

Information Note re Bologna Process/European Higher Education Area (EHEA)

1. The Bologna Process

There are currently 49 participating countries in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), which implement reforms on higher education on the basis of common key values – such as freedom of expression, autonomy for institutions, independent students' unions, academic freedom, free movement of students and staff. The European Commission has a status similar to that of a country member.

In addition to the country members the Bologna Process also includes key stakeholders as Consultative Members. These include students' representatives (ESU), the European association of universities (EUA), the representatives of higher education institutions (EURASHE), qualifications and quality assurance bodies (ENQA, EQAR), the representatives of teachers and staff, the Council of Europe, and representatives of employers.

Through the Bologna Process, countries, institutions and stakeholders of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) area continuously adapt their higher education systems to make them more compatible and to strengthen their quality assurance mechanisms. A number of key developments have been facilitated and strengthened on a European-wide basis through the Bologna Process over the past two decades. These include the use of ECTS, the adoption of the Diploma Supplement, the development of Qualifications Frameworks, and standards and guidelines for the quality assurance of higher education in the EHEA.

A Ministerial Conference is held every 2-3 years, which results in a Communiqué being adopted. The most recent conference was held in Rome in November 2020.

2. Role of BFUG in the Bologna Process

The Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) oversees the Bologna Process between the ministerial conferences.

In that regard it has a Secretariat, which is hosted by the country which will hold the next Ministerial Conference. The Secretariat, currently held by Albania, provides administrative and operational support for the BFUG and its Board, including the planning of meetings and taking minutes; supporting the various BFUG Groups (AG, WG, CG,

BICG, TPGs) and other structures, and in agreement with the Co-Chairs, taking minutes and preparing the draft reports.

The BFUG is co-chaired by an EU and a non-EU country for six month periods. The EU Co-chairs follow the EU Council Presidency running order. The non-EU Co-Chairs are assigned a sequence, which is agreed as part of the work plan for the period between each Ministerial Conference. These roles are currently held by France and Azerbaijan.

The next full BFUG meeting will be held in Strasbourg, France on 10th/11th April 2022.