

Independent assessment of the Bologna Process As required in the London Communiqué TERMS OF REFERENCE

General Framework

The independent assessment of the Bologna Process follows the request as formulated by the European Ministers in charge of higher education at their meeting in London, 17-18 May 2007 where they asked for an independent assessment to be included in a reporting exercise for 2010 on the overall progress of the Bologna Process:

Building on previous stocktaking exercises, *Trends*, and *Bologna with Student Eyes*, we invite BFUG to consider for 2010 the preparation of a report including an independent assessment, in partnership with the consultative members, evaluating the overall progress of the Bologna Process across the EHEA since 1999.

The strategic objectives and operational goals of the Bologna Declaration and subsequent communiqués (see annex, for quotations in full) should be the guiding principles for the independent assessment.

The independent assessment should contribute to the evaluation of the overall progress of the Bologna Process by:

- an assessment of the realisation of the operational objectives of the Bologna Declaration and subsequent communiqués,
- an evaluation of the extent to which the operational objectives led to the achievement of the strategic goals of the Bologna Declaration, i.e. “to establish the European area of higher education and to promote the European system of higher education world-wide”.

Task for tenders to respond to call of the European Commission

The eligible tender should:

- (1) Assess the achievements of the Bologna process in relation to the following operational objectives:
 1. A system of easily readable and comparable degrees
 2. A system based on three cycles
 3. Credit system (ECTS)

4. Mobility of students and staff
5. Quality assurance
6. European dimension
7. Lifelong learning
8. Social dimension (access and employability)
9. Linking higher education (EHEA) and research (ERA)
10. Global dimension

(2) Evaluate whether/to what extent the operational objectives contributed to the achievement of the strategic goals

In executing tasks (1) and (2), the tender should carry out original research. At the same time it should take into account previous stocktaking exercises, *Trends*, and *Bologna with Student Eyes* or any other already existing reliable assessments/evaluations.

(3) Should have a critical look whether the actual follow-up structure and the voluntary character of process has been appropriate.

(4) Should evaluate the criteria for full membership to the Bologna Process (party to the European Convention) in view of the interest to the process of non-European countries.

(5) Should during the whole process communicate with the Bologna Follow-up Group and report at regular times.

Criteria for eligibility of tenders

- Should be legally and operationally independent from any of the actors in the Bologna process. By consequence, full members, consultative members and partners to the Bologna Process are not eligible.
- Should be able to form multi- and interdisciplinary research forum or consortium which can cope with the complexity of the evaluation and the multiple contexts of the actual challenges of society at large. Should have relevant experience in the field of international law and of the different law systems in Europe and in the technicalities of international academic recognition.

ANNEX
Strategic objectives and Bologna goals
Quotations from the Bologna Declaration and subsequent Communiqués

1. Bologna: strategic objectives and operational goals

The Bologna Declaration highlights as strategic framework:

Meanwhile, we are witnessing a growing awareness in large parts of the political and academic world and in public opinion of the need to establish a more complete and far-reaching Europe, in particular building upon and strengthening its intellectual, cultural, social, scientific and technological dimensions.

[...]

We must in particular look at the objective of increasing the international competitiveness of the European system of higher education. The vitality and efficiency of any civilisation can be measured by the appeal that its culture has for other countries. We need to ensure that the European higher education system acquires a world-wide degree of attraction equal to our extraordinary cultural and scientific traditions.

The declaration further elaborates six (operational) goals:

.... we engage in co-ordinating our policies to reach in the short term, and in any case within the first decade of the third millennium, the following objectives; which we consider of primary relevance in order to establish the European area of higher education and to promote the European system of higher education world-wide.

- Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, also through the implementation of the Diploma Supplement in order to promote European citizens' employability and the international competitiveness of the European higher education system
- Adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate.
Access to the second cycle shall require successful completion of first cycle studies, lasting a minimum of three years.
The degree awarded after the first cycle shall also be relevant to the European labour market as an appropriate level of qualification.
The second cycle should lead to the master and/or doctorate degree as in many European countries.
- Establishment of a system of credits – such as the ECTS system – as a proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility.
Credits could also be acquired in non-higher education contexts, including lifelong learning, provided they are recognised by receiving universities concerned.
- Promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement with particular attention to:
 - a) for students, access to study and training opportunities and to related services
 - b) for teachers, researchers and administrative staff, recognition and valorisation of periods spent in a European context researching, teaching and training, without prejudicing their statutory rights.

- Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to develop comparable criteria and methodologies
- Promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research.

2. Prague communiqué

The Prague communiqué concluded with continued follow-up and mentioned. Here the social dimension and lifelong learning were introduced as new Bologna goals.

.....Ministers encouraged the follow-up group to arrange seminars to explore the following areas: cooperation concerning accreditation and quality assurance, recognition issues and the use of credits in the Bologna process, the development of joint degrees, the social dimension, with specific attention to obstacles to mobility, and the enlargement of the Bologna process, lifelong learning and student involvement

3. Berlin communiqué

The Berlin communiqué added the goal of linking higher education and research:

Additional Actions

European Higher Education Area and European Research Area – two pillars of the knowledge based society

Conscious of the need to promote closer links between the EHEA and the ERA in a Europe of Knowledge, and of the importance of research as an integral part of higher education across Europe, Ministers consider it necessary to go beyond the present focus on two main cycles of higher education to include the doctoral level as the third cycle in the Bologna Process. They emphasise the importance of research and research training and the promotion of interdisciplinarity in maintaining and improving the quality of higher education and in enhancing the competitiveness of European higher education more generally. Ministers call for increased mobility at the doctoral and postdoctoral levels and encourage the institutions concerned to increase their cooperation in doctoral studies and the training of young researchers. Ministers will make the necessary effort to make European Higher Education Institutions an even more attractive and efficient partner. Therefore Ministers ask Higher Education Institutions to increase the role and relevance of research to technological, social and cultural evolution and to the needs of society. Ministers understand that there are obstacles inhibiting the achievement of these goals and these cannot be resolved by Higher Education Institutions alone. It requires strong support, including financial, and appropriate decisions from national Governments and European Bodies.

Finally, Ministers state that networks at doctoral level should be given support to stimulate the development of excellence and to become one of the hallmarks of the European Higher Education Area.

And laid down the organisation of the follow-up structure of the Bologna Process:

Follow-up structure

Ministers entrust the implementation of all the issues covered in the Communiqué, the overall steering of the Bologna Process and the preparation of the next ministerial

meeting to a Follow-up Group, which shall be composed of the representatives of all members of the Bologna Process and the European Commission, with the Council of Europe, the EUA, EURASHE, ESIB and UNESCO/CEPES as consultative members. This group, which should be convened at least twice a year, shall be chaired by the EU Presidency, with the host country of the next Ministerial Conference as vice-chair. A Board also chaired by the EU Presidency shall oversee the work between the meetings of the Follow-up Group. The Board will be composed of the chair, the next host country as vice-chair, the preceding and the following EU Presidencies, three participating countries elected by the Follow-up Group for one year, the European Commission and, as consultative members, the Council of Europe, the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB. The Follow-up Group as well as the Board may convene ad hoc working groups as they deem necessary. The overall follow-up work will be supported by a Secretariat which the country hosting the next Ministerial Conference will provide.

In its first meeting after the Berlin Conference, the Follow-up Group is asked to further define the responsibilities of the Board and the tasks of the Secretariat.

4. Bergen Communiqué

Here the global dimension was elaborated for the first time:

The attractiveness of the EHEA and cooperation with other parts of the world

The European Higher Education Area must be open and should be attractive to other parts of the world. Our contribution to achieving education for all should be based on the principle of sustainable development and be in accordance with the ongoing international work on developing guidelines for quality provision of cross-border higher education. We reiterate that in international academic cooperation, academic values should prevail.