BFUG on request of the organisers.

For an event to be published on the EHEA website, the organisers have to fill in a template provided by the BFUG Secretariat. The final decision on whether or not an event is considered a part of the BFUG events is taken by the BFUG Secretariat.

