

## **CAPACITY BUILDING ACROSS THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA**

### **Introduction**

1. The Bergen Communiqué underlines the importance of ensuring that progress towards the Bologna goals is consistent across all participating countries. Ministers explained that they saw a need for greater sharing of expertise to build capacity at both institutional and governmental level. They also committed to assisting the new participating countries to implement the goals of the Process.

2. This paper invites BFUG members to consider how this might be achieved.

### **Methods used so far**

3. The Council of Europe has played the lead role in assisting new participating countries to implement the Bologna goals. They have worked with EUA and UNESCO- CEPES to hold seminars for the new participating countries in South East Europe and Russia as well as in the five countries that joined the process in 2005 (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) . EURASHE has also held seminars to support the implementation of Bologna reforms. Through TEMPUS and CARDS, the European Commission too has provided assistance for some countries.

4. Bologna seminars have also provided opportunities for all those involved in the Bologna Process to exchange ideas and information and help drive progress at both institutional and governmental level.

### **Focus on implementation**

5. We recognised in Bergen that the necessary legislative reforms are now largely in place. One of our main challenges for the next two year period will be to ensure effective implementation of the reforms. This will require engagement on the part of all those involved in the Bologna Process: higher education institutions, student bodies, social partners, national governments, their agencies and international organizations.

6. As is always the case, we will have to undertake this work against a background of limited resources. We will therefore have to identify methods of supporting implementation that can be delivered within the resources available to us. This will require us to identify efficient and economic means of support. We will also need to ensure that the support structures we set up are sustainable over the period required to achieve full implementation of the reforms.

7. We should not underestimate the scale of the work to be undertaken. In particular, countries that joined the Process in 2003 or 2005 may require a significant level of support to “catch up” with countries involved since the outset.

### **Areas for support**

8. The Stocktaking Report produced for the Bergen summit confirmed that the Bologna goals are being pursued and targets are being met by the great majority of countries. The report focused on the three priority areas of quality assurance, the two-cycle degree system and recognition of degrees and periods of study. The analysis showed that the number of countries in each colour category was:

- Red 0
- Orange 3
- Yellow 11
- Light Green 19
- Dark Green 10

9. It found that countries have made the most progress in:

- ratifying the Lisbon Recognition Convention
- implementing the European Credit Transfer System
- implementing the two-cycle degree system.

10. The report also found that countries were making the lowest rate of progress in:

- student participation in quality assurance processes
- level of student participation in the two-cycle system
- international participation in quality assurance.

11. There is however considerable variation at national level across all participating countries. For example, six countries were rated excellent for student participation in quality assurance processes; 17 for their level of student participation in the two-cycle process and 12 for international participation in quality assurance. At least one country was rated excellent for each of the ten criteria used in the Stocktaking Report. This suggests that BFUG has access to considerable expertise across all the key areas of the Bologna Process and that we have the ability to support capacity building across the European Higher Education Area.

12. While all members of the Bologna Process should reach the goals of the Process at the stipulated time regardless of the date of their adhesion, it is reasonable to assume that at least some of the countries that joined the Process in 2003 and in 2005 may require extra support. As far as possible, such support should be targeted to issues and areas where the countries in question feel the needs for an benefit of external support is the strongest and/or which have been identified as weak points though the stocktaking exercise.

### **Options for capacity building**

13. The Council of Europe has indicated that it is willing to continue to take a lead role in assisting new participating countries. The Council will focus on assisting countries in South East Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States that joined the Bologna Process in 2003 or 2005. It is also willing to consider requests

for assistance from other countries. The Council intends to offer assistance in response to requests from, and discussion with, the countries concerned.

14. There is, of course, also an incumbent responsibility on the competent authorities of participating countries to ensure that external assistance to their country is well coordinated and that different initiatives and offers of assistance are complementary rather than overlapping. All participating countries will wish to consider how they might contribute to capacity building within the European Higher Education Area, without duplicating any function already being fulfilled by the Council of Europe, ENQA, EUA or the European Commission.

15. Bologna Promoters supported by the European Commission have been appointed in all countries taking part in the Bologna Process. Their role is to engage with institutions and other stakeholders to promote awareness of the Process. Many are actively engaged in supporting the implementation of Diploma Supplements. BFUG representatives could consider how best their Bologna Promoters might contribute to capacity building at institutional, regional and national level.

16. The ENIC/NARIC network has a key role to facilitate mutual recognition of higher education qualifications. Ministers agreed in Bergen that participating countries should draw up national action plans to improve the quality of the process associated with the recognition of foreign qualifications. The ENIC/NARIC networks could be asked to consider what further actions they might take to support developments in the area of recognition.

17. We expect that there will be a Bologna Working Group set up to consider the implementation and further development of the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. Mogens Berg from Denmark, who will chair this group, has suggested that this group could provide assistance to participating countries working to introduce national frameworks.

18. We envisage that seminars will continue to play a role in capacity building. We expect that in addition to seminars included in the Bologna Work Programme, there will be a considerable number of other events associated with the creation of the European Higher Education Area. This is in line with the recognition in Bergen in May 2005 that the Process is moving towards a period of consolidation and implementation. Participating countries may want to offer to hold workshops to cover areas where they have expertise. They could be organised at regional, national or European level and could be aimed at institutional staff as well as government agencies and the social partners. There could also be regional events, where neighbouring countries come together to discuss in detail how to implement the Bologna reforms. The Secretariat's role would be to advertise these events on the Bologna website, as has been the practice over the last two years.

19. As highlighted above, the first Stocktaking Report showed that there was considerable variation across the 45 participating countries in the level of progress being made in the three priority areas. The Secretariat could invite countries with particular areas of expertise to indicate whether they are willing to share their good practice with other countries, whose progress in that particular area has been less marked. At the same time, we could invite countries to indicate to the Secretariat

areas in which they might welcome some support. This would allow the Secretariat to put countries willing to share experiences in touch with one another.

20. There may also be merit in promoting better linkages amongst the organisations working on specific Bologna related issues. For example, the Secretariat could act as a broker and set up a list of organisations working on qualifications frameworks in each participating country. A simple email distribution list would allow all those working in this area to exchange information and develop a support network. Contact lists could be set up for all the priority areas for the next Stocktaking exercise. This could include:

- quality assurance
- qualifications frameworks
- recognition of degrees and periods of study (including joint degrees)
- recognition of prior learning.

21. So far, BFUG meetings have focused on developing and monitoring the delivery of the Bologna Work Programme. We could expand the range of the discussions, by including a “Bologna reforms item” for each meeting. Countries could offer to give a short presentation on an area where they have either been successful in implementing Bologna reforms or are facing difficulties. Each presentation could be followed by a question and answer session, to allow BFUG members to exchange experiences and good practice. Alternatively, due to pressure on time in the formal Bologna meetings, such sessions could be offered on an optional basis immediately before or after each BFUG.

## **Conclusion**

22. BFUG is invited to:

- consider the options for capacity building suggested in this paper
- explore whether there are any further options that could be pursued
- indicate which options should be taken forward.

Bologna Secretariat  
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