

BFUGB12 minutes
13 June 2006

Minutes of the Bologna Board Meeting

Vienna 13 June 2006

The meeting was held at the Austrian Ministry for Education, Science and Culture on Tuesday 13 June 2006 from 9.00 to 15.00. A list of participants is appended.

A minute's silence was observed to remember Roland Vermeesch, President of EURASHE and valued Bologna colleague, who died suddenly on 10 June after a short illness.

1. Welcome and adoption of agenda

Documents BFUGB12 1a Draft agenda
BFUGB12 1b Draft annotated agenda

1.1 The Chair (Barbara Weitgruber) welcomed Birgitte Yuorin and Maarit Palonen from Finland to gain experience of BFUG before Finland took over the EU Presidency on 1st July. Apologies had been received from Greece and Turkey and the chairs of the Stocktaking and Portability of grants and loans working groups.

The agenda was adopted without comment.

2. Minutes of the last BFUG and Board meetings

Documents BFUGB11 Minutes Board meeting 25 January 2006
BFUG8 Minutes - BFUG meeting 6-7 April 2006

2.1 The minutes of the last Board meeting were approved. The revised minutes of BFUG8 were also approved. Advice on version control would be adopted for future minutes (all new document versions will carry the respective date for easy identification).

3. Review of Bologna Work Programme

Updates from Working group Chairs, ENQA and EUA.

Documents BFUGB12 3a ENQA Register of QA Agencies
BFUGB12 3b Portability of grants and loans

3.1 The Chair reminded those present that a number of Working Groups' final draft reports were expected for presentation to the Board in September and to BFUG in October. It would be important for BFUG to have a clear view of recommendations likely to be made to Ministers when they met in London.

International Dimension

3.2 The Chair reported on the conclusions of the recent summit between the EU as well as Latin American and Caribbean Heads of States and Governments, a copy of which would be passed to the Secretariat for circulation. Increasingly, higher education was becoming a priority for bi-lateral and bi-regional links. There was a genuine desire for links to be strengthened at all appropriate levels, as evidenced by the April meeting between EUA and their counterpart in Latin America. The G8 Ministerial meeting on Education was further evidence of the importance of education at a global level. A copy of the Moscow Declaration would also be circulated to BFUG for information.

3.3 There had been a further meeting in China on EU-China cooperation in Higher Education at the end of May. The Chinese were very interested in the Bologna Process. It was likely there would be another event on higher education in China under the German Presidency.

3.4 In response to demand for information about the Bologna Process at the NAFSA conference in Quebec, EUA had produced a folder to explain the Bologna Process to a non-European audience. EUA would provide a weblink to the document. Feedback would be welcome.

External Dimension

Documents: Working Group meeting agenda 12 June 2006
Working Group meeting minutes 7 April 2006

3.5 Norway (Toril Johansson) reported on the progress of the External Dimension Working Group. The group had agreed that the timescale for its work meant that the strategy and report would be prepared in parallel. The large group had been divided into sub-groups to work on different aspects of the concept. A draft strategy and preliminary report drawing on related events and based on the seminars and working group outcomes would be ready for the end of August. Jan Levy had given a presentation on a proposal made to the Norwegian Government on Globalisation in Higher Education: linking Bologna to the global discussions, which it was thought could inspire the External Dimension strategy and report.

3.6 In discussion the following points were made:

There was a question about the expectations for contributions to the Communiqué from working groups and projects. The External Dimension group had hoped to influence and contribute to the Communiqué draft with a sound strategy document.

It would be helpful for the Board to have an indication of the emerging conclusions of the group's work. It was agreed that the papers prepared by the sub-groups would be circulated to Board members for information about the work in progress.

Qualifications Frameworks

Documents: EQF/LLL and the Bologna Qualifications Framework

3.7 Denmark (Mogens Berg) reminded the Board of the Working Group's remit and gave a brief progress report against each strand of their terms of reference. The group had agreed not to pursue a survey on how credits were defined in national legislation. The two pilots testing the procedures and criteria for self-certification against the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA were due to complete in September. The group had provided support to the Stocktaking Working Group. Arrangements had been made to provide regional workshops to assist countries in developing their own higher education qualifications frameworks. The Working Group was monitoring developments in the proposed European Qualifications Framework (EQF). However, the detail of the proposal was changing rapidly and there had not yet been an opportunity to consult the whole group on the latest developments. The latest letter therefore represented the views of the Chair, rather than the group.

3.8 The EQF/LLL descriptor system had been simplified which allowed for more detailed HE descriptors to be held outside of the EQF. There were now clear links between EU Commission and Bologna proposals. A suggested BFUG statement supporting the EQF proposals would be presented to BFUG for discussion in October. Prior to this, the Working Group would discuss the EQF/LL proposal at their next meeting in September. Based on the outcome of the two pilots, the group would also consider whether any further development of the Bologna qualifications framework was required. Overall, the group expected to be able to present a draft report to BFUG in October.

3.9 In discussion the following points were made:

Questions were raised about the procedure for publishing and adopting the EQF. The EU Commission (Peter van der Hijden) informed the Board that the EC document would be published in September and that the procedure for adoption by the EU Parliament and Council of Ministers was likely to take about a year. There was therefore still scope for further dialogue about the details of the proposal.

EUA (Lesley Wilson) asked whether there were any qualifications other than higher education qualifications in the top three levels, particularly at level 8. If there were none, it was questionable why the descriptors in the EQF were not consistent with those in the Bologna framework. The EU Commission (Peter van der Hijden) explained that, as a Lifelong Learning framework, the EQF had to be sufficiently broad to allow for non HE qualifications at the upper levels. To illustrate this point, it was agreed that it would be helpful for the EC to identify non – HE qualifications which would articulate to the upper levels of the EQF. There was scope for potential confusion between the Bologna and the EQF frameworks, particularly from an external dimension. However,

the two frameworks served different purposes and detailed descriptors of qualifications would be held at national level, rather than in the EQF or the Bologna framework.

There would be further opportunities for discussing the relationship between the two frameworks before the London conference.

Stocktaking

3.10 The Secretariat (Ann McVie) gave a brief update on the work of the Stocktaking Working Group. Following the last BFUG, the indicators had been finalised and were now on the website. Countries were therefore aware of the criteria against which they would be assessed. The deadline for National Reports was 15 December 2006. The deadline for return of Eurydice questionnaires had been 1 June 2006. Returns from non-Socrates countries to the Secretariat had been slow, with only one complete questionnaire returned on time. It would be important for all countries to complete their National reports on time, to ensure the stocktaking report was finalised in time for the London conference.

3.11 The Working Group would next meet on 11 October, to discuss the outline for the report, which would be presented for discussion at the next BFUG meeting in Helsinki. January to February was expected to be the busiest period for stocktaking.

3.12 In discussion the following points were made:

Neither the “Trends V” nor the “Bologna through Students Eyes” reports would be available until at least March 2007. This meant that it would be difficult for EUA or ESIB to make a direct contribution to the stocktaking report. However, it was hoped that emerging themes and conclusions from those reports could feed into the stocktaking process.

Social Dimension and Data on Staff and Student Mobility

3.13 The Chair explained that Annika Pontén had been unexpectedly prevented from attending the meeting. She would send an update to the Secretariat for circulation to the Board following the next meeting of the Working Group on 14 June 2006.

Portability of Grants and Loans

3.14 The Chair intimated that the first Working Group meeting would take place on 16 June 2006. The Board were invited to offer any comments on the paper presented outlining the schedule of work up to presentation of a report to BFUG in October.

3.15 In discussion the following points were made:

It was recognised that the Nordic countries had considerable

experience of portable grants and loans.

The CoE (Sjur Bergan) highlighted the need to consider national as well as EU legislation on grants and loans.

EUA – Principles of Doctoral Programmes

3.16 EUA (Lesley Wilson) gave an update on the project since the last BFUG meeting. The project was proceeding in line with the agreed Terms of Reference. The event held on doctoral programmes on 1-2 June in the framework of the Austrian Presidency entitled: “A Researchers’ Labour Market: Europe – a Pole of Attraction?” had brought together BFUG members and research councils and had shown that there was no clarity over the funding of doctorates and doctorate programmes. Working with OECD, EUA was likely to prepare a questionnaire to establish where responsibility lay at national level for 3-cycle funding and management. If issued in September, the results of the questionnaire may be available by December. The complexity of the funding arrangements for the third cycle might be an issue for the London Communiqué.

3.17 The dates of the Structure of Doctoral Programmes seminar had been changed to 26-27 October to avoid a clash with the BFUG meeting. The programme for the seminar in December in Nice was being developed

3.18 It was agreed that the conference report be circulated through the Secretariat to keep BFUG informed of the work to achieve closer co-operation between the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area.

ENQA – Register of QA Agencies –

3.19 ENQA (Peter Williams) referred to the paper giving an updated reflecting activity up to September. The consultant Bastian Baumann had almost completed interviews for the Register and would report to the E4 group meeting at the end of June. An interim report would be ready for the Board in September to inform further work to produce the final report next spring. At the same time, ENQA members were starting their cyclical reviews. E4 was grateful to Ann McVie of the Secretariat for attending their meetings as an observer.

3.20 Referring to Quality Forum planned for November, EUA (Lesley Wilson) reported that German colleagues would be attending the next E4 Group meeting to discuss their input to the event.

3.21 It was agreed that:

The Secretariat would circulate the conclusions of the recent summit between the EU and the Latin American and Caribbean Heads of States and Governments, together with the Moscow G8 Declaration.

EUA would provide a weblink to its folder explaining the Bologna Process to an external audience.

The papers prepared by the External Dimension sub-groups would be circulated to Board members for information about the work in progress.

The EC would provide some examples of non HE qualifications which would articulate to the upper levels of the proposed EQF.

EUA would circulate the conclusions of the June seminar on doctoral programmes.

4. Preparation for London

Documents: BFUGB12 4 Conference of Ministers responsible for HE

- Composition of Communiqué Drafting Group
- Timetable for Group's work
- Initial discussion for possible priorities for Communiqué
- Update on preparation for the conference

4.1 The UK (Rachel Green) gave an update on preparations for the London conference. The Board was invited to comment on the suggested composition of the Communiqué Drafting Group, which comprised Troika, UK, Latvia and Georgia and on the proposed timetable. Views were also sought on possible priorities for the London Communiqué. Ideas for speakers for London would be welcomed, possibly from outside Europe, but connected with Europe and the Bologna countries.

4.2 In discussion the following points were made:

There was general agreement with the drafting group composition proposed and that it was better to keep it small. The final decision would be made by BFUG at the October meeting.

It was suggested that the timetable should include website consultation, as for the Bergen Communiqué. The discussion will be continued at the September Board meeting with further discussion at the October BFUG based on a paper prepared by the Secretariat after the September Board meeting. Agreement rather than discussion of priorities might be expected at the October meeting of BFUG.

Denmark (Mogens Berg) suggested Communiqué priorities might be organised in groups, for example Ministerial priorities from the last Communiqué, political issues that had arisen since Bergen, quality assurance register and the qualifications framework, not as a priority, but as a consequence of stocktaking. This would be a way to classify and order priorities to aid decision making later.

There would be a need to take account of conclusions from seminars as well as from working groups. Priorities for 2009 might not be evident until stocktaking was complete.

The structure of the Communiqué was important. This could usefully be discussed at the September Board meeting. There was a need to look at how to progress to 2010 and beyond. There might be a need for a working group to consider how to develop the EHEA post 2010. As a first step, the Secretariat will circulate the papers produced by the Norwegian Secretariat on possible options for supporting the process after 2010. As well as the support structure, there was a need to consider the areas for further development post 2010. The 2007 Communiqué might signal the need for such discussion and give an indication of goals for 2010 as a summary of the characteristics of the EHEA.

5. AEGEE – possible request to join BFUG

Documents: BFUGB12 5 AEGEE background paper

5.1 The Secretariat (Ann McVie) advised that the paper was to make the Board aware of a possible approach from AEGEE to become a member of BFUG. This had arisen through informal contact made at the Holy See seminar. AEGEE had worked informally with BFUG in the past and was looking to re-establish contact and increase their involvement with the Process. ESIB had been alerted to this.

6. Report from the Secretariat's meeting with Eurocadres

Documents: BFUG12 6 Secretariat/Eurocadres meeting 28 April 2006

6.1 The Secretariat (Ann McVie) reported that she and Yvonne Clarke, had met Jean-Paul Boucher, Vice-President of Eurocadres, at his request in London. Eurocadres were happy to remain a partner member of the Bologna Process and wanted to discuss areas of mutual interest and bi-lateral relations. The Secretariat has suggested that Eurocadres attend the Employability seminar in Swansea.

7. Updates from Consultative Members

EU Commission – Peter van der Hijden

7.1 The modernisation agenda paper requested by Heads of States and governments was issued and would be discussed by Ministers shortly. The text, grouped under nine headings, underlined the importance of the work in the Bologna Process to modernise HE.

7.2 The information on EU quality labels and the reasoning behind them, requested at the last BFUG, would be sent to the Secretariat by the end of July and presented at the next BFUG meeting.

Council of Europe – Sjur Bergan

7.3 The last ENIC/NARIC meeting had taken place on 4 -6 June in Tallinn. Co-operation between ENIC/NARIC and ENQA had increased considerably. The Working Group considering “substantial differences” was continuing. This was expected to be a long-term project.

Forum on Democratic Culture in Higher Education CoE Headquarters Strasbourg
22-23 June 2006

Third CoE Forum on HE Quality Assurance CoE Headquarters Strasbourg
19-20 Sept 2006

Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research (CDESR) - plenary session

CoE Headquarters Strasbourg
21-22 Sept 2006

Role of the student (part of Russian Chairmanship of CoE)
Moscow
1-3 November 2006

EUA - Lesley Wilson

7.4 EUA had just finalised the first edition of their Bologna handbook, published as a loose-leaf binder at the beginning of July. Already over one thousand subscriptions had been received. It will be updated four times a year. Information about the publication and availability would be sent to the Secretariat.

EURASHE – Stephan Delplace

7.5 The two current Vice-Presidents would take over in the interim until a decision was made about the position of President.

ESIB – Nina Gustafsson Aberg

7.6 The next student convention would take place in Finland in October with the working title - Future of the Bologna Process after 2010.

8. Any other business

Ministerial Conference 2009

8.1 The Chair reported that the Netherlands had hosted a meeting of the applicant countries to determine if they could reach agreement amongst themselves. No decision was reached so they wrote to Finland to request the opportunity to make presentations to BFUG in October followed by a vote of the members.

8.2 In discussion the following points were raised:

It would be important to ensure that, if a vote was necessary, Ministers' views were fully reflected and a final decision reached, to avoid re-opening of the issue at the Ministerial meeting.

There were a number of procedural issues to be resolved before any such vote could take place at BFUG. Finland was prepared to organise the vote and contact the Ministries if required, but would request assistance from the Board in clarifying the potentially complex voting procedure.

Serbia and Montenegro

8.3 C of E (Sjur Bergan) gave an update on the status of Montenegro. A number of EU countries had already declared support and independence had been accepted at EU level. Serbia would be the natural successor state and Montenegro would therefore need to re-apply for membership to the EU and other European organisations.

8.4 It was agreed that:

Montenegro should continue to attend BFUG and be involved in all events. However, Ministers would need to endorse Montenegro's application to join the Bologna Process when they meet in London in 2007.

9. Date and place of next meeting

The next BFUG Board meeting will be on 1 September at 9.00am in Helsinki, Finland.

Yvonne Clarke
Bologna Secretariat