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ADVISORY GROUP 1 EHEA INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Bologna Policy Forum 'Task Force'¹

BPF Draft Concept Note

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Summary

| | |
|--|---|
| I. The origins of the Bologna Policy Forum | 2 |
| II. Facts and figures about the four Bologna Policy Fora | 2 |
| III. Lessons learnt / next challenges | 3 |
| IV. Revisiting the BPF | 4 |
| V. Annex..... | 6 |

¹ The BPF task force has been decided in the London meeting (May 2016). It is composed of representatives of ACA, Belgium (Flemish Community), European Commission, ENQA, ESU, EUA, France, Romania and United Kingdom. It is chaired by France and UK.

I. The origins of the Bologna Policy Forum

After four Ministerial conferences dedicated to structuring the EHEA and designing the main architecture and common tools, the Ministers asked the BFUG to make proposals for a more outward looking EHEA and to integrate the **Bologna Process in a global setting**² (Bergen, 2005). A *Strategy for the European Higher Education in a Global context* was adopted in London (2007)³, around five core policy areas

- Improving information of the EHEA
- Promoting European higher education to enhance its world-wide attractiveness and competitiveness
- Strengthening cooperation based on partnership
- Intensifying policy dialogues
- Furthering recognition of qualifications

For each policy area, *Elements for possible future actions* were proposed (**Annex 1**).

The Bologna Policy Forum was created to 'intensify policy dialogues'. It has been conceived as a way of increasing cooperation with Non Bologna countries, and to foster mutual understanding and learning in the field of higher education. The BPF has been described as « *an umbrella for meetings, workshops and seminars involving representatives of EHEA and non-EHEA governments, as well as higher education stakeholders, to be facilitated via governmental and organisational initiatives and programmes with equivalent partners in other regions, based on the existing initiatives of the Council of Europe, ENIC/NARIC, ENQA, ESU, EU, EUA, EURASHE, UNESCO, etc.*» (Elements for possible future actions, p. 4-5, London 2007).

II. Facts and figures about the four Bologna Policy Fora

In 2009, at the Leuven Ministerial Conference, the first **Bologna Policy Forum** engaged 14 non-European countries, and international organisations and NGOs. In 2010, 23 and 2012, 19 non-EHEA countries were represented. The biggest countries in terms of student population and internationalisation were present at each forum until 2012 (Australia and New Zealand, Canada and the United States, China, Japan and Brazil).

The level of representation at ministerial level has been decreasing since Vienna where it was the highest (12 ministers upon 23 participants in Vienna, 5 ministers upon 19 participants in Bucharest, 0 in Yerevan) - (**Annex 2**- BPF: participation).

The BPF programme has either been organised after the main Ministerial conference (Leuven) or in parallel (Vienna, Bucharest and Yerevan), the adoption of the Policy statement being discussed jointly after the Communiqués (**Annex 3** BPF: organisation).

In 2014, following the dynamics of the "Arabic springs", the BFUG agreed on the proposal for a **regional approach focused on the South Mediterranean area**. Armenia, wishing to take into account its neighbouring countries, chose a compromise inviting MENAAS countries (Middle

East, North Africa and Asia). Indonesia and Kyrgyzstan, as non-EHEA countries participated in the Yerevan conference in 2015.

The four Policy statements try to find a balance between general principles on the benefits of cooperation and the role of higher education in key societal challenges and concrete proposals on specific topics. After Vienna, a list of EHEA and non-EHEA contacts was supposed to initiate a follow-up with the non-EHEA countries between two conferences but it has not been activated since 2012.

² Zgaga. P. (2007), The Bologna process in a global setting.

³ <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/WGR2007/Strategy-for-EHEA-in-global-setting.pdf>

III. Lessons learnt / next challenges

The BPF, as it has been conceived until now, is one element of the strategy for “**EHEA in a global setting**” implemented to promote the international prestige of the Bologna Process and to increase the worldwide influence of the European Higher Education Area in a context where competition was increasing very fast. Through sharing best policy practices and understanding, the BPF helped to make **EHEA a point of reference** for harmonising national systems of Higher Education through regional and cooperative approaches.

The interest in the Bologna Process outside Europe, as a new and unique process in the world, was very high until beginning of 2010s. For some countries, such as Canada, United States⁴ and Australia, it was important to follow carefully the Process since this strong potential of cooperation at European Ministerial level was supporting the development of European ‘norms’ likely to compete with the international ones dominated by the Anglophone systems. For other countries (Francophone African countries for instance), Bologna is an incentive to implement national reforms compatible with the EHEA tools (three cycle reform-LMD⁵, Standards for quality assurance, qualification frameworks). For Latin American stakeholders, it has been an incentive to implement for example, credit systems and, quality assurance mechanisms within networks of institutions or regional organisations⁶.

Since then, the international cooperation’s context has changed reshaping the relations between global, regional and national priorities;

As a matter of fact, Higher Education is now on different international or global agendas.

- ✓ It is part of the UN **Sustainable Development Goals** agenda for 2030 (SDG4⁷). The Incheon Declaration (May 2015) states on a framework for action ‘*towards inclusive and equitable education and lifelong learning for all*’ with different proposals for Higher Education. After having initiated ‘regional conventions’ since 1976, in all the regions of the world, UNESCO is now working on a **Global convention for the recognition of studies, diplomas and degrees**.
- ✓ **Education** came back on the G7 agenda in 2016 (after 8 years of absence), and within the Science and Technology G7 Forum dialogue, the role of higher education is part of the discussions. It is as well on the APEC (Asia Pacific Economies Cooperation) and BRICS agendas.
- ✓ Several global or inter-continental initiatives have been taken by different higher education institutions and students stakeholders. For instance, the second global dialogue will be organised in Mexico in January 2017, the first Higher Education Forum for Africa, Asia, Latin America (HEFAALA), a South Global initiative, was launched in Durban in August 2016. ESU is involved in a global dialogue for students.

Many regions are actively engaged in the construction of **Regional Higher Education Areas** (ASEAN, Africa, East Africa, Francophone Africa⁸...) or at least in the design of specific integrative instruments, (regional quality frameworks and qualification frameworks). Since 2012, the European Commission supports such development and is engaged in **policy dialogues** in collaboration with other European or national stakeholders (EUA, ENQA, DAAD, NUFFIC, Campus France, etc.) in particular with ASEAN, Africa, Latin America, South Mediterranean⁹. The experience of 20 years of cooperation in the European Higher Education Area, through the Bologna Process, becomes therefore very useful.

At the same time, national and institutional strategies for internationalisation have also been addressed in many countries as encouraged by the European Commission strategy in 2013¹⁰. However, where internationalisation is about increasing market share and, attracting the best global talent, it could raise tensions between national goals and European approaches.

⁴ Adelman, C. (2009), The Bologna Process for US eyes: Re-learning Higher Education in the age of convergence”.

⁵ Licence, Master, Doctorat following the French LMD reform (2002).

⁶ See Arcu-Sur in Mercosur (www.edu.mercosur.int/arcusur) or the Central American Quality Assurance system (SCUCA).

⁷ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4>

⁸ See Zgaga.P. report as mentioned above and Pol. P. (2016) “Beyond 2020: imagine a bridge of academic and scientific solidarities around the world”, EAIE Conference Starter, p5-11, Liverpool.

⁹ See the report of the first Advisory group « EHEA international cooperation » meeting in Paris on January 2016. www.ehea.info

¹⁰ **European higher education in the world**, European Commission, April 2013.

Moreover, the world is faced with common interdependent societal and technological challenges such as climate change, poverty, terrorism, digitalisation and Higher Education plays an important role in contributing to find common answers to produce knowledge and train responsible global citizens and good professionals.

Within this changing context, the next challenges for the Bologna Policy Forum are

- To strengthen the position of EHEA in a global setting and gives perspectives beyond 2020
- To bring added value to the existing regional policy dialogues
- To mobilise ministers on concrete actions relevant to address common challenges for Higher Education
- To ensure a sustainable international partnership policy

IV. Revisiting the BPF

Different scenarios for the future have been discussed by the BPF task force since the last AG1 London meeting. While the task force has agreed on common principles it now wants to open the discussion on specific issues during the meeting in Nizhny.

4.1. Possible scenarios for the future

- A **Global EHEA Ministerial Conference**: the non-EHEA voluntary partners are integrated in all the discussions and there is no more BPF as such. The aim of the conference is to arrive to a common statement including proposals for a changing governance to cooperate on a sustainable basis with non-EHEA countries.
- **Towards a EHEA- Regional Higher Education Area** in particular with the Mediterranean countries, becoming members of the Bologna Follow Up Group.
- Towards a **EHEA-Regional Policy Dialogue** without excluding any regions, with the aim to decide on joint concrete actions to increase transparency, mobility and employability between voluntary regions (development of compatible EHEA tools such as credit systems, qualification frameworks, standards and guidelines for quality assurance, charter for transnational education, etc.).
- The BPF remains a **specific event** with the aim to focus on targeted topics in line with the priorities of the 2018 Ministerial Conference and the international agendas for Higher Education and Research, likely to lead to a joint plan of actions

4.2. Proposal of agreed principles for 2018

- ✓ Finding a good balance between the BPF 's purpose to strengthen the **influence of EHEA** in the world and the necessity **to listen and learn from the world** to take joint decisions
- ✓ Keeping a specific event (that might be renamed¹¹) appears to be the most realistic option, since the EHEA still has to solve inward issues in terms of implementation and new goals.
- ✓ Situating the dialogue on a political and not technical basis to attract ministers and not only high-level representatives of the administrations, higher education institutions and regional organisations and be able to involve them in future actions.
- ✓ Finding a way to integrate more the BPF in the general conference
- ✓ Designing a common 'statement' including a plan of action
- ✓ Continuing the partnership and links with the Ministers of Higher Education initiated by AG1 with regional stakeholders without excluding any bilateral approach.

4.3. Issues open to the discussion

¹¹ Global Higher Education policy forum/summit, International Bologna Policy Forum...

➤ Topics

Considering the priorities of working group 2 (Implementation) and working 3 (New goals), and the willingness to strengthen Higher Education on a global and inter-regional agenda, selected topics are proposed as a basis for consultation and decision to arrive to one main orientation

✓ **Regional development of Higher Education Areas**

Learning policies on strengths and weaknesses of such regional areas in a changing global context.
Which fundamental values and common or compatible tools can be developed between regional areas?

✓ **Sustainable development goals, “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all”**

How regional actors are contributing to this and what synergies can be found?

✓ **Higher Education for societal challenges in a changing global context**

The role universities in changing economies and societies
Policy measures and tools to answer migration caused by crisis,

✓ **Which governance of higher education in a changing global context?**

➤ Format

Taking into account that the Ministers can't afford to stay more than 1,5/2,5 days including travel and that we aim at more mutual learning, understanding and decisions, the program has to be elaborated in close cooperation with the whole Ministerial Conference program.

However, different levels of integration can be considered according as well to the main orientation we want to give this international 'event':

✓ **Focused integration:**

A specific time (half a day for instance after, before or in-between) is dedicated to the topic selected with a discussion on the statement and the roadmap.

✓ **Broad integration**

- A first part of the Ministerial deals with the issues of EHEA implementation and non-implementation (the non EHEA ministers can be invited (?)) but the decisions will be at EHEA ministers level only

- A second part focuses on the 'new goals' and includes in the discussions the non-EHEA Ministers and Regional representatives

- A third part includes the discussions for the communiqué (s)

Other organisation can be proposed according to the organisation and the main priorities of the general conference.

A draft programme will be proposed in May 2017.

➤ Partnership

Since 2016, under the approval of the Amsterdam BFUG, the co-chairs and AG1 members have initiated a first dialogue with regional organisations much interested in the Bologna Process and in an active participation in the next Bologna Policy Forums.

- Mediterranean countries: the Union for the Mediterranean is part of AG1, and is involved in programmes on migration and mobility, euro-Mediterranean university; UNIMED plans a workshop on the state of art of the Bologna process in the Mediterranean countries on 21st October 2016 and will launch a survey on this issue,

- Asia (with ASEAN), AG1 members (Flemish Belgium and Germany) are part of the ASEM dialogue.

- Africa (African Union, Inter-university council for East-Africa, Association of African university),

- Latin America (Organisation of Ibero-American States).

- Countries and regions part of Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie: AUF is part of AG1 and is chairing a new platform to develop a digital francophone area for higher education involving 33 ministers of education in the francophone area (<http://www.iidneuf.org>).

Annex 3 presents a draft timeline for regional dialogues and events

These contacts have to be consolidated, enlarged to other stakeholders and regions (North America, Pacific).

AG1 'EHEA international cooperation', with the support of the Secretariat, goes on acting at regional higher education area levels and national levels with the support of AG1 members and the French Ministry of Higher education and research.

Formal invitation will be sent to the Ministers at a later time (see **Annex** draft timeline BPF organisation 2015-2018).

V. Annex

Annex 1: *Elements for possible future actions in Strategy for the external dimension the Bologna process* (2007)



Annex 2: *The Bologna policy Forum: participation and organization*



The Bologna policy
Forum participation a

Annex 3: *Draft timeline regional dialogues 2016-2018*



Annex 4: *Draft timeline BPF revision and organisation 2015-2018*



Background documents

Bologna Policy Forum Communiqué:

o Louvain-la-Neuve (2009) <http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=44>

o Vienna (2010) <http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=44>

o Bucharest (2012) <http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=44>

o Erevan (2015) <http://bolognayerevan2015.ehea.info/files/FourthBolognaPolicyForumStatement.pdf>

The EHEA in a Global Setting: 2014 Strategy Review (2015) in Report of the 2012-2015 BFUG WG on Mobility and Internationalization, Annex 9 (BFUG document) <http://bolognayerevan2015.ehea.info/files/MI%20WG%20Report.pdf>

Beyond the Bologna Process: Creating and connecting national, regional and global higher education areas Background paper for the Third Bologna Policy Forum Bucharest, April 27th, 2012 (2012) (BFUG document) http://conference.osp-ua.info/materialy/BPF%20Background%20Paper_FINAL%20VERSION.pdf

THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA (EHEA) IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT (2009) (BFUG document) http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/Documents/2009_EHEA_in_global_context.pdf

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Looking out: The Bologna Process in a Global Setting On the “External Dimension” of the Bologna Process (2007) (BFUG document)

http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/WGR2007/Bologna_Process_in_global_setting_finalreport.pdf

Articles

Que Anh Dang (2015), The Bologna Process goes East: from ‘Third country’ Jargon to prioritizing Inter-regional cooperation between the ASEAN and EU, in The European Higher Education Area, Springer. http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007%2F978-3-319-20877-0_47

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Pol. P. (2016), Beyond 2020: imagine a bridge of academic and scientific solidarities around the world, EAIE conferences Conversation Starter, Liverpool, p 5-11. (September 2016). www.eiae.org