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## **BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP (BFUG)**

### **Rules of Procedure 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 rules of procedure and its sub-structures (the Board, Working Groups, Advisory Groups, Task Forces, other ad hoc groups, and the BFUG Secretariat).

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

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## I. The Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG)

### a. Role

The BFUG is the executive structure supporting the Bologna Process between the Ministerial Conferences. It has been 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. It may also decide to establish task forces, ad-hoc groups or other structures to fulfil its tasks and reach the goals set out in the Ministerial Communiqué.

The BFUG members are invited to express their interest in participating in one or more Working Groups (WGs), Advisory Groups (AGs) or any other sub-structures by submitting a declaration of interest, 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 groups should be organised in compliance with their Terms of Reference approved by the BFUG, have a reasonable size, and reflect the diversity of the EHEA.

The BFUG Work Plan 2018-2020 is structured on the basis of the Paris Communiqué (for more details, see Annex 2). The BFUG decides on the Terms of Reference of the different Working Groups, Advisory Groups, task forces, ad-hoc groups or other structures, and it decides which of their recommendations 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 implement, coordinate and monitor the three Thematic Peer Groups (TPGs), 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:

- **EHEA/BFUG 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. Annex 4

details the procedure to become an EHEA member. Only country members and the European Commission have the right to vote within the BFUG and to approve and adopt the final documents.

- **Consultative Members** are relevant stakeholder organisations and other institutions that have a European scope to their work and are instrumental in the development and implementation of the Bologna Process. The 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 status similar to that of the consultative members (as a non-voting member of BFUG), but has so far not been officially designated as a consultative member.
- **Partners** are 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 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) and the Vice-chair from the host country of the next Ministerial Conference. 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	

1 July – 31 December 2019	Finland	Turkey	Italy
1 January – 30 June 2020	Croatia	Ukraine	

Each co-chairing country is responsible for appointing a person who will be in charge of fulfilling the tasks of the chairmanship. The Co-chairs, in close cooperation with the Vice-chair and supported by the BFUG Secretariat, chair the BFUG and the BFUG Board. In the decision-making process, the Chairs assume the responsibility for leading the way towards compromise in order to move 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 in that case need to announce explicitly that their intervention reflects their country's position and that they are not speaking as chair at that specific moment. The Co-chairs and the Vice-chair, although they can also represent their country, must exercise their chairing tasks with the necessary neutrality. The Vice-chair is responsible in particular for the host country's preparations for the Ministerial Conference.

#### d. BFUG Secretariat

The Bologna Follow-Up Group Secretariat (BFUG Secretariat) provides neutral, administrative and operational support to the BFUG, the BFUG Board, Chairs, WGs/AGs and other established structures (task forces, ad-hoc groups, etc.). It acts as an external and internal contact point for the EHEA, and also presents the BFUG in a variety of settings in agreement with the Chairs; it supports the preparation of the EHEA Ministerial Conference and the Bologna Policy Forum, and maintains the EHEA website (<http://www.ehea.info>) with regular updates.

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 usually convened at least once every six months. The working language of the BFUG is English (see Annex 6 for more details).

All BFUG members should attend each BFUG meeting. Each EHEA member or consultative member has the authority to designate its BFUG representatives. Each EHEA member or consultative member usually sends a maximum of 2 representatives to the BFUG meetings. On every agenda point, each BFUG delegation is invited to express the position of its country, institution or organisation with respect to the matter in question. 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 current decision making procedure within the BFUG is based on a consensual understanding that the Co-chairs of the BFUG summarise at the end of each agenda point. When Co-Chairs speak and act in their capacity as BFUG delegates, they must make clear that their intervention reflects their country's position.

In exceptional circumstances the BFUG may decide to take a decision through vote. Its voting rules foresee two votes per Member delegation, to take account of the fact that some countries have a federal system. 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 15 days prior to the meeting, after being prepared by the Chairs of the BFUG and by the BFUG Working and Advisory Groups or other sub-structures. All comments or significant changes proposed by the BFUG members to these documents have to be submitted at least 5 days prior to the meeting.

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. The draft minutes are agreed with the respective Chairs and are then circulated to the members (BFUG/AG/WG/Board) within 15 days after the meeting for feedback. The members have the possibility within 15 days to 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) should generally be adopted by electronic consultation after each meeting: only if there should be too many diverging comments, the adoption will be postponed until the meeting of 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.

Before each BFUG meeting, the Chairs and the Secretariat will hold a preparatory 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 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 co-ordinating 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 European Commission;
- Council of Europe, EUA, ESU, EURASHE;
- one of the Co-chairs of each Working, Advisory and Coordination Groups.

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.

Before each Board meeting, the Chairs and the Secretariat will hold a preparatory 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 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 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) has been organised, which includes 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, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”), the Vice-chair (Italy) and the BFUG

Secretariat will be set up. The Drafting Committee will be operational from spring 2019, and will be supported by the Secretariat.

During the governing period 2018-2020, the host for the next Ministerial Conference will be selected. The procedure for the Selection of the next 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](http://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 at least 10 days in advance of the meetings unless the Chairs have decided otherwise.

The country pages of each BFUG member will be 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 substructures concerned.

For the internal use of the BFUG members or that of WGs/AGs and other sub-structures, 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 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, any other sub-structures as well as by the EHEA member countries and organisations. The EHEA website should be passed from one Secretariat to another with all the technical backgrounds in order to guarantee the transition between two Secretariats. 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. Relevant invitations, presentations, reports and conclusions from BFUG members and consultative members can be published on the website and forwarded to the BFUG. In principle, this service could also consider similar requests from other parties.

For an event to be published on the EHEA website, the organisers have to fill in a template



provided by the BFUG Secretariat (Annex 10). The final decision on whether or not an event is considered a part of the BFUG events is taken by the Co-chairs in consultation with the BFUG Secretariat.



# **BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP (BFUG)**

## **RULES OF PROCEDURE 2018-2020**

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