

**MEETING OF THE BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP
PRAGUE CONGRESS CENTRE, 26-27 MARCH 2009**

Outcome of proceedings

Welcome and introduction to the meeting

Vice-Minister Jakub Durr welcomed the participants and gave an update on past events of the work programme for education of the Czech EU Presidency.

Apologies had been received from Armenia.

1. Adoption of the agenda

Documents: BFUG (CZ) 16_1a [draft agenda]
BFUG (CZ) 16_1b [draft annotated agenda]

The agenda was adopted.

2. Outcome of proceedings of BFUG meeting, Prague, 12-13 February 2009 and minutes of Board meeting, Ostend, 23 February 2009

Documents: BFUG (CZ) 16_2 [BFUG Prague I outcome of proceedings]
BFUGBoard (SE) 20_2 [Board Ostend minutes]

The BFUG approved the outcome of proceedings of the BFUG meeting in Prague and took note of the Board minutes.

3. Information by the Czech Presidency

Document: BFUG (CZ) 16_3 [Board voting procedure]

- Vera Stastna, Chair of the BFUG, gave an account on past Bologna-related events, which are also announced at the Bologna Secretariat's website.
The mandate of Norway, Holy See and FYROM in the BFUG Board expires on 30 June 2009. Elections will be held at the BFUG meeting in Leuven, 27 April 2009, if more than 3 countries express interest. The Chair referred to the procedures for vote and eligibility. Candidatures can be put forward until 9 April 2009 by e-mail to the Bologna Secretariat.
- Two members of the European Cultural Convention had expressed their intention to become members of the Bologna Process earlier, but after receiving the template for application Belarus did not meet the deadline and San Marino withdrew. They re-contacted the Chair and the agreement was that they would submit their report by 31 October 2009 for possible accession in 2010, or later for the next possibility for accession in 2012.

4. EQAR - Results of the first round of applications and update on General Assembly

Document: BFUG (CZ) 15_10 [EQAR update]

Lesley Wilson (EUA) in her capacity as chair of the EQAR General Assembly presents the document.

The General Assembly of EQAR, at its meeting of 25 March 2009, suggested that a balance has to be found between confidentiality on applications to the Register and transparent communication. In the meantime 3 agencies have been registered. The Register Committee will decide on the 7 pending applications on 4-5 April and also discuss the

newly received applications.

The Executive Board of EQAR will convey the request for more information from the General Assembly to the Register Committee.

A new meeting of the General Assembly is planned, preferably preceding the next BFUG meeting in Stockholm.

The BFUG took note of this information.

5. Reports on progress with implementation of Bologna reforms

5.1 Stocktaking 2009 (including analysis of the national strategies on the social dimension)

Documents: BFUG (CZ) 16_5.1a [final stocktaking report]
BFUG (CZ) 16_5.1b [social dimension report]

Andrejs Rauhvargers (Latvia), Chair of the Stocktaking Group and Cynthia Deane (research consultant) presented the report (see slides in annex).

In the debate that followed EUA and ESU pointed out that the data in the forthcoming reports may differ in certain respects from the data provided in the Ministerial reports. Recognition has to be taken up at the level of the higher education institutions.

The BFUG endorsed the 2009 stocktaking report, including the analysis of the national strategies on the social dimension.

5.2 Data collection

Document: BFUG (CZ) 16_5.2 [data collection report]

Fernando Reis (Eurostat) and Dominic Orr (Eurostudent) presented the Report on Social Dimension and Mobility in the Bologna Process, which was endorsed at the last BFUG meeting in view of a discussion on the follow-up (see slides in annex)

In the debate that followed there was consensus that the work on development of indicators for mobility and social dimension should continue. Data collection on mobility can underpin possible later formulation of benchmarks.

For the time being the number of international students is based on the criterion of nationality of students registered and therefore not accurate. There is the problem of the lack of data on staff mobility, which could probably be complemented by the data from the future universities' register. The issues need further discussion, possibly in a seminar.

5.3 Eurydice

Document: BFUG (CZ) 16_5.3 [Eurydice report]

The BFUG took note of the Eurydice report presented by David Crosier (Eurydice).

This report has to be considered as complementary to stocktaking. It is partial in the sense that it focuses on national legislation but also comprehensive as it covers the 46 countries.

The 2009 report has concentrated on degree structure, transparency tools and mobility.

Delegations were invited to provide further comments in writing.

6. General Report on the 2007-2009 Work Programme

Documents: BFUG (CZ) 16_6 [Secretariat Report]

The Secretariat introduced the report, which is still work in progress. Further comments can be sent to the Bologna Secretariat by 3 April 2009.

7. Ministerial conferences

7.1 Ministerial conference in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve, 28-29 April 2009

Documents: BFUG (CZ) 16_7.1a [2009 conference draft programme]
BFUG (CZ) 16_7.1b [policy forum background paper]
BFUG (CZ) 16_7.1c [outline of policy forum statement]

The BFUG took note of the information provided by the Benelux hosts of the 2009 ministerial conference.

The Secretariat gave an update on the practicalities of the organisation. In reaction to the programme EURASHE announced that it will present its recent report on the implementation of lifelong learning. Concerning the organisation of the parallel sessions, it was recalled that delegation members in principle follow the head of delegation to the same parallel session.

Germain Dondelinger, Vice-Chair of the BFUG, gave an update on the Bologna Policy Forum. Its "road map" consists in the work of the global dimension working group and the prepared questions for debate. During the debate Ministers are expected to speak on behalf of the EHEA as a whole, not as an individual country. Above all it is the intention to listen to the guests.

7.2 Ministerial conference 2010

Document: BFUG (CZ) 16_7.2 [2010 conference draft programme]

Barbara Weitgruber (Austria) provided extra information on the 2010 conference and announced the planned publication on the history of the Bologna Process. The exact planning will also be made in function of the outcome of the Bologna Policy Forum in Louvain-la-Neuve.

7.3 Ministerial conference 2012

Camelis Sturza (Romania) informs on the 2012 ministerial conference. It will keep up the lively spirit and will organise the conference in Bucharest in the Palace of the Parliament.

8. Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Draft Communiqué

Documents: BFUG (CZ) 16_8a [communiqué draft 3]
BFUG (CZ) 16_8b [comments received on draft 2]
BFUG (CZ) 16_8c [communiqué drafting roadmap]

The BFUG started with the discussion on par. 20 (multidimensional transparency tools) before starting the paragraph per paragraph discussion. Delegations could agree to start from the UK text proposal. The other possibility was to start discussing the draft text in the Communiqué distributed before the BFUG meeting. The majority of the delegations supported the former suggestion. The UK text was then developed further. See also the comments to para 20 below.

Summary of the paragraph pro paragraph discussion

I Preamble

Para 1. It will be made clearer that the topic concerns higher education

The ageing population will be kept as a challenge as this issue has been explicitly singled out in previous the Bologna beyond 2010 discussions.

Para 2. The challenge also implies opportunities. This will be added.

Para 3. Competences needed for active citizenship are indicated in para 4. Previous textual suggestions have been incorporated.

Para 4. Textual suggestions formulated by delegations will be incorporated. No reference will be taken up to the Magna Charta as other documents and initiatives should then be mentioned too.

Para 5. Textual suggestions formulated by delegations will be incorporated.

Para 6. The possibility, within a national context, of an intermediate qualification linked to the first cycle will be maintained in the text as it was agreed during the Bergen ministerial conference in 2005. In various situations the possibility is appreciated. It is signalled that the topic also appears in para 11. The references to the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance will be made congruent in all paragraphs concerned.

Para 7. The objectives will be related to various levels.

II Learning for the future: higher education priorities for the decade to come

Para 8. Some delegations expressed doubt on the appropriateness of using the term "excellence". After discussion the word excellence was clarified as pointing at different forms of delivering high quality in different missions of higher education. Nevertheless the text was slightly amended.

Para 9. Widening access is an active process, and the formulation will clarify this. Access to higher education also depends on progression from other levels. This needs to be mentioned properly in the text. Correction of mechanical mistake: the last sentence on equipment of staff will be deleted.

Para 10. Textual suggestions to indicate the inclusion of work-based routes will be incorporated.

Para 11. The paragraph relates to two subjects and as suggested it will be divided into two parts. The correct name of the EUA Charter on LLL will be included. After discussion it was agreed to change "each" institution into "higher education institutions". The meaning of the verb "inform" was clarified and considered adequate. The relevance for formal, non-formal and informal learning was made explicit.

Para 11 bis. The sentence on self-certification by 2012 was replaced by the precise sentence for the timing of self-certification of National Qualifications Frameworks, suggested on the basis of the working group on Qualifications Frameworks. After discussion it was considered important to mention that, within national contexts, intermediate qualifications within the first cycle can be a means of widening access.

Para 12 (Employability) Upon discussion on the level of knowledge concerned, the word "advanced" was introduced as this reflects the intention.

NB. In the German language “advanced” could be translated as “Wissenschaftlich”. To emphasize the value and notion of quality assurance of work placements the phrase “embedded in study programmes” is added.

Para 13. (Student centred learning) The title was changed into “Student centred learning and the teaching mission of higher education”. Textual suggestions to bring the sentences in line with concerns of delegations have been incorporated.

Para 14. (Education, research and innovation) The notion that applied science is also important to foster innovation is included. Joint degrees, not only at doctoral degree level, but at all levels, have been already aimed at in previous communiqués. It does not need to be repeated. The part on the integration of EHEA and ERA has been deleted, as it is unclear what the modalities of such “integration” would be, given the larger geographical scope of the EHEA than the ERA (EU only).

Para 15. (International Openness) The tasks and expectations of the various stakeholders were clarified and the first sentence made more active. There was preference to phrase the use of existing structures for a sustainable network of contact points, as was also intended by the working group on global dimension.

Para 16. (Mobility) After discussion on the targets and their meaning, it was agreed to keep the political target of at least 20% for those graduating in the EHEA in the 10 years up to 2020, and to introduce in another para the commitment to elaborate a clear definition of mobility in conjunction with data collection and geographical balance. Some delegations, however, expressed reservations to expressing a concrete target.

Para 17. (Mobility) Textual suggestions regarding the understanding of mobility windows were included to make clear that mobility windows refer to structured opportunities for mobility in study programmes.

It was signalled that some of the practical measures for mobility like visa and work permits are outside the competence of education ministers. This should not refrain ministers from convincing their colleagues in their respective governments of the importance of tackling these issues. Difficulties of reaching a balanced mobility were taken into consideration and come back later in the Communiqué.

Para 18. Textual suggestions have been accommodated.

Para 19. (Data collection and multidimensional transparency tools) The title was changed into: Data collection.

Para 20 on transparency tools:

The Chair proposed to work from the UK proposal, which received much support. It was further suggested to include the function of comparing strengths and to explicitly mention the relation with quality assurance and recognition. The para received a separate heading: Multidimensional transparency tools.

Para 21. (Funding) The wording was adjusted, highlighting the importance of public funding as a guarantee for broad access to higher education.

III The organisational structure and follow-up

Para 22. Textual suggestions regarding the appropriate stakeholders were included.

Para 23. No comments.

Para 24, 25, (version after BFUG para 26, 27) After discussion, specific actions up to 2012 and reporting on them were made clear in various paragraphs.

The co-operation of Eurostat, Euridice and Eurostudent was confirmed.

One overall report on the progress of the implementation of the Bologna Process will be expected in 2012. It will include the stocktaking, which enjoys publicity and acts as a driving force, other data collection and possibly results of working groups or seminars. Another report in 2012 on the development of transparency mechanisms is expected from the BFUG.

The BFUG is further asked to prepare a work plan for 2012 and in particular it is also asked:

- To define the indicators used for measuring and monitoring mobility and social dimension in conjunction with the data collection;
- To consider how balanced mobility could be achieved within the EHEA.
- To set up a network, making optimal use of existing structures, for better information on and promotion of the Bologna Process outside the EHEA;
- To follow-up on the recommendations of analysis of the national action plans on recognition.

Para 26, 27 (version after BFUG para 28 and 29). No specific comments.

9. Bologna Beyond 2010 Report

Document: BFUG (CZ) 16_9 [Beyond 2010 Report]

The document is to be considered as a working paper that helped the BFUG to reflect on Bologna Beyond 2010 and to prepare the Communiqué. The Benelux will take responsibility for the content, without committing BFUG for each and every detail of the content. Nevertheless, further textual comments from delegations are welcome and should be communicated in writing to the Secretariat by 3 April 2009 at the latest. In any case the text will be reedited in view of better alignment with the actual formulations in the draft Ministerial Communiqué.

10. Work programme beyond 2009

Document: BFUG (CZ) 16_10 [work programme beyond 2009]

The BFUG drew up of a list of actions to be taken immediately after the 2009 ministerial conference, as input for the future work programme. This list includes the work on the qualifications framework, the validation seminar on the independent assessment of the implementation of the Bologna Process to be held 1 December 2009, hosted by the Flemish Ministry of Education and Training.

Spain announced the dates of the Board meeting, 28-29 January 2010 and the BFUG meeting, 18-19 February 2010. Both meetings will be held in Madrid.

11. Updates from EC and consultative members (written contributions only)

Documents: BFUG (CZ) 16_11a [CoE update]

BFUG (CZ) 16_11b [EQAF conclusions]

The BFUG took note of the information.

12. Next BFUG meeting, Leuven, 27 April 2009

The next meeting of the BFUG will take place in Leuven (University Library) on 27 April 2009, from 2 to 4 pm.

Sweden announced the dates of the BFUG (Board) meetings under Swedish Presidency

- Board: 4 September 2009
- BFUG: 28-29 September 2009.

Both meetings will be held in Stockholm.

13. Any other business

Germany raised the issue of the use of languages at Bologna Ministerial conferences. In principle they see 2 options: either all most widely spoken languages are offered, or a regime of English+language/s of the host country is followed. The Vice-Chair replied that the latter option was followed for the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve conference, which explains that besides English, French can be spoken at the conference.