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BOARD MEETING
Belgrade (Serbia), 15 March 2018
Minutes

0. List of Participants

Delegation	First Name	Surname
BFUG Co-chair (Bulgaria)	Ivana	Radonova
BFUG Co-chair (Bulgaria)	Diana	Marinkova
BFUG Co-chair (Serbia)	Katarina	Jočić
BFUG Co-chair (Serbia)	Bojan	Tubić
BFUG outgoing Co-chair (Estonia)	Janne	Pukk
BFUG outgoing Co-chair (Russia) / WG3 Chair	Nadezda	Kamynina
BFUG incoming Co-chair (Austria)	Gottfried	Bacher
BFUG incoming Co-chair (Switzerland)	Muriel	Meister
BFUG incoming Co-chair (Switzerland)	Sylvia	Studinger
BFUG Vice-chair (France) / AG1 Chair	Marie-Odile	Ott
ESU	Adam	Gajek
EUA	Michael	Gaebel
EURASHE	Michal	Karpisek
European Commission	Vanessa	Debiais-Sainton
European Commission	Klara	Engels-Perenyi
AG2 chair (Germany)	Frank	Petrikowski
AG3 Chair (Liechtenstein)	Daniel	Miescher
AG4 Chair (Albania)	Linda	Pustina
WG1 Chair (Norway)	Tone Flood	Strøm
WG2 Chair (Belgium fl.)	Noël	Vercruyse
BFUG Secretariat	Françoise	Profit
BFUG Secretariat	Marina	Steinmann
Prospective BFUG Secretariat	Federico	Cinquepalmi

Apologies: Council of Europe

1. Welcome and introduction to the meeting

The hosting Co-chair Bojan Tubic, Deputy Minister for Higher Education in Serbia, introduced himself and welcomed the participants. The Bulgarian Co-chair and the Vice-chair thanked the Serbian host for the organisation of the meeting.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

3. Feedback of the BFUG meeting in Sofia in February 2018

The Co-chair (Bulgaria) informed about the last BFUG meeting where the Bologna Process Implementation Report (WG1), the Belarus Roadmap (AG2) and the Terms of Reference for the "Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG)" (AG3/WG2) had been the main points under discussion. The Ministerial Conference and the Bologna Policy Forum had also been on the agenda. She announced that the minutes of the BFUG meeting should be sent in the week after this Board meeting.

4. Presentation of the AG/WG work

4.1. Draft 2018 Bologna Process Implementation Report (WG1 Monitoring)

The WG1 chair (Norway) reported that until 12 March, BFUG representatives had the opportunity to correct data they provided themselves. Comments for clarification were received and integrated. She informed as well that some countries did not respond either in the first nor the second round.

The Co-chair (Bulgaria) regretted that a number of countries did not comment at all. The WG1 chair explained that discrepancies would be explained in the text wherever possible. EUA amplified that for their data collection, all higher education institutions had been invited to take part; but that in the end, some countries were not represented as well as others. Austria thanked the data collectors, and the WG1 chair assured to pass thanks on to the colleagues.

The BFUG Co-chair (Bulgaria) announced that hard copies of the report will be available for the conference.

4.2. Proposal for a 2018-2020 Bologna Process Implementation Report (WG1 Monitoring)

The WG1 chair (Norway) explained that she had nothing new to add on this topic from the presentation made at the BFUG meeting in Sofia. A more detailed proposal should be available for the next BFUG meeting in April 2018.

4.3. Joint proposal WG2 (Implementation) / AG3 (Dealing with non-implementation)

The AG3 chair (Liechtenstein) reported that the four documents were presented in Sofia, but that some details would be discussed again at the BFUG meeting in April 2018. Electronic comments on the wording of these details had been received after the meeting. The WG2 chair (Belgium fl.) explained that the approach as such was adopted but that some countries wanted some changes. He underlined that the call for nominations of countries which was tabled for this meeting had to be discussed on this very day in order to have nominations for the discussion in Sofia. In addition, the AG3 chair (Liechtenstein) and the WG2 chair (Belgium fl.) informed the Board members that a new version of the Term of reference was drafted the day before between the AG 3 Chair (Iceland) and France to find a consensus. This new version had been sent to Board members during the Board meeting for information.

Albania expressed the view that the Terms of Reference had not yet been adopted, and that there should be no discussion during this Board meeting as no established procedure allowed for electronic consultation. The Co-chair (Bulgaria) explained that the e-mail which the Co-chairs had sent was an invitation to clarify which wording was not acceptable for some countries, and to suggest a new wording; and that it had not been proposed to adopt the text during this phase. The European Commission thanked the Co-Chairs for their clarification per e-mail and welcomed the dialogue between AG3, WG2 and France to reach consensus about the wording.

The AG3 chair underlined that decisions were to be taken at BFUG level and that this was never questioned. The role of the Board was to organise the next BFUG meeting, and was regarded as a sounding body as well; therefore the paper with the revised Terms of Reference had been distributed during this meeting for information and expression of opinions as well.

The WG2 chair underlined that not a single comment on the roadmap had been made by the BFUG, and that the call for expression of interest had to be opened this month in order to make the peer groups operational in September. The methodology for the peer groups was explained in the guiding notes but was meant to stay flexible in order to allow the chairs of each peer learning group adapting it for their respective needs. He explained that the first round of the proposed process would end in March 2020 and that a further round would depend on the following questions a) if co-operation in the EHEA would be continued beyond 2020 and b) if in this case ministers would decide to have a next round of the process.

Austria assumed that the practice would continue after 2020; and declared that the incoming Co-chairs wanted to make the peer support groups start by sending out letters inviting all countries to participate.

To avoid discussions like the last time at the BFUG meeting, it was proposed to call for a written reaction before the meeting from each delegation wanting to comment. The European Commission regarded the sentence highlighted on p.2 of the document as the only issue for discussion during this Board meeting.

Some Board members stressed that the BFUG had decided about the mandate of the group in November 2017, and that the focus of this mandate would be discussed at the BFUG meeting in September 2018. ESU regretted that the wording got weaker and reminded the Board members that the present version of the documents already represented a huge compromise.

For the upcoming BFUG meeting, the Board members expected the chairs to improve documents based on the comments made during this Board meeting. To avoid the misinterpretation that the group would monitor implementation of everything, the name of the group could refer to peer learning/support and the three key commitments. Board members asked for consistency of the wording in all documents and proposed testing if the documents were understandable in the higher education community outside the BFUG.

The Co-chair (Bulgaria) concluded that AG3/WG2 would send the last version of all documents at least three weeks before the meeting, and that the Secretariat would publish them. The agenda of the BFUG meeting would foresee enough time for this point. Furthermore, the Co-chair confirmed that a message with the call for expression of interest would be sent out by the Secretariat after this meeting, and that a decision on the Terms of Reference and the composition of the group would be taken at the next BFUG meeting.

4.4. Final Report and recommendations from AG3 (Dealing with non-implementation)

The AG3 chair (Liechtenstein) explained the document "Structure of final report" and stressed the need of updating the content after the BFUG accepted the Terms of Reference. Two of the four documents published for this meeting (*BFUG_BG_SR_58_4c AG3WG2 Proposal, BFUG_BG_SR_58_4d AG3WG2 Terms of Reference*), should become part of the Final Report. The two other documents were regarded as supporting notes for the BFUG, which were necessary and useful in the discussion of the two main documents but would not be needed as part of the final report. This estimation was shared by the Board.

4.5. Draft Bologna Policy Forum Statement (AG1 EHEA international co-operation)

The AG1 chair (France) presented the main points of the draft Bologna Policy Forum Statement. She explained the document should also be in good articulation with the draft Communiqué.

The Board members welcomed the document; some alerted the AG1 group to the need of adapting the draft Bologna Policy Forum Statement to the upcoming versions of the draft Communiqué still under discussion. The European Commission expressed the concern that the paper covered too broad areas for further cooperation and suggested to be more specific and focused on EHEA issues.

The Vice-chair reminded participants of 20 March as deadline for comments from BFUG delegations.

4.6. Final Report and recommendations from AG2 (Support for the Belarus roadmap)

The AG2 chair (Germany) explained that he understood from the BFUG in Sofia that it had been decided to wait for the action plan provided by Belarus and for the decision of the BFUG on this proposal. He expressed the expectations that the Co-chairs will write to Belarus reminding them of the invitation to

send an action plan, and that the BFUG would decide on how to monitor implementation of that action plan during the next working period.

Some Board members expressed concerns about misunderstandings concerning Belarus and an action plan, it was not clear that decisions had been taken in Sofia. Other Board members understood that the BFUG asked Belarus to submit such an action plan.

The Vice-chair expressed the view that getting in touch would be a good idea.

The Co-chair (Bulgaria) agreed that the Co-chairs would investigate if Belarus was preparing a response.

4.7. Final Report and recommendations from AG4 (Diploma Supplement revision)

The AG4 chair (Albania) explained that some small changes on documents had been made and that the question of mentioning the ISCED level in the Diploma Supplement had been decided negatively.

EUA asked for slight modifications concerning the section on digitalisation.

The AG4 chair declared that it was meant the way the European Commission understood it and that the wording would be checked once more.

5. Draft Programme for the 2018 Ministerial Conference and the Bologna Policy Forum

The Vice-chair presented the draft programme of the Ministerial Conference as published on the conference website. She informed that President Macron might be available only on 23 March, and that in this case, the programme would be rearranged accordingly. Panels would correspond to topics of the draft Communiqué, as it has been already presented in earlier BFUG meetings. Having the President Macron speaking on the 23rd of May will allow to get more time available for discussion on the Communiqué on the 24th of May.

The Secretariat reported that preregistration had started. At the date of this Board meeting, positive answers for ministers (or Vice-ministers/Secretariats of State for some countries) had been received from 34 EHEA countries, and 6 countries did not yet answer. About the Bologna Policy Forum, 10 countries (Columbia, Ivory Coast, Egypt, Gabon, Kyrgyzstan, Mali, Niger, Pakistan, Palestine, Thailand) confirmed their presence. In case of bilateral and multilateral meetings requests, rooms would be made available during the whole conference.

The European Commission asked for having a list of countries invited to participate at the BPF as it had been done for previous Ministerial Conferences. Other Board members supported this demand and asked for regular updates from the Secretariat.

The Secretariat announced they would provide information about registered ministers and participants after this meeting and to regularly send updates.

It would be important to communicate how discussions would be organised, as ministers wanted to know when they will be able to take the floor. Norway proposed to start the discussion of the Communiqué early on the first day. The WG1 chair (Norway) reminded the organisers to approach the person who should be presenting the Implementation Report. Some Board members criticised the approach of adopting the Communiqué part by part. EUA reminded the Board members that this already had been said in the last two BFUG meetings and that there had been several delegations expressing their concern regarding this format. It would be better to test the content of the whole Communiqué right in the first plenary on the first day.

The Vice-chair explained that the format of each session would be a panel with a moderator.

The Co-chair (Serbia) concluded that details would be provided right after this meeting and be updated in the coming weeks by the Secretariat.

6. Draft for the 2018 Ministerial Communiqué

The Vice-chair started with an overview of the draft presented at the last BFUG meeting in February, and reminded the participants that the following draft has been sent to all BFUG members on February 16th for receiving written comments until 22 February. She reported that 37 delegations sent comments on which a revised version was based, version 5.0, which was distributed to members of the Drafting Committee on 28 February up to March 6th. Only one comment was received by mail from the drafting committee. Version 5 was then transmitted on 6 March to all BFUG members.

She reported that some members had worked on a "common draft" which had been sent on 13 March; other comments (about 16) had been received as well.

The European Commission explained that some consultative members and the European Commission have gathered in Brussels in order to facilitate the drafting process and to produce the draft they sent before the Board meeting. This was meant to support the Drafting Committee by sending consolidated comments. They explained this "common draft" was built on draft 4.0, emphasising in the preamble all the goals which had been reached and addressing the main challenges the EHEA has to face today. Progress and aims were explained in more detail in the following sections. ESU explained that the group had taken the remarks from the last meeting into account when preparing the "common draft". EURASHE added that nevertheless, the group had reorganised topics from draft 5.0; and proposed that the Drafting Committee would compare this proposal with additional comments when preparing version 6.0.

The Board members regarded the "common draft" as a good starting point for the work of the Drafting Committee's meeting on the following day, and called for ensuring collective ownership of the Drafting Committee before sharing a next version with the BFUG. Furthermore, they proposed clustering and prioritising all comments received, and agreeing on the next version (version 6.0) within the Drafting Committee before sending it to all BFUG members.

The Vice-chair announced that the Drafting Committee will work on the 16th of March starting from the "common draft", and taking into account all the comments received from delegations not involved in the proposed common draft. She proposed the Drafting Committee will produce a new and extra Draft Communiqué in between March the 16th and the next BFUG in April. This will request reactivity from the delegations. The Drafting Committee will propose a new roadmap after their meeting.

7. Draft agenda for the BFUG meeting in Sofia (Bulgaria)

The Co-chair (Bulgaria) announced that the Practical Information would be sent after this Board meeting, and that transports from and to the airport will be organised again.

The AG3 chair proposed that the documents for discussion should be the proposal itself and the Terms of Reference, and that the discussion should be focused on the Terms of Reference. The WG2 chair suggested distinguishing documents to take note of and documents to be discussed/adopted (Terms of Reference, composition of the initial BICG, and a draft for the invitation letter).

Many Board members supported this suggestion and wanted to not discuss the entire Terms of Reference but just the two bullet points not agreed upon at the last meeting. They underlined that for most documents revision is a question of editing, but not of changing the content. Some board members asked for the presentation of all the documents relevant to this point during the next BFUG meeting. Some Board members expressed the view that for common understanding in the wider higher education community, the wording "peer support" would be regarded as much better than "reversed peer review". The wording "insufficient progress" should be kept for the proposal as several Board members expressed their support. Documents should be revised to harmonise the terminology used among them.

The Secretariat proposed publishing all documents from AG3 in a revised version with consistent wording at the EHEA website; ESU reminded Board members that the BFUG will be able to set up the methodology of the peer groups during the next working period and that other details should be discussed later.

Due to the necessary discussion on the new approach under point 4.3, the Co-chair (Bulgaria) announced to allocate more time for point 4.3. of the draft agenda.

Austria asked to include a short presentation of the network of Ombudspople under "Any Other Business" in the agenda for the next BFUG meeting.

8. Information by the incoming Co-chairs

The incoming Co-chair (Switzerland) announced that the next Board meeting would take place on 3 July in Zürich, with a dinner on 2 July. The main topic to be discussed during the BFUG meeting in Austria would be the work programme for 2018-2020.

The Secretariat asked who will the participants to this Board meeting, as it is the first one after the Ministerial Conference. Liechtenstein recalled that for the first Board meeting of this current work period, no AG/WG chairs had been invited as the previous groups had ceased their activities.

The incoming Co-chair (Austria) reported that the BFUG meeting would be organised on 27 and 28 September at a conference centre in Vienna right next to the river Danube. The review of the Ministerial Conference 2018 and the discussion of the 2018-2020 work programme would be the main topics; a slot on Erasmus+ key action 3 projects had been proposed as additional topic.

The Secretariat reminded current and incoming Co-chairs to agree on a date for a handover ceremony. The possibility of having it back to back with the first Board meeting was raised.

9. AOB

The Secretariat reminded AG/WG chairs of the deadline for sending the final reports of all groups to be printed by the end of April.

The European Commission proposed a list of clear action points being distributed on the working day following the day of every meeting and suggested the following action points for this meeting:

- New peer review process to support EHEA countries in implementing the 3 key Bologna commitments: The Co-chairs will circulate the proposed revised wording to all BFUG members to collect feedback prior to the next BFUG meeting in order to facilitate an adoption at this last meeting before the ministerial conference in May.
- Set-up of the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BCIG) to co-ordinate and monitor this new peer review process: the Co-chairs will send a message to call for nominations for members of this BICG.
- Communiqué: The Board called on the drafting committee to circulate a revised draft to all BFUG members as soon as possible to allow for an additional revision before the next BFUG meeting.
- Belarus: the Co-chairs will send a message reminding Belarus that they should send their proposed revised roadmap before the next BFUG meeting.
- Ministerial conference: The Board asked the Secretariat to share regularly the list of confirmed head of delegations.

The Board members thanked the hosts for their hospitality; and the Deputy Minister for Higher Education in Serbia for the Co-chairing.

The Co-chair (Serbia) closed the meeting and thanked all participants for their contributions.