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Advisory Group 1: EHEA International cooperation

Eighth Meeting

Brussels (Belgium), 15 December 2017

Draft Minutes

List of participants

COUNTRY/ ORGANISATION	NAME
BELGIUM VL	Noel VERCRUYSE
BELGIUM VL	Magalie SOENEN
BFUG SECRETARIAT	Françoise PROFIT
BFUG SECRETARIAT	Mariana SAAD
CYPRUS	Stelios CHRISTOPHIDES
EAIE/European Association For International Education	Markus LAITINEN
ENQA	Maria KELO
ESU	Caroline SUNDBERG
EUA/European University Association	Henriette STOEBER
EU COMMISSION	Marlène BARTES
FRANCE chair	Marie-Odile OTT
GERMANY	Katrin FOHMANN
GREECE	Alexandra KARVOUNI
IAU/International Association of Universities	Hillegje VAN 'T LAND
IRELAND	Gerry O'SULLIVAN
ROMANIA	Alexandra COLTAN
RUSSIAN FEDERATION	Alexander GRUDZINSKY

SPAIN chair	Margarita de LEZCANO-MUJICA NUÑEZ
UNITED KINGDOM chair	Ella RITCHIE

Apologies received from ACA, Azerbaijan, AUF/ Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie, EI/ETUCE, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Lichtenstein, Montenegro, OECD, Serbia, UfM and UNESCO.

1. Welcome and Tour de table

The chairs welcomed the participants and thanked the Irish representative and the permanent Representation of Ireland to the European Union for organising the meeting and their efficiency. A tour de table followed, allowing members to introduce themselves to the group.

2. Feedback from the Tartu BFUG meeting

The Spanish chair underlined that two of the three chairs were present in Tartu and explained that she was in charge of presenting the AG1 report and recommendations as well as the BPF draft agenda. She pointed out that AG1's recommendations received a very positive reception. She mentioned that the remark on the lack of representation of academics was supported by the representatives of academia at the BFUG. A discussion followed, where the British chair recalled the points made by the representatives of academia in AG1 at the last Berlin meeting (16 October 2017). Several members also underlined the difficulty in selecting representatives academic from 48 countries.

The French chair indicated that there was a general agreement on the BPF agenda. She informed the group about the other main topics discussed at the conference: the important debate on implementation and non-implementation, the draft agenda for the 2018 Ministerial and the interest for the "European Universities" proposed by French President Macron. A round table on the latter was proposed to be held during the Conference as a perspective for the Future.

3. Discussion on the Concept Notes

The British chair reminded the group members that the BPF would be organised around a keynote speech and two round tables and presented them with a summary of the content of the Concept notes.

The European Commission representative remarked that the topics of the two round-tables were strongly linked to the subjects discussed at the Gothenburg summit and she suggested to include a paragraph mentioning the Gothenburg communication in the concept notes.

Discussion on RT1:

Some members argued that the concept note raised too many topics and that it might lead to an unmanageable discussion at the BPF. They also pointed out that spending too much time on the presentation of practices might slow the discussion.

Discussing different approaches to the topic itself (widening access to HE), the participants remarked that responses to inequality and under representation differed from one region to the other and that had to be taken into account for the organisation of the debates.

Several participants wondered if the expression "anchor institutions" was not too deeply rooted in an American academic culture with no clear counter-part outside said culture.

Discussion on RT2:

After discussion, it was decided to keep the second paragraph of the draft. The Irish representative argued that the HE sector is a vector for values, as the role of the group and the BPF is to bring topics on the agenda of people who can take action. Speaking about the list of possible questions submitted to the BPF participants, the EUA representative suggested to focus on the policy level. The German representative underlined that to make the discussions clearly relevant the concept notes should put

forward the common grounds of the problems they addressed. The British chair asked the members of the group to send ideas and suggestions before the end of December.

4. Organisation of the RT: the keynote speaker and the speakers

The participants examined what the number of speakers for each round table should be. Some were in favour of four ministers (with two coming from the EHEA and two from non-EHEA regions), others thought that 6 was a better number. The Vice-chair reminded them that all ministers present at the event should be able to have the floor and that the role of the moderator would be key.

The group also looked at the possibility of sending targeted invitations to speakers already identified as experts on a field or as especially important partners (interlocutors) in different regions.

The French chair informed the group of the difficulties at getting in touch with the intended keynote speaker. The putative second name did not rally a consensus this time. A discussion followed on who else to invite for that role. Then IAU representative proposed to ask the new DG of UNESCO, ESU did approve and the proposition did not meet objection, the French chair had no objection too. Some possible names of persons from African countries or organisations were mentioned too. But the Spanish chair stressed that the keynote speaker needed to be of political importance to attract the right audience to the BPF. This was the aim of the rationale that did lead the group to the previous proposal.

Several members asked how invitations would be made and if specific countries would be represented at the BPF. The representative from ESU pointed that her organisation was interested in developing further their relations with Africa and South America. After considering if the group would choose to favour a region, the group agreed to invite all countries without restriction. It was also decided that Belgium and Romania who already hosted BPF fora would send information on the organisation of these events as well as the lists of participants.

The representative of the European Commission asked France to inform the group when official invitations are sent and suggested to update the excel list of contacts that was set up two years ago. The following discussion helped clarify that the list was intended for invitations to AG1 group sessions although it was also thought that it could help identify the right contacts for the BPF at that time.

5. Drafting of the BPF Statement

After discussion, it was decided that the draft of the BPF statement should be based on the concept notes at the moment. The European Commission representative asked what the political value of the Statement would be and how far the Ministers would be committing themselves and their countries to the adopted text. The Belgium VL representative explained that the format and the political scope of the BPF did not allow for formal commitments.

The roadmap for the writing of the drafts and the circulation of the text was also examined. It appeared that a first Draft 0 should be presented to the Board of the BFUG in the January meeting in Belgrade. It was decided that the chairs would propose a first draft in early January to circulate among the group and that the London meeting of February would be dedicated at the re-writing of the draft. It was also agreed that the draft at its most final stage would be sent for consultation to the participant non-EHEA countries. It was understood that this consultation should take place two times before the BPF.

6. AOB

The British chair confirmed that the next group meeting will take place in London on February 19th at the Universities UK International headquarters. Practical information about accommodation would be sent later to all participants.