

BFUG Board (CZ) 19_2
Issue date: 10 February 2009

**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF THE BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP
PRAGUE, 13 JANUARY 2009**

Draft Minutes

Welcome and introduction to the meeting

The Chair, Věra Šťastná, welcomes all participants.

Apologies had been received from Toril Johansson (Norway), who is replaced by Rolf Larsen, and from Sjur Bergan (Council of Europe), who could not attend due to illness but had sent his comments on the communiqué by e-mail.

The Board agrees with the proposal of the Chair to have the meeting recorded.

1. Adoption of the agenda

Documents: BFUG Board (CZ) 18_1a [draft agenda]

BFUG Board (CZ) 18_1b [draft annotated agenda]

The agenda is adopted.

**2. Minutes of the BFUG Board meeting, Bled, 9 June 2008 and
outcome of proceedings of the BFUG meeting, Paris, 14-15 October 2008**

Documents: BFUG Board (CZ) 18_2a [Bled BFUG Board minutes]

BFUG (CZ) 15_2a [BFUG Paris draft outcome of proceedings]

The Bled BFUG Board minutes are approved.

The Chair asks to take note of the part of the outcome of proceedings of the BFUG, where "drawing up a list of decisions to be taken under Czech Presidency" is mentioned, referring to recognition. She suggests to incorporate the recommendations of the ENIC-NARIC report on recognition into the communiqué and/or the Beyond 2010 report.

EUA (Lesley Wilson) and ESU (Ligia Deca) point out that they would prefer the outcome of proceedings to be more detailed. In particular they would like to see more clearly which position had been taken by which delegation.

The Secretariat stresses that the outcome of proceedings is a synthesis taking careful account of the comments provided by various countries and consultative members, and though it was at times difficult to summarize the discussions when no conclusions were drawn, it reflects the main outcomes of the meeting. The Board is reminded that during the Portuguese Presidency the choice was made to report on the BFUG discussions in the format of "outcomes of proceedings", which was considered more useful than verbatim reports. For the Board meetings, the Secretariat provides more detailed "minutes" with the purpose of informing all BFUG members. Furthermore, when the draft outcomes were distributed some participants had provided comments which mostly had already been incorporated in the text. If participants still have comments, they are welcome to provide them in writing. The

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Secretariat will take on board the suggestion formulated by the European Commission (Peter van der Hijden) that in cases where no conclusion is reached, more detail will be provided in the outcome of proceedings on which delegations are in favour and which against certain positions. In any case the outcome of proceedings document and/or minutes should reflect the content of the discussion. These are documents for the group, for the whole discussion and should contribute to the consensus.

Finally, it should be noted that the outcome of proceedings of the BFUG is just a point of information on the agenda of the Board meeting. It will be put on the agenda for approval at the next BFUG meeting. For this purpose the Secretariat will repeat their request to the BFUG members to provide remaining comments on the outcome of proceedings in writing.

3. Information by the Czech Presidency

Document: BFUG Board (CZ) 18_3 [Kazakhstan request]

Applications to join the Bologna Process

- Kazakhstan has repeated its request for membership of the Bologna Process. It is not eligible according to the Berlin criteria for membership, as was reaffirmed by the Ministers' decision in London. Kazakhstan, and other non-European countries that have expressed interest, will be invited to the Bologna Policy Forum by the hosts, also on behalf of the Czech Presidency.
- San Marino withdrew its intention to apply, Monaco and Belarus asked for the documents for application and received them with the request to send them back to the Secretariat by 31 December 2008. Up to the present none of these countries have sent their application yet.

The Secretariat is asked to prepare an overview of the requests for the BFUG.

- ESU refers to the discussion at the BFUG in Paris, where the fear was voiced that an invitation to the Bologna Policy Forum could give the wrong signal. Couldn't these countries see this invitation as a first step to membership in the Bologna Process? EURASHE (Stephan Delplace) is concerned that countries might get the impression that to be invited to the Bologna Policy Forum a country has to ask for membership in the Bologna Process first.

The Chair suggests to take up this issue under item 8 of the agenda.

Presidency programme

An overview of the events during the Czech Presidency is provided in the files for the meeting.

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Independent assessment

Regarding the *Independent Assessment of the Bologna Process* Christian Tauch (EC) signals that CHEPS is not able to make the deadline for the meeting of the Advisory Committee scheduled for 24 February 2009; he suggests linking the meeting of the Advisory Committee to the March BFUG.

4. Draft agenda of the BFUG meeting, Prague, 12-13 February 2009

Document: BFUG (CZ) 15_1a [BFUG 15 draft agenda]

The Chair introduces the draft agenda indicating that most of the time is intended to be devoted to the draft communiqué. Some reports of working groups are likely to be finalised at the first BFUG meeting in Prague (items 5-9 on agenda). The Secretariat reports that, in general, the work of the working and coordination groups is progressing well. Stocktaking is likely to be hampered as not all national reports have been received.

The suggestion is made to merge item 10 with item 4, as reporting on the social dimension is part of stocktaking.

The work programme 2009-2010 is on the agenda, as it is evident that some activities will continue. These actions can be included in the work programme up to the meeting in Budapest and Vienna. The Secretariat suggests not to write a new work programme but rather to extend the calendar and add events already scheduled.

The discussion that followed concentrated on the following issues:

- Nature of the work programme: extended calendar/light weight programme/official work programme?

Chair and EUA point out that some action lines need urgent and immediate continuation (e.g. qualifications framework, recognition) and furthermore, for the Independent Assessment a BFUG seminar has been scheduled already.

EC and the Vice-Chair argue that work programmes have to be established (shortly) after the Ministerial Conference. It is therefore dangerous for the BFUG to decide on them before the Ministerial meeting. Sweden (Myrna Smitt) considers the 2009 Ministerial Conference to be the starting point for an extended work programme to be decided on at the BFUG meeting, 28-29 September 2009.

The Chair points out that it was not the intention to adopt a formal work programme. We need something "light" now, which can be adopted and elaborated further after the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Ministerial Conference.

- Timing of the work programme: 2010, 2012 or 2020?

Norway (Rolf Larsen) suggests that papers for the BFUG in February should raise the question whether the work programme should last until 2010 or 2012.

Sweden and ESU emphasize that the Process should not take a pause between 2009 and 2010.

The Chair proposes to ask colleagues from Hungary and Austria to clarify their intentions.

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France (Hélène Lagier) suggests using a work programme beyond 2009, to avoid risks of delay and problems of choosing between 2010 and 2012.

EUA suggests that the Beyond 2010 report could be complemented with facts and figures by EUROSTAT and other groups. Regarding the *beyond 2010 document* the question is asked for whom the report is meant and how it will be dealt with. Will there be a last round of comments possible?

The Chair responds that the report – as all reports provided by BFUG – is meant for Ministers. The new draft of the Beyond 2010 report will take into account comments received. A new round of written comments after the Prague BFUG will be possible, but the paper must move ahead, also in congruence with the Communiqué.

In the light of recent progress, EUA suggests renaming item 18 as “EQAR: results of first application round”.

Regarding the items 5-10, *reporting of working groups*, it is agreed that Chairs of working groups, who will present the reports, need to be concise and within strict time limits. They have already been asked to present executive summaries in the report.

The Chair concludes that the presentations need to focus on the main recommendations/key messages/highlights and to remain within 5 minutes with help of 2 slides. Slides should be sent in advance. We should avoid discussing the issues twice, once when reporting and once under the discussion on the draft Communiqué.

The Vice-Chair reports that the steering group on data collection and the working group on employability can come up with challenging conclusions, which could lead to discussions that will take more time than 5 minutes. It appears for instance that higher education is underfinanced, for education itself, not for the research part of it. The data collection report may influence the policy orientations of Bologna Process to a larger extent than we think at this stage. Unfortunately the report on data collection will come last minute.

The Chair concludes that the reporting on working groups is most relevant for the Communiqué, the Beyond 2010 report and the future work programme. For the BFUG meeting the discussion should focus on the Communiqué. Discussions which may arise from the reporting will have to be planned in when preparing the BFUG.

5. Update on the 2007-2009 Bologna work programme

The item has been concluded in agenda item 4.

6. Bologna work programme

The item has been concluded in agenda item 4.

7. Bologna Beyond 2010 Report and Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué

Documents: BFUG Board (CZ) 18_7a [Beyond 2010 report of 21/11/08 with comments]
BFUG Board (CZ) 18_7b [“zero draft” Communiqué]

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BFUG Board (CZ) 18_7c [Communiqué roadmap]

The Vice-Chair introduces the zero draft Communiqué and explains the logic behind it. It is a concise, political document with operational objectives, drafted in consistency with the Beyond 2010 report.

The zero draft communiqué first describes what has been going on since 1999, the major achievements. That part concludes with stating that the Bologna Declaration is reaching further than 2010. What has been said in 1999 is still valid today. Then it moves to new challenges: demographics (huge reduction of student numbers – reason for LLL, etc.) and the social dimension (an inclusive EHEA, attract more students into HE, also from non-traditional backgrounds, focus on access *and* completion).

It ends with operational targets to tackle internationalisation and enhance mobility.

A much debated issue in the BFUG is classification/typology - a number of projects are under way, which will lead to ranking of some kind. Funding is another challenging issue. Both are dealt with in a way taking into account the sensibilities.

The present document is still too long for a political document. So we should not add items to it, but rather take items out.

General remarks

The zero draft is considered a good basis to start with (France, Sweden, EC, Holy See).

The *sequence* in the document was considered not in line with the oral introduction and unclear. After discussion it was concluded to change the sequence and move the par. 13-15 up, then concentrate on new actions on mobility, LLL and social inclusion etc. What are overriding concepts for par.20-23?

Par. 22 on the current financial crisis and its implications for funding will be moved up.

It is agreed that the document should remain political and not go into administrative details on the implementation.

The European Commission recommends that the Communiqué should be *attractive for Ministers*, demonstrating how the Bologna Process responds to societal needs: qualifications for the future, to which LLL and mobility are answers. In April the financial crisis will be felt and therefore it should be mentioned that investing in HE is a response to this.

ESU suggests bringing in the issue of social dimension earlier in the text and not only as a tool to realise other policy objectives.

Norway points out that the zero draft is too vague, too long, and not political enough. Globalisation should move up, rather call it "internationalisation". For HE worldwide mobility is important but do we need 5 paragraphs (7-12) on it?

Norway and France suggested that the Communiqué should put more emphasis on the relation between HE and research.

The Vice-Chair announces that in the next version of the Communiqué more stress should be laid on the current financial crisis and the necessity of investment in higher education

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(education and research)? Benchmarks will be made clearer, and proposed not only for mobility but also for other areas.

A discussion on the value of *benchmarks* took place, for which data are needed which sometimes are not available (yet). There is agreement that, generally speaking, benchmarks can set directions and structure work.

Nevertheless benchmarks should remain motivating i.e. politically interesting and achievable, for a variety of countries.

On the issue of which policy areas are suited for benchmarking.

LLL, equitable participation to HE (in the line of the London Communiqué: student body entering, participating and completing HE should reflect the diversity of the society), mobility. EUA suggests to explore the possibility of benchmarking for HE systems, for instance if they are able to respond to certain challenges.

Other suggestions include: funding, relevance of qualifications (Vice-Chair), elements of institutional autonomy (EUA), higher education attainment including for the third cycle (EC and Norway).

Benchmarks can probably be clustered (EC).

Benchmarks are not the only way of setting targets. We should think of different ways to approach the issue (Norway).

A benchmark could be made for funding education. In EU context there is one for research, not for education (EC).

Different elements of autonomy could be benchmarked; typologies sometimes reflect the impact of HEIs on governmental policies (EUA)

It is agreed that benchmarks will be proposed in the new version of the Communiqué for discussion by BFUG.

Regarding par. 20-21, the question remained whether and/or how the classification/issue should be included in the Communiqué, should it be considered/monitored in the framework of the Bologna Process and how it relates to other processes (e.g. OECD).

Par. 25 and 11 indicate co-operation with other Ministries. Sweden wonders whether this should be mentioned in a Communiqué of Education Ministers, as this exceeds their competencies.

Paragraph by paragraph discussion

Detailed comments have been included in the new version of the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué (BFUG (CZ) 15_5a)

8. Update on Ministerial Conference in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve, 28-29 April 2009

The Secretariat informs the Board that the programme of the Ministerial Conference is amended in line with the discussion at the BFUG in Paris. Invitations to the Forum are about to be sent. The Forum is a kind of pilot event. For logistical reasons it will be limited to 20

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delegations from countries outside the EHEA. The invited countries consist of those countries that have been repeatedly expressing interest to cooperate with the Bologna process already in previous time and countries selected from different parts of the world in a concern for geographical balance. The Secretariat will prepare a paper for next BFUG with a proposal for questions that could be discussed at the Forum.

In the invitation letter Ministers are suggested to include in their delegation a representative from their academic community.

ESU, EUA and Holy See point out that at the last BFUG meeting several questions regarding the Forum have been asked to which the answers are still unclear.

The Chair emphasised that the present hosts somehow start with a "pilot" Forum, including countries that asked for invitation but also trying to make sure all UNESCO regions are covered. One cannot speak of "criteria" for invitation; they could not be found. More important is the content of the Forum: what is most interesting? How to proceed further with co-operation outside Europe? The Vice-Chair reminded the Board of the fact that the Forum will start after the adoption of the Communiqué and the formal meeting is closed. Invitations have been handled in a practical way. Countries have been asked to attend the Forum and to cooperate without giving them the perspective of future membership to the Bologna Process. In a few cases interest is solicited, as a region would otherwise not be present.

As the host countries have been repeatedly addressed by non-European countries, wishing to attend the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve meeting, they had to take their responsibility in coordination with the Czech Presidency and come up with a quick and pragmatic solution.

The Chair invites the Secretariat to circulate the new programme of the main conference and documents on the Forum (invitation letter, question paper) to BFUG.

9. Application for hosting the 2012 Ministerial Conference

The Board takes note of the application received from Romania to host Conference and Secretariat. The offer will be included in the agenda of the BFUG.

9. Date and place of next BFUG Board meeting

The Secretariat informs the Board that the BFUG Board meeting scheduled for Monday 23 February 2009 will take place in Ostend at the Belgian coast, which can easily be reached by train from Brussels. The hotel and conference centre are in easy walking distance from each other and the train station. The Board meeting will start 8.30 a.m. and conclude no later than 4 p.m. to enable participants to catch their flights in the evening. Arrivals are expected on Sunday. Sunday evening a dinner will be offered by the hosts in the hotel at 7 p.m. Written information will be provided soon.

As 23 February is in middle of Belgian school holidays, which has an impact on the availability of hotel rooms, Board members are requested to register in time.

10. Any other business

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- The March BFUG meeting is preceded by the EQAR General Assembly and followed by a meeting of advisory committee to the independent assessment (e.g. Friday, 2-4 pm). The researchers will come to Prague.
- Swedish Presidency:
28-29 September 2009 BFUG in Stockholm
Board meeting probably 4 September 2009.

The Chair thanked the participants for the constructive contributions and closed the meeting.