

BFUGB10 Minutes  
29 June 2005

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD  
OF THE BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP  
LUXEMBOURG, 15 JUNE 2005**

A list of participants is appended.

## **OPENING OF THE MEETING**

Board members from Denmark, Greece and Turkey elected at the BFUG meeting on 18 May 2005 attended for the first time. The Chair welcomed the new members.

### **1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

Documents:           BFUGB10 1a Draft agenda 26 May 05  
                          BFUGB10 1b Draft annotated agenda

Decision:

*The agenda was adopted.*

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

Documents:           BFUGB9 Minutes of the Board meeting 18 May 05  
                          BFUG6 Minutes of the BFUG meeting 18 May 05

Greece noted that they disagreed with the term “short cycle” and the rationale behind it under item 4 in the minutes from the Board meeting. The Chair replied that this was what was said at the meeting, before the ministers’ decision to change the wording of the draft communiqué.

Decision:

*The minutes of the Board meeting on 18 May 2005 were approved.*

### 3. REFLECTIONS AFTER THE BERGEN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Document: None

Jan Levy summed up his experiences of the period from Berlin to Bergen, cf. slides at [http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/b/Board\\_Meetings/050615\\_Luxembourg/050615\\_Experiences\\_Levy.ppt](http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/b/Board_Meetings/050615_Luxembourg/050615_Experiences_Levy.ppt).

He emphasised the importance of deciding on a work programme for the next period as early as possible, cf. agenda item 5. The Board should be represented in working groups in order to maintain the link with the governing structures of the Process. With regard to the drafting of the communiqué, an important lesson was that after an open round of consultation, a new, consolidated proposal should be presented. It is important to embed BFUG proposals properly at the national level.

With regard to the ministerial conferences, Levy noted that there are in effect two groups of participants, with an “inner circle” consisting of the ministers and their advisers. Are the parallel sessions the best way of involving the outer circle, those who are not directly involved in the ministers’ meeting? A majority of countries had wanted an increase in the delegation size for the Bergen conference. Keeping the focus on the ministerial meeting and at the same time ensuring broad participation of stakeholders was a difficult balancing act. Both in Bergen and Berlin the host country had decided who to invite as observers, but it might be argued that the BFUG should be involved. The Council of Europe supported this, noting that the BFUG now has a mandate to follow up the external dimension.

The Chair commented that a day and a half is the maximum possible length for a ministerial conference. The problem of the relationship between BFUG members and ministers is a general one; it is sometimes difficult to know whether the former are just stating their own opinions in BFUG meetings, or those of their ministers. The Council of Europe noted that this point might be stressed by the incoming UK Chair. The Chair further noted that having a BFUG/Board meeting immediately before the ministerial conference creates logistical problems, and that an earlier date should therefore be found in future. The meeting between ministers Cimet and Biltgen in late 2004 had been very useful in establishing trust between the Chair and the organising country. With regard to working groups for the next period, the Chair argued that they should have a representation of different regions and educational systems; this was also a lesson learnt from the ENQA project. The EUA supported this view.

Several speakers questioned the format of the parallel sessions. The Secretariat noted that all the central people from the organising side had been in the ministerial meeting with the “inner circle”, which contributed to a more tenuous relationship between the parallel sessions and the rest of the conference. The Council of Europe suggested that a sequential format might be considered, with a seminar with broader participation followed by the ministerial meeting proper. This time expectations of what would be carried over from the parallel sessions and reflected in the communiqué had not been fulfilled.

At the Bergen conference a number of amendments to the communiqué were tabled at the last moment, either in the BFUG meeting the day before or in the ministerial meeting. There were different views on this. While some thought that the ministers ought to have been given more background information on problematic points, the Chair expressed himself in favour of last-minute interventions, because they give ministers a chance for real discussion. In addition

such interventions may be meant mainly for the home audience. It is common e.g. in EU contexts that you have to strike a deal. It was suggested that, after controversial issues had been detected, an alternative might be a “crisis management group”, i.e. an informal group to inform the ministers/countries of the issues in question. Others pointed out that the Chair already fulfilled this function. While some thought that there had been a lack of information, others argued that proposals were the result of the political situation in individual countries, and that lack of information was not the issue. In addition what goes on at the national level can change quickly, so that it is difficult to plan things too long in advance. The Chair summed up this point by noting that last-minute discussions will inevitably arise; that is the nature of politics. Both the host country and the Chair need to be sensitive to this, and it is important for all parties concerned to make sure that the Chair is well informed.

The Council of Europe raised the question of how to stimulate more discussion on what the participants have in common, i.e. the Process and its policies, rather than what is going on in the respective countries. Reports on what is going on at the national level are important, but should not take up as much time in the ministers’ meeting as they did in Bergen.

The Chair of the stocktaking working group, Ian McKenna, had sent a message with a number of recommendations regarding continuation of the stocktaking process. Electronic consultation should take place in advance of the BFUG meeting in October with a view to appointing a new working group at the meeting. The Board should look to identify candidates, including sceptics. The incoming Chair should look into possibility of engaging an expert immediately. The working group and EURYDICE should be the only sources of data and analysis in order to ensure consistency of data. The work plan and methodology should be agreed at the October meeting. The expert engaged in the previous period, Cynthia Deane, had also sent a message emphasising the need to clearly spell out the importance and added value of stocktaking. The Secretariat pointed out that if an expert is again engaged, the relation between the expert and the Secretariat must be clear from the start.

The EUA suggested that it might be involved as an observer in the next stocktaking process. It was confirmed, in response to a question from EUA, that the stocktaking exercise would, as over the last two years, concentrate on monitoring progress in respect of governmental action while the TRENDS Report would focus on implementation in institutions. The Council of Europe noted that in addition to regional representation the working group should include members with special knowledge of the areas in question. At the same time the working group should be kept small. It was pointed out that if the working group is established at the October meeting, it should be asked to present its final questionnaire for adoption in the spring meeting of the BFUG. This time some countries had been surprised by the specific benchmarks. The Chair replied that the new working group should be appointed by the BFUG meeting in October and should include at least one member of the previous working group. He further agreed that the questions and methodology to be used should be endorsed in the spring meeting. Although stocktaking and further development of the European register for quality assurance agencies were separate processes, the stocktaking working group should liaise with the E4 group on stocktaking in the area of quality assurance.

The European Commission pointed out that it needed to be made aware of any actions for which Commission support would be sought before 1 December.

Action:

*The Board took note of the issues raised.*

#### **4. DOCUMENTATION OF THE BERGEN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE**

Documents: See <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/>

All working documents and available presentations from the conference have been posted at the Bologna-Bergen web site, including documentation relating to the parallel sessions. A final report will be produced by the host country when the documentation is complete. This will be a compilation, similar in format to the Berlin report. The Secretariat noted that some of the *results* may also be published on the website, e.g. what the overarching framework looks like after the ministers' decision, the criteria worked out by ENQA etc. With regard to the recommendations from the parallel sessions, the Chair noted in reply to a question from ESIB that it will be up to the BFUG to decide how they will be used, and that the decision cannot be taken until all the material from the sessions, including the summaries of the rapporteurs, is available.

Action:

*The Board took note of the information given by the Secretariat.*

#### **5. FOLLOW-UP OF THE BERGEN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE**

Documents: BFUGB10 5 Follow-up of the Bergen Ministerial Conference  
BFUGB10 5a Draft and final form of the Bergen Communiqué  
BFUGB10 5b The framework of Qualifications – Short cycle  
BFUG2 3final BFUG Work Programme 2003-2005

The Secretariat introduced document BFUGB10 5, which listed points that were highlighted for follow-up in the Bergen Communiqué, with suggestions for possible working methods. The Chair stated that the UK presidency should be asked to come up with a proposal at the BFUG meeting in October on the new work programme and the working method under each item, and should liaise with people as it deemed necessary. The document listed the relevant issues, and a lot of information was available already. In reply the UK stated its intention to have informal consultations among the Board in advance, without another meeting, cf. agenda item 9.

It was pointed out that commissioning a study was also a possible tool, for instance with regard to mobility of staff and students. There was some discussion on the points listed in the documents. With regard to national action plans for recognition, it was noted that the ENIC-NARIC networks might be able to contribute. The European Commission pointed out that it has launched work on data for staff mobility, and promised to communicate with the UK Chair on the issue. ESIB noted that the main elements of the national reports for 2007 should be agreed at the October meeting as a basis for deciding on the final list of questions for the stocktaking in the spring meeting of the BFUG. Coming up with data both on mobility and on the social situation of students would involve a significant amount of work. In reply the UK noted that one of the first things a working group would have to do is look at what data already exists.

The European Commission also repeated that it will need to know by 1 December what projects will seek support, as it is preparing its own work programme. Information about this will be given at the October meeting. The Chair replied that the main features of the new work programme would be clear in October, but not necessarily the detailed financial implications. It was pointed out that the terms of reference for any new working groups will have to be decided by the BFUG in October in order to be able to apply to the Commission for support. The working groups should be able to work immediately after the October meeting.

The issue of further work on qualifications frameworks in the light of the decisions made in Bergen was raised. The Commission stated that it would publish its blueprint for a framework for lifelong learning in July, with a relatively short period of consultation. The Bologna Process should react immediately if it does not agree with the proposals concerning higher education. The Education Committee will not discuss the proposal until next year. Mogens Berg noted that he was a member of the Commission's expert group. If the BFUG was to give an opinion, it would have to be in the October meeting. The Chair pointed out that the Commission's proposal would eventually result in a recommendation, which would have a wider scope than just higher education. What would be published in July would be a document for reflection; the recommendation would follow only later. The work carried out within the Bologna Process must be reflected, and the BFUG should therefore review the Commission's proposal. The working group on an overarching qualifications framework might prepare a proposal for a reaction by the BFUG, communicating with the next Chair. Mogens Berg noted that the expert group had advised the Commission to send the proposal to *all* the participating countries in the Bologna Process, not just those which are EU members. ESIB pointed out that the reactions of non-EU countries would still not carry the same weight as those of member countries. The Chair concluded that in addition to consultation at the national level, is essential that the Bologna Process as such should give one answer to the proposal, consistent with what was decided in Bergen, as the Process has endorsed the overarching European framework of qualifications for higher education. The Secretariat pointed out that the overarching framework adopted by Ministers in Bergen did not include a description of a short cycle within the first cycle and would simply be the framework of the three main cycles. It would be posted accordingly at the Bologna web page.

Decision:

*The Board strongly recommends that a Work Programme for the period 2005-2007 is agreed at the BFUG meeting in October, and that working groups should be appointed by the meeting where appropriate. The incoming Chair will present a proposal in consultation with the Board.*

## **6. BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP SEMINARS**

Document: BFUG2 4 Criteria for Bologna Follow-up Seminars 2003-2005

In the previous two-year period, proposals had been invited for seminars and the BFUG selected the ones that would go into the work programme. The document was a reminder of the criteria that had been established in that connection. There was agreement that there had been too many seminars in the previous period, and that for the new work programme to be as

clearly focussed as possible, seminars would need to be closely integrated. In addition, countries/organisations will continue to organise seminars for local or regional development and dissemination, but these will not form part of the work programme. There will, however, be a calendar of relevant events on the Bologna Process website as before. Also, countries may offer to take the lead in areas central to the work programme, as Sweden had already done with regard to the external dimension. In addition, a seminar might be a good way of presenting and discussing preliminary results of projects, e.g. a report from a working group, as had been the case with the report on qualifications frameworks. In any case the communiqué should be taken as the starting point.

The Board further agreed that the new work programme would need to be adopted at the October meeting. It would not be practical, nor desirable, to make a call for proposals in the meantime. The EUA noted that it had been given a mandate with regard to doctoral studies in the Bergen Communiqué, but that there were many possible ways of tackling it. Austria and France had indicated an interest in being partners in the project. There might be a need for a working group, but there was also a need to involve both the academic community and the rest of the BFUG. In general, the stakeholders were concerned by all the points listed for follow-up.

The Chair concluded that a proposal for the new work programme, with indications of methodology including seminars if relevant, should be presented at the BFUG meeting in October, cf. agenda item 5. A wish was expressed for the documents to the meeting to be circulated as early as possible.

Action:

*The Board took note of the issues raised.*

## **7. MANDATE AND PROCEDURES FOR THE BOARD AND THE SECRETARIAT**

Document: BFUG1 3 Responsibilities of the Board – Tasks of the Secretariat

The Secretariat pointed out that although it communicates with the Chair, it should be formally responsible to the BFUG. The Secretariat works continuously, and it is important to establish contact with each new incoming Chair as early as possible. The Chair agreed that the Secretariat should be responsible to the BFUG, which is the governing body put in place by the ministers. It is a tool that the presidency uses, but is responsible to the whole group, cf. the Secretariat of the European Council. It was pointed out that the existing document makes a useful distinction between administrative aspects of the Secretariat and its responsibility towards the Chair. It needs to be updated, but the principles are OK. Although some speakers felt that it might be more clearly stated that the Secretariat is responsible to the BFUG as such, it was agreed not to present the document to the BFUG for a new discussion, but to update it to fit the period 2005-2007.

Decision:

*Document BFUG1 3 Responsibilities of the Board – Tasks of the Secretariat will be updated with the correct dates and host country for the period 2005-2007.*

## **8. DEADLINE FOR CANDIDACIES FOR HOSTING THE 2009 MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE**

Document: None

At the conference in Bergen, several ministers declared their interest in hosting the ministerial conference in 2009. Proposals included the Be-Ne-Lux countries, Croatia and Slovakia. There was some discussion as to whether a deadline of 31 December 2006 would be too late for the next host country to make the necessary preparations. However, it was pointed out that any country making a serious bid would have to ensure that it was ready. Furthermore, if there were several candidates, diplomacy would come into operation and the candidates might well find a solution between themselves, as had happened before. It was agreed that at the BFUG meeting in October countries should be asked to put forward or reconfirm their candidacies, that a deadline should be announced, and that this might appropriately be 31 December 2006. The Chair remarked that France had indicated that it would like to host a celebratory meeting in 2010, but that this would be different from the ministerial conferences.

Decision:

*The BFUG should set a deadline for candidacies for the next Ministerial Conference at its meeting in October.*

## **9. DATE AND PLACE FOR THE NEXT BOARD MEETING**

Document: None

The incoming Chair had indicated that there would be no need for a second Board meeting before the BFUG meets in Manchester in October. No new date was fixed.

## **10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

As this was his final meeting as Chair, Germain Dondelinger thanked the Board and the Secretariat for a positive and fruitful period of cooperation. Also Marlies Leegwater thanked the Secretariat for 1½ years very good cooperation as it was her last Board meeting.

ESIB presented its new representative, at the same time providing information about the launch meeting for the new Eurostudent report just after the Board meeting.