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**MEETING OF THE BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP  
Athens, 9 April 2014 - 10 April 2014  
Draft Outcome of Proceedings**

**Participant list**

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## **1. Welcome and Introduction to the BFUG Meeting by the Chairs**

### **Welcome by Greece**

Mr. Athanasios Kyriazis, the Secretary General for Education & Religious Affairs of the Hellenic Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, welcomed the participants and stressed that Greece has actively been involved in the Bologna Process (BP). In 1999 when the Bologna Declaration was signed, it was unimaginable that in 2014 the EHEA would have 47 member countries. The Bologna reforms have positively changed the image of higher education (HE) by creating trust and quality. A lot has been achieved since 1999 but still there are barriers to overcome. Furthermore, HE institutions should attract the students while taking into account the needs of the labour market. Finally, it was highlighted that the attractiveness of the EHEA should be maintained and student mobility should be increased.

After a brief introduction of the main issues to be addressed at the BFUG meeting, the Secretary General expressed his best wishes for a productive and meaningful meeting.

Ms. Athina Plessa Papadaki, the Head of the Directorate for European Union Affairs of the Hellenic Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, presented the main priorities of the Greek EU Presidency in the field of education and training policy, which are:

- Social cohesion
- Effective and innovative education and training
- Quality assurance
- Higher education.

For more details as well as the events planned during the Greek EU Presidency and BFUG Co-Chairmanship see the PowerPoint presentation below:



Presidency-presentation\_BFUG\_07ap14.p

**The BFUG was informed that there were 81 participants present at the meeting and the apologies were received from BUSINESSEUROPE and UNESCO. The following countries/organisations were not present at the meeting EUROSTAT, Montenegro, Portugal, Russian Federation, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Ukraine.**

### **Welcome by Kazakhstan**

Ms. Kymbat Beisekina (Kazakhstan) thanked the organisers for the warm welcome as well as the outgoing BFUG Co-Chairs, Lithuania and Georgia, for the productive six-month period of the BFUG Co-Chairmanship. The gratitude was expressed to the Secretariat for the permanent support and good preparation of the meeting documents.

It was highlighted that Kazakhstan is a young country that joined the Bologna Process in 2010 which has given a new impulse for the modernisation of its HE.

The main events organised during the Kazakhstan BFUG Co-Chairmanship were the following:

- BFUG Board meeting, 12 February 2014;
- International conference on "Bologna Structural Reforms: History, Problems and Perspectives", 13-14 February 2014;
- Round table on "Institutional Engagement in Internationalisation", 13 February 2014;
- Seminar on "Academic Mobility: Implementation and Development of the Tools", 29 March 2014.

### **2. Adoption of the agenda**

Documents: BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_2a [Draft agenda]  
BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_2b [Draft annotated agenda]

**The agenda was adopted with the inclusion of two items in "AOB":**

- 1.** Bologna Process Researchers' Conference (FOHE – BPRC), second edition organised by Romania;
- 2.** The European Commission's ideas on the European area of skills and qualifications presented by the EC.

### **3. Draft minutes of the BFUG Board meeting, Astana, 12 February 2014 and adoption of the draft outcome of proceedings of the BFUG meeting, Vilnius, 7-8 November 2013**

Documents: BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_3a [BFUG Board Astana draft minutes]

**The draft outcome of proceedings of the Vilnius BFUG meeting was approved without any amendments. The BFUG also took note of the Astana BFUG Board meeting draft minutes.**

#### **4. Information on the outcomes of the Co-Chairs Coordination meeting**

Document: BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_4 [Co-Chairs Coordination meeting agenda]

Mr. Dimitrios Skiadas (Greece) presented the outcomes of the Co-Chairs' coordination meeting highlighting three main topics dealt with, i.e. the future of the Bologna Process (BP), the BFUG WG Co-Chairs update on the progress of their work with a focus on transversal issues and preparation of the 2015 Yerevan Ministerial events. Furthermore, the BFUG was advised on the key points raised during the preliminary exchange of views on the future of the BP, which are as follows:

- BP has become increasingly political. Hence, in order to ensure active involvement of the Ministers into the process as well as to support the development of the efficiency and quality of higher education systems at national level, the BP goals and objectives should be relevant to the daily concerns of the EHEA Ministers.
- In the same vein, the introduction of such new topics as the integration of innovative technologies into higher education could be of interest for the Ministers.
- To alleviate the uneven implementation of the BP, targeted support could be provided to the EHEA countries that are still at earlier stages of implementation. Also, for the same purpose, those EHEA countries that do not have active participation, should be re-invited into the BP. Strengthening of the links between the BFUG/BFUG structures' country representatives and their respective HE Ministries would have desirable impact on the BP implementation.
- Finally, there is a need to bolster ties between the European Research Area (ERA) and the EHEA.

#### **5. Launching a dialogue on the future of the Bologna Process**

Documents: BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_5a [Bologna Process revisited]  
BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_5a.1. [Spanish non-paper\_Bologna Process revisited]  
BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_5b [Roadmap for the discussion of the future of the Bologna Process]

Mr. Germain Dondelinger (Luxemburg), on behalf of the number of countries and organisations that have raised the concern of the future of the Bologna Process (BP), presented the non-paper. It was explained that the paper was entitled the Bologna Process revisited since it invites the countries to rethink the BP.

It was reminded that the BP had been launched in order to make the Europe more attractive and competitive. Indeed, a lot has been achieved; however not all the ambitions have been fulfilled. Parallel to the instruments introduced by the BP, it has initiated debates

around such issues as social dimension, employability, mobility, structural reforms etc. At the same time, these aspirational goals were not fully and properly translated into operational reality. Moreover, there is a need to consider whether the BP is still the adequate tool to respond to the challenges of the over-changing reality.

The decreasing participation of the Ministers in the Ministerial meetings should be tackled. Thus, the issue is very serious and the participation of all the EHEA countries to the discussion of the issue is highly important. The BP should be made politically relevant and this means that it is something that needs to be utilised. Thus, there is a need to think how to change the HE so that it meets the demands of the society.

Last but not least, it was noted that the document raises several critical issues and launches an open-minded dialogue the outcome of which should provide an answer for the forthcoming 2015 Ministerial events.

The BFUG stressed the importance of the issue, its relevance as well as its timeliness. Moreover, it was highlighted that the BP has been a success and it has provoked radical changes in the HE across Europe. The key issues defined in 1999 have evolved. At the same time, there is a challenge of uneven implementation. Thus, it is the right time to find out how to direct the Process in the future as well as how to motivate the countries lagging behind.

It was also highlighted that the dialogue should reflect the viewpoints of the BFUG on the content and governance structure.

The following significant issues were raised:

- **As for the content**, it was stressed that one of the most important things is to address topics that would be interesting for the Ministers. It is obvious that some EHEA countries are more active than the others. This depends also on the individuals involved.
- There is a need to look at the issues that lend themselves to the Bologna style cooperation and see whether these are the priority issues for the Ministers and vice versa whether the priority issues for the Ministers lend themselves to this kind of cooperation.
- The reality of non-participation should be addressed. The participation to the meetings is not satisfactory and only the commitment of all the members to the BP can ensure its success.
- Professional recognition of qualifications is still a challenge. There is a need to investigate whether the EU criteria can be applicable across the EHEA.
- Mobility and removal of the barriers are vital issues as well. Ministers need one or two key messages rather than ten messages in a complicated wording. Thus, there is a need for simplification of key documents by filtering out some specific outcomes.
- Hence, the Communiqué can be shorter and not exceed one page.
- Probably the Ministers should be given a chance to change it as well as really discuss and decide the subjects.

- **Regarding the governance structure**, it should be reshaped without going to the direction of becoming an organisation which will undergo monitoring and evaluation.
- The length of the provision of the Secretariat responsibilities should also be reconsidered and maybe set for a longer term composing of the employees from different countries.
- The e-mailing procedure should be reviewed as a lot of issues can be discussed in that way without being included in the agendas of the meetings, which could be made more ambitious.
- There is a need to decide what the priority goals should be for the future. Moreover, they should be focused on a limited number of issues shared by everybody. At the same time the priorities and challenges faced by the national/regional governments in the HE management need to be reflected much better in the focus of the work done by the BFUG.
- It should also be taken into consideration that the member countries have started from different points but they should all have the same direction of travel. Of course there can be flexibility as long as it is not so great that some of the countries stop traveling or completely change their direction.
- The intergovernmental nature of the work should also be taken into consideration.
- For the development of the issue, a format of the encouraging discussion should be defined. The extraordinary meeting held in Sarajevo on 24-25 June 2008 can be a good example.
- The timetable of the procedures allowing for political consultations in between the meetings should be developed.
- There is a need to ensure that each delegation speaks with the backing, on behalf of the political authorities.
- There is no doubt that the BP needs modernisation and one of the issues to reconsider is the gap between the theory and practice.
- The BP should be development into a combination of a process with well-defined actions and strategy. There must be a kind of system that will safeguard a uniform implementation in the countries, which should be monitored.
- One of the major principals of the BP is trust and transparency, so there is no need to shy back to discuss them.
- There is also a need to think whether it is time to start talking systematically about the developing the BP into a convention since it will certainly guarantee implementation.
- Ultimate values and goals of the BP should be redefined and in doing so there is a need to point to three areas, namely quality, innovation and competitiveness.
- At the same time the added value of the BP should not be disregarded. Despite the EHEA diversity, there is a possibility for translating from one system to another. Since the issue of helping the countries which lag behind was stressed, maybe there should

also be a kind of encouragement for those countries that have managed to implement all or nearly all the goals set and maybe they should be included in some pilot projects.

- BP has been a challenge for all the countries. The effectiveness of the implementation of the BP is not the same across the EHEA with the non-EU countries having their additional particularities, including lack of professional and proper experience. Thus, it will be useful to have guidelines for the implementation of the BP.

With regard to the importance of the issue it was decided to have an extraordinary BFUG meeting in September under the Italian and Holy See BFUG Co-chairmanship.

Hence, the BFUG agreed that the non-paper was meant as a starter, therefore all the comments and ideas expressed will be reflected in the input which should be prepared by the Secretariat for being seen as a paper of the whole group. The countries and organisations that have drafted the non-paper will be eager to be involved in the preparatory process. The roadmap prepared by the Secretariat was fine in terms of timing. As for the BFUG meeting in September, in order to ensure productive discussion, the engagement of all the members is important. Therefore, they should come prepared to make a brief statement on the questions below:

1. What are your top priorities?
2. Why?
3. What can the EHEA do about them?
4. How should the issue of the uneven and non-implementation of the BP be addressed?

**Finally, the Chair concluded that the discussion on the future of the BP and the EHEA was very important and interesting. The deliberations stressed the positive element of the BP which is that all the countries benefited from the implementation of the Process. Of course the countries do not move in the same pace but still the pros outweigh the cons. The BFUG wants to move ahead with the BP and it can be accelerated to bring more positive results.**

**As for the future discussions, it will be good to have the text where the views of all the members are expressed. The latter should be prepared by the Secretariat as well as the present and incoming BFUG Co-Chairs. For the next BFUG meeting in September, there is a need to agree on the basic principles and the EHEA members must come prepared for the meeting. Therefore, the four questions indicated above will be drafted for the countries and the countries will be invited to provide their written answers and send them back to the Secretariat. The deadline will probably be in June but the exact date will be announced while circulating the draft outcome of proceedings of the Athens BFUG meeting. The Secretariat will collect the answers for further discussions.**

## **6. Reports from the Chairs of the working groups**

### **6a. WG Reporting on the Bologna Process Implementation**

Document: BFUG\_ GR\_KZ\_39\_6a [Report of the Reporting on the Implementation of the Bologna Process WG]



Mr. Andrejs Rauhvargers (Latvia), the Co-Chair of the **Reporting on the Implementation of the Bologna Process WG**, informed the BFUG that since the last meeting of the WG held on 15 November 2013 in Riga, the finalisation of the BFUG/Eurydice questionnaire for the 2015 Report has been overseen. Moreover, the electronic version of the questionnaire has been sent to the BFUG members with a deadline for completion of 30 April 2014.

It was also highlighted that taking into account the discussions on the future of the Bologna Process, the 2015 Implementation Report should use more visibility tools as well as maps in order to present clear data. Besides, it will be good if at the 2015 Ministerial Conference more than 15 minutes are allocated for the presentation of the Implementation Report as it will be approximately 200 pages.

To the concern of the BFUG regarding the procedure of the discussion of the new scorecard indicators, it was recalled the recommendation of the Astana Board meeting that the final decision on the inclusion of new scorecard indicators should be made after the data collection on the basis of the proposal made by the WG .

**6b. Structural Reforms WG report including the updates from Ad-Hoc WG on the Third Cycle, Ad-Hoc WG on the Revision of the ECTS Users' Guide, RPL Network, and NQF**

Document: BFUG\_ GR\_KZ\_39\_6b [Report of the Structural Reforms WG]

Mr. Sjur Bergan (CoE), the Co-Chair of the **Structural Reforms WG**, highlighted that the last meeting of the WG was on 10-11 March 2014 in Vatican City, with the main focus on the final report to be submitted to the BFUG in autumn 2014.

It was stressed that the WG took to heart the recommendation made during the Astana Board meeting that the WG reports should be focused and contain clear and specific political recommendations to the Ministers for the 2015 Yerevan Ministerial Conference. Thus, the WG has decided that a focused executive summary with a limited set of political recommendations should be produced.

The outline of the draft report and the tentative timetable in 2014 were attached to the WG report.

The Co-Chair also briefly presented the updates from the four substructures of the WG, which are:

- Ad-hoc group on Third Cycle Qualifications
- Ad-hoc group on the Revision of the ECTS Users' Guide
- Network on Recognition of Prior learning (RPL)
- Network of National Correspondents for Qualifications Frameworks.

It was noted that the substructures of the WG are working well but nevertheless there are concerns about the participation. This is a very important issue, since non-participation will result in the lack of benefiting from each other's experience as well as not being able to voice the concerns of the network members during the decision making.

## **6c. Social Dimension and Lifelong Learning WG**

Document: BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_6c [Report of the Social Dimension and Lifelong Learning WG]

Ms. Elisabeth Gehrke (ESU), the Co-Chair of the Social Dimension and Lifelong Learning WG (SD&LLL WG) updated the BFUG on the WG's recent activities. The WG's fourth meeting, which had a focus on access, was held on 3-4 April 2014 following the PL4SD interim conference in Vienna, Austria. It was explained that within the WG the work had been reorganised in 4 thematic groups (TGs) (i.e. TGs on access, LLL and employability, teaching and learning, and student supports and services) according to the thematic strands under the WG's remit.

During the meeting the following documents were presented and discussed: the Strategy for the Social Dimension and LLL, Guidelines for National Access Plans, and the outline of the WG's draft final report. The documents will be redrafted to take on board the comments and suggestions received.

As for outcomes produced by the TGs, they will feed into the final report, Strategy, or Guidelines for national action plans, as appropriate.

### **6c.1. Update on the Peer Learning for the Social Dimension (PL4SD) project**

Mr. Martin Unger (IHS, PL4SD) delivered a comprehensive presentation on the progress of the PL4SD project emphasising its three pillars – the database, country reviews, and dialogue/dissemination activities.

The BFUG was advised that the PL4SD database had successfully collected 235 measures addressing the social dimension of higher education from 25 EHEA countries. In addition, it had been supplemented by a number of research papers and studies on the topic.

With this respect, the BFUG country representatives were asked to encourage their respective countries to take part in the second round of data collection to start in May 2014.

4 countries, namely, Armenia, Croatia, Lithuania, and Romania committed to take part in the country reviews. The country reviews for the first three countries will take place in 2014, whereas should there be sufficient funds, the review will be carried out in Romania country in 2015 as well.

On 2-3 April 2014 PL4SD interim conference was held in Vienna, Austria, which aimed at exchanging experiences and stimulating peer learning from other countries on how to improve the social dimension of higher education in the EHEA. The conference also marked the launch of [the online database](#). The final dissemination conference will be held jointly with EUROSTUDENT on 25-27 February 2015 in Vienna.

For more details, please refer to the .ppt below:



PL4SD at BFUG  
10\_4\_2014.pptx

## **6d. Mobility and Internationalisation WG including the update from NESSIE**

Document: BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_6d [Report of the Mobility and Internationalisation WG]  
BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_6d.1. [Target on incoming mobility]  
BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_6d.2. [Guidelines on staff mobility]  
BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_6d.3. [Staff mobility: Proposal for the Yerevan Communiqué]

The report of the Mobility and Internationalisation WG was presented by Mr. Peter Greisler (Germany), the Co-Chair of the WG, who noted that the last meeting of the WG was on 23-24 January 2014 in Vienna. The NESSIE activity report was attached to the report of the WG.

It was highlighted that the WG presents two documents for the approval by the BFUG, i.e. target on incoming mobility and guidelines on staff mobility. Moreover, the WG suggested the proposal on staff mobility for the Yerevan Communiqué.

As for the target on incoming mobility of students into the EHEA, the following proposals were made:

- To call upon all EHEA countries to consider making an increase in incoming student mobility from outside the EHEA an objective in their internationalisation strategies.
- To call upon Eurostat and the relevant national data collectors to collect and report on data on credit and degree mobility into the EHEA.

Concerning the document on staff mobility, the WG has come up with the definition of staff mobility as well as presents recommendations which will serve to promote staff mobility.

At the same time it was emphasised that while speaking about the encouragement and support of staff mobility, the financial aspect of the institutions as well as the discussions on the future of the Bologna Process should be taken into consideration. Thus, the BFUG suggested to make the focus of the recommendation and the proposal for the Communiqué aspirational and sharper taking into account the EHEA diversity and bring out the political responsibility. Additionally, there is a need to clarify whether the request to the Ministers regarding the increase in incoming student mobility is what all the EHEA countries want, since based on the EU statistics the majority of non-EU students usually go to one specific EU country. Hence, the WG should focus on the barriers on student mobility.

**After the deliberations of the BFUG, the Chair concluded that concept and the meaning of the texts are endorsed; however the WG should further work on the fine-tuning of the wording.**

## **7. Updates on the Pathfinder group on automatic recognition**

Documents: BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_7 [Report of the Pathfinder group on automatic recognition]

Mr. Adam Tyson (EC) introduced the report of the Pathfinder group on automatic recognition. The BFUG was informed that the last meeting of the group was on 6 February

2014, where the focus was on the progress from Pathfinder group countries (Benelux, Belgium/Flemish Community, Nordic and Baltic ENIC/NARIC, Western Balkans, Germany) since the last meeting. Moreover, the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) provided an update of the ESNSurvey 2014's results, reporting on students' views on recognition. At the same meeting the European Commission informed the countries about the E+ Key Action 3: Prospective initiatives-call, providing support to policy experimentations trailing improved recognition practices:

[https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/funding/key-action-3-prospective-initiatives-european-policy-experimentation-eacea-102014\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/funding/key-action-3-prospective-initiatives-european-policy-experimentation-eacea-102014_en)

Last but not least, it was highlighted that the group discussed the possible content for its report to the BFUG and is in the process of drafting an initial version. It plans to submit the report to the Structural Reforms WG in time to incorporate its views before the BFUG meeting in autumn 2014. The next meeting of the Pathfinder group will be held on 15 May 2014.

## **8. Proposal for the Revised European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA**

Documents: BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_8a [Proposal for the Revised European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA]

BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_8b [Commentary of the ESG revision steering group on the comments received through the open consultations and from the BFUG]

Ms. Lesley Wilson (EUA) briefed the BFUG on the revision process of the revised draft of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG). It was outlined that the revision process was based on the assumption that the ESG are a) not a policy documents, rather a guide for practical work in quality assurance and b) about quality assurance, not quality, as such. In light of this, one of the main concerns of the steering group had been to ensure coherence in the three parts of the text. Moreover, the process was guided by the understanding that the ESG need to be applicable to the diverse programmes and modes of provision observed in the EHEA.

Furthermore, it was highlighted that the revised draft ESG draws upon a significant number of comments received during the consultation period from a wide range of actors in the EHEA, in particular the national ministries and the BFUG. It was acknowledged that the input led to important changes and improvements in the current draft. As it stands, the proposal reflects the broad consensus reached by all the stakeholder organisations involved in the process. It was stressed once again that for the ESG applicability concerns, further changes should reflect a consensus among the BFUG members.

Please refer to the document [BFUG GR KZ 39 8b](#) as well as the presentation below for more information, including the detailed commentary on the rationale and approach the steering group adopted towards integrating the proposals received in the revised draft ESG.



Proposal\_ESG\_Athe  
nsBFUG\_9April.pptx

In general, the BFUG was ambivalent about the basis upon which the steering group had been working – to produce a coherent text for the revised ESG which all higher education institutions (HEIs), quality assurance agencies (QAAs) and HE systems can implement. There were different contradicting opinions expressed on

- whether or not the revised draft ESG in the current state would serve the main purpose, i.e. to provide practical guidelines for QA and can or cannot be recommended for adoption in Yerevan in 2015.
- whether the ESG is a political document or merely one of the Bologna instruments.

A number of general comments and remarks were made:

- The revision of the ESG is an excellent opportunity to make a difference not only to QA as such but to the quality of HE systems. Failure to take the opportunity could have an undesirable impact on students and consequently on the society at large.
- Other incentives e.g. increased financial support to HEIs could give an impetus to HE systems in their efforts to move forward.
- The revision of the ESG could take into account the Commission Report on Progress in Quality Assurance in HE within the European Union (EU)<sup>1</sup> which stressed the need for a thorough-going revision of the ESG that would move away from the procedural approaches towards those that could put in place more quality culture in HEIs and create a cycle of quality enhancement in HEIs, if not established yet.
- In most EHEA countries quality and QA are policy priorities. In addition, the proposal for the revised ESG will be presented for the Ministers' endorsement in 2015 in Yerevan. Hence, it stands to reason that the ESG are a political document.
- To achieve these, the revised ESG should support HEIs and QAAs to transform the political objectives – i.a. enhancing graduates' employability, preventing dropout, providing more flexible support for different student groups, enhancing internationalisation, and implementing SCL – into everyday practice at the institutional level since the achievement of these objectives themselves comprise the quality.
- The clear distinction made between the quality and QA, and the focus on teaching and learning in the draft was appreciated.
- The new ESG should be a natural improvement of the current ESG.
- The revised ESG should set aspirations that are shared in all the 47 countries of EHEA. At the same time, the document should remain fit for purpose for a long period of time.
- The current draft is aligned, to a great extent, with the recommendations produced by High Level Group on the Modernisation of HE<sup>2</sup> and the guidelines produced during the on-going revision of the ECTS User's Guide led by the EC.
- The ESG could take into account the Council of EU conclusions on QA to be prepared for the May meeting under the Greek Presidency.

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<sup>1</sup> COM(2014) 29 final

<sup>2</sup>Report to the European Commission on Improving the quality of teaching and learning in Europe's higher education institutions

More specific suggestions for the revision were also made:

- External QA should help HEIs implement Bologna tools (EHEAQF, ECTS, and Diploma Supplement). With this in mind, in Part 2 on standards and guidelines for external QA, a clear reference should be made to these instruments.
- In addition to 1.2, the relationship between intended learning outcomes (LOs) and achieved LOs should be articulated in Standard 1.3 as well. To enhance the confidence of the society towards the awarded degree, HEIs should have in place a system to demonstrate that the intended LOs have been achieved upon graduation. This could be added to 1.2.
- The amendments in 1.4 on student admission, progression, recognition, and certification were welcomed. Yet this part should also require HEIs to have published procedures that would explicitly state how they address student complaints.
- The inclusion of administrative staff in 1.6 and RPL in 1.4 was welcomed.
- 1.6 could be more explicit concerning which student groups can be considered underrepresented (e.g. mature, part time and LLL learners).
- From the quality concern perspective, the academic fraud has certain importance. The guidelines could require HEIs to have published arrangements for addressing this issue.
- In 1.8 on public information, HEIs should be asked to be clearer and provide information that covers both advantages and disadvantages of studying and graduating from the particular institution. The Guidelines should state that the data collected is available publicly and easily accessible. Finally, 1.8 should account for the provision of information on possible career prospects in relation to regulated professions.
- 1.9 should account for the quality of traineeship as well. A reference could be made to the EC study on traineeship arrangements published in 2012<sup>3</sup>.
- When referring to the student-centred learning, the ESG should state that such learning contributes to the personal development of students.
- It was explained that there are no specific references to the Bologna tools in in Part 2, because standard 2.1 makes explicit link between Parts 1 and 2 and therefore includes the idea that the agencies need to take into account everything that is written in Part 1, including the references to the Bologna tools. .
- In Standard 2.4 it should be made clear that external QA should be carried out by groups of external experts that include not only students, but also other external stakeholders including employers.
- It was suggested to have a clearer reference to employability. Yet this is one of the three priorities the EHEA Ministers set for the period 2012-2015.
- The need to have the Standards as an executive summary was questioned.

It should be noted that there were also a number of countries that expressed support to the ESG as they were proposed, and saw no further need for changes.

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<sup>3</sup> European Commission Study on a comprehensive overview on traineeship arrangements in Member States: Final Synthesis Report.

**Ms. Lesley Wilson (EUA) informed the BFUG that the steering group would indicate topics that emerged from the discussion and communicate to the BFUG. The BFUG would be asked to agree on which specific suggestions should be integrated into the draft. For the efficiency purposes of the revision process, an active cooperation of the BFUG is required. The newly revised ESG would be presented at the September BFUG in Rome, Italy.**

#### **9. Revised version of the proposal for the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Degrees**

Document: BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_9 [Proposal for the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, Version 8.1]

This agenda point was presented by Mr. Colin Tück, the director of the EQAR Secretariat. It was noted that based on the decision of the Ministers reflected in the Bucharest Communiqué “to recognise quality assurance decisions of EQAR-registered agencies on joint and double degree programmes”, a small Expert Group was set up to draft the above mentioned proposal. At the same time it was stressed that the initial proposal had been discussed during the last meetings of the Structural Reforms as well as Mobility and Internationalisation WGs and all the comments made during both meetings have been analysed and are reflected in the current version.

Thus, the proposal is based on QF-EHEA, ECTS and ESG (parts 1+2 mainly, as it stands, both in line with current as well as the revised ESG) and is spelled out specifically for joint programmes. Moreover, it is compatible with all types of external QA-whether it is evaluation, accreditation or audit at programme or institutional level.

As for the application of the proposal, it should be done in two main ways:

- Cooperating HEIs need programme accreditation.
- Cooperating HEIs are “self-accredited” for programmes, i.e. accredited/evaluated/audited at institutional level.

The BFUG highlighted the importance of the proposal and made the following comments:

- The proposal raises the attractiveness of the EHEA, as there is a possibility to have joint degrees with the HEIs outside the EHEA.
- National regulations on joint degrees hinder their promotion, therefore it is recommended to remove them.
- If the proposal is adopted, there should be no additional national criteria as joint programmes are not national programmes but international ones.
- This is a quite new instrument and there is a need to be clear about it and use punchy language.
- Though the document is a challenge for the national legal frameworks, in case of proper implementation by the countries, it can solve many problems.

Meanwhile, the BFUG also indicated the following concerns and hesitations:

- The proposal should be more explicit on national criteria.
- It gives some impression that specific standards and guidelines are required for joint degrees, whereas the ESG is enough.
- More information is requested for the European Union Directive 2005/36/EC indicated in the proposal.
- The paper needs some fine-tuning regarding the issue of the countries which do not

have accreditation system at all.

Last but not least, the BFUG noted that the proposal sets three messages for the Ministers:

- 1) Joint degrees are the integral part of the EHEA reforms.
- 2) The document is a good instrument, which can be adopted by the Ministers in 2015.
- 3) There is a need to look at the outline of the remaining obstacles and it will be good if the group could report back in 2018 what has been done for the removal of the obstacles.

With regard to the text of the Communiqué included in the proposal, it was noted that the text should be more ambitious. At least the Ministers should commit themselves to a single quality assurance procedure which will lead to the creation of a kind of free zone/space for the establishment of the joint programmes.

Moreover, in terms of wording, two amendments were suggested for the draft text of the Communiqué:

- On page 2 in the sentence,, We renew our commitment to recognise the outcomes and quality assurance decisions by EQAR-registered agencies on joint programmes. We adopt the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes as a ('a' should be changed to 'the') common basis in order to facilitate the implementation and quality assurance of joint programmes,,.
- On page 3, in the sentence,, The cooperating institutions should select the quality assurance agency from the list of EQAR-registered agencies. In case the external quality assurance procedure results in a formal outcome, it should – dependent on the national legal framework – come in force or be ('be' should be changed to 'is') recognised in all countries where the programme is offered, as agreed in the Bucharest Communiqué,,.

**After the deliberations, the Chair concluded that the principles of the document are agreed by the BFUG and the expert group will take account of all the comments and suggestions made by the participants.**

#### **10. Update on the preparation of the Ministerial Conference and the Fourth Bologna Policy Forum in Yerevan in 2015**

Documents: BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_10a [Update on the 2015 MC and the Fourth BPF in Yerevan]

BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_10b [Bologna policy forum (BPF)\_concept note from the Mobility and Internationalisation WG]

Ms. Karine Harutyunyan (Armenia) briefly introduced the issue under this point of agenda, which provided information on the possible venue, main actors, financial aspects as well as other preparatory measures for the events. Moreover, the agendas of the events are in the process of drafting.

At the end it was noted that the BFUG was invited to discuss the following issues:

- BPF Concept note and the way forward;
- The preferable format and structure of the MC in Yerevan;
- Format of bilateral meetings for ensuring their effectiveness;
- Strategy for identifying speakers (e.g. ask the WGs to suggest speakers).



Mr. Luis Delgado (Spain) stressed the substructure, established under the Mobility and Internationalisation WG, had developed the BPF concept note, which proposes two alternative ways for the organisation of the BPF. Thus, the BFUG should discuss the issues put forward in the paper and make a decision concerning one of the approaches suggested.

The BFUG members noted that:

- More time is needed for the final decision regarding the way of the organisation of the BPF.
- It will be good not only to change the level of the involvement but also the profile of the participants.
- It is preferable to focus on one region and think of specific topics that will be interesting for all the participants.
- The previous experience with the BPFs has shown that the invitation of the whole world to the event does not ensure its success. Thus, the regional approach, namely the focus on the Southern Mediterranean region, is desirable.
- While discussing the issue, the high-level ASEM conference to be organised in May in 2015 should also be taken into account.

Last but not least the representative of the EUA and EI informed the BFUG about their cooperation with the association of the Arab universities.

**Thus, the Chair concluded that the regional focus is more or less accepted by the BFUG; however a decision regarding the topics to be discussed at the Fourth BPF should be made.**

**Finally, it was noted that the Secretariat can already start working on the list of the participants from the Southern Mediterranean region.**

#### **11. BFUG thematic session (Financing of higher education)**

Document: BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_11 [Programme of thematic session on financing of higher education]

The highlights of the discussion are presented as Annex 1 of the present document.

#### **12. Draft work programme of activities of peer learning and peer review initiative**

Documents: BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_12 [Draft work programme of activities of peer learning and peer review initiative]  
BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_12\_Annex1  
BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_12\_Annex2

Ms. Gayane Harutyunyan, the Head of the Bologna Secretariat, presented the draft programme and noted that the Secretariat in cooperation with EC had revised the document to take on board the comments received at the Vilnius BFUG meeting. The peer learning activities (PLAs) had been rearranged in four tables: the first table contains PLAs that have already been carried out; the organisers of the proposals in the second table will be able to apply for funding under Erasmus+; the third table includes proposals foreseen for funding under Erasmus+ with the need to clarify the subject and/or decide if the PLA is the right

format; and finally the last table contains proposals that need to be consolidated and volunteered for.

Mr. Adam Tyson (EC) once again informed the BFUG that some of the PLA proposals could be supported under Erasmus+. The call for applications would be published in the period of June-July 2014 and the contracts would be signed at the end of the year. Though funding would be allocated from the 2014 budget year, PLAs could also take place in 2015. The funding would be restricted to the EHEA countries, yet non-EHEA countries could take part in PLAs at their own expense.

Concerning PLA Proposal 8 put forward by Poland, Mr. Bartłomiej Banaszak (Poland) stressed that the overarching idea of the PLA was to discuss the issue related to the links between structural reforms and employability. The proposal as it stands would aim to consider in particular the role of employers in shaping curricula, QA processes, and QFs.

**The work programme of activities of peer learning and peer review initiative was endorsed.**

### **13. Selection of observers from the BFUG to the EQAR Register Committee**

Documents: BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_13a [Procedure for the selection of the EQAR Committee Observers]  
BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_13b [List of Countries for the Nomination of the EQAR Committee Observers]

The Chair introduced the role and the main tasks of the EQAR as well as the election procedure and the criteria for the observers to the EQAR Register Committee.

The call to the EHEA countries to nominate candidates for the observers to the EQAR Register Committee was issued by the BFUG Secretariat. Five nominations (Belgium/Flemish Community, Croatia, Greece, France and Spain) were received for the required five places; therefore no further election was needed.

### **14. Updates from EC, consultative members, EQAR (written contributions only)**

Documents: BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_14a [CoE update]  
BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_14b [ENQA update]  
BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_14c [EURASHE update]  
BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_14d [EI update]

**The BFUG took note of the written contributions.**

### **15. Next BFUG meeting, Italy and next BFUG Board meeting, Holy See**

Document: BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_15 [BFUG Co-Chairmanship Italy & Holy See]

Ms. Marzia Foroni (Italy) presented the overall priorities and main events of Italy during its EU Presidency as well as the priorities of Italy and Holy See during the Italian-Holy See BFUG Co-Chairmanship and the planned activities and meetings.

For more details, see the PowerPoint presentation below:



BFUG\_GR\_KZ\_39\_15  
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## **16. Any Other Business**

Mr. Radu Damian (Romania) informed the BFUG that Romania would like to organise the Future of Higher Education - Bologna Process Researchers' Conference (FOHE – BPRC), second edition on 24-26 November 2014 in Bucharest. The first conference was also organised in Bucharest on 17-19 October 2011.

Moreover, it was noted that Armenia, as the host of the 2015 Ministerial Conference and the Fourth Bologna Policy Forum, has agreed to Co-Chair the conference while the expenses will be covered by Romania. The outcomes of the conference will be useful for the discussions of the future of the Bologna Process.

Mr. Adam Tyson (EC) presented the European Commission's ideas on the European area of skills and qualifications. The idea is how to better join up different education and training sectors. Thus, one of the aspects for exploration is how to make it easier for people to move between sectors as well as have their skills and qualifications quickly and easily recognised. Although there are many tools designed to help the mobility of learners, still there is a long way to go. Moreover, last December the EC launched a public consultation on the European Area, focussing amongst others on:

- Higher and more relevant skills and the link with the labour market;
- Internationalisation of education and the opportunities and challenges stemming from new technologies;
- Quality assurance and the implementation of the learning outcomes approach;
- Need to provide learners and workers with clear and easily accessible information and efficient services.

The public consultation will be open until 15 April 2014. The high-level closing conference presenting the result of the consultation will be organised on 17 June 2014.

For more details, see the PowerPoint presentation below:



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**The Chair thanked the BFUG members for their fruitful discussions and contributions.**