



BFUG_SK_ME_52_4 Proceedings
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BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP (BFUG)

PROCEEDINGS 2015-2018

This document outlines how the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) is operating for the 2015–2018 period, in terms of structure, meeting management and communication. The provisions set out in this document are not to be considered as strict or definitive rules, but as guidelines for the BFUG proceedings and its sub-structures (the Board, Working Groups, Advisory Groups and the Bologna Secretariat).

With regard to the prior periods, the document in Annex 1 reports an historical overview of the BFUG proceedings since the BFUG has been established. The documents in Annex 4, Annex 5, Annex 6 and Annex 7 are also historic documents provided for information purposes.

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I. Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG)

a. Role

The BFUG is the executive structure supporting the Bologna Process in-between the Ministerial Conferences. It is in place since autumn 1999. The BFUG is entrusted with preparing the Ministerial Conferences, policy forums and with overseeing the Bologna Process between these, including taking forward matters that do not need to be decided by the Ministers or that have been delegated by the Ministers. The BFUG meetings play an important role in overseeing the implementation of the ministerial Communiqués as well as in developing the Bologna Process.

The BFUG has the possibility to set up Working and Advisory Groups in order to deal with specific topics in more details. Such as expressed in the work plan 2015-2018, BFUG and consultative members have been invited to express their interest in participating in one or more Working Groups (WGs) or Advisory Groups (AGs) and as Co-chair by completing a declaration of participation, provided by the Secretariat. All WGs/AGs are open to participation from BFUG members, experts nominated by national authorities, consultative members and international experts proposed by the group. Composition should reflect the diversity of the EHEA.

On the basis of the Yerevan communiqué, the BFUG work plan 2015-2018 has been restructured in three Working Groups (WGs) and four Advisory Groups (for more details, see Annex 2). The BFUG decides on the Terms of References of the Working and Advisory Groups and decides which of the recommendations of the Working/Advisory Groups will be proposed to the Ministers. If it deems necessary, the BFUG may also provide an opportunity for all members and consultative members to express their views on the recommendations and reports.

b. BFUG Membership: the current three categories

BFUG membership is based on the membership of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The EHEA currently has three categories: member, consultative member and partner.

- **EHEA/BFUG Member:** the members are the 48 countries and the European Commission (listed in Annex 3). To become a member of the EHEA, countries have to be party to the European Cultural Convention and to declare their willingness to pursue and implement the objectives of the Bologna Process in their own systems of higher education. The document in Annex 4 details the procedure to become an EHEA member. In 2015 Belarus became a member of the EHEA. Ministers at the Yerevan ministerial conference stated that they were “welcome[ing] Belarus as a member of the EHEA and look[ing] forward to working with the national authorities and stakeholders to implement the reforms identified by the BFUG and included in the agreed road map attached to Belarussian accession”.
- **Consultative member:** this is a non-voting category of members who represent stakeholder organisations and other institutions that have a European scope to their work and are instrumental in the implementation of the Bologna Process. The explicit criteria for consultative membership can be found in Annex 4. The current eight EHEA consultative members are: Council of Europe (CoE), UNESCO, European University Association (EUA), European Association of Institutions of Higher Education (EURASHE), European Students’ Union (ESU), European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), Education International (EI) and BUSINESS EUROPE. The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) was founded in 2008 from an initiative of the Bologna Process. EQAR has a similar status to the consultative members (non-voting member of BFUG), but has so far not been officially named consultative member.
- **Partner:** organisations that wish to be associated with the Bologna Process/the BFUG but are not included in the Consultative member category. At present, the following four organisations are BFUG partners: the European Association for International Education (EAIE), The Council of European professional and managerial staff (Eurocadres), Eurodoc, the European Association for Promotion of Science and Technology (Euroscience). They can, upon request, attend BFUG events and may be invited by a WG/AG to send an expert who will participate to the work.
- Further technical experts, such as Eurostat, Eurostudent or Eurydice may be associated to the BFUG and invited to events upon specific request.

c. Chairmanship: BFUG Co-chairs and BFUG Vice-chair

The current chairing arrangements foresee that the Bologna Process will be co-chaired by the country holding the EU presidency and a non-EU member country (see the document in Annex 5). Moreover, the host country of the next Ministerial conference is nominated as the Vice-chair. The following chairing arrangement is due to be applied in the period 2015-2018:

| Semester | Co-chair from EU-Presidency | Co-chair from non-EU country | Vice-chair |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 July – 31 December 2015 | Luxemburg | Liechtenstein | France |
| 1 January - 30 June 2016 | Netherlands | Moldova | |
| 1 July – 31 December 2016 | Slovakia | Montenegro | |
| 1 January - 30 June 2017 | Malta | Norway | |
| 1 July – 31 December 2017 | Estonia | Russian Federation | |
| 1 January - 30 June 2018 | Bulgaria | Serbia | |
| 1 July – 31 December 2018 | Austria | Switzerland | Host of 2020 conference |
| 1 January - 30 June 2019 | Romania | Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia | |
| 1 July – 31 December 2019 | Finland | Turkey | |

Each country is responsible to nominate a person who will be in charge of fulfilling the tasks of the chairmanship. The **Chairs** have a joint responsibility to take forward the aims and actions laid down by the Ministers responsible for Higher Education in the Bologna Declaration and subsequent Communiqués of ministerial conferences. The Co-chairs, in close cooperation with the Vice-chair, chair the Bologna Ministerial Meetings and the Bologna Policy Forum as well as the sessions of the BFUG and the BFUG Board. The Co-chairs jointly represent the EHEA in European and international meetings. In the decision-making process the Chairs assume the responsibility to lead the way towards compromise and to provide political impetus for moving the Bologna Process forward.

The Co-chairs may delegate tasks, such as external representation, to the Vice-chair. The Vice-chair ensures continuity between the rotating chairmanships.

d. Functioning of the BFUG meetings

BFUG meetings are in principle hosted by one of the EHEA Co-chairs and are convened at least once every six months. The working language of the BFUG is English (see Annex 6 for more details).

All EHEA/BFUG members and consultative members may attend each BFUG meeting. Each EHEA/BFUG member country and consultative member has the authority to designate its BFUG representatives, according to internal procedures. Each EHEA member and consultative member sends a maximum of 2 representatives to the BFUG meetings. On every agenda point, each BFUG delegation is invited to express the position of the country, institution or organisation in question on the respective matter. The Chairs, in consultation with the Board, have the authority to invite experts/individuals to contribute to BFUG meetings under specific points for which they have the required expertise.

The BFUG Co-chairs lead the discussions on all points of the agenda as well as declare the meeting open or closed. The Co-chairs sum up the conclusions whenever they deem necessary. The Co-chairs maintain the right to speak and to vote in their capacity as BFUG delegates, except in cases where an additional national expert has been appointed to sit as a national representative.

The current decision making procedure within the BFUG is based on a consensual understanding that the Co-chairs of the BFUG summarise at the end of each agenda point. In exceptional circumstances and when the BFUG so decides, a decision through vote may be used.

As a general rule, the BFUG meeting documents should be circulated by the Secretariat at least fifteen days prior to the meeting, after being set-up by the Chairs of the BFUG and by the BFUG Working and Advisory Groups. All comments or significant changes proposed by the BFUG members to these documents have to be submitted at least five days prior to the meeting. This rule is proposed so that every BFUG delegation has enough time to circulate the BFUG meeting documents within its specific consultation structure.

The Secretariat is in charge of drafting the minutes of the meetings of the BFUG/AG/WG/Board in consultation with the Chairs. These minutes are then circulated to the members (BFUG/AG/WG/Board) for feedback no later than one month after the meeting. The members have the possibility to within 15 days send amendments to the minutes, which will be taken into consideration by the Chairs in the process of finalising the minutes. Minutes of the meetings (BFUG/AG/WG/Board) generally will be approved via email in order to have them available for timely publishing on the website.

II. BFUG Board

a. Role and composition

The BFUG Board is an advisory committee for the Chairs and the Secretariat to prepare the BFUG meetings. The responsibilities of the Board were defined by the BFUG during its meeting in Rome (see Annex 7). It also deals with the Working and Advisory Groups, since one Co-chair of each WG/AG is member of the BFUG Board meetings.

The current members of the Board are:

- the BFUG Co-chairs double Troika (the outgoing, present and incoming Co-chairs of the BFUG);
- the BFUG Vice-chair;
- the European Commission;
- four of the consultative members (Council of Europe, EUA, ESU, EURASHE);
- one of the Co-chairs of each Working and Advisory Group.

The Co-chairs and Vice-chair of the BFUG are the same for the Board.

b. Functioning of the BFUG Board meetings

The Board usually meets at least one month (preferably six weeks) before each BFUG meeting. The host of the Board is normally one of the EHEA Co-chairs. The minutes of the Board meetings, taken by the BFUG Secretariat in consultation with the Chairs, will be approved via email and published as described above.

III. Ministerial Conferences

Within the governing period 2015-2018 the Ministerial Conference will take place in spring 2018, hosted by France. The country hosting the upcoming Ministerial Conference acts as a Vice-chair of the Bologna Process / European Higher Education Area. As agreed by the Ministers in the Berlin Communiqué (2003), the country organising the upcoming Ministerial Conference also hosts the Bologna Process Secretariat between two consecutive ministerial meetings. This applies to the governing period 2015-2018 in which France is hosting the BFUG Secretariat.

In connection with the Ministerial Conference, since 2009, a Bologna Policy Forum (BPF) is organised, which gathers partner countries from outside the EHEA.

Ministers decide at Ministerial Conferences about the central aspects of the EHEA, including its further developments and commitments by its member countries. The Ministerial Conference also decides on new applications for membership to the EHEA as well as any other main changes to the process. A communiqué is adopted at each Ministerial Conference that outlines decisions taken by the Ministers. The Ministerial Conferences are prepared by the BFUG.

For the preparation of the Draft Communiqué from the next Ministerial Conference 2018 in Paris, a drafting committee composed of the Co-chairs chairing in spring 2018 (Bulgaria, Serbia), the two outgoing Co-chairs of that period (Estonia, Russia), the former Co-chairs (Malta, Norway) and the Vice-chair (France) will be set up. The drafting committee will be in charge from spring 2017 and be supported by the Secretariat.

During the governing period 2015-2018, the host for the next Ministerial Conference in 2020 will be selected. The procedure for the Selection of the 2020 Ministerial Conference host can be found in Annex 8. Each member country of the EHEA can apply for hosting the Ministerial Conference and is expected to provide the necessary logistical and financial support to ensure the successful organisation of such an event.

IV. BFUG Secretariat

Between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2018, the Secretariat of the Bologna Follow-up Group is held by France, as organiser of the next 2018 EHEA Ministerial Conference. It will continue along the same lines as agreed previously at the BFUG meetings: the Secretariat will provide neutral support to further the consolidation of the European Higher Education Area under the exclusive authority of the BFUG, its Co-chairs and Vice-chair.

The structure is working in an international way including staff members provided by EHEA member countries.

The main tasks of the Bologna Follow-Up Group Secretariat are:

- supporting the Chairs in their work
- providing administrative and operational support for the BFUG and its Board;
- supporting all BFUG Working / Advisory Groups;
- acting as an external and internal contact point for the European Higher Education Area;
- preparing the Ministerial Conference in France (2018) and the Fifth Bologna Policy Forum under the supervision of the BFUG.

In order to provide up to date information not only for the BFUG but also to the wider public, the Secretariat maintains the European Higher Education Area website (<http://www.ehea.info>).

The document in Annex 9 outlines more specifically the tasks of the BFUG Secretariat.

V. EHEA Communication: EHEA Website and Backoffice

As part of the EHEA communication efforts, with the launch of the European Higher Education Area, a EHEA website www.ehea.info was established. The website will be further developed and updated by the BFUG Secretariat with support from the BFUG and its sub-structures.

As a general rule, all documents that are not explicitly excluded will be published on the website. Documents distributed for BFUG meetings will be published on the website in advance of the meetings unless the Co-chairs have decided otherwise.

The country pages of each BFUG member will be partially edited under the responsibility of the member. The pages concerning BFUG Working Groups and other substructures will be edited by the BFUG Secretariat, in close cooperation with the Co-chairs of the concerned WGs/AGs.

For the internal use of the BFUG members or that of Working/Advisory Groups the Secretariat has created a password for a protected website area, generically called "the Backoffice". This area allows for document storage and exchange, events' registration, calendar setting. In September 2016, a new website will be launched which will offer public access to the full archive with exception of only those documents which have been decided to be confidential.

The EHEA website is listing an open calendar of events, organised by the BFUG Working and Advisory Groups as well as the EHEA member countries and organisations. For an external event, due to be published on the official EHEA website, it has to be related to the Bologna Process and should be organised or at least supported by one of the countries or organisations participating in the Bologna Process. Moreover, the event should in principle be open to participants from all Bologna countries and should be in line with the priorities of the BFUG work plan. Invitations, presentations, reports and conclusions can be published on the website and forwarded to the BFUG on request of the organisers.

For an event to be published on the EHEA website, the organisers have to fill in a template provided by the Bologna Secretariat. The final decision on whether or not an event is considered a part of the BFUG events is taken by the Bologna Secretariat.

VI. ANNEXES

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Ministry of Education, Culture and Science of the Netherlands



Ministry of Education of the Republic of Moldova

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ANNEX 1: Historical Overview - Information on the former BFUG Proceedings

Document set-up on *19.02.2013*

Purpose and structure of the paper

This document is aimed at providing a detailed description of the current Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) decision-making and communication procedures, based on their chronological evolution and current status quo. The provisions of this document are not to be considered as strict or definitive rules, but as guidelines for BFUG proceedings and are subject to change in line with the flexibility that has become a characteristic of the BFUG due to its current role in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The first version of the present document was endorsed by the BFUG at its 24th meeting in Gödöllő (March 2011). The need for such a paper stemmed from the discussions held in the BFUG meetings in Brussels (December 2009) and Madrid (February 2010), as well as in view of the increasing need for the Co-chairs of the BFUG to provide information about the BFUG functioning rules to external parties, as well as new members of the EHEA and the following BFUG Secretariats.

The paper tries to outline the following elements for the BFUG and, as much as possible, for its sub-structures (the Board, working groups, ad-hoc working groups, networks and the Bologna Secretariat): historical overview, role and composition, main functioning rules, decision making and communication rules.

An annex listing relevant documents has been inserted, since there was no previous attempt to gather all the BFUG functioning rules into one document and hence an overview of what has already been documented might give the reader a better glimpse of the BFUG complexity.

Introduction

The BFUG has been the executive structure supporting the Bologna Process in-between the Ministerial Conferences since autumn 1999. It is entrusted with preparing the Ministerial Conferences, policy forums and with overseeing the Bologna Process between these, including making decisions on matters that do not need to be referred to the Ministerial Conferences or that have been delegated by the Ministers. Its current configuration and scope were agreed upon by the Ministers at their meeting in 2003 in Berlin and each EHEA country and consultative member has the authority to designate its BFUG representatives, according to internal procedures. It was also at this meeting that the Ministers decided to establish a Bologna Secretariat, to be provided by a country or countries hosting the forthcoming ministerial meeting. Until then, secretariat support had been provided by the rotating presidency of the Process, which followed the EU Presidency.

The informal nature of the Bologna Process has been influencing the way in which the BFUG meetings have been conducted and the degree to which the conduct of affairs has been formalized or made the subject of rules and regulations. The level of documentation regarding the BFUG proceedings or the role of the different BFUG actors has been adjusted to the character of the Bologna Process and hence little formalised rules and regulations currently exist.

With the proclamation of the European Higher Education Area by the Ministers responsible for higher education in 2010, we have entered a new phase of in-depth implementation of the EHEA, and this was deemed by the BFUG as an appropriate moment to document the already existing modus operandi of the BFUG meetings. This exercise is all the more meaningful as such a description of the guidelines related to BFUG proceedings would make it easier for new members of the BFUG or other interested parties to become accustomed with the way in which this follow-up structure conducts its work.

Historical overview of the BFUG structures

A short overview of the BFUG structure is found in the "Bologna Beyond 2010" report¹: Since 1999, Ministers have met every two years to assess progress made and to decide on new steps to be taken. The following regular ministerial conferences will be held in 2015, 2018 and 2020. The follow-up structure supporting the process in-between those ministerial meetings has emerged gradually; the arrangement, as it exists now, was agreed upon by Ministers at their meeting in 2003 in Berlin.

"Ministers entrust the implementation of all the issues covered in the Communiqué, the overall steering of the Bologna Process and the preparation of the next ministerial meeting to a Follow-up Group, which shall be composed of the representatives of all members of the Bologna Process and the European Commission, with the Council of Europe, the EUA, EURASHE, ESIB² and UNESCO/CEPES³ as consultative members. This group, which should be convened at least twice a year, shall be chaired by the EU⁴ Presidency, with the host country of the next Ministerial Conference as vice-chair.

A Board also chaired by the EU Presidency shall oversee the work between the meetings of the Follow-up Group. The Board will be composed of the chair, the next host country as vice-chair, the preceding and the following EU Presidencies, three participating countries elected by the Follow-up Group for one year, the European Commission and, as consultative members, the Council of Europe, the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB. The Follow-up Group as well as the Board may convene ad hoc working groups, as they deem necessary. The overall follow-up work will be supported by a Secretariat, which the country hosting the next Ministerial Conference will provide.

In its first meeting after the Berlin Conference, the Follow-up Group is asked to further define the responsibilities of the Board and the tasks of the Secretariat."

The BFUG meeting in Rome on 14 November 2003 reacted to this request by Ministers and further defined the responsibilities of Board and Secretariat.

¹ Bologna Beyond 2010 report (Chapter 3, page 24)

² ESIB is now known as ESU – European Students' Union.

³ UNESCO/CEPES ceased its operation in 2011 and was replaced by UNESCO as an EHEA Consultative Member.

⁴ Starting with 1 July 2010, a new Co-Chairing arrangement was adopted by the Ministers in the Budapest/ Vienna Ministerial Conference. More information is available on page 5, under 'Functioning of BFUG meetings'.

In 2005, Education International Pan-European structure (EI), ENQA and UNICE (now BUSINESSEUROPE) were accepted as additional consultative members of the BFUG.

However, within the "Bologna Beyond 2010" report, a recommendation is made for the role of the BFUG Board to change towards a more consultative role towards the BFUG Co-Chairs and the Secretariat in the preparations of the BFUG meetings.

In their 2009 Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, Ministers endorsed the already existing support structure as "fit for purpose" and decided to establish a co-chairmanship composed by the country holding the EU presidency and a non-EU country.

BFUG - role and composition

It is now firmly established that the BFUG oversees the Bologna Process/EHEA between the ministerial meetings and meets at least once every six months, usually for one-and-a-half days. In practice, the BFUG has generally met once every semester except in the semester leading up to a ministerial conference, when a supplementary BFUG meeting has been held, mainly to consider the draft communiqué.

The BFUG has the possibility to set up working groups to deal with specific topics in more detail and also receives input from Bologna Seminars. It is worth noting that in this respect, working methods have changed over time: prior to 2005, the emphasis was more on official Bologna seminars on specific topics, whereas after 2005 the emphasis shifted to a working group structure. In a sense, this also reflects the development of the Process, from a broad exploration of key issues to increased focus on policy development. In both cases, the BFUG validated the results and recommendations of the activities and prepared decisions to be made by the Ministers. The BFUG also provides an opportunity for all members and consultative members to express their views on the recommendations and reports of the working groups even if the membership of these is, by necessity, limited.

In terms of membership, the EHEA currently has two categories: members (the 47 countries and the European Commission) and consultative members.

To become a member of the EHEA, countries have to be party to the European Cultural Convention and to declare their willingness to pursue and implement the objectives of the Bologna Process in their own systems of higher education. A document (BFUG_BE-AL_21_8_Accession_Criteria), detailing the procedure to become an EHEA member was prepared for the BFUG in Alden Biesen.

The BFUG includes a non-voting category of members, generically called "consultative members", who represent stakeholder organisations and other institutions that have a European scope to their work and are instrumental in the implementation of the Bologna Process. The Berlin Communiqué (2003) outlines the initial consultative members:

"Ministers entrust the implementation of all the issues covered in the Communiqué, the overall steering of the Bologna Process and the preparation of the next ministerial meeting to a Follow-up Group, which shall be composed of the representatives of all

members of the Bologna Process and the European Commission, with the Council of Europe, the EUA, EURASHE, ESIB and UNESCO/CEPES as consultative members.”

With the Bergen Communiqué (2005), the number of consultative members increased from five to eight, which is also the current number of consultative members within the BFUG:

„We endorse the follow-up structure set up in Berlin, with the inclusion of the Education International (EI) Pan-European Structure, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), and the Union of Industrial and Employers’ Confederations of Europe (UNICE) as new consultative members of the Follow-up Group.”

Explicit criteria for consultative membership were for the first time laid down by the BFUG at its meeting in Mondorf on 1-2 March 2005 (see BFUG5_6 and BFUG (BE/Al) 21_8).

The current eight BFUG consultative members are: Council of Europe (CoE), UNESCO, European University Association (EUA), European Association of Institutions of Higher Education (EURASHE), European Students’ Union (ESU), European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), Education International (EI) and BUSINESS EUROPE.

At the same time, the BFUG established the category of “BFUG partner” for organisations that wish to be associated with the Bologna Process/the BFUG but do not meet the more demanding criteria for consultative membership. At present, the following four organisations are BFUG partners: the European Association for International Education (EAIE), The Council of European professional and managerial staff (Eurocadres), Eurodoc, the European Association for Promotion of Science and Technology (Euroscience). They are, for instance, included in the general mailing list of the Bologna Secretariat for messages of general interest (e.g. invitations to seminars) and are also invited to send one representative each as observer to ministerial conferences.

The functioning of the BFUG meetings

The BFUG meetings play an important role in overseeing the implementation, following the ministerial conferences, while aiming at maintaining the momentum of the process. BFUG meetings have been, so far, hosted by one of the EHEA Chairs and are convened at least once every six months. The working language of the BFUG is English.

Each EHEA member and consultative member sends a maximum of 2 representatives to the BFUG meetings. Any exceptions to this rule have to be authorized, on a case by case basis, by the BFUG Chairs. On every agenda point, each BFUG delegation is invited to express the position of the country, institution or organization in question on the respective matter.

As a general rule, the BFUG meeting’s documents should be circulated by the Secretariat at least fifteen days prior to the meeting, after being organised by the Chairs and Vice-Chair of the EHEA and by the BFUG working groups, ad-hoc working groups, networks Chairs (where appropriate). This means that all documents drafted by the BFUG

members or significant changes proposed to previously circulated BFUG documents have to be submitted five days prior the meeting. This rule is proposed so that every BFUG delegation has enough time to circulate the BFUG meeting documents within each specific consultation structures such as national BFUGs or concerned public authorities and stakeholder organisations.

Within the BFUG meetings, thematic discussions can be scheduled, in order to detail a particular area of interest for the EHEA members. In order to interact with other policy areas, the BFUG may liaise with experts and policy makers also from other fields, such as research, immigration, social security, employment etc as necessary. The Chairs, in consultation with the Board, have the authority to invite experts/individuals to contribute to BFUG meetings under specific points for which they have the required expertise.

The BFUG Chairs lead the discussions on all the points of the agenda as well as declare the meeting open or closed. The Chairs shall conduct proceedings and sum up the conclusions whenever they deem necessary. The Chairs shall retain the right to speak and to vote in their capacity as BFUG delegates, except in cases where an additional national expert has been appointed to sit as a national representative.

The BFUG Chairs guarantee the good preparation and conduct of the BFUG and the Board meetings, ensuring that different points of view may be expressed in a debate, when not all participants have the opportunity to speak. The Chairs should, on each agenda point, formulate a conclusion of the debate that reflects the discussion and, where a vote is needed, should formulate the alternatives on which the BFUG is invited to vote. The Chairs also conduct the vote.

In their tasks, the Chairs are supported by the Bologna Secretariat. The Chairs can also suggest closing the list of speakers for each agenda point. After each agenda point, the Chairs draw the conclusions of the BFUG discussion, which will be included in the minutes of the meeting by the Bologna Secretariat as decisions of the BFUG. These minutes are then circulated to the BFUG members for feedback no later than one month after the meeting. The BFUG members have the possibility to send proposed amendments to the minutes, which will be taken into consideration by the BFUG Chairs in the process of finalizing the minutes. The final version of the minutes is adopted by the BFUG in the following meeting. The current chairing of the EHEA arrangements has been endorsed by the Ministers in and is detailed in the document BFUG (ES) 20_7c:

With the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué the Ministers decided that in the future, the Bologna Process would be co-chaired by the country holding the EU presidency and a non-EU country. To put this decision into practice, the Bologna Follow-up Group at its meeting in Stockholm on 28-29 September 2009 agreed:

- *to treat the EU Presidency and the non-EU country as two chairs (rather than as chair and co-chair) to signal very clearly that the Bologna Process will be chaired on equal footing by the EU Presidency and a non-EU country.*
- *to leave it to each chairing team to define the exact division of tasks between the two chairs and the vice chair(s)*
- *to start the new chairing arrangement on 1 July 2010.*
- *to apply the alphabetical order when designating the chair from a non-EU country.*

- *to adjust the composition of the BFUG Board by replacing the three elected members with the outgoing, present and incoming non-EU chairs.*

The chairing order that was agreed during the 2009 Stockholm BFUG meeting has been changed due to the request from the Holy See to chair together with Italy and Greece with Iceland. All four concerned EHEA members have agreed to the proposal which was then accepted by the BFUG during its 2012 March Copenhagen meeting.

The following new arrangement was established for the period until the next 2015 Ministerial Meeting.

| Semester | EU-Presidency | Chair from non-EU country | Vice-chair |
|---------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1 July – 31 December 2012 | Cyprus | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Armenia |
| 1 January - 30 June 2013 | Ireland | Croatia | |
| 1 July – 31 December 2013 | Lithuania | Georgia | |
| 1 January - 30 June 2014 | Greece | Kazakhstan | |
| 1 July – 31 December 2014 | Italy | Holy See | |
| 1 January - 30 June 2015 | Latvia | Iceland | |

The Chairs have a joint responsibility to take forward the aims and actions laid down by the Ministers responsible for Higher Education in the Bologna Declaration and subsequent Communiqués of ministerial conferences. They chair both the Bologna Ministerial Meetings and the Bologna Policy Forum, in close cooperation with the Vice-Chair (the host country), as well as in the sessions of the BFUG or the BFUG Board meetings. They jointly represent the EHEA in European and international fora. The division of tasks between the Chairs will be decided in the beginning of the mandate by each pair of Chairs, with no obligation of maintaining the previous arrangement. After a division of tasks between Chairs has been agreed, it should also be communicated to the BFUG, preferably before the start of the chairing semester.

In the decision-making process the Chairs assume the task to lead the way towards compromise and to provide political impetus for moving the Bologna Process forward.

BFUG Decision Making

Except in the relatively rare cases where a vote is taken, the current decision making procedure within the BFUG is based on a consensual understanding that the Chairs of the BFUG summarize at the end of each agenda point.

The BFUG rarely takes a decision through a vote. Usually the decisions are taken with the intention of reaching consensus and the conclusions are drawn by the Chairs of the BFUG.

However, voting was needed in the past decade for situations such as:

- electing the host of the next ministerial conference
- selecting the BFUG Board member countries or

- selecting the BFUG observers within the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) General Assembly.

Due to having a different BFUG endorsed procedure for each of these votes at very different points in time, more than one voting system currently exists. The voting systems have been defined for specific cases where a vote was deemed necessary and they are used as long as they are deemed appropriate by the BFUG. However, there is currently no explicit provision on which situations are regulated by a voting procedure or how a voting procedure comes into force or becomes obsolete.

For **electing the host of the upcoming ministerial conference**, the voting system has had the following characteristics so far (the present electing procedures for the host of the upcoming ministerial conference/policy forum were agreed in 2009 ⁵):

- Eligible to vote: BFUG members (47 member countries and the European Commission (EC)), with the exception of those bidding to host the event. Any country not able to attend BFUG will have the option of submitting a bid in a sealed envelope to the Secretariat before the meeting takes place.
- BFUG participants will carry out any necessary consultation with their Ministers in advance of the BFUG meeting, to ensure they have a mandate to vote. To assist with this, the Secretariat has to re-circulate the original application letters from the candidate countries, indicating their willingness to host the next ministerial conference and the policy forum.
- No additional information will be issued by the candidate countries, either before or during the next BFUG meeting.
- Each member country and EC will have two votes; the Secretariat will provide two ballot slips for this purpose.
- The ballot will be secret.
- The outcome will be based on a simple majority of the number of votes cast. In the event of a tie, there will be a second round. In the unlikely event of a further tie, the Chairs will draw lots.
- The votes will be counted by the Secretariat during the BFUG meeting, overseen by two tellers. The BFUG participants will be invited to volunteer to act as tellers at the start of the BFUG meeting.
- The Chairs of the BFUG will write to the Ministers of the countries concerned, to advise them of the outcome of the vote.

For **electing the BFUG observers within the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) General Assembly**, the voting system has the following characteristics (as agreed by the BFUG and documented in BFUG (SE) 19_7_rev):

- All countries participating in the Bologna Process are eligible to stand for an election, except those that have already been observers to the Register Committee four times.
- The actual observer nominated by the elected country should be member of the BFUG.
- Nominations will be invited by an agreed deadline.
- A maximum of two countries acting as observers to the Register Committee at the time may be re-elected.

⁵ See document BFUG 9_9.

- In the event that more than five countries indicate they would like to become observers to the Register Committee, election will be by vote. Elections will be held at the BFUG meeting immediately prior to the beginning of the mandate of the Register Committee.
 - Candidates are all eligible countries that formally expressed their candidature by the agreed deadline;
 - Each member of the Bologna Process present, in the BFUG meeting will receive two voting slips and may vote for up to five nominees on each voting slip;
 - The five candidates receiving the highest number of votes on the first ballot will be elected. Should more than two of the candidates standing for re-election be among the five countries to attract the highest number of votes, only the first two (in terms of number of votes) will be taken into account.
- Should two or more countries be tied, a second ballot will be held to determine which of these countries shall be the second re-elected, or the fifth newly elected country.

Prior to the current arrangements for Board membership, three BFUG countries were elected to the Board. Details on this past procedure can be found in Appendix 2.

In general, looking at the three described voting systems, each EHEA member country has two votes, on two separate ballot papers that will be used for the secret vote. The different approach between voting systems mainly lies within the right of the countries presenting candidates to vote or not. Thus, candidates have the right to vote in elections for the Board⁶ – which will no longer be needed with the new arrangements for Board membership following the co-chairing arrangements - and observers for the EQAR General Assembly, but not in votes on the venue of forthcoming ministerial meetings. The rule that candidates for the Board were not allowed voting for themselves, which is obviously unenforceable with a secret ballot, has been abandoned.

Voting in the BFUG has so far been regarded as a “last resort” solution and in any case alternative options should be considered before casting a decisive vote (finding a compromise, postponing the issue on the agenda etc).

BFUG Communication rules

The BFUG works according to its work plan, which is adopted after ministerial conferences and can, in theory, change according to the interest of the BFUG members. The BFUG communicates regularly with its sub-structures (working groups, ad-hoc working groups and networks) and the Board through regular updates of their work and through the Chairs of these sub-structures who are sometimes also the BFUG delegates. Working group chairs who are not members of the BFUG may be invited to attend BFUG meetings for items concerning the working groups for which they are responsible, on the decision of the Chairs of the BFUG. The reports of the BFUG sub-structures have to be endorsed by the BFUG, prior to the ministerial conferences.

As part of the EHEA communication efforts, with the launch of the European Higher Education Area, a permanent EHEA website www.ehea.info was established by the

⁶ Previously named “Bureau”,

Romanian Bologna Secretariat, which will be serviced and maintained by the next Bologna Secretariats with support from the BFUG and its sub-structures.

The country pages of each BFUG member will be partially edited under the responsibility of their owners⁷, thus increasing the level of interactivity between the BFUG and the public. The pages concerning BFUG working groups and other substructures will be edited under the responsibility of the Chairs of working groups in cooperation with the Bologna Secretariat.

In the communication process, the BFUG Chairs are the main external representatives. They can delegate part of the external representation responsibilities to the Vice-Chair, other BFUG members or the Bologna Secretariat.

The Bologna Secretariat acts as a nexus of information. It is advisable that all internal and external communication made by the BFUG passes through the Bologna Secretariat in order to maintain an archive of the EHEA. As such, all messages that BFUG members want to transmit to the BFUG, Board or its substructures should be sent to the Bologna Secretariat, who will then circulate the information as appropriate.

The day to day communication with actors outside of the BFUG is usually ensured by the Bologna Secretariat, in cooperation with other concerned parties (such as BFUG Chairs, Vice-Chairs or sub-structures Chairs).

For the internal use of the BFUG members or that of working groups, ad-hoc working groups, network members, a password protected website has been created, generically called "the Backoffice"⁸. This area allows for document storage and exchange, events' registration, calendar setting. A password protected EHEA Forum has also been set up, as well as an EHEA documents archive (<http://archive.ehea.info/about>).

BFUG Board - role and composition

The responsibilities of the Board were defined by the BFUG during its meeting in Rome (14th of November 2003, document no BFUG 1_3). This document outlines the following role of the Board:

"The Board supports the Bologna Follow-up Group in its activities and has the mandate to provide efficiency to the management of the Bologna Process, assuring at the same time its continuity. As such, the responsibilities of the Board consist of co-ordinating and monitoring the effective implementation of the work programme. The following list, which is not exhaustive, illustrates the scope of this responsibility:

- *overseeing the preparation of the next Ministerial Conference by means of supporting and coordinating the realisation of the Bologna events, as described and listed in the work programme 2003-2005;*
- *providing support and assistance to new members as they seek to meet the objectives of the Bologna Process and, at the same time, looking after the*

⁷ The only exception being the national reports.

⁸ All restricted areas linked with the Bologna Process can be accessed from: <http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=213>

effective participation of representatives of the candidate countries in the Bologna events;

- maintaining contacts with ENQA as it undertakes the work defined in the Berlin Communiqué;*
- co-ordinating actions for the preparation of the stocktaking exercise for 2005;*
- organising Working Groups composed by BFUG members and/or experts on special issues decided by the BFUG.*

The BFUG may also delegate to the Board tasks it deems appropriate and necessary to achieve the objectives of the Bologna Process. In line with these responsibilities, the Board shall prepare issues for the BFUG. If urgent decisions have to be taken on specific matters, the Board will consult through e-mail the BFUG members before taking any decision.”

Both the Independent Assessment of the Bologna Process and the Bologna Beyond 2010 report point to the need for redefining the role of the Board. The Bologna 2010 report suggests that “the Board should be maintained, but its terms of reference should be updated to turn it into an advisory committee for the Chair and the Secretariat to prepare BFUG meetings.”

The composition of the Board was first changed in 2010, together with the adoption of the document “Briefing note for decision by the Ministers” (BFUG (ES) 20_7c). During the BFUG Board meeting in Sarajevo (May 31, 2012) it was agreed that there is a need for more streamlined structures, in line with the priorities of 2012 Bucharest Communiqué which will allow the BFUG to be more involved in strategic policy issues. Simultaneously, the authority and responsibility of the working groups will be increased and they will gain the freedom to set up sub-structures: ad-hoc working groups and networks. The proposed new structures underpinning the BFUG work plan will require particular expertise from the Chairs of the various working groups, continuity and representation. In the context of the substantial increase of responsibilities associated with the chairing the BFUG working groups, the BFUG Board recommended to complement the Board’s composition with at least one of the Co-Chairs of each working group, as decided by each WG members.

The current members of the Board are:

- the EHEA Chairs double Troika (the outgoing, present and incoming Chairs of the EHEA);
- the EHEA Vice-Chair(s);
- the European Commission;
- the four consultative members (Council of Europe, EUA, ESU, EURASHE);
- one of the co-chairs of each working group.

The proceedings of the Board meetings are minuted by the Bologna Secretariat, who is permanently invited to the Board meetings.

Board – functioning and communication rules

The Board usually meets at least one month (preferably six weeks) before each BFUG meeting. The host of the Board is normally one of the EHEA Chairs. The minutes of the Board meetings are circulated to Board members for comments and then endorsed in the next Board meeting. They are also circulated to the BFUG, which takes note of the information contained within. The communication between the BFUG Board members is ensured by the Bologna Secretariat.

BFUG sub-structures

After each ministerial conference, the BFUG adopts its work plan in order to organize the follow-up work. Within the work plan, the BFUG can decide to set up different sub-structures – e.g. working groups, ad-hoc working groups and networks – whose specific nature and precise tasks (e.g. coordination, monitoring, preparing a report) are outlined in the respective terms of reference. Each working group, ad-hoc working group or network is chaired by one or more BFUG members or consultative members. Their Terms of Reference are adopted by the BFUG. Each BFUG sub-structure reports to the BFUG on a regular basis.

Working groups set up by the BFUG are open to participation from all EHEA countries, the European Commission and the consultative members but also need to be of a workable size. The notion of “workable size” has never been strictly defined and thus it is left to the BFUG and/ or the WG’s Chair(s) to decide what that size should be. As the groups work on behalf of the entire BFUG, their composition should reflect the diversity of the BFUG and the EHEA more generally. Where necessary, the groups can also decide to involve external experts.

To keep the entire BFUG involved, the working groups will regularly report back to the BFUG. For a better communication process between the working groups and the BFUG, it is good that the working groups’ Chairs are also BFUG delegates. The final reports/conclusions should be submitted sufficiently early to allow the BFUG to give them due consideration before each ministerial meeting.

An ad-hoc working group is a smaller group established by the BFUG working group or by the BFUG Board in order to fulfil a specific task within a limited timeframe depending on the task at hand (shorter than the three-year period). It is not a permanent structure and can exist shorter than the two or three year period. The ad-hoc group can develop policy recommendations to be submitted to its coordinating structure (either to the BFUG, the Board or a working group); its composition should reflect the task at hand and it should be chaired by a BFUG member.

Networks are meant to establish longer term cooperation between a large number of partners (potentially all countries and organisations participating in the Bologna Process). As thematic networks, these structures usually connect experts in a specific field (e.g. student support or qualifications frameworks) from different countries and organisations and allow them to share information and examples of good practice, to assist each other, and possibly also to develop new policies. The Bologna Secretariat ensures that the BFUG is informed of the activity of the networks included in the BFUG work plan and provides

assistance to the network Chairs, upon their request and within the mandate of the respective network.

The Bologna Secretariat assists the work of the BFUG sub-structures, by preparing minutes and agendas, together with the working group or network's chairs and aiding in the preparation of the background documents, if requested to do so. The communication within the BFUG sub-structure and between the BFUG/Board and the BFUG sub-structures is also ensured by the Bologna Secretariat, which acts as liaison for all members of the working group or network.

The composition of the BFUG sub-structure is defined by its Terms of Reference. The BFUG sub-structure composition is approved en bloc by the BFUG, together with the Terms of Reference.

In most cases so far, nearly all EHEA countries and consultative members that have wished to be a part of a BFUG sub-structure have been included, even if the request came after the Terms of Reference were approved by the BFUG. Also, it is worth mentioning that BFUG sub-structure members do not have to be necessarily the same persons with the BFUG delegates.

The length of the mandate of a BFUG sub-structure is usually defined in its Terms of Reference, but it usually covers the time between two consecutive ministerial conferences. An exception to this rule will not be represented by the ad-hoc working groups that will have a mandate according to the assumed task. BFUG sub-structures can extend their mandate under the same Chairs or with different ones, but always with the BFUG re-endorsing the updated Terms of Reference.

The BFUG work plan also contains Bologna seminars, which are included in the EHEA calendar of events. The conditions for an event to become a Bologna seminar were listed in the BFUG Work Plan 2009 – 2012: "In the early stages of the Bologna Process, a central function of the Bologna seminars was policy development. While international seminars and conferences can still play an important role in further policy development, the focus of the 2009-2012 period should be on *communication* and *dissemination* of the Bologna reforms."

Rather than having a limited number of "official Bologna Seminars", there therefore is an open calendar of events, encouraging countries and organisations to arrange as many seminars, conferences and workshops as possible.

For an event to be included in the EHEA calendar of events that is published on the official EHEA website, it obviously has to be related to the Bologna Process and should be organised or at least supported by one of the countries or organisations participating in the Bologna Process. Moreover, it should in principle be open to participants from all Bologna countries, which however does not exclude international events that have a more regional focus. Coherence with the priorities of the BFUG workplan is desirable. Invitations, presentations, reports and conclusions can be published on the website and forwarded to the BFUG on request of the organisers.

For an event to be included in the BFUG calendar, the organisers have to fill in a template provided by the Bologna Secretariat. The final decision on whether or not an event is considered a part of the BFUG calendar is usually left to the Bologna Secretariat, according to rules decided by the BFUG, as it is also the Bologna Secretariat who administers the Bologna Process website. In order for an event to be included in the EHEA calendar, it has to be supported by at least one BFUG member.

Bologna Secretariat⁹

According to the Bologna 2010 report, the central task of the Bologna Secretariat is to support the work of the BFUG at four levels: BFUG, Board, working groups, ad-hoc working groups or networks and seminars.

The Secretariat prepares draft agendas, drafts reports, notes and minutes and carries out the practical preparation for meetings as requested by the Chairs or organisers (in case of EHEA seminars). The Secretariat is also at the disposal of the BFUG Chairs and Vice-Chairs to assist them in their tasks of finding compromise solutions, coordinating work and summarising complex debates. While the Chairs of the EHEA rotate every six months, the Secretariat provides continuity in keeping record of the BFUG proceedings, together with the BFUG Vice-Chairs.

Another task of the Secretariat that has become increasingly important is to provide up-to-date and reliable information about the Bologna Process/EHEA (for both EHEA and non-EHEA countries) and to maintain an electronic archive. To fulfil those functions, the Secretariat makes use of the EHEA permanent website, including a document repository – the EHEA Backoffice – as central tool. The Secretariat also maintains the EHEA archive.

Finally, the Bologna Secretariat is asked to cooperate with the host country/countries in preparing the following ministerial conference. Up to now, the Bologna Secretariat has been hosted by the country/countries organising the following ministerial meeting, which led to a full rotation every two years. Seconding national experts has been a possibility, which was already used for the two national experts seconded by Austria and Hungary to the Benelux Secretariat when this Secretariat was prolonged for one year, until the 2010 ministerial conference.

According to the proposed 2012– 2015 Secretariat's Terms of Reference, the primary function of the Secretariat will therefore be to provide neutral support to further the consolidation of the EHEA under the exclusive authority of the BFUG and its Chairs and Vice-Chair.

More specifically, the functions include:

- to provide administrative and operational support for the BFUG and its Board – including planning meetings, preparing background papers and minute-taking;
- to assist the BFUG and its Board in the follow-up work, including planning of activities and following up on BFUG decisions;
- supporting Bologna working groups/networks and carrying out any special tasks concerning the implementation of the work programme of the EHEA – including planning meetings together with the Chairs, preparing background papers and

⁹ The Bologna Secretariat is also referred as Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) Secretariat

minute-taking;

- to maintain the EHEA permanent website and archives;
- to act as an external and internal contact point for the EHEA;
- to provide representation at external events, upon request of the organisers;
- to cooperate with the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) of the Republic of Armenia in the preparations of the upcoming 2015 Yerevan EHEA ministerial conference and the Fourth Bologna Policy Forum.

As a part of the Bologna Secretariat's activities, minute taking is perhaps the most visible aspect. Minute taking takes many forms within the BFUG, Board and its sub-structures. For the BFUG a more concise minute taking procedure was preferred so far – the drafting of outcomes of proceedings - which included the main decisions taken and a more detailed account of what was considered to be relevant proposals or contradictory debates. An indication of who were those against and in favour of a specific proposal was also to be given. For the Board meetings, more detailed minutes were preferred so that the BFUG debates could fully benefit from the Board's discussion. For the BFUG sub-structures' minutes, the style was decided in cooperation with the sub-structures' Chair(s) and members. According to the latest discussions, a more concise style of minutes seems to be preferred by both the BFUG and the BFUG Board, with a clear indication of the main conclusions drawn by the BFUG/Board Co-Chairs.

As a part of the general communication responsibilities of the Secretariat, the maintaining of the EHEA permanent website and archives is a considerable task. In this respect, the continuous update of the website can only be achieved with the contribution of all BFUG members. This will be facilitated through the possibility of contributing to the interactive section within the national pages, as well as the pages of the BFUG sub-structures.

Final notes

The document, which had been a revised version of the initial document adopted in March 2011 in Gödöllő, was discussed during the BFUG meeting in Nicosia, August 28-29, 2012. The amendments suggested during the Nicosia BFUG meeting document are reflected in the present document. The document will be endorsed during the Dublin BFUG meeting, March 14-15, 2013. Any reference to information contained within the present document has to make clear its source.

Appendix 1 – References

1. BFUG 1_3: "Responsibilities of the Board – Tasks of the Secretariat. Final document approved by the members of the BFUG during the meeting in Rome, the 14th November 2003"
2. BFUG 5_6: „Criteria for new consultative members and BFUG Partners"
3. BFUG 9_9: „Electing the host of the upcoming ministerial conference"
4. BFUG(CZ)16_3 - Previous versions: BFUG9 5, BFUG13 10 – Voting rules for electing the Board countries
5. BFUG_HU_AD_24_7a_Information on BFUG proceedings_2009-2012
6. 2009: "Bologna Beyond 2010" report
7. BFUG (SE) 19_7_rev - „Electing the BFUG observers within the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) General Assembly"
8. BFUG (ES) 20_7c: "Briefing note for decision by the Ministers"
9. 2010: The Independent Assessment of the Bologna Process
10. BFUG_BE-AL_21_8: „Requirements and procedures for joining the European Higher Education Area"
11. BFUG_CY_BA_33_4a: "Draft ToR of the BFUG Secretariat_2012-2015"
12. BFUG_PL_AM_26_3b: "Gödöllő BFUG draft outcome of proceedings"
13. BFUGBoard_IE_HR_34_4b: "Nicosia BFUG draft outcome of proceedings"

Appendix 2 – Procedure for Electing the Board Countries

For electing the Board countries¹⁰, the voting system had the following characteristics (as agreed by the BFUG on 26th of February 2009 and documented in BFUG (CZ)16_3 - previous versions: BFUG9 5, BFUG13 10):

- "Approximately one month prior to the BFUG meeting during which the election will be held, the Secretariat will contact all eligible BFUG countries to ask if they wish to stand for election. Nominations will be invited by an agreed deadline. This will normally be at least two weeks before the next BFUG meeting.
- In the event that more than three countries indicate they would like to be considered for election to the Board, election will be by vote. Elections will be held at the BFUG meeting immediately prior to the beginning of the mandate of the Board. It will be held by voting slips distributed at BFUG meetings. Voting will be by secret ballot. The agreed voting procedures are as follows:
 - Candidates: all eligible countries that formally expressed their candidature by the agreed deadline;
 - Number of votes: two voting slips per country¹¹: members may vote for up to three nominees on each voting slip. Only members of BFUG (countries and the European Commission) may vote (i.e. not consultative members);
 - The three candidates receiving the highest number of votes on the first ballot will be elected. Should two or more countries be tied for third place, a second ballot will be held to determine which of these countries shall be the third country elected.

¹⁰ This is a description of the former system of election of countries into the Board which was effective till 1 July 2010, when the new Co-Chairing system came into place.

¹¹ This rule is intended to allow countries in which two Ministries are responsible for higher education (e.g. Belgium (Flemish and French Communities) and Germany (Federal and Lander level) to vote while ensuring that all countries have an equal number of votes. Delegations decide who cast the votes on their behalf.

- In any second ballot, BFUG members will vote for one of the countries tied for third place. The same voting rules apply as in the first ballot; there will be two voting slips per country and the European Commission.
- The Secretariat will issue two voting slips to each country member and the European Commission at the BFUG meeting. The votes will be collected, counted and the results announced during the meeting. The Secretariat will undertake this task, overseen by the BFUG Chairs.”

ANNEX 2: BFUG Work Plan 2015-2018

Document set-up on 14.09.2015

On the basis of the Yerevan communiqué, the paper “The Bologna process revisited” and our preparatory work in the BFUG meetings in Riga (January and March) and the board in Vaduz, the BFUG work plan 2015-2018 has been restructured in three working groups (WGs) and four advisory groups (AGs). The three WGs focus on **reporting**, on **implementation** and on **new visions**. The four advisory groups are focused on single targeted tasks.¹²

Working Groups

The 1st WG on “**Monitoring**” will have the task to monitor and to report on the current state of implementation of the Bologna Process, as it was done in the period 2012-2015. Monitoring is critical for providing countries with a strong evidence base on the progress of implementation. The report of 2018 will constitute the basis for the period 2018-2020¹³.

The 2nd WG on “**Fostering implementation of agreed key commitments**” will support implementation on agreed goals by peer learning and peer exchange events offering exchanges of good practice on the basis of the implementation report 2015 and the measures adopted in the Yerevan Communiqué. It involves national stakeholders in the activities, in order to encourage greater exchange and implementation on the ground.

The 3rd WG on “**Policy development for new EHEA goals**” is dedicated to new priorities for the future of the EHEA. The group serves as a platform for finding policies to follow new EHEA goals and *innovation*. The topics in the WG are focussed on new goals as adopted in the Yerevan Communiqué with a European dimension. The working group will cooperate closely with the national, European and international stakeholders. The events held in the 3rd WG have to provide policy recommendations.

Advisory Groups¹⁴

They advise the BFUG on “EHEA international cooperation” including the Bologna Policy Forum (BPF), “Support for the Belarus Roadmap”, “Dealing with non-implementation” and “Revision of Diploma Supplement”. The AG on the Revision of the Diploma Supplement supports the Council of Europe, the European Commission and UNESCO in reviewing the Diploma Supplement.

Organisation of the WGs

Each WG consists of a number of co-chairs and working group members. The co-chairs are responsible for the reporting of the policy recommendations to the BFUG.

Whereas the WG on “Monitoring” functions in a similar way compared to the last period (2012-2015), the two other WGs are mandated to organise various actions and events (e.g. peer learning, conference, seminar, pathfinder group, etc). The approach follows a matrix structure addressing different topics by different peer learning events such as conferences, research seminars, workshops.

¹² Please refer to the organisation chart 2015-2018 below.

¹³ Please refer to the Terms of Reference of the WGs.

¹⁴ Please refer to the Terms of Reference of the AGs.

To meet the goals of the Yerevan Communiqué, a list of specific topics and challenges will be identified and proposed by the co-chairs of the groups to the BFUG.

Event organisers will finance the activity while the participants cover for travel and accommodation expenses. The Secretariat will assist the co-chairs.

Working Group and Advisory Group membership

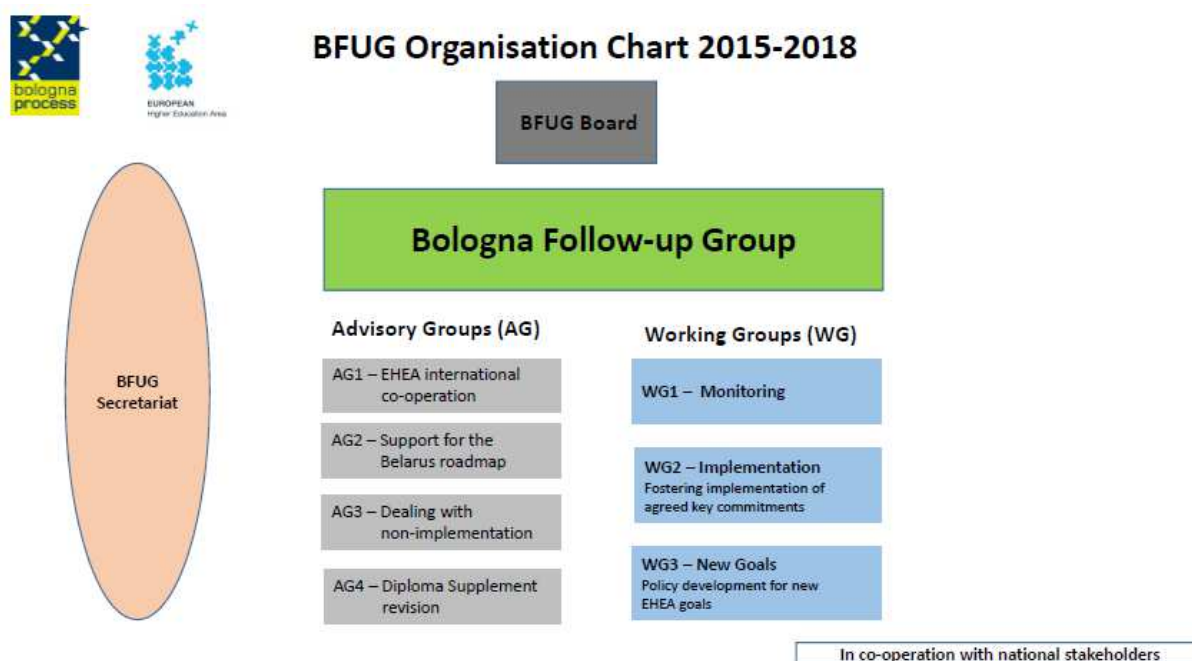
BFUG and consultative members are invited to express their interest in participating in one or more WGs or advisory groups and as co-chair by completing the declaration of participation¹⁵. **Each declaration of participation should include a short explanation of interest and motivation for participating or for organising an event.** All WGs/AGs are open to participation from BFUG members, experts nominated by national authorities and consultative members. Composition should reflect the diversity of the EHEA.

To allow coherence and synergy and to avoid duplication of work, WGs and AGs should be interlinked by members participating in more than one WG or AG. In addition to that, regular exchange between co-chairs is necessary.

The tasks of co-chairing requires leadership and commitment to keep up contact with other WGs/AGs and the BFUG secretariat. One co-chair of each WG/AG should regularly be invited to the BFUG Board meetings.

Tentative Schedule¹⁶

This work program is accompanied by a tentative schedule for the BFUG 2015-2018 period. The schedule shall also serve as a guideline for succeeding co-chairs during the period 2015-2018.



¹⁵ Please refer to the declaration of participation

¹⁶ Please refer to the tentative schedule

ANNEX 3: List of members, consultative members and partners of the BFUG

| Members |
|---|
| Albania |
| Andorra |
| Armenia |
| Austria |
| Azerbaijan |
| Belarus |
| Belgium |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina |
| Bulgaria |
| Croatia |
| Cyprus |
| Czech Republic |
| Denmark |
| Estonia |
| Finland |
| France |
| Georgia |
| Germany |
| Greece |
| Holy See |
| Hungary |
| Iceland |
| Ireland |
| Italy |
| Kazakhstan |
| Latvia |
| Liechtenstein |
| Lithuania |
| Luxembourg |
| Malta |
| Moldova |
| Montenegro |
| Netherlands |
| Norway |
| Poland |
| Portugal |
| Romania |
| Russian Federation |
| Serbia |
| Slovak Republic |
| Slovenia |
| Spain |
| Sweden |
| Switzerland |
| The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia |
| Turkey |
| United Kingdom |
| Ukraine |
| European Commission |

| Consultative Members |
|--|
| BUSINESSEUROPE |
| Council of Europe |
| Education International |
| European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) |
| European Students Union (ESU) |
| European University Association (EUA) |
| European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) |
| United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) |
| |
| <i>Similar status as consultative members, but not officially consultative member:</i> |
| European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) |
| |
| Partners |
| European Association for International Education (EAIE) |
| Council of European Professional and Managerial Staff (EUROCADRES) |
| European Council for Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers (EURODOC) |
| EUROSCIENCE |

ANNEX 4: Requirements and Procedures for Joining the European Higher Education Area

Document set-up: 24/09/2015

Introduction

With a view to possible future applications, the BFUG at its meeting in Madrid on 18-19 February 2010 agreed to review the criteria for accession to the Bologna Process/the European Higher Education Area and to assess whether they are still fit for purpose or need to be updated.

Requirements for membership of the EHEA

The existing criteria for admission of new members to the European Higher Education Area were set by the 2003 Berlin Communiqué:

Countries party to the European Cultural Convention shall be eligible for membership of the European Higher Education Area provided that they at the same time declare their willingness to pursue and implement the objectives of the Bologna Process in their own systems of higher education. Their applications should contain information on how they will implement the principles and objectives of the declaration.

The decision to use the European Cultural Convention as a criterion was meant to provide a clear definition of the possible geographical scope of the European Higher Education Area, given that all 48 countries party to the Convention at the time were considered part of geographical Europe and it was not expected that any additional country would be invited to join the Convention. It was also intended to ensure that this definition was decided by competent political authorities since accession to the European Cultural Convention is subject to a decision by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and hence by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, see below.

In the meantime, the number of countries that are party to the European Cultural Convention has risen to 50, as Serbia and Montenegro replaced the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Kazakhstan joined in March 2010.¹⁷

Although primarily directed at the members of the Council of Europe, the European Cultural Convention (article 9.4) also foresees the possibility of other European countries joining:

“The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe may decide, by a unanimous vote, to invite, upon such terms and conditions as it deems appropriate, any European State which is not a member of the Council to accede to the present Convention.”

The decision on whether or not to admit a country – and to define which country to consider as “European State” – thus rests with the member states of the Council of Europe, represented in the Committee of Ministers by their Foreign Affairs Ministers.

¹⁷ For a full list of countries that have ratified the European Cultural Convention, search for Treaty 018 on <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/ChercheAvecSTE.asp?CM=1&CL=ENG>. At present, there are only three countries that are party to the European Cultural Convention but not part of the EHEA (yet): Belarus, Monaco & San Marino. All three expressed interest in joining the Bologna Process at some stage (Belarus most recently in April 2010) but up till now, none of them has submitted a formal application.

For accession to the European Higher Education Area, the criterion of being party to the European Cultural Convention was complemented by a second criterion to ensure commitment to and implementation of the goals and principles of the Bologna Process/the EHEA.

In the context of previous accessions, applicant countries were requested to confirm their adherence to the following principles:

- International mobility of students and staff;
- Autonomous higher education institutions;
- Student participation in the governance of higher education;
- Public responsibility for higher education;
- The social dimension of the Bologna Process.¹⁸

The application had to be complemented by a report, detailing the higher education policies of the country in the light of the Bologna Process and outlining how the principles and objectives of the Bologna Process had been and/or would be implemented.

The most recent report for accession (using the template of the latest stocktaking exercise) covered the following topics:

- General information on the higher education system
- Partnership

Degree System

- Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle
- Stage of implementation of the third cycle
- Relationship between higher education and research
- Access and admission to the next cycle
- Employability of graduates/cooperation with employers
- Implementation of national qualifications framework

National Implementation of the Standards And Guidelines For QA in the EHEA (ESG)

- Reviewing the QA system against the ESG and national support for implementation
- Internal quality assurance in higher education institutions
- Stage of development of external quality assurance system
- Level of student participation
- Level of international participation

Recognition of Degrees and Study Periods

- Stage of implementation of Diploma Supplement
- National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
- Stage of implementation of ECTS

¹⁸ See BFUG B3 7 fin; REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES FOR JOINING THE BOLOGNA PROCESS, published on the Bologna website by the UK Bologna Secretariat in November 2006; BFUG_ES_20_4a.

Lifelong Learning

- Recognition of prior learning
- Flexible learning paths

Joint Degrees

- Establishment and recognition of joint degrees
- Removing obstacles to student and staff mobility
- Portability of loans and grants

The Attractiveness of the EHEA and Cooperation with other parts of the world

- Implementation of strategy

Future Challenges

- Main challenges for higher education

Social Dimension of the Bologna Process

- Current state of affairs
- Process towards a more inclusive higher education system (strategy for the future)
- Information on the national responsibility for the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the national strategies.

In summary, the **two criteria for accession to the European Higher Education Area** at present are:

- (a) being party to the European Cultural Convention and
- (b) commitment to the principles and objectives of the Bologna Process, to be demonstrated through the national report.

Procedure for application

The decision to accept new members to the European Higher Education Area is taken by the Ministers responsible for higher education in the countries participating in the Bologna Process – so far, this has always happened at Ministerial Conferences.

Countries wishing to join the Bologna Process were asked to send an application for membership to the Minister(s) responsible for higher education in the host country/countries of the next Ministerial Conference and the country chairing the Bologna Process, with a copy to the Bologna Secretariat. The application had to be signed by the (national) Minister responsible for higher education, submitted by a given deadline, and be complemented by the required national report, for which candidate countries were provided with a slightly adjusted version of the latest stocktaking template.

When an application was received, a confirmation of receipt was sent to the applicant country and the BFUG Chairs, assisted by the Bologna Secretariat, verified that the application satisfied the prescribed procedures. The BFUG (with support from Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretariat, Council of Europe and/or BFUG Board) assessed the application with

the accompanying national report on the basis of the criteria for admission described above and agreed on the recommendation to be given to the Ministers. On the basis of this recommendation, the Ministerial Conference then decided whether or not to admit a country as a member of the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area.

* * *

Criteria for Consultative membership & BFUG Partnership

Next to “members”, the Bologna Process also involves “consultative members” and “BFUG partners”.

With the Prague Communiqué, the Ministers agreed:

“The European University Association, the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE), the National Unions of Students in Europe and the Council of Europe should be consulted in the follow-up work.”

In the Berlin Communiqué, these organisations (plus UNESCO-CEPES) were then referred to as “consultative members”.

Explicit criteria for consultative membership were for the first time laid down by the Bologna Follow-up Group at its meeting in Mondorf on 1-2 March 2005 (see BFUG5_6). At the same time, the BFUG established the category of “BFUG partner” for organisations that wish to be associated with the Bologna Process/the BFUG but do not meet the more demanding criteria for consultative membership.

The criteria were defined as follows:

1. Added value to the Bologna Process

Any new consultative member or partner of the BFUG should give the process an added value, meaning that their contribution should be relevant to the work of the BFUG.

Additional criteria on added value for new consultative members

Any new consultative members should also meet the following criteria:

- their contribution cannot be easily covered by an existing consultative member¹⁹;
- cooperation with the BFUG may not be better covered at another level.

2. Relevance of the stakeholder group

Organisations that may contribute to stronger links between higher education and the labour market are relevant to the Process. Organisations that may contribute to stronger links between higher education and other educational fields may also be relevant.

Organisations representing special professions do not match the BFUG, which deals with *general* principles and structures in higher education.

¹⁹ BUSINESSEUROPE, Council of Europe, Education International Pan-European Structure, ENQA, ESU, EUA, EURASHE, UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education

- Organisations should have higher education as a central field of interest.
- The stakeholder group should be relevant to the principles, action lines and goals of the Bologna Process.

3. Representativeness

A new consultative member or a partner should not be a sub-organisation of a member or consultative member of the Bologna Follow-up Group.

Additional criteria on representativeness for new consultative members

Any new consultative member should:

- be the most representative organisation in its field of interest,
- be a European organisation, or a European branch of an organisation,
- accept organisations from all the Bologna member states as full members,
- have full members from no less than 50 % of the Bologna countries,
- have full members from countries outside the EU/EEA and EU candidate countries.

4. Organisational form

A new consultative member or a partner should either be a non-governmental organisation (NGO) or an inter-governmental organisation.

Additional criteria on organisational form for new consultative members

Its mandate should reflect its relevance to the Bologna Process and its right to give an opinion on behalf of its members on matters relating to the Bologna Process.

Procedure for becoming Consultative member or BFUG Partner²⁰

Organisations wishing to become consultative member or BFUG partner need to send an application to the Bologna Secretariat, documenting that they satisfy the listed criteria. The Secretariat then puts the request on the agenda of the BFUG that in turn will assess the application.

Decisions on consultative membership are taken by the Ministerial Conference (based on the assessment and the resulting advice of the BFUG). Decisions on whether or not to accept an organisation as BFUG partner are taken by the BFUG.

At present, the following four organisations are BFUG partners: EAIE, Eurocadres, Eurodoc, Euroscience. They are, for instance, included in the mailing list of the Bologna Secretariat for messages of general interest (e.g. invitations to seminars) and are also invited to send one representative each as observer to Ministerial Conferences.

Proposed action

Taking into account that the European Higher Education Area has just officially been launched by 47 countries and that the Bologna Process has entered a new phase of consolidation, the BFUG is asked to review the criteria for membership of the Bologna Process/the European Higher Education Area.

²⁰ This procedure was also agreed at the BFUG meeting in Mondorf in March 2005 (see BFUG5_6).

- Are the criteria still fit for purpose?
- Given that the Ministers of Foreign Affairs define what is to be considered a "European State" when it comes to joining the European Cultural Convention, does it make sense to continue using this Convention to define the geographical boundaries of the European Higher Education Area? What could be possible alternatives to define which countries to consider "European"?
- Since the EHEA has officially been launched and the focus of the next period is on in-depth implementation of the ongoing reforms, is it sufficient for an accession country to declare their willingness to pursue and implement the objectives of the Bologna Process in their own systems of higher education, as is the formal criterion now, or should a certain level of implementation be required?
- Would this have consequences for current members that might demonstrate significant shortcomings in the implementation of the required criteria?
- Which goals and principles would countries wishing to join the EHEA need to commit to and/or have implemented before their accession?

On the basis of the first discussion at the Alden Biesen BFUG meeting in August 2010 the paper will be revised and put again on the agenda of the BFUG meeting in March 2011.

ANNEX 5: Briefing Note for Decision by the Ministers (BFUG Co-chairing)

Document set-up on 12/02/2010

In response to the request to leave technical details out of the Declaration, BFUG members are provided with the present document to be put forward to their Ministers for approval (individually) before the Bologna Ministerial Anniversary Conference in March.

It concerns three issues:

1. CO-CHAIRING OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS 2010-2012

With the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué the Ministers decided that in the future, the Bologna Process would be co-chaired by the country holding the EU presidency and a non-EU country. To put this decision into practice, the Bologna Follow-up Group at its meeting in Stockholm on 28-29 September 2009 agreed:

- to treat the EU Presidency and the non-EU country as two chairs (rather than as chair and co-chair) to signal very clearly that the Bologna Process will be chaired on equal footing by the EU Presidency and a non-EU country.
- to leave it to each chairing team to define the exact division of tasks between the two chairs and the vice chair(s)
- to start the new chairing arrangement on 1 July 2010.
- to apply the alphabetical order when designating the chair from a non-EU country.
- to adjust the composition of the BFUG Board by replacing the three elected members with the outgoing, present and incoming non-EU chairs.

This will result in the following **chairing arrangement** up to the next Ministerial Meeting, at the occasion of which the arrangement should be evaluated and further established for the period until the following Ministerial Meeting in 2015.

| Semester | EU-Presidency | Chair from non-EU country | Vice-Chair |
|---------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|------------|
| 1 July – 31 December 2010 | Belgium | Albania | Romania |
| 1 January - 30 June 2011 | Hungary | Andorra | |
| 1 July – 31 December 2011 | Poland | Armenia | |
| 1 January - 30 June 2012 | Denmark | Azerbaijan | |

Provisional chairing arrangement July 2012 to June 2020

| Semester | EU-Presidency | Chair from non-EU country | Vice-Chair |
|---------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|---|
| 1 July – 31 December 2012 | Cyprus | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Host of 2015 Ministerial Conference (not known yet) |
| 1 January - 30 June 2013 | Ireland | Croatia | |
| 1 July – 31 December 2013 | Lithuania | Georgia | |
| 1 January - 30 June 2014 | Greece | Holy See | |
| 1 July – 31 December 2014 | Italy | Iceland | |
| 1 January - 30 June 2015 | Latvia | Liechtenstein | |

| | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------|---|---|
| 1 July – 31 December 2015 | Luxembourg | Moldova | Host of 2018 Ministerial Conference (not known yet) |
| 1 January - 30 June 2016 | Netherlands | Montenegro | |
| 1 July – 31 December 2016 | Slovakia | Norway | |
| 1 January - 30 June 2017 | Malta | Russian Federation | |
| 1 July – 31 December 2017 | United Kingdom | Serbia | |
| 1 January - 30 June 2018 | Estonia | Switzerland | |
| 1 July – 31 December 2018 | Bulgaria | “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” | Host of 2020 Ministerial Conference (not known yet) |
| 1 January - 30 June 2019 | Austria | Turkey | |
| 1 July – 31 December 2019 | Romania | Ukraine | |
| 1 January - 30 June 2020 | Finland | tbc | |
| | | | |

General tasks of countries chairing the Bologna Process

The Chairs have a joint responsibility to take forward the aims and actions laid down by Ministers responsible for Higher Education in the Bologna Declaration and subsequent Communiqués of Ministerial Conferences. They hold the chair both at the Bologna Ministerial Meetings and the Bologna Policy Forum as well as in the sessions of the Bologna Follow-up Group or BFUG Board meetings. They jointly represent the Bologna Process in European and international fora.

In the decision-making process the chairs assume the task to lead the way towards compromise in cases of controversy, and to provide political impetus for moving the Bologna Process forward.

2. PERMANENT EHEA WEBSITE

With the launch of the European Higher Education Area, a permanent EHEA website <http://www.ehea.info> will be established, which will be serviced and maintained by the Bologna Secretariat with support from the Bologna Follow-up Group.

From 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2012, the website will thus be maintained by the Romanian Bologna Secretariat.

The following domains have also been reserved and visitors of those pages will be automatically diverted to the official EHEA website mentioned above.

- european-higher-education-area.info
- european-higher-education-area.net
- european-higher-education-area.org
- european-higher-education-area.eu
- bologna-process.info
- bologna-process.net
- bologna-process.org

3. MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE 2015 – HOSTING AND SECRETARIAT

The decision on the host(s) of the 2015 Ministerial Bologna Conference needs to be taken before 1 January 2012 to ensure a smooth handover to the next Secretariat to be provided by the host(s). Therefore, candidatures of countries wishing to host the 2015 Ministerial Conference, the Bologna Secretariat and the EHEA website, should be put forward by 1 September 2011. In case several candidatures are received by the given deadline, a vote will be organised at the BFUG meeting in autumn 2011.

ANNEX 6: Language Regime for EHEA Ministerial Conferences

Document set-up in 2011

Background Document

The current document develops on the background paper prepared for the Alden Biesen BFUG meeting (BFUG_BE-AL_21_7_min_conf_languages) and on the subsequent discussion carried out during the meeting (101216_6_Alden_Biesen_BFUG_meeting_draft_outcome_of_proceedings_extended_version). The conclusion of the Alden Biesen BFUG discussion was that the Chairs and the Bologna Secretariat were asked to draft a revised paper on language regime, which would be a basis for discussion for the BFUG meeting in Gödöllő, Hungary.

The present background document aims at providing an overview of the implications on an eventual change in the present language regime. The paper also details the practical aspects of the so-called "Stockholm agreement" and of the other potential options discussed in Alden Biesen, in order to properly inform the decision of the BFUG members.

The first section of the document aims at anchoring the document in the current agreement on the use of languages at the ministerial conferences. Further on, the document presents the proposals submitted at the BFUG meeting in Alden Biesen and the main options put forward on this occasion. Some practical implications of the "Stockholm agreement" are explored in the next section. The options discussed in Alden Biesen BFUG are described in terms of practical arrangements and reviewed in light of the distinct arrangements implied by reading, listening and speaking regimes. The closing section provides a historical overview of the discussions on this topic. The references used are indicated in the end of the document²¹.

"Translation" and "interpretation" both refer to the process of faithfully rendering a message expressed in one language into another language.²²

1. CURRENT LANGUAGE REGIME

The current arrangement on using languages in ministerial conferences consists of a decision adopted at the Stockholm BFUG meeting, stipulating that **English plus the language(s) of the host country(ies)**²³ will be the languages employed during the Ministerial Conferences unless the host waives its right (as applied to the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Conference in April 2009).

At its meeting in January 2010, the Bologna Follow-Up Group Board concluded that the *"Chair of the conference would be also allowed to provide for his or her own*

²¹ The document should be read with the caveat that its authors do not hold any specialised qualifications of translation, interpretation or language policy;

²² "Conference interpreting deals exclusively with oral communication: rendering a message from one language into another, naturally and fluently, adopting the delivery, tone and convictions of the speaker and speaking in the first person. It should not be confused with translation which deals only with written texts." This is the definition from the official website of the Directorate General for Interpretation, within the European Commission, accessed on January, 28th, 2011, at http://scic.ec.europa.eu/europa/jcms/c_5376/what-is-conference-interpreting;

²³ See document BFUG_SE_7.4_German request conference languages.

interpretation for the purposes of chairing the conference”, if necessary²⁴. In practice this latter rule has not been used yet.

2. CURRENT DISCUSSIONS

The BFUG members are expected to express their opinions on whether or not the rule agreed in Stockholm is suitable, after conducting an internal and informal consultation with their respective national or federal authorities or organizations.

The BFUG Chairs and the Bologna Secretariat were asked to draft a revised paper on ministerial conferences language regime, which would take into account the previous discussions and the conclusions from the Alden Biesen BFUG meeting²⁵. The revised document should constitute the basis for discussion on the matter at the BFUG meeting in March 2011.

The members of the BFUG agreed that the Bucharest Ministerial Conference would be governed by the Stockholm agreement, while any change to the current arrangements would have consequences on the future ministerial summits²⁶.

The current discussions on the language regime for the ministerial conferences examine the possibility of revising the current Stockholm arrangements if the dissatisfaction with it is widely shared among BFUG members.

2.1 Stockholm language regime

In Stockholm, the members of the BFUG took note of the information given by the hosts on the use of languages in the ministerial conferences²⁷ and agreed on a general rule. At the Vienna-Budapest Ministerial Conference in March 2010, in line with the BFUG decision, interpretation was provided from and into English and in the languages of the host countries (German and Hungarian)²⁸.

The Bologna Process tandem chairing procedure²⁹ could also impact on the ministerial conferences, in terms of the languages that could be provided. As agreed in the BFUG Board meeting in Madrid, the chairs would be allowed to provide for their own interpretation for chairing the conference.

In practical terms they can choose to do so by resorting to simultaneous, whispered or consecutive interpretation:

- With *consecutive interpretation*, the chairs would make use of a personal interpreter, which would provide interpretation for every segment of their oral address. Speakers need to pause after every few sentences to allow for interpretation. This option is the

²⁴ See document BFUG Board (ES) 21 draft minutes (page 6);

²⁵ See document BFUGBoard_HU_AD_23_3c BFUG meeting Alden Biesen, draft outcome of proceedings, extended_version;

²⁶ See document BFUGBoard_HU_AD_23_3c_BFUG meeting Alden Biesen draft outcome of proceedings - detailed ver, section 7;

²⁷ See document BFUG (SE) 18_1b draft annotated agenda;

²⁸ See BMAC Handbook BFUG (ES) 20_8b;

²⁹ Starting July 2010, the Stockholm BFUG agreed to start a new chairing arrangement having one chair country holding the EU Presidency and a non-EU country designated by alphabetical order. See document BFUG_ES_20_7c_briefing_note_to_Ministers;

least demanding in terms of extra resources for interpretation but has the significant disadvantage of doubling the time used by speakers to address the audience and may fragment the debates.

- The interpreter can also provide *whispered interpretation*³⁰ for the chair. This saves time but has the disadvantage of disturbing those sitting closest to the Chair (the Co-Chairs and the Secretariat), who all need to concentrate fully on the proceedings of the meeting. For obvious reasons, whispered interpretation can be used only to ensure the Chair understands messages delivered by others; statements by the Chair will have to be interpreted either consecutively or simultaneously.

- With *simultaneous interpretation*, the interpretation would be provided without causing interruption in the speaking sequence. By resorting to this option, the organisers would have to accommodate the logistical support (i.e. soundproof booths, transmission channels, sufficient translators etc.) for the purpose of chairing the conference.

If interpreters fluent in all the languages of the conference would not be available, the interpretation would use one reference language stream to ensure interpretation from and into other languages (*relay interpretation*). The streamed language would be chosen according to the degree of familiarity of most interpreters with a specific language.

The review of the Alden Biesen proposals listed below is based on the assumption that the chairs prefer simultaneous interpretation into and from their own languages. If the chairing countries have more than one national language, translation could be provided for more than one language per country. For the purpose of easing the reading, in the rest of the document the proposals are reviewed for the minimal case in which chairing and hosting countries do not have more than one national language.

2.2 Advanced proposals on language regime

The language regime proposal³¹ put forward and discussed at the last BFUG meeting in Alden Biesen consisted of the following options (two of them as in the draft document prepared by the Secretariat and a third one presented by France):

*Option 1*³² (*EN_interpretation + No. HC*³³ + 2 x chair ≥ 4 languages):

As a rule, English plus the language(s) of the host country(ies) will be offered, unless the host waives its right. Furthermore, the chairs³⁴ of the conference will be allowed to provide for their own interpretation for the purposes of chairing the conference, as mentioned before.

³⁰ Whispered interpreting involves practically simultaneous interpretation without the use of technical aids. The interpreter sits next to or behind the listener and whispers the interpreted version into his or her ear.

³¹ See French proposal: *BFUG BE-Min_cces_languages - Draft Paper for BFUG consultation - with Option 3 - 20 08 2010*.

³² See BFUG (BE/AL) 21_7, Background Document Language Regime for Ministerial Conferences

³³ Abbreviation for Host Country;

³⁴ The chairing task division is to be decided between the host country and the BFUG acting chairs.

With the Bologna Process being chaired by two countries, this option could lead to four (or more) languages being used: English, the language(s) of the host(s), and the language(s) of the chairs³⁵.

*Option 2*³⁶ ($EN + No.HC + 2 \times chair + log_capacity$ ³⁷ ≥ 4 languages):

The host(s) will inform the BFUG whether – in addition to option 1 - it is logistically possible to offer simultaneous translation for a number of other languages (and how many). Provided the logistical situation permits (e.g. number of interpretation booths, transmission channels, etc.), the countries participating in the Bologna Process will be given the opportunity to request to provide for simultaneous translation to and from their own language(s) *at their own cost*. If the requests submitted surpass the logistical capacity of the conference venue, the host(s) will inform the BFUG about their selection procedure.

One year in advance of a ministerial conference, the host country (or countries) and the chairs will communicate to the BFUG which languages of host and chairing countries will be used for the ministerial conference in addition to English.

During the Alden Biesen BFUG meeting it was proposed not to treat the second option as a separate one when considering one of the above, but rather to treat **option 2 as a particular case of option 1** and therefore to drop it. The second option would entail a selection process with sensitive implications. In Alden Biesen, some speakers described them as being roughly similar in terms of languages spoken, the difference being made by the practical arrangements.

*Option 3*³⁸ ($EN_interpretation + No. HC + 2 \times chair + FR + DE \geq 6$ languages):

“In addition to option 1 – EN and the language(s) of the host country or countries (unless the host(s) waive(s) this right) -, a wider linguistic pluralism for the period 2010-2020 would be ensured with French and German.

One year ahead of the ministerial conference, the host country (or countries) and the chairs will communicate to the BFUG which languages in addition to English, French and German, will be used for the Ministerial Conference.”

2.3 Review of the advanced options

As it was suggested during the last BFUG meeting, the above-presented options could also include a distinction between the **reading, listening, speaking** facilities offered by the hosts. This distinction is not part of the current language usage arrangements, nor of the submitted proposals. It appeared out of the Alden Biesen BFUG debates, and the current document explores its impact in terms of practicalities.

³⁵ Unless some of these languages are common. However, this case is a matter of coincidence, therefore would be ruled out of the review from now on.

³⁶ See BFUG (BE/AL) 21_7, Background Document Language Regime for Ministerial Conferences;

³⁷ Logistical capacity;

³⁸ French proposal: *BFUG BE-Min_cces_languages - Draft Paper for BFUG consultation - with Option 3 - 20 08 2010*;

According to the proposal made during the Alden Biesen meeting, the second option would be merged with the first option. The rest of the document reviews only option 1 and option 3.

- **Reading:** The host country(ies) would disseminate materials for the needs of the ministerial conferences.

Until now the BFUG members/structures provided the host countries with the documents for the purpose of dissemination. The responsibility for the content of the documents, and hence for the language, rested entirely with their authors and proponents. For efficiency reasons, most of the documents were drafted and disseminated in English only. The organisers were never in the situation of assuming the responsibility for the translation of the documents that they would disseminate. The language used for the adoption of Ministerial Communiqués was also English. Versions in other languages of the Communiqués, disseminated in various media and under various moments, including on the website of the Bologna Process, were translated after adoption, by the respective BFUG members. The responsibility for the translation rested entirely with the translators - the respective BFUG members, and the translations were unofficial.

The introduction of an official language regime could have the following practical consequences on the documents of the ministerial conferences³⁹:

a) *For option 1*

The host country(ies) would be expected to provide conference materials and practical information in English, in the language of the host country or countries and, eventually, in the language(s) of the chairs. It could be the case that the chairs are providing their own translated documents for their personal use. Providing official documents (i.e. communiqué, statements, Bologna Process reports, etc) would imply authorised translation arrangements and, hence clear deadlines for all the submitted documents, in order to make the translation possible.

Additionally, a decision should be taken on the primary language on the adoption of the Ministerial Communiqué.

The total languages of the written materials would amount to minimum two. If two languages are added for the use of the chairs, the result is a minimum of six languages.

b) *For option 3:*

In addition to option 1, option 3 would require the host country to provide the written materials, into French and German, resulting in ***a minimum of four languages of dissemination. If two languages are added for the use of the chairs, the result is a minimum of six languages.***

- **Listening:** Interpretation would be assured for those attending the ministerial conferences.

³⁹ This can be the case only if the distinction between reading, listening and speaking regimes is considered worthy to be taken into account. The same disclaimer is valid for the paragraphs describing the implications in terms of listening and speaking.

a) For option 1:

The participants would be provided with simultaneous interpretation in their given headsets for English, and the language(s) of the host country(ies), unless the host country or countries waives their right. The chairs of the conference would be allowed to provide for their own interpretation. In case the chairs opt for using this facility, their demand could be accommodated by providing either consecutive or simultaneous interpretation. For consecutive interpretation, the number of the languages of interpretation would not be affected. For simultaneous interpretation, minimum two more languages would be added.

Currently, this is the arrangement for the ministerial conferences. It amounts to minimum two. If two languages are added for the use of the chairs, the result is a minimum of four languages.

b) For option 3:

The host of the conference would need to provide the participants with translation and interpretation for the oral addresses of the speakers in English, French, and German, the language(s) of the host country(ies) and the languages of the chair(s), while the language of the addresses would be English. This option would add French and German to the one above, **amounting to minimum four languages. If two languages are added for the use of the chairs, the result is a minimum of six languages.**

- **Speaking:** In their discourse, the speakers and listeners can make use of the languages of the ministerial conference, as described below:

a) For option 1:

The speakers can address the participants in English plus the language(s) of the host country or countries, unless the host waives its right. For the purpose of chairing the conference, the chairs can provide for their own interpretation. In case one chair decides on a *simultaneous interpretation* formula, the speakers of the conference could also address the audience in that language. The host would be expected to assure the necessary equipment for the interpretation of the oral addresses of the speakers. The listeners can use any of the languages of interpretation. **This option could sum up a minimum of two languages, allowing for two more additional languages for the use of the chairs, unless any of the parties renounces its rights.**

b) For option 3:

For the second option, speakers can in addition choose to address the ministerial conference in two other languages, - either French and/or German. **This option could sum up a minimum of four languages, allowing for two more additional languages for the use of the chairs, unless any of the parties renounces its rights.** The listeners can use any of the languages of interpretation.

This review approaches the proposals put forward in Alden Biesen without mixing alternatives, but aggregate solutions can be imagined as well.

The present document does not detail the implications of providing translation and interpretation for participants with impaired sight (i.e. materials written in Braille) or impaired hearing (i.e. sign language translation).

3. Historical Background

Ministers agreed to engage in the establishment of the European Area of Higher Education and promoting the European system of higher education worldwide with a view on:

*"Promotion of the **necessary European dimensions in higher education**, particularly with regards to curricular development, interinstitutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research."*⁴⁰

They also emphasized the role mobility plays in ensuring linguistic pluralism and in supporting multilingual tradition in the European Higher Education Area:

*"Mobility is important for personal development and employability, it fosters respect for diversity and a capacity to deal with other cultures. It encourages linguistic pluralism, thus underpinning the **multilingual tradition of the European Higher Education Area**."*⁴¹

For practical reasons, from the start of the Bologna Process with the ministerial meeting in 1999, English has been the working language for the Process follow-up.

In Stockholm, a German⁴² proposal put forward two options:

- 1) English plus the language(s) of the host country or countries, unless the host waives its right;
- 2) English, French, German and Russian, and, if the host country wishes so, the language(s) of the host.

The BFUG agreed upon transforming option one in a general rule on the use of languages in ministerial conferences.

At the Budapest-Vienna Ministerial Conference in March 2010, in line with the BFUG decision, interpretation was provided from/into English and the languages of the host countries. Before the Conference, the French Minister asked for interpretation from/into French to be offered and the language regime for ministerial conferences to be decided at ministerial level. The Chairs and Vice-Chairs offered to take up the question of the language regime after the ministerial conference and asked the BFUG to come up with a proposal for the future, which can be agreed upon by the Ministers.

At the BFUG meeting in Alden Biesen⁴³ three proposals were put forward, two by the Secretariats and one by the French delegation. They generated a rather lengthy discussion and the Chairs and the Secretariat were asked to draft a revised document, providing a detailed overview of the implications of changing the current agreement.

⁴⁰ Bologna Declaration, 1999;

⁴¹ Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, 2009;

⁴² See document BFUG_SE_7.4_German request conference languages

⁴³ See document BFUGBoard_HU_AD_23_3c BFUG meeting Alden Biesen, draft outcome of proceedings, extended_version.

The BFUG members are expected to express their opinion on the suitability of the Stockholm rules on language usage in ministerial conferences, after conducting an internal and informal consultation with their respective country authorities or organizations.

The BFUG is asked to:

- Map the agreement and disagreement with the current arrangement (the "Stockholm regime") in terms of languages usage in ministerial conference;
- Agree on further steps.

ANNEX 7: Responsibilities of the Board – Tasks of the Secretariat

Italian Presidency of the Bologna Follow-up

Final document approved by the members of the BFUG during the meeting in Rome, the 14th November 2003

“Ministers entrust the implementation of all the issues covered in the Communiqué, the overall steering of the Bologna Process and the preparation of the next ministerial meeting to a Follow-up Group... A Board...shall oversee the work between the meetings of the Follow-up Group... The overall follow-up work will be supported by a Secretariat which the country hosting the next ministerial Conference will provide. In its first meeting after the Berlin Conference, the Follow-up Group is asked to further define the responsibilities of the Board and the tasks of the Secretariat.”

(Berlin Communiqué, 19 September 2003).

Preamble

The main purpose of the Bologna Follow-up Group consists in raising the general awareness of the Bologna principles and in promoting the widest participation in the Bologna Process of all actors in Higher Education.

In order to achieve this, the process must be open, participatory and inclusive, while at the same time, generating debate and awareness. The full involvement of member countries must be encouraged at all stages, as each decides on the most appropriate means – legislative or otherwise – for implementing the objectives of the Bologna Process. Equally, the support of all of the partners in Higher Education is central to the realisation of these objectives. However, the genuine commitment to the process can only be maintained through a bottom-up approach, which will also preserve the progress achieved to date and improve it furthermore.

In the last few years, the Bologna Process has gained momentum and enlarged its boundaries in a way, which could not have been foreseen by its “founding fathers”. The scale of involvement is such that this process can no longer function without a permanent support structure. However, such a structure needs not be large or excessively bureaucratic. On the other hand, it must be capable of dealing with complex or multifaceted issues, while allowing for flexibility of procedures and approach.

Against this background, the members of the Bologna Follow-up Group, during the meeting of 14 November 2003 in Rome, approved the following:

Responsibilities of the Board of the Bologna Follow-up Group

The Board supports the Bologna Follow-up Group in its activities and has the mandate to provide efficiency to the management of the Bologna Process, assuring at the same time its continuity. As such, the responsibilities of the Board consist of co-ordinating and monitoring the effective implementation of the work programme.

The following list, which is not exhaustive, illustrates the scope of this responsibility:

- overseeing the preparation of the next Ministerial Conference by means of supporting and coordinating the realisation of the Bologna events, as described and listed in the work programme 2003-2005;
- providing support and assistance to new members as they seek to meet the objectives of the Bologna Process and, at the same time, looking after the effective participation of representatives of the candidate countries in the Bologna events;
- maintaining contacts with ENQA as it undertakes the work defined in the Berlin Communiqué;
- co-ordinating actions for the preparation of the stocktaking exercise for 2005;
- organising Working Groups composed by BFUG members and/or experts on special issues decided by the BFUG.

The BFUG may also delegate to the Board tasks it deems appropriate and necessary to achieve the objectives of the Bologna Process.

In line with these responsibilities, the Board shall prepare issues for the BFUG. If urgent decisions have to be taken on specific matters, the Board will consult through e-mail the BFUG members before taking any decision.

Tasks of the Secretariat of the Bologna Follow-up Group

General mandate

The tasks of the Secretariat will include:

- administrative and operational aspects associated with the next Ministerial Conference, including the setting up of a web site;
- secretarial functions as directed by the BFUG and the Board;
- execution, under specific mandate from the BFUG or the Board, of
- special tasks concerning the implementation of the work
- programme
- function of reference point for information on the Bologna Process and the activities of the Bologna Follow-up Group.

The Secretariat is made up by persons of the Country hosting the next Ministerial Conference. There is also the possibility to second national experts to the Secretariat.

The Secretariat is under the authority of the Chair of the BFUG while, as to the administrative aspects, it is responsible to the Country hosting the next Ministerial Conference.

Additional mandate for the present Secretariat

The Secretariat is organised as a special section within the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research and operates under the administrative rules of the Ministry. Tasks performed under a mandate from the BFUG/Board will be reported back to the BFUG/Board.

ANNEX 8: Procedure for the Selection of the 2020 Ministerial Conference Host

Document set-up on 19.02.2016

Introduction

This paper aims to:

- outline the role and responsibilities of the country hosting the upcoming Bologna Process Ministerial Conference;
- provide an overview on how the selection of a host for the upcoming Bologna Process Ministerial Conferences was handled in the past;
- propose a timeframe for the election of the host of the 2020 Ministerial Conference and to give a short description of the main responsibilities to be taken up by the host country.
- Outline a voting procedure for choosing a host for the Ministerial Conference 2020 in case of several applications

Role and responsibilities of the country hosting the upcoming Bologna Process Ministerial Conference

The host of the Ministerial Conference is expected to provide the necessary logistical and financial support to ensure the successful organisation of such an event. This includes the following requirements:

- Conference room fitting at least 100 ministerial delegations, with each delegation having a maximum of 5 participants;
- Simultaneous interpretation for participants⁴⁴.
- Rooms for bilateral meetings and parallel sessions;
- Meals and local transport throughout the conference for all members of the ministerial delegations.

In connection with the Ministerial Conferences, a Bologna Policy Forum (BPF) was organised in 2009 (Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve), 2010 (Vienna), 2012 (Bucharest) and in 2015 (Yerevan). It is foreseen that a Policy Forum will take place in 2018 (Paris) as well as to include a Policy Forum in the upcoming Ministerial Conference in 2020.

The country hosting the upcoming Ministerial Conference acts as a Vice-Chair of the Bologna Process/European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The Vice Chair's role is to ensure continuity within the rotating Bologna Process/EHEA Co-Chairing system, in which the two Co-Chairs change every semester. The chairs (Vice-Chair and Co-chairs) have to give the necessary political impetus to the whole process. The division of tasks between the Co-Chairs and the Vice-Chair is defined at the beginning of their mandate by each chairing team.

⁴⁴ See annex 7 to BFUG proceedings 2015-2018 „Language regime for Ministerial Conferences“

The chairing arrangements that follow up to the ministerial meeting in 2020 will have the following composition:

| Semester | Co-Chair from EU- Presidency | Co-Chair from non-EU country | Vice-Chair |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1 July - 31 December 2015 | Luxemburg | Liechtenstein | |
| 1 January - 30 June 2016 | Netherlands | Moldova | FRANCE as host of 2018 Ministerial Conference |
| 1 July - 31 December 2016 | Slovakia | Montenegro | |
| 1 January - 30 June 2017 | Malta | Norway | |
| 1 July - 31 December 2017 | United Kingdom | Russian Federation | |
| 1 January - 30 June 2018 | Estonia | Serbia | |
| 1 July - 31 December 2018 | Bulgaria | Switzerland | Host of 2020 Ministerial Conference |
| 1 January - 30 June 2019 | Austria | Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia | |
| 1 July - 31 December 2019 | Romania | Turkey | |
| 1 January - 30 June 2020 | Finland | Ukraine | |

As agreed by the Ministers in the Berlin Communiqué (2003), the country organising the upcoming Ministerial Conference also hosts the Bologna Follow-up Group Secretariat between two consecutive ministerial meetings. If this shall also apply to the host of the Ministerial Conference 2020 will be decided by the BFUG until the opening of the call for hosting the 2020 Ministerial Conference.

Historical overview

Following the call to host the Bologna ministerial meeting for 2009, three proposals were submitted to the Secretariat by December 2005 from the Benelux countries, Croatia and the Slovak Republic. The candidate countries wrote to Finland, as incoming Chair of the BFUG asking to organise a voting process amongst the BFUG members, to elect the host country for the 2009 Ministerial Conference. The Finish Minister asked the BFUG to define a selection mechanism and, as a result, a voting system was developed for the BFUG meeting in Helsinki (12-13 October 2006).

For the following Ministerial Conference in 2010 (Budapest – Vienna Ministerial Anniversary Conference) one application was submitted jointly by Austria and Hungary. Similarly, for 2012 one country (Romania) expressed its interest and submitted an application to host the 2012 Ministerial Conference in Bucharest. Moreover, for 2015 again one country (Armenia) expressed its interest and submitted an application to host the 2015 Ministerial Conference in Yerevan. During both cases the BFUG agreed on the

submitted applications, therefore no voting procedure was initiated. For the 2018 Ministerial Conference, France and Georgia submitted an application in November 2014 to the BFUG Secretariat. Georgia withdrew its application before the BFUG in January so that France remained as the only candidate for the host of the Ministerial Conference in 2018. Georgia stated its interest to host the BFUG Secretariat in the period 2018-2020.

Looking at the existing precedents, it is customary that candidatures for hosting the Bologna Process Ministerial Conferences are submitted following a call for proposals launched at BFUG meetings, usually in the second half of the year preceding the year in which the new host is starting its term. The application letters are received by the Bologna Secretariat and are subsequently forwarded to the BFUG co-chairs and vice-chair and circulated before the BFUG meetings in which a decision is made on this matter.

Proposal on a timeframe for the selection of the 2020 Ministerial Conference

The decision regarding the next host of the Ministerial Conference is expected to take place during the 2017 BFUG meeting in Malta.

The Bologna Process/EHEA members interested in hosting the 2020 Ministerial Conference should send the application letter to the Bologna Follow-Up Group Secretariat no later than February 1, 2017. The letter should be signed by the Minister responsible for higher education.

The Secretariat should forward the letters to the BFUG Chairs, no later than 6 February 2017 and circulate them to the members of the BFUG at least two weeks prior to the 2017 BFUG meeting in Malta.

| Time frame | The election process |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Autumn 2016 - BFUG meeting Slovakia | Opening the call for hosting the 2020 Ministerial Conference; |
| 1 February 2017 | Deadline for submitting candidacies for hosting the 2020 Ministerial Conference to the BFUG Secretariat; |
| 6 February 2017 | Deadline for the Secretariat to circulate the candidacies to the BFUG Chairs |
| February 2017 | Secretariat circulates the candidacies to the BFUG members (min. two weeks prior to the next BFUG meeting); |
| Spring 2017 | EHEA members not attending the next BFUG meeting submit their votes in a sealed envelope to the BFUG Secretariat; |
| Spring 2017 BFUG meeting | Finalising the selection procedure for the next host(s) of the 2020 Ministerial Conference. The host(s) will be finally endorsed by the EHEA Ministers responsible for |

higher education at the 2018 Paris Ministerial Conference.

Proposal for the selection procedure of the host country for the 2020 Bologna Process Ministerial Conference

In case only one application for hosting the 2020 Ministerial Conference is received, it will be circulated to the BFUG Chairs and sent to the BFUG members two weeks prior to the BFUG meeting in Malta for further endorsement.

In case two or more candidatures are submitted to host the 2020 Ministerial Conference, the election process would follow the voting procedures described below.

Voting procedure for 2020 Ministerial Conference in case of more than one application

The voting procedure proposed is based on the procedure set-up for selection of the host of the Ministerial Conference in 2009.

Election procedure

- Eligible to vote: the European Commission (EC) and all full BFUG country members, with the exception of those bidding to host the event.
- The voting will take place during the Spring 2017 BFUG meeting. Any country not able to attend the BFUG will have the option of submitting a bid in a sealed envelope to the Secretariat before the meeting takes place.
- BFUG participants will carry out any necessary consultation with their Ministers in advance of the BFUG meeting, to ensure they have a mandate to vote. To assist with this, the Secretariat will circulate the application letters from the countries indicating their willingness to host the conference in the timeframe indicated in the table above.
- No additional information than the application letter will be issued by the countries bidding for the host of the Conference in 2020 either before or during the BFUG meeting.
- Each country/EC will have two votes; the Secretariat will provide two ballot slips for this purpose.
- The ballot will be secret.
- The outcome will be based on a simple majority of the number of votes cast. In the event of a tie, there will be a second round (see examples below). In the unlikely event of a further tie, the Chairs will draw lots.
- The votes will be counted by the Secretariat during the BFUG meeting, overseen by two tellers. BFUG participants will be invited to volunteer to act as tellers at the start of the BFUG meeting.
- The Chairs of the BFUG will write to the Ministers of the countries concerned, to advise them of the outcome of the vote. This will have the effect of the countries

receiving the least votes withdrawing their offer to host the 2020 Ministerial conference.

Example A

| Country | Number of votes |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Country A | 28 |
| Country B | 30 |
| Country C | 16 |
| | |
| Country B is selected | |

Example B

| Country | Number of votes |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Country A | 28 |
| Country B | 28 |
| Country C | 18 |
| | |
| Second round | |
| Country A | 38 |
| Country B | 36 |
| Country C | Withdrawn |
| | |
| Country A is selected | |

ANNEX 9: Role of the Bologna Secretariat: Terms of Reference 2015-2018

Last modified: 09.09.2015

1. BACKGROUND

When the Bologna Secretariat was first established following the Berlin meeting of Ministers responsible for higher education, the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) agreed, after discussion, upon its role and functions. These proposals for a Secretariat were accepted by the BFUG Meeting in Rome in November 2003 (for further information see document BFUG1_3 of the meeting).

2. PRIMARY FUNCTIONS

For the period 1st of July 2015 until 30th of June 2018 the role and functions of the Bologna Secretariat will continue along the same lines as agreed previously at the BFUG meetings: the Secretariat will provide neutral support to further the consolidation of the European Higher Education Area under the exclusive authority of the BFUG and its Chairs and Vice-Chair.

More specifically, the functions include:

- providing administrative and operational support for the BFUG and its Board – including planning meetings and minutes;
- assisting the BFUG and its Board in the follow-up work for the period July 2015 to June 2018 – including planning of activities and following up on the BFUG decisions;
- supporting all Bologna Working Groups and Advisory Groups and preparing the draft reports;
- carrying out any special tasks concerning the implementation of the work programme of the European Higher Education Area;
- reviewing and updating the European Higher Education Area website and archives;
- acting as an external and internal contact point for the European Higher Education Area;
- sharing important messages with the stakeholders;
- providing representation at external events upon request of the organisers;
- preparing the Ministerial Conference in Paris (2018) and the Fifth Bologna Policy Forum under the supervision of the BFUG.

3. METHOD OF OPERATION

In conjunction with the Co-chairs and the Vice-chair, the Secretariat drafts:

- agendas for the BFUG meetings
- background discussion documents (liaising with relevant authors as appropriate)

- relevant papers for the BFUG and its Board, Working Groups and Advisory Groups meetings information on practical arrangements for meetings (during meetings the Secretariat can take responsibility for practical arrangements in cooperation with the hosts, if necessary);
- minutes of the BFUG/Board meetings for clearance by the Chairs
- copies of these minutes for comments and subsequent adoption by the BFUG/Board at the next meeting;
- assistance and support for each Bologna Working Group and Advisory Group, and carries out other specific tasks, as agreed by the mentioned BFUG sub-structures.

The Secretariat supports the implementation of the work programme adopted by the BFUG.

To this end, the Secretariat should attend Bologna Seminars and other events, where and as appropriate.

The Secretariat reviews and updates the European Higher Education Area website ensuring that up-to-date information is made available at all times for the BFUG and the public at large. It will develop an ad-hoc communication system, using up-to-date digital tools. It shall propose a new website in order to provide a more efficient service.

The Secretariat organises the Ministerial Conference and Bologna Policy Forum in Paris in 2018.

4. Contact details:

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Further information will be provided subsequently.