

BFUG BOARD MEETING

Oslo (Norway), 30th March 2017

Minutes

0. List of Participants

Delegation	First Name	Surname
BFUG Co-chair (Malta)	Tanya	Sammut-Bonnici
BFUG Co-chair (Norway)	Toril	Johansson
BFUG outgoing Co-chair (Slovakia)	Jozef	Jurkovič
BFUG incoming Co-chair (Estonia)	Margus	Haidak
BFUG incoming Co-chair (Estonia)	Janne	Pukk
BFUG incoming Co-chair / WG3 chair (Russia)	Nadezda	Kamyninan
BFUG Vice-chair (France)	Marie-Odile	Ott
Council of Europe	Sjur	Bergan
ESU	Lea	Meister
EUA	Michael	Gaebel
European Commission	Mette-Moerk	Andersen
European Commission	Sarah	Lynch
AG2 chair (Germany)	Frank	Petrikowski
AG3 chair (Iceland)	Una	Vidarsdottir
AG4 chair (Romania)	Mihai Cezar	Haj
WG1 chair (Norway)	Tone Flood	Strøm
WG2 chair (Belgium fl.)	Noel	Vercruyse
BFUG Secretariat	Françoise	Profit
BFUG Secretariat	Marina	Steinmann

Apologies: BFUG outgoing Co-Chair (Montenegro), EURASHE, AG1

1. Welcome and introduction to the meeting

The Co-chair from Norway opened the meeting and together with the Co-chair from Malta welcomed the participants. Marie-Odile Ott introduced herself as acting Vice-chair due to reorganisations in the French ministry regarding the perspective of the 2018 Conference in Paris.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The chairs invited the participants to comment on the minutes from last Board and BFUG meeting.

Several participants expressed their regrets that even though major changes were made with the minutes from the Bratislava meeting, they had not been recirculated. The Board concluded that in the future the draft minutes would be recirculated if substantial changes are suggested. The Secretariat should also notify the BFUG when the minutes have been published online.

On request, the Secretariat explained that for the venue of the 2018 Ministerial Conference in Paris, a public call has been published, with a proposed date 24/25 May for the conference. If tenderers are offering other dates it might change, this will be known by the end of April. More information will be available for the Gozo BFUG meeting.

3. Applications for the 2020 conference

One application has been received, and the Board welcomed the Italian invitation. At the same time, it expressed a desire for further information, especially regarding the organisation and staffing of the Secretariat and the conference. The question was also raised whether the next Ministerial Conference should be held in 2020 or 2021 in order to follow the three year cycle. The European Commission explained that due to the Commission's budget cycle the conference has to take place in 2020 if it is to receive support within the current budget, and the Co-chairs reminded the Board that the mandate of the process given by the ministers lasts until 2020 only, and that this discussion had been closed at the Amsterdam BFUG meeting.

The Board asked the Secretariat to request detailed information on technical aspects of the conference and the Secretariat from Italy for the Gozo BFUG. The Board decided to propose to the BFUG to accept the application of Italy as host of the ministerial meeting in 2020 subject to clarification of these issues.

Board members expressed the view that the future of the Bologna Process is not necessarily linked to the technical decision on the Secretariat and the Conference but should be discussed separately in the autumn BFUG. The question of whether a kind of "Implementation Report" was to be written for the 2020 conference was raised. Most members were in favour of having a report in 2020, and favoured a "lighter" or a different type of report, e.g. look at the broader picture since 2010 or have an overall external review. It was also recalled that many BFUG members felt the process leading up to the 2010 evaluation report was unsatisfactory and did not allow members to comment or even to correct basic factual mistakes. Because of the limited time, no major additions can be made for the data collection but the Board agreed that a report is needed for the conference. There might be some aspects in the 2018 Implementation Report which could be analysed in more detail, and in addition the report should be linked to the goals which will be set at the 2018 conference. The WG1 (*Monitoring*) chair commented that if it is decided to have a broader overall evaluation of the process as such, WG1 might not be the right group to carry out such a task. If the decision is taken to have a "lighter" implementation report in time for the 2020 conference, the mandate of WG1 will have to be revised. The Gozo BFUG should make a decision on whether to have a report in 2020 whereas the content of that report could be discussed later.

4. Update concerning the AG/WG work

The WG1 (*Monitoring*) chair reminded the participants that the draft structure of the report had been adopted in Bratislava. The data collection has been split into two parts: The first part consists of a prefilled questionnaire focusing on the existing indicators where countries are asked to check whether the information provided for 2016/17 is correct, and only explain if that is not the case. The second part of the data collection is an online questionnaire covering the new topics arising from the Yerevan Communiqué such as fundamental values, teaching and learning, digitalisation etc. WG1 will meet in Riga on 26 April with the purpose of discussing the new indicators for the report as well as updated and new scorecard

indicators. The results will be presented at the Gozo BFUG. A first draft of the report focusing on the key issues will most likely be available for the autumn BFUG. Regarding "Fundamental Values", data will concentrate on academic freedom and institutional autonomy. Some questions have been included in the second questionnaire, and some information will be provided through the data collected by ESU and EUA.

The Co-chairs asked the other WGs/AGs to be in touch with WG1 if data was needed.

The **WG2** (*Fostering implementation of agreed key commitments*) chair reported from the 4th meeting in Vienna in March 2017 with a thematic session on the social dimension and one on mobility, and a discussion on how to draft the report. It is foreseen to concentrate on implementation of the three key commitments, the adoption of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and the new ECTS Users' Guide. It should include an analysis and evaluation of the work of WG2 and all events. Implementation could be regarded on national or institutional level. Proposals will include reversed peer review (organised as a dialogue between selected countries) as a model, mainstreaming of the social dimension and reformulation of the short cycle. The meeting on June 13th in Malmö will be linked to an event on refugees and will deal with recognition of prior learning and recognition in times of crisis. The Co-chairs welcomed that recommendations will be presented to the BFUG in Gozo, and underlined the importance of ensuring that there will be clear recommendations from WG2 for the ministerial meeting.

The **WG3** (*Policy development for new EHEA goals*) chair reported that "Relevance of Competences" and "Digitalisation" had been discussed in Stockholm in November 2016. It was difficult to come to conclusions, especially for competences. The next meeting in April was due to deal with the three topics "Active Citizenship", "Teacher Support" and the relation between EHEA and ERA. Conclusions on Digitalisation and Competences were due to be finalised after the April meeting. At its last meeting in Brussels in September 2017, WG3 chairs intend to have arrived at generic conclusions.

Board members underlined that the work of WG3 is highly relevant to the question of where the EHEA should go beyond 2018/2020. Therefore, it is crucial to define some new goals and reflect on the structure of the EHEA. New goals should not be too numerous and should be clearly defined. The Board underlined the importance of WG3 coming up with clear recommendations for new goals for the EHEA in due time.

As two of the three **AG1** (*EHEA International Co-operation*) chairs left recently and the third was not available for this meeting, an AG1 member (Chair of WG2) reported about the last meeting in Alcalá with representatives from other regions. For Latin American participants, diversity was the main challenge. The first outcomes to propose so far touch on interregional collaboration in order to set up an "international alliance". The Bologna Policy Forum might be called "EHEA global policy dialogue".

Board members asked the AG to examine how other regions perceive the EHEA, e.g. as an example to follow (like the Mediterranean region) or if they have other expectations (like Latin America). They wondered what a "policy dialogue" in Paris should look like if not European-centred. The BFUG Co-chairs underlined the need for concrete proposals to discuss at the BFUG meeting in Gozo, especially when it comes to the discussion on a potential Bologna Policy Forum. The group responded that a more elaborated proposal would be prepared for the Gozo BFUG, e.g. common issues for all regions and the EHEA such as mobility, digitalisation, or structural reforms. As the dialogue so far is taking place with intermediate organisations and not with ministries, this is a challenge. Several Board members expressed doubts about the added value of a Policy Forum in 2018, and the Board concluded that this issue should be addressed at the Gozo BFUG meeting.

The **AG2** (*Support of the Belarus roadmap*) chair stated that the goals of the group are set out very clearly in the roadmap. Now, the situation when joining the EHEA in 2015 has to be compared with what has changed since then. There were examples of misunderstandings and misuse of Bologna tools, and these had to be addressed e.g. through organising new events on the tools. In the context of the last meeting, 50 rectors of Belarusian HEIs had been invited to Berlin. The next meeting will be held in Minsk in mid-May and at this meeting the AG plans to meet also with the independent stakeholders. The Co-chair stressed the need to lift the work of the group also to the political level, through e.g. organising a meeting with Belarusian parliamentarians. A draft report will be written in September by AG2 chairs and finalised at the AG2 meeting in October. It might then be presented in the November BFUG meeting.

ESU referred to its open letter to the authorities in Belarus following the massive protests in the country also amongst students, and referred to the demands made by ESU in the letter. Some members of the Board raised their concern regarding the reports received on the situation in Belarus.

The WG2 chair invited Belarus to participate in the peer-learning activity on Qualifications Frameworks in April.

The **AG3** (*Dealing with non-implementation*) chair reported that the extensive discussions on the "procedure model" proposed in Bratislava were followed by an AG3 meeting in January. The group revised the model and agreed on explanations of the issues under discussion. The changes will be presented at the Gozo BFUG meeting with a revised version of "Working Paper III". The focus is more on peer-support between well-performing countries and countries which are lagging behind in implementing the key commitments. AG3 will have an exchange with WG1 on the indicators prior to the next meeting of AG3 in June.

AG2 referred to the fact that peer support needs substantial time, staff and money. It would be important to establish such an offer on European level to provide access for all countries. The European Commission informed that opinions had been noted for the drafting of the next call where it might be considered to expand peer-learning opportunities between smaller groups of countries. Some concerns have been expressed as applications under Erasmus+ need a lot of time for planning and thus might not be suitable for support at rather short notice.

The **AG4** (*Diploma Supplement revision*) chair referred to the group's meeting in March which aimed at finalising the template and guidelines for the Diploma Supplement. The implementation of the current Diploma Supplement model had led to changes in the template. The Diploma Supplement might be used for the third cycle without any specific changes. If the BFUG would like to comment on the proposals, some more time would be needed at the Gozo BFUG meeting. The final report will be discussed by AG4 in September, so that it should be presented in the autumn BFUG.

5. Proposal of a template for written reports from AG/WGs for the Gozo BFUG meeting

The Secretariat explained the proposed template for a report for the Gozo BFUG. This report should be clearly different from the final report in autumn 2017 (designed for the 2018 Ministerial Conference). The main purpose of it would be to raise awareness for conclusions from the work, which might result in proposals for the Ministerial conference and/or the Communiqué.

The Board agreed that the BFUG needs to be informed about major issues on which the groups need input from the BFUG. "Proposals to the BFUG" should not refer to reports on the groups' work, but to points for discussion. The Board decided to accept to have a template, to use "tasks" instead of "goals" and to ask the Secretariat to fill in all of the annexes 1 and 2. On request of some Board members, the template will be open for specific needs of individual groups but should still lead to offering a concise and condensed basis for preparing BFUG members for the discussion in Gozo.

6. Draft agenda for the BFUG meeting in Gozo (Malta)

It was decided to start with the reports from the Working Groups, followed by those of the Advisory Groups. AG3 and AG4 both signalled that they would need more time for discussion. The 2018 conference should be a separate point on the agenda, as should the work of the drafting committee. The minutes of the Bratislava meeting should also be a point for information on the agenda alongside the minutes of the Board meeting. The issue of whether a report should be written for the 2018-2020 period should also be on the agenda as a point for decision for the BFUG. If the BFUG wants to have such a report, it would require the expansion of the mandate of WG1 in order for the WG to be able to start work on the next period as soon as possible without anticipating the decision on the existence and composition of working groups for the next period. For the thematic session, see item 9 below.

The issue on whether EAIE would be accepted as consultative members of the BFUG was raised under this point on the agenda, as there seemed to be some uncertainty related to the decision taken at the BFUG meeting in Bratislava. As EAIE does not fulfil the criteria for consultative membership, the decision was taken that the Co-chairs will send a letter to EAIE on behalf of the BFUG informing them about the decision taken, and the item will not be discussed again in Malta.

7. Discussion on fundamental values of the EHEA

Participants were reminded of the interesting discussions in Bratislava on institutional autonomy and academic freedom. The Co-chairs asked what is expected on this issue and how one should proceed with the issue of fundamental values for the 2018 ministerial meeting. Board members suggested two possible ways to proceed with the issue. The first one would be to include a paragraph on fundamental values of the Bologna Process and the EHEA in the Communiqué, focusing on areas like student participation, institutional autonomy, and academic freedom. The second option would be to have a debate with the ministers on this issue at the Ministerial Conference in Paris. Several Board members underlined that the Ministers had raised the issue of fundamental values at the ministerial meeting in Yerevan, established AG2 and AG3, and that the ministers would expect the issue to be taken up again. It was stressed that addressing the issue of fundamental values both in the Communiqué and the Ministerial Conference is only a natural follow-up of the fact that the 2018 Implementation Report will report on fundamental values of the EHEA for the first time. Several Board members supported this view and were also in favour of including the issue both in the Communiqué and the conference.

The Secretariat was asked prepare a summary on what has been discussed so far and what had already been included in former Communiqués.

8. Drafting Committee for the 2018 Ministerial Communiqué and a Bologna Policy Statement

The Co-chairs explained that the meeting on the following day was organised to start work on the methodology and tasks of the Drafting Committee. The first draft of the Communiqué should be discussed in the autumn BFUG in Estonia. The BFUG should clearly direct the Committee in terms of goals and expectations.

9. Presentation of the Thematic Discussion on Innovative Learning Strategies in Higher Education planned for the Gozo BFUG meeting

The Co-chair from Malta provided information on the Thematic Discussion led by the speaker of the FT | IE Corporate Learning Alliance. The organisation, led by the Financial Times and IE Business School of Madrid, focuses on lifelong education for international executives, student-centred learning and digital education, which are regarded as three pillars innovative learning methods.

Concern was raised by the Board members that the methods and approach of IE as a different type of institution might not be easily transferable to the HEIs normally included in the Bologna Process. The Maltese Co-chair stressed that the speaker would be well prepared on both the context and the audience, and underlined that the discussion is meant to inspire the work of the AGs and WGs

10. Information by the incoming Co-chairs

Russia announced the Board meeting at the St. Petersburg University of Economics on 26 September 2017. It will be up to the Drafting Committee to propose their meeting in connection with this date which Russia would also offer to host. Board members will be provided with all details for visa and practical information by the end of April or early in May. Estonia announced that the BFUG meeting will take place on 9/10 November 2017 in Tartu.

11. AOB

Romania informed the Board that it will not be able to organise the European Researchers Conference as announced due to a lack of funds.