

Proposal to set principles on the size of delegations at BFUG meetings

Introduction

1. This paper invites the Board to consider whether principles should be set for the size of delegations at BFUG meetings.

Background

2. There are now 45 signatory countries and 8 consultative members of the Bologna Process, as well as the European Commission. There are usually one or two representatives from participating countries at each meeting and two or more from consultative members. However, some delegations, for political or administrative reasons, have more than two representatives; others at different times may have had as many as five for different reasons depending on interests and responsibilities and on meeting agendas. This often brings the number of attendees at BFUG meetings to over a hundred people.

3. The overall purpose of BFUG is to provide a forum for effective discussion and take forward Ministerial commitments. Although we know Bologna colleagues well and acknowledge their considerable enthusiasm and commitment, the Secretariat has some concerns about the increasing size of delegations.

4. The increasing number of people taking part in BFUG meetings can bring about overcrowding in meeting rooms, making participation uncomfortable and unproductive. Large delegations could also prevent active participation by some attendees, either from the same group or from others, especially when meeting timings are constrained. Large numbers may also be seen as somewhat 'intimidating', especially to new members.

5. The Secretariat would therefore like to recommend that Bologna colleagues consider their delegations carefully and restrict the number to the minimum possible without compromising their countries' or organisations' representation in the process. This might be assisted by setting principles on which to base the size of delegations. This would be in line with the principle for participating in Board meetings, agreed at the Board meeting in Mondorf in April 2005, that only one representative should attend from each country, the EC and consultative members.

Proposed principles for the size of BFUG delegations

6. The basic principle which might be adopted would be that participating countries, consultative members and the European Commission should ideally send no more than one representative to BFUG meetings. Where this

limit is not achievable, for example in those countries with a federal or devolved system or with more than one national level Ministry responsible for higher education (this would include currently: Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Russia, Serbia and Montenegro and the UK), the upper limit should be two.

Conclusion

7. The Board is invited to:

- to consider whether setting principles for the size of delegations at BFUG might help ensure the meetings are more manageable
- to consider whether the proposed principles are realistic and could be recommended to BFUG.

Bologna Secretariat
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