

**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF THE BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP**

**Madrid, 28 January 2010, 15.00-20.00 hrs**

*Ministry of Education, C/San Bernardo 49, second floor*

**Draft minutes**

**Participants**

<b>Country /Organisation</b>	<b>Name</b>	
Spanish Presidency	Luis	DELGADO
Spanish Presidency	Rafael	BONETE (Chair)
Albania	Anila	GODO
Armenia	Gayane	HARUTYUNYAN
Armenia	Karine	HARUTYUNYAN
Austria	Barbara	WEITGRUBER
Belgium /Flemish Community	Noël	VERCRUYSSSE
Belgium /French Community	Kevin	GUILLAUME
Cyprus	<i>Apologies</i>	
Hungary	László	CSEKEI
Hungary	János	CSIRIK
Romania	Lazar	VLASCEANU
Romania	Remus	PRICOPIE
Sweden	Myrna	SMITT
European Commission	Barbara	NOLAN
European Commission	Sophia	ERIKSSON WATERSCHOOT
Council of Europe	Sjur	BERGAN
ESU	Andrea	BLAETTLER
EUA	Michael	HÖRIG
EURASHE	Stefan	DELPLACE
Bologna Secretariat	Marlies	LEEGWATER
Bologna Secretariat	Cornelia	RACKÉ
Bologna Secretariat	Françoise	BOURDON
Bologna Secretariat	Sabine	NEYER

## **1. Adoption of the agenda**

Documents: BFUGBoard (ES) 21\_1a [draft agenda]  
BFUGBoard (ES) 21\_1b [draft annotated agenda]

Apologies from Cyprus were received. It was decided that Kazakhstan's request to join the Bologna Process would be dealt with under item 7 of the BFUG Board agenda. With this addition, the agenda was adopted.

## **2. Minutes of the BFUG Board meeting, Stockholm, 4 September 2009 and outcome of proceedings of the BFUG meeting, Brussels, 30 Nov. – 1 Dec. 2009**

Documents: BFUG Board (ES) 21\_2 [Stockholm Board minutes]  
BFUG (ES) 20\_2 [BFUGBrussels draft outcome of proceedings]

The Stockholm Board minutes were approved and the BFUG Brussels draft outcome of proceedings was taken note of.

## **3. Information by the Spanish Presidency**

Vice-Director General, Luis Delgado presented the priorities and events of the Spanish Presidency - the first Presidency under the Lisbon Treaty - in the field of higher education. The slides of his presentation are attached. It was suggested that the BFUG working group on international openness should be involved in the conference on the "Internationalisation of Higher Education" in April and the social dimension working group in the conference on the Social Dimension in Málaga in May.



Spanish Presidency

## **4. Independent Assessment**

Documents: BFUG Board (ES) 21\_4a [indep. ass. overview & conclusions]  
BFUG Board (ES) 21\_4b [assessment statements]

The European Commission informed the Board that after the Brussels BFUG meeting the contractors had been instructed to make the corrections sent in by the BFUG members and to produce a more concise document for the Ministers. For this purpose, the two documents presented to the Board (Overview and Conclusions plus Assessment Statements) will be integrated and a 5-page summary added. The resulting document of about 35 pages will be printed by Austria for the ministerial conference. The detailed report and the annexes will only be published on the relevant websites (European Commission, Bologna Secretariat, CHEPS etc.) – together with the Overview and Conclusions.

The documents made available to the Board were considered of much better quality than the one presented to the BFUG in Brussels. Still, the Council of Europe pointed to a number of factual errors and several Board members stressed the need to give the BFUG members the opportunity to check all parts of the independent assessment report for factual errors before they are published (be it in printed form or online).

Austria reminded the Board that it was a commissioned study for an independent assessment and that the conclusions were those of the researchers, not the conclusions of BFUG. At the ministerial conference, the ministers and other heads of delegations will have the opportunity to react to the assessment and the conclusions drawn.

It was agreed that the Secretariat would send the two documents presented to the Board (Overview and Conclusions plus Assessment Statements) to the BFUG members, allowing them to report factual errors (using "track changes") until 5 February. The researchers would then have time till 15 February to make the corrections.

In the meantime, the BFUG could proof-read the latest version of the detailed report, which the researchers should send by 5 February 2010, and BFUG should report comments by 15

February 2010. The final version should be available on the Internet the day before the Bologna Ministerial Anniversary Conference at the latest.

Due to the lack of time, it was agreed to consult the BFUG via e-mail on the proposed procedure. The European Commission agreed to inform the researchers as soon as possible about the change of deadline and procedure.

Regarding the names to be given to the documents on the Independent Assessment it was decided to use "Overview and Conclusions" and "Detailed Assessment Report" for the time being.

Austria explained that at the Ministerial Conference there would not be a presentation of the report as such but that the input from the researchers and the stakeholders would be clustered according to topics/action lines. The European Commission was asked to talk to the researchers to find a good speaker who could present the results for the various topics in a clear and concise manner.

## **5. Draft Budapest Vienna Declaration**

Documents: BFUG Board (ES) 21\_5a [comments on BVD draft 1]  
BFUG Board (ES) 21\_5b [BVD draft 2]

The Spanish Chair stressed the need to keep the Declaration short (no more than 2 pages) and explained that in the final stage, the draft would still be checked by native speakers.

The Austrian Vice-Chair asked EUA, ESU and EURASHE to indicate whether there were any messages from their reports that were still missing from the draft.

EURASHE, supported by ESU, criticised the absence of a specific reference to the learner. EUA signalled general agreement with the draft. ESU asked for the social dimension to be emphasised, student-centred learning to be mentioned as a principle, and (in paragraph 6) a reference to student participation to be included.

The Council of Europe expressed general support for the draft and proposed some changes in the wording. Paragraph 9 would need to say more than that "some fine-tuning is necessary"; paragraph 2 should also mention committed students (to avoid the impression that input comes exclusively from the staff and only students get something out of it); in the final sentence of paragraph 7 the word "also" should be deleted.

Armenia also complimented on the draft but suggested that the language could still be improved, for example by starting every paragraph with "We, the Ministers...". In paragraph 2, Armenia further proposed to change "smooth and fair recognition" to "fair recognition" (a proposal which was strongly opposed by Austria) and to mention the pool of experts on the EHEA (see below), which Spain and Austria did not consider appropriate for a Declaration.

Romania asked for paragraph 11 to be more explicit on who would take the decision on the questions raised and for the deleted reference to the permanent website to be taken back in again.

Several other Board members preferred such rather technical details not to be mentioned in the Declaration. As a compromise (also taking into account the outcome of the discussion at the Brussels BFUG meeting), it was agreed that the Secretariat would prepare a document on permanent website, host of 2015 conference, and the details of the co-chairing, which would then be put forward by the BFUG members to their Ministers, allowing them to decide on these issues without having a concrete reference in the Declaration.

The European Commission stressed the need for national governments to step up their efforts to explain the Bologna reforms and thus asked to add "at national level" when referring to better communication in paragraph 9. As the Council of Europe, the European Commission supported a more humble and less self-congratulatory tone in that paragraph.

ESU supported the wording of paragraph 1 proposed by the Council of Europe in writing (see BFUG Board (ES) 21\_5a); asked for the academic community in paragraph 9 to be specified; and suggested that the BFUG (in paragraph 10) be asked to develop "additional" instead of "new" working methods to make clear that they are to complement rather than to replace the existing BFUG procedures.

In reaction to the requests from several Board members, the Romanian representative agreed to seek the approval of the Romanian Minister to hold the 2012 Ministerial Conference in Budapest a day earlier, on Thursday 26 and Friday 27 April 2012.

The Secretariat confirmed that, in accordance with the road map, the revised draft 2 of the Declaration would be sent to the BFUG on 1 February and comments could be handed in until Monday 8 February.

## **6. Discussion paper on setting up a pool of experts across the EHEA countries**

Documents: BFUG Board (ES) 21\_6 [pool of experts - discussion paper]

Austria presented the paper on setting up a pool of experts, which had been prepared by the working group on international openness, and asked for comments to prepare the discussion at the BFUG meeting. The working group had identified a clear need to enlarge the pool of experts able and willing to advise on specific Bologna-related issues or to speak on the Bologna Process / the EHEA in general at different types of events across the world. There were, however, some challenges related to setting up such a pool of experts (e.g. who would or would not be included), which is why the working group decided to present two alternative approaches to the BFUG.

The European Commission reminded the Board that a pool of expertise already existed with the 300 Bologna Experts financed through the Lifelong Learning Programme and around 60 Higher Education Reform Experts financed through Tempus. They warned against duplication and questioned the need for an additional structure.

Austria explained that the Secretariat could not draw on these experts and could not ask them to perform tasks. Individual BFUG members could, however, nominate the national Bologna or Higher Education Reform Experts for inclusion in the pool. Sweden stressed the need to differentiate between national and international experts.

EURASHE supported the proposed pool of experts, as it would allow also organisations to nominate experts for inclusion in the pool. Reacting to a question from EUA, Austria explained that the selection of speakers for a specific event, for instance, would be made by the organisers of the event, based on the information received from the Secretariat (drawn either from the database - if set up - or from the reactions received from the BFUG by e-mail). For the sake of clarity, the French Community of Belgium proposed to present the pool of experts as a *database* that the Secretariat would be able to draw upon.

As second document prepared by the working group on international openness, Austria presented the **draft terms of reference of the EHEA Information and Promotion Network**. The working group had been mandated by the BFUG to facilitate the first meeting of the Network. As this first meeting is scheduled for May 2010, the BFUG needs to agree on the terms of reference in Madrid. The challenge will be to find the relevant people to be nominated for the Network (one per country/organisation), who are experts on information *and* promotion and who are well-connected to the relevant organisations in their home countries. After the first call for nominations some 20 reactions had been received. Changes in nominations are expected once the Network is up and running.

Armenia asked if there would be any financial support for the Network and Austria explained that the Network would be self-organised (and self-financed) like the network on student support (NESSIE). The European Commission expressed doubts whether countries would be willing to invest in information provision outside the EHEA, if they do not even invest in communication within the country. Since countries compete with each other to attract students, they might not be eager to engage in joint promotion activities either.

Austria referred to the mandate given by the Ministers and advocated a pragmatic approach to setting up the Network, evaluating its functioning once it has been established.

It was agreed that the two documents would be slightly amended in the light of the discussion - most notably to avoid confusion with the Bologna Experts and to ensure that the purpose of both structures would be clear.

## **7. Agenda of the BFUG meeting, Madrid, 18-19 February 2010**

Documents:       BFUG (ES) 20\_1a [Madrid BFUG provisional agenda]  
                      BFUG (ES) 20\_12a [RecommendationCoEParl. Assembly-EN]  
                      BFUG (ES) 20\_12b [RecommendationCoEParl. Assembly-FR]

The following changes to the provisional agenda have been accepted:

- "Information by the Spanish Presidency" will be item 1.
- Kazakhstan's request for accession will be added as item 4.

The Council of Europe informed the Board that Kazakhstan had applied to join the European Cultural Convention and would on 24 February 2010 most likely be invited to do so. Against this background, Kazakhstan had approached Chair and Secretariat, repeating the wish to join the Bologna Process.

The Council of Europe reminded the Board of the two criteria for a country to join the Bologna Process (as set by the Ministers in Berlin in 2003): The country (a) needs to be a party to the Cultural Convention and (b) needs to commit to the goals of the Bologna Process. The latter would be assessed on the basis of the national report. For the accessions in 2003 and 2005, the Council of Europe had arranged the assessment of the reports and agreed to do the same for Kazakhstan's report before the BFUG meeting in Madrid.

The European Commission advised to wait with launching the accession procedure until Kazakhstan had in fact become a party to the Cultural Convention but Austria explained that it would be better to discuss the issue at the BFUG meeting rather than having to rely on a written consultation to prepare the decision by the Ministers at their meeting in Budapest and Vienna.

- To elect the "BFUG representatives as observers to the EQAR Register Committee", it will not be necessary to organise a vote, as only 4 candidatures have been put forward for 5 places.
- Eurydice having already agreed to present the draft Focus 2010 report to the BFUG, ESU, EUA and EURASHE were asked to give a brief "pre-view" of their reports, too. EUA, however, signalled that they would probably not be able to do so due to a strict embargo on the report until the EUA launch event in Vienna.
- Item 13: "Recommendation 1892 of Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe"

The Council of Europe informed the Board about the context of the Recommendation, which had been issued by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, a consultative body within the Council of Europe with members of national parliaments. The Recommendation is not yet the official position of the Council of Europe, which would be taken by the Committee of Ministers, following the advice of the Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research that will discuss the issue at its meeting on 24 and 25 March.

The Spanish Chair explained that Sir McIntosh had asked to be invited to the BFUG meeting to be able to present the position of the Parliamentary Assembly to the BFUG. After a brief discussion, the Board agreed to react positively to this request (giving Sir McIntosh 10 minutes to present the Recommendation and 20 minutes for comments) to allow Sir McIntosh to listen directly to the feedback from the BFUG and to raise awareness

on both sides, also to ensure that different people dealing with the issue in different contexts (BFUG and Council of Europe) speak with one voice.

- Item "Budapest/Vienna Ministerial meeting and Second Bologna Policy Forum":

The hosts briefly presented the draft programme of the two events and announced that a handbook with information on the logistics would be sent to the BFUG and the contact persons soon.

The Spanish Chair explained that the Spanish Minister who is expected to chair some of the sessions would like to do so in Spanish. At the meeting in Stockholm, the BFUG had decided that at ministerial conferences only English and the language(s) of the host country/countries would be offered. The Board agreed that the Chair of the conference would be allowed to provide for his or her own interpretation for the purposes of chairing the conference.

Regarding the Bologna Policy Forum, the hosts explained that it was not clear yet whether a Statement or Conclusions by the Chair would be prepared, as so far very little input had been received from both EHEA and non-EHEA countries. The hosts agreed to explore further what kind of follow-up to the Bologna Policy Forum would be possible and to prepare a document as input for the BFUG.

### **8. Next BFUG Board meeting**

To prepare the BFUG of 24-25 August 2010, a Board meeting was not deemed necessary. Present and incoming Chairs together with old and new Secretariat agreed to jointly take care of the preparation of the BFUG meeting and to ensure a smooth handover on 30 June/1 July 2010.

### **9. Any other business**

No comments having been made, the meeting was closed.