



WORKING GROUP ON FUNDAMENTAL VALUES

Fourth Meeting, Online
20 October 2022

Minutes

List of Participants

Country/Organization	First Name	Last Name
Austria	Milica	Popović
Council of Europe	Sjur	Bergan
Croatia	Leonardo	Marušić
EI-ETUCE	Rob	Copeland
European Commission/Eurydice	David	Crosier
European Students Union (ESU)	Matteo	Vespa
European University Association (EUA)	Monika	Steinel
ENQA	Anna	Gover
Finland	Maija	Innola
France	Carle	Bonafous - Murat
France	Mathieu	Musquin
Germany (Co-Chair)	David	Akrami Flores
Holy See	Melanie	Rosenbaum
Iceland	Una Strand	Viðarsdóttir
Norway (Co-Chair)	Tone Flood	Strøm
Poland	Agnieszka Lekka	Kowalik
Romania (Co-Chair)	Mihai Cezar	Hâj
Sweden	Robin	Moberg
Switzerland	Aurélia	Robert-Tissot
Turkey	Asil	Günay
Scholars at Risk Network (Guest)	Robert	Quinn
DAAD (Guest)	Hans	Leifgen
Rector at King's College London (Guest)	Liviu	Matei
BFUG Secretariat	Aida	Myrto
BFUG Secretariat	Jora	Vaso
BFUG Secretariat	Patrik	Bardhi

Malta sent regrets.

1. Welcome remarks and approval of the agenda

Cezar Hâj (Co-chair, Romania) welcomed the participants and introduced the other Co-chairs.¹ He proposed to continue the discussion of the minutes of the previous meeting, already started in the informal discussion with the intervention of Oltion Rrumbullaku (Head of BFUG Secretariat).

He commented that it had been agreed in the meeting in Malta that minutes were going to be needed rapidly after the meeting, for the experts to redraft the FV statement, and expressed his disappointment that the Secretariat sent them only after several months. After the minutes had been distributed, it was noticed that an entire section of the minutes – on the discussion of the draft statement on student and staff participation – was missing, whereas the text included under this heading referred to the discussion of the study conducted by the Central

¹ David Akrami Flores replaced Marit Metternich as Co-Chair.

European University and commissioned by the Council of Europe. It was noted that the report of this discussion, for which there was no headline, missed important parts of the discussion, as pointed out in the comments by the Council of Europe once the meeting report had been received.

Two of the main issues raised concerned the missing sections and the unresponsiveness of the Secretariat. Also problematic was the fact that specific deadlines were set during the meeting, namely that comments were due by the end of July and revised statements by the end of August. It was noted that the minutes do not reflect these concrete conclusions and deadlines.

It was emphasized that the Secretariat is responsible for complete recordings and ensuring notetaking, also if there are problems with the recording of the meeting. Any such problems cannot be accepted as an excuse for unsatisfactory meeting reports. Sjur Bergan (CoE) added that he sent suggestions for the missing elements (see above) and concluded that the lack of information will affect the FV group's presentation in the BFUG meeting in November. Overall, there was concern about the way the Secretariat is developing. The absence of a Secretariat representative at the San Marino WG meeting was also noted with concern.

At this juncture, it was stated that the WG needs to know how to move forward. The WG members decided not to adopt the minutes of the Malta meeting and underlined the importance of ensuring accurate and satisfactory reports of all future meetings.

The Co-Chair advised the Secretariat to maintain a clear and consistent communication process wherein reception of all emails from the Co-chairs or working groups is confirmed. The Co-Chair then recalled the meeting's aim to discuss the indicators to be included in the 2024 Bologna Implementation Report. Lastly, it was confirmed that the meeting after Bucharest, will take place in March 2023 in Berlin. A doodle would be sent out shortly.

2. Presentation of the first deliverable of the NewFAV project - Mapping report on the existing indicators on Fundamental Values

Liviu Matei began by stating that the aim of the report is to identify existing indicators and other tools, models and initiatives that enable the effective assessment of the state of implementation of the fundamental values of HE. He underlined that, as part of the project, an online survey was developed, with the participation of education experts, accompanied by a review of published articles related to FV indicators. The analysis, a mapping report, identified indicators and their function.

Mr. Matei stated that there are some values for which there are corresponding measuring tools and others for which there are at present no satisfactory tools. The most challenging chapter was the one on academic integrity, as there are no satisfactory tools to measure it. The identified indicators and tools are also reviewed based on their potential to be used in the EHEA effort to monitor FVs. Mr. Matei concluded that the current report is subject to feedback from the group and the project committee. Because the mandate of the study was limited to identifying indicators, it does not attempt to define values.

Matteo Vespa (ESU) stated that ESU can provide additional feedback on potentially using the Autonomy Scorecard without altering the data set. He added that the dimension on public funding related to public responsibility is missing. It was stated that more information on academic freedom and academic integrity is needed and, also, that there should be more focus on the selection criteria and data sources. It was commented that the fundamental values constitute a unity and special attention should be given to their interaction as well as how to develop indicators that can show the mutual dependence and integration between the values.

Sjur Bergan (CoE) suggested looking at the relationship between public or private funders and the institutions as well as the level of autonomy between different funding arrangements. He added that the relationship between general operational funding and specific project funding might be an important element to be put into discussions. Mr. Matei stated that the feedback of the group would be useful in completing the current mapping list and emphasized that the project is not about developing a monitoring mechanism for FVs.

It was concluded that the project will deliver information for the discussion and decision making of the WG, which has the political responsibility to provide proposals on the monitoring system. It was added that there cannot be a monitoring system without a statement on what is

understood by each fundamental value. Finally, it was concluded that feedback on the document via the Co-chairs and the Secretariat in writing is welcome.

For more information, please see [Measuring fundamental values: indicators, tools and initiatives. A Mapping Report](#)

3. Presentation on the proposed indicators for the 2024 Bologna Process Implementation Report & and update from the Monitoring WG

David Crosier (Eurydice) began by presenting the format of the 2024 Bologna Process Implementation Report (BPIR). He stated that both de jure and de facto indicators should be included, along with possible sources.

Mr. Crosier then presented the progress of the fundamental value indicators and the possible issues involved. Regarding the Academic Freedom (AF) de facto indicators, Mr. Crosier referred to the AF Index (AFI) as the best available source. He reminded the group members that they have agreed in favor of proposing a global indicator on AF without breaking it down into sub-indicators. He underlined that not everyone has agreed that the role of the Public Authorities in decision-making for new HE programs is an important indicator. In addition to the AFI, useful de facto indicators can come from EUA's autonomy scorecard. He added that it is important to choose between the two and, if opting for the autonomy scorecard, to select the most important dimensions for the report.

There is no clear statement on Academic Integrity (AI) yet but some issues are whether ministries and PAs are providing guidance on plagiarism and fraud or support through student and staff training on AI. ESU survey and ENQA were cited as potential sources of de facto indicators. On participation of students and staff on HE governance, one of the indicators should look at the requirements for students and staff involvement in decision making. In terms of sources for Public Responsibility for HE de facto indicators, Mr. Crosier stated that the EUA funding observatory could be one and the BFUG for Public Responsibility of HE.

Concluding his presentation, Mr. Crosier said that, at this stage, the selection of topics, the proposal of de jure indicators, and the aspects of de facto indicators to be included in the proposal must be confirmed. The BFUG will then receive questions covering these topics, which will be designed and launched in the beginning of next year.

Tone Flood Strøm (Co-Chair of both the FV and Implementation WGs) reiterated that, for the 2024 BPIR, the group should focus on a small number of existing indicators while keeping in mind that different ones may be needed in the long run. On Academic Freedom, Matteo Vespa (ESU) underlined the importance of administrative provisions and stated that information can be requested from the BFUG. In terms of de jure indicators, he emphasized the importance of student and staff involvement in HE policy governance at the national level. On de facto, he cited BWSE's (Bologna with Student Eyes) and his team's forthcoming publication as two data sources.

Milica Popović (Austria) underlined the importance of including all present de facto sources, even if transitory, because this can serve to show that the future monitoring mechanism will go beyond the checklist, self-referential system by member states. She stated that there is a number of additional sources that should be included, like ESU's Bologna with Student Eyes and the publications of the Global Observatory on Academic Freedom – for academic freedom especially. She suggested that the report needs to clearly demarcate whether the sources used are self-referential documents produced by the states or independent research-based documents.

Sjur Bergan (CoE) advised the Co-Chairs to underline both de jure and de facto indicators in their presentation in Brno and to ensure, especially as concerns de facto indicators, acceptance of the use not only of national or public sources of information but to gather input from a wide range of stakeholders. He added that it is important to report on each value even when reporting poses a challenge either methodologically or to specific EHEA members so as to safeguard against member countries reporting only on values where their performance is high. On a related note, on those indicators and values that do not include information from EHEA

countries, Mr. Bergan proposed an amendment in order to remind countries of their due diligence in providing information.²

The existence of overlapping indicators among various working groups was discussed, which can reduce duplicate work. It was clarified that for the FV chapter, approximately 10-15 indicators are expected or 30 pages of the report. It was clarified that the selection and proposal of indicators is the task of the FV WG while the responsibility of the Monitoring WG is to compile a coherent report.

There was a request to clarify whether two different types of monitoring were being confounded during the discussion, specifically the monitoring of the FVs and the monitoring of the Bologna Commitments. To this, Cezar Hâj (Co-chair) confirmed that, what is presently discussed is only the monitoring of the FV in the context of the implementation of the Bologna Process. He asked whether the system will be monitored through Eurydice and questioned whether the process of monitoring FVs might be too cumbersome to include in its entirety in the final BPIR.

It was argued that it is important to focus on what can be included now in the BPIR 2024, while also addressing the lack of sources for de facto reporting, but to also ensure that it remains clear that, beyond 2024, there might be new developments on new sources of reliable information on FV.

For more information, please see [Indicators on Fundamental Values in Higher Education: state of play following WG FV meeting in Malta](#)

4. Session 1: Debate on “Academic freedom” Indicators

Cezar Hâj (Co-chair, Romania) began his presentation by presenting the proposals from both the Monitoring WG and ESU jointly and welcomed new proposals as the discussion progresses.

Regarding Academic Freedom (AF), Mr. Hâj clarified that there are proposals on the de jure approach, especially on the legal protection of academic freedom and the respective dimensions of indicators, but no specific questions. To this, it was replied that the indicators are to be determined first and questions can be discussed at a later stage. It was then clarified that ESU did propose some specific questions on the legal provisions to protect academic freedom, the administrative measures to implement these legal provisions, and whether AF is included in QA mechanisms.

Sjur Bergan (CoE) suggested that it might be helpful to consider the de jure and de facto indicators together, as many issues might be related to the latter. He mentioned possible issues with academic freedom and institutional autonomy and the role of public authorities potentially clashing. He then cited a few recent cases where these values were in conflict with one another and suggested this should be considered. It was responded that the sole approach of measuring de facto indicators is via the Academic Freedom Index (AFI).

Related to the topic of legal provisions to protect AF, members were invited to consider not only what protects AF but also what can put AF at risk, from a legal perspective, as well. There was a question on the meaning of administrative measures and whether they encompass contractual issues and job security. It was suggested that the phrasing should somehow cover this, as it is one of the elements that helps safeguard academic freedom on the de facto level. It was clarified that this can either be measured quantitatively or by requesting information on national provisions on job security.

Another suggestion was to ask governments whether there are other mechanisms or systems, beyond QA, which monitor AF. In order to avoid duplicate work, it was recommended that, regarding the staff dimension of precarious conditions, indicators from the Social Dimension group be used as proxies. It was questioned whether the indicators in the BIR will be linked to a scorecard and be assigned colors. In response, it was emphasized that the scorecard approach is used when it is a viable option,³ that it works only with clear policy commitments, and that more work is needed on this topic before determining the method of presentation.

² The suggested sentence was phrased as follows: “Where this information is not available, the BFUG has a responsibility for seeking it.”

³ It was confirmed that a scorecard approach has been deemed appropriate for the Social Dimension group but not for the Learning and Teaching group.

The status of tenure was suggested as a potential *de jure* question, which is linked to the work of the Learning and Teaching WG. Another suggested question was whether there are specific provisions and regulations ensuring academic freedom for non-tenured staff or early-career researchers who are not often protected.

The importance of alternative sources to self-reporting was cited as crucial in order to have as many voices heard as possible. There was a suggestion to make the point that fundamental values are important to both democracy and quality of education and include, as a criterion, to what extent the FVs are reflected in the QA exercise and how quality affects AF. It was suggested to add a dimension that measures the extent to which scholars and students can publicly criticize the leadership and policies of their own HEIs.

The Co-chair summarized the agreed-upon suggestions among the group members, including tenure as a possible new area of questioning, whether there are other tools used to monitor AF, as well as other more specific standards of QA on AF.

David Crosier (Monitoring WG Co-Chair) concluded that upon reaching agreement on the issues for which data should be collected, draft questions will be developed and shared with the group so comments may be added before finalizing the questions. He also addressed the suggestions of adding tenure by citing it as a challenging topic with no available quantitative data or trends. There was a suggestion to broaden the definition of tenure to reflect the different European contexts where many HEI staff enjoy considerable civil servant benefits while not having tenure.

5. Session 2: Debate on “Institutional autonomy” indicators

David Akrami Flores (Co-Chair, Germany) presented an outline of the *de jure* and *de facto* indicators of institutional autonomy and new indicators proposed by ESU. It was mentioned that the scorecard includes information on several of these components. However, since the autonomy scorecard analyzes HE laws in various countries, a concern was raised about its designation as a *de facto* source of data. It was agreed that the information gathered regarding the *de jure* position can be correlated with the EUA scorecard. The updated EUA Scorecard will be available in early 2023, and pertinent information will be accessible upon request, such as Eurydice. A comment was made regarding the relationship between QA and institutional autonomy, inferring that it is challenging to measure because governments do not generally disclose that they actually afford institutions little autonomy.

Finding the PA’s proper role in the exercise of their responsibility for the HE system and their relationship to HEIs was another point, more specifically in the context of the second *de jure* indicator. It was explained that if PA decide that a study program in a particular academic topic is needed in a specific area of the country, e.g., because PAs consider the HE offer in this part of the country is underdeveloped, and PAs fund and encourage it, it is entirely within PA’s competence. The PA would be going beyond the scope of their competence if they made specific decisions on curricula. In order to determine whether there is any interference, it was proposed that PA clarify their role.

Another point concerned the questions presented by ESU. The concern is that certain questions, such as what the balance of internal and external members of the governing body should be, and whether there should be solely either internal or external members, may be premature for the current exercise.

The ESU questions haven't been amended or examined in-depth because they were just introduced. Therefore, it was suggested that some of them be reviewed during the future reporting period. There were no objections to the inclusion of two particular ESU questions on the funding and establishment of not-for-profit organizations. The EUA Autonomy Scorecard was agreed upon as a source, but it remains to be determined which parts of the Scorecard are going to be used.

David Crosier pointed out that the EUA autonomy scorecard addresses some of the concerns stated by ESU. He emphasized how crucial it is to keep the questions and indicators on a given issue to a minimum. This is not a questionnaire-filling exercise; rather, it involves trying to concentrate on what is actually needed and locating the best source to employ. It was suggested that these are enough questions to be asked to the BFUG, because the EUA scorecard

will provide significant data. If too many questions are asked, the information that is ultimately provided will be of lower quality. It was stated that even though the questions should be kept to a minimum, the one regarding the various forms of funding is vital. Finally, it was decided to employ the three framework indicators along with the various components of the EUA Scorecard.

6. Session 3: Debate on "Academic integrity"

The proposed indicators were presented, followed by a remark that the ESU questions on this value would be included also in the Bologna with student eyes publication (BWSE), and would be available for use by Eurydice. It was stated that there are two crucial aspects to the problem of academic integrity that are also emphasized in the statement: one concern is the development of a culture of ethics, transparency and integrity, and the other is the methods required to deal with violations. The discussion suggested that it could be more feasible to concentrate on the defense mechanisms of HE systems and institutions against violations of academic integrity. Even without a mapping of the culture, there should be emphasis on preventative measures.

It was also emphasized that it was important to determine whether there are any further plans for HE staff to participate in training programs, whether these plans are voluntary or required, and the percentage of staff who participate in this training. It was highlighted that even in the absence of a national framework, there may still be national guidelines. As a result, ESU advised that the BFUG members be asked whether or not they have a national provision, and possibly that QA agencies be requested to submit information if there are provisions at the constitutional level, as a de facto indicator. Overall, it was agreed to proceed with the points presented by Eurydice.

7. Session 4: Debate on "Participation of students and staff in higher education governance" indicators

Tone Flood Strøm (Co-Chair) presented the de jure indicators for this value and explained that the ESU questions were too detailed to be taken into account at this stage. Nonetheless, it was requested to use the information that would be collected from the BWSE publication. It was also noted that the ESU questions are mostly covered by the proposed indicators, with the exception of the level of involvement of students and staff in national and HE policy making.

The need to include the systemic issue in reporting or data collecting was emphasized. It was noted that at the system-level, given the role of elected authorities (typically the national assembly), there may not be (only) representative bodies but that there should at least be formal and institutionalized arrangements for consultation of students and staff.

Regarding the level of participation, it was necessary to note that it would be crucial to determine whether students and staff feel included in HE governance and have the ability to vote on all matters. It was therefore recommended to introduce the system level dimension, include a question on the right to speak and vote on all topics before the governing body, and include another question that addresses the issue of autonomous student and staff representation. Another concern raised was the importance of monitoring the implementation of a given decision. It was claimed that the information from the BWSE publication might be used for the de facto indicators and that the BWSE data gathering was anticipated to be accomplished by July and published in November. Eurydice would then receive the information.

8. Session 5: Debate on "Public responsibility of and for higher education" indicators

Tone-Flood Strøm (Co-Chair) introduced the indicators for *Public responsibility for higher education*. It was stated that the legal system should not only control but also contribute to stimulate or advance HE systems. In the long term, a strong foundation for financial support by public authorities is required, whether or not there is a minimum threshold. So as to comply with the general funding guidelines, a framework for funding from other sources was also noted as being essential.

In order to examine the funding framework, a few sources were listed, including the OECD guidelines and the [EUA public funding observatory](#). It was suggested that an assessment of the

amounts and types of financing that the governments are providing for HE should be done. The topic of "stability of funding" was explored, pointing out its complexity and whether it applies to individual institutions or the system as a whole. It was also pointed out that stability may be less desirable than an increase of funding. Therefore, formulations need to be examined, and it was suggested that they contain language about finance consistent with HE missions.

It was mentioned that sub-indicators reflecting funding have been produced and are included in the BPIR's Social Dimension chapter. As there were problems with specialized funding addressing certain requirements within SD, the strategy to consider funding stability was chosen. David Crosier (Eurydice) noted that there will be statistics on the overall investment in HE with GDP per capita investment in the introduction section of the BPIR.

Regarding the *public responsibility of higher education*, it was observed that the first two indicators lacked a distinction between the public responsibility of and for higher education, and that these indicators were also not very broad. Regarding the first point⁴, it was mentioned that the policy and regulatory framework should be interpreted to apply to more than only the HE sector. It was proposed that the second item⁵ should at least be expanded to include factors other than the support of public authorities, such as the degree to which HEIs are able to engage with communities and the extent to which they really do so. It was suggested that reformulation be carried out in a way that preserves researchers' academic freedom.

It was determined that the first point be revised to emphasize public policy rather than focusing solely on HE policies. For the second point, due to its complexity, it was recommended to ask a question like "Is there any QA method or other mechanisms that evaluate community engagement?". It was also emphasized that the formulation should be revised with focus on the statement.

9. Update on the fundamental values statements, next meetings and AOB

Mihai Cezar Hâj (Co-Chair) informed that the next WG meeting will be held in Bucharest, Romania on 6-7 December 2022. He also invited the members of the WG to participate in a PLA on the topic of Institutional Autonomy that is scheduled for December 5^t. Additionally, the sixth WG meeting, which will be hosted with the support of the DAAD in Berlin in March 2023, was announced. Mr. Hâj announced that they will present a few dates that are available for the meeting in March at the following meeting in December. The WG members would receive the draft statements at the start of the following week (Oct. 24, 2022), and they would have three weeks to offer feedback. The comments and feedback would be sent to the WG Co-Chairs and Secretariat. The draft statement will then be sent to the experts to be revised accordingly, and then distributed to members prior to the WG meeting in December.

The indicators would be sent by Eurydice within the next week, as well as the agenda of the PLA, where it was stated that one of its objectives is to address national authorities. It was anticipated that the next WG meeting's main topic will be Academic Integrity. It was indicated that the WG would present the draft statements and the work completed to date at the upcoming BFUG meeting LXXXII, as well as discuss the capacity of the Secretariat in connection to the support given to this WG. Additionally, there was a discussion about suitable experts, and a few names were suggested to contact for the drafting of the statement. ESU offered its assistance with a first draft.

The Co-Chairs thanked the guests and members for their contributions and input to the meeting. No other business was raised.

⁴ Involvement of stakeholders in design and implementation of policy and legal framework.

⁵ Public support to HEIs to pursue community engagement activities.