



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

1 **INTRODUCTION**

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

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

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

19

20 **ALREADY EXISTING WORKING METHODS AND TOOLS**

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

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

38 - At national level, setting up national Bologna Follow-Up Groups and using the  
39 national Bologna Experts' Team for incentivizing Bologna Process implementation.  
40

## 41 **PROPOSALS FOR ADDITIONAL WORKING METHODS**

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### 43 **1. Study visits**

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

53

### 54 **2. Peer learning**

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

62

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

64 In their usual understanding the two terms refer to:

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

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

72

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

79

### 80 **4. Internships**

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

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

88

## 89 **5. Creating a feedback possibility from the side of academics researching the** 90 **topic of Bologna implementation**

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

97

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

102

## 103 **6. Setting up national Bologna Follow-Up Groups (BFUGs) in every EHEA** 104 **country**

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

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

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

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

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

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

141

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

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

152

153 **GENERAL NOTES**

- 154 1. We invite the members of the BFUG to propose more ideas on possible additional  
155 working methods or concrete examples illustrating the already proposed ones  
156 (preferably based on already existing national or institutional good practices) and  
157 to discuss the ideas currently put forward. Due to differences in understanding of  
158 the methods proposed, there might be various ways in which the suggestions  
159 above could be implemented at national and/ or institutional level.
- 160 2. All of the possible additional working methods above will need careful  
161 consideration with regards to the funding resources on a case by case basis.
- 162 3. In order to steadily progress in the proper and full implementation of the agreed  
163 Bologna principles and action lines, the national and institutional commitment will  
164 be the essential ingredient to all EHEA activities until 2012. In this regard,  
165 securing the necessary resources from the national, regional and institutional  
166 levels will be the crux of a successful EHEA.
- 167

168 **PROPOSED ACTION**

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