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*Ministry of Education, Science and Culture*

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**MEETING OF THE BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP**  
**Riga, 26 January 2015 - 27 January 2015**  
**Draft Outcome of Proceedings**

**Participant list**

<b>Country / Organisation</b>	<b>Name</b>
Albania	<i>Absent</i>
Andorra	Maria del Mar Martinez Ramirez
Andorra	Maria Meritxell Gallo Yanes
Armenia	Karine Harutyunyan
Austria	Gottfried Bacher
Azerbaijan	Azad Akhundov
Belgium/Flemish Community	Noël Vercruysse
Belgium/French Community	Kevin Guillaume
BFUG Secretariat	Gayane Harutyunyan
BFUG Secretariat	Ani Hovhannisyan
BFUG Secretariat	Sahakanush Sargsyan
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Aida Durić
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Petar Marić
Bulgaria	<i>Apologies</i>
BUSINESSEUROPE	Anita Līce
Council of Europe	Sjur Bergan
Croatia	Ana Tecilazić Goršić
Cyprus	Despina Martidou-Forcier
Czech Republic	Tereza Kobelkova
Denmark	Jonas Husum Johannesen
Denmark	Jette Søgren Nielsen
EC	Adam Tyson
EC	Frank Petrikowski
EC	Mette Moerke Andersen
EI	Jens Vraa-Jensen
EI	Guntars Catlaks
ENQA	Padraig Walsh
ENQA	Maria Kelo
EQAR	Colin Tück
EQAR	Melinda Szabo

Estonia	Janne Pukk
ESU	Fernando Miguel Galán Palomares
ESU	Elisabeth Gehrke
ESU	Erin Nordal
EUA	Lesley Wilson
EUA	Michael Gaebel
EURASHE	Johan Cloet
EUROSTAT	<i>Absent</i>
EUROSTUDENT	Martin Unger
EUROSTUDENT	Kristina Hauschildt
Eurydice	David Crosier
Finland	Maja Innola
France	Patricia Pol
France	Hélène Lagier
Georgia	Georgi Sharvashidze
Georgia	Elene Jibladze
Georgia	Archil Sokhadze
Georgia	Teimuraz Janjalia
Germany	Peter Greisler
Germany	Heide Ahrens
Greece	<i>Apologies</i>
Holy See	Friedrich Bechina
Hungary	Ernö Keszei
Iceland	Una Strand Vidarsdottir
Ireland	Tim Cullinane
Italy	Federico Cinquepalmi
Italy	Marzia Foroni
Kazakhstan	<i>Absent</i>
Latvia	Andrejs Rauhvargers
Latvia	Agrita Kiopa
Latvia	Jolanta Silka
Liechtenstein	Daniel Miescher
Lithuania	<i>Apologies</i>
Luxembourg	Valérie Schreiner
Luxembourg	Corinne Kox
Luxembourg	Leon Andre Diederich
Malta	Tanya Sammut-Bonnici
Moldova	<i>Absent</i>
Montenegro	<i>Absent</i>
Netherlands	Jolien van der Vegt

Norway	Tone Flood Strøm
Norway	Toril Johannson
Poland	Maria Boltruszko
Poland	Bartłomiej Banaszak
Portugal	Ana Mateus
Portugal	Inês Branco
Romania	Radu-Mircea Damian
Russian Federation	Nadezhda Kamynina
Russian Federation	Svetlana Shvedova
Serbia	<i>Absent</i>
Slovak Republic	<i>Absent</i>
Slovenia	<i>Apologies</i>
Spain	Luis Delgado
Sweden	Albin Gaunt
Switzerland	François Grandjean
"the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"	<i>Absent</i>
Turkey	Şaban Halis Çalış
Ukraine	<i>Absent</i>
UNESCO	<i>Absent</i>
United Kingdom	Pamela Wilkinson
United Kingdom	Ian Crombie
United Kingdom/Scotland	Rebecca Robinson

## **1. Welcome and Introduction to the BFUG Meeting by the Chairs**

### **Welcome by Latvia**

Ms. Agrita Kiopa, Understate Secretary, Head of the Department for Higher Education, Research and Innovation of the Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia, welcomed the BFUG members and stressed that it was the first BFUG meeting hosted under the Latvian EU Presidency as well as the first Latvian EU Presidency ever.

Moreover, it was stressed that it is the first one of the two BFUG meetings which would bring the BFUG closer to the Yerevan Ministerial Conference and the Fourth Bologna Policy Forum in May.

It was highlighted that the Bologna Process (BP) has become a success story, a facilitator of Europe's growth with a common framework being the key element of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). However, it is called "process" for a reason that there are still areas to address and obstacles to overcome and progress is not the same in all the countries and many have yet to reach the common goals due to several factors, including political and economic challenges. Thus it is time to look back, analyse the progress achieved and improve implementation.

As for the national agenda, it was noted that like in most Central or Eastern European countries, Latvian education reforms started after the collapse of the USSR and they have been formed, shaped and speeded up by the Bologna Process. Latvia has made certain progress in Bologna process implementation and has introduced such tools as diploma supplement, three cycle degree system, credit points, recognition, including RPL, quality assurance system, qualifications framework, joint study programmes etc.

Furthermore, internationalisation is one of Latvia's main priorities in higher education (HE) in order to create flexible higher education that is internationally open and of high quality.

Quality assurance is one of the main pillars of the EHEA as well as one of the priority areas for Latvia, which is supporting national quality assurance agency that works in accordance with these standards and guidelines and is internationally competitive.

Last but not least Ms. Kiopa wished the participants successful and inspiring meeting.

**The BFUG was informed that there were 78 participants present at the meeting and the apologies were received from Bulgaria, Lithuania and Slovenia. The following countries/organisations were not present at the meeting: Albania, EUROSTAT, Greece, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovak Republic, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Ukraine and UNESCO.**

## **2. Adoption of the agenda**

Documents: BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_2a [Draft agenda]

BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_2b [Draft annotated agenda]

While introducing the agenda, the Chair, Mr. Andrejs Rauhvargers (Latvia), recalled the decision of the BFUG made at its meeting in Rome on 27-28 November 2014 to assess the EHEA accession applications received from Belarus and Kosovo<sup>1</sup> since there is some chance that the latter may become a party to the European Cultural Convention before the Yerevan Ministerial Conference. Moreover, the recommendations prepared by a small group of experts composed of the outgoing BFUG Co-Chairs, the Holy See and Italy, Iceland and Latvia, as current Co-Chairs of the BFUG, Armenia as the Vice-Chairs as well as the Secretariat will be discussed during the next BFUG meeting in Riga on 24-25 March 2015.

Mr. Sjur Bergan (CoE) updated the BFUG that there is no further information concerning Kosovo's possible movement towards the European Cultural Convention. However the BFUG should be in the position to make the recommendation in case Kosovo does become party to the Convention before the Yerevan Conference.

As for the accession of Belarus, the BFUG was informed that the CoE is planning to organise a conference in Minsk in early March upon the request of the Belarusian authorities as well as for

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<sup>1</sup> All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

gathering as much information as possible. Further details concerning the event will be circulated to the BFUG members as soon as they are available.

Mr. Adam Tyson (EC) requested to include a point in the agenda concerning the EHEA accession with a very short timeframe. It was noted that the BFUG cannot make any recommendation at this stage however it will be useful to see what the overall feelings are on Belarus situation and whether it will be possible to half prepare a discussion for March making it quicker.

Moreover, the BFUG was informed that the EC has some ideas how the situation of Belarus might be approached.

**Thus, the agenda was adopted with the inclusion of the request from the EC as well as two items in "AOB", which are:**

- 1. Update on the preparations of EUROSTUDENT VI**
- 2. Final report of the FOHE-BPRC2 conference.**

- 3. Draft outcome of proceedings of the BFUG meeting, Rome 27-28 November 2014**

Document: BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_3 [BFUG Rome draft outcome of proceedings]  
BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_3\_Annex1 [Thematic session on the Third Cycle]

**The draft outcome of proceedings of the Rome BFUG meeting and its annex were approved with the inclusion of some minor rephrasing.**

- 4. Revised paper on the Bologna Process revisited: The Future of the EHEA**

Document: BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_4 [Bologna Process Revisited\_Future of the EHEA]

The Chair, Una Strand Vidarsdottir (Iceland), invited Ms. Marzia Foroni (Italy) to present the revised document under this point of agenda. Ms. Foroni in her turn, thanked the BFUG members for their valuable proposals for the integration and improvement of the revised document. It was noted that the current version includes only two parts (Looking back: 15 years of convergence and Looking ahead: new challenges, new goals, new strategies) leaving out the "Organisational issues". Furthermore, the BFUG was inquired whether the document can be considered to be among the documents to be presented during the Ministerial Conference in Yerevan as a good explanatory document reflecting the work and deliberations carried out by the BFUG during the last twelve months.

The BFUG highlighted that the revised version of the document is good and in particular it is useful in the context of the discussions of the Yerevan Communiqué when it comes to the challenges and reality the Ministers should acknowledge.

At the same time, the following points were underlined:

- In the chapter "Looking back: 15 years of convergence" the original common vision of the Bologna Process is described, however the counterpart dealing with the future vision of the Process is missing in the chapter "Looking ahead: new challenges, new goals, new strategies".

- The document contains a lot of suggested approaches, yet there is a need to clarify the intention of having those suggestions and whether the latter ones should be translated into new action lines. In the meantime the suggested approaches can be considered as good points for policy making.
- The Communique should consider the third mission of higher education (HE), which is, besides training and research, a service to the society.
- When it comes to the conflicts, the point on student mobility should be made a bit sharper, perhaps stating that it should be the responsibility of the EHEA to provide mobility opportunities for students and youth from the regions affected by conflicts.
- While referring to the promotion of technological developments, there is a need to refer also to the quality assurance of these innovations.
- It is important to ensure that digitalisation is included both in the teaching and learning part and in the part on scientific research.

The BFUG also made the following two specific points:

- The point on the scientific research and technological development (point 4 p.8) should be split into two different points since two different items are being focused and different approaches are required.
- The point made on HE being a public good through public responsibility and public/private funding (point 2, p. 7) should be made explicit by stating that what is meant is public and/or private funding but not about compulsory mix of the two since there is a choice which is open to all the EHEA member countries.

Finally the BFUG agreed that the document must be among the papers for the Ministers during the Yerevan Ministerial Conference.

**The Chair concluded that two main points stressed by the BFUG should be improved by adjusting to the comments made. Furthermore, the revised paper should be sent out by written communication and in this way the BFUG can agree on the modifications thus taking this point out from the agenda of the next BFUG meeting in March.**

**Moreover, it was noted that this is not a paper to be endorsed by the Ministers but it is included in the package as a reflective paper and not a policy document.**

**The BFUG took note of the paper and agreed with the proposed actions.**

## **5. Draft final reports from the WGs**

### **5a. Reporting on the Bologna Process Implementation WG**

Document: BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_5a.1 [Second draft of the 2015 Implementation report]

BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_5a.2 [Proposal for new scorecard indicators]

Mr. Andrejs Rauhvargers (Latvia), the Co-Chair of the Reporting WG introduced the second draft of the 2015 Bologna Process Implementation Report and the first draft of its executive summary.

Mr. David Crosier (Eurydice) advised the BFUG that the second draft of the Report was by no means the final version. Since the Rome BFUG meeting on 27-28 November 2014 the drafting group had made the decision on integrating the comments received from the EHEA countries based on the following principles – i) a clear argument/evidence had been provided for the requested change(s) and ii) the requirement to respect the 2013-14 reference year had been met.

It was further highlighted that all the information in the Report was still subject to corrections and there was a need for the harmonisation of the style throughout the Report. All these would be achieved in the next few months.

In terms of the proposed new scorecard indicators (SIs), the BFUG was advised that not every new SI had been included in the second draft of the Report. In the Reporting WG's view at the moment the SIs in the Report tend to be reflecting agreements on the priorities the Bologna Process had at earlier stages. However at present there is a need to reflect also on the priorities set recently. The proposed new SIs had been developed with this view and in line with the priorities outlined in the 2012 Bucharest Communiqué.

The BFUG was invited to discuss the proposed new SIs and make a decision on the approach to the SIs in the Report.

For more information concerning the state of play of the 2015 Bologna Process Implementation Report and the list of SIs, please refer to the document below:



5a\_BFUG\_Point\_5a1  
\_Rauhvargers\_Crosie

A number of comments and suggestions followed towards improving the Report, as detailed below:

#### **General comments:**

- The BFUG acknowledged that the Reporting WG had carried out a large amount of work. However, there was still a need for proofreading the Report in terms of linguistic issues as well.
- Coherence should be achieved across the Report. Some of the Chapters would benefit from rereading to make sure the right balance between the level of detail and the avoidance of repetition is achieved (e.g. the Chapter on the Social Dimension is quite long and repetitive).
- The structure of each Chapter in the Report could be as follows: a description of the current situation, that of the problem, a conclusion supported by the examples of good practice observed in the EHEA countries that could be spread further. It would be useful to make sure that the factual analysis is followed by clear conclusions at the end of the Chapters. There is no need for aspirational statements along with the factual ones (e.g. as observed in the Chapter on Quality Assurance).

**Comments and remarks on SI Proposal 1** on level of national openness to cross border QA activities of EQAR-registered agencies:

- The SI is based on the commitment set by the Ministers in the 2012 Bucharest Communiqué: "Allow EQAR-registered quality assurance agencies [QAA] to perform their activities across the EHEA, while complying with national requirements".

- The SI could be reformulated to focus more on the essence of openness. EQAR-registration could be one of the criteria and not the only criterion. However, it was also highlighted that for the green colour of the suggested SI, EQAR registration could be the only criterion.
- The description of the category of dark green colour could be rephrased to read as “All institutions and programmes can choose to be evaluated by an EQAR-registered QAA, while complying with national requirements”. The description of the light green colour could also be reformulated along the same lines.
- It was explained that the SI does not differentiate whether the results of accreditation by a foreign QAA would be automatically recognised or would require approval/ratification/final decision by national bodies. In line with one of the conclusions of RIQAA project, direct recognition of evaluation by EQAR-registered agencies should be valued at the same level as the one in which the final decision is made by the national QA Agency.

**Comments on SI Proposal 2** on portability of public grants and publicly subsidised loans:

- The countries with federal structure could experience difficulties with the SI since in these countries grants and loans are awarded not at the federal level, but at the regional. Differences can be observed across the regions, which could make portability hard to define. Taking these into consideration, it was suggested in the 2015 Report to reflect on the progress of the EHEA countries in this priority area in a more neutral way not through a SI.
- The problems related to the SI are not technical but political.
- It was inquired whether the priority on portability of grants and loans for degree mobility purposes had been agreed by the EHEA Ministers. In the light of literal commitments, focus on degree portability is very controversial.
- It was acknowledged that Figures 7.33 and 7.34 in the second draft of the Report, showed very well the situation of portability of loans and grants in the countries. Having this in mind it was inquired whether SI 2 can be exchanged with 7.33 and 7.34.

**Comments on SI Proposal 3** on measures to support the participation of disadvantaged students:

- The SI could be biased due to the different situations observed in countries, including the definition of disadvantaged students, which varies from one country to another.
- It is true that the SI does not take into account all types of measures in relation to supporting participation of disadvantaged students. Nonetheless, the SI captures the realities of different ways of financially supporting disadvantaged students in the EHEA.
- In the 2015 Report, it should be highlighted that in the next 2018 Report the SI would be improved to include a broader measure of efforts the EHEA countries make to integrate disadvantaged students into HE.

Concerning **SI Proposal 4** it was inquired to be clear on the difference between the systematic monitoring and ad-hoc monitoring of disadvantaged students in mobility.

It was acknowledged that **SI Proposal 5** on national implementation of the principles of LRC was not strong enough. However, given the importance of the issue in the EHEA, it should be



included in the 2015 Report with the indication that by 2018 the SI would be more robust and tell more about the situation in the countries.

Finally, the BFUG was advised that even though the progress of **employability** in the EHEA was not shown through a SI, in the Report the Chapter had been covered much more in depth than in the previous ones.

**Mr. Andrejs Rauhvargers (Latvia), the Chair concluded that the proposed SIs would be included in the next version of the Report to be presented to the BFUG at its Riga meeting on 24-25 March 2015. However in the narrative part of the Report, it would be acknowledged that these SIs were not perfect and had limitations but they would be improved for the 2018 Report.**

**The BFUG was encouraged to submit written comments and suggestions on amending the Report by 9 February 2015. Before the Riga BFUG meeting on 24-25 March 2015, an opportunity would be provided to the BFUG for the final quick reading of the Report and making minor corrections, if necessary.**

**The BFUG endorsed the Report with the condition that the comments would be taken into account.**

#### **5b. Social Dimension and Lifelong Learning WG**

Documents: BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_5b.1 [Draft final report of the SD and LLL WG]  
BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_5b.2 [Draft Strategy\_Widening Participation for Equity and Growth]  
BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_5b.2\_Annex [Draft Guidelines for National Access Plans or Strategies]

Ms. Elisabeth Gehrke (ESU), the Co-Chair of the SD&LLL WG advised the BFUG that the WG had not met since the Rome BFUG meeting in November. The draft final report had been amended in line with the comments received from the BFUG. However, another meeting was envisaged for the SD&LLL WG to discuss the draft Strategy and Guidelines and revise the documents to take into consideration the comments received in Rome.

With the view to have a more targeted approach towards enhancing the social dimension (SD) in the EHEA, the SD&LLL WG put forward two main recommendations for adoption by the Ministers i) to endorse the Strategy with the aim to support the EHEA countries in the development of effective national plans or strategies to ensure greater access to quality higher education and ii) given the outcomes of the PL4SD project to support its continuation beyond 2015.

In the discussion that followed, a number of comments and suggestions were received concerning the Strategy and Guidelines:

- The idea that the countries should have national strategies/action plans was considered vague.
- Some countries where SD is embedded in the overall HE strategy, did not agree to have a separate strategy or action plan to tackle the issue.

- The national strategy/action plan might not be the right tool to address SD. The issue should be approached in a more transversal way: it should be part of the very different aspects of HE, such as mobility, student support services, etc.
- It was appreciated that the Strategy acknowledged that the situation in the EHEA countries is very different.
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member States on ensuring quality education was referred to. It was highlighted that social inclusion is part of the quality of education systems and cannot be separated from the social system. A successful education system provides its learners with adequate opportunities and means to develop their talents and aspirations and hence promotes diversity and social inclusion.
- Even though LLL appears in the working title of the Strategy, it is not dealt with thoroughly in the document.
- The Strategy, as it stands, lays more emphasis on access. The issue of success/completion should be more emphasised.
- The documents should stress that the entire teaching process is important to reach the goal of equal access, participation and completion of HE. Hence, it is required that teachers are professionally developed to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population.

Finally, it was highlighted that the identification of the barriers to access and completion, commitment to working with HEIs and other relevant stakeholders, and systematic data collection (p. 2 in the Strategy) were the essential points that should be included in the agenda of SD whether in the Communiqué or as a strategy. In this context, the SD&LLL WG was encouraged to look at the recommendations to be given to the Ministers and try to be more specific. The WG could concentrate more on challenging the countries to enhance the necessary data collection and then to take necessary measures depending on the country context and drawing on the elements included in the Strategy.

**The BFUG adopted the final report of the SD&LLL WG with the inclusion of the comments received. The WG would revise the Strategy and Guidelines according to the comments and suggestions received and present them at the Riga BFUG meeting on 24-25 March 2015.**

### **5c. Mobility and Internationalisation WG**

Document: BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_5c [Draft final report of the Mobility and Internationalisation WG]

The draft final report of the Mobility and Internationalisation WG was presented by its Co-Chair, Mr. Peter Greisler (Germany) who stressed that while revising the draft final report, the WG has taken into consideration all the comments made by the BFUG during its last meeting in Rome thus changing the structure of the report as well as making the recommendations more direct and concrete. Moreover, the neutral linguistic presentation was emphasized.

Furthermore, the BFUG was informed that the WG agreed that for the Yerevan Ministerial Conference it is not necessary to adopt the working group's report on the 2014 strategy review,

but it is essential to discuss further how to better implement the “EHEA-in-a-Global-Setting” strategy.

The BFUG noted that there are many good elements in the draft final report however there is a need of fine-tuning the wording when it comes to the recommendations for 2015 Yerevan Communiqué. This should be done taking into consideration the structure of the 2015 Yerevan Communiqué being shorter and more pointed as well as to avoid a gap between what the WG has recommended to the Ministers and what actually the Ministers decide.

Thus, the BFUG made the following points:

- There is a need to change “The proposals for 2015 Yerevan Communiqué” (p.5) to “Proposals for consideration for the 2015 Yerevan Communiqué”
- It is necessary to replace the expressions “We, the Ministers... ” (p. 5-7) by “we recommend and/or we propose that the Ministers...”.

**The WG Co-Chairs agreed with the points made by the BFUG who in its turn endorsed the final report of the WG with the suggested changes.**

## **6. Yerevan Ministerial Communiqué (Draft 0)**

Documents: BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_6a [Yerevan Ministerial Communiqué\_draft 0]  
BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_6b [Draft outline of the 2015-2018 EHEA work programme]

Mr. Andrejs Rauhvargers (Latvia), the Chair recalled the BFUG’s decision in September in Rome to establish a drafting group (composed of the representatives from Italy and Holy See as the Co-Chairs of that period as well as Latvia and Iceland as then the upcoming Co-Chairs and Armenia as a Vice Chair and the Secretariat) to work on the Yerevan Communiqué. The BFUG was advised that three documents had been produced – 0 draft of the Communiqué itself, its appendix that included commitments and recommendations for the upcoming period, and the draft outline of the 2015-2018 EHEA work programme which could be transformed into the actual work programme in the future.

Moreover, it was highlighted that in the discussions on the future of the BP three priorities for the EHEA had often been referred to – excellence of teaching/innovation in teaching, the new technologies necessary for new methods of teaching/new types of delivery such as MOOCs, strengthening the relationship between HE and research. The Communiqué could benefit from the inclusion of the three topics.

A lively discussion followed. Some BFUG members were in favour of the **structure** of the draft 0 of the Communiqué. As for the **style**, it was underlined that the document should be shorter and punchier. The use of heavy language, long sentences and repetitions should be avoided.

It was acknowledged that the Bologna Process reached the crossroad and at this point the right direction should be taken. The Communiqué would convey a clear message concerning the **vision** of the EHEA and its future in ambitious starting paragraphs. Moreover, the role of HE in overcoming the challenges the societies face today, e.g. conflicts between countries, political extremism, crisis, creation of stereotypes and stigmatising whole groups, should also be more underlined.

Concerning the section on **progress and challenges** the following comments and suggestions were put forward:

- The progress and challenges should be differentiated.
- The element of professional recognition could be included.
- There is a need to clarify the meaning of the expression 'candidates with non-traditional qualifications' (p.1).

As for the section on **"Where we intend to go: priorities for 2020 and beyond"**, the BFUG was in favour of concentrating on a limited number of priorities. Other comments were also received:

- A point could be added on employability and the role of education to improve it.
- There is a need to maintain the balance between top-down and bottom-up policy approaches.
- There is a need to be more explicit concerning the dialogue between the European Research Area (ERA) and the EHEA.
- The focus on the quality of teaching and learning is very well justified.
- Professional development of teachers at HEIs could be another priority.
- There is a need of recognizing the new political reality in which we have to cope with new wave of conflicts (including conflicts between the states) and extremisms.

For improving the section on **"How we intend to achieve our goals"** it was suggested

- to focus on the dialogue between EU and non-EU members of the EHEA;
- to highlight the role of new pedagogical possibilities of modern technologies used by students, teachers, and administrative staff;
- to add the reference to the need of proper tracking of graduates' career paths. Lack of sufficient information on all levels is harmful to the quality and access to information.
- to acknowledge that all EHEA countries experience difficulties in different policy areas and in this light, to consider concrete cases to find out where it doesn't work and why.
- to reformulate the sentence concerning the consistent failure to implement by some countries of the fundamental standards on which the EHEA is built (p.3, lines 9-12).
- there should be reference to the issue of more coherence between recognition for academic purposes and recognition of professional qualifications.
- to reformulate the sections concerning the involvement of academic community (p.3).

As for the final section on **"The EHEA: a shared responsibility governed efficiently"**, it was highlighted that

- the BFUG should decide on the issue of the Secretariat in time for the 2018 Ministerial Conference;

- the Secretariat should support the Strategy for the EHEA in a Global Setting and dialogue with the regions outside the EHEA.

**The Chair concluded that by 4 February 2015 the drafting group would revise the documents in accordance with the comments received at the meeting and send the new versions to the BFUG members for further suggestions. The BFUG members would then be expected to submit their written contributions until 9 February 2015 by indicating what should be deleted and/or suggesting alternative formulations. Afterwards, the drafting group would integrate the comments and prepare the documents for the Reykjavík BFUG Board meeting.**

**The roadmap for drafting the Yerevan Ministerial Communiqué would be amended to reflect the changes in dates.**

## **7. Fourth Bologna Policy Forum Statement (Draft 0)**

Document: BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_7 [Fourth Bologna Policy Forum Statement\_draft 0]

The Chair, Mr. Andrejs Rauhvargers (Latvia), informed the BFUG that the draft statement of the Fourth Bologna Policy Forum (BPF) is dependent on the Communiqué and when the latter one is modified, the content of the statement will be revised as well.

While presenting the BPF statement, Mrs. Gayane Harutyunyan (BFUG Secretariat) noted that it was agreed that the document should be short and streamlined focused on the specific political goals and commitments of the Ministers responsible for HE and Heads of Delegations to the Fourth BPF.

Moreover, it was highlighted that it is important that the discussion of the BFUG that would follow be focused on two things, i.e. goals of the event and follow up measures.

Thus, the BFUG highlighted the following points:

- The format of the BPF has not been found yet. Moreover, the BPF is not sustainable if it is organised every three years without any organised work involving non-EHEA partners in between the high level meetings. Thus, the challenge is to decide what is done in between the meetings since there is no activity as such on contacting the EHEA countries/organisations and countries outside between the BPFs. So, it is important to address during the Yerevan Ministerial Conference how the countries present there want to interact with the EHEA in the period that follows.
- At the same time it is important to clarify whether the Ministers are ready for greater academic mobility between the EHEA and BPF countries i.e. receiving more students and staff from these areas and vice versa. If this is the case then it should be reflected in the Communiqué.
- If the Fourth BPF should be focused on the Mediterranean region and neighbourhood of the EHEA the political situation of this region should be taken into account and in particular, the role of HE in the development of the democratic societies, in preventing stereotypes, in developing cultural dialogue and in preventing extremism and terrorist acts.
- There is a need to take into account the issues the countries present at the BPF are interested in before making the statement as well as a need for a specific political text coping with the issues the EHEA should address together with the countries present.

- The challenge of revisiting the BPF should be the task of the next period and the next BFUG Secretariat should be involved in furthering the cooperation between the EHEA and other regions of the world. Moreover, maybe there is a need of specific working groups for the cooperation with the BPF countries since international cooperation is one of the strengths of the EHEA.
- For the future of the cooperation there is a need to discuss whether the BPF representatives should be invited to some BFUG meetings.
- The role of UNESCO in drafting the BPF statement should be clarified as well as the latter one should be encouraged to participate actively.
- Repetition of previous BPF statements should be avoided.
- Consistency about the regional processes in HE is missing in the statement.

Moreover, the BFUG suggested the following two expressions for what has been left open in the draft (p.1, line 21-22)

1. Eventual cooperating countries
2. Cooperation between the EHEA and countries from other regions

Last but not least it was suggested to change "Be adapted to other regions" (p. 1, line 8) to "be considered" and to delete the word "reaffirm" (p. 1, line 6) since it is not logical in that context.

**Finally the Chair summarised that the Co-Chairs together with the Secretariat would prepare a document to reflect on the possible ways of cooperation between the EHEA and other regions of the world for the next BFUG meeting in Riga taking into account all the comments made by the BFUG.**

### **Discussion on the applications for EHEA accession from Belarus and Kosovo**

Mr. Sjur Bergan (CoE) informed the BFUG that the CoE has not taken an official position concerning the applications from Belarus and Kosovo. Moreover, there is no information available at present on whether Kosovo would accede to the European Cultural Convention before the Yerevan Ministerial Conference. However, it is important to take into consideration the proposal made in Rome, i.e. to assess the application of Kosovo but on the understanding that it will only be considered should Kosovo move to the accession to the European Cultural Convention.

Furthermore, it was clarified that the procedure for access to the European Cultural Convention is that the authorities of the applicant submit an application which is then assessed by the Committee of Ministers, which then hears the opinion of the states that are party to the Cultural Convention but not members of the CoE (in this case Belarus, the Holy See and Kazakhstan). The Committee of Ministers then makes a decision after having heard the opinion of these 3 countries.

Moreover, the BFUG was informed that Kosovo has stated publicly that it intends to apply for membership of the CoE in March.

As for Belarus, the BFUG was updated that the CoE had some contacts with different parties and received conflicting messages concerning the development in the HE policy, HE structures and

some key elements in Belarus policy have been received. Some of the interlocutors are very clear in saying that there has been considerable progress made, while others state that there does not seem to be much progress.

The Council of Europe had also had contacts with researchers from a German university who had been advising the Belarusian authorities in the preparation of their application. In an open exchange of views, several options, including that of conditional accession, had been explored.

Thus, it was noted that it is very important to try to get as much information as possible and to give both the Belarusian authorities and NGOs in Belarus an opportunity to be heard. For this reason the CoE aims to organise at the request of the Belarusian authorities a conference in Minsk in early March, with the participation of some BFUG members.

So, it is suggested to take into consideration three possibilities for making a decision concerning the accession of Belarus, which are:

1. Clear "yes"
2. Clear "no"
3. "Conditional yes with a clear timetable"

Moreover, the decision taken should be based on as much information as possibly available and in a way that all Belarusian parties be convinced and have a feeling that they have been able to present their case.

The deliberations that followed underlined that it is particularly useful to be clear that the decision on the EHEA accession of Belarus is not necessarily tied to two options and the BFUG members need to consult their Foreign Ministries before the March BFUG meeting in order to have a clear position.

It was also noted that there is a need to think about the possibility of having a conditional roadmap towards Belarus accession which should be clear about the milestones necessary to be met on the conditions that need to be fulfilled by 2018. Moreover, the progress made by the country since 2012 should be assessed and recognized and it should be showed that the BFUG is prepared to work with Belarusian authorities and stakeholder organisations as well as support them in meeting the principles of the Bologna Process.

Furthermore, it was stressed that the Bologna Process is not only an intergovernmental process but it can also contribute to the civil society thus allowing the Belarusian students to educate themselves according to the European standards. On the other hand it was stressed that information received from the independent Bologna committee points out that a number of problems which made the Belarus' accession not possible in 2012, including the ones related to EHEA values, are still actual. Moreover, it was underlined that the third option should be attractive for the applicant; however there is a dilemma whether the essence of the roadmap should be based on the easiness of its implementation or rather on the real problems which make the roadmap necessary. There is also a question on formal outcomes of conditional.

**Thus, the BFUG took note of the exchange of views and will make its recommendation to Ministers in March.**

#### **8. Update on the preparation of the Ministerial Conference and Fourth Bologna Policy Forum in Yerevan in 2015**

Documents: BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_8a [Programme for the Yerevan MC and Fourth BPF]  
BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_8b [List of Countries and Organisations to be invited to the Fourth BPF]

Ms. Karine Harutyunyan (Armenia) presented the new version of the draft programme for the Yerevan MC and BPF and the list of countries and organisation to be invited to the event. It was highlighted that the programme had been amended in accordance with the discussions held at the Rome BFUG meeting in November. In particular, the programme, as it stood, allowed for more joint sessions and more chances for bilateral meetings, and optional visits to HEIs. The topics for the sessions had also been modified. Finally, participants were encouraged to suggest keynote speakers and moderators for the sessions.

As for the list of invitees, it consisted of 16 countries and 24 organisations. Moreover, it was underlined that a number of suggestions had been received from the EHEA countries to invite Japan and Brazil. However, it was also acknowledged that there was low empirical evidence that the previous formula of BPF had been a success. Hence, it was once again suggested adopting a focused approach for the Fourth BPF that would enhance the establishment of a firmer regional cooperation with the specific region.

A number of suggestions were given towards improving the programme:

- The programme would benefit greatly from linking its sessions to the proposed main points in the draft Communiqué such as technological developments, the role of HE in integrating minority communities, combating extremism, and overcoming crisis on the labour market, etc.
- Certain themes in the paper on the future of the EHEA could facilitate and stimulate the discussions in particular during the parallel sessions.
- One of the possible topics of the parallel sessions could be how countries could face today's challenges through academic cooperation.
- The topic concerning the coordination of the EHEA should only be discussed among a certain group of participants.
- The topic on the fundamental values of HE could be discussed with the heads of delegations.
- The participants might also discuss how professionally oriented education could be an asset for their countries.
- For the joint sessions, both EHEA and non-EHEA moderators should be invited.
- The possibility for having a presentation on the cooperation of Latin American countries in the BPF plenary session was questioned, since it was not foreseen to invite any representatives from the region.
- It was suggested to amend the topic of the BPF plenary session 3.
- For the sessions with the BPF delegations, it was deemed necessary to focus also on the topics that are of interest for these countries (for the Arabic countries the topics could include mobility, quality assurance and digital campuses).

On a practical note, Ms. Karine Harutyunyan (Armenia) advised the BFUG that in February 2015 the official website of the EHEA MC and Fourth BPF would be launched and the invitations would be sent out. Event registration and hotel reservation would be available through the website. The countries were urged to nominate members of the delegations in order to be able to register by the established deadline of 1 April 2015.



Moreover, the Secretariat asked the BFUG to check the information on the heads of their delegations sent to them in December 2014 to make sure that all the details are correct and up-to-date.

**Mr. Andrejs Rauhvargers (Latvia), the Chair concluded that Armenia would amend the draft programme based on the feedback received and present it at the next Riga BFUG meeting on 24-25 March 2015. The topics for the parallel sessions would be discussed on the background of challenges the societies were facing. To ensure the active involvement of the Ministers, it was agreed that the BFUG members would have their Ministers' opinion on the topics for the Ministerial event for the next BFUG meeting.**

## **9. Selection of the host for the Ministerial Conference and the Bologna Secretariat in 2018**

Documents: BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_9a.1 [Application of France\_FR]  
BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_9a.2 [Application of France\_EN]  
BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_9a.3 [Letter of the Minister of National Education, Higher Education and Research of France\_FR]  
BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_9a.4 [Letter of the Minister of National Education, Higher Education and Research of France\_EN]  
BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_9b [Letter of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia]  
BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_9c [Letter of the Minister of Education and Science of the RA]

The Chair, Una Strand Vidarsdottir (Iceland) reminded the BFUG that during the Rome BFUG on 27-28 November 2014, the applications from France and Georgia were accepted and two candidate countries were invited to come back with a new and more worked-out proposal(s) by the deadline of 12 January 2015. Moreover, it was agreed by the BFUG during its extraordinary meeting in Rome on 18-19 September 2014 that the BFUG would make its recommendation to the Ministers regarding the next host of MC at its Riga meeting on 26-27 January 2015.

Thus, in January 3 letters were received from France, Georgia and Armenia, correspondingly stating that

1. France confirmed its applications to host the 2018 Ministerial Conference and the Bologna Secretariat based on a team of European experts (inviting also Georgia to join).
2. Georgia decided to postpone its interest to host the Ministerial Conference and carry out the functions of the Bologna Secretariat in the period of 2018-2020.
3. Armenia supported the idea of international BFUG Secretariat and proposed to consider the possibility to include two candidates from the present Armenian Secretariat in the staff of the next Secretariat.

Ms. Patricia Pol (France) stressed that as indicated in the letter of Ms. Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, the Minister for National Education, Higher Education and Research of France; it is a great honour for France to apply for hosting the 2018 Ministerial Conference and the BFUG Secretariat

for the period 2015-2018. For France this application is a strong indication for contribution to the enhancement of the EHEA.

In the proposal circulated to the BFUG, France has described the vision of the BFUG Secretariat as well. Thus, the key features of the Secretariat have to be independence, neutrality and continuity taking into account the lessons learnt. Moreover, the Secretariat should be a Bologna reference point in Europe and more widely paving the way to the future of the EHEA.

Furthermore, it was noted that France believes that the team of the BFUG Secretariat should be European located in the Ministry for National Education, Higher Education and Research of France but independent enough in order to be under the responsibility of the BFUG. Moreover, experts from the volunteer countries are invited to participate in the Secretariat either part time or full time. Most probably the permanent staff will be composed of six people together with experts contributing to the activities of the Secretariat. The proposals from Spain and Armenia are welcome. Moreover, France proposes to have full-time working candidates, both from France and from any other EHEA countries willing to participate.

It is also notable for France that holding 2018 Ministerial Conference should include the organisation of the Bologna Policy Forum as well. Moreover, it should be a specific project connected to the work of at least one staff member of the Secretariat. This issue has to be included from the beginning within the work programme and the organisation of the BFUG Secretariat.

Afterwards, Mr. Luis Delgado (Spain) confirmed the commitment of Spain to support the international secretariat led by France by seconded national expert to the Secretariat on the permanent basis.

Moreover, Mrs. Karine Harutyunyan (Armenia) confirmed the willingness of Armenia to support the idea of the international secretariat and for having continuity in the work of the BFUG Secretariat, one or two members from the current Armenian Secretariat, probably as experts, are suggested to be involved in the activities of the future secretariat.

Mr. Giorgi Sharvashidze (Georgia) informed the BFUG that Georgia postponed its application to the period of 2018-2020. Moreover, to reinforce the country's commitment to the objectives of the Bologna Process, a special unit has been established in January 2015 in the National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement to support the Bologna Process/EHEA.

The deliberations that followed underlined that the BFUG expresses its gratitude to both France and Georgia since two proposals for hosting the Ministerial Conference and the BFUG Secretariat for different periods have been received and in this way the choice has been facilitated. Moreover, it was noted that both countries would organise excellent conferences and Secretariat support.

As for the proposal from France, it is a good base to work on. At the same it was stressed that the proposal from France to organise a Secretariat provided under French authorities but open for secondments from other countries is a very good step since the idea of the truly international secretariat raises a number of issues that the BFUG is not ready to discuss at the moment. Thus, France will need to make its intentions clear about how countries might signal their interest and how the selection will be made.

Furthermore, it was noted that in the proposal concerning the main activities of the Secretariat it is indicated that “the Secretariat will act as BFUG spokesperson”. Of course the Secretariat will be the main source of information on the EHEA during its function, but the term “spokesperson” can also have more political connotation to the extent that the BFUG needs to make statements on the major policy issues under discussion, but those statements in the name of the BFUG will continue to be made by the BFUG Co-Chairs. It was also underlined that it is very important to determine after the Yerevan Ministerial Conference the tasks and conditions of the Secretariat after 2018 and perhaps not in January 2018 but in 2016-2017. Moreover, setting up of the Secretariat should be done with a view of securing continuity to 2020 with as much international expertise as possible while the idea of having expertise for keeping the contact with the regions outside the EHEA is most welcome.

To the inquiry of the BFUG concerning covering the costs of the experts from the volunteer countries, Ms. Pol clarified that France intends to have a team of 6 permanent staff members for the Secretariat with cost sharing. This means that France will probably cover the expenses of 3 staff members coming from France and the rest will be contributed by the volunteer countries. As for the clarification concerning the working language of the Secretariat it was noted that of course it would be English at the same time it would be useful to understand and speak French.

**Finally the Chair closed the discussion by summarising that France is encouraged to write an official invitation to the EHEA countries to volunteer staff for the Secretariat with the clear indication in regard to the financing issue for the countries that will choose to do so and the criteria on the basis of which selection of the seconded staff members will be made. Moreover, it was noted that the BFUG encourages France to think about ideas of the more permanent Secretariat after the Yerevan Ministerial Conference. On that note, the BFUG members will take the proposal of France to their Ministers and propose that they accept it.**

#### **10. Updates from the EC, consultative members, EQAR (written contributions only)**

Documents: BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_10a [CoE update]  
BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_10b [EC update]  
BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_10c.1 [EI update]  
BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_10c.2 [EI update]  
BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_10c.3 [EI update]  
BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_10d [EURASHE update]  
BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_10e [ENQA update]  
BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_10f [EQAR update]

Mr. Sjur Bergan (CoE) updated the BFUG that the CoE Committee of Ministers is currently discussing an action plan after the terrorist attacks on Jan 7, 8 and 9 in Paris. Moreover, education is likely to play a quite strong role in that action plan since it has become even more important after the tragic events.

Mr. Michael Gaebel (EUA) informed the BFUG that EUA in collaboration with the University of Barcelona is in charge of the contract of Higher Education Reform Experts (HERE) in Tempus Partner Countries. More information about this will be provided during the March BFUG meeting.

Mr. Johan Cloet (EURASHE) reminded the BFUG that EURASHE will organise its celebratory 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference titled 'Professional Higher Education as a Key Factor for the Future of Society' in Lisbon (Portugal) on 16-17 April 2015. It will be organised by EURASHE and the Portuguese Polytechnics Coordinating Council (CCISP) and hosted at the Lisbon School of Health Technology (ESTeSL).

Mr. Pdraig Walsh (ENQA) highlighted that now ENQA has 43 members and 48 affiliates in 40 countries of the 47 EHEA countries. Moreover, in October 2014 ENQA adopted a procedure for agencies whose membership expires during the first half of 2015 and who plan to undergo an external review according to the revised ESG (rather than the current ESG). In November, the ENQA Board adopted a complaints policy in order to appropriately respond to concerns from individuals or organisations relating to 1) a full member's compliance with the ESG or 2) the integrity of the external review and decision-making process on the basis of which an agency was admitted as a full member of ENQA.

Last but not least Mr. Colin Tück (EQAR) informed the BFUG that the EQAR Register Committee is currently working on the transition for the revised ESG and some results will be announced in conjunction to the next BFUG meeting. Moreover, the EQAR's General Assembly will take place in the afternoon of 23 March in Riga.

## **The BFUG took note of the written contributions and information provided.**

### **11. Next BFUG meeting, Luxembourg and next BFUG Board meeting, Liechtenstein**

Documents: BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_11 [Presentation of Liechtenstein]

Mr. Leon Andre Diederich (Luxembourg) presented the higher education priorities and the events planned during the period of the Luxembourg EU Presidency and BFUG Co-Chairmanship. Moreover it was stressed that the BFUG meeting will be organised on 8-9 September 2015.

For more details, see the PowerPoint presentation below:



150126\_LU.pptx

Mr. Daniel Miescher (Liechtenstein) presented the outline of the priorities of Liechtenstein during their BFUG Co-Chairmanship as well as the main events to be organised. As for the Board meeting, it was announced that it was planned on 30 June 2015.

For more details, see the PowerPoint presentation below:



BFUG\_LV\_IS\_43\_11\_  
Presentation of Liechi

## **12. AOB**

- **Update on the preparations of EUROSTUDENT VI**

Ms. Kristina Hauschildt (EUROSTUDENT) updated the BFUG on the current state of the EUROSTUDENT project. The new EUROSTUDENT comparative report "Synopsis of Indicators" would be published in time to be presented at the final conference of EUROSTUDENT V organised jointly with the PL4SD project's final dissemination conference in Vienna on 25-27 February 2015.

The BFUG was also informed that the sixth round of EUROSTUDENT was under preparation. The project Consortium had received 22 letters of intent from the countries. A handful of countries had informally expressed their interest to take part in the project. The Consortium would be composed of DZHW (Germany, former HIS), IHS (Austria), ResearchNed (the Netherlands), PRAXIS (Estonia), NCFHE (Malta) and MOSTA (Lithuania).

It was highlighted that EUROSTUDENT had been continuously working on improving the quality of data. To this end, for the next round a technical advisory board would be introduced and stronger assistance to countries would be provided. Capacity building at the country level was also envisaged. Another aspect of the project is its policy relevance. To further strengthen this there would be a policy-makers conference. The third aspect is to encourage different groups to use the data which would be enhanced through organising a users' conference.

Finally, it was mentioned that the budget for the next round was being finalised and country fees would be determined soon.

#### ➤ **Final report of the FOHE-BPRC2 conference**

Ms. Marzia Foroni (Italy) informed the BFUG that the second edition of the FOHE-BPRC Conference took place on 24-26 November 2014 in Romania and was co-hosted by the Romanian Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Education and Science of Armenia, and was supported by the Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The Conference, which had a research and policy agenda, brought together policy-makers and researchers who study the development of the EHEA. The event had an inclusive character as it embraced almost all strands of research in HE. Recommendations were developed to enhance each strand.

The papers presented at the Conference would be compiled into a publication which will be published in time for the Yerevan MC.

Ms. Marzia Foroni (Italy) suggested the BFUG to consider the request of the Conference organisers to be given a chance to present the recommendations at the MC.

For more details on the Conference and recommendations, please refer to the document below:



FOHE BPRC2 - Final  
report.doc

The BFUG members underlined that the interaction with the research was important in developing the EHEA further and the FOHE-BPRC Conference was an initiative which allowed for it.

In this context, Armenia, as the host of the 2015 MC and the Secretariat were inquired about the possibility for the researchers to observe the Yerevan events. Furthermore, it should be

considered how the researchers would be identified assuming that there would be more requests from researchers.

**The Chair thanked the BFUG members for their fruitful discussions and contributions.**