

EUROPEAN
HIGHER
EDUCATION AREA



TIRANA EHEA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

29 - 30 MAY 2024

Annex 2 to the Tirana Communiqué



Rules of Procedures for the European Higher Education Area

The Rules of Procedures for the European Higher Education Area consist of two parts:

Part 1 sets out the Rules of Procedure for the European Higher Education Area (RoP-EHEA), which provide the overall framework. Any change of these rules shall be subject to the decision of Ministers. The RoP-EHEA shall come into force when adopted by Ministers.

Part 2 will set out the Rules of Procedure of the Bologna Follow-up Group and its sub-structures (RoP-BFUG). It can be subject to changes, decided by BFUG, as far as these are in full compliance with the RoP-EHEA (Part 1). Otherwise, such changes require change in the RoP-EHEA and endorsement by Ministers. The RoP-EHEA shall prevail over the RoP-BFUG.

The present document comprises this first part, the Rules of Procedure (RoP-EHEA), by which the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) will be governed, as adopted at the Tirana Ministerial Conference, on 30 May 2024.

The part 2 (RoP-BFUG) will be on the agenda for approval by the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG), following the 2024 Tirana Ministerial Conference.

PART 1 RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA - RoP-EHEA

We, the Ministers responsible for higher education of the States, which are members of the European Higher Education Area, meeting in Tirana on 29 and 30 May 2024;

Considering that over its 25 years of existence, the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area have provided a successful and unique model for coordinated policy reform, taken forward through cooperation between public authorities, higher education institutions, students and staff, respecting the roles and prerogatives of each;

Reaffirming our continued commitment to the European Higher Education Area through cooperation on and coordination of higher education reform and policy development across Europe with the participation of public authorities, higher education institutions, students, and staff through their representative organisations; as well as cooperation with international institutions and governmental and non-governmental organisations with competence in higher education;

Reaffirming that the aim of the European Higher Education Area is to enhance the quality of higher education as well as academic mobility and cooperation;

Reaffirming that the aim of the European Higher Education Area is to strengthen the role of higher education, in and its contribution to our societies, to make them more inclusive, sustainable and resilient, to maintain and strengthen a culture of democracy and human rights, and to build peaceful relations marked by mutual confidence across Europe, and with global partners;

Reaffirming that through its policies and practice, the European Higher Education Area fosters and consolidates the fundamental values of higher education: academic freedom, academic integrity, institutional autonomy, participation of students and staff in higher education governance, and public responsibility for and of higher education;

Considering that at its present stage of development, the European Higher Education Area requires an enhanced framework to fulfil its ambitious mission and achieve the changes that our higher education sectors but also our societies require;

ADOPT these Rules of Procedure for the European Higher Education Area. Its provisions apply to the Ministerial Conferences, the Bologna Follow-up Group and its working structures, including the Secretariat of the European Higher Education Area.

I GUIDING PRINCIPLES

I.1 A process built on European cooperation

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is a voluntary intergovernmental process, built on the Bologna Process, through which its members and consultative members jointly develop policies and soft-law commitments. These are adopted by the competent public authorities of its member States and implemented within each education system, in collaboration and consultation with the representatives of the higher education community, institutions, students and staff. These Rules of Procedure are to guide the operations of the EHEA in the light of established policies, processes and practices.

I.2 Policies and instruments

Ministers identify the policy areas and measures through the declarations and Communiqués they adopt at their regular Ministerial Conferences or in any other setting they may find appropriate for decision making. They may decide to establish frameworks, standards, guidelines, and other mechanisms to further and ensure implementation through coordination, cooperation and mutual support at European level.

I.3 The Bologna Follow-up Group

Between Ministerial Conferences, the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG), where all members and consultative members are represented, develops, adopts and implements the work programme of the EHEA, in accordance with the priorities set by Ministers.

I.4 Co- and Vice-Chairs

The EHEA and its structures are chaired by two Co-Chairs appointed for a period of six months, normally from 1 January to 30 June and from 1 July to 31 December. One Co-Chair represents a European Union member State and the other a non-European Union member State of the EHEA.

The order of the European Union Co-Chairs shall normally follow the order of Presidencies of the Council of the European Union. The order of the non-European Union Co-Chairs normally follows the names of the States in English alphabetical order. For both, the order may nevertheless be modified by the BFUG in agreement with the States members concerned.

The Vice-Chair of the European Higher Education Area represents the State member hosting the forthcoming Ministerial Conference and holds office for the period between two Ministerial Conferences and during the Ministerial Conference organised by the respective member State.

I.5 Ethics

The EHEA shall be developed, maintained and governed in accordance with its fundamental values and in observation of high ethical standards. The BFUG shall develop a specific Code of Ethics for its own work and its working structures, including the Secretariat.

I.6 Implementation of agreed policies

All members commit to act in good faith and as such do their utmost, within their respective education systems and contexts, to further the implementation of policies and decisions adopted by Ministers.

II MEMBERSHIP

The EHEA has members and consultative members, as listed in Annex 1.

II.1 Members

States party to the European Cultural Convention are eligible for membership of the EHEA provided they demonstrate their willingness to pursue and implement the objectives and commitments of the Bologna Process in their higher education systems¹. The European Commission is equally a member of the EHEA.

II.2 Consultative members

European level representative organisations with a legitimate interest in and commitment to, higher education, and intergovernmental organisations representative of public authorities with competence in higher education policy at European level, are eligible for consultative membership of the EHEA.

II.3 EHEA partners

The BFUG may grant organisations that do not fulfil the criteria for consultative membership an association with the EHEA, as EHEA partners. They are invited to Ministerial Conferences and can be invited to the BFUG meetings as determined by the RoP-BFUG. Any decision to grant EHEA partner status shall be

¹ Cf Berlin Communiqué.

communicated to Ministers and shall be considered in Annex 2 to these RoP- EHEA, which lists the EHEA partners.

II.4 European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education

The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) was established under the Bologna Process, with a mandate to establish a register of quality assurance agencies that operate in substantial compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG). It may participate in the BFUG and its structures, without voting rights.

III ACCESSION, WITHDRAWAL AND EXCLUSION

III.1 Accession

Ministers have the exclusive competence to accept new members and consultative members of the EHEA, usually at the regular Ministerial Conference. Applications for membership and consultative membership are to be submitted to the BFUG and will be examined in accordance with the provisions detailed in the RoP-BFUG.

Any member, consultative member or EHEA partner may withdraw from the EHEA upon notification in writing to the BFUG Co-Chairs, duly signed by its appropriate authority, and addressed to the Secretariat of the EHEA. Withdrawal will be effective one month after the receipt of the notification by the Secretariat.

III.2 Suspension and exclusion

Ministers or the BFUG may decide to suspend a member or consultative member, from some or all activities of the EHEA, should it pursue policies or actions that significantly contradict the commitments of the EHEA, constitute a significant violation of its values or confirm an explicit publicly expressed intention to do so. Ministers have the exclusive competence to exclude a member or a consultative member. Under the same criteria, the BFUG may suspend or exclude an EHEA partner.

IV GOVERNING BODIES

IV.1 Governing bodies of the European Higher Education Area

The EHEA has the following governance bodies:

The Ministerial Conference;

The BFUG, with its Board, the two Co-Chairs, and the Vice Chair.

IV.2 The Ministerial Conference

Role and composition

The Ministerial Conference is the highest decision-making authority of the EHEA. It is composed of Ministers responsible for higher education of the State members of the EHEA or their representatives, and of representatives of the highest possible rank with competence in higher education policy of the European Commission and of the consultative members. Delegations representing countries/education systems also include a leader of a higher education institution and a democratically elected student representative.

Process and schedule

The Ministerial Conference meets in regular session at least every three years, and as far as possible in physical presence. Extraordinary meetings are held by decision of the BFUG Co-Chairs or when requested in writing by at least one third of the Ministers and duly authorised representatives of the European Commission and the consultative members.

Competences and tasks

The Ministerial Conference sets its own agenda and takes decisions as appropriate. It has exclusive competence in matters concerning:

- Determining the major goals and priorities of the EHEA.
- The adoption of declarations and Communiqués.
- The adoption of standards, guidelines, and other instruments, which have been formally agreed and are therefore considered as binding on the EHEA and its members.
- The admission or exclusion of members and consultative members of the EHEA.
- The decision on the host and venue of Ministerial Conferences and the Global Policy Fora.
- Any modification of the RoP-EHEA.

IV.3 The Bologna Follow-up Group

The BFUG oversees and directs the development of the EHEA between Ministerial Conferences, ensures the implementation of commitments adopted by Ministers, develops its work programme on this basis and prepares issues for discussion and decision by Ministers. It is made up of duly authorised representatives, with competence in higher education policy matters, of the members and consultative members of the EHEA. The BFUG, its Board, its Co-Chairs and Vice-Chair, the EHEA Secretariat and its other working structures conduct their work in accordance with the RoP-EHEA, and the RoP-BFUG, that it adopted itself.

The BFUG Board is an advisory committee of the BFUG to support it in its activities, including the preparation of its meetings, to enhance efficiency in the management of the EHEA, and ensure its continuity. As such, the responsibilities of the Board consist of coordinating and monitoring the effective implementation of the work programme.

The members of the Board are the present, outgoing, and incoming BFUG Co-Chairs, the BFUG Vice-Chair, the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the European University Association, the European Students' Union, and the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education. One of the Co-Chairs of each of the BFUG working structures according to the work plan of the respective period is invited to participate in Board meetings, without decision-making competence.

IV.4 Working language

The working language of the EHEA is English. The host of the Ministerial Conference may, at its discretion, enable the use of other languages.

V. DECISION MAKING

V.1 Consensus

At all levels, decisions concerning the EHEA are to be made by consensus.

V.2 Voting

Decisions are to be reached primarily by consensus, but in exceptional circumstances, mainly on procedural issues, the BFUG Co-Chairs may decide to take a decision by vote. Votes are limited to the members of the EHEA. Each member has two votes and indicates to the Co-Chairs who will cast the votes on its behalf. There shall be no vote in absence (by proxy). But where a delegation is made up of more than one legal constituent, one of these may vote on behalf of the other constituent provided the latter expressly authorises it to do so by indicating this to the Co-Chairs.

In physical and online meetings, votes are cast publicly, unless at least one delegation requests a secret ballot, with due controls ensuring that only those entitled to cast a vote are able to do so. When voting in presence is not possible, voting may take place by correspondence (letter, email or another electronic means), to be organised by the Secretariat. In this case, the vote cannot be taken by secret ballot.

V.3 Voting regime

If, in exceptional circumstances and in spite of the best efforts of the BFUG Co-Chairs, no consensus can be achieved, decisions can be taken by vote. Votes shall be decided by a majority of the valid votes cast. On matters concerning the following, decisions nevertheless require two thirds of the valid votes cast:

- Adoption of the priorities of the EHEA.
- Adoption of standards, guidelines, instruments and goals.
- The admission, suspension and exclusion of members or consultative members.
- Modifications of the RoP-EHEA.

There shall be no voting on the adoption of the Communiqué.

The quorum shall be two thirds of the members entitled to vote. If no quorum is reached, voting takes place at the following ordinary session or, if the matter needs to be decided sooner, at an extraordinary session, held in physical presence, or online, to be called with a notice of a minimum of two weeks, or by correspondence. No quorum will then be set.

VI GLOBAL POLICY FORUM

Throughout its work, the BFUG seeks to establish dialogue on policies and actions of common concern with partners in other regions.

A Global Policy Forum, which invites international government representatives and organisations is organised, usually in conjunction with Ministerial Conferences. The international partners should be involved in the preparation of the Forum and of the statement that it is to adopt. Invitations should be agreed by the BFUG, which shall consult the host of the Ministerial Conference.

VII EHEA SECRETARIAT

The Secretariat provides neutral, administrative and operational support to the Ministerial Conference, the BFUG and its Board, chairs and working structures. It operates under the authority of the BFUG, is fully accountable to it, and independent of the country or organisation within which it is located.

It should be appropriately equipped, in terms of staff and resources, and sustainable, especially regarding its funding model, and should be strictly non-profit. The Secretariat should be able to accept secondments from EHEA members or consultative members.

Further details are laid down in the RoP-BFUG.

VIII FINAL PROVISIONS

VIII.1 Adoption and modification of Rules of Procedure for the European Higher Education Area

The present Rules of Procedure for the EHEA were adopted at the Ministerial Conference of the EHEA in Tirana, taking place on 29 and 30 May 2024. They may subsequently be modified by the Ministers.

VIII.2 Safeguarding and dissemination of the Rules to members and consultative members

The Rules of Procedure for the EHEA are made public on the EHEA website. The EHEA Secretariat provides the competent authorities of all members and consultative members with a certified copy.

Annexes

Annex 1 EHEA members and consultative members

The countries, institutions and organisations listed below have been accepted as members or consultative members. Membership of the EHEA is governed by Article II of the RoP-EHEA.

Members
Albania
Andorra
Armenia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Belarus (suspended from participation in the EHEA work programme and representation in all EHEA governing bodies as of 12 April 2022)
Belgium Flemish Community Belgium French Community
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Bulgaria
Croatia
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
European Commission
Finland
France
Georgia
Germany
Greece
Holy See
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Italy
Kazakhstan
Latvia
Liechtenstein
Lithuania
Luxembourg

Malta
Moldova
Montenegro
Netherlands
North Macedonia
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Russian Federation (suspended from participation in the EHEA work programme and representation in all EHEA governing bodies as of 12 April 2022)
San Marino
Serbia
Slovak Republic
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Türkiye
United Kingdom
United Kingdom (Scotland)
Ukraine

Consultative Members
BusinessEurope
Council of Europe
Education International
European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)
European Students' Union (ESU)
European University Association (EUA)
European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE)
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

As an independent institution established by the EHEA, participating without voting rights with similar status as consultative members
European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)

EAnnex 2 EHEA Partners

Partners
Association Européenne des Conservatoires, Académies de Musique et Musikhochschulen (AEC)
European Association for International Education (EAIE)
Council of European Professional and Managerial Staff (EUROCADRES)
European Council for Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers (EURODOC)
EUROSCIENCE

Annex 3 Working structures of the BFUG

As stated in Article V RoP-BFUG, the BFUG may establish Working Groups and other structures, in order to fulfil its tasks. The following table lists the most common types of working structures and their functions. It does not exclude different uses of existing, and development of new types of working structures.

Approach	Description	Example
Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Usually a group with more than 10 members □ Open to participation of all BFUG members and consultative members □ Established to conduct work on core tasks, and to contribute to policy development □ Some are standing WGs, or continue over several working cycles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Group on Monitoring • Working Group on Social Dimension • Working Group on Values
Coordination Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Oversees and coordinates activities, also in collaboration with parties or stakeholders who are not BFUG members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BFUG Coordination Group of Implementation of key commitments (BICG) • Coordination Group on Global Dialogue
Advisory Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Accompanies a verification process and/or elaborates a document for the BFUG, to advise Ministers for decision taking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory group Support of the Belarus Roadmap • Advisory group for the Social Dimension • Advisory group for Learning and Teaching in its 2018-2020 work programme.
Task Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Established to explore or fulfil certain limited and concretely described tasks □ Limited in duration □ May be limited in participation, to ensure expertise on the issues and fast results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task Force on Knowledge Sharing • Task Force for the revision of the Rules of Procedure • A Task Force is also established to assist aspiring members and consultative members • Task Force on Fundamental Values in the 2018–2020 work programme
Support to the Roadmap of new members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Established to assist a new member or consultative member during its first period of membership □ Participants are representative of the new member, and of the BFUG, selected due to their individual and institutional capacity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There have been two Roadmap groups, for Belarus in 2015-2018 (Advisory Group), and for San Marino (Working Group), in 2021-2024

Thematic Peer Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Established to enable mutual learning and enhance implementation of key commitments at national level ☐ Usually requires the creation of action plans from members in order to pursue objectives related to the implementation of the key commitments ☐ Possible involvement of experts and stakeholders next to the BFUG delegates. 	
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Annex 4 Procedure and criteria for membership

I. Requirements for membership of the EHEA

Applicant countries are requested to confirm their adherence to the following principles and objectives:

- International mobility of students and staff
- Autonomous higher education institutions
- Academic freedom and integrity
- Student participation in the governance of higher education
- Public responsibility for higher education
- The social dimension of higher education

The application has to be complemented by a report, detailing the higher education policies of the country in the light of the Bologna Process and outlining how the principles and objectives of the Bologna Process have been and/or will be implemented. The Report should cover the following topics:

- General information on the higher education system and partnership with stakeholders
- Degree system
 - Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle
 - Stage of implementation of the third cycle
 - Relationship between higher education and research
 - Access and admission to the next cycle
 - Employability of graduates/cooperation with employers
 - Implementation of the national qualifications framework
- National implementation of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG)
 - Review of the QA system with respect to the ESG and national support for implementation
 - Internal quality assurance in higher education institutions
 - Stage of development of external quality assurance system
 - Level of student participation

- Level of international participation
- Recognition of degrees and study periods
 - Stage of implementation of the Diploma Supplement
 - National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
 - Stage of implementation of the ECTS
- Lifelong learning
 - Recognition of prior learning
 - Flexible learning paths
- Joint Degrees
 - Establishment and recognition of Joint Degrees
 - Removing obstacles to student and staff mobility
 - Portability of loans and grants
- The Attractiveness of the EHEA and cooperation with other parts of the world
 - Implementation of strategy
- Future challenges
 - Main challenges for higher education
- Social dimension of higher education
 - Current state of affairs
 - Progress towards a more inclusive higher education system (strategy for the future)
 - Information on the national responsibility for the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the national strategies.

The application has to be signed by the (national) Minister responsible for higher education, submitted by a given deadline, and be complemented by the required national report.

When an application is received, a confirmation of receipt is sent to the applicant country; the BFUG Chairs, assisted by the Bologna Secretariat, verify that the application satisfies the prescribed procedures.

The BFUG (with support from Co-chairs, Vice-Chair, Secretariat, Council of Europe and/or the BFUG Board) assesses the application with the accompanying national report on the basis of the criteria for admission described above and agrees on the recommendation to be given to the Ministers.

II. Requirements for consultative membership and EHEA partners

The criteria for consultative membership are defined as follows:

- Added value to the Bologna Process

Any new consultative member or EHEA partner should provide added value to the Process, meaning that their contribution should have a European scope and be relevant to the work of the BFUG. Additional criteria on added value for new consultative members: their contribution cannot be easily covered by an existing

consultative member and cooperation with the BFUG cannot be better covered at another level.

- Relevance of the stakeholder group

Organisations should have higher education as a central field of interest. The stakeholder group should be relevant to the principles, action lines and goals of the Bologna Process. Organisations that may contribute to stronger links between higher education and the labour market are relevant to the Process. Organisations that may contribute to stronger links between higher education and other educational fields may also be relevant. Organisations representing special professions do not fit with the BFUG, which deals with general principles of, and structures in, higher education.

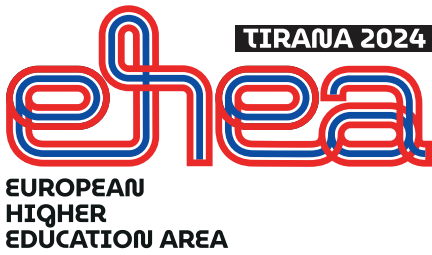
- Representativeness

A new consultative member or EHEA partner should not be a sub-organisation of a member or consultative member of the Bologna Follow-up Group. Additional criteria on representativeness for new consultative members: be the most representative organisation in its field of interest, be a European organisation or a European branch of an organisation, accept organisations from all the EHEA member States as full members, have full members from no less than 50% of the Bologna countries and have full members from EHEA member States outside the EU/EEA and EU candidate countries.

- Organisational form

Either be a non-governmental organisation (NGO) or an inter-governmental organisation. Additional criteria on organisational form for new consultative members: its mandate should reflect its relevance to the Bologna Process and its right to give an opinion on behalf of its members on matters relating to the Bologna Process.

Organisations wishing to become consultative members or EHEA partners need to send an application to the EHEA Secretariat, documenting that they satisfy the listed criteria. The Secretariat then puts the request on the agenda of the BFUG that in turn will assess the application. The decision is taken by the Ministerial Conference for consultative members and by the BFUG for EHEA partners.



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