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BFUG MEETING

Sofia (Bulgaria), 24-25 April 2018

Minutes

0. List of Participants

Delegation	Last name	First name
Albania	Pustina	Linda
Andorra	Martínez Ramírez	María del Mar
Austria	Bacher	Gottfried
Austria	Dulmovits	Stephan
Azerbaijan	Bayramov	Shahin
Belarus	Betenya	Elena
Belarus	Rytau	Aliaksandr
Belgium fl.	Soenen	Magalie
Belgium fl.	Vercruysse	Noel
Belgium fr.	Hollela	Caroline
BFUG Secretariat	Profit	Françoise
BFUG Secretariat	Saad	Mariana
BFUG Secretariat	Steinmann	Marina
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Duric	Aida
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Maric	Petar
Bulgaria	Marinkova	Diana
Bulgaria Co-chair	Radonova	Ivana
Bulgaria	Yotova-Bakalova	Yana
Business Europe	Seling	Irene
Council of Europe	Bergan	Sjur
Croatia	Tecilazić Goršić	Ana
Cyprus	Papoulas	Andreas
Czech Republic	Gondkova	Karolina
Czech Republic	Trojanova	Lucie
Denmark	Ulf-Møller	Maria
Education International	Copeland	Robert
Education International	Roman	Agnes
ENQA	Kelo	Maria
EQAR	Dittrich	Karl
EQAR	Tück	Colin
Estonia	Pukk	Janne

ESU	Šušnjar	Aleksandar
ESU	Sundberg	Caroline
EUA	Gaebel	Michael
EUA	Wilson	Lesley
EURASHE	Karpíšek	Michal
EURASHE	Lauwick	Stephane
Euridyce	Crosier	David
European Commission	Debiais Sainton	Vanessa
European Commission	Engels-Perenyi	Klara
EUROSTUDENT	Vögtle-Köckeritz	Eva Maria
Finland	Innola	Maija
Finland	Vuorinen	Birgitta
France	Desprésaux	Denis
France	Lagier	Hélène
France	Vice-chair Ott	Marie-Odile
Georgia	Margvelashvili	Maia
Germany	Greisler	Peter
Germany	Lüddeke	Barbara
Germany	Petrikowski	Frank
Holy See	Bechina	Friedrich
Holy See	Rosenbaum	Melanie
Iceland	Vidarsdottir	Una
Ireland	Hennigan	Padraig
Italy	Cinquepalmi	Federico
Italy	Lantero	Luca
Italy	Lucke	Vera
Kazakhstan	Khassenova	Unzeilya
Latvia	Ivsina	Daiga
Latvia	Upite	Linda
Liechtenstein	Miescher	Daniel
Lithuania	Sirkaite	Aurelija
Lithuania	Viliūnas	Giedrius
Luxembourg	Diederich	Léon
Luxembourg	Kox	Corinne
Malta	Sammut-Bonnici	Tanya
Moldova	Velisco	Nadejda
Montenegro	Misovic	Biljana
Montenegro	Perovic	Djurdjica
Norway	Johansson	Toril
Norway	Strøm	Tone Flood
Poland	Banaszak	Bartlomiej
Poland	Boltruszko	Maria
Portugal	Dominginhos	Pedro
Portugal	Martins	Afonso D'Oliveira

Portugal	Queiroz	João
Romania	Haj	Mihai Cezar
Russian Federation	Ganshin	Igor
Serbia	Jocic	Katarina
Serbia Co-chair	Tubic	Bojan
Slovak Republic	Jurkovič	Jozef
Slovenia	Rustja	Erika
Spain	de Lezcano-Mújica	Margarita
Spain	Sainz	Jorge
Sweden	Persson	Martin
Switzerland	Meister	Muriel
TFYROM	Aleksov	Borcho
Ukraine	Zolotaryova	Iryna
UNESCO	Snildal	Andreas
United Kingdom (Scotland)	Thomson	Edward
United Kingdom	Wilkinson	Pamela

Apologies: Armenia, Greece, Hungary, Netherlands, Turkey

1. Welcome and introduction to the meeting

Denitsa Sacheva, Deputy Minister of Education and Science in Bulgaria, opened the meeting and welcomed the BFUG delegates. She underlined that for this meeting, the main task for the BFUG would be to prepare the Paris Ministerial Conference and to pave the way for the future of the EHEA.

Bojan Tubic, Serbian Deputy Minister appointed in March, and the BFUG Vice-chair thanked the Bulgarian Co-chair for hosting this meeting.

2. Adoption of the agenda

Italy suggested removing item 11 (information by the incoming co-chairs) from the agenda. Some Board members proposed discussing the draft Communiqué before the draft BPF (Bologna Policy Forum) Statement.

It was decided to delete item 11 from the agenda, to move the draft BPF Statement to the morning session, and to devote the entire afternoon to the draft Communiqué. With these changes, the agenda was adopted.

3. Feedback of the last meetings

The Co-chair (Bulgaria) gave a short overview of the discussion at the previous BFUG meeting in Sofia and referred to the minutes. Regarding agenda point 4.1., Poland wanted to change the wording regarding the intervention this delegation made in February and proposed to send the complete formulation in writing. Regarding point 3, Albania expressed the view that no decision had been made on the AG3/WG2 proposal. The Co-chair (Bulgaria) announced that even if the minutes had been published, the wording would be revised once more by using "accepted" instead of "adopted".

The Co-chair (Serbia) reported that version 5 of the draft Communiqué and the roadmap had been the main topics at the Board meeting in Belgrade in March. The meeting resulted in a consultation of the Co-chairs with the Belarus delegation related to the AG2 Final Report; and the Belarus strategy had been sent as a reaction thereof.

4. Final presentation of the AG/WG work

4.1. *The 2018 Bologna Process Implementation Report (WG1 Monitoring)*

After the WG1 co-chair (Norway) referred to the full Bologna Process Implementation Report (BPIR) which had been sent to the BFUG, the WG1 co-chair (Eurydice) presented some issues relevant to the discussion of the Communiqué:

The overall picture is improving but challenges remain regarding - the three cycle degree structure (indicators not green in 9 systems), - the national qualifications frameworks (indicators not green in 10 systems), - the Lisbon Recognition Convention (indicators not green in 11 systems), - quality assurance (indicators not green in 16 systems), ECTS (indicators not green in 22 systems), - the Diploma Supplement (indicators not green in 2 systems). Some aspects highlighted were learning and teaching (few countries require the teaching staff to have pedagogical training), ECTS (around one third of the countries should take action to ensure that implementation is based on the 2015 ECTS Users' Guide and this is evaluated in quality assurance processes) and the complex picture of short cycle programmes within the EHEA. Thus, clarification would be needed as proposed in the draft Communiqué. The researchers had found little evidence of measures tackling the issues on the social dimension; and the question of values was difficult to handle for this BPIR.

The BFUG thanked the group and the data collectors for the BPIR. Education International suggested looking in more detail into academic freedom and other issues connected with values.

On request, the WG1 co-chair (Eurydice) explained that the slides referred to the number of systems which have not yet implemented the respective commitments; as for key commitments, everything should be fully implemented by now. Regarding values, he explained that it has been taken into account where these issues are covered in national legislation, but that this is not sufficient to cover the issue. The complex nature of this question would be more difficult to tackle with by a reduced report. He proposed to take this issue forward in the next meeting of WG1, before further discussions at the next Board meeting in July 2018. In addition, effects of funding of higher education and forms of governance would be worth to be looked at in more depth.

4.2. *Proposal for a 2018-2020 Bologna Process Implementation Report (WG1 Monitoring)*

The WG1 co-chair (Norway) explained that there was no new document for this meeting, but that for the BFUG meeting in September, a proposal including new Terms of Reference would be drafted by WG1 at its meeting in June.

4.3. *Final Report and recommendations from AG3 (Dealing with non-implementation) including the joint proposal WG2 (Implementation)/AG3 (Dealing with non-implementation)*

The Co-chair (Bulgaria) reminded the BFUG of the previous agreement to adopt the peer support approach and the terms of reference (Section II part 1 and 2 of the new integrated document) during this very meeting. She stressed the need of focusing interventions on clear suggestions, and explained that the BFUG would start the discussion with the proposed Terms of Reference, and afterwards adopt the other parts of the document accordingly. She recalled that additionally, a decision on the annexes to the Communiqué was needed.

The AG3 co-chair (Iceland) presented the AG3 final report with Section I (AG3), II (AG3/WG2) and III (WG 1) and announced an explanatory note to be added underlining that all information in Section III derived from the BPIR. She explained that written comments had been received, that a meeting with France had taken place, and that the final version was based on all these and has been drafted by the WG2 co-chair (B fl.) and the AG3 chairs for this very meeting.

The WG2 co-chair (B fl.) underlined that the thematic peer groups are very different from BFUG WGs, and members could also be institutions, experts etc. He underlined that the concept of reversed peer review is included in the guiding notes (but that the wording is different as requested by the Board and BFUG members before); and that guiding notes are only guiding and not prescriptive. It is up to the peer groups to fix the details according to their needs.

Austria proposed trusting in the work of the future peer groups and their ability to follow the intentions described in the guiding notes. EUA suggested starting work now and adjusting the procedure based on experiences made whenever necessary. Germany wanted to delete the link from credits to all three cycles, as the 3rd cycle in many countries is not linked to a range of credits. Albania suggested including

on p. 7 that the BFUG meeting in February did not adopt a final document, and expressed the view that indicators should be reviewed. Several delegations welcomed the compromise worked out by WG2 and AG3. Many of them supported keeping "insufficient progress", while others proposed modifications like "only some progress", "lack of progress", or "without tangible progress".

The WG2 co-chair (B fl.) underlined that even countries that are doing well must also be open to be criticised and that it is up to the peer groups and the BICG to see about the criteria for "insufficient progress", while it is up to the BFUG to draw conclusions. Italy supported the comments made by Albania and added: concerning procedures, sending invitations for BICG membership before the terms of reference was formally adopted can be questioned. The cyclic procedure was not adopted and there was no consensus on establishing an intermediate layer of decision to report to the BFUG. The Council of Europe underlined that the proposal is intended to improve implementation, where challenges are identified, thanks to the peer support.

The AG3 co-chair (Iceland) explained that the document does not include any proposal for an intermediate layer between the BFUG and the peer groups. It stresses rather that every decision will be taken by the BFUG. How to measure progress and how to define "insufficient progress" should be left to the peer groups to discuss and present to the BFUG. The peer groups will be guided by the BFUG and should take ownership of the way they work.

The Co-chair (Bulgaria) thanked all delegations for their comments and concluded that the document needs to be modified as regards the use of ECTS: it should make clear that credits are not used everywhere for the third cycle. The Terms of Reference were adopted with the current wording, though alternative proposals had been made for "insufficient".

4.4. Composition of the initial "Bologna Implementation Coordination Group" (BICG)

The Co-chair (Bulgaria) reported that Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Spain as well as the European Commission, EUA, EURASHE and Education International had expressed their interest in being part of the BICG.

The WG2 co-chair (B fl.) proposed having three countries (Austria as former WG2 co-chair and one of the BFUG Co-chairs in the second half of 2018, Bulgaria as current BFUG Co-chair, and Croatia as 2020 BFUG Co-chair), and the European Commission in the group, and calling on other European organisations to agree on one representative. One of the WG1 co-chairs could become an affiliated member, and Iceland could be asked to become a member.

Iceland responded to be willing to participate only if the BFUG explicitly would ask for this. During this discussion, Italy and Albania expressed interest to be part of the group. EURASHE wanted to include more than one stakeholder representative. The Council of Europe expressed the view that countries should build the majority of the group and include a fair range of countries. It argued that Italy should be included as the future BFUG Co-Chair and as a delegation that had expressed strong scepticism toward the model originally proposed, even if the Council of Europe did not share Italy's view of the model. Italy recalled the Terms of Reference with 5 members agreed and suggested including a non-EU country. The Co-chair (Bulgaria) welcomed the idea of including a non-EU country and the flexibility of Albania and Iceland in this respect. Romania reminded the BFUG of the proceedings, and the tradition of nominating members of groups before adopting their terms of reference.

The AG3 co-chair (Iceland) underlined that the initial composition of 5 members will be extended once the chair of each peer group will be included.

After further discussions, the Co-chair (Serbia) concluded that the initial group would have six members: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia (as current or future Co-chairs), Italy (as future Vice-chair), the European Commission, and EUA/EURASHE sharing one seat. Albania, Cyprus and other interested countries were invited to volunteer for chairing one of the peer groups in order to become member of the BICG. The preparatory group would draft letters to all countries and organisations; and a decision about the full composition of the BICG will be taken by the BFUG in September.

4.4. Final Report and recommendations from AG2 (Support for the Belarus Roadmap)

The AG2 co-chair (Holy See) recalled the agreement to invite Belarus to propose an action plan, and the AG2 co-chair (Germany) welcomed the proposal sent by Belarus. He asked the BFUG to decide how further progress should be monitored, e.g. by the usual WG1 procedure or by another tool.

Belarus explained that the paper describes the transition from the roadmap period to the regular procedures of the BFUG. The country wanted to follow the normal procedure with BFUG support, and participation in peer groups. To be realistic, the perspective goes beyond 2020. Russia appreciated the efforts from Belarus, Austria welcomed the commitments included, and both supported the proposed strategy.

The Co-chair (Bulgaria) concluded that the Belarus proposal is adopted.

5. Draft Bologna Policy Forum Statement

The AG1 co-chair (France) presented the draft Bologna Policy Forum Statement which integrated comments received on the previous version.

The Council of Europe asked for details regarding the support mentioned in the first line, or for modification of the wording used. In the first sentence of the third paragraph, stakeholders should be mentioned in addition to countries. In the fifth paragraph, "employability for all our students" should be amended with "and graduates". In the final paragraph, reference should be made to a "global policy dialogue" (instead of global working group), because this wording is used in the draft Communiqué. The Holy See called for clarification of both the dialogue and the methods proposed to partners in this exercise. EUA in general asked for more practical details about how things will be carried out and proposed to replace "this approach" by "similar approaches" in the third paragraph. The European Commission supported the request of becoming more specific about the global dialogue or group; and asked for deleting "(Erasmus Mundus)" in the last sentence. Belgium (fl.) highlighted the difference between the draft Bologna Policy Forum Statement and the draft Communiqué and underlined that ministers should mandate the BFUG to establish a working group or another method for the dialogue in between the conferences/fora.

The AG1 co-chair (France) referred to the last lines of the text explaining the approach for the political dialogue and underlined that most suggestions made would be easy to take on board.

6./7. Draft for the 2018 Ministerial Communiqué

The BFUG Vice-chair, as Drafting Committee chair, explained that all comments from countries and organisations on the previous version had been taken into account for drafting version 7.0. This version had been sent ten days before this meeting in order to allow consultations on national/organisational level and to come back with comments on the very day of this BFUG meeting.

The European Commission explained that common comments by a number of organisations and a few countries on version 7.0 had been sent to all BFUG delegations as an attempt of saving time for the discussion during this meeting. Many of the changes were of stylistic nature, to strengthen the messages in the document. Belgium (fl.) expressed the view that sending this document (without track changes) was not the best procedure; although suggestions within the text are valuable. ENQA referred to the need of taking joint ownership. The Council of Europe pointed out that many delegations had several times submitted a number of comments which had not resulted in substantial changes. It expressed the view that draft 7.0 was still not attractive, clear and readable; and that therefore, a number of delegations had agreed on these common comments.

After the BFUG Vice-chair presented the structure of the document, and numerous comments were made on the procedure, the style of the text and on the wording of specific sentences; it was decided to discuss the draft Communiqué paragraph by paragraph on the basis of the consolidated draft including the comments by a number of countries and organisations. The decisions taken by the BFUG are reflected in version 8.0 which is attached to these minutes [and had been sent to all delegations on 27 April].

The BFUG Co-chairs asked WG2 and AG3 to provide the necessary documents indicated as annexes: the proposal for "Support for the Implementation of Key Bologna Commitments", and the

proposal for the revised Overarching Framework of Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

8. Programme for the Ministerial Conference 2018

The BFUG Secretariat [presented](#) the programme currently foreseen for the meeting.

9. Update on the Ministerial Conference 2018

The BFUG Secretariat [presented](#) the agenda and practical information concerning the Ministerial Conference in Paris in May 2018.

10. Draft Reports from the Consultative Members for the 2018 Ministerial Conference

BFUG members took note of the information provided.

11. Information by the incoming Co-chairs

Switzerland and Austria confirmed the information given during the BFUG Board meeting and announced to send invitations and practical information in due time. A presentation on the national higher education system in [Austria](#) and in [Switzerland](#) is available on the website.

12. AOB

Austria shortly presented the [network of ombudsmen](#) and announced it would come back to this topic during the next working period of the BFUG.

Poland reminded the BFUG members of the invitation to a national Erasmus+ event which had been distributed by the BFUG Secretariat.