



**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF THE BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP (BFUG Board)
Andorra, 11 February 2011, 09:00 – 16:00**

Draft Minutes

BFUG List of participants

Country/institution/association	First name	Last name
Andorra	Enric Manel	Garcia
Andorra	Mar	Martinez Ramirez
Armenia	Gayane	Harutunyan
Armenia	Karine	Harutunyan
Belgium / French Community	Kevin	Guillaume
Belgium / Flemish Community	Soenen	Magalie
Bologna Secretariat	Deca	Ligia
Bologna Secretariat	Proteasa	Viorel
European Association of Institutions in Higher Education(EURASHE)	Delplace	Stefan
European Commission	Eriksson- Watershoot	Sophia
European Students' Union(ESU)	Santa	Robert
Hungary	Gyöngyösi	Katalin
Hungary	Keszei	Ernő
Poland	Banaszak	Bartolomiej
Poland	Bołtruszko	Maria

Welcome and introduction to the meeting

The Andorra Secretary of State, Mr. Juan Marc Miralles welcomed the participants and opened the meeting.

1. Information by the Hungarian Presidency and Andorra and minutes of the BFUG Chairs Handover, Budapest, 30 November 2010

Enric Manel Garcia (Andorra) provided an overview of the Andorran higher education landscape, emphasising the national interest in pursuing quality assurance in e-learning, life long learning and doctoral studies.

Ernő Keszei (Hungary) briefly informed the BFUG Board on the state of the art of the organization of the Gödöllő BFUG meeting (17-18 March 2011).

Enric Manel Garcia introduced the minutes of the BFUG Chairs in Budapest. A discussion on the nature of the Chairs Handover meeting, as well as on its links to the BFUG and BFUG Board meetings followed.

Ernő Keszei concluded that such handover meetings between BFUG Chairing teams are useful for:

- ensuring continuity between BFUG Chairing teams;
- agreeing the directions for the materials to be prepared for the Board meetings;
- guiding the Bologna Secretariat in its work.

The Chair also concluded that the informal manner of the meeting should be kept, thus the minutes should not be circulated to the BFUG or the BFUG Board.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted with two changes:

- a discussion of the Belarus situation was added to the agenda;
- an addition of an information point from the Polish and Armenian Chairmanship of the BFUG.

3. Minutes of the BFUG Board meeting, Madrid, 28 January 2010 and outcome of proceedings of the BFUG meeting, Alden Biesen, 24-25 August 2010

The minutes from BFUG Board meeting in Madrid on January 28th, 2010 were adopted with the following change: on page 4 the location of the ministerial summit will be corrected to Bucharest instead of Budapest.

The short and extended versions of the Alden Biesen BFUG meeting's outcome of proceedings were introduced and their regime of dissemination was put forward as a discussions point. The following points were raised:

- there are fears on behalf of some BFUG members that detailed outcome of proceedings, which nominate the speakers, would harm the open and informal atmosphere within the BFUG;
- the outcome of proceedings should aim at satisfying the public need of transparency, as well as at keeping the memory of the process. For transparency, publishing on the www.ehea.info website the text boxes from the short version should be enough, while the detailed version should indicate only the direction in which the discussion went, with a listing of the arguments put forward, without nominating the specific countries which made the respective arguments;
- the short version should be online, also for the use of the researchers. Public transparency can be addressed through a press release published on the website;
- a detailed version, close to a verbatim, would help the new-comers to the BFUG or those who could not attend the respective meeting to understand the debates;
- clear conclusions from the chairs are needed in order to be possible to draft shorter and more concise outcome of proceedings.

It was concluded that the names of the countries should be made explicit in the BFUG outcome of proceedings only upon request. The outcome of proceedings should record the main positions of the BFUG members, in a grouped manner, without necessarily following the chronological order, as well as the conclusions of the BFUG Chairs.

4. Transition from the Bologna Process (BP) to the consolidation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)

The document was introduced pointing at its origins in the German request for exploring the consequences of the transition from the Bologna Process to European Higher Education Area. Further it was inquired whether the three descriptors used as headers for the three groups of questions (the policy level, the actors and the governance of the process) are enough and if the transition discussion should precede the discussion on the Guidelines for BFUG proceedings, as well as those on the additional working methods or the EHEA accession criteria.

The following issues were raised in regards to terminology change:

- higher education institutions are familiar with the Bologna Process terminology and this is a reason to keep the Bologna Process terminology in place;
- "Bologna Process" is a renowned international brand and changing the terminology might affect communication with other world regions;
- changing just the terminology might be misleading as it might be understood that the BP is over and the EHEA is fully operational;
- a period of transition would be needed;
- with regard to the possible implications for the nature of the process, the main opinions are summarized below:
 - it was difficult to pinpoint the main unique features of the EHEA in the Information and Promotion Network meeting;
 - there is no generally accepted definition of the European Higher Education Area;
 - the shift to EHEA implies also a shift from a national governmental approach towards an institutional level approach;
 - EHEA implies more permanent structures and binding targets;
 - the ministers did not ask for a change of structures, nor agreed with such an endeavour; with the "Bologna beyond 2010" report, the Ministers have adopted specifies that the structures are fit for purposes;
 - the EHEA can be regarded as the result of a coordinated process of reforms known as the "Bologna Process", therefore the coexistence of the two terms describes best a reality in which different countries are in different stages of implementation;
 - a threshold for BP implementation in order to become or remain a member of EHEA was not established, so they cannot be equated;
 - a reflection group on the future of the Bologna Process can be set up, if the BFUG would agree with such a proposal.

The discussion was concluded by the Chair as follows:

- the discussion on the terminology change is subsequent to the one on the implications for the nature of the process of the shift from Bologna Process to the EHEA; therefore they will not be disconnected;
- the material to put forward to the BFUG would be modified accordingly, by placing the terminology discussion after the core questions on the transition from the BP to the EHEA.

5. BFUG decision-making and communication procedures

The three background papers on this agenda point were introduced: the agreed status quo, the overview of feedback received from BFUG members on the questions posed by the Secretariat over email and a document outlining the proposed way forward on this topic.

The following opinions were expressed:

- the process should keep its informal manner, hence it should not be formalised;
- the description of the current operation of the BFUG (the status quo document) is an indication of current ways of proceeding in various situations, not a straight-jacket imposing a strict set of procedures to be followed;
- a disclaimer should be added that the description should be informative, it should not be perceived normatively;
- the current document, even if it describes the past manner in which the BFUG conducted its proceedings, is flexible enough not to formalize the process.

It was concluded that the status quo material would be presented in the Gödöllő BFUG meeting, asking the participants to express their opinions on which sections should be kept for information and guidance purposes. The document would be updated in the light of the perspective of the BFUG members and put forward for adoption during the October 2011 Cracow BFUG meeting, with the intention of using it as an informative material for those interested.

The questions upon which the BFUG members did not express convergent opinions would continue to be asked and the expressed opinions would be mapped by the Secretariat.

6. Criteria for accession to the European Higher Education Area

The Chair presented the apology of Sjur Bergan (Council of Europe), as he was unable to reach Andorra due to air traffic disruptions.

The document prepared by the Council of Europe and the Bologna Secretariat was presented accompanied by some context information:

- Future applications for membership could arrive from San Marino, Monaco and Belarus. Currently there is no official application to be processed. Manifestations of interest were received from Belarus and San Marino and were answered by the Secretariat, following the approval of the responses by the BFUG Chairs;
- The composition of the ad hoc working group asked by the BFUG Chairs to analyse the previous questionnaires and to propose to the BFUG a revised version;
- The agreement in the ad hoc working group meeting held in Paris on 8 February 2011 to have open ended and forward looking questions, which would provide information about the applicant countries' willingness and ability "to pursue and

implement the objectives of the Bologna Process in their own systems of higher education”.

The following opinions were expressed within the meeting:

- a student should be part of the ad hoc group;
- more emphasis should be laid on updates on stakeholders’ involvement, especially for the quality assurance part and the E4 should be able to provide input for this specific section of the questionnaire;
- the questionnaire should also look for institutional arrangements that guarantee the right of students to represent their colleagues and be represented;
- the questionnaire should have a comprehensive approach to values and principles;
- an important part of the EHEA accession questionnaire discussion should be how the BFUG can follow up the receipt of the questionnaire, if necessary; in this respect further questions or study visits could be envisaged.

It was concluded that the input of the Board would be sent to the ad hoc group for integration in the new EHEA accession questionnaire. The material would be presented in the first day of the BFUG meeting so that it would be possible for the comments of BFUG members made during the meeting to be integrated in order for the final document to be put forward for adoption on the second day of the BFUG meeting. The BFUG members would be however asked to send as many comments as possible in writing so that these could be integrated even before the actual BFUG meeting.

Further on, it was discussed whether the BFUG should adopt a common declaration on Belarus, having in mind the letters of various ministers responsible for higher education within the EHEA, the Council of the European Union conclusions on Belarus from 31 January 2011, the European Parliament resolution of 20 January 2011 on the situation in Belarus and the Resolution no. 1790 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe regarding the situation in Belarus in the aftermath of the presidential election.

The attention of the participants was drawn to the fact that the current wave of expulsions is different from the one in 2006: the protesting students are expelled due to discriminatory academic evaluations, not through administrative procedures. Additionally, mobility opportunities for Belarusian students are currently hindered by the political situation, so special programmes could be put in place by various EHEA countries to support them.

It was concluded that the BFUG members would be asked if they endorse such a possible BFUG Declaration on the Belarus situation over email, prior to the BFUG. If there would be no significant opposition, a dedicated point of agenda would be added. In parallel, Poland, ESU and the Secretariat will prepare the draft text of the Declaration, for a possible BFUG endorsement.

7. EHEA possible additional working methods

The three background papers on this agenda point were introduced: the agreed status quo, the overview of feedback received from BFUG members on the questions posed by

the Secretariat over email and a document outlining the proposed way forward on this topic.

The BFUG Board members discussed the matrix with the existing working methods which are used at the national level and with the intention of the EHEA countries to fund additional working methods, as well as the Research Observatory (repository of research papers) and the possibility to coordinate with EUA and EURASHE with regards to the direct involvement of higher education institutions for deepening the Bologna Process implementation at the grassroots level.

The following opinions were expressed:

- financing is crucial for the success of the proposed additional working methods;
- thematic sessions connected with the BFUG should be organized; they should be optional and last for approximately two and a half hours;
- the re-enforcing of the link between Bologna experts and national BFUG members is needed at the national level, while recognising where this link is already a strong one, but also with the improvement of the situations in which the link is less strong;
- there should be an inquiry into why the national BFUGs (where they exist) seem to be less involved than before in the reporting on the Bologna Process implementation;
- intellectual property rights have to be taken into account when building the research repository. Perhaps a group could be asked to define a selection mechanism;
- for the direct involvement of institutions, large scale consultations regarding their working methods for Bologna Process implementation are needed. Funding needs to be secured in this respect;
- an idea to have a study on how the implementation of the Bologna Process is funded at different levels was put forward.

The Flemish Community of Belgium volunteered to organise this autumn a meeting of the BFUG Board with the main European research consortiums on higher education, such as CHER (Consortium of Higher Education Researchers), SRHE (Society of Research in Higher Education), EAIR (European Association of Institutional Research), IMHE (Institutional Management of Higher Education of OECD), to discuss the Research Observatory.

It was concluded that the comments received would be integrated in the materials for the BFUG meeting and the same final questions would be kept for the BFUG to consider.

The Board also concluded that the Cracow thematic session connected with the BFUG meeting would be organized by the E4 group, on the topic of quality assurance, following the E4 request in this sense. The Polish representatives would confirm the availability of the necessary facilities.

8. Language regime for EHEA Ministerial Conferences

The background document reflecting the technical implications of the options agreed upon during the Alden Biesen meeting was presented and feedback on specific technical formulations on page 5 of the document was received.

It was concluded that the comments of the Board would be integrated into the document. The debate would be opened if a significant number of countries share the dissatisfaction with Stockholm agreement. In case France wants to take up the language regime at the ministerial level, the BFUG will have to inform the decision of the ministers.

9. Information on the preparations for the Bucharest Ministerial Conference and the Third Bologna Policy Forum, 26-27 April 2012

The Board was informed on the two alternative agendas for the Ministerial Conference and the Bologna Policy Forum options put forward to the BFUG by the International Openness Working Group:

- one option covering one full day (starting at lunchtime on April 26 to lunchtime on April 27, 2012) and
- the other option covering one day and a half for both meetings (starting in the morning of April 26 and ending with lunch on April 27, 2012).

It was concluded that the update regarding the organisational progress for the Ministerial Conference and the Bologna Policy Forum to be put forward to the BFUG should describe the links between the two events, while emphasising which agenda points are common and separate for the two events and how much time is envisaged for ministers to negotiate the communiqué.

10. Agenda of the BFUG meeting, Budapest (Gödöllő), 17-18 March 2011

The draft agenda was presented and was endorsed by the Board.

The Hungarian representatives provided some details on the practical facilities for the Gödöllő BFUG meeting, In addition, details were provided about the Gödöllő Royal Castle, the organisation of the EQAR General Assembly back to back with the BFUG meeting, in the afternoon of the 18 March 2011 and about the bus transfers to be organised for the BFUG participants' convenience.

11. Next BFUG Board meeting, Armenia, 6-7 September 2011

The Armenian representatives presented a list of planned international events to be organised within the period of their co-chairmanship of the BFUG (second half of 2011):

- An international conference on the topic of Funding of Higher Education (end of September/ beginning of October 2011);
- A Summer School for Students (10 days) on the topic of "Bologna beyond 2010";
- An international seminar for students organised in cooperation with the Council of Europe and ESU.

Further details will be provided at the BFUG meeting in Gödöllő.

12. Updates from the upcoming Polish Presidency regarding the agenda and priorities in the field of higher education for the second semester of 2011

The Polish representatives presented the priorities of the Polish EU Presidency in the field of higher education and research, their operational objectives, as well as the planned HE related events to be organised in the second semester of 2011. A detailed presentation will be also given during the upcoming Gödöllő BFUG meeting.

13. Any other business

The issue of access to BFUG documents for members of the national BFUG was raised. It was concluded that the access to the personalised EHEA Backoffice accounts is to be given upon a national decision.