



Ministry of Science, Innovation
and Higher Education



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**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF THE BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP
Baku, 21 February 2012, 10:00 – 17:00**

Draft Minutes

List of participants

Country/ Organisation	Representative
Armenia	<i>Apologies</i>
Azerbaijan	Azad Akhundov (Chair of the meeting)
BFUG Secretariat	Ligia Deca
BFUG Secretariat	Viorel Proteasa
Bosnia and Herzegovina	<i>Apologies</i>
Council of Europe	Sjur Bergan
Cyprus	Despina Martidou-Forcier
Denmark	Helle Damgaard Nielsen
Denmark	Jacob Fuchs
Denmark	Ditte Mesick
ESU	Allan Päll
EUA	<i>Apologies, written contribution to agenda point 8</i>
EURASHE	Stefan Delplace
European Commission	Adam Tyson
European Commission	Frank Petrikowski
Poland	Bartłomiej Banaszak
Romania	Lazăr Vlăsceanu
Romania	Adrian Curaj

1. Information by the BFUG Chairs: Denmark and Azerbaijan

The Azeri Chair welcomed the BFUG Board members and listed the apologies. He further referred to the efforts made to secure the participation of the Armenian delegation. Unfortunately, due to heavy specific bureaucracy, the Armenian delegation could not be present and apologised through the BFUG Secretariat.

Further on he introduced Azerbaijan's priorities for higher education:

- Mobility, with emphasis on a programme already running for three years that funds Azeri students to study in renowned universities the world;
- The national qualifications framework, which is almost ready for official approval by the national authorities. Support and recommendations were received from the Council of Europe (CoE) and implementation will follow.

The BFUG Board members took note of the information presented by the Chair.

2. Adoption of the agenda

EURASHE asked for an AOB item referring to the 'Quality assurance initiative'. It was proposed to discuss agenda items 10 and 11 in connection with agenda item 15.

The Chair concluded that the agenda is adopted with the comments made.

3. Adoption of minutes of the BFUG Board meeting, Copenhagen, 30 November 2011 and taking note of the outcome of proceedings of the BFUG meeting, Copenhagen, 18-19 January 2012

The Chair introduced the agenda point. The BFUG Board members made specific suggestions for improving the clarity of the documents. For the outcome of proceedings of the BFUG meeting, it was also suggested to include references to transparency tools at the discussions regarding the Communiqué, and a reference to the letters sent by a number of European ministers to the Education minister of the Republic of Belarus at the respective point.

The Chair concluded that the BFUG Secretariat will improve the documents according to the feedback received and prepare them for the upcoming BFUG meeting.

4. Status of BFUG WG/ Network reports

The BFUG Secretariat described the status of the BFUG WG/ Network reports as well as the calendar for their endorsement.

CoE informed that, after the consultation with the BFUG Secretariat, the Network of National Correspondents will meet in Brussels after the Ministerial Conference, on May 22. The meeting will focus on how the work on QFs should be organised in the next BFUG workplan. The conclusions of the meeting will feed into the BFUG Board meeting in Sarajevo (31 May 2012) and the BFUG meeting in Cyprus (28-29 August 2012).

The BFUG Board members took note of the information presented.

5. Executive Summary of the Report on the BP implementation

The Chair introduced this agenda point, mentioning that the comments received during and after Copenhagen I BFUG meeting were integrated in the circulated version of the Executive Summary.

The following general comments were received:

- The Report on the BP implementation is very well-written and interesting and the Executive Summary should reflect this;
- The current Executive Summary has normative content, which makes it look like an alternative Communiqué. Some of the highlights of the Executive Summary are in line with the commitments of the Ministerial Communiqué, while others diverge. Instead, the Executive Summary should be descriptive and provide an introduction to the content of the report;
- The Report on the implementation of the Bologna Process has a special role because it shows where the Bologna implementation stands. It is therefore important that the Executive Summary of the report sends the right message;
- The tone of the Executive Summary is important. The WG Chairs have made it more positive, but it still paints a too negative image. A proper balance needs to be achieved between celebrating achievements and outlining limitations. The conclusions of the text should draw more clearly on data from the report.

The specific comments received are listed below:

Page 1:

- The introduction should feature one section that acknowledges progress, written with affirmative clauses, followed by another that identifies remaining challenges and the areas for improvement;
- The introductory chapter to the report contains relevant information, it can also be used for the executive report;
- The first sentence sounds too negative. The first paragraph should send the message that the Bologna Process continues to evolve. All countries have made substantial and irreversible reforms, which enable the EHEA to further develop. Currently this paragraph questions the achievements of the Bologna Process;
- A reference to QFs and recognition is needed. Currently, the emphasis is only on structures and quality assurance;
- The second paragraph should in a positive manner send the message that a new approach is needed, not because the old one was inappropriate, but because of the evolution of the process.

Page 2:

- The four bullet points which are listed are not mobilising enough to set the agenda of this decade of the Bologna Process;
- The second paragraph on page 2 is too student-centered. This paragraph should be deleted;
- The questions listed on page two as being the main ones that the report addresses are not clearly answered in the text. There are other aspects of student life not covered through these questions;

- Immigrant background seems to be over-emphasised. The data shows that parental background is a factor with wider impact;
- Access and admission are presented in a rather confusing way. Admission extension and improving access are two different things;

Page 3:

- When mentioning ECTS, in paragraph two, the word "purposes" creates confusion. It should be made clear that the conclusion refers to the ground on which ECTS credits are being allocated;
- In the last paragraph, the use of "claim" distorts the message. If the Reporting WG finds there is a problem with the procedure of self-certification they should question it. As long as self-certification is not challenged, the wording seems inappropriate. In the same paragraph, the wording "stand good chances" should be clarified, perhaps with 'countries that are between steps 7 and 10 in the development of national qualifications frameworks';

Page 4:

- It was suggested to include a paragraph on agencies which are listed in EQAR;
- This section talks about recognition and student performance, financing and study conditions. Better structuring and clear separation of the topics would improve the clarity of the section.
- The question in paragraph three could be rephrased as "whether it is necessary to include student services, research, and other issues or not";
- This section needs to strongly emphasise that structures are now in place and that future focus should be on implementing them. This could be inserted at the beginning, before other considerations.

Page 5:

- The paragraph on gender balance should celebrate the increase in overall female participation, while pointing to the gender imbalances in participation in certain subjects;
- It is noted that men from the working class disappear from formal education, but this might not be a HE issue. Transition from secondary to higher education can be problematic in this respect, which the Executive Summary could acknowledge;
- The conclusion regarding the labour market-university mismatch may be too hasty. It is unclear whether the data provided in the report is sufficient to draw such a conclusion;
- The message of the last paragraph is unclear. Recent graduates are less employed than other people due to qualifications mismatch, but also due to general economic context; this contextualisation is missing. The paragraph needs to explain after how many years employability levels can be compared.

Page 7:

- The introductory statement to the recommendation, mentioning that countries have turned away their attention from the Bologna Process, is ambiguous in respect to who are making such a claim and on what grounds;

Page 8:

- It would be useful to include recommendations regarding reporting and data gathering in order to make the next report even better;
- The first recommendation is not clearly in line with the draft Communiqué;
- Recommendation 1 should point out how QFs open alternative HE paths;
- Recommendation 3 repeats 1, b;
- In recommendation 4, b, it is unclear what it means to confirm the goals of mobility;
- Recommendation 4, b is unclear.

The Chair concluded that there is agreement among the Board that the report on the BP implementation is very well-written and interesting and it is important that the executive summary reflects this. Therefore, the Board suggests that a different document should be prepared as an Executive Summary of the Report on BP implementation, based on the current introduction to the actual report, as the Executive Summary should more clearly reflect the actual content of the report, thus making the executive summary more factual than it already is. If the WG Chairs decide to keep the text of the current executive summary, it could be submitted to the BFUG as the Reporting WG's recommendations. The Board's comments will be communicated to the Reporting WG Chairs by the Danish BFUG Chair. Possible further comments from the BFUG Board members should be sent in writing to the BFUG Secretariat.

6. Re-drafted proposal of the Social Dimension Observatory

The project application was submitted under the LLP call, by a consortium including ESU and other EUROSTUDENT partners. The BFUG Board members welcomed the application and the substantial improvement of the proposal. They expressed satisfaction with the inclusion of the comments received from the BFUG. It was considered that cooperation with the BFUG is essential for the project.

The BFUG Board further debated the merits and shortcomings of having two proposals which are similar in their approaches, namely the peer learning within the Social Dimension Observatory and the European Peer Review Initiative. Having two separate proposals may be confusing for an external audience, but having a separate proposal for SD may provide the required attention.

The BFUG Board members agreed to also discuss the European Peer Review Initiative at this agenda point. The following comments were received regarding the European Peer Review Initiative:

- It has to be clear that no new structure will be created through this mechanism;
- The emphasis should be laid on mutual learning and on the involvement of stakeholders, from institutional, local and European level;
- The sharing of good practices should be underlined;
- It would facilitate an integrated view on the Bologna Process policies and the associated policies;
- It represents an opportunity for a country to ask for support in areas where it feels that it needs assistance;
- It was suggested to change the name of the initiative to European Peer Learning Initiative to signal that focus is to be put on good practices and assessment of the level of implementation of Bologna reforms;
- It may be the case that exactly the countries which are mostly in need of external help cannot afford it. Solutions to such situations should be sought.

On the financial side, it is possible to submit another application for the LLL programme in order to finance the European Peer Review Initiative. Currently, the SD Observatory proposal has entered the project competition. The results of the competition will tell if it is to be financed or not.

The Chair concluded that the paper for the European Peer Review initiative will be revised according to the above comments. As the start-up of the two initiatives should not be interdependent, the Social Dimension pilot project (with the current paper) will be the starting point of the discussion at the upcoming BFUG meeting in Copenhagen. The European Peer Review/Learning Initiative will be discussed subsequently.

7. EHEA Mobility Strategy

The Chair invited the BFUG Board members to provide their input to the draft mobility strategy. On a general note, the BFUG Board appreciated the high quality of the document and expressed its gratitude towards the efforts of the Mobility WG.

It was argued that:

- Page 3, section 5, bullet point 4: the wording regarding the implementation Lisbon Recognition Convention is too weak ("encourage a more positive attitude towards") and something stronger should be inserted; bullet point 5: some visa problems are

administrative, but others are political in their nature. The adjective “administrative” should be deleted;

- Page 1, section 2: it would be difficult for a reader who is less acquainted to Bologna Process details to understand what the provisions in the Leuven Communiqué are with regard to the 20% mobile students by 2020 mobility target. The target should be made explicit in the EHEA Mobility Strategy as well.
- Page 4, section 7: The recommendation on accreditation of joint programmes was welcomed, but it may come across as a bit unclear. Currently it differs from the text of the Bucharest Communiqué.

Most BFUG Board members expressed hesitance regarding the 5% inward mobility target. Some expressed concerns regarding the level (5%), which is perhaps overly ambitious. Other BFUG Board members expressed fears that adding another target may distract attention from the more important 20% target and questioned if such a target is relevant for mobility. On this basis, the BFUG Board agreed that the Mobility WG should be asked to omit the target of incoming mobility from the EHEA Mobility Strategy.

The Chair concluded that the Mobility WG will be thanked for their impressive work and asked to revise the EHEA Mobility Strategy according to the above comments of the BFUG Board. A new version should be presented for endorsement at the Copenhagen BFUG meeting in March.

8. Bucharest Communiqué – Draft 3_ver 1

The Chair introduced the agenda point and gave the floor to the Danish co-Chair to describe to the BFUG Board members the process of integrating comments received since the version presented in Copenhagen I BFUG meeting. Most of the content clarifications were made by the Danish co-Chair, as they have coordinated the redrafting process. EUA sent their input in writing, and their comments and suggestions were considered within the discussions.

The Danish co-Chair underlined that the Communiqué has been revised according to the feedback received. It is now shorter, punchier and clearer. Through the three sections of “Setting out priorities for 2012-2015” the Communiqué now addresses HEIs directly.

On a general note, the BFUG Board members appreciated the document as being well drafted. They stressed that the Ministerial Communiqué is the main political document of the EHEA so it has to be readable, but not over-simplified. The document achieves the right balance.

The BFUG Board members commented the Ministerial Communiqué paragraph by paragraph:

“Investing in higher education for the future” (lines 6-18):

- Ministers' commitment to uphold solid public funding of HE has to be bolder;
- Additionally, a commitment to set up a framework for the provision of private funding is needed;
- Diversification of income sources for HE should to be inserted;
- The paragraph should also touch on accountability of HE, twining investment in HE;

“Building new synergies and looking ahead” (lines 19-36):

- The idea of the coherence of the Bologna Process reforms needs to be more visible;
- 'Synergies' is used by an English speaker to avoid saying what he/she means. It is best to avoid the use of this word, if possible;

“Enhancing employability to serve Europe's needs” (lines 37-75):

- The reference to HEIs' regional function is too utilitarian, it needs to put more emphasis on people;
- The reference to 'doctoral education' should be replaced with 'training of doctoral candidates', so as to not give the impression that all doctoral candidates have a student status within the EHEA;
- The paragraph on learning outcomes should also call for reporting on their implementation;
- The paragraph on qualifications frameworks ends abruptly, without any recommendation for action in case of the delayed countries. One option is to ask them to submit a revised timetable and another is to offer them support in finalising their qualifications framework;
- The text needs to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the EC and CoE in overseeing the implementation of the EQF-LLL and the QF-EHEA respectively;
- ECTS should be learning outcome based. A reference to the link between them should be inserted maybe in the work ahead section;

“Providing quality higher education for all” (line 76-104):

- Student centered learning should appear more prominently in the text;
- Counselling and guidance should be mentioned when describing measures to make higher education systems inclusive;
- Regarding the revision of the ESG, two contradicting views were expressed: one that goes in line with the recommendation of the Map-ESG project, the other that gives a more prominent role to the countries, through the BFUG. It was agreed that the proposal has to reconcile strong involvement of the stakeholders with the public responsibility for QA;
- The text must send the message that the current demanding criteria for EQAR listing must be upheld;

“Strengthening mobility for better learning” (lines 105-127):

- The text should reflect the conclusions of the discussions on the “EHEA Mobility Strategy”;
- Recognition is much more than a measure of the trust in higher education systems. It is about people’s life chances;
- The reference to the 2007 ‘EHEA in a global setting’ strategy should be kept and the Communiqué should also call for data in this respect.

“Improving data collection and transparency” (line 128 – 137):

- Data collection and transparency are underpinning the three priorities; this has to be explicit through the way in which sub-titles are built, so that it is not mistaken as another priority;
- This paragraph should be written having in mind both current and developing transparency tools;
- The WG recommendations insisted on democratisation or user-drivenness of transparency tools and on grounding such tools on empirical data. Both of them are currently not included;
- The paragraph is rather neutral, it has to send a stronger message;
- Regarding the European Peer Review Initiative, it was proposed to insist on voluntary involvement and on sharing of good practices.

“Setting out priorities for 2012-2015” (lines 138 – end)

- The text should include the message that the three levels - HEIs, national and European - have to cooperate between them according to their respective authority and capacities, in order to follow the indicated priorities;
- Assigning priorities to three levels does not mean they are to be taken in isolation. The current problem is the balance of the recommendations, also in terms of the text size;
- In the last bullet under national priorities, it should be added the request for countries which did not meet the 2012 deadline for development of their NQFs to submit a revised roadmap.

Some wording suggestions were made accordingly. The BFUG Board members also suggested other linguistic and semantic changes.

The Chair concluded that the drafting group consisting of the chairs and the BFUG Secretariat should prepare a revised draft for the BFUG meeting, in light of the comments made by the BFUG Board members.

9. Bucharest Bologna Policy Forum Statement – Draft 3

The BFUG Board members welcomed the revisions to the text. A few punctual suggestions were put forward, without altering the main messages of the text.

The Chair concluded that the drafting group consisting of the chairs and the BFUG Secretariat should prepare a revised draft for the BFUG meeting, in light of the comments made. The draft should be sent to both the EHEA and non-EHEA national contact points for feedback prior to the March BFUG meeting.

10. Thematic session (EIT) at the March 2012 BFUG meeting

It was proposed to postpone the thematic session for the BFUG meeting in Cyprus, in order to allow for more debate on the text of the Bucharest Communiqué and no opposition was expressed. It was also suggested to review the timetable to allow more time for discussions, as it was the case in the other thematic sessions on QA and QF.

The Chair concluded that the EIT thematic session will be postponed for the BFUG meeting in Cyprus (28-29 August 2012) and will be redrafted according to the feedback.

11. ESU Convention 17-20 March 2012

ESU's publication "Bologna With Student Eyes" will be presented on Monday morning of 19 March, before the beginning of the BFUG meeting, as in the circulated agenda. There are plans (unconfirmed) for a joint social event on Monday evening as well. The BFUG members will be invited to join the ESU Convention on Sunday.

The Chair thanked ESU for the presentation and the BFUG Board members took note of the information.

12. EHEA Accession – procedural follow-up

It was suggested by the Danish Chair that the BFUG should endorse a procedural paper outlining that, in light of the BFUG decision in January, there will be no point on the Bucharest Ministerial Meeting agenda regarding the Belarus application. A short document will be prepared for the BFUG meeting to clarify that not mentioning anything regarding the acceptance of Belarus as an EHEA member in the Bucharest Communiqué has in fact the consequence that Belarus will not be granted EHEA membership. A second letter following the Ministerial Conference is needed to announce to the Belarus authorities that the Belarus application for membership was not accepted.

The Chair concluded that a document will be prepared for the BFUG meeting and that the proposal for the way forward was endorsed by the BFUG Board members.

13. Information on the preparations for handover of the BFUG Secretariat and presentation of the EHEA archive

The BFUG Secretariat announced that, according to past experiences, two meetings are expected to take place in late June: the handover between the Romanian and Armenian BFUG Secretariats and the BFUG Chairs handover meeting.

As an update, the Bologna Process archive is ready and the upload of documents is in progress.

The Romanian Vice-Chairs expressed availability to assist future Secretariats with the maintenance of the EHEA website, EHEA Backoffice and the archive. They also offered to initiate a repository of research articles on the Bologna Process, equipped with a search motor employing semantic analysis.

It was concluded that the main concern for the future is sustainability of the developed infrastructure and the following actions will be guided by this principle.

14. Information on the preparations for the Ministerial Conference and the Bologna Policy Forum

The Romanian Vice-Chairs provided a brief update: funds have been secured, as well as the location. The Ministers responsible for higher education from Romania, Denmark and Azerbaijan will meet on the 1st of March in Brussels and the European Commission will also be invited. The Conference website has been launched and the hotels will be announced in the first week of March.

The volumes that resulted from the "Future of Higher Education – Bologna Process Researchers Conference" will be delivered at the end of March and will be distributed to all the participants at the Ministerial Conference and Bologna Policy Forum.

The BFUG Board members took note of the information provided by Romania.

15. Agenda of the BFUG meeting, Copenhagen, 19-20 March 2012

The Danish co-Chair introduced the agenda and the overall duration of the meeting, highlighting that the BFUG meeting will be opened on the 19 March, after ESU's presentation

of the "Bologna With Student Eyes" results, and that EQAR General Assembly will follow on Tuesday, 20 March, after lunch.

The BFUG Board members took note of the information provided by Denmark.

16. Next BFUG Board meeting, Bosnia-Herzegovina, 31 May 2012

The Chair mentioned that the meeting was confirmed to be held in Sarajevo on the 31st of May 2012. The agenda will be developed after the Ministerial Conference.

The BFUG Board members took note of the information provided.

17. Any other business

EURASHE informed the BFUG Board Members that a letter was sent to the European Commissioner outlining that HEIs should be more involved in QA. The claim is grounded by:

- The conclusions of the Antwerp EQAF, that called for more assistance and help to develop QA at the institutional level. It was concluded that one annual meeting is not enough;
- The results of the EURASHE survey regarding the ESG implementation.

EURASHE asked whether money can be earmarked for QA support at the institutional level. The Commissioner replied saying that the problem is real, but that there are existing EU programmes for this initiative and that more support should be secured from the national level.

EURASHE has proposed to add a line on this issue in the Communiqué under the priorities section. He promised to send text before the March BFUG.

The BFUG Board members took note of the information provided. No other issue was raised.

The Chair thanked the participants and closed the meeting.