

BFUG4 Minutes  
29 March 2005

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP  
MONDORF, 1-2 MARCH 2005**

The meeting was held in Mondorf Parc Hotel, Mondorf, Luxembourg. A list of participants is appended.

**OPENING OF THE MEETING**

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, stating that the speaking time for each delegation would be 15 minutes.

**1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

Documents: BFUG4 1a Draft agenda  
BFUG4 1b Draft annotated agenda

Action:

*The agenda was adopted.*

**2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS BFUG AND BOARD MEETINGS**

Documents: BFUG3 Minutes of the BFUG meeting 12-13 Oct 04  
BFUGB5 Minutes of the Board meeting 09 Dec 04  
BFUGB6 Minutes of the Board meeting 25 Jan 05

Action:

*The minutes of the BFUG meeting on 12-13 Oct 2004 were approved.*

**3. ENQA PROJECT ON QUALITY ASSURANCE**

Document: BFUG4 3 Report on Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA

In the Berlin Communiqué, Ministers asked “ENQA through its members, in cooperation with the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB, to develop an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance, to explore ways of ensuring an adequate peer review system for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies, and to report back through the Follow-Up Group to Ministers in 2005”. ENQA Chair Christian Thune presented the final report from the project, characterising the process leading up to it as good and constructive,

with close contact with ENQA members and an excellent working relationship with the E4 partners. The feedback from the BFUG had also been appreciated. The diversity of European higher education had been a premise for the work; therefore there could not be a “one size fits all” approach. Nevertheless, the report contained proposals with a sufficient common denominator to be meaningful.

The standards defined for the different levels (internal quality assurance, external quality assurance processes, quality assurance agencies) are linked and build on each other. ENQA and its partners were invited by the Ministers in Berlin to look also at procedures; in this phase, however, it will be left to the institutions and agencies themselves to decide on the procedural consequences of the proposals. This will be a national process for the coming years. The purpose of the European register is to identify the level of compliance with European standards. A committee had been suggested because there must be legitimacy behind the register. The proposed consultative forum was felt to be a good forum for future substantial discussion of quality assurance issues.

Quoting from the foreword to the report, Thune emphasised that it is not a final statement, but a call for further action. Whenever new approaches are introduced, there is an element of national consideration. The proof of the apple is in the eating; the proposals must be set in motion to show that they work. The Chair thanked ENQA and its partners for the work carried out, commenting that they had covered enormous ground. A number of speakers added their thanks in the course of the discussion.

Questions were raised about the proposed register committee, which might become a very powerful body in the Bologna Process. Why 9 members? How will the representatives of governments be appointed? Why was it stipulated that the members of the committee will act in an individual capacity? Several speakers asked for more explanation of the thinking in the report on this issue, questioning the proposal that the committee would be tasked with defining ownership of the register, and arguing that the easiest way to achieve a light, non-bureaucratic structure would be for the register to be managed by ENQA itself. Clarification of the relationship between the committee and the proposed consultative forum was asked for, and it was argued that the forum needed broader geographical representativity if it is to be some kind of official body. Some members also stated that they needed more time to reflect properly on the report. The Council of Europe pointed out that the *definition* of quality in higher education could not be entirely addressed by the report; whereas some countries take a quantitative approach, others supplement statistics with more qualitative information. Assessments must nevertheless be mutually recognised.

Christian Thune explained the difference between the committee and the consultative forum. The forum is a continuation of the cooperation of the E4, supplemented with other partners. The register committee would have the authority to decide on membership of the register and categorisation of agencies. Its composition could be argued, but it should not be too large. The decisions to be taken concern rather technical issues linked to whether agencies meet the European standards. In most cases that would be clear. This was the thinking behind the proposed composition and the proposal that the members of the committee should act in an individual capacity. He admitted that the selection of government representatives was a difficult point. The composition must be clear before Bergen. Management of the register by ENQA would lead to lack of credibility because ENQA and its member agencies are themselves players. Therefore a broader group and ownership is needed. Ownership is a legal

issue: what does it mean that a committee owns and runs the register? Legal action may be taken, and the idea had been to seek legal advice on this issue before June.

The Chair stated that the committee and the ownership of the register are major questions. Greater precision is required with regard to the composition and responsibilities of the committee. Who exactly will be a member? According to what rules and regulations? The other question that had been raised was the question of legality. What will be the instruments in place in terms of legality? These issues might be referred to the Board for discussion. If agreement was not reached, the issues might have to be reconsidered after Bergen. The Chair stressed that substantial agreement has already been reached.

The EUA commented that for the E4 partners, the register committee is a very important element of the proposals. The European Commission supported the suggestion of the Chair that issues concerning the committee should be referred to the Board for further discussion.

Decision:

*The BFUG thanks ENQA and its partners for the important contribution which they have made to the Bologna Process. The BFUG recommends to Ministers that the proposed standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the EHEA and the proposed model for peer review of quality assurance agencies are introduced and tried out on a national basis in the participating countries and that the results are reported back to the next Ministerial Conference in 2007.*

*The BFUG welcomes the establishment of a European Register of quality assurance agencies and asks ENQA to develop rules and regulations for such a register. The BFUG asks the Board to consider the composition and responsibilities of the proposed European Register Committee as a basis for discussion at the BFUG meeting on 12-13 April 2005.*

**Note.** Germany has made the following reservation with regard to the second paragraph: “In Germany we have a strong debate on the register. Therefore it is important for us to have a clear position and wording as well in the minutes as in the final Bergen document. I am afraid to say that we cannot fully agree to the wording in the ‘Decision’: ‘The BFUG welcomes the establishment of a European Register of quality assurance agencies and asks ENQA to develop rules and regulation for such a register.’ We cannot welcome a register without having transparency of what its responsibilities and power are. As far as this is still in development we have to wait for the results. After all we ask you to delete the words ‘welcomes the establishment of a European Register of quality assurance agencies and’ in the minutes.”

#### **4. PROJECT ON AN OVERARCHING FRAMEWORK OF QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE EHEA**

Documents: BFUG4 4 Report from the Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks  
BFUG4 4a Recommendations from the Bologna seminar on Qualifications Frameworks, Copenhagen, 13-14 January 2005

Working group chair Mogens Berg presented the report. A preliminary version had been discussed at the Bologna follow-up seminar in Copenhagen on 13-14 January, and had been adjusted by the working group based on the discussions at the seminar. The report draws a distinction between national and overarching frameworks. Qualifications are embedded in national frameworks. The report defines major elements of the European framework such as cycles, descriptors and credit ranges, using the Dublin descriptors developed by the Joint Quality Initiative. The criteria and procedures for verification of compatibility between national frameworks and the European framework had been further developed after the seminar. Frameworks benefit life-long learning, and the French system for recognition of prior learning was mentioned as an example of good practice. The European Commission has begun developing a qualifications framework for lifelong learning, and will build on the work carried out within the framework of the Bologna Process for the higher education part.

The Chair congratulated the working group with an excellent report, which like that of ENQA held a very high standard. The Vice-Chair asked for an update on the more general framework. In response the Commission pointed to both the work on a wider European qualifications framework and the parallel work on credits and the relationship between the framework and ECTS. A consultative document on each is planned before the summer, but it is unclear whether it will be before or after the Bergen conference. There will then be a six-month period of consultation, followed by draft recommendations to the European Council and Parliament in the spring of 2006. In particular the wider range of partners in VET necessitated a more substantial consultation process.

A question was raised concerning countries with a division between professional and academic higher education. Are shared descriptors possible? The working group chair replied that there is room for further development of the descriptors. ESIB pointed out that the recommendation from Copenhagen was to further develop the self-certification procedure for 2007. Why was this not followed? The working group chair replied that the question had been heavily discussed in the group. However, if verification procedures were postponed the result might be that the whole process of establishing national qualifications frameworks might be delayed. The revisions made after the Copenhagen seminar had brought quality assurance agencies more closely into the verification process and added criteria and procedural requirements. The EUA pointed out that a number of issues were still open on doctoral studies, cf. the Salzburg seminar. The WG chair replied that the report was not a definitive statement on this point, and that e.g. the use of credit systems in PhD programmes needed to be further discussed.

The Vice Chair stated that the major proposals in the report should be accepted and discussed in the context of the Bergen communiqué. The Bologna Process does want to take a responsibility for the development of qualifications frameworks in Europe, although not all the decisions may be taken at one time. There will be development at more than one speed, with different stages in different countries. The working group had done well to accommodate some of the question marks from the Copenhagen seminar with regard to the self-certification process, which may now work, but at what time is a question for further consideration. The Council of Europe pointed out that the report proposes a simple overarching framework in which different national frameworks can fit in, and that this makes sense of diversity. Any qualification, whether professional or academic, should give access to further studies as well as to the labour market.

The Chair pointed out that only a few countries have qualifications frameworks so far. With regard to the proposed decision, it was nevertheless questioned whether 2010 was too far away, and whether every country should not have started the work at the national level by 2007. Mogens Berg advocated inclusion of the process for verification of compatibility in the decision. The Chair replied that this was already implicit, but that it would be added. In the light of other comments made the Chair stated that the question of stocktaking would be looked at again, but that there was a need to keep the momentum, and that stocktaking was one way of doing this. He therefore advocated some form of stocktaking for 2007. With regard to the other recommendations made by the Copenhagen seminar they would be taken into account in the appropriate contexts.

It was questioned whether the responsibility for maintenance and further development of the European framework should rest with the BFUG as proposed, or whether it should instead be given to existing bodies or networks such as ENIC/NARIC. The Chair replied that the proposal referred to the *political* responsibility, and that the intention was to say who is accountable in the end, not to say anything about the operational side. There would be a need to liaise with relevant bodies and committees.

Decision:

*The BFUG thanks the Working Group for its important contribution to the Bologna Process. The BFUG advises Ministers to adopt the overarching framework of qualifications for the EHEA as proposed by the Working Group and entrust the BFUG with the maintenance and further development of the framework.*

*The BFUG advises Ministers to underline the importance of linking the overarching framework of the EHEA to the broader European framework of qualifications for lifelong learning encompassing general education as well as vocational education and training now being developed in the EU context by the European Commission, and asks the Commission to consult with all parties to the Bologna Process in this work.*

*The BFUG advises Ministers to commit themselves to elaborating national frameworks of qualifications compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications for the EHEA by 2010, and to having started the work by 2007. Ministers may ask the BFUG to follow up the proposals in the report with regard to verification of compatibility between national frameworks and the overarching European framework. With a view to the goals set for 2010, Ministers may charge the BFUG with organising a stocktaking process on the progress and implementation of national qualifications frameworks, including the third cycle, and report back to the next Ministerial Conference.*

## 5. THE STOCKTAKING PROJECT

Documents: BFUG4 5 Minutes of Stocktaking WG meeting 26 Jan 05

A progress report was made by the chair of the stocktaking working group, Ian McKenna. An Irish expert, Cynthia Deane, had been hired to assist in writing the stocktaking report. There had been two working group meetings since January. The first task had been to collect all the necessary material, and one national report was still outstanding. In addition, Eurydice was waiting for comments that would enable it to verify the last five country reports for its *Focus* study, which forms part of the stocktaking. The second issue had been the development of a scorecard/analytical model. What was sought was a measurement of progress. The analytical model was in the process of being finalised, with ten indicators and a five-grade scale for each. The two-cycle degree system was cited as an example. From the scores for each indicator, averages will be calculated both on a thematic and a country basis. This was the first attempt at such an exercise, and would be a substantial one, although not perfect.

The final stocktaking report will start with an executive summary followed by a chapter 1 on methodology. Chapter 2 will contain the overall scorecard, which will be factual. This will be followed by a more detailed analysis in chapter 3 and conclusions and recommendations in chapter 4, cf. the wording on possible corrective action in the Berlin communiqué. An annex will contain the scorecards for each country with a brief commentary. The next steps will be to maintain the pressure to get the data in and to start writing the report. As part of that, each country will be issued with their scorecards and given **5 working days** to say if they agree with the scores. If a country wants changes to be made, the request should be supported by evidence. If there is no response, it will be taken as assent that the scores will appear in the report.

In conclusion the working group chair acknowledged the cooperation of the European Commission and Eurydice, ESIB, the Council of Europe and the EUA, at the same time expressing his hope that the experience gained would be used as the basis for a new stocktaking exercise before the next ministerial conference in 2007. The Chair supported this and underlined the importance of the stocktaking to the Bologna Process.

A discussion ensued on the methodological approach decided on by the working group. It was questioned why a scorecard had been preferred to a more qualitative approach, and doubts were expressed as to whether the results would promote mutual understanding or meet other stated aims, and whether this form of presentation would lead to more clarity. It was argued that more explanation of the methodology would be needed to avoid misunderstanding and misreading. It was also pointed out that a system of grades may be interpreted as conveying a degree of precision for which there is no foundation in reality. A critical stocktaking was needed; the question was how the results should be presented. The report should not be a simplistic bait to the media or others. The positive development of the Bologna Process since 1999 must not be ruined.

Supporters of the approach argued that quantitative indicators are essential, and that the approach of the working group met the objectives formulated by the ministers in Berlin. Clear measurements are necessary; where do we stand at this point if we want to achieve the EHEA by 2010? In addition to allowing ministers and the BFUG to identify areas where little

progress has been made, the report would allow each minister to assess the progress in his or her country.

It was also discussed whether the stocktaking report would be public. Some members argued that the BFUG has no mandate to accept, approve and release such a report to the media. It should be up to the ministers to decide what to do with it. Others pointed out that the results were bound to leak out.

The European Commission commented that Ministers have committed themselves on various occasions to doing things, and that the results have to be measured to avoid losing credibility. The material from the stocktaking is so comprehensive that it will be necessary to present it in a summary form. The working group is looking in detail at the fields which it is covering, producing a nuanced judgement that is looking at two or three aspects. The process has to be fairly easily understandable if it is to have credibility, although colours may not be the best way of presentation. The process is not going to be 100 per cent precise, but nor would it be if presented in text. The papers should be public.

In response to questions about the 5-day limit, the working group chair pointed out that the scores built on material supplied by each country which had already been verified. He confirmed that the time limit would be 5 *working* days. He further emphasised that although the scorecard is factual, the commentary will be qualitative, as asked for by the ministers in Berlin. Also, scorecards have been used before, e.g. the Lisbon scorecard. The general picture was that good progress is being made. In the EU and other forums ministers are making commitments based on the Bologna Process; they need to be sure that these commitments are not built on sand. The country scorecards would not be making judgments, but would present the information from the countries in a way which can be compared. UNESCO-CEPES pointed to the PISA study as a similar kind of exercise with an overall positive impact, beneficial for education in the participating countries. Due account should be taken of the sensitivities involved. The working group chair noted that the work of the group was public and would be made available on the website. The scorecard was still a work in progress.

In conclusion the Chair reminded the meeting that the stocktaking is a review of the current state of the Bologna Process, a review which was asked for by the ministers for political purposes. It is not a minor exercise, but one that will provide a tool for steering the process. The Chair asserted that the model of analysis relying on national reports and Eurydice material is a sufficiently valid tool to reach certain kinds of measurements. The way the data had been gathered was the right way. The presentation needs to be easily understandable; a political tool cannot be a complex tool. The more academic considerations of precision will have been dealt with before the results are presented. The way the working group has been operating so far has been transparent enough. There has been information, which has been checked and verified and which will ultimately be compiled. With regard to the verification procedure, the time limit of five working days should be endorsed. The working group should be asked to produce a first draft of the material for the BFUG meeting in April. This would give a better basis for considering the presentation. The working group should continue to work on the scorecard without the BFUG having taken a definite decision on the presentation. With regard to publication, work *in progress* will not be made public. Discussion can only happen after the material has been endorsed by the ministers if they feel like doing so. A ministerial conference is a public event; the results must therefore also be public.

Decision:

*The BFUG endorses the analytical model proposed by the stocktaking Working Group and asks the group to continue its work, taking note of the comments of BFUG members, and to present its report in time for the next BFUG meeting. It is understood that the stocktaking is reviewing the progress made in the various action lines of the Bologna Process for political purposes. Thus, it needs to be easily understandable and easily readable. Before the next BFUG meeting country summaries based on the material provided will be sent to BFUG members for verification with a time limit of 5 working days.*

## **6. NATIONAL REPORTS 2004-2005**

Documents: All reports received by the Secretariat are available at <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/>

The deadline for submission of the national reports was 14 January 2005. By the time of the meeting the Secretariat had received 42 out of 43 reports.

Decision:

*The BFUG takes note of the national reports received and made available on the Bologna-Bergen website and asks the Secretariat to make sure that all national reports are presented in due time.*

## **7. GENERAL REPORT “FROM BERLIN TO BERGEN”**

Document: BFUG4 7 Preliminary draft report “From Berlin to Bergen”

In its meeting on 14-15 November 2003, the BFUG had asked the Secretariat to draft a general report on progress from Berlin to Bergen, to be presented to the ministers in Bergen. The Secretariat presented the preliminary draft. Conclusions and recommendations from the 14 Bologna follow-up seminars had been included, whereas other material was still coming in. Although the BFUG had asked for a short report, sufficient space needed to be given to properly reflect the efforts laid down in the seminars. Comments to the draft were invited, preferably by e-mail.

Objections were raised to the chapter attempting to define important concepts. It was pointed out that more work was needed if any kind of glossary was to be worked out, and that a larger group of people would need to be involved. Several speakers also doubted if a common set of definitions was desirable, or even possible. Others argued that a common vocabulary is crucial to enhance communication and would be quite helpful to the Process, but that the Bologna-Bergen website would be a more proper place for a glossary. The Chair pointed out that if a glossary was developed, it would build on what had been agreed in the Bologna Process to date. However, the general report was not the right context. The chapter should therefore be taken out, also because it would make the report less focussed. Other speakers noted that if a glossary was put on the website, it should be made clear that it did not have any



special status, but was one glossary among many. Even then more discussion might be needed on its purpose and form. The source of listed definitions should be given.

There was also some discussion about the structure of the report and the order of the chapters, with some speakers arguing that the report should have a clearer focus on the three priority areas defined for the period. The Chair stated that the comments made would be considered in the further drafting of the report.

Decision:

*The Secretariat is asked to continue the drafting, taking note of the comments of BFUG members, and report back at the next BFUG meeting. The chapter on proposed concepts will be deleted.*

## **8. CHALLENGES REGARDING MOBILITY**

Document: BFUGB4 8 Challenges regarding mobility

In view of the fact that a number of problems restricting mobility lie outside the competences of ministers of education (financial, legislative, immigration regulations, etc.), the Communiqué Drafting Group had asked for a document to be prepared by the Secretariat as a basis for discussion in the Board and the BFUG. The document had been discussed in the Board meeting on 25 January. The Chair pointed out that mobility is a long-standing issue both within the Bologna Process and the EU, but that the objectives of increased mobility for both students and staff had only partly been met. New measures must therefore be looked for. Issues such as visa requirements and financing tend to be more complicated within the wider Europe than within the EU. Mobility influences two other transversal issues, the social dimension and the international dimension. There must not be an impression of the EHEA as a “fortress Europe”. Cooperation with other countries must be based on sustainable development of the higher education and research systems of all parties. A twofold decision was looked for: 1. that the BFUG would recognise the importance of simplifying visa requirements, so that this would become part of the agenda for the next two-year period; 2) to obtain a mandate to organise a study on better conditions for student and staff mobility.

A number of speakers questioned whether issues which lie outside the competence of education ministers should be raised in Bergen, arguing that the Bologna Process should concentrate on areas where it can make a difference, such as e.g. ensuring that higher education institutions understand and use the Diploma Supplement. Some nevertheless supported the idea of a study, whereas others suggested that countries may be asked to report on what they have done to improve mobility in the next national reports, keeping within the issues for which the education ministers are responsible. Statistics should be improved.

The Council of Europe, supported by ESIB, argued that since higher education policy interacts with other areas of public policy, issues such as visa regulations that restrict the mobility of students and staff can legitimately be raised. Education ministers represent their respective governments and can consult with other members as they see fit. They may decide that this is something they need to come back to, but it would be a disservice to students and staff not to highlight the issues. ESIB added that mobility is at the core of the Bologna Process, and that there is little sense in other actions if students and researchers cannot move

around and avail themselves of the opportunities. Citing section 6 in the document, ESIB also pointed to mobility as a way of reducing social inequality, but with potentially conflicting goals within the Bologna Process. A statement might be made about this. The Vice Chair also supported raising issues outside the competence of education ministers, citing indications that mobility may not be developing as desired. Lack of progress cannot be due to a lack of priority, cf. the strong EU programmes. Mobility could be an area for stocktaking in 2007. Goals and criteria would then be needed.

The EU Commission pointed out that a new directive on access for study purposes would solve the visa issues within the Union. It also pointed to the mobility programmes, with an increase in mobility of 10% per year, as evidence of the emphasis placed on mobility. Work was under way to improve statistics, studies had been carried out on the social conditions of students, and a working group had been established on portability of loans and grants. All the action lines are instrumental to increasing mobility in Europe. The Commission suggested that peer pressure through stocktaking might be the most effective action that could be taken.

Several more speakers supported raising the issue of visa regulations in Bergen, pointing out that the impression of stricter regulations in the US had recently had a negative impact on student flows there. There should be a political message from Bergen that mobility is an instrument for the EU to achieve the Lisbon goals, and in a wider sense to make European higher education more attractive. However, the wording would need to be carefully considered. It was also pointed out that although surveys and studies are important, one should look for results and actions. It was noted that the conclusions of the document could be made more precise, with specific attention to lack of data, legal obstacles, financial issues, the problem of mobility within the cycles (which is increasing in some countries) and recognition problems. In addition, staff mobility, where there is almost no data, would need to be looked at. In this context legal obstacles as well as the question of direct exchange between universities should be considered. Specific guidance could be given for a study for 2007.

Pointing out that one of the arguments for including the European Commission as a partner in the Bologna Process had been that the Process would inevitably touch on other policy areas, the Chair concluded that mobility is more than a mere technical, educationalist question, where the greatest advances have been made by people other than educationalists. At the Bergen meeting, the issue should be looked at from this wider political perspective. The education ministers represent their governments. The Chair asked for agreement on three points: 1) that a study should be carried out, taking into account the comments made in the meeting; 2) that ministers should be ready to touch upon other issues than education issues; and 3) that members of the BFUG should liaise with relevant colleagues in their home countries to ensure a firm commitment at the April meeting to broadening the discussion on mobility to include other policy areas than those within the authority of education ministers.

Decision:

*Aware of the many challenges to be overcome to further increase mobility between participating countries, as presented in document BFUG4 8, the BFUG underlines the need for further study of these challenges. Ministers may ask the BFUG to organise collection of data concerning staff mobility and in particular obstacles to it, and on the other hand a study on the provision of better conditions for student mobility.*

*The BFUG recognises the need to take into account other policy areas which may present obstacles to student or staff mobility, e.g. visa requirements and procedures. Since a commitment by an education minister commits the government of the country, it is essential for the members of the BFUG to consult with other relevant ministries in their home countries and report back to the next BFUG meeting to enable commitments in wider policy areas to be made.*

## **9. APPLICATIONS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE BOLOGNA PROCESS**

Documents:           BFUG4 9 Applications for participation in the Bologna Process  
                          BFUG4 9a Application letters from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia,  
                          Moldova, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Kosovo  
                          BFUG4 9b Report from Armenia  
                          BFUG4 9c Report from Azerbaijan  
                          BFUG4 9d Report from Georgia  
                          BFUG4 9e Report from Moldova  
                          BFUG4 9f Report from Ukraine  
                          BFUG4 9g Report from Kazakhstan  
                          BFUG4 9h Report from Kosovo

By the 31 December 2004 deadline, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova and Ukraine had applied for participation (membership) in the Bologna Process. All the applications had been found to be in accordance with the prescribed procedure. Kazakhstan is not party to the European Cultural Convention and does therefore not meet the criteria for participation. After the deadline, Kosovo had also applied to join the Process in a letter dated 12.01.05.

The Chair asked the BFUG members to consult with political authorities in their home countries with a view to obtaining endorsement of the applications of the 5 eligible countries. Any reservations should be notified to the Secretariat *before* the next BFUG meeting on 12-13 April. Kosovo is not an independent country and therefore not eligible, but might be invited to attend the Bergen conference as an observer to allow it to profit from the progress made and the discussions going on within the Process. The Vice Chair pointed out that a decision by the BFUG is not needed for the host country to invite observers, and that Kosovo had been invited to Berlin. The European Commission stated that the criterion of being a signatory to the European Cultural Convention has very serious consequences, arguing that it is difficult to make a rational distinction between Azerbaijan and Georgia, which are eligible, and Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, which are not. The Chair replied that this was why the need for consultation was emphasised. In addition to ensuring that the applicant countries satisfy the criteria, the geopolitical dimension needs to be considered. The Vice Chair noted that Kosovo is a special case because it is geographically within the EHEA, but at present not covered by the jurisdiction of any of its members. With regard to countries outside Europe, attempts should be made to reach out, but there were obvious limitations. Contacts must be based on a combination of practical and idealistic considerations. The Council of Europe stated that no plans exist to further expand the coverage of the European Cultural Convention.

Decision:

*Based on the applications and reports received, the BFUG will advise Ministers in Bergen to welcome Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine as participating countries (members) in the Bologna Process, **unless a member country makes a reservation before the next BFUG meeting on 12-13 April.***

## **10. POSSIBLE BOLOGNA PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHER REGIONS**

Document: BFUG4 10 Possible Bologna Partnership with other regions

In the Board meeting on 9 December 2004, the Secretariat had been asked to consider how states outside Europe could form links with the Bologna Process. The Board had then discussed a preliminary document in its meeting on 25 January. The Chair pointed out that the question of partnership with other regions is part of the international dimension of the Bologna Process, which involves both competition and cooperation, including cooperation with developing countries. The document raised two issues: who to cooperate with, and what form the cooperation should take. The objective was to stimulate exchange and mobility, and at the same time make information about the Process as widely accessible as possible.

Several speakers commented on the balance between competition and cooperation. The EUA stated that European universities need more support, and that there should not be too much cooperation with regions with which Europe is in competition. Other regions expect to discuss not only with governments, but with universities. For instance, the EUA has cooperation agreements with Latin America. It was pointed out that the EHEA is a virtual area that cannot in itself compete with the US or Japan, and that the actors are governments and higher education institutions. In order for European universities to be competitive, academic management may need to be reformed. Other speakers emphasised that the basic principles of the Bologna Process should also apply to its relations with other parts of the world. There is a focus on regions with which there is competition, for good reason, but also an obligation to reach out to the less privileged. The growing anxiety in a number of African countries that the Bologna Process will turn into a “Fortress Europe” should be taken heed of. It was noted that China had expressed an interest in the Bologna Process and in taking part in seminars, and had been represented at the seminar on doctoral studies in Salzburg.

There was general agreement that measures should be taken to better inform other countries and regions about the Bologna Process both through targeted campaigns and in other ways. The concept of the Process is well known, but not the reality behind it. For instance, better information is needed about the degree system and the system for quality assurance. The interest from other regions shows that the Process can also act as a model of regional cooperation, though not necessarily replicable in other parts of the world. It was pointed out that with regard to recognition of Bologna degrees outside Europe, the ENIC/NARIC network plays a role. However, in the United States there is no central authority for either higher education or recognition. Information therefore needs to be targeted at conferences etc. It was suggested that the need for better information about the Process ought to be mentioned in the Bergen communiqué. However, the most important thing would be to continue advancing the Bologna Process itself.

In general it was also felt that the conclusions of the document could have gone a bit further, distinguishing between cooperation with countries and cooperation with other regions. To enhance the idea of regional development may be one of the strategies of the Bologna Process. There are many instruments for cooperation with countries, e.g. scholarship schemes. The partners may be different from region to region. More precision would be needed in the communiqué.

The Chair thanked the Secretariat for a thought-provoking document. The comments made would be taken into account. Competition and European responsibility form a double agenda in international partnerships, and both need to be addressed. Ways should be found to organise dialogue within competition. At the same time, Europe's responsibility towards developing countries must be remembered. How can it be made a reality? This again affects immigration policies and related issues, and also relates to sustainable development without brain drain. An organised dialogue is necessary, not just one based on informal contacts.

Decision:

*With a view to making the Bologna Process an open process the BFUG should be prepared for organised contacts with other countries and regions. These contacts should be seen in the context of the competition agenda of the Bologna Process, and should thus serve the purpose of promoting recognition of Bologna diplomas and in general furthering information about the Process to the outside world. At the same time fair guidelines for cross-border higher education need to be established and observed, and academic values should prevail in international academic cooperation and exchange. Organised contacts should also reflect Europe's responsibility for sustainable development vis-à-vis developing countries. Mobility should be encouraged in order to attract students and researchers to European higher education, with due attention to the risks of brain drain in the sending countries.*

## **11. CRITERIA FOR NEW CONSULTATIVE MEMBERS AND BFUG PARTNERS**

Document: BFUG4 11 Criteria for new consultative members and BFUG partners

At the request of the Board, the Secretariat had proposed criteria for admission of organisations that could significantly contribute to the work of the BFUG as new consultative members. The Board had discussed the issue in its meeting on 25 January and asked the Secretariat to present it to the BFUG for decision. The Chair recalled that the EUA and ESIB had been included as consultative members from the beginning, and had later been joined by the Council of Europe, UNESCO-CEPES and EURASHE. Requests had now been received from ETUCE, Eurocadres and UNICE. Criteria must therefore be adopted as a basis for saying yes or no. The Bologna Process and its governing bodies must be kept manageable.

There was general support for establishing criteria for consultative membership. The Vice Chair pointed out that although the proposed criteria were strict, there might be organisations that complied with all of them. Concrete cases could be considered only after the criteria had been approved.

With regard to the proposed “second circle” of BFUG Partners, the Chair stated that elements could be added, e.g. invitations to take part under certain agenda points at BFUG meetings. The European Commission noted that the BFUG can invite whom it needs when it needs. Three groups might be considered: 1) broad social partners – employers and workers in the broad sense (UNICE and the European Trade Union Federation); 2) teachers’ trade unions – ETUCE. The argument that the EUA also represents the employees of higher education institutions might be seen as rather idealistic. 3) Thematic interest groups – art colleges, chemists etc. The criteria should be framed to exclude the latter. In response to 2) the EUA stated that it was in favour of including staff organisations. Implementation is becoming more and more important in the Bologna Process, and the representation of the academic community should therefore be strengthened. Several speakers supported the need to have discussions with employers and unions, and the proposal that a mechanism should be found for this. In response to a question from the Commission, the Secretariat stated that the proposed criteria excluded thematic organisations from becoming consultative members, whereas the issue of representativeness would decide between Education International and ETUCE with regard to the teachers’ unions. The requests received will be discussed at the next meeting. Any decision to admit new consultative members must be taken by ministers, whereas decisions on a looser partnership may be taken by the BFUG itself.

The Chair concluded that the meeting agreed to advise ministers to keep consultative membership restricted, and that the proposed criteria should be adopted, at least for the time being. On this basis the next BFUG meeting would advise the ministers on concrete cases. BFUG Partners may be invited to meetings, seminars, special relevant agenda items etc. at the discretion of the BFUG.

Decision:

*The BFUG adopts the criteria for consultative members as proposed in document BFUG4 11. The BFUG will advise Ministers that consultative membership of the BFUG should remain restricted and that potential new consultative members should satisfy the criteria listed in the document. Decisions are made by the Ministerial Conference.*

*Relevant organisations may be accepted by the BFUG as BFUG Partners, receiving information and invitations to seminars, being invited to participate under relevant agenda points at BFUG meetings, and possibly also being invited to send an observer to the Ministerial Conferences.*

## **12. THE BERGEN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE**

Document: BFUG4 12 Preliminary programme for the Bergen Conference

The Vice Chair updated the BFUG on the preparations for the conference. Invitations had been sent to the ministers responsible for higher education in the participating countries as well as the eligible applicant countries, to the European Commission and to the consultative members. In addition invitations to observers, experts etc. were being prepared. In that context it had been useful to listen to the debate about relations with other parts of the world. Space imposes strict limitations. The BFUG very early took the decision that delegations should have no more than 5 members, including one representative of the national rectors’

conference and one student representative. A number of requests to ease the limit had been received, but this would only be considered in special situations where countries have more than one minister responsible for higher education, or a federal or other system where it must be represented by more than one minister. Any other requests would have to be considered immediately before the conference, and then only if good reasons existed. Countries intending to request a larger delegation were asked to contact the Vice Chair or the Secretariat as soon as possible. If ambassadors of participating countries to Norway are to take part at the conference, they must be included in the national quota of 5. This should therefore be looked into in advance.

The parallel sessions will be modelled on those in Berlin. Terms of reference are in the process of being finalised and will be distributed to the BFUG when ready. There will be a possibility for a brief discussion of these at the next Board meeting. Experts, chairs and rapporteurs will soon be invited. In response to a question from the EUA, the Vice Chair stated that it would be useful to consult with the E4 group on the terms of reference

In response to other questions, the Vice Chair stated that the speaking time for ministers and consultative members had not yet been fixed, but that the time would be limited. All the speakers having a place in the programme would be contacted. A message to national and international press wishing to cover the conference was being prepared and would be put on the website. In conclusion the Vice Chair reminded the BFUG that the deadline for registration is 1 April and that the electronic registration form must be used. Additional practical information will be sent to all participants after the expiry of the deadline. He also reminded the members of the invitation to attend the national day celebrations on 17 May. Members requiring further information were advised to contact the Secretariat.

Action:

*The BFUG took note of the information given by the Vice Chair..*

### **13. DRAFTING THE BERGEN COMMUNIQUÉ**

Document: Draft Communiqué dated 08.02.05 and incoming comments at <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/b/hind.htm>  
BFUG4 13 Working document for the BFUG meeting

As decided in the meeting of the BFUG on 12-13 October 2004, the Drafting Group and the Board had developed a draft communiqué for discussion. The draft had been posted on the service page of the Bologna-Bergen website for electronic consultation among the BFUG members. The Chair stated that the objective at this point was to discuss the content, whereas comments relating to elements of style would be referred to the Drafting Group. The Drafting Group had thought it necessary to restate the vision of the Process, which had to some extent evolved since the Bologna Declaration in 1999. The Process had been a success for two reasons: because it is a voluntary process, and because of the involvement of partners. Progress and actions would be reviewed, and priorities might be changed. The discussion would be organised according to the main headlines of the draft.

Questions were raised about the procedure and whether it was sufficiently transparent. The BFUG had not been presented with a revised text with all possible variants, which would be

the only way of building up consensus. When would it be able to discuss a consolidated text, and who would prepare it? The Chair replied that a consolidated text would be presented to the BFUG meeting in April, after which only small alterations would be made. The text would be prepared by the Drafting Group on the basis of the discussion in the meeting and a new electronic consultation. The timetable for work on the communiqué would be revised accordingly. The Chair emphasised that there was full transparency and that the document showed very openly the conflicts that were there. In the final communiqué there would be a need for a more global view. In terms of substance and content, a number of decisions would therefore have to be made in the present meeting on which direction the communiqué was going to take on different issues.

### Structure

The European Commission stated that the structure of the draft was excellent, but that the final communiqué should be more focussed, concentrating on what is new or changed and on the decisions made, for instance with regard to the proposed standards and guidelines for quality assurance. Other material should be moved to the general report. There would still be enough solid material to produce a shorter communiqué which is full of substance. In support the Council of Europe noted that the communiqué is both the instrument through which political decisions are made by ministers and part of the external communication strategy of the Process. Previous communiqués had also been used to confirm or legitimise the considerable activities going on, but this should instead be done in a comprehensive general report, which the ministers could then take note of in the communiqué. The communiqué should describe overall aims, with the EHEA seen as a consistent whole, and should refer to the full range of purposes of higher education. The objective of a shorter, more focussed communiqué was supported by a number of subsequent speakers.

Another suggestion for the structure was to have two main headings: 1) the experience from Berlin to Bergen, remembering the priorities (progress), and 2) the programme for the future, both the period until 2007 and the following years (action). New priorities should be set, including intermediate priorities for 2007. It was suggested to add something on support for new participating countries. Yet another proposal was to structure the communiqué around “vision”, “mission” and “goals”. The expected outcomes must be clearly stated, otherwise measuring will not be possible.

The question was raised whether the use of “we” meant that signatures were envisaged. The Vice Chair replied that this did not necessarily follow, but that the possibility of inviting the ministers to sign should not be ruled out. This would depend on the substance of the document. The use of the first person was more active. Different views were expressed on whether the first or the third person should be used.

The Chair concluded that the text should be focussed and shortened. The final communiqué should be more of a political document and less of a report. It was too early to decide on the final subdivisions. Focus should be on the three priority areas of the Berlin Communiqué, and then on mid-term objectives from now on. ESIB pointed out that the communiqué is also addressed to those who have to implement the Bologna Process, i.e. the higher education institutions and their staff. It must therefore be clear what is behind the priorities. This makes it easier to get the decisions implemented. Other speakers noted that the communiqué will build on previous communications, and can therefore be short. The Chair concluded that a



number of elements from the present draft communiqué would be moved to the general report, which will then be acknowledged in the communiqué.

### Issues

A discussion followed on individual paragraphs. The comments made will be taken into account in the continuing drafting process, on the agreed basis that the final communiqué will be a shorter, more political document. The social dimension of the Bologna Process and values such as cultural diversity were emphasised. Partners should be acknowledged, but not necessarily named. The EUA stressed the special position of higher education institutions and students in relation to other partners. EURASHE added that the broad variety of the higher education sector must be reflected. The Chair replied that this was part of the *acquis* of the Process, and was therefore clear. The admission of new countries must be referred to, but if something is to be said about supporting them, it should be concrete. This was something to think about until the April meeting.

With regard to the third cycle, the Chair pointed out that there was no agreement on the use of ECTS, and that ECTS would therefore not be referred to in this connection. Focus should be on the importance of doctoral studies for research and for society. The EUA, with the support of the Council of Europe, argued that as the third cycle is not part of the stocktaking, reference should be made to the results of the Salzburg seminar. *Trends IV* should be referred to in connection with references to the stocktaking. EURASHE pointed out that research forms part of the second cycle as well, and that this should be referred to. The Chair agreed with this and with suggestions that the text on doctoral studies should be moved to the part about future actions. On the issue of ECTS credits, the European Commission noted that they can be linked to all learning experiences and outcomes, not just taught courses. A time range of three years thus corresponds to 180 credits. Several speakers supported describing at least the first two cycles in credits, as they are also important in a lifelong-learning perspective.

With regard to quality assurance and qualifications frameworks, the Chair referred to the discussions under agenda items 3 and 4. The EUA signalled that the E4 group would submit further comments on the basis of the discussion. Under lifelong learning, it was proposed to add a reference to recognition and validation of informal and non-formal learning. It was suggested that lifelong learning might be made a priority area for 2007, and that this should be considered at the next BFUG meeting. Lifelong learning is linked to the social dimension and the issue of widening access. The European Commission noted that recognition of prior learning falls under the action line of recognition, and that in general relevant issues were covered under the three priority areas. As for the section on recognition, it was agreed that it should focus more on implementation at the national and institutional level, taking account of the results from the stocktaking.

With regard to the social dimension, the chair pointed out that a number of conclusions had already been drawn, especially in the discussion under agenda item 8. These would be taken into account by the Drafting Group. The European dimension was more of an overarching concept and should be phrased along the different action lines. The external dimension had also been discussed, cf. agenda item 10. The conclusions will be fed into the communiqué. It was argued that the external dimension, the openness of the EHEA, ought to form part of the vision. The Chair replied that this will be one of the priority areas for 2007.

## 2010 and beyond

The Chair pointed out that this would also be discussed under a separate agenda point. The communiqué should focus more clearly on what is to be achieved both in 2007 and in 2010, and then on how to get there. The Council of Europe pointed to the conclusions from the Paris seminar on the social dimension as an argument for making this a priority for the next period. There is concern about Europe moving forward at different speeds; therefore better monitoring of the social situation is needed. The Vice Chair raised the issue of a new stocktaking in 2007. Qualifications frameworks, lifelong learning and mobility could be possible stocktaking objects; also the social dimension. The targets set in Berlin had been concrete, and similarly concrete targets would be needed for a stocktaking project for 2007. Also, the methodology would allow monitoring of the three areas already subjected to stocktaking, which would be interesting.

Reservations were expressed against referring to the Bologna Process as a “cooperative venture”.

Several speakers raised the issue of whether there would be a ministerial conference in 2010, and if so, also one in 2009. The European Commission argued that if there is to be no conference in 2009, the one in 2007 ought to be held in the autumn. The Chair replied that this question needed careful consideration and should be the subject of a separate agenda point at the April meeting.

Decision:

*The Drafting Group is asked to present a new draft of the communiqué to the BFUG meeting in April on the basis of the discussion in the meeting and a new round of electronic consultation. The sequence of Ministerial Conferences in 2007 – 2009/10 will be the subject of a separate agenda point at the April meeting.*

## **14. DRAFT DISCUSSION DOCUMENT FOR THE BERGEN CONFERENCE**

Document: BFUG4 14 The EHEA – A common understanding or a legal instrument?

The BFUG meeting on 13 September 2004 had asked the Secretariat to prepare a discussion document for the ministers in Bergen on what the Bologna process should lead to in 2010 and beyond and whether it should be institutionalised in a more formal way. The tabled document incorporated comments made by the Board at its meetings in December and January. The Chair stated that the ministers should be made aware of the need for such a debate, and that the document was intended to stimulate discussion, not to provide answers. The ministers would then have an “organised brainstorming session”. This mode of working was known from the EU. The result might be a mandate for the BFUG to further explore different scenarios in the coming period. The purpose was to initiate a debate which might continue in a more structured way at the next ministerial conference in 2007 and perhaps lead to a decision in 2009 or 2010. The BFUG should discuss whether the right questions had been asked, whether the document was likely to give rise to a good discussion.

Several speakers pointed out that to some extent the document suggested answers before the questions were asked, and that this might hamper discussion. Definite scenarios should not be given. The references to the Lisbon Process were also questioned. The Chair agreed that these were valid points. The European Commission questioned the envisaged three-stage process. It further argued that the questions should be made more specific in order to avoid diffuse responses. This would give a better basis for further work. The ministers should be asked what are the chief characteristics of the Bologna Process which they would like to preserve after 2010. The tabled draft was too much dominated by structures; the document should be more about the substance. The Commission stressed that the Bologna Process belongs to the participating countries, and that asking it to take the Secretariat would therefore be odd. In response to this it was noted that the value of ministers' meetings is that they can talk about the issues that concern them, and that their interest lies in trying to reach their goals by whatever means. They should therefore be given the opportunity to discuss the issues raised.

ESIB expressed agreement with the European Commission that the discussion should be about the chief characteristics of the Bologna Process. Partnership with intergovernmental organisations, institutions and students should therefore be mentioned. The bottom-up nature of the Process might also be mentioned. It was questioned whether the discussion would not be premature without more information about the situation in 2010. A deficit analysis might be conducted, and then an analysis of whether the Bologna Process was a good instrument for reaching the goals. Instead of a free discussion among ministers it might be better and more effective to include some of the questions in the Bergen communiqué and ask for further elaboration before 2007. A concept for 2010 should be elaborated. The Council of Europe noted that the aim was to set in motion a process which ensures that the goals are reached in 2010, making the EHEA a reality, and that the process should be set in motion now. The EUA noted that implementation should be taken into account, although not as a main topic.

The Chair noted that the comments made would lead to considerable redrafting of the document, focussing on the characteristics of the Bologna Process and which of them it is most important to preserve. Possible scenarios and solutions should not be indicated before the questions. The questions should be made more closed. The next BFUG meeting would decide whether the issues in question should be raised in a separate discussion document, as proposed, or in the communiqué itself. A new draft would be presented, at the same time testing what inclusion of some parts of it in the communiqué would look like. As a personal opinion the Chair stated that he still favoured a separate discussion document

Decision:

*The Secretariat is asked to present a revised draft to the next BFUG meeting based on the comments made by members of the BFUG.*

## **15. TIME AND PLACE FOR THE NEXT MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE**

Document: BFUG4 15 Letter from Minister of Education and Skills Charles Clarke dated 11 November 2004 to Minister Maria van der Hoeven

The deadline for candidacies for the next Ministerial Conference was 31 December 2004. The United Kingdom is the only candidate country. In its meeting on 25 January, the Board

recommended that the offer from the United Kingdom to host the next Ministerial Conference should be accepted. The UK noted that the time of the conference had not been finally decided, but that the venue would be London. A Secretariat would be established to take over from that provided by Norway in the present period. ESIB pointed out that in the autumn of 2005 the host country and presidency will be the same country. Several speakers stated that this was not a problem, the Vice Chair noting that the idea of the present arrangement was to secure proper coordination between the BFUG and the host country.

Decision:

*The BFUG recommends that the offer from the United Kingdom to host the next Ministerial Conference in the Bologna Process is accepted.*

## **16. CONTRIBUTIONS FROM MEMBERS AND CONSULTATIVE MEMBERS**

The Council of Europe and UNESCO-CEPES briefly informed about seminars which they had held for new participating countries in the Bologna Process and applicant countries.

Action:

*The BFUG took note of the information given by the Council of Europe and UNESCO-CEPES.*

## **17. DATE AND PLACE FOR THE NEXT BFUG MEETING**

It had previously been decided that the next BFUG meeting will be held on 12-13 April in Mondorf. Participants should arrive in the evening of 11 April to allow the meeting to start no later than 9 a.m. on 12 April.

Decision:

*The next BFUG meeting will be held in Mondorf on 12-13 April, starting in the morning of 12 April.*

## **18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business.