

BFUG11 minutes
17-18 April 2007

Minutes of the Bologna Follow-up Group Meeting

Berlin 17-18 April 2007

The meeting will be held at the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften in Berlin. A list of participants is appended.

1. Welcome and introduction to the meeting

Peter Greisler (Chair) welcomed members to the second meeting of the Follow-up Group under the German Presidency.

2. Adoption of agenda

Documents: BFUG11 2a Draft Agenda
BFUG11 2b Draft Annotated Agenda

The agenda was adopted without comment.

3. Minutes of the last BFUG

Documents: BFUG11 3a Minutes of BFUG10 5-6 March 2007

Two amendments were requested on the minutes of the last meeting. It was agreed that the estimated cost of the European register of Quality Assurance Agencies should be *Euros 185,000-245,000*. Under applications to join the Bologna Process the reference should be to the "*Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)*", not Northern Cyprus.

4. BFUG work programme: progress reports from projects and working groups

Documents: BFUG11 4 Draft Stocktaking Report
BFUG11 4a Score Card Report with Numbers

Stocktaking

4.1 Andrejs Rauhvargers, Chair of the Working Group, presented a general overview of the stocktaking exercise. He described the approach taken, highlighted the areas where there had been most progress and gave an overview of progress against each indicator.

4.2 Conclusions so far indicated that good progress had been made in the implementation of three-cycle degree system. This had been conformed by Eurydice's findings. External quality assurance and student participation in quality assurance processes had greatly improved, a conclusion backed by evidence from ESIB. There was less progress on international participation in quality assurance area and the development of national qualifications

frameworks.

4.3 Recommendations to countries would include working towards a national qualifications framework, and continuing to make progress against all action lines, including taking forward National Action Plans for Recognition. Recommendations for Ministers would include the need to set clear policy goals, and the fact that stocktaking had been established as an integral part of the Bologna Process.

4.4 It was agreed that:

- *The stocktaking report would be presented to Ministers without amendment.*

5. London Communiqué

Documents: BFUG11 5 Draft London Communiqué

5.1 The Chair (Peter Greisler) presented the draft Communiqué for discussion. He stressed that the structure had been generally accepted; only concrete proposals on subject content, important issues should be presented for discussion. Linguistic changes would be accepted without discussion.

5.2 An extended discussion of the Communiqué line by line followed.

6. BFUG work programme: progress reports from projects and working groups (ctd)

Social Dimension and Data on Staff and Student Mobility

Documents: BFUG11 6a Report from the Social Dimension and Data on Student and Staff Mobility Working Group

6.1 The Chair of the working group, Annika Pontén briefly outlined the basic structure of the report with the conclusions and recommendations. The approach to the report had been discussed and agreed at previous BFUG meetings. The recommendations of the report proposed actions at national level and European level. At national level countries would report by the next ministerial conference on the implementation of action plans and strategies to support the social dimension. At EU level the working group recommended that Eurostat, in conjunction with Eurostudent would work to develop more comparable and reliable data to inform progress towards the overall objective for the social dimension in all Bologna countries.

6.2 Germain Dondelinger, as Chair of the data subgroup, had looked at data on mobility from a wide range of sources in Europe and worldwide. Without a common definition, the overall picture of mobility of students and staff was unclear. As for the social dimension, the working group was recommending actions at national and EU level to increase mobility, and for EUROSTAT to be charged with the collection of data on the mobility of staff

and students. The report identified challenges for individuals and HEIs to make connections between the social dimension and mobility and proposed that BFUG continue the debate in the next working period.

6.3 Peter Greisler proposed discussion of the communique text for the social dimension and mobility working group as linked to the report. EUA had prepared a draft text for comment as agreed at the last meeting to strengthen the recommendation to ensure action on the social dimension would be taken and followed up with stocktaking.

6.4 It was agreed that:

- *The recommendations from the Working Group would be reflected in the draft Communiqué text. The draft Communiqué text would be amended in line with the changes proposed by EUA*

European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies

Documents: BFUG11 6b E4 Report covering letter
BFUG11 6c E4 Group report

6.5 Peter Greisler introduced the important issues for discussion and careful decision, following the discussion at the previous meeting. He thanked the E4 group for the work done since then. He reminded BFUG that agreement was needed on the principles on which the register would be based, not detailed points of implementation. He also reminded BFUG that the register would not be a regulatory authority, but rather a voluntary list of quality assurance agencies that were operating in line with the E4 standards and guidelines.

6.6 Peter Williams (ENQA on behalf of E4) presented the working group report, which had been revised to address the issues raised about the structure, funding and governance of the register committee. The covering letter, which summarised the changes, clarified that the register would only include those agencies that met the agreed criteria, demonstrated by review at national level. The register would be a legal non-profit entity. The register committee would comprise eight nominees with knowledge and expertise in HE and quality assurance and five observers selected by BFUG as observers to ensure decision making processes were fair and transparent. To promote sound judgement and consistency within the register committee, E4 was recommending a small membership with a period of tenure to be agreed (3-4 years?) and applied on rotation to ensure overlap for effective handover. It was estimated that finances in the order of £185K/Euros254K would be required to support the establishment of the register. E4 members would not be able to contribute funding directly. Applicants would be charged a fee for asking to be considered for inclusion on the register. The EC had offered to provide some funding to support the establishment of the register.

6.7 In discussion the following points were made:

- The new proposal was welcomed and largely agreed. It would be important to avoid conflicts of interest to assure independence and for the register to be self financing.
- There was support for an evaluation/review in two years and regular reports to BFUG.
- The draft London communiqué text should be aligned to the reference in the Bergen Communiqué to the role of national reviews. The draft communiqué text should also refer explicitly to the different roles of members, observers and stakeholders.
- There would be a need to look at costings beyond the start up funding being provided by the EC, in order to sustain the register independently of governments.

6.8 *It was agreed that:*

- *The E4 report should be presented to Ministers for endorsement in London.*

External Dimension

Documents:

6.9 In her update to BFUG, Toril Johansson, the Chair of the Working Group, focused on the draft communiqué text. Since the previous BFUG meeting, the strategy and “tool box” had been separated into two documents. She suggested the draft communiqué text should be revised to make it clear that Ministers were adopting the strategy and setting a clear context for work in this area during the next period.

6.10 In discussion the following points were made:

- There was general agreement to adopt clear elements of the strategy separately from the tool box. The distinction between the two documents needed to be evident.
- There was broad agreement that the communiqué text should be amended along the lines of the text being suggested by the Council of Europe. The text should also refer to the OECD guidelines on transnational education.

6.11 *It was agreed that:*

- The draft communiqué text would be revised to reflect the comments made.

7. Applications to join the Bologna Process

Documents: BFUG11 7a Secretariat paper with the Council of Europe on agreed procedures for new applicants to Bologna

7.1 Referring to the previous BFUG discussion, Peter Greisler suggested that all country applicants should be rejected, on the grounds that they did not meet the agreed criteria. Eurodoc could be accepted as a “partner”, rather than a consultative member.

7.2 In discussion, the following points were made:

- It was important to be consistent and adhere to the agreed criteria for membership.
- While there was agreement that Kosovo did not meet the agreed criteria now, it might be possible to admit them as new member before the next Ministerial conference in 2009, provided that they clearly met the agreed criteria.
- Turkey asked BFUG to note that it supported the applications of “TRNC” and Kosovo for membership.
- It was noted that advice and information about in the Bologna Process was accessible to all higher education institutions in Europe. There was no need for a formal decision on this by BFUG.

7.3 *It was agreed that:*

- *BFUG’s recommendation would be that all applicants for country membership should be turned down.*
- *Eurodoc would be invited to become a partner member.*

8. Election of new Board members

Documents: BFUG11 8a Election procedure for BFUG Board members

8.1 Following a vote in accordance with the agreed procedure, Hungary, Spain and Sweden were elected as members of the Board.

9. London Communiqué

Part two: Discussion of the draft London Communiqué

9.1 Peter Greisler led a further discussion of the draft comunique text, section by section.

9.2 Gottfried Bacher (Austria) asked BFUG to note Austria's concern that the draft text did not adequately reflect the need to ensure that the quality of higher education was not diminished in any way by other factors.

9.3 Jurate Deviziene (Lithuania) asked BFUG to note that Lithuania considered that it was up to Ministers to determine the most appropriate policy measures for taking forward areas such as the social dimension.

9.4 It was agreed that:

- *The draft communiqué text would be revised to reflect the agreements reached during the meeting, subjected to a grammatical check and re-issued.*

10. Preparations for the London Conference:

Documents: BFUG11 10a Secretariat Report
BFUG11 10b Update on preparations for the
London conference

10.1 Contributions for the Secretariat Report had been commissioned from BFUG members on a voluntary basis. The report would be a factual account of how work over the last period had been taken forward. All comments and contributions should be sent to Ann McVie at the Secretariat.

10.2 The accompanying paper outlined the preparations for the London conference. Any questions about the event should be addressed to Ann McVie at the Secretariat in the first instance.

**11. Updates from EC and consultative member
(written only)**

Documents: EURASHE

11.1 EURASHE (Andreas Orphanides) presented a report on a research project undertaken by EURASHE on Bachelor degrees and Employability. The results and final report would be presented at a future meeting of BFUG.

12. Any other business

12.1 The Council of Europe asked for an indication of the programme of Board and BFUG meeting under the new Secretariat and Presidency. They wished to avoid a clash with their HE and research committee meeting on 29 September 2007. Portugal put forward provisional dates of 2-3 October in Lisbon for BFUG and 30-31 August for the Board. These would have to be confirmed later.

Bologna Secretariat