

Co-chairing of the Bologna Process by the EU Presidency and a non-EU country

“In the future, the Bologna Process will be co-chaired by the country holding the EU presidency and a non-EU country.” (Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, ¶ 24)

To take forward this decision, taken by the Ministers in charge of higher education in the countries participating in the Bologna Process at their meeting in Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve in April 2009, the present document outlines possible options and issues to be considered by the Bologna Follow-up Group in view of the practical implementation of the co-chairing.

General background

The Bologna Process is currently chaired by the country holding the EU Presidency, which rotates every six months. This means that the EU Presidency country chairs and hosts the meetings of BFUG and Board, oversees the work in-between those meetings and represents the BFUG at international events. The country is also represented on the Board during the six months preceding and the six months following the Presidency (as part of the “troika”).

With its decision of 1 January 2007, the Council of the European Union has determined the order in which the EU Presidency will be held until the first half of 2020 as follows:

EU Presidencies 2010-2020

1 January - 30 June 2010	Spain
1 July – 31 December 2010	Belgium
1 January - 30 June 2011	Hungary
1 July – 31 December 2011	Poland
1 January - 30 June 2012	Denmark
1 July – 31 December 2012	Cyprus
1 January - 30 June 2013	Ireland
1 July – 31 December 2013	Lithuania
1 January - 30 June 2014	Greece
1 July – 31 December 2014	Italy
1 January - 30 June 2015	Latvia
1 July – 31 December 2015	Luxembourg
1 January - 30 June 2016	Netherlands
1 July – 31 December 2016	Slovakia
1 January - 30 June 2017	Malta
1 July – 31 December 2017	United Kingdom
1 January - 30 June 2018	Estonia
1 July – 31 December 2018	Bulgaria
1 January - 30 June 2019	Austria
1 July – 31 December 2019	Romania
1 January - 30 June 2020	Finland

In the EU context, three Presidencies work together, with a joint work programme, for a period of 18 months as “Trio Presidency” - as indicated in the table above.

At present, 19 non-EU countries are participating in the Bologna Process:

Albania	Holy See	Serbia
Andorra	Iceland	Switzerland
Armenia	Liechtenstein	"the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"
Azerbaijan	Moldova	Turkey
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Montenegro	Ukraine
Croatia	Norway	
Georgia	Russian Federation	

Note:

Some of the non-EU countries are expected to join the European Union at some point.

In case Belarus, Monaco and/or San Marino decide to join the Bologna Process (which might happen already in 2010), they will have to be added to the list.

Issues to consider for the implementation of the co-chairing

(A) Tasks of the co-chair

Chair and co-chair will closely cooperate in the preparation of the BFUG and Board meetings and will agree among themselves on the details of the co-chairing, including, for instance, on where to hold the meetings.

In principle, the EU-Chair takes the financial commitment to organise the necessary BFUG and Board meetings and functions as Presidency contact point for the Bologna Secretariat.

(B) When to start? When does "the future" begin?

As the first opportunity for BFUG to discuss the issue will be the meeting on 28-29 September 2009, the earliest possible date to begin with the co-chairing will be 1 January 2010, with the start of the Spanish Presidency. This has the advantage that it will also be the start of a new trio of EU Presidencies (Spain-Belgium-Hungary).

(C) Period of co-chairing

As the EU Presidency changes every 6 months (on 1 January and 1 July), it is suggested that the co-chairing follows the same rhythm. As there will be 21 semesters between 1 January 2010 and 30 June 2020, each of the currently 19 non-EU countries participating in the Bologna Process would get the opportunity to co-chair the Process for six months.

(D) Mode of designation of the non-EU co-chair

Option 1

The easiest and most straightforward solution would be to simply follow the *alphabetical order*, in which case the co-chairing arrangements would look as follows:

Semester	EU-Presidency	Possible Co-Chair
1 January - 30 June 2010	Spain	Albania
1 July – 31 December 2010	Belgium	Andorra
1 January - 30 June 2011	Hungary	Armenia

1 July – 31 December 2011	Poland	Azerbaijan
1 January - 30 June 2012	Denmark	Bosnia and Herzegovina
1 July – 31 December 2012	Cyprus	Croatia
1 January - 30 June 2013	Ireland	Georgia
1 July – 31 December 2013	Lithuania	Holy See
1 January - 30 June 2014	Greece	Iceland
1 July – 31 December 2014	Italy	Liechtenstein
1 January - 30 June 2015	Latvia	Moldova
1 July – 31 December 2015	Luxembourg	Montenegro
1 January - 30 June 2016	Netherlands	Norway
1 July – 31 December 2016	Slovakia	Russian Federation
1 January - 30 June 2017	Malta	Serbia
1 July – 31 December 2017	United Kingdom	Switzerland
1 January - 30 June 2018	Estonia	"the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"
1 July – 31 December 2018	Bulgaria	Turkey
1 January - 30 June 2019	Austria	Ukraine
1 July – 31 December 2019	Romania	Belarus? Otherwise: Albania
1 January - 30 June 2020	Finland	San Marino? Otherwise: Andorra

Option 2

The 19 non-EU countries could also agree on a different order (for the entire period up to 2020), allowing countries to *choose a specific six-month period*.

Possible compromise

Applying in principle the alphabetical order but allowing small adjustments if necessary.

(E) Impact on composition of the Board?

In the present arrangement, as decided by the Ministers in Berlin (2003), the BFUG Board includes the 3 countries of the EU troika, changing every semester, plus 3 countries elected for one year. For the sake of equal treatment and to facilitate cooperation with the chairs, it could be advisable to apply the same "troika" rotation system to the non-EU countries too (replacing the three elected members). This would also have the advantage of ensuring balance between EU and non-EU countries on the BFUG Board.

Note:

For this change, implying the abolishment of the election procedure, a Ministerial decision is needed, which could be taken in Budapest/Vienna. This would be just in time, as the mandate of the current elected members Armenia, Cyprus and Romania ends on 30 June 2010.

Annex: Excerpt from the Berlin Communiqué on the follow-up structure

Follow-up structure

Ministers entrust the implementation of all the issues covered in the Communiqué, the overall steering of the Bologna Process and the preparation of the next ministerial meeting to a Follow-up Group, which shall be composed of the representatives of all members of the Bologna Process and the European Commission, with the Council of Europe, the EUA, EURASHE, ESIB and UNESCO/CEPES as consultative members. This group, which should be convened at least twice a year, shall be chaired by the EU Presidency, with the host country of the next Ministerial Conference as vice-chair.

A Board also chaired by the EU Presidency shall oversee the work between the meetings of the Follow-up Group. The Board will be composed of the chair, the next host country as vice-chair, the preceding and the following EU Presidencies, three participating countries elected by the Follow-up Group for one year, the European Commission and, as consultative members, the Council of Europe, the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB. The Follow-up Group as well as the Board may convene ad hoc working groups as they deem necessary.

The overall follow-up work will be supported by a Secretariat which the country hosting the next Ministerial Conference will provide.