

## CO-CHAIRING OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS BY THE EU PRESIDENCY AND A NON-EU COUNTRY

### Responses to BFUG questionnaire

#### SUMMARY

By 19 August 2009, 37 responses had been received from 18 EU countries (with 2 responses from Belgium and 2 from the UK), 13 non-EU countries, and 4 consultative members.

**Concerning the mode of designating the co-chair, the responses to the questionnaire revealed a clear majority among BFUG members, from both EU and non-EU countries, in favour of applying the alphabetical order while allowing for small adjustments if necessary** (rather than having the non-EU countries choose a specific 6-month period). Turkey introduced a third alternative by suggesting to relate the order of co-chairing the Bologna Process to the accession date (countries that joined the Bologna Process first would then also co-chair first) and/or to the size of the higher education system, as indicated by the number of higher education institutions and/or students.

**Similarly, a clear majority of both EU and non-EU countries opted for a rotating troika of non-EU co-chair countries, replacing the three elected countries on the BFUG Board.** Denmark proposed a combination of the two alternatives by replacing the troika arrangement with a "duo system": instead of the past, present and future chairs and co-chairs, the Board would comprise the present and the incoming chairs and co-chairs (not the outgoing ones) as well as two elected members.

The responses to the questionnaire also showed that there are a number of other questions that still have to be addressed before the co-chairing arrangement can be put into practice.

These questions include:

- the division of tasks between chair, co-chair and vice-chair (see for instance the proposal from Slovenia);
- the starting date (1 January 2010 or 1 July 2010);
- the exact nature of the "small adjustments" to the alphabetical order (e.g. with which country to start and how to move on from there).

## RESPONSES IN DETAIL

1. Mode of designation	
1.a. Alphabetical order	(Armenia), Austria, Belgium/Flemish Community, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, (Italy), Liechtenstein, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Russia, Slovenia, Spain (but starting with Andorra), Switzerland, UK-Engl./NI/Wales, UK-Scotland, Council of Europe, ENQA, ESU
1.b. Order determined by the 19 non-EU countries, allowing each of them to choose a specific 6-month period	Andorra, Belgium/French Community, Georgia, Portugal, Turkey, Ukraine, EURASHE
<p><b>Comments</b></p> <p><b>Andorra:</b> The relationship between countries and the physical location could be helpful. Following this aspect Andorra are interested in co-chairing with Spain the next six-month period. As we know Spain are also interested in co-chairing with Andorra.</p> <p><b>Armenia:</b> In principle the alphabetical order is acceptable but there should be possibility for some changes when necessary.</p> <p><b>Belgium/Flemish Community:</b> Of course small adjustments should be allowed if necessary and justified</p> <p><b>Belgium/French Community:</b> Non-EU countries should be allowed to decide when they are ready to co-chair.</p> <p><b>Bosnia and Herzegovina:</b> We consider the alphabetical order (option 1) is the best for co-chair, because it is the simplest and very transparent arrangement.</p> <p><b>Council of Europe:</b> Should a country inform the Bologna Secretariat that it is not prepared to take on the Co-Chair, the next country in line should be asked to do so, so that the alphabetical rotation simply "moves up". Should this happen, it would of course be important to be informed as early as possible.</p> <p><b>Croatia:</b> It is our opinion that in principle the alphabetical order should be used for determining non-EU co-chair, but that the non-EU countries may make small adjustments if necessary. If there is interest, this may result in EU and non-EU countries discussing the forms of partnerships that may be most fruitful or efficient, thus contributing to overall regional cooperation in higher education.</p> <p><b>Czech Republic:</b> We cannot imagine anything else applied in principal than the alphabetical order. However, we suggest a small amendment which has very pragmatic reasons. As Armenia is an elected member of the BFUG Board for the present period it could be reasonable to start the list of the non-EU countries with Armenia as the first non EU co-chair. Additionally to Armenia's experience from the work at the Board it would also enable Albania to stay at the Board for three periods and before chairing benefiting from the experience with the work at the Board (the starting country has "only" two periods and if we start with Armenia next to the continuity it would enjoy 4 periods – together with the present mandate - in one round). See the annex.</p>	

**Denmark:** However, small adjustments should be possible according to individual wishes from the countries.

**Estonia:** In general, alphabetical order could be mode of action but it can be adjusted to the proposals for changes of non-EU countries if necessary.

**Finland:** Small adjustments could be made if necessary.

**France:** Since a pre-determined order has already been adopted for EU Member States, the same should go for non-EU States as well.

**Germany:** Small adjustments in the order should be possible

**Hungary:** Applying in principle the alphabetical order but allowing small adjustments if necessary.

**Italy:** The best option would be the "compromise" one: the alphabetical order modified according to specific needs that the non EU countries might raise.

**Liechtenstein:** I support the compromise "Applying in principle the alphabetical order but allowing small adjustments if necessary" as mentioned above.

**Netherlands:** The Netherlands would strongly prefer to designate the non EU-chair in an alphabetical order with the possibility that, in case there is a political delicate issue, a pragmatic solution can be found.

**Poland:** It is a simple and practical proposition.

**Portugal:** Should leave the decision to the 19 countries. Whatever the solution, this must be solved for the years to come by the next BFUG meeting.

**Slovenia:** Alphabetical order unless the non-EU countries propose something else. Their proposals should be decisive

**Spain:** We would like to co-chair the Bologna Process with Andorra for many reasons. Andorra has told us that they would also like to co-chair with us the Bologna Process. Alphabetical order but starting with ANDORRA will be also fine for us.

**Switzerland:** Small adjustments should be allowed if necessary.

**Turkey:** This new implementation of Co-chairing of the Bologna Process by the EU Presidency together with non-EU countries is conceived as a fair implementation by Turkey: We believe that this type of Presidency implementation will definitely provide a balance between the member and non-member countries on the BFUG board.

On the other hand, we have some concerns about the mode of designation of the non-EU co-chairing. Co-chairing would lead the non-EU

country to share its experiences in its implementation of the Bologna Process. Therefore we propose some other options as an alternative. Alphabetical order might seem as a fair type of designation at first sight, but the alphabetical list brings the new and relatively less experienced Bologna member states to the closest dates for co-chairing. This, we believe, will not be an effective and fruitful way of providing a strong Presidency.

We suggest the list is prepared on the base of full membership dates to the Bologna Process, the oldest non-EU members having the closest Co-chairing dates on the list. We preferred this option in which countries became full members at the same year may choose a specific six months period. Late members might choose later presidency periods among themselves.

The other indicator in assigning the mode of designation for co-chairing might be the number of higher education institutions and/or the number of students in higher education in Bologna member states. The highest number among non-EU members addresses more individuals within the framework of Bologna Process and might have the early presidency period. This type of co-presidency might help for the co-chairing country with its high number of Bologna Process addressees by a swift adaptation and full implementation of the Process.

The last option might be a lottery among the non-EU countries for closer Presidency.

**ENQA:** allowing for small adjustments if necessary

**EURASHE:** In my opinion it is only fair that they make their own choice, possibly in consultation with the EU countries, which will everyone make feel more comfortable.

## 2. Board Composition

2.a. Rotating troika of non-EU co-chair countries, replacing the three elected countries

Andorra, Austria, Belgium/Flemish Community, Belgium/French Community, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Montenegro, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, UK-Engl./NI/Wales, UK-Scotland, Council of Europe, ENQA, ESU, EURASHE

2.b. Keeping the present arrangement

Estonia, France, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Netherlands, Spain,

### Comments

**Belgium/Flemish Community:** Co-chairing without being a member of the board is an empty box.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina:** Our experience and opinion from the first co-chairing (BFUG meeting in Sarajevo) is that participation of co-chairing country in the Board is very important. Co-chairing countries should have representatives in the Board.

**Council of Europe:** Should a country inform the Bologna Secretariat that it is not prepared to take on the Co-Chair (see above), it would also be understood that it gives up its place in the Board troika.

**Croatia:** We strongly support regional balance in the governance of the Bologna process, but care also needs to be taken to ensure equal chance for participation for all countries. If the number of EU and non-EU countries in the Bologna process is taken into consideration, the system of "two troikas" would make the EU countries relatively underrepresented. Perhaps a third system may be devised. One possible option may be that the Board consists of the EU troika, two of the non-EU co-chair countries, and one country elected from all the countries of the Bologna Process (essentially a 3+2+1 system)

**Czech Republic:** The Secretariat suggestion to start with the co-chairing since 1 January 2010, i.e. with a new EU-troika is a very relevant point but if we agree that the "details of co-chairing" of the Process should be well discussed and agreed in advance and become "rules" for future period of the Process we might need more than only one BFUG meeting. The new composition will lead to changes in the composition of the Board – the composition of the Board becomes mandatory. Now it will be composed only of co-chairs and consultative members. It is definitely a good platform which will bring the co-chairs together and make them think about the Process in a consistent way which enables smooth continuous leadership of the Process. (See also below). All crucial changes should be agreed by the Ministers. The first ministerial conference is in Vienna-Budapest in March 2010. This is reasonable time and the new co-chairing system would start since 1 July 2010 with the new period of Bologna. In case we start with the model suggested by the Secretariat and we stick to the late spring term of ministerial meetings (which proved to be better solution than the September/autumn one) the EU-troika does not match anyway. And the next ministerial meeting is in 2015 and could be expected in the middle of the Troika: Italy, Latvia, and Luxembourg. See the annex. Unless shifting the ministerial meeting to the second half of the respective year we do not stick to EU-troika period. The date for the Romania conference is firmly stated in the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué – 11-12 March 2015. For 2018 is probably not most appropriate solution to plan 2018 conference in autumn as they are only two years between 2018 and 2020 conference. From the reason of time factor and organisational planning as well our preference goes to start the co-chairing system after the Vienna-Budapest meeting, since 1 July 2010.

**Denmark:** DK suggests that the troika-system is replaced by a "duosystem" consisting only of the present and the coming presidency/Board countries (and not the outgoing presidency country), which would then allow for an additional two elected members of the Board. The composition of the Board would then be:

2 members: The present EU-presidency country and the non-EU "Bologna-partner-country"

2 members: The coming EU-presidency country and the non-EU "Bologna-partner-country"

2 members: Elected as per the present election procedure

**Estonia:** Generally, participation in the Board should be on a voluntary basis. But we might opt also for first alternative if non-EU countries prefer that.

**France:** The current elections for the BFUG Board should be kept in order to allow some sort of flexibility and a free voice among the BFUG to choose its representative members for the Board every year.

**Germany:** The co-chairing country needs to attend the BFUG meetings in any case. A rotating troika of non EU co-chair countries is the logical consequence.

**Poland:** I am not sure of the effectiveness of the proposition. It is sure that the composition of the Board will be adjusted to the co-chairing arrangement, but I have no better proposition.

**Slovenia:** There is clear added-value in new arrangement that should result in a more balanced involvement, commitment and influence of EU and non-EU countries. The abolishment of existing system of elections that favoured EU countries, more active and more popular countries or individuals is also positive. The system should be implemented after the Ministerial decision in 2010.

**Switzerland:** Also for practical reasons, the co-chairing non-EU country should in any case be a member of the Board.

**Turkey:** We support the rotation of troika of EU Presidency countries should be complemented by a rotating troika of non-EU co-chair countries for the sake of creating a balance between EU and non-EU countries on the Board. On the other hand, the application should not be on alphabetical order, but on the above mentioned criteria such as full membership date, or number of higher education institutions and/or the number of students in higher education.

**ESU:** It seems to be the solution of most political fairness. If a considerable difficulty occurs in perspective of a specific chair/co-chair-team, this shall be discussed in the BFUG Board and the BFUG. It shall be possible that in such a situation the BFUG could decide on an alternative solution. We therewith argue for option 1 with inclusion of the possible compromise.  
In case Belarus/Monaco/San Marino join the Bologna Process, these should be added at the end of the list of the co-chairing countries as suggested in the table above.

#### Other comments or suggestions

**Belgium/Flemish Community:** Both new arrangements should be implemented from the same date (from July 1<sup>st</sup> 2010).

**Czech Republic:** In section A) which deals with tasks of the co-chairs we suggest small amendment of the second paragraph  
In principle, the EU-Chair takes the financial commitment to organise the necessary BFUG and Board meetings, unless the co-chairs agree otherwise, and functions as Presidency contact point for the Bologna Secretariat.  
The commitment of the Presidency country to organise the necessary BFUG and Board meetings should serve as the guarantee for having the meeting. Where to hold the particular meeting and funding could be a matter of mutual agreement. We have already experienced several models:  
Meetings organised in the Presidency country and by the Presidency and the Presidency country paid (using the Presidency money) – most common model  
The Presidency country co-funded the meeting in a non-EU country (Slovenia and B-H cooperation on Sarajevo BFUG meeting in 2008) – rather exceptional, however, an example of a good practice  
Meeting in non- EU country – if we remember rightly this was the case of collaboration when Norway held the Secretariat (before Bergen)  
Other arrangements can definitely be added – e.g. ad hoc 2001 BFUG meeting in Brussels before the Prague conference; or the meeting of BFUG Board in 2009 hosted by the Benelux countries and chaired by the Presidency.

We believe that some basic “details of co-chairing” should be stated in advance (e.g. as the above mentioned commitment of the EU-presidency to organise necessary BFUG and BFUG Board meetings). The rules should not be as soft as simple statement that the co-chairs change every 6 months. Chairing the Process is not only organising the BFUG and BFUG Board meetings. With the new proposal we will have

in a typical troika period 6 countries involved. We need same bases on which they cooperate to keep consistency in chairing the process. See point E) impact on composition of the Board. The number of Board members should not grow. We should stick to the size we have now. This would lead to the "mandatory" composition: 6 country representatives (two Troikas – EU and non-EU), European Commission, the present consultative members. We will not need elections any longer.

It also brings us to thinking about the role of the hosting country. As suggested and as there is the mutual agreement the hosting country/ies has/have responsibility to manage the Secretariat. Up to now the function of the hosting country has acted as the vice-chair to the Process. With two co-chairs for one 6-months period and 8 -12 co-chairs between two ministerial conferences there is a question if we need a vice chair any longer. In reality already now the vice-chair de facto played the role of Secretary General to the Process. Should then the host country rather serve as Secretary General to the Process between the two ministerial meetings? With rotating chairmanship this would be the firm/stable element. The Secretary general as well as the Secretariat will participate at all meetings of the Board

Note:

We should not take this questionnaire as the only alternatives. If there are other suggestions than these options in the questionnaire from the members states or other members of the BFUG they should be discussed. Namely the non-EU countries' opinions should be carefully taken into account. The evaluation of the new co-chairing structure, incl. the Board and Secretariat mandates should be done before Bucharest and possible adjustments suggested for the ministerial meeting in Bucharest.

#### Annex to the response from the Czech Republic – Models of the Board composition

##### 1) Starting on 1 July 2010

1 July 2010 – 30 June 2012	Romania serving as Secretary General to the Process and has the responsibility for the Secretariat		
1 July – 31 December 2010	Belgium	Armenia	Board: Spain, Belgium, Hungary, Armenia, Albania, EC, CoE, EUA, EURASHE, ESU
1 January - 30 June 2011	Hungary	Albania	Board: Belgium, Hungary, Poland, Armenia, Albania, Andorra, EC, CoE, EUA, EURASHE, ESU
1 July – 31 December 2011	Poland	Andorra	Board: Hungary, Poland, Denmark, Albania, Andorra, Azerbaijan, EC, CoE, EUA, EURASHE, ESU
1 January - 30 June 2012	Denmark	Azerbaijan	Board: Poland, Denmark, Cyprus, Andorra, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, EC, CoE, EUA, EURASHE, ESU
1 July 2012 – 30 June 2015	Xxxxx serving as Secretary General to the Process and has the responsibility for the Secretariat		
1 July – 31 December 2012 */	Cyprus */	Bosnia and Herzegovina */	Board: Denmark, Cyprus, Ireland, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, EC, CoE, EUA, EURASHE, ESU

\*/ These countries will probably already start a new period 2012 – 2015 if not decided otherwise

2) Starting on 1 January 2010

1 July 2009 – 30 June 2010	Benelux-Austria-Hungarian Secretariat and the vice – chair Barbara Weitgruber		
1 January 2010 – 30 June 2010	Spain	Armenia	Board: Sweden, Spain, Belgium, Armenia, Cyprus, Romania, Albania, EC, CoE, EUA, EURASHE, ESU
1 July 2010 – 30 June 2012	Romania serving as Secretary General to the Process and has the responsibility for the Secretariat		
1 July – 31 December 2010	Belgium	Albania	Board: Spain, Belgium, Hungary, Armenia, Albania, Andorra, EC, CoE, EUA, EURASHE, ESU
1 January - 30 June 2011	Hungary	Andorra	Board: Belgium, Hungary, Poland, Albania, Andorra, Azerbaijan, EC, CoE, EUA, EURASHE, ESU
1 July – 31 December 2011	Poland	Azerbaijan	Board: Hungary, Poland, Denmark, Andorra, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, EC, CoE, EUA, EURASHE, ESU
1 January - 30 June 2012	Denmark	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Board: Poland, Denmark, Cyprus, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia EC, CoE, EUA, EURASHE, ESU
1 July 2012 – 30 June 2015	Xxxxx serving as Secretary General to the Process and has the responsibility for the Secretariat		
1 July – 31 December 2012 */	Cyprus */	Croatia */	Board: Denmark, Cyprus, Ireland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, EC, CoE, EUA, EURASHE, ESU

\*/ These countries will probably already start a new period 2012 – 2015 if not decided otherwise

**France:** - What about Monaco willing to join the Bologna Process in the list, as well as San Marino or Belarus which are already listed?

- It should be made clear that once a non-EU country is co-chairing the BFUG together with the EU member State holding the EU Presidency, this non-EU country as a BFUG co-chair is supposed to represent and act on behalf of the non-EU countries as a whole, just like the EU country holding the Presidency does as the BFUG chair.

**Netherlands:** The Netherlands think it would be good to include anywhere in this background paper (version to the BFUG by a foot note or so) that the tasks of the presidency, the BFUG and the Board as such do not change.

**Slovenia:** I would like to thank the Secretariat for this proposal. At the same time I would like to appeal to you to really consider all different proposals that you'll receive before you prepare the final proposal for BFUG. Namely, the present questionnaire allows only a limited number of options.

**Crucial for success of new arrangements are not the above technical issues, though, but the issue of what you call "the tasks of the co-chair".** (Critical observers like A. Corbett note that the operating procedures of the Bologna Process are "closely modelled on the EU presidency system. This has almost entirely excluded 19 countries, including Russia, Turkey and the Balkan states, which are fully European as members of the Council of Europe.")

**We should, first of all, talk about rights and duties of Co-chair. If we really want to give a new, meaningful role to the non-EU countries in the Bologna Process the rights and duties of Co-chair must be formally defined. They are too important to be left to the informal agreements between each individual Chair and Co-chair. This demands, however, some changes in present arrangements.**

**Proposal for a possible formal arrangement:**

**BFUG: EU Presidency country as Chair, non-EU country as Co-chair  
Non-EU country is acting as Vice-chair. (So far the host of the next ministerial conference had this right.)  
EU Presidency country as Chair is organising / financing BFUG meeting(s).**

**BFUG Board: Chair non-EU country, Co-chair EU Presidency country  
Non-EU country as Chair is organising / financing Board meeting(s).  
(BFUG still has to change the terms of reference of Board to become an advisory body.)**

**BFUG Secretariat: host of next ministerial meeting is providing and heading the Secretariat**

Any formal proposal that will be adopted should allow for further adjustments of detailed arrangements, if necessary, respecting, however, the principle of Co-chairing during the whole ten years period.

**Besides, we should seek to strengthen the role of non-EU countries also in less formal ways. The issue of Co-chairing is namely about fair balance of power between EU and non-EU countries, competence building, getting to know each other and mutual learning etc. For example, we could reach a gentlemen's agreement to prepare every official Bologna seminar in twinning arrangement between one EU and one non-EU country and to organise a certain number of them in non-EU countries with financial support of their twinning partners (Sarajevo model).**