

BFUG3 8
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INVITATIONS TO THE BERGEN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

1. BACKGROUND

At the BFUG meeting in Rome on 14 November 2003, it was agreed that delegations from member states to the next ministerial conference would consist of 5 members: 3 representatives of the ministries (including the minister), 1 representative of the national rectors' conference and 1 student representative. In a few cases, more than one minister may attend. In addition, the EU as a full member and the Council of Europe, ESIB, the EUA, EURASHE and UNESCO-CEPES as consultative members will send delegations, which should be limited to 3-5 delegates. (In Berlin, where it was not specified that national delegations should include institutional and student representatives, the EUA and ESIB had larger delegations.)

Up to 230 people from Bologna member states and partner organisations will thus attend the ministerial conference in Bergen. Both for practical reasons and in order to maintain the focus of the conference, the number of attendees should not exceed 300. In comparison a total of 278 delegates attended the conference in Berlin. The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research is already receiving a large number of requests to attend the Bergen meeting. It is therefore necessary to determine who should be invited beyond the delegates from participating countries and organisations, and while Norway is hosting the meeting, any views expressed by the BFUG will be taken into consideration.

2. POTENTIAL NEW MEMBERS

8 countries which are party to the European Cultural Convention and thus eligible for membership of the Bologna Process, are as yet not members: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Monaco, San Marino and Ukraine. Of these, Moldova and Ukraine have formally declared their intention to join. The deadline for applications for membership has been set to 31 December 2004.

As regards organisations, the European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) has sent letters to the Dutch and Norwegian education ministers requesting to become a consultative member of the process. Principles for admitting new consultative members will be discussed by the Board at its meeting in Oslo on 9 December. As with new member states the final decision will be taken by Ministers in Bergen.

Successful applicant countries and organisations may be invited to the ministerial conference in Bergen, with limitations as to the size of their delegations as for existing members. Representatives of several potential member states were present in Berlin.

3. OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Some organisations which are not members of the Bologna Process, nevertheless contribute to it in significant ways. A prominent example is ENQA, the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. Other organisations represent important stakeholders, such as the Union of Industrial and Employer's Confederations of Europe (UNICE). Both ENQA and UNICE were represented in Berlin. It is foreseen that some organisations will be invited to the Bergen conference on the same basis.

4. GUESTS FROM OTHER REGIONS

At the Board meeting in the Hague on 13 September, the Vice-Chair stressed that Norway wants the programme for the Bergen conference to signal that although the Bologna process is a genuinely European process, it is not inward-looking. Some of the requests for attendance have come from other parts of the world. Brazil was represented at the Berlin meeting.

For the Bergen ministerial conference, Norway proposes to invite one minister from each of the UNESCO regions outside Europe, i.e. Africa, the Arab States, the Asia/Pacific region, Latin America/the Caribbean and North America. This may be done in consultation with UNESCO. Each minister is likely to be accompanied by an attendant. In addition a few other guests may be invited.

5. CONCLUSION

The number of delegates from member states and organisations is estimated at around 230 as indicated above. Delegations from applicant countries and organisations may number some 20 to 30 people. This leaves room to invite a limited number of guests from other organisations and other regions of the world.