

BFUG B4 Minutes
29 September 2004

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF THE BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP, THE HAGUE, 13 SEPTEMBER 2004

The meeting was held in the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, The Hague. A list of participants is appended. The Chair welcomed the participants, and in particular the new Board members, to the meeting.

1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Documents: BFUGB4 1a Draft agenda 3 Sept 04
BFUGB4 1b Draft annotated agenda 8 Sept 04

Action:

The agenda was adopted.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING

Document: BFUGB3 Minutes of the Board meeting 14 June 04

Action:

The minutes of the Board meeting on 14 June 2004 were approved.

3. PROGRAMME OUTLINE FOR THE BERGEN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

The Vice Chair presented the programme outline, based on the format of the Berlin conference. Norway wants the programme to signal that although the Bologna process is a genuinely European process, it is not inward-looking. The director-general of UNESCO has therefore been invited as keynote speaker. External participants may be invited to attend the opening plenary session. Themes for the parallel sessions should be further discussed in the December meeting. Possible themes include:

- The Bologna Process and the Copenhagen Process
- Quality assurance in a global perspective
- Synergies between higher education and research
- Gender equality in higher education and research
- The Bologna Process and the Lisbon Process

The Vice Chair reminded the meeting that every country would be invited to send a delegation of 5 people to the conference, including the minister.

The Chair supported the idea of a discussion of themes for the parallel sessions at a later stage, but found the themes already mentioned interesting. In response to a question about how the results of the parallel sessions are to be used, the Vice Chair replied that attempts should be made to use them more actively after the conference than had been the case after Berlin, but not directly as inputs to the Ministers. The EUA asked whether stakeholders would be allowed to take part in the ministerial discussions in the afternoon of the first day, as they were in Berlin. The Vice Chair replied that this should be considered for later decision.

Action:

The Board noted the information given by the Vice Chair.

4. A FIRST DISCUSSION OF ISSUES FOR THE BERGEN COMMUNIQUÉ

Document: BFUGB4 4 on issues for the Bergen Communiqué

The Chair asked for an open discussion. The Bergen meeting will have a strong emphasis on evaluation. It will be appropriate to state some long-term goals for 2010, and also some intermediate goals for 2007.

The format of the communiqué was discussed. It was argued that it needs to be short and clear in order to serve as a focussed, political and easily understandable document. The Berlin communiqué had been successful as a message to the higher education community, but less so in relation to other stakeholders and the world in general, with little reporting in the international press. Pressures on higher education make it necessary to keep it high on the political agenda.

At the same time the communiqué will be the only document which is adopted by the Ministers and which is therefore authoritative. On this basis it was discussed whether it might be supplemented by a second text, possibly a conference report including a broader description of the issues, or a more elaborate document on the follow-up. The possibility of a separate list of decisions was also raised. Several members pointed out that there must be a clear distinction between decisions made by the ministers and any other statements. It was felt that too many documents would take away the focus of the conference and that the only documents should be the communiqué and the conference report prepared by the organisers.

It was pointed out that an important function of the Bergen meeting will be to endorse the results of the stocktaking project, the project laying the groundwork for an overarching framework of qualifications for the EHEA, and the ENQA project on quality assurance. No new action lines should be added; instead the existing ones should be deepened and further developed. An emphasis on other action lines than in the present period would make the process more balanced. At the same time, work should be continued on horizontal themes such as the Bologna process and the wider world, its meaning for the higher education institutions and the social dimension. Ministers might be more explicit about the purpose of higher education in the communiqué, as well as about the social dimension including the public responsibility for higher education, and might ask for further work to be carried out. At the same time it was noted that concepts such as the social dimension may mean different things to different people, and that the language of the communiqué must therefore be clear.

The Chair stated that it is important for the Bergen communiqué to be able to present some steps forward, and pointed out that the issue of mobility had as yet not been properly and systematically addressed. Several members expressed the view that the success of the Berlin communiqué stemmed precisely from the fact that it set concrete targets. Clear goals should therefore be set also in the areas defined as priority areas in the period leading up to 2007. This may be easier for some action lines than others. The next version of the document prepared by the Secretariat will contain a “shopping list” of possible priority areas and targets.

A discussion ensued on the goals of the Bologna process itself and how the concept of the EHEA can be developed towards 2010. It was argued that the Bergen summit might be used to lay the basis for a discussion during the next period of different options such as institutions, a legal framework or other forms of formalisation. The present momentum of the process may not last without such mechanisms. The work must have a mandate from the Ministers. Some members doubted that this should be an issue for the communiqué, and suggested instead that it might be a theme for one of the parallel sessions, after advance preparation. However, with proper preparation such a session might also feed into the communiqué. Another suggestion was that a short document ending in a few focussed questions could be prepared for discussion amongst the Ministers, as is done at EU ministerial meetings. This would make the Ministers’ discussions more forward-looking. It was agreed that only a first discussion on the issue will be possible in Bergen, and that the process might then be taken further in 2007. It was further agreed that the Secretariat should prepare a discussion paper for the next Board meeting on how to proceed, i.e. how to organise this discussion at the Bergen conference and how it should be prepared, including what the role of the BFUG and Board should be.

Decision:

On the basis of the discussion in the meeting, the Secretariat will develop document BFUGB4 4 further for consideration at the BFUG meeting in October. A new draft will be circulated to the Board members before the document is made available to the BFUG. The Secretariat will further prepare a paper for the next Board meeting on how to lay the foundations for a discussion at the Bergen summit of what the Bologna process should lead to in 2010 and the possibility of a more formalised structure.

5. PREPARATIONS FOR DRAFTING THE BERGEN COMMUNIQUÉ

At the BFUG meeting in Dublin on 9 March, it was decided that the Board will take responsibility for preparatory drafting of the Bergen Communiqué and that this may be done through the establishment of a dedicated working group. The meeting agreed that a smaller group than the Board is needed and that the group should have a permanent chair. There must be a feedback mechanism in relation to the BFUG/Board, possibly in the form of an interactive web page rather than relying solely on e-mail exchanges among all the BFUG members. An outline of the communiqué should be prepared for the next Board meeting.

Decision:

The Bergen Communiqué will be drafted by a small group consisting of the following members:

Germain Dondelinger, Luxembourg

Marlies Leegwater, Netherlands
Jan Levy, Norway
Ian McKenna, Ireland
Rachel Green, United Kingdom (name supplied after the meeting)
Pavel Zgaga, Slovenia
Per Nyborg, Secretariat

The group will be chaired by Germain Dondelinger for the period of its existence. The group should start its work as soon as possible. An outline for the communiqué should be presented at the next Board meeting.

6. ENQA PROJECT ON QUALITY ASSURANCE

Documents: BFUGB4 6a Draft report on an adequate peer review system
BFUGB4 6b Draft report on standards and guidelines
Additional documents from ESIB, the EUA and EURASHE on
<http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/b/hind/htm>

In the Berlin Communiqué, Ministers asked “ENQA through its members, in co-operation with the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB, to develop an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance, to explore ways of ensuring an adequate peer review system for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies, and to report back through the Follow-up Group to Ministers in 2005”. In his introductory remarks, ENQA chair Christian Thune pointed out that this implies striking a balance between the views of ENQA members and the views of the other organisations mentioned. The mandate calls for a cooperative effort.

ESIB, the EUA and EURASHE had submitted supplementary documents shortly before the meeting, and commented on these. The organisations noted that there was disagreement as to the nature of their involvement, and argued that they should be regarded as more than just consultative partners. A number of areas where they and ENQA agreed had been set out; in addition, the documents raised specific concerns for each organisation. All felt that having a common discussion platform was very useful. With regard to the peer review system for QA agencies, the organisations argued that a clear distinction should be made between the criteria for membership of the proposed register and those for membership of ENQA, as agencies not eligible for membership of ENQA might also be listed. With regard to the standards and guidelines, the ENQA documents focus on standards for higher education institutions, whereas ESIB in particular also wanted to include standards for external quality assurance. There was also some disagreement as to the degree to which the principle of subsidiarity should apply, with ESIB and EURASHE stressing the importance of the European level. On its part, the EUA stressed that the standards should concentrate on key policy goals and principles.

The Vice Chair noted that the reports show both the progress made and the difficulties involved, pointing out at the same time that the mandate from the ministers had been given to ENQA “through its members”. The ENQA general assembly in November should therefore give it a mandate which allows the documents to be further discussed and finalised in the E4 group. The assembly should not be the final step in the process, as a lot of work may still be done in the months leading up to Bergen. The final responsibility for the preparation of the

documents will lie with ENQA. The two documents should be merged into one before submission to the BFUG and Ministers. The standards part might be developed further with regard to the national level, as requested in the Berlin Communiqué. In the part on peer review, the national responsibility should be made clearer. Regarding the proposed directory, precision is needed. The directory should be quality assured in itself, and it must be clear what the underlying standards are. Also, the role of the proposed committee as an advisory body needs to be clarified.

Several speakers pointed out that there are other stakeholders in quality assurance besides those represented by the four organisations, and that in particular the government level was missing. Responsibility for external quality assurance is intimately linked to responsibility for the higher education system itself, which lies with the public authorities. On this basis scepticism was expressed with regard to the proposed committee. It was also mentioned that such committees tend to take on a bureaucracy of their own. In addition, questions were asked about the relationship of the proposed directory to the work being carried out by OECD/ UNESCO. The register must not appear to be a European mechanism for protectionism.

Several members argued that the proposals should contain standards for both internal and external quality assurance. The standards should be relevant items for universities to work on and for quality assurance agencies to review, not a checklist to be fulfilled. It was also argued that the subsidiarity principle should be strengthened. A country should be able to decide whether it wants to apply its own review processes or borrow those recommended at the European level. A clearer and more coherent text was called for in order to avoid surprises in Bergen.

The EU Commission informed the meeting that it will shortly adopt a new report and recommendations on quality assurance which contain similar measures to those of the ENQA draft with regard to review of agencies leading to a register.

Christian Thune commented that there is agreement among the partners that the text is not clear enough, but not on the direction in which it should go. For instance, the working group had been unable to come up with a good solution with regard to the role of public authorities. The text is thus a compromise. The Berlin mandate is in itself not very clear.

The Chair concluded that a status report should be presented to the BFUG meeting in October, outlining some of the remaining issues. Given the mandate from the Ministers in Berlin, the report should come from ENQA. It is the responsibility of ENQA to report to the BFUG, which must then judge whether enough progress can be made before Bergen. The final report will have to be presented to the BFUG meeting on 1-2 March 2005.

Action:

The Board noted the information given by ENQA. ENQA is asked to present a status report to the BFUG meeting on 12-13 October.

7. WORKING GROUP ON OVERARCHING QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

Document: BFUGB4 7 Outline of report on qualifications framework
Minutes from WG meetings 16 January 2004, 11 March 2004,
24 May 2004 and 30 June 2004
at <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/b/hind.htm>
See also [EU Comm. Note on developing common reference levels for VET](#)

Board members who are also members of the working group supplemented the brief report that had been submitted. The working group had prepared three chapters for its last meeting, including one on the overarching framework, which builds on the three cycles and uses the Dublin descriptors. In addition there is discussion on the usefulness of an intermediate descriptor for the bachelor level. The Board noted that the Joint Quality Initiative will meet in Dublin on Monday 18 October to discuss this. It will also invite relevant organisations and countries which are not yet involved in the work of the JQI, in this case EURASHE and France (where an intermediate level in the first cycle exists). The descriptor for the intermediate level is considered the most difficult, because the national systems are so different. In general the working group is making good progress. The framework will not be prescriptive, but will be designed to be robust and meet the requirements of transparency and mobility. The input from the Edinburgh seminar on learning outcomes had been important. There had been discussion in the group on the number of levels, including whether short-cycle studies should be included, and on including the entrance qualification, which a majority of the members had been against.

Another point of discussion was the possible inclusion of credits. It was argued by Board members that since the Berlin Communiqué makes reference to “workload”, credits should be included. However, this also concerns the relationship between the overarching framework and the national frameworks. Reference was further made to proposals for qualifications frameworks in the VET sector. It was argued that it is important for the BFUG to see what is going on and to be able to give feedback not just before the Copenhagen seminar, but before the Maastricht ministerial meeting in December. Working group members mentioned that steps had been taken accordingly, for instance by inviting the relevant Commission staff member to the last working group meeting.

The Chair questioned whether the documents submitted would be sufficient as a report to the BFUG. The previous Board meeting had also asked for working papers from the group to be posted on the Bologna-Bergen web site. The point in question was what the BFUG should ask for from the project; a balance might have to be struck between complete and thorough documents and updated information. The report to the BFUG meeting ought to lay the basis for a substantial discussion similar to the one on quality assurance at the present Board meeting. Mogens Berg, the chair of the working group, would be invited, and should be invited to later Board meetings where the project would be on the agenda.

The Chair concluded that a somewhat more extensive status report would be needed for the BFUG meeting. The issue of short-cycle programmes should be mentioned, as well as the connection with the Copenhagen process, with more precise information about the relevance of such external developments. The Vice Chair added that it would be useful for member states working on their own frameworks to have working papers from the project posted on the Bologna-Bergen web site.

Action:

The Board took note of the information submitted by the Working Group. A fuller report is asked for for the BFUG meeting in October, including a more substantial discussion of relevant issues.

8. WORKING GROUP ON STOCKTAKING

Documents: Minutes from WG meeting 15 June 2004
Letter from the WG Chair dated 29 June 2004
List of Stocktaking Benchmarks
Circular letter to national units in the Eurydice network
at <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/b/hind.htm>

Ian McKenna, who chairs the stocktaking Working Group, explained the background and purpose of the letter of 29 June. Appendices containing the consolidated list of questions with data sources and a list of national EURYDICE contact points would enable the Bologna representatives to consult the EURYDICE contacts in order to ensure consistency of information. Also, the list indicated which data would be expected for the stocktaking from i.a. the ESIB survey.

Action:

The Board took note of the information given by the Chair of the Stocktaking Working Group.

9. QUALITY ASSURANCE AND RECOGNITION - THE GLOBAL DIMENSION

Document: [UNESCO/OECD Guidelines on Quality Provision](#)

Jan Levy gave a presentation of the work jointly carried out by the OECD and UNESCO. Over the past twenty years, the number of foreign students in the OECD area has doubled to about 1,5 million, an increase which is higher than the general rise in student numbers. More than half originate outside the OECD. In other parts of the world there is insufficient capacity in many countries to assess the provision offered by foreign providers; they lack the legislation, competence and/or quality assurance systems. Trade agreements including GATS are not an appropriate framework for response to these challenges; there is therefore a need for an educational response. UNESCO/OECD is a combination representing and giving legitimacy in both exporting and importing countries.

With regard to the planned database, the work had so far identified a number of difficulties, but few solutions. The work on international guidelines is proceeding well. A draft will be put on the websites of both OECD and UNESCO before the next meeting of the working group in October, see <http://www.unesco.org/education/amq/guidelines/qualityprovision.html>. The aim is a set of guidelines that can be adopted as a recommendation by both organisations. The proposal of the group will be finalised in January. Afterwards a formal process will follow which will not be completed until the autumn.

Jan Levy's powerpoint presentation is available on <http://bologna-bergen2005.no/b/hind.htm>.

Several members, including the Chair, commented that the BFUG should follow the project closely and find ways to discuss the issues involved in more detail, and that information on the project should also be presented in Bergen. It was noted that a characteristic of the Bologna process is that students and institutions are working together with governments; on the other hand national quality assurance regulations tend to be written for national providers. Jan Levy replied that what is done at the European level is closely watched by other parts of the world, and that it will be a strength for the global process if Europe succeeds. Some related initiatives were mentioned, including projects involving the World Bank.

Action:

The Board took note of the information given by Jan Levy.

10. BFUG FOLLOW-UP OF SEMINARS IN THE BFUG WORK PROGRAMME

Documents: [Criteria for seminars included in the BFUG Work Programme, Reporting of Bologna Follow-up Seminars to Secretariat at http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/](http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/)
BFUGB4 10a Recommendations from the Stockholm Seminar
6-7 May 04
BFUGB4 10b Recommendations from the Ghent Seminar
4-5 June 04
BFUGB4 10c Recommendations from the Edinburgh Seminar
1-2 July 04
BFUGB4 10d Recommendation from a seminar in Dresden
14-15 June 04

At the previous Board meeting, the Chair had raised the question of how the BFUG should handle recommendations from the seminars in the BFUG Work Programme. The Vice Chair stated that there should be a possibility for the BFUG to discuss some of the recommendations in more detail. The experience from Berlin was that there had not been enough time to consider the large number of recommendations properly. In addition, the reports from many of the seminars in the present period will not be available until after Christmas. Also, some of the recommendations might need further follow-up because of developments in the relevant fields, for instance that of joint degrees, cf. the Stockholm seminar in May.

It was suggested that for seminars included in the Bologna Work Programme, the Secretariat should provide context for the recommendations as a basis for further discussion in the Board and BFUG. Not all seminars will feed into the communiqué; for example, the one on learning outcomes in Edinburgh had been more relevant for the work on the overarching qualifications framework. On this basis the Chair suggested that the Secretariat should give advice on how the recommendations from each seminar should be handled, i.e. what their address should be. This could be tried out at the BFUG meeting in October for the four seminars that had been held so far. The EUA pointed out that the outcomes of their convention in March 2005 as well as that of ESIB were also relevant and should be brought to the attention of the BFUG and the Ministers. As a general comment it was pointed out that it is important for seminar organisers and stakeholders to know that the recommendations will somehow be considered.

Decision:

The report and recommendations from the seminars forming part of the Bologna Work Programme will be brought to the attention of the BFUG with advice from the Secretariat as to how they should most appropriately be handled, including whether the recommendations should be considered for inclusion in the Bergen Communiqué. For the BFUG meeting in October, the Secretariat will prepare a discussion of the recommendations from the seminars in Stockholm, Ghent, Edinburgh and Santander.

11. PRELIMINARY DRAFT AGENDA FOR THE BFUG MEETING ON 12-13 OCTOBER IN NOORDWIJK

Document: BFUG3 1a Draft agenda for the BFUG meeting 12-13 October 2004

The proposed agenda was discussed, including a possible item concerning breaches of the Bologna principles by current members of the process.

Action:

The agenda will be modified and the annotations prepared on the basis of the discussion in the meeting.

12. CONTRIBUTIONS FROM BFUG MEMBERS AND CONSULTATIVE MEMBERS

The EU Commission informed the meeting that the decisions on allocations from the Socrates-Tempus Bologna call had been made. The letters had been signed and would be sent out shortly after the Board meeting. In parallel, a process of financial verification was going on. A binding agreement exists only when the contracts have been signed. 27 projects had been selected in total, of which 3 had both a Socrates and a Tempus component, 17 were Socrates only and 7 Tempus only. A list would be published on the Commission homepage.

The EUA noted that it was finalising the programme for its convention in Glasgow in March 2005 and would be distributing it to the BFUG in time for the meeting in Noordwijk. There would also be a document detailing what the EUA is doing on each of the action lines. With regard to *Trends IV*, some 50- 60 site visits to universities would be undertaken over the next 4 months. Two of the biggest networks of universities (COIMBRA and UNICA) would be carrying out parallel operations. The Commission financing did not allow the project to be extended to non-member institutions, but Fachhochschulen etc. who are EUA members would be included.

The Council of Europe noted the appointment of Terry Davis as its new Secretary General, and further that Monaco was about to become its 46th full member. The European Cultural Convention will celebrate its 50th anniversary starting in December and going on till May 2005. The 21-22 September CD-ESR plenary session was mentioned, likewise the seminar on public responsibility for higher education and research in Strasbourg immediately afterwards. There had also been a seminar in Moscow at the end of July for the 7 CIS countries that are

party to the Cultural Convention (in cooperation with the EUA and ESIB). A new conference of the same kind might take place next year.

ESIB provided brief information about the seminar on employability in Bled, Slovenia on 22-23 October, its general assembly in the spring, and on the student survey it will conduct, which will also include questions for the stocktaking. In addition a planned training programme for student representatives was mentioned.

Action:

The Board took note of the information given by the EU Commission and the consultative members.

13. REQUEST FROM ETUCE FOR CONSULTATIVE MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

Document: BFUGB4 13a Letter from ETUC dated 20 June 2004
BFUGB4 13b Letter from ETUCE dated 2 September 2004

The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) had sent letters to the Norwegian and Dutch education ministers asking to be recognised as a consultative member in the follow-up structures of the Bologna Process. The Chair signalled an open attitude with regard to the request. The Vice Chair stated that Norway was positive to the proposal from ETUCE and considered it a representative trade union for academic staff. Several members questioned whether ETUCE was the organisation which most appropriately represents the academic staff of higher education institutions and whether it represented the whole Bologna area, and asked to know which were its affiliated members in the Bologna member states. As ETUCE is affiliated with several other organisations at the international level, it must be made clear precisely which organisation is being considered.

It was agreed that the questions raised should be looked into and relevant background information gathered. The final decision must be made by the Ministers in Bergen; in the meantime ETUCE might be invited to seminars etc. The question of new consultative members should be treated as a matter of principle, with clarification of possible criteria, requirements for documentation etc. The Secretariat was asked to prepare a paper on this. Consultative member status might not be the best solution in every case. At the same time there was general agreement on the importance of participation of employees' organisations in the Bologna Process.

Decision:

The Secretariat will prepare a short paper on the conditions for admission of new consultative members for the December meeting of the Board, as well as collect necessary background information on ETUCE. Decisions regarding new consultative members are made by Ministers. The Secretariat will send a letter to ETUCE, on behalf of the education ministers of Norway and the Netherlands, informing it of the procedure to be followed.

14. DATE AND PLACE FOR THE NEXT BOARD MEETING

Decision:

The next Board meeting will be held in Oslo on 9 December 2004.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair thanked everybody present for their contributions. The Vice Chair thanked the Chair for hosting and conducting the meeting.