

BFUG10 minutes
5-6 March 2007

Minutes of the Bologna Follow-up Group Meeting

Berlin 5-6 March 2007

The meeting was held at the Vertretung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen beim Bund, Hiroshimastrasse 12-16, 10785 Berlin from 9.30 am on Monday 5 March to 13.00 on Tuesday 6 March 2007. A list of participants is appended.

Apologies had been received from Chantal Kaufmann (Belgium French Community) Andrejs Rauhvargers (Latvia), Chair, Stocktaking Working Group, Vadim Kasevich (Russia), Peter Plavcan and František Schlosser (Slovak Republic), Myrna Smitt (Sweden) and Roderick Floud, European Universities Association (EUA).

1. Welcome and introduction to the meeting

Birger Hendriks (Chair) welcomed members to the first meeting of the Follow-up Group in the German Presidency.

2. Adoption of agenda

Documents: BFUG10 2a Draft agenda
BFUG10 2b Draft Annotated Agenda

The agenda was adopted without comment.

3. Minutes of the last BFUG and Board meetings

Documents: BFUG10 3a Minutes of BFUG 12-13 October 2006
BFUG10 3b Minutes Board 23 January 2007

The minutes of the last BFUG meeting were approved without comment. No queries were raised about the minutes of the last Board.

4. BFUG work programme: progress reports from working groups

Documents: BFUG10 4a Interim Report from Stocktaking WG
BFUG10 4a (part 2) First draft Stocktaking Report
BFUG10 4b Report from Social Dimension WG
BFUG10 4c Draft Report from Portability WG
BFUG10 4d Report from QF WG
BFUG10 4e Revision Strategy from Ext Dim WG

Stocktaking

4.1 On behalf of the Chair of the Working Group, Andrejs Rauhvargers, the Secretariat (Ann McVie) presented the latest update and some emerging

conclusions from the Working Group. Preparation of the report was progressing well and delivery was expected on time. One National Report and ten National Action Plans remained outstanding. The Secretariat would continue to follow up. The overall message was that countries were making good progress to achieve the Bologna goals.

4.2 At the last meeting of the Working Group in February, the emerging findings and the draft report were discussed. Country scores had since been sent out for validation. Most countries who applied to have scores changed were accepted, as further evidence had been supplied. A few scores were still to be agreed. At the Working Group's next meeting on 26-27 March, the conclusions and final report would be prepared for presentation to BFUG in April.

4.3 The format of the report would broadly follow the previous report. The indicators had changed from 2005, to reflect the progress expected by 2007, given the overall deadline of 2010. This meant there could not be any direct read across from 2005 to 2007. Information for the report had been taken from National Reports and other data sources: Eurydice, Trends V, and hopefully ESIB report *Bologna through Student Eyes*. The findings from Eurydice and Trends V demonstrated broad consistency with the results from the National Reports.

4.4 Since 2005, there had been significant change and improvement in the level of student participation in Quality Assurance procedures. Access to the next cycle and the development of external quality assurance were also areas of strength. Less progress had been made on two of the new areas for stocktaking: the establishment of national qualifications frameworks and recognition of prior learning.

4.5 Analysis of the National Reports suggested there was a need to improve understanding of the relationship between qualifications frameworks, learning outcomes, and recognition issues. The National Reports suggested there was a need for development on the accreditation of prior learning. It was possibly too early to apply the scorecard approach to this aspect of recognition. Analysis of the National Action Plans for Recognition suggested there was considerable variation in practice at institutional level and a need to share good practice. While progress was being made with introducing recognition tools, such as Diploma Supplements and ECTS, further efforts were required to achieve full implementation.

4.6 International quality assurance arrangements had not improved as much as other areas. Evidence suggested the lack of international cooperation was due to language and legal barriers to involving foreign experts in the governance of quality assurance agencies. Conversely, there was evidence of considerable progress on work to remove barriers to joint degrees and joint programmes.

4.7 In discussion the following points were made:

ESIB looked for a broader definition of access and continued to have concerns about recognition issues and ECTS.

Education International (EI) (Monique Fouilhoux) asked why the report did not address mobility.

4.8 Ann McVie advised that stocktaking has not addressed mobility, as it had been agreed this would be addressed by the Working Group on the Social Dimension and Staff and Student Mobility.

It was agreed that:

The final Stocktaking Working Group report would be available in time for the BFUG meeting.

Social Dimension and Data on Mobility of Staff and Students

4.9 The Chair of the Working Group, Annika Pontén, presented a summary of the draft final report from the Working Group. A full presentation would be made to BFUG in April. The core areas for action and broad objectives for both the social dimension and mobility were described in the paper produced for the meeting. The definition of the social dimension was designed to encompass the differing situations in different countries. The definition of mobility was similarly wide and not limited to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The Working Group would seek agreement on proposed recommendations, as Ministers were not expected to endorse the full report, but commit to the main objective.

4.10 Germain Dondelinger reported on the data collection aspect of the group's work, focusing on data on mobility. The synthesis and recommendations diagram reflected the group's working definitions. The blanks indicated the lack of in depth analysis. The final proposal for action would be based on the proposed definition of mobility and a recommendation that data be collected at national and European/Bologna level. At European level there were insufficient coherent and reliable data currently available. It was recommended that Eurostat in conjunction with Eurostudent should be mandated to collect data to give an overall picture of Higher Education (HE) in situ. The task would be overseen by BFUG.

4.11 In discussion the following points were made:

ESIB agreed the recommendations reflected the problems in Europe of mobility, equality, socio-economics and access reported widely by ESIB members. ESIB suggested strengthening the recommendation to ensure action was taken promptly on the social dimension and for this to be followed up by stocktaking. They did not consider it sufficient to rely on National Action Plans alone. EUA supported this view, highlighting in particular the need to take action to remove obstacles to staff mobility.

Some considered it was too soon to apply stocktaking methodology. Addressing the social dimension was a long term goal, some aspects of which fell outwith the remit of Ministers responsible for HE. It was important to have a solid basis of data for individual countries to decide their policies. Improving data collection would help identify areas of action at the national level and enable progress to be assessed. The Bologna stocktaking scorecard approach was not necessarily the best way of assessing progress in this complex area.

It was recognised that improving the availability of data would be a long-term and complex tasks. The EC confirmed that both Eurostat and Eurydice would provide assistance in any way they could.

4.12 *It was agreed that:*

The final draft report would be presented at the next BFUG meeting.

ESIB and EUA would put any specific proposals in writing to the Working Group.

Portability of Grants and Loans

4.13 The Chair of the Working Group (Aldrik in't Hout) gave a presentation on the group's final report. The group recognised that implementing portable grants and loans was a means of facilitating the mobility of students in the EHEA. The main recommendation from the group was for those Bologna countries that were interested to form a network to assist each other with the implementation of portable grants and loans and facilitate joint actions, recognising that it would be up to each country to decide in accordance with national practice.

4.14 In discussion the following points were made:

It was recognised that portable grants and loans were not the only aspect of mobility.

There was broad agreement with the network proposal as an opportunity for countries to learn from each other. It would be easy to set up, and could provide a means of sharing experience and identifying issues for governments.

It was agreed that:

The agreement to set up a network of student support experts would be reflected in the London Communiqué.

Qualifications Frameworks

4.15 Mogens Berg, Chair of the Working Group, presented the final report and a summary of the work completed. The group was satisfied that no

amendments were required at this time to the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA. Evidence from National Reports showed that considerable effort would be required to meet the goal of all countries having developed a national qualifications framework by 2010. Support and the sharing of good practice would be required, up to and beyond 2010. The working group was proposing that the Council of Europe, which already carried out work in the field of recognition, be asked to take on this task and act as a repository for reports on countries self certifying against the overarching framework.

4.16 The working group had looked at the relationship between the Bologna framework and the proposed European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF). The group was satisfied that they were compatible, and that countries could develop their HE qualifications framework, and decide at a later date if they wanted to expand it to include other levels. National qualifications frameworks were the most important tools, in facilitating recognition, rather than overarching frameworks. To ensure compatibility across frameworks, the group was recommending that the Member States ask the European Commission to ensure that a proposal for ECVET is developed in a way that remains compatible with ECTS.

4.17 *It was agreed that:*

The Working Group's report should be agreed.

External Dimension

4.18 Toril Johansson as Chair of the Working Group and Austria (Barbara Weitgruber) presented the final report and strategy for the group. Ministers had mandated the group to prepare and agree a strategy for the EHEA on the basis of partnership, to stimulate cooperation with other parts of the world. Pavel Zgaga's report for the group had now been published and free copies were available from the Norwegian Secretariat. The strategy consisted of five core policy areas to promote action within the EHEA. The annex took up feedback from the BFUG Board and identified elements for future action by countries and institutions, providing a 'tool box' approach. Among the proposals of the group was an informal network of institutions promoting HE.

4.19 In discussion the following points were made:

There was general support for the key elements of the revised strategy.

Some further clarification was needed on which elements of the 'tool box' Ministers were being asked to commit. It was important to remember the complimentary role of governments and institutions.

Prioritisation of the elements of the action plan would also be helpful, possibly focusing on improving information and recognition in the first instance.

Recognising that much was already happening in this area, the emphasis might be on building further on existing resources eg EUA handbook, and the Bologna Secretariat website to improve information about the Process.

There was a need for further explanation of the scope and purpose of the proposed principles on social and legal framework conditions for students and staff.

Some highlighted the fact that the list of possible actions was possibly too Eurocentric: UNESCO was not mentioned as a partner. Other networks were also in existence.

There were mixed view on how ambitious the strategy was. There was a need to be clearer on what could be achieved, by when. There was also a need to be clearer about the link between the attractiveness of the EHEA and achievement of the Bologna goals. The key to making the EHEA more attractive was to focus clearly on implementation of the Bologna action lines.

4.20 *It was agreed that:*

The strategy and the action plan would be separated. The draft strategy and action would be revised to reflect the comments made.

The revised strategy and action plan would be issued for further discussion at the April BFUG.

5.0 Applications to join the Bologna Process

Documents: BFUG10 5a Secretariat paper on new applicants to Bologna
BFUG10 5b Letter from the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus ("TRNC")
BFUG10 5b(i) Letter from YODAK
BFUG10 5c Letter from EURODOC
BFUG10 5c(i) Statement from EURODOC
BFUG10 5d Letter from Israel
BFUG10 5e Letter from Kosovo
BFUG10 5f Letter from Kyrgyz Republic

5.1 The Chair (Birger Hendriks) explained that the purpose of the discussion would be to invite initial comments on the applications and the process for developing a recommendation for Ministers. There would not be any in depth discussion of the individual applications. Country members would be expected to seek advice from their Foreign Ministries before the next meeting so that a recommendation from BFUG to the Ministers can be agreed. The Secretariat, in close cooperation with the Council of Europe had prepared a background paper.

5.2 The Council of Europe (Sjur Bergan) then presented the four applications in relation to the two core criteria for membership and the one application for consultative membership. He stressed that it would be important for delegations to consult at home and seek advice to make the right decision. The outcome would be added to the Communiqué.

5.3 In discussion the following points were made:

There was no need to revise the criteria for full membership as mentioned in the Berlin declaration: ratification of the European Cultural Convention and a commitment to the goals of the Bologna Process. While it might be attractive to develop new membership categories, it would set a precedent and make it difficult to refuse other applicants in the future.

It was important to bear in mind the extent and importance of cooperation between universities, both within and beyond the EHEA.

With regard to the application of Eurodoc, ESIB pointed out that doctoral students were represented by ESIB.

It was suggested that the secretariat should keep a list of interested parties for invitations to seminars.

5.4 ***It was agreed that:***

There was no need to revise the criteria for full membership.

BFUG members should discuss the applications with relevant ministries in their home countries in advance of the next meeting.

Where possible, countries should let the Secretariat know their views in advance of the next meeting.

6.0 **BFUG work programme: topics for discussion**

European Dimension – to be lead by France

Documents: BFUG10 6a Report from European Dimension

6.1 France (Eric Froment) had proposed a discussion on the European Dimension, as it was an action Line in the Bologna Process that had remained largely unexplored thus far. This suggested either it was too obvious or too difficult, with discussions largely having been limited to joint degrees. In either event, there was a need to know what has been done so far, and identify what might be required by 2010.

6.2 In discussion the following points were made:

It was agreed as a timely intervention. The Bologna Process needed

to reconsider the values and traditions as the common ground for membership, and to reinvigorate a vision for the future of the EHEA and how it would interact with the rest of the world. Denmark (Torben Rasmussen) proposed a seminar on the subject before the 2009 Ministerial conference.

While some thought there might be merit in trying to make explicit the European values underpinning the EHEA, drawing on the work started by the Holy See seminar, others disagreed.

6.3 *It was agreed that:*

This would be considered further in the context of the communiqué.

Recognition – feedback from Riga seminar

Documents: BFUG10 6b Feedback from Riga seminar on Recognition

6.4 In the absence of Latvia (Andrejs Rauhvargers) the CoE (Sjur Bergan) and joint-host gave feedback on the seminar. It had focused on the challenges of recognition, recognition of prior learning and recognition of qualifications in the global context. The conclusions and recommendations were outlined in the seminar report. It had concluded that the EHEA should approach qualifications from other parts of the world with an open mind. Recognition of prior learning needed to be developed and progressed and links made between recognition and quality assurance.

Mobility – Feedback from EI seminar

Documents: BFUG10 6c Feedback from EI Seminar

6.5 EI (Monique Fouilhoux) reported on the seminar on mobility organised by EI in close collaboration with ESIB. The seminar, the first EI had hosted was well attended; including delegates from Eastern Europe (Russian interpretation was available). Two studies commissioned for the event formed the basis of discussion. Recommendations included the need to take responsibility for attracting new mobile teaching staff; clarifying intellectual property rights in relation to mobility; the need for more action before 2009; and developing European strategies for mobility of staff and students. A draft proposal for the Communiqué was proposed outlining the benefits of mobility and how to link it with the External Dimension. Ministers were being asked to agree to EI and ESIB working on a European Strategy for Mobility over the next two years. A full report would be available for BFUG soon.

Doctoral Programmes

6.6 EUA (Lesley Wilson) presented EUA's report on doctoral programmes. Having reminded BFUG of the terms of reference for the group, she described the methodology used, the main topics discussed at the Nice seminar and the

main conclusions. Two new issues had arisen: the status and career development options for early stage researchers; and the diversity in funding mechanisms for third cycle studies. This led to recommendations concerning the strengthening of links between HE and research; the creation of high quality programmes and research opportunities to make Europe more attractive for students; doctoral cycles linked to Bologna cycles; individual institutions to embed doctoral programmes in existing strategies and policies; and the need to share further experience among universities on innovative doctoral programmes and practices emerging across Europe

6.7 In discussion the following points were made:

There was support for highlighting the need to consider the social dimension in the third cycle as well as in the first two cycles.

The emphasis on diversity and flexibility in the third cycle was welcomed. It would be important to retain this in any future developments.

BFUG members were welcome to review their response to the EUA questions on doctoral programmes, if necessary. This element of the report had yet to be finalised.

7.0 BFUG work programme: progress reports from projects

European register of Quality Assurance Agencies

Documents: BFUG10 7a Progress Report on European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies

7.1 On behalf of E4, ESIB (Koen Geven) and ENQA (Peter Williams) gave a presentation of their final report following the last meeting E4 on 22 February. E4 had addressed the issues raised at the Helsinki BFUG and the January Board. The role of governments had been addressed; they would have observer status and access to the same information as the register committee. Funding of the register was estimated at Euros 185,000-245,000 annually to run the register. The EU Commission had agreed in principle to provide start-up funding. The report now made clearer the relationship between ENQA and the register. Liability, in the case of non-compliance and the need for an appeals procedure to be in place, had also been considered. It was hoped that ministers would approve the register and it would become operational from January 2008. Sign off to the E4 report was now being sought.

7.2 In discussion the following points were made:

There was concern about the independence, ownership and role of the committee, how individual members would be selected, and how governments would participate. There were no details about the balance of power or what voting rights each member would have or the

decision making process. The structure and link between BFUG and the Register was also unclear.

Funding was a particular issue. Governments could not be expected to fund the Register, if it was to be truly independent.

There was need for further clarification of the relationship between ENQA and the Register and national reviews and the Register. ENQA already required their members to undergo national or external reviews.

A few were concerned that an agency might fail a national review, but still be accepted on the Register. There was general concern about potential conflict with the overall role of governments in quality assurance.

7.3 In response, ENQA (Peter Williams) advised that the Committee would be an expanded version of the E4 group, with members nominated by the E4 group and social partners. Members would act in a personal capacity and would not be mandated by an organisation, to ensure independence. The committee would set up its own detailed operating procedures. An agency would have to undergo review, which could be a national review, before it was allowed on the Register. The Committee would assess the robustness and findings of the review, before deciding whether the agency should be included on the Register. ENQA were already doing this type of work and to avoid two sets of reviews, it had been agreed that the register committee would normally accept an ENQA review as sufficient for inclusion on the Register. It was envisaged that some agencies would not be based in the EHEA or might not want membership of ENQA. In this case, the Register Committee would ensure that a review was undertaken, possibly by commissioning an independent review by a third party.

7.4 The role of governments would be to keep a watching brief and ensure fair play. They should not have a role in the decision making process. To keep the Register Committee to a manageable size, five government nominees were being proposed. BFUG would determine how they were selected. It was envisaged that long term funding would come from subscriptions for inclusion on the Register. Lawyers in Belgium had advised on the legal entity and would continue to give advice.

7.5 *It was agreed that:*

BFUG would send any comments to the Secretariat within 5 working days to forward to the E4 group. The latter would revise the report to address the comments raised on ownership; funding; role of the committee; role of general assembly and the priority of national reviews. E4 would circulate a revised report as soon as possible, to enable BFUG to make a final decision at the next meeting in April.

8.0 **BFUG work programme: London Communiqué**

Discussion of the draft London Communiqué

Documents: BFUG10 8a Draft London Communiqué
BFUG10 8a Annex. Comments to date on Draft
London Communiqué

8.1 The Chair (Birger Hendriks) reported that a drafting group meeting would take place after this BFUG. Comments on the latest draft would be taken into account and a new draft circulated again next week for further comment. The next meeting of the group would be at the beginning of April. BFUG were invited to give general comments on the contents and structure.

8.2 In discussion the following points were made:

ESIB and others commented favourably on the proposals made by EUA and asked for all working group draft texts and outcomes to be included in the communiqué. It was however acknowledged that, ultimately, it was the responsibility of the Communiqué Drafting Group to produce the draft text.

Norway would send a new version of the external dimension strategy and a separate annex, to make clear what actions ministers were invited to endorse. A new communiqué text would also be offered, focussing on improving information and recognition.

The communiqué should not be too technical; it was a political statement.

Now only 3 years away 2010, the text needed to be more explicit about the values of the EHEA and what was implied beyond 2010. It was however too early to go into too much detail.

All decisions in the communiqué needed to be clear and precise about what is deliverable for 2009. In particular, the scope of future work strands for the next period needed to be explicit.

8.3 ***It was agreed that:***

The Communiqué Drafting Group would take account of the comments made in producing the next draft.

8.4 Update on preparations for the London conference and Secretariat Report

Documents: BFUG10 8c Update on preparations for the London Conference

8.5 In response to questions about the arrangements for London, the UK (Rachel Green) confirmed that all Ministers would be invited to take part in the

panel sessions, even if they would not be making some introductory remarks. There would not be any parallel sessions, with all delegates having the opportunity to listen to the Ministerial discussions.

8.6 Comments were invited on the draft paper about the panel sessions. Suggestions for panel members from outwith the EHEA would also be welcome.

9.0 Updates from EC and consultative members (written only)

Documents: BFUG10 9a European Commission
BFUG10 9b Council of Europe
BFUG10 9c Education International
BFUG10 9d ENQA
BFUG10 9e ESIB
BFUG10 9f EURASHE
BFUG10 9g EUA (no report)
BFUG10 9h UNESCO-CEPES
UNICE (no further update since last BFUG meeting)

EC paper on *European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) - A system for the transfer, accumulation and recognition of learning outcomes in Europe*

Reflecting on the comments raised about ECTS, ECVET and the EQF, Peter van der Hijden highlighted the fact that the consultation in ECVET was due to close at the end of March. The consultation was open to all, not just Member States.

10.0 Any other business

Portuguese survey on medical studies AMEE (Association for Medical Education in Europe)

Portugal (Sebastião Feyo de Azevedo) drew attention to the letter circulated to BFUG members asking for information on the organisation of medical studies. He asked BFUG members to arrange completion of the survey and agreed to provide feedback.

Information point

The Netherlands (Marlies Leegwater) drew attention to the outcome of work on the Bergen Communiqué action line on quality assurance - Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 February 2006 on further European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education – *Official Journal L 064, 04/03.2006*

Timetable for BFUG meetings after London

It was noted that it would be helpful for the BFUG timetable after London to be clarified as soon as possible.

BFUG Board elections

The Secretariat would shortly be emailing to seek volunteers to take part in the BFUG Board for the period June 2007 to 30 June 2008. If more than three candidates were put forward, there would be a vote at the April BFUG meeting.

Date of next BFUG meeting (BFUG11) 17-18 April 2007, Berlin.

Yvonne Clarke
Bologna Secretariat