



Ministry of Education and  
Science of Georgia

## Task Force on the Review of the Rules and Regulations for the Governance of the European Higher Education Area (TF RR)

8<sup>th</sup> Meeting, Online

9 October 2023

10:00 – 13:00 CET

[Meeting minutes](#)

### List of participants

Delegation/Organization	First Name	Last Name
Czech Republic (Co-Chair)	Michal	Karpíšek
BFUG International Expert	Colin	Tück
EUA (Co-Chair)	Michael	Gaebel
European Commission	Kinga	Szuly
Italy (Co-Chair)	Luca	Lantero
BFUG International Expert	Sjur	Bergan
Germany	Frank	Petrikowski
Romania	Irina	Geantă
BFUG Secretariat (Head)	Edlira	Subashi
BFUG Secretariat	Kristina	Metallari

Albania (Vice-Chair) sent regrets.

Conclusions from the discussions in the meeting:

### Agenda and MoMs of the past meeting (7<sup>th</sup> Meeting):

- The agenda was approved without changes.
- Minutes of the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting were approved without any revisions.



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## Report from the BFUG Board discussions

- The main critique from the BFUG Board meeting in September 2023, in Tbilisi, Georgia, was that until presently, EHEA did not have a legal personality. The changes in the legal make-up would be followed by changes of the EHEA's character.
- The need to clarify the roles of the Secretariat in the RoP document was highly stressed. It was also important to highlight the changes between the new and old Rules of Procedures.
- Regarding the Secretariat, the issues brought up in the BFUG Board meeting were legalistic and organizational issues. It was deemed important to provide a vision for the Secretariat (i.e.: what would the Secretariat of the future look like?) and how it contributes to the Bologna Process.
- There were questions about the ethical code of the EHEA suggested by CoE in the Stockholm BFUG meeting, and whether that would be a part of the RoP. It was deemed that the ethical code was not in the remit of the Secretariat.
- It was highlighted that most representatives of the BFUG Board meeting in Tbilisi were generally absent from the discussion on the future of RoP and the Permanent Secretariat. It was noted that the representatives that shared their stance on the matter had a divided reaction. One of the reasons for this reaction was the lack of understanding for the financial commitment (i.e.: what it means for a country to host the Permanent Secretariat). The representatives opposing the Permanent Secretariat agreed that it would change the nature of the EHEA, by becoming a structure akin to a membership organization. Another issue foreseen were legal difficulties in the transformation, as well as the position of the Head of the Secretariat (i.e: arguments on whether there should be a mandate or not).

## Reflection for overall plans until the ministerial meeting

- It was stressed that there needs to be a vision for the Permanent Secretariat and the RoP that could be succinctly conveyed to political leadership, in a way that could ensure political support.
- In order to address the legal issues, it was suggested that the TF RoP consult a legal expert in international public law. While EQAR was seen as a legal reference, it was noted that EQAR has voluntary, non-mandatory membership, meaning not every EHEA member is part of it. Additionally, it was highlighted that the primary legal issue with creating an EHEA legal entity was deciding what would



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happen to the countries that do not join (or do not take a decision to join), or countries that cannot pay.

- It was noted that there are hurdles in realizing the current Permanent Secretariat and RoP suggestions before the next Ministerial conference. However, it would be important not to let the current concerns halt the discussion. It was stressed that the Ministers should adopt RoP in the Tirana meeting and commit to a Secretariat running from 2027 onwards. It was brought to the attention of the TF members that the deadline for hosting the next Secretariat was December 15, and so far, there had not been any candidates. Finally, the aim for the Ministerial was to have a clear statement in the Tirana Communique, to provide direction to the Bologna Process. Lastly, it was stressed that it is crucial to present an argument to the BFUG on the added value of the Permanent Secretariat and TF RoP revision.

#### **Further work on documents for Madrid BFUG**

- It was suggested that the vision for the RoP should highlight the revamping of the Bologna Process into a more profiled and proficient process and should be centred around the RoP as a considerable political change. It was noted that countries should agree that the Ministers recommit to an EHEA which de facto is based on the observance of fundamental values, a forum of cooperation for structural reforms, and other important higher education goals (such as the social dimension). It was noted that to realize this vision, a more efficient, stronger Secretariat providing longer-term support played a crucial role.
- In addition, the benefits of adopting values — like the independence of the Secretariat and international composition — were highlighted, and it was underscored that this would require the rewriting of the current Rules of Procedures.
- At the same time, the importance of brevity was underlined, so the proposal could be easily understood by many audiences, and it would be clear that the decision would be taken by a vast majority of countries. To conclude, this was why a cover letter for the proposal of the RoP and the Permanent Secretariat was suggested, as a way to guarantee political support and clarity of communication with all different representatives and stakeholders.

#### **Preparation for the BFUG presentation and discussions**



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- The aim for the BFUG meeting in Madrid was stated — a place for BFUG to express an informed opinion for the RoP and permanent secretariat proposals.
- A short cover letter was suggested, underlining the key arguments of the proposal. The details would be incorporated in an annex.
- It was noted that the BFUG would be addressed via a message for feedback on the proposal. The deadline for the final draft ready to be shared would be November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023.
- As for the models of governance, it was highlighted that it was important to communicate that the models are feasible, and in principle implementable. The importance of framing the document was highly stressed, as well as the need to present the different options at a high level (not as detailed as suggested before).
- It would be beneficial to reach out to EQAR and CoE about their stance on the matter. It was reminded that the Co-chairs would reach out to the respective organisations and inquire about their proposals, as well as their stance on the Permanent Secretariat issue.
- It was requested to clarify the amount allotted in the BFUG Meeting, and it was specified that it would be half an hour to an hour.



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