

BFUG10 3b

(BFUGB14 minutes)
January 2007

Minutes of the Bologna Board Meeting

Berlin 23 January 2007

The meeting was held at the Federal Ministry of Education for Education and Research in Berlin on Tuesday 23 January 2007 from 9.00 to 16.00. A list of participants is appended.

Apologies had been received from Toril Johansson (External Dimension) Barbara Weitgruber attended in her place; Mogens Berg (Qualifications Frameworks) and Annika Pontén (Social Dimension and Mobility).

1. Welcome and adoption of agenda

Documents: BFUGB14 1a Draft Agenda
BFUGB14 1b Draft annotated agenda

1.1 The agenda was adopted without comment. It was later decided to take item 5 (Applications to join the Bologna Process) straight after lunch.

2. Minutes of the last BFUG Board meeting

Documents: BFUGB14 2 BFUGB13 Minutes – Board meeting
1 September 2006

2.1 The minutes of the last BFUG Board meeting were approved.

3. Review of Bologna Work Programme (updates from Working group Chairs/ENQA/EUA)

Documents: BFUGB14 3a Social Dimension and Mobility
BFUGB14 3b Nice Seminar conclusions and
recommendations
Stocktaking Interim Report

Stocktaking – Andrejs Rauhvargers

3.1 Latvia (Andrejs Rauhvargers), as Chair of the Working Group, presented the preliminary findings from the stocktaking exercise. Analysis work had progressed well and was ahead of the schedule for the 2005 exercise. Most reports had now been received, but only eight had arrived by the deadline of 15 December 2006. The Secretariat would continue to send reminders to countries with National Reports and Action Plans for Recognition still outstanding. Early indications showed evidence of considerable progress

in work to implement the E4 Standards and Guidelines on Quality Assurance. Eurydice data in preparation would be used to help verify the information taken from National Reports. The scores could not easily be compared with the previous exercise, as the criteria for the indicators had changed.

3.2 Draft scorecards would be issued to countries on 31 January 2007. They would be given two weeks to respond. The collated scorecards would then be circulated to the working group for discussion at their next meeting in Lillehammer on 19 February 2007. A draft of the final report would be ready by 23 February 2007 for comment by BFUG in Berlin on 5-6 March 2007.

3.3 In discussion the following points were made:

EUA (Lesley Wilson) advised that findings from the EUA Trends report would be available for the Lillehammer meeting.

ESIB (Nina Gustafsson Åberg) confirmed that conclusions from the Students' Convention in March and ESIB's 'Bologna through student eyes' would also be made available to contribute to the stocktaking report.

Social Dimension and Data on Mobility of Staff and Students

3.4 On behalf of the Chair of the Working Group, Annika Ponten, the Secretariat (Ann McVie) presented the latest update from the Working Group. Comments were invited on a number of points. These included any comments on the suggested outline for the final report and the suggested measures for future action at both national and BFUG level.

3.5 In discussion the following points were made:

ESIB (Nina Gustafsson Åberg) suggested the overall goal should be included in the London Communiqué. National Action plans were a way forward, but a two year timescale was too long. It would be desirable for there to be evidence of action before 2009.

There was a need for the overall goal for the social dimension to reflect the fact that it could not be achieved by HEIs alone. Visas, immigration and social security were all aspects affecting the social dimension and mobility.

There did not appear to have been much progress made on identifying comparable data. There would be a need to explain the value of working to improve data collection, given the suggestion that national action plans be developed according to national priorities.

It would be important to address staff mobility as fully as possible. All forms of mobility should be considered.

It was agreed that:

The structure of the report with aims and objectives listed would be presented

to BFUG in March.

Portability of Grants and Loans – Aldrik in't Hout

3.7 The Netherlands (Aldrik in't Hout), as chair of the working group, reported from the recent meeting of the Portability Working Group. The group had found that, while there were some obstacles to overcome, countries could move to implement portability. The group's report would propose that countries should continue to network within the EHEA. An informal network, possibly chaired by three countries was envisaged, to monitor progress, raise issues for discussion and give advice on implementation.

3.8 A draft of the report would be circulated to the Working Group by the beginning of February for comment and the final version would be ready to circulate to BFUG for discussion at the next meeting. Suggested Communiqué text asked Ministers to agree to the network.

3.9 It was agreed that:

The draft Communiqué text would be updated to reflect the text offered by the Portability Working Group.

Qualifications Frameworks

3.10 On behalf of the Chair, CoE (Sjur Bergan) gave a short update, as member of the working group. The suggested Communiqué text had been agreed and the final report would be ready to present to BFUG. The Working Group had underlined that the national frameworks should be compatible with both the overarching Bologna framework and the proposed European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF). The Working Group was suggesting that the CoE be asked to support the elaboration of national qualifications frameworks.

External Dimension

3.11 Austria (Barbara Weitgruber) as deputy chair of the working group gave a short overview of the Working Group report. She referred to Pavel Zgaga's report, underlining the fact that it was based on the outcomes of three seminars on how the Bologna Process is viewed by the rest of the world. The resultant strategy paper presented ideas on how HE stakeholders might develop the external dimension both now and in the future as the process of reform continued.

3.12 A 'toolbox' approach was proposed for taking the strategy forward. Important information sources like the Bologna Handbook and a dedicated website were suggested. The strategy focused on the Bologna themes of competition, cooperation and furthering recognition of qualifications as a means of facilitating mobility. Ministerial agreement would be sought for elements of the strategy that could be taken forward in the next phase, and possibly beyond 2010. Proposed draft text for the Communiqué was also

presented.

3.13 In discussion the following points were made:

There was a need to differentiate between what could be achieved in the short-term and what might take longer. Some actions were already being pursued, but this was not clear from the draft strategy. It would also be helpful to identify the actions that would require new funding or a support structure.

There was broad support for the 'toolbox' approach. This would allow individual countries to take action in line with their own priorities. Many actions were already being taken forward, by individual countries or organisations. For example, EUA was already engaged in policy dialogue with other areas of the world.

It was agreed that:

Before presentation to the next BFUG, the Working Group would make clear the activities already in place and what support the other activities would require in the future.

ENQA – Register of QA agencies – Peter Williams

3.14 ENQA (Peter Williams) gave an update on progress with the register. Drawing on comments from the BFUG meeting in Helsinki, a new draft proposal had been prepared. Advice from lawyers in Belgium had made the possible legal basis for the Register clearer. The cost of related activities and administration of the Register had been reduced, although extra staff might be needed temporarily at the outset. The EC had indicated that Socrates funding was likely to be available to cover start up costs.

3.15 The process for application to the register and approval policies had been clarified. There would be three different routes for applicants to apply: a national review, an ENQA review and a non-national review. Full details of the role and structure of the Register Committee were described in the Board paper. It was proposed that there should be some Government involvement as non-voting members and observers, to ensure fair play. E4 would appreciate the Board's view on this point. E4 was also offering some draft Communiqué text.

3.16 In discussion the following points were made:

Considerable progress had been made since the last BFUG and the role and responsibilities of the register committee now were clearer.

Government representatives should be given access to all papers, but not voting rights or a role in decision making.

There was a question about how to deal with the register, if it did not

function satisfactorily. It would be important to be clear about the role of different authorities in a worst case scenario.

It would be helpful if the Communiqué text could describe how the register committee would operate, as well as its purpose.

3.17 ENQA (Peter Williams) replied to a number of the questions raised by the Board. The paper reported on the practicalities of the register committee and was not intended to cover all points of implementation. He agreed that transparency would be vital and it would be clarified in the text that government observers would have access to all information. Further advice would be sought from lawyers on establishing the authority of the register committee as a legal entity. There could not however be any formal link with BFUG, as it was not a legal entity.

It was agreed that:

The register and legal issues related to the register committee would be discussed further at BFUG in March. The report for BFUG would recommend that government representatives took part in the Register Committee as non-voting members.

EUA – Principles of Doctoral Programmes – Lesley Wilson

3.18 EUA (Lesley Wilson) gave an update on the doctorates seminar in Nice and the Working Group final report, on which it was based. EUA had welcomed over 400 delegates to Nice and were almost overwhelmed by the number of emails following an invitation to send comments on the seminar recommendations. BFUG colleagues were thanked for returning 36 questionnaires on the funding of doctoral programmes. Analysis of the results were included in the draft report which would be presented at the BFUG meeting in March, possibly together with draft Communiqué text.

3.19 The seminar had looked at the links between doctoral programmes and research careers, and the importance of encouraging young people to take up research careers. The 10 Salzburg principles were upheld. It was recognised that the third cycle was different from the first two cycles, although they should be implemented in tandem. Most of the issues for the future would be for HEIs to take forward. They included how to organise doctoral programmes within institutions and how professional doctorates might develop.

It was agreed that:

There was not any need to refer to professional doctorates in the Communiqué, although it was an issue for further discussion within a Bologna context.

4.0 Applications to join Bologna Process

Documents: BFUGB14 5 applications to join the Bologna Process

4.1 The Secretariat had now received applications to join the Bologna Process from the Kyrgyz Republic, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and Israel. Kosovo was also expected to apply. The Chair (Peter Greisler) invited the Council of Europe (Sjur Bergan) to present the case for each applicant country.

4.3 There was support for the Secretariat's recommendation that the Kyrgyz Republic was not eligible for consideration as it was not a signatory of the European Cultural Convention.

4.4 The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was only recognised as a separate state by Turkey. Cyprus was already a member of the Bologna Process. This suggested BFUG should not recommend acceptance of the application from Northern Cyprus.

4.5 Israel also was not a signatory of the European Cultural Convention. This suggested the application should be rejected, although there might be scope to increase engagement with Israel, through policy dialogues and observer status as conferences.

4.6 The position of Kosovo was more complex, as it was de facto being governed by the international community: negotiations about its status were ongoing. Kosovo had previously applied to join the Bologna Process in 2005, but had been turned down. BFUG might wish to consider whether some alternative form of membership might be appropriate, to avoid Kosovo being isolated within the EHEA.

4.7 In discussion the following points were made:

The EU Commission (Peter van der Hijden) raised the question whether a new category of membership might be considered in the future.

To ensure the process did not become unmanageable, access to BFUG and working groups should be restricted to BFUG members. Observer status could be given to a limited number of countries to attend ministerial conferences.

There was broad agreement that Kosovo might be presented to BFUG as a special case. HEIs in Kosovo were part of EUA and did take part in the Tempus programme.

It was agreed that:

The Council of Europe (Sjur Bergan), in conjunction with the Secretariat, would prepare a paper on all the applications, on which to base the discussion at BFUG.

5.0 Preparation for London

Documents: BFUGB14 4 London Communiqué and update on Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education 17-18 May 2007

5.1 The Secretariat (Ann McVie) gave an update of progress against the agreed timetable for producing the Communiqué. A draft would be ready for BFUG in March. The drafting group would then circulate revised text to BFUG by email for further comments. The final draft would be presented to BFUG in April.

5.2 A draft invitation to Ministers for the conference would be sent out in February and a copy would be sent to BFUG members. Information would be included about registration via a password protected website. The board was asked to note that no official transport would be provided. The invitation would also make clear the delegation size and composition.

5.3 A draft paper to explain the purpose and format of the panel sessions had been prepared. It was hoped that Ministers would take part in the panel sessions along with other delegates. All delegates would be free to observe Ministers when they were discussing the Communiqué.

5.4 In discussion the following points were made:

ESIB (Nina Gustafsson Åberg) made a number of suggestions. They included reducing the number of possible topics to be discussed under the characteristics of the EHEA, but enhancing the emphasis on the social dimension, and the role of universities not just in employment, but also in business and society.

There was support from the Council of Europe and EUA for Russian interpretation. It would greatly assist the Russian Federation and a number of the newer countries.

Communiqué draft

The Chair (Peter Greisler) lead a short discussion about the draft Communiqué text.

5.5 In discussion the following points were made:

ESIB (Nina Gustafsson Åberg) raised a number of comments about the draft. It would be helpful to re-emphasise that higher education was a public responsibility. More about diversity and the role of students in the Process, mobility and flexible learning paths would be welcome.

Previous communiqués were still valid, hence repetition should be avoided. It would be important to include concrete actions for Ministers, such as the adoption of the Register or the External

Dimension Strategy.

It was agreed that:

The Secretariat would consider the comments raised on the conference programme and the panel session.

The draft Communiqué text would be revised and issued to the Communiqué Drafting Group for any further comments before issue to BFUG.

6.0 Agenda for BFUG10 – 5-6 March 2007

Documents: BFUGB14 6 Draft agenda BFUG10 Berlin 5-6 March 2007

7.0 Updates from EC and Consultative members (oral)

Documents: BFUGB14 7 EURASE Update

The Council of Europe – Sjur Bergan

7.1 The Council of Europe (Sjur Bergan) reported that two events had taken place since the last meeting: Ministerial Conference on reforming HE in South East Europe – Strasbourg 27-28 November 2006 and the Ministerial Conference on reforming HE in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – Strasbourg 12-13 December 2006. The events had been arranged to help those countries prepare for the London Conference.

ESIB - Nina Gustafsson Åberg

7.2 ESIB (Nina Gustafsson Åberg) reported that a new Chair and executive committee had been appointed and the Secretariat had been informed. They would start in February and be in position for one and a half years which would provide good continuity. The ESIB student convention was due to take place in March in Berlin.

EURASHE – Stephan Delplace

7.3 EURASHE (Stephan Delplace) reported that there had been some problems with collecting data for a survey on employability, but it was hoped to have the results before the end of March.

EU Commission – Peter van der Hijden

7.4 The EU Commission Peter van der Hijden reported that the document 'From Bergen to London' had been updated.

8.0 Any other business

8.1 The Council of Europe (Sjur Bergan) proposed the Secretariat contact the member countries that had not attended the last two BFUG meetings to ask about attendance at the ministerial conference.

Georgia (Lela Maisuradze) suggested that new country members might be asked to report on the assistance they had received from other members. This would illustrate what action had been taken in response to the comment on capacity building in the Bergen Communiqué.

It was agreed that the newer countries would be invited to address this aspect in any contributions they provided for the general Secretariat report.

9.0 Date and place of next meeting

3 April 2007, Berlin (provisional)

9.1 A decision would be made following BFUG in March and confirmed by email.

Yvonne Clarke
Bologna Secretariat