



Bosnia and Herzegovina
Ministry of Civil Affairs

Task Force on the Review of the Rules and Regulations for the Governance of the European Higher Education Area

Second meeting, Belgium

13 January 2023

Minutes of Meeting

List of Participants

Delegation/Organization	First Name	Last Name
BFUG Vice-Chair*	Linda	Pustina
Czech Republic (Co-Chair)	Michal	Karpišek
EQAR	Colin	Tück
EUA (Co-Chair)	Michael	Gaebel
European Commission	Kinga	Szuly
Italy (Co-Chair)	Luca	Lantero
Romania	Irina	Geantă
BFUG international expert	Sjur	Bergan
BFUG Secretariat (Head)	Oltion	Rrumbullaku
BFUG Secretariat (Deputy Head)*	Edlira	Subashi

Online attendance*

Frank Petrikowski (Germany) sent regrets.

1. Welcome remarks and approval of the agenda and minutes

Michael Gaebel (co-chair) welcomed everybody to the second meeting of the Task Force (TF). The meeting's agenda was approved without changes, and the first meeting's minutes were approved with a few minor remarks that were communicated to the BFUG Secretariat via email. As in the first meeting, it was advised to keep brief and concise minutes.

Linda Pustina introduced Ms. Edlira Subashi as the newly appointed Vice Head of the BFUG Secretariat. It was informed that Ms. Subashi will endeavour to reorganize the work of the Secretariat in order to

have a more effective structure in place. The BFUG members and consultative members will be notified of this appointment via email, accentuating the commitment to more effectively organize the work and support that will be provided by the Secretariat and to address all of the issues that have been raised.

For more information, please see: [TF_ROP_SE_BA_2 Meeting Agenda](#)

2. Discussion on key structures and question

Michael Gaebel (Co-Chair) started the discussion from the third part of the Work plan document that was sent to the members, that is the Key Issues and Questions. This part of the document has basically two layers. In the first layer, there is the listing of the main upcoming issues, which should be discussed in the Task Force. In the second layer, there is the suggestion on how these issues could be presented to the BFUG.

2.1 Replacement of Rules of Procedures by two complementary documents

Two complementary documents were deemed necessary, one to be submitted the ministers for adoption, and the other document for the BFUG and its structures. It was decided that the first document should be called "Statutes" and should contain the main issues, which are for the ministers to decide.

It was suggested that the Statutes are an important step for formalizing and making EHEA more permanent, and they need to be included in the Communiqué. In the Statutes, the Ministerial Conference would be explicitly acknowledged as the authority for all major decision-making, and the different EHEA governing bodies will be outlined. The ministers set the EHEA's priorities for the upcoming work period by adopting the Communiqué. The Statutes may be amended by the minister only. The BFUG will have the authority to create working groups and other similar structures, and oversee the development of the EHEA between the ministerial meetings.

It was suggested that several elements of the Council of Europe (CoE) Statute, particularly the aim, membership, organs, and secretariat, could serve as a basis for developing the EHEA Statutes' structure. Before describing the procedure for excluding members, the Statutes could describe who the members are, how they are accepted, and that the Ministers have the authority to set membership criteria. Additionally, it was suggested to state in the Statutes that the ministers typically convene in a Ministerial Conference every two to three years. Of course, that should not exclude exceptional Conferences, which may take place in an online format, if deemed necessary, i.e., in the event of an emergency.

2.2 Roles and competences of different structures within the EHEA

2.2.1 Division of competences between the BFUG and the Board

It was proposed that the competences of the Board of the BFUG to take routine and operational decisions could be enhanced, in order to facilitate the management of the BFUG meetings. The Board could meet more frequently and hold also one online meeting per semester. On the other hand, meeting four times a year requires more voluntary work from the Board members, which is not supported financially by any project. Nevertheless, every country should in principle co-chair the BFUG and share the work and responsibility.

The composition of the Board was discussed, with suggestions made to keep the actual triple troika and the representation of the Consultative Members. The co-chairs of the WGs should be invited for specific topics, according to some members of the TF. However, if the Board meets more than once throughout the semester, co-chairs of the WGs could attend at only one of the meetings, entirely or only part-time.

It was noted that the coordination between the WGs was a crucial aspect that required a structure that could be connected to the Board or not, but caution should be exercised to avoid creating a second Board. The Board could handle this coordination, but with a different focus and by adjusting the online sessions in conjunction with the in-person meetings.

2.2.2 Draft Committee and the Global Policy Dialogue

It was advised to make a few minor changes to the membership of the Drafting Committee (DC), particularly regarding the potential for inviting experts or launching an open request for additional parties to join the actual triple troika. On the other hand, it was mentioned that the ideal size for the DC is less than 15 participants. In order to improve the coherence between the two documents, it was also suggested that the DC needs to oversee the Global Policy Forum (GPF) statement.

It was observed that during the Ministerial Conference and the Global Policy Forum as part of the Conference, it is in practice difficult to distinguish between the ministers from EHEA and other countries.

2.3 Reflection of ownership of different processes

The principle that the Co-Chairs serve as the BFUG's representatives while the ministers hold the primary position and "ownership" of the EHEA was stated. The duties of the Vice-Chair and secretariat need to be clarified in more detail.

It was suggested that the Rules and Procedures should provide some guidelines on how the substructures should report at the BFUG meeting. While the internal structure of the WGs is their own responsibility, the composition of the WGs should continue to fall under the competence of the BFUG.

2.4 EHEA membership

The current rules governing the application and acceptance of Members, Consultative Members, and Partners were thought to need some review. The use of a roadmap, as for instance for San Marino, was found useful, and should be retained for any further new members.

Pros and cons of conditional membership, and different ways to administer it, were discussed.

Related, the group discussed the issues of suspension and/or exclusion of the membership. Clearer regulations were suggested for members that visibly violate core rules or key commitments. A roadmap or other mechanisms could also be a way to address problems for the current members.

It was concluded to continue with the existing approach of conditions before membership, and roadmap with details to be developed once a member has joined. However, any potential measures that BFUG or the Ministers might employ if a member does not comply and is subject to suspension or exclusion are still up for debate.

2.5 General perception of the EHEA and the Terminology

It was suggested that the Statutes should start with a mission statement.

Regarding terminology, it was stated that the difference between the terms Bologna Process and EHEA is obvious because the former refers to the period up until the Ministerial Conference in Vienna, 2010, which created the EHEA, and the latter, to the period following that. The correct term would therefore be EHEA. It was concluded to retain the term of the BFUG Secretariat.

2.6 Role and position of the Secretariat

The structure and operation of the BFUG Secretariat were then discussed. It was underlined that during the last working session, there had also been a proposal for a permanent BFUG Secretariat. It was also suggested that the Secretariat include individual staff with expertise in matters pertinent to the BFUG, BFUG Board and Ministerial Conference, in addition to expertise in IT and the support of the various BFUG working structures.

Italy provides an offer to base the Secretariat in Bologna (Italy), which was discussed, considering also different legal and organisational approaches, including the requirement to hire international personnel. Other suggestions included Brussels as a possibility in order to facilitate communication with other policy groups and organisations. This might also require including a call for the permanent Secretariat to the BFUG.

Furthermore, different legal settings have been discussed, emphasizing that the permanent Secretariat, while established in accordance with the legislation of the country and possibly hosted and supported by national authorities, needs to be independent from external interference. National legislation on rules for recruitment of international staff would have to be considered. Examples of some existing organisations were mentioned, such as the CoE's [European Centre for Modern Languages \(ECML; a Partial Agreement\) and EQAR](#). One proposal was that the secretariat should include staff from the country hosting the next ministerial, regardless of where the Secretariat is based, also as secondment positions.

Several suggestions were made on the topic of funding. A likely approach would be to finance the secretariat through a combination of funding from the EC and EHEA countries. To explain and advocate the case, a tentative cost-plan and budget should be developed.

With regards to potential funding by the EC this would require already in 2023, a detailed proposal.

These issues should also be presented to the BFUG Board. The TF will next come up to the BFUG with a more elaborated plan outlining the tasks, the organization, the funding, and what it would entail for the EHEA members.

3. Work plan and division of tasks

It was agreed to prepare the Statute's framework and some starting draft of the model for the Secretariat ready for the BFUG Board meeting in Sarajevo (Bosnia & Herzegovina). Following the input from the Board these documents will be developed for the BFUG meeting in Stockholm (Sweden). The feedback from the BFUG would be used to prepare the pre-final draft during the summer. It was suggested to leave the Rules of Procedures (RoP) for later stages.

It was decided to have three subgroups for the specific issues, as the following:

- Sjur Bergan, Irina Geantă, Michal Karpišek, and Michael Gaebel for the Statute.
- Luca Lantero, Kinga Szuly, Irina Geantă, and Colin Tück for the subgroup on the framework of the secretariat
- All the members in the subgroup for the rules of procedures.

Moreover, Michal Karpišek and Colin Tück would identify some existing rules for the voting systems.

It was agreed to have a meeting on 10 March 2023, and to distribute doodles for the possible meetings on February and June 2023 with the support of the BFUG Secretariat. It was planned to use the next day after the BFUG meeting in Stockholm, for a meeting of the TF.