

BOLOGNA Beyond 2010
Issues for discussion at the Paris BFUG meeting of doc. BFUG (FR) 14_9
based on comments received from delegations

Reactions to the document entitled “Bologna beyond 2010” have been rich and varied and while most suggestions can be incorporated into the document as such, a number of points that have been raised either need clarifying or discussing in more detail. The purpose of the present document is to identify those main issues for the Paris BFUG meeting to adopt a position on them.

Issues

- What kind of cooperation/regulation do we need at European level? Who does what? What are the different responsibilities at the various levels?

Some delegations argue that it would be wrong to equate the existence of new legislation with progress. On the other hand the Sarajevo meeting advocated the drafting of a mobility code and the issuing of a statement by ministers to redefine the roles and responsibilities of the various actors in a system defining higher education as a public good. Those are tools that could be defined as “soft law instruments” which (re-)define the governance of the system. The BFUG is asked to take position on this issue.

- European dimension

One delegation asks to include a reference to the “European dimension” in higher education. This concept was already included in the Bologna Declaration. However, it has not been properly defined. Is the European dimension the distinguishing characteristic(s) of European higher education? If so, what is this characteristic? Is it multilingualism, is it the collaborative system of the Bologna Process, is it the broad research basis of most HEIs, or is it a system of values? Are we therefore talking about the “identity” of European higher education?

The “European dimension” could also be defined as the experience of cultural diversity by students and staff when they engage in mobility schemes and it could find its expression in cooperative agreements between HEIs across Europe as exemplified by the awarding of joint degrees.

The BFUG is asked to further define the concept.

- Link between HE and Research

There have been repeated references to the need for a closer link between higher education and research. The inclusion of the third cycle into the Bologna Process, the definitions underpinning this cycle and the increasing concern with the status of early stage researchers are signs of this link. However, one delegation argues that the link between higher education and research needs to be further strengthened. Is the argument one which calls for schemes to facilitate joint research projects among the HEIs of the 46 Bologna countries?

The BFUG is asked to further define the concept.

- What do we mean by moving from structure to practice, to content, to substance?

The general argument goes that the first ten years of the Bologna Process have been devoted to structural reforms and that the next stage will have to be devoted to actually reforming the curricula. Curricular reform is the responsibility of the institution and the various programmes are said to reflect the diversity of the institutions. Does this mean that there is no room for European cooperation in this area? If so, should the subject then be mentioned at a European ministerial conference?

At the same time programmes leading to the awarding of diplomas related to the regulated professions (whether nationally regulated or through the directives, or through both) are not based on the principle of programme diversity. How does this affect the "movement from structure to practice/content/substance"?

Moreover the Sarajevo meeting proposed the introduction of subject descriptors. Will this proposal lead to greater convergence of programmes at the expense of diversity? What is the link between subject descriptors and qualifications frameworks?

- How to guarantee fair recognition?

One delegation argues that recognition for academic purposes is the responsibility of the higher education institution. While this is undoubtedly the case, the question still is how to guarantee fair treatment during the application process and how to guarantee fair decisions. Ultimately the answer to this question also sheds a light on the issue of the selection of students.

- Role of HEIs to promote the social dimension of HE

The definition given to the social dimension is one that includes all provisions needed for having equitable access into, progress and completion of higher education. Comments made to the text suggest softening this definition through a lesser focus on successful completion. The question ultimately is to define how prominently the social dimension should feature on the agenda.

- Status for third countries

There is consensus now that there can be "A Bologna Policy Forum" in the margins of Bologna ministerial meetings with participants from EHEA countries and countries that have expressed their interest in the Bologna Process but are not party to the European Cultural Convention. The question still is whether countries participating in the

Bologna Policy Forum would obtain the status of Bologna Partner Country or any other term which reflects their strong interest, without suggesting that membership is within reach.

➤ **Benchmarks**

Bfug is asked to define what action lines should be subjected to benchmarking and what the benchmarks are. One benchmark that has been suggested is the one of 50% of the graduate population having been mobile by 2020.

➤ **Classification and ranking in relation to transparency and QA**

“Institutional diversity should be made transparent.” BFUG is asked to express its opinion on whether new transparency tools like the development of typology or specific European ranking instruments like the ones developed by CHE/Bertelsmann Stiftung should be supported.

➤ **Tuition fees and diversification of funding**

The challenges facing the HEIs in the future are such that additional funding is required to meet the rising costs. In this context a number of trends can be identified, such as movement towards competitive funding, movement towards output oriented funding, an increase of non public income made possible by institutional autonomy and in some cases the introduction of student fees. BFUG is asked to state its opinion on the funding issue.

Chapter 4

The drafting of chapter 4 will have to rely on the conclusions drawn from the discussions above. What should be noted though is that the redrafted chapter 4 will state strategic political objectives (like increasing mobility, widening participation, etc.) and concrete targets and benchmarks. It will therefore constitute the core of the communiqué.

Process

15 November: new draft of the report

15 December: deadline for next round of comments

16 January: Board discussion on the comments made

End of January: New draft for BFUG meeting on 12-13 February