

**BACKGROUND PAPER ON POSSIBLE ADDITIONAL WORKING METHODS  
TO FACILITATE THE PROPER AND FULL IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE AGREED BOLOGNA PRINCIPLES AND ACTION LINES**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Bologna Process, which created the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), is based on cooperation between ministries, higher education institutions, students and staff from 47 countries, with the participation of international organisations. The various reports presented at the Bologna Process ministerial conferences in Leuven/ Louvain-la-Neuve (2009) and Budapest/ Vienna (2010) underlined the need for additional measures to bridge the implementation gap and to increase the motivation for further work on making the EHEA operational at the institutional and national levels.

With the Budapest-Vienna Declaration, the Ministers therefore agreed to give the following mandate to the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG):

*"We, the Ministers responsible for the European Higher Education Area, ask the Bologna Follow-up Group to propose measures to facilitate the proper and full implementation of the agreed Bologna principles and action lines across the European Higher Education Area, especially at the national and institutional levels, among others by developing additional working methods, such as peer learning, study visits and other information sharing activities."*

**ALREADY EXISTING WORKING METHODS AND TOOLS**

So far, the Bologna Process has mainly used the following working methods and tools:

- Ministerial conferences to monitor progress and agree on priorities for the next period.
- BFUG work plans for the period up to the next Ministerial meeting, on the basis of the most recent Ministerial Communiqué and/or Declaration.
- BFUG working groups carrying out specific mandates and providing policy input for the next Ministerial conference.
- Seminars on Bologna Process topics, aimed at policy development, or dissemination and exchange of experience, whose results fed into the work of the BFUG.
- Networks of peers in certain fields (e.g. QF or student support).
- A variety of already established contacts inside and outside the EHEA to seek and exchange good practice (e.g. on quality assurance, internationalization etc.).
- the Bologna Process website to disseminate information coming from the bi-annual ministerial conferences, BFUG and BFUG working group meetings as well as results of Bologna seminars
- Reports taking stock of the Bologna implementation progress.

- At national level, setting up national Bologna Follow-Up Groups and using the national Bologna Experts' Team for incentivizing Bologna Process implementation.

## **PROPOSALS FOR ADDITIONAL WORKING METHODS**

### **1. Study visits**

It is obvious that there are serious limits to the information exchange that can occur through Bologna surveys or written reports. As such, we could envisage study visits (from groups to single persons) to observe the progress on Bologna reforms both in areas in which there is a positive development, but also in areas where there are challenges for the implementation, followed by sharing of the information with the BFUG members. The study visits have the advantage of creating immediate networking between experts acting in the Bologna implementation field and thus add to the creation of knowledge networks on this topic. Findings may also be disseminated in the local context.

### **2. Peer learning**

Peer learning occurs when people in similar circumstances share common or related experiences and then reflect on them together over a period of time. Peer learning activities could be enhanced in the context of the Bologna Process as a useful working method and be enriched by further deepening of the shared experience through job-shadowing or coaching (see working method no. 3). Peer learning would perhaps be most useful for those in charge of institutional and national Bologna implementation: policy experts, deans, heads of departments etc.

### **3. Coaching/ job-shadowing**

In their usual understanding the two terms refer to:

*Coaching - method of directing, instructing and training a person or group of people, with the aim to achieve some goal or develop specific skills and attitudes*

*Job shadowing - involves spending a period of time with a seasoned expert, observing everything that he or she does, related to the work that is expected to be accomplished as part of the daily routine of the activity. Involving one individual to act as the observer and one person to function as the demonstrator, this allows the observer to get a handle of what is involved in performing the tasks associated with the work.*

One of the methods of gaining new ideas on how to successfully develop Bologna Process reforms is to learn from peers involved in the same process, but in a different national context. As such, coaching or job shadowing could be successfully used and professionals working on Bologna implementation at the national or institutional level could be mobile so as to make use of the extraordinary European potential coming from the diversity of approaches in Bologna implementation.

### **4. Internships**

Internships, i.e. supervised practical experience at a work place, for instance at a government office, a rectors' conference or a university, could also be used for furthering the implementation of the Bologna Process. The interns would preferably cross borders to expand their experience. It is to be expected that students that would be interested in such activities would be involved one way or another in the Bologna Process

implementation activities, either through their field of study or through their role in the Bologna Process implementation structures within the university.

## **5. Creating a feedback possibility from the side of academics researching the topic of Bologna implementation**

The new Bologna website could provide a platform for the BFUG to receive feedback regarding the Bologna implementation progress. A large number of academics focus their research on Bologna implementation. Their work is useful as a source of inspiration. With the proper dissemination of such a tool among the research community and policy advisors, a useful flow of Bologna implementation analysis information could be directed towards those who need to steer the implementation process further.

In order to allow for a meaningful flow of research information, an electronic "Bologna Observatory" could be set up. With an open access websystem (such as a wiki type of webpage), research papers on the implementation of the Bologna Process from various sources could be posted and shared..

## **6. Setting up national Bologna Follow-Up Groups (BFUGs) in every EHEA country**

A good practice at the national level has proven to be the set-up of national BFUGs, in which students, academic staff, institutions, employers and QA agencies together with researchers and government representatives are monitoring the Bologna implementation and advising on future policy directions. Such partnerships proved to be beneficial and thus consideration should be given to recommending that similar arrangements are made across the 47 Bologna countries, especially in view of the need for in-depth implementation and broader debate on the Bologna action lines implementation.

## **7. National Bologna Experts and the BFUG members**

The European Commission supports a network of National Bologna Experts, whose purpose is to disseminate information about the Bologna Process at national and institutional level and to increase the capacity of policy makers and academic communities in implementing the Bologna reforms. In some countries the Bologna Experts are not benefiting on a continuous basis from the input and expertise of the BFUG representatives and the national BFUG. In order to have a coherent approach on the in-depth implementation of the agreed Bologna principles and action lines, the following actions might be considered:

- Reinforcing the link between the national BFUG representatives or the national BFUG itself (if existent) with the national Bologna Experts in order to aid the in-depth implementation of the agreed Bologna principles and action lines;
- The European Commission could share with the BFUG the information exchanged with the Bologna Experts;
- Presence of BFUG members to the various meetings/ trainings of the Bologna Experts at European level, as contributors, where appropriate;
- Joint Bologna Experts/ BFUG members' national seminars on specific areas of Bologna implementation.
- More active use of the Bologna Experts' web pages (<http://www.bolognaexperts.net/>) by BFUG members.

## **8. Thematic sessions during BFUG meetings**

Looking at the positive feedback received following the Sarajevo BFUG meeting (2008), the BFUG members could consider useful organizing time slots during BFUG meetings for thematic debates on specific topics in plenary or in parallel discussion groups. Depending on the nature of such thematic debates, the results could feed into the next ministerial communiqué, the work of BFUG working groups and networks, or the national Bologna implementation work.

## **9. Bologna Process website – tool for peer learning**

As a tool linked to peer learning, the Bologna Process website could provide updates on good practices regarding all Bologna thematic areas, coming from the BFUG members. The BFUG WG chairs could aid in this sense, by including peer learning activities within the WG activities and collect information about good practice from the members of the WG. Furthermore, good practice from outside of the EHEA regarding Bologna thematic areas should continue to be sought, by capturing such information from, for example, international seminars in which BFUG members are participating. For the website pages to remain attractive there is a need for continuous updating and an interactive web platform is already in place, with individual access codes for the BFUG members.

## **GENERAL NOTES**

1. We invite the members of the BFUG to propose more ideas on possible additional working methods or concrete examples illustrating the already proposed ones (preferably based on already existing national or institutional good practices) and to discuss the ideas currently put forward. Due to differences in understanding of the methods proposed, there might be various ways in which the suggestions above could be implemented at national and/ or institutional level.
2. All of the possible additional working methods above will need careful consideration with regards to the funding resources on a case by case basis.
3. In order to steadily progress in the proper and full implementation of the agreed Bologna principles and action lines, the national and institutional commitment will be the essential ingredient to all EHEA activities until 2012. In this regard, securing the necessary resources from the national, regional and institutional levels will be the crux of a successful EHEA.

## **PROPOSED ACTION**

The BFUG is asked to endorse the present paper as a non-exhaustive list of Bologna Process working methods which would be considered by each BFUG member, according to the specific context.