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BFUG BOARD MEETING
Zürich (Switzerland), 3 July 2018
Minutes

0. List of participants

Delegation	First Name	Surname
BFUG Co-chair (Austria)	Gottfried	Bacher
BFUG Co-chair (Austria)	Stephan	Dulmovits
BFUG Co-chair (Switzerland)	Muriel	Meister
BFUG Co-chair (Switzerland)	Silvia	Studinger
BFUG outgoing Co-chair (Bulgaria)	Ivana	Radonova
BFUG outgoing Co-chair (Bulgaria)	Yana	Yotova-Bakalova
BFUG outgoing Co-chair (Serbia)	Vanja	Nedeljković
BFUG outgoing Co-chair (Serbia)	Bojan	Tubić
BFUG incoming Co-chair (Romania)	Daniela-Cristina	Ghițulică
BFUG Vice-chair (Italy)	Ann Katherine	Isaacs
Council of Europe	Sjur	Bergan
ESU	Adam	Gajek
EUA	Michael	Gaebel
EURASHE	Michal	Karpíšek
European Commission	Klara	Engels-Perenyi
European Commission	Kinga	Szuly
BFUG Secretariat	Giovanni	Finocchietti
BFUG Secretariat	Luca	Lantero
BFUG Secretariat	Vera	Lucke
Previous BFUG Vice-chair (France)	Marie-Odile	Ott
Previous BFUG Secretariat	Françoise	Profit
Previous BFUG Secretariat	Mariana	Saad
Previous BFUG Secretariat	Marina	Steinmann

Apologies: BFUG incoming Co-chair (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

1. Welcome and introduction

The hosting Co-chair Silvia Studinger (Switzerland) welcomed the participants. She reported on all the hand-overs that took place before the dinner: from the French BFUG Secretariat to the Italian BFUG Secretariat, from the French Vice-chair to the Italian Vice-chair, from the outgoing Co-chairs Bulgaria and Serbia to the current Co-chairs Austria and Switzerland.

1.1 Information by the outgoing BFUG Co-chairs: Bulgaria/Serbia

The outgoing BFUG Co-chairs Ivana Radonova (Bulgaria) and Bojan Tubić (Serbia) expressed thanks for the support they received during the past six months, underlined the positive atmosphere of cooperation that accompanied their work, and wished good luck to the incoming Co-chairs.

1.2 Welcome by the current BFUG Co-chairs: Austria/Switzerland

The current Co-chairs Gottfried Bacher (Austria) and Silvia Studinger (Switzerland) thanked the outgoing Co-chairs for their good wishes, and underlined their eagerness to carry on their tasks with the same spirit of cooperation. They welcomed the Vice-chair Ann Katherine Isaacs and wished her all the best for her new role. They expressed their gratitude that the previous BFUG Secretariat was still present in this meeting to help and stated that they are looking forward to work with the Italian Secretariat.

1.3 Information by the BFUG Vice-chair (Italy)

The current Vice-chair for Italy, Ann Katherine Isaacs, expressed thanks for the trust granted her and for the positive atmosphere of collaboration, and underlined the importance of further progress, making use of the huge existing potential for connecting the many countries and different levels, including HEIs, with the aim of fully implementing what appears clearly defined in theory, but still may present difficulties in practice.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted without modification.

Board_AU_CH_62_2a Draft Agenda

Board_AU_CH_62_2b Draft Annotated Agenda

3. Feedback from the last meeting (BFUG meeting in Sofia, 24-25 April 2018)

The outgoing BFUG Co-chair (Bulgaria) underlined the success of the joint efforts with the Co-chair (Serbia) in the organisation and management of the BFUG meeting in Sofia, in which the Paris Communiqué was finalised with limited changes to the text submitted by the drafting committee. She added that in Sofia the Bologna Policy Forum Statement and the peer-support structure for implementation were adopted.

The Co-chair (Austria) commented that the outgoing Co-chairs (Bulgaria and Serbia) had two BFUG meetings and two Board meetings to organise, and that they did a great job.

BFUG_BG_RS_60 Minutes

4. Evaluation Report of the Paris Ministerial Conference

The Head of the previous French BFUG Secretariat presented the first results of the evaluation survey of the Paris Ministerial Conference and the Fifth Bologna Policy Forum. The Conference

and Forum were attended by 644 participants of which there were 28 country delegations from outside the EHEA.

The full evaluation report will be available for the next BFUG Meeting in Vienna.

Board_AU_CH_62 Evaluation Paris Ministerial Conference.pptx

The Board congratulated France and the Secretariat for the well organised Ministerial Conference and formulated the following observations in view of future Conferences:

- The high number of Ministers was a great success and showed increased participation in relation to the 2012 and 2015 Ministerial Conferences.
- The speech by the French Prime Minister was much appreciated.
- It is preferable that the Ministerial Conference be chaired by the hosting Minister, since in Paris having a professional moderator gave the ministers less ownership of the Conference.
- The moderator's time-management skills are of prime importance: it would have been important to have had time to discuss the future work on implementation and compliance.
- There was surprise that the hosting Minister was not present to close the meeting, giving the final touch.

5. Information by the BFUG Secretariat

Luca Lantero, Vera Lucke and Giovanni Finocchietti, members of the Italian BFUG Secretariat 2018-2020, introduced themselves. Luca Lantero, the Head of the Italian BFUG Secretariat explained the organisation of the Secretariat - which will comprise at least seven people - and the role of institutions (MIUR, CRUI, CIMEA, and Studiare Sviluppo srl) that will collaborate in the organisation of the Rome 2020 Ministerial Conference.

The first steps of the Secretariat's activities include: a) re-building the website, since the previous Secretariat was not able to transmit the source code and the CMS (Content Management System) to the Italian Secretariat; b) updating the mailing list used by the outgoing Secretariat; c) launching an international call for experts in view of selecting one senior and three junior experts (it is envisaged to select both EU and non-EU experts, as appropriate).

An event is announced to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Bologna Declaration; it is to be organised with the University of Bologna and held in June 2019. As for the Rome Ministerial Conference, the "Rome Convention Center - La Nuvola" may be the venue of the event, although this is still to be decided. The Conference will take place in the second half of June 2020.

Finally, the Italian BFUG Secretariat informed Board members that representatives of San Marino have informally contacted the Secretariat in order to understand the correct procedure for submitting their candidature as a new member of the EHEA.

6. Presentation and discussion of the 2018-2020 Work Plan and Proceedings

The BFUG Secretariat presented a power point to illustrate a draft proposal of the Work Plan and proceedings on the basis of what was decided in the Paris Communiqué.

Board_AU_CH_62 Work Plan and Proceedings.pptx
Board_AU_CH_62_6a Draft Work Plan

In the Paris Communiqué the Ministers adopted a structured peer support approach to the implementation of Bologna key commitments, and established the creation of peer groups focusing on those key commitments. The Communiqué mandated the BFUG to implement, coordinate and monitor the peer support activities with the aid of a Bologna Implementation Coordination Group (BICG) instituted to that end.

The work of the BICG was to be based on three Thematic Peer Groups (TPGs), focused on:

- Qualifications Frameworks (degree structure) - including ECTS;
- Implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention including the DS;
- Quality Assurance.

In addition, analysing the Paris Communiqué, the proposal was to create and operate the following three Working Groups (WGs):

- WG1 Monitoring;
- WG2 Governance and Priorities;
- WG3 Global Policy Dialogue.

and the following two Advisory Groups (AGs):

- AG1 Digitalisation;
- AG2 Social Dimension.

Finally, the Paris Communiqué mandated the BFUG to establish interaction with the ERA - European Research Area. According to the draft, the BFUG Board, with the support of the BFUG Secretariat, should initiate and develop contacts with the ERAC - European Research Area and Innovation Committee.

7. Discussion on the substructures of the BFUG (e.g. AGs/WGs) and invitation for participation

In presenting the draft Work Plan, the Head of the Secretariat underlined that there is a short time period to implement the activities and tasks (less than 2 years) and that it is crucial and urgent to create positive feedback between the initiatives and understandings of the protagonists and stakeholders of the HEIs and of the BFUG.

On the basis of this evaluation and particularly with reference to the many comments received from the Co-chairs, Vice-chair and other Board members, the Italian Secretariat proposed a number of issues for discussion:

- Is it necessary to establish WGs or AGs for all the topics? Or only for some of them? Is it possible to create a lighter and more flexible structure than the one initially planned? Can some topics be merged?
- Would it be useful to establish “ad hoc task forces” or other substructures instead of WG/AG in some instances?
- Which topics should be taken up directly by the BFUG (after preparation by the Board)?
- Would it be useful to plan “thematic BFUG Seminars” on key topics, involving different stakeholders, perhaps back-to-back with BFUG/Board meetings?

The Secretariat underlined the fact that it is crucial to approve the BFUG Work Plan and related Terms of References during the Vienna BFUG meeting in order to start the work of each WG or AG as soon as possible.

Work Plan 2018-2020

The Board agreed that a lighter and more flexible structure is needed as the BFUG has only 18 months' net time to work on the topics. There appeared to be broad consensus that:

- A wider mandate to the Board itself in preparing some topics for discussion in the BFUG would make it possible to lighten the WG/AG structure;
- 'Ad hoc groups', 'task forces', 'expert meetings' or "Bologna events" could be solutions for addressing some of the topics, in order to emphasize action and to avoid having so many WGs and AGs;
- We should build better on what has already been done in the Bologna Process;
- Actions within the Bologna context should reach out, whenever feasible, to higher education institutions directly, in order to increase their involvement and commitment.

The Secretariat will prepare an updated Work Plan based on the discussion and present it to the Board for approval before the next BFUG.

BICG and the three TPGs – Thematic Peer Groups

The BICG was already established and its ToR approved during the Ministerial Conference in Paris. The first meeting of the BICG was held in Brussels on 5 June 2018; the letter to BFUG members inviting them to indicate in which Thematic Peer Group/s they wish to participate was already sent and the BICG members and the Secretariat are collecting the answers. Some comments and remarks were made by Board members on this topic:

- The TPGs are not expected to address ex novo their theme, but to connect countries requiring support on certain parts of each key commitment with others that can provide examples of good and effective practice.
- Reference should be made to the scorecards indicators, which not all countries may have taken into account;
- The TPGs should, if necessary, be articulated in smaller sub-groups or clusters, considering the number of participants and the specific areas of interest in each TPG;
- Each country and consultative member should participate in at least one of the proposed TPGs and they are encouraged to join two or even all three groups.

Belarus Strategy for 2018-2020

The French BFUG Secretariat received a message from the Belarus BFUG delegation giving some information about the state of play with regard to the implementation of their Strategy: Belarus informed the Board that they have drafted an Action Plan for 2018 on implementing their Strategy that will be discussed and approved at the Rectors' Conference on 5 July 2018. The Belarus delegation is also selecting candidates to participate in the three TPGs. The Board agreed that Belarus should be invited to join all three TPGs considering that it needs to develop all key commitments.

The Board noted that the Strategy comprises several areas not covered by the three TPGs, and that there should be external experts accompanying them. It will be important that the BFUG receives regular updates, through the Board, from both the Belarussian authorities and the expert involved, in order for the BFUG to be duly informed about the implementation of the Strategy.

The BFUG Board agreed that the Co-chairs will contact the Belarusian delegation to discuss further steps to support the implementation of Belarus's Strategy in conjunction with their participation in the three TPGs as well as the areas not covered by the TPGs.

WG – Monitoring

The Board agreed that a Working Group on Monitoring is needed also during the 2018-2020 period in order to develop the Bologna Process Implementation Report, with a special focus on assessing the main developments in the EHEA since the Bologna Process began. The Italian BFUG Secretariat underlined that during the next BFUG meeting in Vienna it is crucial to approve a Work Plan comprising this WG and its new ToR in order to formalize the WG1 - Monitoring for the period 2018-2020 and to open participation in it to other BFUG members. A meeting of the WG1 - Monitoring 2015-2018 is scheduled for 10 July 2018, having been organised before the adoption of the Paris Communiqué, in the form established in the previous Work Plan 2015-2018. It will now be necessary to prepare a draft of the new WG Terms of Reference and a draft call for new members. These drafts should be presented in Vienna and adopted by the BFUG, as was explained during the last BFUG meeting in Sofia by the WG1 Chair (Norway).

Global Policy dialogue

Both the Paris Communiqué and the Bologna Policy Forum Statement indicate the need to improve regular cooperation with other regions and international organisations, also in view of the possible establishment of a Global Working Group in the next 2018 -2020 Bologna Work Plan. The Board agreed that regional networks, as well as the many existing regional and thematic actors, including the international networks developed by the EU programs, should be involved in that dialogue and relations with them should be enhanced. One starting point is the network of people present at the Bologna Policy Forum in Paris. The Italian Secretariat informed the Board members that during the next Ministerial meeting in Rome there will be more space and greater resources available for the Bologna Policy Forum (BPF). The Board invited the Vice-chair, together with the Italian BFUG Secretariat and with the support of other BFUG experts (especially members of the former AG 1 on Internationalization), to reflect, make contacts and gather ideas about the format of the next BPF at the next Ministerial Conference in Rome. On this basis, the BFUG will discuss the next steps with regard to the global policy dialogue, including a possible "Global Working Group" as mentioned in the BPF Statement.

Governance and priorities 2020

The Board held a first brief exchange of ideas on the future of the EHEA, considering that it is necessary to decide in advance whether and how a common process should continue after 2020. With regard to Ministerial Conferences, there could be three of them in the decade 2020-2030, at intervals of three to four years: in any case the Board considers that two years give too narrow a time frame. The Italian BFUG Secretariat reminded the Board members that there is the issue of financial resources, which would be very relevant if we switch to periods of four years; and that there is the possibility for non-EU Member States to use the Twinning Programme in order to finance a future Secretariat, as was done by our Armenian colleagues. The Co-Chairs will ask the BFUG in Vienna to think about possible priorities for the period 2020-2030 and entrust the Board to examine the question further. On this basis and in view of the first BFUG meeting in 2019, the Board will prepare a proposal for discussion. This topic will also be on the agenda of the 20th Anniversary Conference of the Bologna Declaration planned in Bologna in June 2019.

Learning & Teaching / Digitalisation

The Co-chairs invited the Board to consider the need for a specific working group on this topic. The Board commented that Learning & Teaching and Digitalisation are two different issues and have to be developed separately. Various members of the Board mentioned other themes indicated in the Paris Communiqué relating to digitalisation: the digital developments of the Diploma Supplement,

the European Student Card and the adoption of transparent procedures for the recognition of qualifications, prior learning and study periods, supported by interoperable digital solutions. Members observed that the proposed themes (Learning & Teaching / Digitalisation) were rather heterogeneous and difficult to manage together. Digitalisation is a tool and not a goal on itself and should therefore be a subject in all thematic working groups. Members also pointed to the emphasis given in the Communiqué to developing student-centred Learning and Teaching, as the underlying reason for cooperation in the Bologna Process. The topic of Learning and Teaching has been repeatedly referred to as a priority, but on the one hand implementation in higher education institutions will require a new level of engagements; and on the other Digitalisation in its various valences must not be ignored. The topic of Learning & Teaching might be dealt with in a specific “Bologna Event” or ‘Bologna Events’ organised by an ad hoc task force, and the option of formulating guidelines for digitalisation in the EHEA, similar to what was done for Quality Assurance, was introduced. The Board welcomed the offer made by EUA to submit a proposal on content as well as structure with regard to Learning and Teaching. The Board agreed to await these suggestions and on that basis to present the issue of whether to integrate the two topics, or to treat them separately to the next BFUG meeting.

Social Dimension

The Board recognized the usefulness of peer learning activities to deal with the topic, starting from the strategies already developed in some countries, and from the experiences in progress, also making use of external experts as appropriate. It was emphasized that the activities’ objective must be to support member countries to make progress on this issue. The Board agreed to propose the establishment of an Advisory Group (AG) on the Social Dimension in order to coordinate peer support activities, and it designated the ESU to submit a proposal on the structure and activities of the AG.

Cooperation between EHEA – ERA

It was agreed that the European Commission will contact DG Research/ERAC for a first exchange of ideas on the possible ways of collaboration, considering the possibility of establishing a first contact during the ERAC plenary meeting on 16-18 September in Salzburg under the AT-Presidency. The Co-Chairs with the support of the Secretariat will liaise with the ERAC to identify the most interesting topics for the collaboration to be established. The topic will be presented to the BFUG at the Vienna Meeting.

Sustainable Development Goals

Due to the very limited time schedule envisaged for the 2018-2020 term, apart from a possible thematic BFUG discussion, it is proposed that this topic be postponed to a time frame after the 2020 Ministerial Conference.

Proceedings 2018-2020

The Board analysed the document proposed by the Italian BFUG Secretariat with the amendments submitted by the Council of Europe, the European Commission, EURASHE and EUA. The role of the Co-chairs, of the Vice-chair and of the Secretariat were explained and discussed. The Board members agreed on most of the amendments proposed. The Secretariat will prepare a new draft of the Proceedings, including also annexes, following the suggestions indicated by the Co-chairs, Vice-chair and the Board.

Terms of Reference for the BFUG Secretariat 2018-2020

Regarding the Terms of reference of the BFUG Secretariat for the period 2018-2020, the document submitted by the Italian BFUG Secretariat was approved with some small changes. The Secretariat

will prepare a new draft of the ToR following the suggestions indicated by the Co-chairs on the basis of the Board discussion.

Concerning the preparation of the minutes, the Secretariat will prepare a first draft of the minutes of the Board and BFUG meetings and send them to the Vice-chair and Co-chairs who comment on these. The Secretariat will integrate the comments and will then send the minutes to the Board who will have 15 days to comment on them. The final version of the minutes should be made available 15 days before the next BFUG meeting at the latest.

8. Draft Agenda for the BFUG meeting in Vienna

The draft agenda for the next BFUG meeting in Vienna was presented and the Co-chairs will make the related changes taking into account the updated Work Plan including the comments received during the Board meeting in Zürich.

9. Information by the incoming co-chairs

The incoming Co-chair Romania presented the proposal for the next BFUG Meeting, scheduled in the first semester of 2019: the Meeting will be hosted at Politehnica University of Bucharest. The tentative date is 10-12 April 2019, and the final date will be communicated by Romanian delegates as soon as possible, during the meeting in Vienna at the latest. The incoming Co-chair Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has the task of organizing the next BFUG Board Meeting, scheduled in March 2019, the latest. Since the country representatives did not attend the most recent meetings including the present Board meeting, it is decided that the Council of Europe, with the support of the BFUG Secretariat will contact them.

10. BFUG Membership

The French Secretariat reports on an e-mail sent to the members of the BFUG by EURODOC - The European Council of Medical Candidates and Junior Researchers, with the request to change their current status from “partner” to “consultative member” of the BFUG. The formal decision of this request is at the discretion of the Ministers at the next Conference in Rome. The EURODOC message will be forwarded to the Co-chairs who will prepare an answer that explains the procedure as well as asking EURODOC to better explain its motivation to become a consultative member. This response will be sent by the Secretariat to EURODOC representatives. If formal application arrives in time, this point will be considered during the next BFUG meeting in Vienna.

11. Any Other Business

No other business was proposed. The Meeting ended with warm thanks to the Co-chairs and to the local organizers.