



Ministry of Education, Culture and
Science of the Netherlands



Ministry of Education
of the Republic of Moldova

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MEETING OF THE BOARD OF THE BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP

Chisinau (Moldova), 18 January 2016

Draft Minutes

List of participants attending the meeting

Delegation	Surname	First Name(s)
BELGIUM VL (on behalf of WG 2)	Vercruyse	Noel
BFUG SECRETARIAT	Profit	Françoise
BFUG SECRETARIAT	Salden	Nina
COUNCIL OF EUROPE	Bergan	Sjur
ESU	Galan Palomares	Fernando Miguel
EUA	Gaebel	Michael
EURASHE	Cloet	Johan
EUROPEAN COMMISSION	Tyson	Adam
EUROPEAN COMMISSION	Waters	Margaret
FRANCE vice-chair	Pol	Patricia
HOLY SEE (on behalf of AG 2)	Bechina	Friedrich
ICELAND (on behalf of AG 3)	Vidarsdottir	Una
LATVIA (on behalf of WG 1)	Rauhvargers	Andrejs
LIECHTENSTEIN	Miescher	Daniel
LUXEMBOURG	Kox	Corinne
MOLDOVA co-chair	Velisco	Nadejda
MOLDOVA co-chair	Pavlov	Ludmila
MONTENEGRO	Vujovic	Aleksandar
MONTENEGRO	Misovic	Biljana
NETHERLANDS co-chair	Boselie-Abbenhuis	Floor
NETHERLANDS co-chair	van der Vegt	Jolien
ROMANIA (on behalf of AG 4)	Mihai Haj	Cezar
SLOVAKIA	Jurkovic	Jozef
SPAIN (on behalf of AG 1)	Delgado	Luis
UNITED KINGDOM (observer)	Robinson	Rebecca

Welcome address

The Minister of Education of the Republic of Moldova, Corina Fusu opened the meeting. She expressed her honour to host the BFUG board in her country. She outlined the reforms currently ongoing in the higher education sector in Moldova which aim to set-up a modern system of higher education in the country. Some of the most important issues are the development of a Quality Assurance system in accordance with the European framework as well as to enhance quality in education. In view of the meeting of the AG on support for the Belarus roadmap (AG 2) equally taking place in Chisinau, she expressed the willingness of her country to assist Belarus to align with the Bologna process.

The co-chair from the Netherlands and the vice-chair from France thanked the Minister and the colleagues from Moldova for hosting the meeting.

1. Information by the outgoing BFUG chairs: Luxembourg and Liechtenstein

The main tasks of the former co-chairs from Luxembourg and Liechtenstein have been the set-up of the BFUG work programme and the set-up of WGs and AGs, including the development of their TOR and the decision on membership in the groups. A first meeting of the co-chairs of each group took place in Brussels in early December 2015 which has served as a very good starting point for the work of the groups. A hand-over meeting with the new co-chairs from Moldova and the Netherlands, as well as the vice-chair from France also took place in Brussels. The two co-chairs thanked the vice-chair France and the BFUG Secretariat for the good cooperation during their co-presidency and wished the incoming co-chairs much success.

2. Information by the incoming BFUG chairs: Netherlands and Moldova

The present co-chairs from Moldova and the Netherlands thanked the former co-chairs, in particular for the very useful handover meeting held in Brussels. The setting-up of TOR of WGs/AGs was a difficult task that was well achieved.

The Dutch delegation recalled the Dutch EU presidency priorities for education that are composed of three main pillars: 1. quality of education; 2. encouraging skills, cognitive and non-cognitive skills; 3. Inclusive Europe, social inclusiveness.

The next BFUG will take place on 7/8 March 2016 in Amsterdam. The BFUG meeting will be followed by a conference on the future of higher education that shall contribute to the new "Higher Education Modernisation Agenda" of the European Commission. All BFUG delegates are warmly invited to attend this conference.

3. Adoption of the agenda

EURASHE requested to include under agenda point “AOB” an information point on a project on the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).

Luxembourg asked to discuss a request received from the network “NESSIE”. It was agreed to discuss this topic under agenda point 8 on “EHEA governance structure”.

The participants agreed on these amendments and adopted the agenda.

4. Minutes of last meetings

4.1 Adoption of the draft minutes of the last BFUG board meeting in Vaduz

Document: BFUGBoard_NL_MD_49_4a [BFUG Board Vaduz draft minutes (to be adopted)]

All comments received by the Secretariat were incorporated in the document presented at the current meeting.

The board adopted the Vaduz minutes in its present form (*BFUGBoard_NL_MD_49_4a*).

4.2 Presentation of the draft minutes of the BFUG meeting in Luxembourg

Document: BFUGBoard_NL_MD_49_4b [BFUG meeting Luxembourg draft minutes]

Participants of the board received the minutes of the BFUG in Luxembourg for their information. The minutes are due to be adopted by the BFUG in Amsterdam. There were no comments from the board members on these minutes. The European Commission thanked the Secretariat for the very clear and concise document.

5. Information by the BFUG Secretariat - Restructuring of the EHEA website and communication tools

Francoise Profit, head of the BFUG Secretariat, gave an update on the Secretariat’s structure: the Secretariat team is international: besides the French employees, it includes staff members from Germany, Armenia, Bulgaria and Romania. The Secretariat gave an update on the current work of restructuring the EHEA website and showed a first draft of the new wireframe.

Document: Presentation of the new EHEA website

The new website will be presented in a modern, dynamic design, include a research engine, restructure the organization of contents and provide for access to social networks.

The members of the board discussed the transparency of documents, the target audience and a continuous website update. The following points were raised:

The question of transparency of the documents has to be submitted to the BFUG members in Amsterdam in order to get a recommendation on this crucial point taking into consideration the following proposals:

1. Minutes of meetings (BFUG/WG/AG/Board) may be approved via email in order to have them available in a shorter timeframe for publishing on the website;
2. In general, the rule shall apply “documents that are on the agenda of the BFUG/WG/AG/board and that are not explicitly excluded shall be published on the website”.

Board participants recommended the use of social media in the new website. The Secretariat explained that the first objective is a clear and concise public website; social media are included in the new site but for the time being, the Secretariat had to conclude that there is not enough information/news for a daily use of social media channels.

It was requested that among the target group, accessing the website, students shall be considered.

A change in the domain name without any justification was not supported by board members.

A proposal was made that based on the ELCORE group from the ENIC NARIC network, a voluntary working group on the website and communication tools shall be set-up within the BFUG.

Some board members requested that the use of the Backoffice website shall be improved.

6. Working groups/Advisory groups

6.1. Report on the AG/WG co-chairs meeting held in Brussels on 17 December 2015 and report on work done/planned by co-chairs of each WG/AG

Documents:

BFUGBoard_NL_MD_49_6a [Agenda of the co-chairs meeting in Brussels]

BFUGBoard_NL_MD_49_6b [TOR AG 1]

BFUGBoard_NL_MD_49_6c [TOR AG2]

BFUGBoard_NL_MD_49_6d [TOR AG3]

BFUGBoard_NL_MD_49_6e [TOR AG4]

BFUGBoard_NL_MD_49_6f [Draft TOR WG1]

BFUGBoard_NL_MD_49_6g [Draft TOR WG2]

BFUGBoard_NL_MD_49_6h [Draft TOR WG3]

The Secretariat gave an overview of the meeting of co-chairs of WG/AGs that took place in Brussels on 17 December 2015 in the ESU premises. The purpose of the meeting was to kick-off the work of the groups through internal discussions among co-chairs of each group as well as to plan the groups' actions with a particular focus on cross-cutting issues, overlaps and synergies among different groups. The meeting was deemed very useful by participants and it was recommended to have such a type of meeting at least once a year, possibly in connection with the second year BFUG.

Presentation by the AG on International Cooperation (AG 1)

The first meeting of the group took place on 12 January 2016 in Paris. 15 member countries, the European Commission as well as ESU, ENQA, EI/ETUCE and EUA attended. In addition to those, the OECD, UNESCO, IAU, the EAIE, the AUF and ACA were invited to the meeting as observers.

The AG requests to formally add above mentioned organizations as experts and include this change in the TOR of the AG.

The objective of the AG is to set-up a roadmap for cooperation with non BFUG members and to prepare the next Bologna Policy Forum. A discussion took place on the low attendance rate of the last Policy Forum as well as the preferences over selecting a regional, versus a global focus for the meeting in the future. An overview of existing dialogue and forums, respectively from ENQA, EUA and the European Commission was helpful for further planning of the work.

The AG came to the conclusion that the next Policy Forum shall not be a single event, but a culmination of regular dialogues taking place during the next years.

The AG is collecting contact lists of ministerial representatives, rectors' conferences and institutions in Asia, Latin America, North America, Africa and the MENA region. Topics for discussion shall be agreed with the representatives of these regions. Already identified topics within the WG on Implementation (WG2) and the WG on New goals (WG3) may be used.

The next meeting of the group will take place in London in May 2016, followed by meetings in Russia and Madrid.

Presentation by the AG on the Belarus Roadmap (AG 2):

The AG is meeting for the first time the day after the board meeting. The specificity of this group is that it is dealing with only one country. The AG has two missions: 1. to accompany and assist Belarus in the implementation of the roadmap and 2. to objectively report back to the BFUG on the implementation of the roadmap.

The group is planning two meetings every year alongside additional events, one inside and one outside Belarus. It is planned to liaise closely with the European Commission and the Council of Europe on already ongoing activities in the country.

The group plans to utilize an approach that is aimed at building trust with the Belarussian government, but also taking seriously information from other sources.

The group has close links to AG 3 on non-implementation and will closely liaise with this group.

Presentation by the AG on Non-Implementation (AG 3):

The current co-chair from Iceland is now supported by a new co-chair from Liechtenstein. The first meeting took place in Brussels on 14 January 2016. The meeting came up with the identification of three key commitments for the EHEA. Introduced by a preamble mentioning the core values of the EHEA, such as academic freedom, free mobility and student participation, the following issues were identified:

- Three cycle system
- Lisbon recognition convention
- Quality Assurance

A paper on these three commitments shall be presented for adoption to the BFUG in Amsterdam. The AG foresees to work with the WG on monitoring (WG 1) and the WG on implementation (WG 2) to identify countries that have problems with these key issues and would like to propose peer learning for them. The co-chair of the AG requested the possibility to have a meeting between co-chairs of these groups in the margin of the BFUG in Amsterdam in order to discuss above issues.

The next meeting of the AG will concentrate on the question what to do procedurally with countries who do not implement fundamental values and these three issues. The next meeting shall take place in Iceland in September 2016.

Presentation by the AG 4 on the Diploma Supplement (AG 4)

The AG will meet end of the current week (22 January 2016) for the first time. The objective of the meeting is to finalize the AG's working methodology and meeting schedule as well as to go through/collect all the work done already on the diploma supplement.

Presentation by the WG on Monitoring (WG 1):

Norway has been selected as the leading co-chair of this WG. The first meeting of the group will take place on 19 February 2016 in Oslo (Norway). The meeting will look at the 2015 report to see what additions are needed and which information can be taken out. The last report contains 300 pages; in future it shall not be longer.

All of the WGs and AGs need the data of the WG on Monitoring. This WG will specifically work with the WG on implementation (WG2) and the AG on the Belarus roadmap (AG2). When talking about Belarus, one needs to make sure that we cannot ask things such as fundamental values from Belarus that other countries might not fulfil. We may therefore need to include new elements in the report.

The timeline for setting-up the report is tight as usual. The answers to questionnaires need to be received by mid-2017 in order to be presented to the BFUG by end of 2017. This requires a good

cooperation from all countries. The WG also foresees to integrate data from Eurostat, Eurostudent and Eurydice, possibly also from ESU.

Presentation by the WG on Implementation (WG 2):

The first meeting of the WG will be held on 27 January 2016 in Brussels. It is a large group with 33 members, 25 countries, 8 organizations and 4 co-chairs. A list of topics to be addressed and a list of events already foreseen/offered by members of the WG was collected in preparation of the first meeting.

The agenda of the first meeting will include a discussion on the TOR and the objectives of the group, how to organize targeted support to member countries who have difficulties in implementation as well as a brainstorming session on recognition, the social dimension, quality assurance and student centred learning.

The second meeting of the WG is foreseen for June 2016 and a third one at the end of the year 2016.

Presentation by the WG on New Goals (WG 3):

This WG is equally a large group with 35 members and 5 co-chairs. An intensive communication has already been established between the co-chairs. The Work plan of the group will be presented and agreed with members at the first meeting on 9 February 2016 in Moscow (Russian Federation). The meeting will also serve to discuss and finalize the TOR. In fall 2017, the group needs to present recommendations to the BFUG; this date will determine the WG's time plan.

A rotary coordination among co-chairs has been agreed, starting with ESU. Close cooperation will be necessary with the WG on implementation (WG 2), as countries have proposed some topics to both groups. A close coordination shall also be sought with the AG on international cooperation (AG 1), respectively for involvement of experts outside the EHEA.

In the discussion, the following points were raised:

- A permanent contact in the Secretariat per WG / AG was recommended. The Secretariat explained that this is currently not the case in order to allow for some flexibility, but takes note of this comment.
- Fundamental values, such as institutional autonomy, academic freedom and student participation are important issues to tackle not only in Belarus. The Council of Europe is planning a conference on these issues, probably in 2017.
- Links between WG and AGs are key in order to avoid overlap. The Brussels meeting is a good model that shall be replicated in the future.
- The existing schedule of WGs/AGs shall be updated by the Secretariat. It can give BFUG members a good overview of the current state of work undertaken.

- All members of WG shall know the strategic direction of the Bologna process. It is the task of the co-chairs, participating in the board and BFUG to convey information from the discussions in these meetings. In addition, within each country and organization a regular contact / coordination is highly recommended between the BFUG member and members in different WGs / AGs.

6.2 Discussion on the proposed amendments of the ToR by EC/CoE/IC and Poland

Documents:

BFUGBoard_NL_MD_49_6i [AG4_comments_EC_COE_IC]

BFUGBoard_NL_MD_49_6j [WG2_comments_EC_COE_IC AND Poland]

BFUGBoard_NL_MD_49_6k [WG3_comments_EC_COE_IC]

The TOR of AGs were adopted at the BFUG meeting in Luxembourg; the TOR of WGs are not yet adopted and need to be presented for adoption to the BFUG in Amsterdam. The Secretariat has received comments from Poland and from the EC/COE/Iceland on selected TOR, which were explained to the board members.

The following decisions on TOR were made for a presentation at the BFUG meeting:

- Given the fact that it is only a minor change, the change proposed to the TOR of the AG on the diploma supplement (AG4) will exceptionally be recommended for adoption without discussion to the BFUG, although TORs of AGs are already adopted.
- The addition of experts to the TOR of the AG on international cooperation (AG 1) will be exceptionally recommended for adoption to the BFUG.
- A discussion on TOR for AGs shall not be reopened.
- In the amendments to the TOR of WG on implementation (WG 2) “voluntary” shall be added to “peer review”. As the WG supports the amendments made by Poland and the EC/COE/Iceland, they shall be proposed with above change for adoption to the BFUG.
- The WG on new goals (WG 3) will make a proposal for changes to TOR, based on the comments from EC/COE/Iceland. The proposal will be coordinated with respective parties so that the new formulation can be proposed for adoption to the BFUG.
- A request was made that the TOR will each include the respective number of the group and that reporting requirements are harmonized.
- Each group shall send a one page on their work schedule to the Secretariat to give an overview of the work that has already been done and the work that shall be undertaken.

WGs have received the possibility to communicate any additional changes to the Secretariat by a given date, following their first meeting. The co-chair from Netherlands kindly asked co-chairs to keep requests to an absolute minimum in order not to restart discussion on the TOR.

7. Presentation of the draft agenda for the BFUG in the Netherlands, 7/8 March 2016

Document: BFUGBoard_NL_MD_49_7

The co-chair from the Netherlands presented the draft agenda of the forthcoming BFUG in Amsterdam. Parallel sessions on both days of the meeting shall allow WGs and AGs to bring specific issues to the attention of BFUG members and discuss these with them. WGs/AGs were invited to come forward with suggestions on these parallel sessions:

- The AG on international cooperation (AG 1) is interested in having a parallel session
- The AG on the Belarus roadmap (AG 2), the AG on the diploma supplement (AG 4) and the WG on monitoring (WG 1) are not interested
- The session foreseen by the AG for non-implementation (AG 3) does not fit in the concept because it's not open to all BFUG members and would therefore need to be held before/after or parallel to the BFUG meeting. No parallel session is therefore foreseen for AG 3
- The WG on implementation (WG 2) and the WG on new goals (WG 3) will need to discuss the issue with their members
- A parallel session on EHEA governance shall be included
- A short note from the co-chairs on what each parallel session is about will be necessary for the preparation of BFUG members

The following additions were made on the agenda:

- It was agreed that an agenda point on "questions and answers to written updates from consultative members" will be included, such as traditionally foreseen in the BFUG meetings

8. EHEA governance structure

8.1 Discussion on draft BFUG proceedings 2015-2018 to be presented to the BFUG in March

Document:

BFUGBoard_NL_MD_49_8a [draft proceedings]

The Secretariat prepared a draft for the proceedings 2015-2018 in cooperation with the co-chairs and vice-chair. The document was briefly presented to the board members.

The following comments / request for changes were made to the draft proceedings:

- The admittance of an organization as consultative member needs to be decided by the ministers. If we want EQAR to be a consultative member, we shall include this in the Paris communiqué
- The fact that only some of the consultative members are members of the board has historical reasons – but has also been done in order to keep a balance between country members and

consultative members. There was no request to include any further consultative member as member of the board.

- The sentence on Belarus shall be formulated according to the wording in the Yerevan communiqué.
- The statement that an international Secretariat exists for the first time is not correct and shall be reformulated.
- A paragraph on ministerial conferences shall be included as this belongs to the process.
- Annex 6 shall be updated with the selection procedure of the 2020 Ministerial conference.

With these changes the proceedings shall be recommended for adoption to the BFUG.

A request for association to the BFUG structure was received from the network, NESSIE. Nessie is one of the networks that were set-up in the framework of the previous BFUG structure. It was, however, decided not to have any longer sub-structures or networks in the working groups so that the networks came to an end. The network Nessie was linked in the past to the WG on internationalization and mobility and is, for example, dealing with the issue of portability of grants.

It was decided that no formal link between Nessie and the BFUG structure shall be set-up. However, it may be advisable that the WG on implementation (WG 2) cooperates with them in practice, for example by inviting one of their co-chairs as observer to WG 2 meetings, when issues of common interest are foreseen on the agenda.

8.2. Debate on how to organize the discussion in the upcoming years on the BFUG governance post-2018

Some members of the board felt that it is too early for the discussion on the governance post-2018, as the work first needs to start and to produce first results. A request from the ministers to simplify the EHEA governance structure was already addressed with the current set-up of WGs and AGs.

It is, however necessary not to lose sight of this topic and to prepare a roadmap how to address this issue in the coming years. It was therefore decided to have a parallel session on the topic in the BFUG in March. This session could come-up with a list of questions on which basis the co-chairs and the vice-chair can set-up a background paper and timetable and hand that over to the next Chairmanship. In this way, one can be assured that the topic will be dealt with.

9. Links between the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the EHEA

*Document: BFUGBoard_NL_MD_49_9 [EQF_EHEA]
Presentation of Sjur Bergan, Council of Europe*

A short presentation by Sjur Bergan, Council of Europe, brought to the participants' attention what are Qualifications Frameworks and their role in the Bologna process. There are currently two different frameworks in the EHEA: 1. The EQF, addressing all levels of qualifications, initiated by the European Commission and encompassing the EU Member States only and 2. The EHEA framework, being solely linked to higher education, and encompassing the much wider region of the EHEA. The two frameworks are not identical, but compatible. We need to address the issue how to continuously ensure this compatibility.

The European Commission, as initiator of the EQF, informed that there is currently some planning/thinking on the future of the EQF, including the question of including countries outside the current EQF framework. A discussion between the EQF and the EHEA does not need to take place immediately, but shall be taken up in the future.

It was agreed that the topic shall be discussed in the BFUG meeting second half of this year, in December 2016 in Bratislava.

10. Information from future co-chairs Montenegro and Slovakia / dates for the BFUG and BFUG board meetings in the second half of 2016

Document: Power point presentation Montenegro and power-point presentation Slovakia

Both countries gave a short presentation on their country and higher education system.

The next Board and BFUG meetings will take place as follows:

- **24 October 2016 BFUG board meeting in Podgorica, Montenegro**
- **8-9 December 2016 BFUG meeting in Bratislava, Slovakia**

11. Presentation of the SPHERE project by EUA

Document: Power point presentation SPHERE

The EUA and the University of Barcelona are implementing a service contract from the European Commission / EACEA for the implementation of the Higher Education Reform Experts (HERE) in selected Erasmus+ partner countries (former Tempus countries). The project implements a series of events and technical assistance missions linked to the objectives of the EHEA. These are generally closed meetings, but if there is an interest in participation, EUA invites board members to contact EUA.

It was agreed (upon proposal from the EC as contractor to this project) that it makes sense to link this project with the BFUG WGs so that activities will focus on issues that have also been identified by the BFUG as areas of importance.

The European Commission also informed that there is currently a call for proposal open for EU member states to support the Bologna process.

12. AOB

EURASHE briefly presented the project “The ESG a tool for change” and forthcoming events in the framework of the project. Board members were invited to participate and spread the information to their constituencies. An information note will be sent to the BFUG Secretariat to forward to all members.

The Dutch co-chair reminded on behalf of Germany on the request sent by the German Ministry of Education and Research on the access of BA graduates to the public service. This is an issue that is also taken-up in the Yerevan communiqué and is therefore of specific importance. The German ministry would be grateful for feedback from EHEA countries on this issue and will be happy to share the answers collected among BFUG members.

The Co-chairs thanked the Secretariat for the preparation of the meeting as well as Moldova as a host of this meeting.

END OF MEETING