

**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF THE BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP
LISBON, 30-31 AUGUST 2007**

Draft minutes

Participants

Portuguese Presidency: Sebastião Feyo de Azevedo (Chair), José Cardoso (Co-chair),
Alexandra Delgado
Benelux: Germain Dondelinger (Vice-chair), Chantal Kaufmann
Germany : (Bund): Birgit Galler
Germany (Länder): Birger Hendriks
Slovenia : Darinka Vrecko
Spain : Guillermo Bernabeu
Hungary : Janos Csirik
Sweden : Myrna Smitt
European Commission : David White, Christian Tauch
Council of Europe: Sjur Bergan
EUA: Michael Gaebel
EURASHE: Andreas Orphanides
ESU: Bruno Carapinha
Bologna secretariat: Marlies Leegwater (Head of secretariat), Marie-Anne Persoons,
Cornelia Racké

Welcome and introduction to the meeting

The meeting was chaired by Prof. S. Feyo de Azevedo who welcomed the participants and presented the Co-chair, Prof. J. Cardoso, and the senior officer in the Directorate General for Higher Education, Ms Alexandra Delgado, the Presidency contact person for all practical issues for the BFUG.

1. Adoption of the agenda

Documents: BFUGBoard (PT) 15_1a [draft agenda]
BFUGBoard (PT) 15_1b [draft annotated agenda]

The agenda was adopted.

2. Minutes of the last Board meeting, Berlin 23 January 2007

Document: BFUGBoard 14 minutes

The minutes were adopted.

3. Information by the Portuguese Presidency

The Chair informed the Board on the priorities for higher education in the PT EU Presidency programme, namely the knowledge triangle (education-research-innovation), social cohesion and related EU topics as i.a. the EU Directive on professional recognition. These are also the issues on the national agenda. Since the legislation on the implementation of the Bologna Process in PT, including on the new degree structure has been put in place, the focus is now on the content of the implementation: student-centred learning, increase of success rates in higher education, mobility etc.

Upcoming events:

- BFUG, 2-3 October : draft agenda is on the table
- The Erasmus conference of 4-5 October 2007 in Lisbon will give large attention to the social dimension.
- EU Education Council in November will hopefully also take the social implications of mobility in higher education on board.
- The Chair will provide information on a possible meeting in the context of the modernisation of higher education agenda as soon as possible.

4. Information by the Bologna Secretariat

Marlies Leegwater, Head of secretariat presented the new Benelux Bologna secretariat. It will function like the previous UK and Norwegian Bologna secretariats. The novelty is that the organisation is transnational. The secretariat draws the attention to the Bologna website (www.bologna2009benelux.org) where there is a section "linking the EHEA" with links to official websites of the different countries and organisations. The Bologna partners will be invited at the BFUG meeting to check the information and to make comments for correction and updating for their respective country/organisation.

5. Work programme 2007-2009

Documents: BFUGBoard (PT) 15_5a [WP proposals, detailed overview]

BFUGBoard (PT) 15_5b [WP proposed seminars and WGs]

BFUGBoard (PT) 15_5c [WP issues]

5.1 General issues (i.a. timing of events)

Following the call on behalf of the Chair on July 3, 2007 to present proposals for the Bologna work programme 2007-2009 the secretariat received many valuable proposals covering all issues on which the London Communiqué asked for follow-up.

It appears that there is some congestion of proposed seminars in the second half of 2008. Seminars should be spread better in time. Another issue raised is the geographical distribution. It would be advisable that participation in working groups showed a better geographical distribution compared to previous periods. Also it would be recommendable to have Bologna seminars in all different parts of the EHEA. One solution could be that countries that propose a seminar agree to organise it in one of the less represented areas and cooperate with the host country.

In view of the early date of next Ministerial conference, 28-29 April 2009, results of working groups and seminars should be largely available by the beginning of 2009. Concerning working groups, they should not work in isolation but should cooperate with other working groups and liaise with the BFUG as a whole. In any case minutes of working group meetings should be made available to the whole BFUG shortly after the meetings.

5.2 *Mobility*

Mobility belongs to the core business of the Bologna Process. In a certain sense all actions on transparent degree structure, recognition of qualifications and cooperation in quality assurance, can be considered as a way to enhance international mobility.

It is also one of the topics on which progress tends to be slow and a sense of urgency is now required. Therefore mobility should receive a prominent role in the Bologna work programme 2007-2009.

Mobility is a multidimensional topic that includes issues like financial arrangements, student provisions, visa issues, recognition, staff conditions (pensions etc.), data collection based on reliable indicators and taking into account contextual differences between countries...

All these issues should be taken on board in an integrated approach which includes the guidelines on the work programme in the London Communiqué, the ongoing actions and the concrete proposals communicated by the Bologna partners.

At this moment, apart from the network on portability of grants and loans, no working group is proposed, but mobility will play an important role in data collection and is one of the areas explicitly mentioned by the Ministers for stocktaking. Probably there are other methods to address the urgency of the mobility issue than the classical working group.

An integrated approach is, however, crucial to make progress.

It should be possible to organise a structured series of events (seminars, exchange of good practices....) overseen by a steering group consisting of those countries and organisations that proposed seminars and actions on mobility

The secretariat is asked to provide such an integrated overview as background material for further discussion at the BFUG.

For the specific topic of equitable balance in the context of EU legislation, it seemed to be more appropriate to concentrate the discussion in the fora of the EU (Education) Council.

5.3 *Degree structure*

ECTS: *Proper* implementation of ECTS still remains a priority.

Moreover, EC is in a process of consulting the network of national academic contact points for the updating of ECTS key feature and the users' guide. The BFUG will be asked to contribute to the debate. The purpose of the exercise is i.a. the integration of the concept of learning outcomes into ECTS.

- Learning outcomes : UK proposed that EUA and EURASHE would organise a seminar on learning outcomes. EUA and EURASHE will take this up. ESU is interested to join.
- As a related event to the issue of degree structure, Germany will organise a seminar on the degree structure in medical studies.

5.4 *Employability*

In the light of the many proposals received, preference should be given to structured events rather than establishing a classical working group.

As mobility, employability is a multidimensional topic and is related to curriculum issues as well as to monitoring the employment of graduates of all 3 cycles, not at least in the public service. All items mentioned in the London Communiqué should be taken on board in an integrated approach.

In order to increase the employers' interest in and awareness of employability, it would be appropriate to have Business Europe on board for this action line. Special attention should also be paid to SMEs.

The secretariat was asked to contact the different countries and organisations that have proposed actions on employability and ask them to come up with an integrated proposal. As in the case of mobility, a structured series of events overseen by a (coordination) group, would be more appropriate than a classical working group.

5.5 *Recognition*

Two different issues should be distinguished:

- (1) analysis of National Action Plans;
- (2) recognition of prior learning.

The ENIC-NARIC network can certainly handle the analysis of the NAPs, which is already in progress, but a way should be found to keep in touch with BFUG and to take action to disseminate good practice. In the analysis the main focus of attention will be on the "substantial difference" issue, where a more reasonable approach should be adopted by both national authorities and higher education institutions.

Concerning recognition of prior learning, which is a very complex issue, this should be part of the lifelong learning action line of the Bologna work programme.

5.6 Qualifications framework / ECTS

CoE has developed a series of actions following the mandate given by the Ministers in London. A Qualifications Framework Forum is planned for 11-12 October in Strasbourg, as well as a follow-up conference and several regional conferences.

CoE would be in favour of creating an advisory group for the steering of the process, provided it is of a reasonable size. This group could also function as contact point between the overarching qualifications framework for the EHEA and the EQF to be adopted in the near future by the EU.

CoE will modify its proposal including this advisory group.

It should be noted that the coordination role of CoE does not include all possible actions on the qualifications framework at national or regional level.

5.7 Lifelong learning

There is room for a series of 2-3 seminars coordinated by the countries and organisations that expressed interest (Slovenia-Netherlands-Scotland-EUA-EURASHE-ESU).

It should be noted that a seminar on the role of higher education institutions will be organised in the context of the Slovenian EU-Presidency programme in cooperation with the Continued University Education Network.

EUA plans a conference in autumn 2008 on similar topic in cooperation with the University of Rotterdam.

The secretariat was asked to contact all interested parties to come up with an integrated proposal.

5.8 Quality assurance

Most of the work will be on the register (activities of E4 group). Minutes of the E4 meeting of September 25 should be available at the October meeting of the BFUG.

Related issue: ECA conference on mutual recognition of quality evaluation and accreditation decisions, December 2007.

Apart from this or further to this, there is still room for a Bologna conference on quality assurance if a partner would be interested (Armenia or Georgia ?).

5.9 Third cycle

FI has proposed a seminar on the third cycle in line with previous seminars on bachelor and master degrees. It should be noted that any action will not start from scratch. The outcomes of the Salzburg and Nice conferences are still valuable. Moreover, the issue

should be looked at from a very broad perspective, including employment issues, as well as the relation between the EHEA and the European Research Area.

FI could be asked to keep in touch with other interested parties in the subject.

5.10 Social dimension

Among the comments received, there are no organising proposals.

It should be observed that the NAPs will deal mainly with the future while there is also the question of evaluation of past policies. It was suggested that an advisory group could be established whose terms of reference would be (a) to design the template for the national action plans on the social dimension; (b) to liaise with stocktaking (point 3.7 of the London Communiqué); and (c) and to organise a conference.

5.11 Global dimension

Proposal of furthering the work of the previous working group and ENQA proposal for a conference of *UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education*. It was recommended that ENQA would keep in touch with the competent body within UNESCO.

It should be observed that global dimension is also one of the topics to be taken up in the stocktaking.

5.12 Stocktaking and data collection

- Stocktaking : a stocktaking working group will be established chaired by LV. The timing of work will be important. It should be enabled to make maximum use of the results of other surveys, like e.g. the Eurydice Focus on Higher Education and the work of ESU and EUA.

Moreover it should apply sound indicators and should therefore work in close cooperation with the data collection working group.

- Data collection: the mandate given in the London Communiqué to the EC (Eurostat) and Eurostudent to work on data collection and indicators is now coordinated by the EC. A working group is about to be set up and a first meeting with EC, Eurostudent and representatives of the BFUG (including the former LU Chair of the previous working group on data collection) will take place in Brussels in the beginning of November. EC sees the representation of non-EU countries in this group as highly desirable.

5.13 Beyond 2010

A distinction should be made between the independent evaluation which is only due to 2010 and the report to be submitted at the Ministerial conference in 2009.

The EC proposes to launch a call for tender in the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme for the independent evaluation of the Bologna process early 2008 (as a call beginning 2009 would come too late, the work would then only start end of 2009).

The first priority, however, is an agreement by the BFUG on the terms of reference of such an independent evaluation. These agreed ToR should be taking into account by the EC when issuing the call for tender.

For the preparation of the report for 2009, it should be observed that the London Communiqué has insisted on the involvement of the BFUG *as a whole*.

This is not easy to reconcile with the practical solution of entrusting this complex task to a special working group with the preparation. The main problem with a separate working group is that probably all Bologna partners would like to participate and that there are no sound arguments to refuse participation.

A possible way out could be to have an open process, with regular (including electronic) consultation of the BFUG, extra BFUG meetings with discussions of the Beyond 2010 topic prepared by the Board.

Input for the report will also be provided by specific seminars, like the academic conference organised by the Flemish Community of Belgium and the stakeholders' consultation organised by Luxembourg and possible other events organised by other partners.

The secretariat is asked to provide an integrated work plan taking on board the different proposals.

5.14 *Other issues*

- Terms of reference for seminars: were approved in the period before Bergen. Secretariat will update the document, as well as provide a template for the ToR for working groups.
- Particular attention should be given to the involvement of all Bologna countries in the work programme and the attendance of all at BFUG meetings.
- Ministerial communiqué: drafting should not start too early because input of outcomes of work programme is needed first.

6. BFUG meeting of 2-3 October 2007

Document: BFUGBoard (PT) 15_6 [draft agenda]

Board members formulate comments on the timing of the discussions and the order of agenda points. It was agreed that most of the available time should be devoted to the work programme being the main item. In ideal circumstances the first discussion on the

work programme as a whole should be conclude the first day enabling the Chair to provide a definitive version for approval the next day. Chair will take this up with secretariat.

7. Date and place of meetings under Slovenian Presidency

Provisional dates :

16 January: Board – Ljubljana (9.00-16.00)

Probably 13-14 March or dates in the same week : BFUG – conference centre close to Ljubljana Airport (1,5 days, starting in the morning of the first day)

9 June: Board - Bled

The incoming Presidency will ask the secretariat to send a questionnaire to all BFUG members on their opinions of the desired format of BFUG meetings in terms of frequency and length of the meetings.

8. Any other business

None

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