

BFUG2 Minutes
24 March 2004

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP

DUBLIN, 9 MARCH 2004

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the participants to Dublin. Some members of the BFUG had sent their apologies. A list of participants is enclosed.

1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Documents: BFUG2 1a Draft agenda 26 Feb 04
 BFUG2 1b Draft annotated agenda 27 Feb 04

Action:

The agenda was adopted.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS BFUG AND BOARD MEETINGS

Documents: BFUG2 2a Minutes of the BFUG meeting 14 Nov 03
 Letter from the Italian Chair 09 Dec 03 (approval by electronic
 consultation)
 Minutes of the Board meeting 15 Nov 03 (for information)
 BFUG2 2b Minutes of the Board meeting 29 Jan 03
 (for information)
 Note: Approval of seminars following electronic consultation
 3 Feb 03 (cf. item 4).

Action:

*The minutes of the BFUG meeting on 14 November 2003 were approved.
Approvals by electronic consultation were noted.*

3. BFUG WORK PROGRAMME 2003-2005

Document: BFUG2 3 19 Feb 04 on the Work Programme

The Chair emphasised that the time leading up to the Bergen ministerial conference is limited, and that the meeting must therefore reach clear decisions. The Work Programme adopted by the BFUG will be its statement of action.

Members of the BFUG pointed out that when referring to the Berlin Communiqué, the document should use direct quotations where possible. Questions were raised with regard to the geographical distribution of members of working groups to be appointed under agenda points 5 and 6, and with regard to the criteria for Bologna Follow-up Seminars. The Chair stated that the document would be amended on the basis of comments in the meeting.

Decision:

The BFUG Work Programme must relate in the best possible way to the activities proposed in the Berlin Communiqué. It should have a reasonable balance between the various action lines of the Bologna Process, with particular attention to the inclusion of the social dimension as a transversal action line. Members and consultative members of the Bologna Process may initiate the actions forming the Work Programme; in this sense it will be a bottom-up process.

The BFUG will take responsibility for coordinating projects in areas where joint action is needed, i.e. developing an overarching framework of qualifications for the EHEA and monitoring the ENQA project on quality assurance. The BFUG will also take an overall responsibility for ensuring that new member countries are supported.

The Chair and Secretariat will finalise document BFUG2 3 on the BFUG Work Programme 2003-2005 on the basis of the deliberations of the meeting.

4. BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP SEMINARS 2003-2005

Document: BFUG2 4 27 Feb 04 on Seminars + Appendix

The Chair pointed out that seminars are an important forum for dialogue and exchange of experience. However, there is a limit to the number of seminars that BFUG members can attend in the period leading up to the Bergen conference. The BFUG therefore needs to focus its energy. It will be important to have a small number of clear recommendations from each seminar, as this will give the recommendations authority. With regard to questionnaires, the reason why it had been proposed to coordinate any questionnaires was that this might reveal opportunities for synergies; there was no wish to create unnecessary bureaucratic procedures.

Poland asked for its proposed seminar on quality assurance to be included in the Work Programme, providing additional oral information. The seminar will meet the criteria with regard to participation.

Slovenia similarly asked for its seminar on employability, in cooperation with the EUA and ESIB, to be included. The theme is explored only to a limited extent by other seminars. Among other things the seminar will examine the value of transparency tools from the point of view of employers.

Germany pointed to its plans for a seminar on the Bachelor's degree in chemistry on 14-15 June 2004, arguing that it is important to bring the message of the two-cycle system down to the people on the ground. The seminar links the university world to the world of employment.

Several members provided additional information about the seminars proposed, including changes of dates. Some general comments were also made. Time is needed to feed the results of seminars back to the BFUG; therefore there should be no seminars after February 2005. The vocabulary of the Bologna Process should be used. In order to avoid misunderstanding it was decided to delete the sentence on page 2 of the document saying that seminars on an overarching qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area should not be planned independently.

The Chair noted that the list did not preclude any member state from organising a conference or seminar on the basis of its interests and priorities.

Decision:

The BFUG approves the criteria for Bologna Follow-up Seminars.

Bologna Follow-up Seminars may be organised by individual member countries or consultative member organisations in accordance with their own priorities and objectives, taking account of the criteria approved by the BFUG.

Having regard to the limited time available, the Board has recommended that a number of seminars be treated as central to the conduct of the BFUG Work Programme, in that they reflect the priorities set by the Ministers in Berlin and have the potential of contributing most to the realisation of the European Higher Education Area.

On this basis, the BFUG includes the following seminars in its Work Programme 2003-2005:

1. *“Joint degrees – Further development”
(Sweden, 6-7 May 2004)*
2. *”Bologna and the challenges of eLearning and distance education”
(Belgium-Fl, 4-5 June 2004)*
3. *“Using Learning Outcomes” (UK, 1-2 July 2004)*
4. *“Assessment and accreditation in the European framework”
(Spain, 28-30 July 2004)*
5. *“Public Responsibility for Higher Education and Research”
(Council of Europe, 23-24 Sept 2004)*

6. *“Mobility” (The Netherlands, 11-12 Oct 2004)*
7. *“Employability and its link to the objectives of the Bologna Process” (Slovenia, 22-23 Oct 2004)*
8. *“New Generations of Policy Documents and Laws for Higher Education: Their Thrust in the Context of the Bologna Process” (UNESCO-CEPES/EUA/Council of Europe, 4-6 Nov 2004)*
9. *“Bachelor’s Degree: What is it?” (Russia, 23-24 Nov 2004)*
10. *“Improving the Recognition System” (Latvia, 3-4 Dec 2004)*
11. *“European Qualifications Framework” (Denmark, 13-14 Jan 2005)*
12. *“The social dimension of higher education facing world-wide competition” (France, 27-28 Jan 2005)*
13. *“Doctoral Programmes for the European Knowledge Society” (Austria/Germany/EUA, 3-5 Feb 2005)*
14. *“Co-operation between accreditation agencies” (Poland, 14-15 Feb 2005)*

5. AN OVERARCHING QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR THE EHEA

Document: BFUG2 3 19 Feb 04 on the Work Programme

The Chair asked Denmark to introduce the topic based on its initiative in this field. The initiative springs from the successful Copenhagen seminar on qualifications frameworks in March 2003. Denmark has invited other countries with experience of qualifications frameworks to participate in preparing a comprehensive report for its new seminar in January 2005, and a preliminary small working group has been set up for this purpose. Other countries that are also working on national qualifications frameworks will be invited to contribute their experiences. The group has examined concepts and elements to be used not only in a European, but also in national frameworks. The report to be prepared will include discussions on concepts and their relationship to the Bologna action lines, on guidelines for setting up national frameworks, and on the elements, status and scope of a framework for the European Higher Education Area. The EHEA framework will be a meta-framework.

The Chair commented that it is important to consider the language used so as not to give the wrong impression of what is intended. The Board had felt it important to establish a Working Group under the authority of the BFUG, and this was accordingly proposed in the document. The group should be kept small. It will build on the work already done and draw on existing expertise, so as to avoid duplication of networks or efforts.

Several members of the BFUG pointed to other ongoing activities that should feed into the process, such as the work of the ECTS Counsellors on the relationship between credits and

levels and the EURASHE project on integrating shorter higher education in the qualifications frameworks. Also, discussions in seminars will be relevant. It was pointed out that the project should be capable of being connected to other parts of learning, including other levels of the education system.

The composition of the Working Group was discussed. Several BFUG members argued that experts should be included in the process. The Chair replied that the decision to draw on external expertise should be left to the group. Some felt the group as proposed to be too narrow, and several proposals were made for extending it. In addition the importance of reporting back to the BFUG was underlined.

The Chair pointed out that the mandate for the work was given in the Berlin Communiqué, and as such, the BFUG must take responsibility. There is a need for representativeness and for access to expertise. Progress must be communicated to the BFUG. If an expert were to be included in the Working Group, external financing would be necessary. The first task of the Working Group should be to set down the terms of reference, which could then be circulated to the BFUG. Progress must be made in time for the Bergen meeting. The Chair supported the suggestion to establish an electronic contact point for information about the work.

Decision:

The organisation of the work to establish an Overarching Framework of Qualifications for the EHEA is an area for which the BFUG must take responsibility. The work should build on the outcome of the Copenhagen Seminar on 27-28 March 2003 and further studies in this field, including the background research paper for the Irish Presidency Conference on 8 March 2004.

The BFUG appoints a Working Group to coordinate the work to develop an Overarching Framework of Qualifications for the EHEA. Recognising their key role, this Working Group will be chaired by Denmark, along with the Chair of the BFUG. The following members are appointed:

Mogens Berg, Denmark (chair)

The BFUG Chair

Ian McKenna, Ireland (after 1 July)

Jacques-Philippe Saint-Gérand, France

Éva Gönczi, Hungary

Andrejs Rauhvargers, Latvia

The Working Group should draw on external expertise as it feels appropriate. It should define its terms of reference as soon as possible and present them to the Chair for approval by electronic circulation in the BFUG. The Working Group will be required to submit regular reports to the BFUG.

The relationship to other levels of the education system should be considered.

6. ORGANISATION OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS STOCKTAKING

Document: BFUG2 6 27 Feb 04 on Stocktaking

The Chair underlined that the stocktaking is a very important task. It will provide an opportunity for corrective action, and is therefore sensitive. At the same time it must be accurate and objective to achieve its purpose. Its results will influence the tone of the Bergen meeting. The contribution of partners will be important, also the national reports. There must be reporting to the BFUG during the process.

Several BFUG members pointed out that the stocktaking was meant to go beyond the point of view of stakeholders and that experts must therefore be involved. It will have to rely on a variety of sources which are brought together in an analytical way. Professional outcomes should be guaranteed. In response to the question put in the document, the EU Commission confirmed that EURYDICE may extend its scope to cover all the Bologna member states. Germany offered to ask a specialised research institute to contribute. This was welcomed by the Chair.

Some questions were raised with regard to the measuring points identified in the document on the basis of the Berlin Communiqué. The Chair stated that the questions were intended to be indicative and illustrative of the nature of the exercise, and did not represent a final product. The document will be modified accordingly. The Vice Chair pointed out that it is clear that the Ministers want more in-depth reporting than before, and that the report cannot be wholly bottom-up: it must answer the specific questions contained in the communiqué.

Several members argued that the proposed composition of the Working Group was too narrow and that especially new member states ought to be represented. This was followed up in the decision. At the same time it was decided not to include the consultative member organisations, on the understanding that the stocktaking is a political task requiring the identification of corrective action within States. However, the continued cooperation of consultative members in the exercise was seen as absolutely vital, as they will produce data and material necessary for the conclusions of the Working Group.

It was pointed out that a timetable for the exercise needs to be worked out, showing the responsibility of the different participants (“who does what when”). The Chair promised that this would be done.

The role of the national reports was discussed. The Chair pointed out that they offer an opportunity for member states to explain the data brought out by the stocktaking. The stocktaking will be much more focussed than a summary or synergy of national reports. The Chair agreed that the stocktaking must be able to rely on expertise for analysis and interpretation, which must be objective. The results produced must be honest and reflect the actual situation. The three priority areas are the main focus, but the report may comment on other issues.

Decision:

The BFUG takes responsibility for the conduct of the stocktaking exercise. Detailed reports will be prepared on the progress and implementation of the intermediate priorities set in the three priority areas defined for the period 2003-2005: quality

assurance, the two-cycle degree system and recognition of degrees and periods of study.

The BFUG appoints the following members to a working group to carry out the stocktaking and report back to the BFUG:

*Ian McKenna, Ireland
Marlies Leegwater, Netherlands
Germain Dondelinger, Luxembourg
Jan Levy, Norway
Aleksa Bjeliš, Croatia
..., Russia
Peter van der Hijden, EU Commission*

The Working Group is asked to report on progress to the BFUG meeting in October 2004, and to prepare its final report in time for the BFUG meeting in March 2005. The final report should describe the progress of the Bologna Process by January 2005.

The Working Group will draw on expertise as appropriate, and will be assisted in its task by the BFUG Secretariat. (In this regard, it is important that the members of the BFUG undertake to give the Working Group access to all relevant national information resources as specified in the Berlin Communiqué).

The report of the Working Group will form the basis for a report by the Bologna Follow-up Group to the Ministerial Conference in Bergen in 2005. In line with previous conferences, the consultative members may present their own reports to the conference.

The Working Group will take as its starting point Document BFUG2 6 with the modifications agreed on in the meeting.

7. REPORTING TO THE 2005 MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Document: BFUG2 7 26 Feb 04 on Reporting

Members argued that a timetable should be drawn up and that the draft format for the national reports should be prepared as soon as possible. The questions should be put in such a way that countries are free to include the views of stakeholders. The Chair stated that the document would be revised to include a timeline.

Decision:

The General Report on BFUG Activities 2003-2005 should be a short report on all activities in the Work Programme, to which recommendations from seminars and reports on the stocktaking and other projects may be appended. This report will be drafted by the Secretariat and submitted to the BFUG for approval.

National reports on the progress of the Bologna Process should be submitted to the BFUG in good time before the Bergen Conference. A common format for the 2005 reports from member countries will be defined. The Secretariat is asked to produce a draft format as soon as possible.

A timeline of the reporting process should be defined.

The Board takes responsibility for preparatory drafting of the Bergen Communiqué. This may be done through the establishment of a dedicated working group.

8. SUPPORTING NEW MEMBER COUNTRIES

A pre-meeting for new members was held on 7 February. A letter from Serbia and Montenegro asking for support from the Follow-up Group, particularly in the area of quality assurance, was circulated. The EU Commission pointed out that new member countries may seek financial support under the TEMPUS programme. The Council of Europe stated that it would continue its support for new member countries and also candidate members. UNESCO-CEPES similarly informed about relevant activities. It was argued that regional networks may be a good way of supporting new member countries, to which the Chair added that information about appropriate networks can be put on the Bologna-Bergen web site.

Decision:

The BFUG will take an overall responsibility for ensuring that new member countries are supported. BFUG members and consultative members are encouraged to organise support actions in or for new member countries, and the Secretariat is encouraged to participate in seminars to inform about the Bologna Process. An overview of actions in this field should be included in the General Report on BFUG Activities 2003-2005.

9. PROGRESS REPORT FROM ENQA

The Chairman of ENQA, Christian Thune, presented and commented on the written report submitted to the meeting. A recommendation will be made that agencies in all countries that are signatories to the Bologna Declaration should be eligible for membership in ENQA. This will be decided by the ENQA General Assembly in Stockholm in June. The ENQA survey of quality procedures in higher education in Europe will be updated and will be relevant for the stocktaking. In general the ENQA project is proceeding well.

Action:

The BFUG noted with satisfaction the progress reported by ENQA and asked for an updated report to the next BFUG meeting.

10. CONTRIBUTIONS BY THE EU COMMISSION

EUROPASS

Document: COM(2003)796 final 17 Dec 03 on EUROPASS
(available at <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/b/hind.htm>)

EUROPASS is intended to function as a framework to which different transparency instruments may be attached, including the Diploma Supplement. The proposal will be adopted during this calendar year. The Commission has duly noted the concerns raised over issues of ownership, certification and alteration. Working groups have been established on ownership and certification.

Action:

The BFUG took note of the information given by the Commission representative.

Report on European cooperation in quality assurance

The EU Commission is about to present a report to the EU Parliament and the Council of Ministers on cooperation in quality assurance in higher education, with proposals on how to make European quality assurance more coherent in line with commitments made by Ministers in Bologna, Prague and Berlin. The report may have a direct bearing on the ENQA project and the BFUG Work Programme.

Action:

The BFUG took note of the information given by the Commission representative.

Financing activities of the BFUG Work Programme

Documents: SOC/COM 16 Jan 04 on support of Bologna Projects
(available at <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/b/hind.htm>)
“Call for Proposals for Europe-wide Participation Projects contributing to the Realisation of the European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process)” (tabled in the meeting, available at <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/b/hind.htm>)

The Commission tabled the call for proposals, which reflects the initiatives set out in the document *From Berlin to Bergen: The EU Contribution*. Among activities that may be supported are the design of an overarching framework of qualifications for the EHEA, the Bologna Stocktaking and the organisation of Bologna Follow-up Seminars. The call covers all Bologna countries and also potential member states. The deadline is 16 April.

Action:

The BFUG took note of the information given by the Commission representative.

Promoting Bologna

This initiative is also part of the Commission plan *From Berlin to Bergen: The EU Contribution*, presented to the BFUG and Board in Rome. The final version of the document is available at <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/b/hind.htm>. The aim is to make the Bologna Process better known and understood by a variety of measures, including the establishment of national teams of Bologna promoters with financial support from the Commission.

In its meeting on 29 January, the Board welcomed EU/Socrates support for nationally driven activities which are in line with the BFUG Work Programme and national Bologna plans/strategies in member countries, and which draw on expertise gained in other countries and in European institutions and organisations participating in the Bologna Process. However, the Board questioned the usefulness of restricting such support to specific instruments like the proposed team of promoters, and of creating new structures at the European level. This has led to changes in the proposal from the Commission, where the provision of information materials and the setting up of national teams of Bologna promoters are now separate measures.

Action:

The BFUG took note of the information given by the Commission representative.

11. INFORMATION FROM PARTNERS IN THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

Documents: BFUG2 11a EURASHE Working Agenda on the Bologna Process
 BFUG2 11b Contributions by the Council of Europe to the EHEA

Action:

The BFUG took note of the information given by the representatives of EURASHE and the Council of Europe.

12. DATE AND PLACE FOR THE NEXT BFUG MEETING

The Netherlands stated that the BFUG meeting under Dutch Presidency is planned for 12 October 2004, in conjunction with its Bologna Follow-up Seminar on mobility. Luxembourg, which takes over the Presidency from 1 January 2005, informed the meeting that BFUG meetings in the spring of 2005 are planned for 1-2 March and 8-9 April.

Decision:

The next BFUG meeting will be held in Noordwijk, Netherlands, on 12 October.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair acknowledged the contribution of Hermann Müller-Solger, who was present as a member for the last time, to the BFUG.

A list of postal addresses for BFUG members will be put on the web site.

The question of the procedure and dates for electing new Board members from 1 July was raised. The Chair stated that the procedure will be as before.