

BFUGB11 minutes
25 January 2006

Minutes of the Bologna Board Meeting

Vienna 25 January 2006

The meeting was held at the Austrian Ministry for Education, Science and Culture on Wednesday 25 January 2006 from 10.30 to 16.00. A list of participants is appended.

1. Welcome and adoption of agenda

Documents BFUGB11 1a Draft agenda
BFUGB11 1b Draft annotated agenda

The Chair (Barbara Weitgruber) welcomed members of the BFUGB to the meeting and Vienna. The agenda was adopted with the Council of Europe and EURASHE proposing to add items under any other business.

2. Minutes of the last BFUG and Board meetings

Documents BFUGB10 Minutes of the Board meeting 29 June 2005
BFUGB7 Minutes - BFUG meeting 12-13 October 2005

The minutes of the last Board meeting were approved. Two amendments were proposed to BFUG meeting notes as follows; page 4, sixth discussion point – delete 'Vatican' and replace with 'Holy See' since this was the official designation; pages 11-12, add a reference to the support provided by the EU Commission through the Tempus Programme. Revised minutes would be presented to the next BFUG meeting in April for final approval.

3. Selection procedure for candidates for 2009 Ministerial Conference

Documents BFUGB11 3a BFUGB11 3b
Letters outlining bids from: Benelux
Croatia
Slovak Republic

The Secretariat (Ann McVie) explained that, as indicated at the October BFUG meeting, three candidates had submitted formal bids by the deadline of 31 December 2005. The bids were received following a letter issued by the Secretariat which had outlined the responsibilities and financial commitment of providing a Secretariat and hosting the ministerial conference. To assist the selection process, the Secretariat had drawn up for consideration some possible options to facilitate fair selection. The Board was asked to consider the advantages and disadvantages of each and to identify any further options.

Before inviting general comments on the various options, the Chair suggested

a two-fold approach; covering all eventualities. Candidates should be asked to try and reach a solution amongst themselves in the first instance. If agreement could not be reached, there might be a need to agree upon a secret ballot by BFUG as a last option, although it is clear that the final decision rests with the Ministers in London in 2007.

In discussion the following points were made:

It was desirable to avoid selection by secret ballot and to reach a decision by consensus. Previous candidates had come to an agreement amongst themselves. Any decision taken by BFUG could introduce a political dimension to a process based on intergovernmental collaboration and cooperation.

It might be helpful to offer a meeting with the Troika (Austria, Finland and the UK) to facilitate discussion amongst the candidates, if they failed to reach a decision themselves.

It was agreed that:

The Chair would contact the candidates and invite them to try and reach a decision amongst themselves.

The Secretariat would circulate a draft of the Chair's letter to Board members for any comments before issue to the three candidates.

The Board would be kept informed of developments.

4. Outline agenda for London summit (16-18 May 2007)

Documents: BFUGB11 4a
BFUGB11 4b

The UK (Rachel Green) gave an update on the arrangements for the London Ministerial conference. It would take place over one and a half days from 17-18 May 2007, in the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in central London. The number of participants would be broadly in line with the last conference. The size of each delegation would therefore be five as before. Following the BFUG meeting in Manchester there were no plans for parallel sessions. Group discussions were being considered, to make the event more participative. It would be important to set the conference in the context of the vision of the European Higher Education Area in 2010 and beyond with a wider debate on higher education reform and globalisation in education. Views were sought on how to make the conference more dynamic and participative.

In discussion the following points were made:

It was considered helpful to specify that delegations should generally include student and HEI representatives. Some discretion might

however be required on the size of delegations.

There was a need for sufficient time to discuss the Communiqué, as this was the essential purpose and outcome of the conference.

There was some support for group discussions, preferably in mixed groups with Ministers, but this might present challenges to language and cultural protocols. Ideally, the outcome of any discussion sessions should influence the Communiqué in some way.

While it might be preferable to have participative discussion, simply observing the dynamics of a Ministerial meeting was considered to be interesting for many delegates.

The Communiqué structure might provide themes for discussion topics. Discussions could be based on papers prepared and issued to delegates in advance. It might be possible to reflect some aspects of these discussions in the final Communiqué.

Possible topics for discussion included: European HEIs in the world (the likely topic for EUA's Lisbon Convention); employability and recognition; or how to link the themes of the Lisbon and Copenhagen agendas.

Efforts should be made to minimise the time spent on progress reporting, particularly at national level. It was however important to allow ESIB, for example, to present their survey.

To facilitate participation, there might be merit in increasing the range of languages used in discussion sessions to include Russian. The Communiqué should however continue to be drafted in English only.

It was agreed that:

The UK would consider the helpful suggestions offered and present a further updated outline programme for discussion at the April BFUG.

5. Size of delegations for BFUG meetings

Documents: BFUGB11 5

The Chair acknowledged the increasing size of BFUG and the need to keep the meetings manageable. At the same time, there was a need for the meetings to be inclusive, particularly for the newer countries. Restrictions such as language and culture and the different structures of ministries, could also place constraints on setting strict parameters on the size of BFUG delegations. Views were sought on whether the Board should make any recommendations to BFUG on this point.

In discussion the following points were made:

There was general agreement with the principle as expressed in paragraph 6, that it was essentially for individual countries to decide delegation size. Limits were difficult to enforce and could lead to some delegations increasing their representation to a set limit, even though it is clear that as a rule each country is represented by one delegate only.

It was important to value the contribution and to take a flexible approach to the specific needs of delegations.

It was agreed that:

The Board would ask BFUG to consider their delegations carefully and restrict the number to the minimum possible without compromising their countries' or organisations' representation in the process

6. Review of Bologna Work Programme (updates from Working Group/Project Chairs and Secretariat)

Stocktaking Working Group – an interim report from Andrejs Rauhvargers

As Chair of the Stocktaking Working Group, Latvia (Andrejs Rauhvargers) gave an update on the stocktaking exercise. Twelve high level indicators had been developed. A complete suite of indicators was currently out for comment amongst working group members. At their next meeting on February 27, the working group would be correlating comments on indicators and deciding on revisions, with a view to presenting a complete set of indicators to BFUG for adoption in April. Some indicators had been merged and some recalibrated from dark green to light green, to reflect Ministers' expectations as set out in the Communiqué. The working group had been co-operating with appropriate partners. Eurydice would issue their questionnaire in March and replies were expected back by the end of May 2006. However, there would be an opportunity to update the information held by Eurydice. The Council of Europe had offered to adapt their electronic tool for gathering information on the implementation of the Lisbon Convention to obtain comparable data from countries. Issues for stocktaking included the number and range of questionnaires in circulation, the differences in the coverage of each questionnaire and the amount of work to be completed before the April BFUG meeting.

It was agreed that:

The EC's Tempus network might help obtain and check data from Eastern European countries not in the Eurydice or ENQA networks.

The Stocktaking Working Group should aim to issue at least the indicators and criteria to BFUG two weeks in advance of the meeting in April. This would allow BFUG members to consult internally as necessary before the meeting. The template for the National Reports might follow at a later date.

The aim should be to reach agreement on the indicators and criteria at the

April BFUG meeting.

External Dimension – an interim report from Toril Johansson

Norway (Toril Johansson) reported progress on the External Dimension. The first meeting of the working group was due to take place on 9 February. Greece would host a seminar on 25-26 June on how the Bologna process operates, what has been achieved so far, and the links with and interaction with other areas of the world. The Holy See was to hold a seminar on the external dimension theme in Rome in April. A continuous process of work through the seminars would produce an overall policy and final report on the external dimension. Russia had expressed an interest in taking part in the working group.

It was agreed that:

The external dimension was a rapidly expanding area of work. There would be a need to ensure all strands were being captured within the working group.

Social Dimension and Data on the Mobility of Staff and Students in Participating Countries – an interim update from Annika Persson

Sweden (Annika Persson) reported on the work on the social dimension and data on staff and student mobility. The working group had met twice, was pursuing its agreed terms of reference and had established appropriate links with other organisations and working groups. Departing slightly from the approach suggested in the terms of reference, there was only one sub-group, chaired by Luxembourg, on the collection and exploration of data. This group had three strands: socio and economic situation of the students, mobility of staff and mobility of students. There would be a discussion at the next BFUG in April to breakdown and define the concept of the social dimension. The first priority for the group was to define the social dimension; work on data capture would follow. To assist with this, Eurydice had offered a social dimension survey in all 45 member countries. The group had also encouraged participation in the recent Eurostudent conference. Anxious to reflect the variety of situations across the EHEA, the working group was looking to expand its membership.

It was agreed that:

There would be a detailed discussion about how to define the social dimension at the April BFUG meeting.

Qualifications Framework – an interim update from Mogens Berg

Denmark (Mogens Berg) advised that a working group meeting took place in Copenhagen in November soon after the last BFUG. The work was a continuation of topics not dealt with in depth by May 2005. The intention was to report to Ministers in May 2007 on detailed criteria and procedures for self certification, and on the compatibility of the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA with the proposed European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong

Learning. The assistance to member countries would be carried out through a network of QF-contact persons and regional meetings. The Chair welcomed this initiative. It was hoped that a draft report would be available for consideration by BFUG in October 2006.

It was agreed that:

The qualifications working group would proceed on the basis outlined.

ENQA – an interim report from Séamus Puirseil

ENQA (Séamus Puirseil) reported that the survey was complete and the final report was in preparation. Work was also under way to develop procedures for external reviews and a report on this aspect of the ENQA Standards and Guidelines was expected in early spring. The E4 Group was in agreement on a single register and was currently working up the basis on which an EU register committee might operate. Agreement to use a consultant had been reached. The timetable was as follows: a draft specification for consultancy was in preparation and appointment was expected in early February; a draft of the final report based on the standards and guidelines from Bergen was expected by the end of February for discussion in March; a final proposal would be presented at the London conference in 2007. EUA would lead on the European Quality Forum, which would take place in November 2006. E4 meetings were scheduled for February, April and June. A full progress report would be provided for the April BFUG meeting.

It was agreed that:

A full report would be given at the April BFUG. This would include ENQA's comments on the EC Recommendation on Quality Assurance that was expected to be adopted shortly.

EUA – an interim report from Lesley Wilson

EUA (Lesley Wilson) gave an update on the EUA project on the further development of doctoral programmes.

Following a meeting of the steering group in November, the intention was to secure endorsement by as many higher education institutions as possible to the 10 principles agreed in Salzburg. Work was also under way to identify the implications for governments, students and HEIs. EUA events had been arranged to deal with each in turn. There was a considerable variety of financing methods for doctoral studies used across Europe. The final event would take place in France on 7-9 December 2006, to identify the policy implications to be considered by BFUG. The resultant report was expected by February 2007.

It was agreed that:

EUA would circulate for BFUG an updated version of the project's Terms of Reference, to include dates of the events planned and indicate which were open to BFUG members.

External Dimension – Feedback on the EU/China Seminar on Higher Education and the Mexican Bologna conference

The UK advised that the purpose of the EU/China seminar was to promote a better understanding of HE across the EU and China. The EU was well represented, with around two thirds of the 160 participants being Chinese. The programme included small group discussions on familiar issues including quality assurance, HEI business links and qualifications frameworks. There was increasing HE provision in China, but the participation rate was currently only about 18%. There were plans to expand provision for both HE and vocational education. There was considerable interest in the Bologna process and scope for greater collaboration. This was something that was likely to be pursued by future EU Presidencies.

Austria (Gottfried Bacher) circulated for information the agenda from a recent Mexican event on the Bologna Process. There was real interest in setting up bi-laterals with European networks. Work akin to the Tuning project was under way in South America and it was hoped that the Austrian EU/Latin America summit would have HE as a topic on the agenda.

It was agreed that:

The External Dimension Working Group should consider whether there was scope for closer co-operation with South America.

7. Preparation of meeting with new member countries on 26 January 2006

Documents: Draft agenda: Council of Europe - Austrian Bologna Process Information Seminar

The Chair advised that, following a letter by the Austrian Minister of Education, Science and Culture representatives had been identified in all the new countries, most of whom would be attending the meeting on 26 January. Armenia was unable to attend due to adverse weather. However, a bi-lateral Austrian-Armenian Ministerial meeting had taken place. Thanks were extended to the Council of Europe (CoE) for providing funding to allow the representatives to attend.

CoE (Sjur Bergan) gave an update on activity in the new countries since the last BFUG. Conferences had been held in Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and the 'former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia'. Discussions were also under way with Albania, where the government was preparing an education white paper. All countries were making good progress, and were keen to engage and learn from other countries' experiences.

In discussion the following points were made:

It was queried whether the newer countries should be allowed more time to complete the stocktaking exercise. It was agreed however that they should be treated as equal partners.

The EC paper 'From Bergen to London' had helpful information to support new countries to work in partnership with EU partners, through Tempus for example.

New countries might have knowledge of Bologna, but might not know about how BFUG works and about other strategic tools available. Links between the Pan-European structure and what happens in the home country also might not be apparent. It would be important to explain these links and the support available during the induction meeting.

A practical point was raised on the difficulties that some new members have in obtaining visas in time to attend meetings. BFUG representatives needing a Visa should be encouraged to ask for official invitations as early as possible in advance.

It was agreed that:

The induction meeting would be factual and informative, providing direction and advice on examples of good practice and support in the Bologna Process.

8. EC Contribution to the Bologna Process – Bergen to London

Documents: From Bergen to London the EU Contribution tabled at the meeting

The EC (Peter van der Hijden) presented the EC's paper on 'From Bergen to London', the follow up to the 'Berlin to Bergen' paper which had outlined the EC's support for the Bologna Process from 2003 – 2005.

The new paper was closely associated with the structure of the Bergen Communiqué and listed the support available from Socrates, Tempus, Erasmus Mundus and a new call on HE reform. Further contextual papers on the role of universities in the Lisbon agenda were planned, by way of follow up to the informal meeting of the European Council that took place at Hampton Court in the UK last October.

It was agreed that:

The EC paper on 'From Bergen to London' would be presented at the April BFUG.

9. Priorities for discussion at BFUG meetings

Documents: BFUGB11 9

The Secretariat explained that it had been agreed at the October BFUG that the Secretariat should prioritise the list of topics in the Work Programme for discussion at BFUG meetings. The core proposal was that suggested topics

be linked to progress reports from the appropriate working groups. Other topics could be included on BFUG agendas as and when time allowed.

In discussion the following points were made:

It was suggested that discussion of the arrangements to support the EHEA post 2010 be included on a BFUG agenda as early as possible, together with a background paper.

The autumn 2006 BFUG was suggested as the time to hold an initial discussion about the London Communiqué. Rather than focus on details, the discussion should identify the broad themes for the new Communiqué, as a framework for the work of the Communiqué Drafting Group.

Preparatory work on the themes for the London Communiqué could be discussed at the June and September Board meetings. This would allow an initial paper to be drafted and circulated before the first BFUG discussion in October 2006 about the broad themes.

There was concern that linking topics with progress reports from working groups might curtail wider discussion. However, there was little scope for an alternative approach, given the pressure on BFUG agendas.

It was agreed that:

The Work Programme would be amended to reflect the discussion.

The wording of the agenda item on 2010 would be amended to read 'the future'.

There would be some initial discussion about the London Communiqué at the June and September Board meetings, prior to discussion at the October 2006 BFUG meeting.

10. Draft agenda for BFUG8 (6-7 April 2006)

Documents: BFUG8 1a (draft agenda)

The draft agenda was presented and opened to discussion. There were no suggested amendments or proposals.

The chair urged all working group chairs and all consultative partners to provide written reports and/or input papers including a list of concrete items/questions to be discussed and decided at the BFUG to be sent out by the Secretariat 2 weeks before the BFUG meeting at the latest. This will facilitate the preparation by delegates and thus guarantee a smooth running of the BFUG meeting.

It was agreed that:

The draft BFUG agenda would be adopted.

11. Any other business

Belarus student

EUA understood that Rector Winkler had offered the student expelled from Belarus a scholarship and support to attend another institution until they were reinstated.

Council of Europe events

ENIC/NARIC meeting, Tallinn - co-organised with the European Commission, UNESCO/CEPES and the Estonian ENIC/NARIC 4 - 6 June 2006

Forum on the Responsibility of Higher Education for Democratic Culture, Strasbourg 22 -23 June 2006

Forum on Legitimacy and the Role of Public Authorities in Quality Assurance in Higher Education, Strasbourg 21-22 September 2006

Conference on Making the European Higher Education Area a Reality: the Role of Students, Moskva – co-organised with the Russian University of Peoples' Friendship, as a part of the Russian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe, 2 -3 November 2006

EURASHE event

All were welcome to attend the next EURASHE conference on the Dynamics of University Colleges - New Masters in Higher Education - opening up HE through links with LLL and Vocational Education and Training. It would take place in Dubrovnik 27-28 April.

ESIB convention

The next ESIB convention on the Lisbon Process and HE funding would take place in Vienna 10 – 14 March. It was being supported by the Austrian Presidency.

Yvonne Clarke
Bologna Secretariat