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**Proposal for the 4th Bologna Policy Forum**

There is no doubt that Bologna Process with its innovative approach and the new style of cooperation is remaining interesting to other regions of the world that are using it as a model to build regional cooperation on different aspects of higher education.

There have been several examples of various harmonization efforts in Latin America and Caribbean, different parts of Africa, Asia-Pacific. Thus the Bologna Policy dialogue is still relevant and is key to both communicating European higher education reforms in the world and to seeking common approaches with non-EHEA partner countries, regions and institutions.

The Bologna Process has much to offer to other regions.

* Its huge *scope and scale* are an important cooperation model.
* As a transformative higher education change process it provides stimulating lessons.
* It is instructive because it strives to be student-centered, not institution-focused. The ultimate aim of the process is to design higher education according to students’ needs, not according to institutions’ choices or policies.
* It is important because it provides a new and more expansive look at how quality is defined in higher education.

The concept of the 4th Bologna Policy Forum was discussed in the previous two BFUG meetings. The proposal presented to the BFUG meeting in Athens put forward the idea of regional approach and suggested focusing on the countries of the Mediterranean region that are not part of the EHEA, which was accepted by the BFUG.

However, at the September Rome BFUG meeting the deliberations revealed that some countries felt uncomfortable only with the regional approach and it was agreed that the dynamics of the global Policy Forum should not be broken and the political agenda should not be downsized since global platform can be a rare opportunity for establishing strategic cooperation. Moreover, in September in Rome more countries expressed their disagreement with the decision taken earlier by the BFUG and the Board. In the same vein, it is well realised that for the efficiency and success of the forum the approach used previously should be reconsidered.

Thus, the Minister of Education and Science of Armenia as the host in September in Rome suggested to keep the same list of countries as during 3rd BPF taking into consideration the fact that stepping back from global coverage and reducing the number of participating countries to one region only might prevent Bologna Process from achieving its results in the global context. Also it was agreed that interest of all EHEA countries should be considered carefully and equal treatment should be ensured.

After the discussions the Chair concluded that the Co-chairs together with Armenia and the Secretariat will come up with the proposal in time for the November BFUG meeting. The proposal should take into account a request to have a wider perspective for global approach as well as present how the Fourth Bologna Policy Forum can be made politically relevant and attractive. Moreover, while developing the topics for the event there is a need to consider the fact that there are other global events on HE during 2015 in order to avoid overlaps.

In light of this conclusion Armenia, as the Vice-Chair of the process and as the host of the 2015 ministerial events, circulated a letter to the BFUG with the aim to collect information on which non-EHEA countries are strategically important for the EHEA members. The information was meant to help to develop a tailored proposal to be presented to the BFUG in November geared to holding a politically relevant, dynamic and effective global event.

The answers were received from 19 countries and the analysis of the survey shows that China and India, Brazil and USA are the most frequently mentioned countries. Generally, the regions of Asia-Pacific, Latin America, and North America are the most referred to.

While acknowledging the decision taken in Athens and importance of the cooperation of the EHEA with the neighborhood (countries bordering the EHEA member countries) including the Mediterranean region, the results of the survey among EHEA members should also be considered. The survey showed that the interests for strategic partnerships of the EHEA member countries vary significantly. Finally, given the time constrains it is not reasonable to continue discussions on the BPF participants rather it is necessary to concentrate on the goals and key issues of the event.

Thus it is proposed to keep the focus on the whole EHEA neighborhood, including the Mediterranean region to take into account the interests of the non-EU member states of the EHEA. This approach will allow to continue setting ambitious goals for the Bologna Process in a global context.

Moreover, it is important to identify goals and expected outcomes of the BPF as well as to decide on a wide range of follow-up measures which could include conferences and seminars, participation of BPF countries in BFUG and WG meetings as appropriate, etc. The following could be among the goals of the BPF:

* Strengthen cooperation based on partnership and facilitate dialogue on the common policy issues in HE and strive for joint solutions;
* Develop tools (e.g. credit system, QA standards, QFs, etc) and methods (e.g. tuning, peer learning and peer review, etc) for meeting the identified challenges;
* Facilitate recognition of qualifications and encourage increasing mobility between the neighboring countries of EHEA-Asian region.

Nevertheless, this list is by no means exhaustive and further contributions of the EHEA countries and organisations are necessary to ensure the effectiveness of the Fourth BPF. In this light, the BFUG is encouraged to provide reflections with this regard in its upcoming meeting in Rome.

Last but not least having in mind the discussions held during the Rome BFUG meeting in September it is recommended for the future to launch the BPF discussions at the earlier stages of the 2015-2018 work plan as well as include in the work plan agreed follow–up measures.