

BFUG B2 Minutes
10 February 2004

BFUG2 2b

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD
OF THE BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP**

OSLO, 29 JANUARY 2004

1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Documents: BFUGB2 1a: Draft agenda
BFUGB2 1b: Draft annotated agenda

It was decided to discuss a draft document on Bologna Promoters from the EU Commission, dated 28 January 2004, under item 5.

Action:

The agenda was adopted.

**2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING IN ROME ON
15 NOVEMBER 2003**

Documents: BFUGB2 2: Minutes of the Board meeting 15 Nov 03
Minutes of the BFUG meeting 14 Nov 03 (for information)
Letter from the Italian Chair 09 Dec 03 (for information)

The Secretariat was asked to consider whether the expression “founding fathers” used in the document from the Italian Chair on responsibilities of the Board and tasks of the Secretariat can be replaced by a more precise expression. The Chair welcomed Marlies Leegwater onto the Board, and acknowledged the contribution of Dionyssi Kladis (outgoing Board member).

Action:

The minutes of the Board meeting in Rome on 15 November were approved.

3. BFUG WORK PROGRAMME 2003-2005

Documents: BFUGB2 3a on the Work Programme
BFUGB2 3a app1: Letter dated 22 Jan 04 from the Danish Ministry

The Chair pointed out that there is limited time available before the Ministerial Conference in Bergen and that this must be kept in mind when considering working methods. A number of options exist as to how to proceed.

The organisation of the work to establish an Overarching Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area was discussed. A majority of Board members expressed the view that this is an area for which the BFUG must take responsibility. The initiative of Denmark in conjunction with the Joint Quality Initiative was welcomed, but the Chair emphasised that it should be brought under the umbrella of the BFUG. It was suggested that a BFUG working group might be established building on the existing group, but that it should be more inclusive in order to ensure the legitimacy of the process. There should be reporting to each BFUG meeting on progress, status, intended further action etc. With some minor changes, the Board accepted the guidelines proposed in the document.

Several members of the Board commented on individual points in the document, which will be revised accordingly. After some discussion it was decided to delete the section on "BFUG Working Groups on Special Topics", as all the examples mentioned were felt to be well covered by other initiatives. The need to bring different initiatives and networks together in the area of quality assurance was emphasised. The social dimension was mentioned as a possible theme for special discussion in the BFUG.

Decision:

The Board asks the Chair and the Secretariat to continue the development of a draft Work Programme for decision by the BFUG meeting on 9 March, building on the Secretariat document BFUGB2 3a and the deliberations of the Board. The BFUG Work Programme must relate in the best possible way to the activities proposed in the Berlin Communiqué. It should have a reasonable balance between the various action lines of the Bologna Process, with particular attention to the inclusion of the social dimension as a transversal action line. Members and consultative members of the Bologna Process should initiate the separate actions forming the Work Programme; in this sense it will be a bottom-up process.

For Bologna Follow-up Seminars to be included in the BFUG Work Programme, the Board recommends that the proposed criteria should be satisfied. Additional seminars may be organised by individual member countries or consultative member organisations in accordance with their own priorities and objectives.

The Board recommends that the BFUG takes responsibility for coordination of Berlin Follow-up Projects in areas where joint action is needed:

- *developing an overarching framework of qualifications;*
- *monitoring the ENQA project on quality assurance.*

The BFUG should also take an overall responsibility for ensuring that new member countries are supported.

The Board recommends that the BFUG is aware of initiatives by other organisations that may have an impact on the BFUG Work Programme.

The Board will take responsibility for the preparatory drafting of the Bergen Communiqué.

Bologna Follow-up Seminars 2003-2005

Document: BFUGB2 3b on Seminars

The Chair pointed out that a balance must be achieved between the bottom-up approach characteristic of the Bologna Process and the need to focus activities in accordance with the action lines and the Berlin Communiqué. For the Dublin meeting there should be an agreed list of seminars that will form part of the Work Programme. On this basis the proposals received by the Italian Chair and presented in the document were discussed. It was agreed that synergies should be looked for and duplication avoided, but also that the BFUG cannot be too restrictive in deciding on seminars to be included in the Work Programme in view of the bottom-up approach. Seminars should build on the results of previous seminars on the same theme where relevant.

The Chair suggested that the Chair/Vice Chair may enter into dialogue with the organisers to ensure that the seminars engage with the action lines and priority areas of the process. The Vice Chair pointed out that some points should be added under each theme on how the seminars can be made as relevant as possible. In addition, the organisers might be asked to coordinate their proposals. The Chair concluded that the Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretariat will consult with the organisers with the objective of presenting a coordinated seminar programme for decision at the BFUG meeting in Dublin. The list proposed in document BFUGB2 3b will be modified on the basis of the discussion in the Board meeting.

Decision:

The Board submits the following proposed workshops/seminars for the first half of 2004 to the BFUG for approval by electronic consultation:

“Joint degrees – Further development” (Sweden, 6-7 May 2004);

“Bologna and the challenges of eLearning and distance education” (Belgium-Fl, 4-5 June 2004);

“Learning outcomes” (UK, 1-2 July 2004);

“Assessment and accreditation in the European framework” (Spain, 28-30 July 2004).

The Board asks the Chair, the Vice Chair and the Secretariat to continue the preparation of a draft list of seminars to be included in the BFUG Work Programme 2003-2005, to be decided in the BFUG Meeting on 9 March, making contact with organisers to ensure cooperation and complementarity and avoid duplication. In the list of seminars, reference should be made to the relevant points in the Berlin Communiqué.

The Board recommends that the proposed criteria are applied.

Organisation of the Bologna Process Stocktaking 2005

Document: BFUGB2 3c on Stocktaking

The Chair pointed out that stocktaking is a specific responsibility of the BFUG, and that it is political in the sense that countries will be named and corrective actions suggested. The Board meeting in Rome emphasised the need to include institutions and other stakeholders in the process. The stocktaking is a complex task which has to be planned very carefully, and this is the reason why an interim group has been suggested.

The EUA confirmed that there will be a *Trends IV* report, based on a series of site visits to a limited number of institutions in each country. Focus will be on the three intermediate priorities. Existing data for 2003 will be used and updated. Ministries will not be included. Both the EUA and EURASHE expressed their willingness to cooperate to make sure that the picture presented is as complete as possible. The Commission indicated that the possibility to influence the work programme of EURYDICE was limited, but that an update of an existing report might be possible.

The role of national reports was discussed. It was pointed out that they have tended to differ considerably in information value and that the stocktaking report will need to be accurate and reliable in order to enable the ministers to evaluate the actual status of the process. In addition the use of independent experts was discussed. It was also pointed out that the students' voice needs to be heard to make the document representative.

Decision:

The Board recommends that, in line with the mandate from the Berlin ministerial conference, the stocktaking process should be carried out under direct supervision of the Bologna Follow-up Group. On the basis of document BFUGB2 3c and the discussion in the meeting, the Board appoints the following members to an interim working group to prepare a draft paper for the meeting of the BFUG on 9 March: The Chair, the Vice Chair, the Secretariat, the EU Commission and the EUA.

4. REPORTING TO THE 2005 MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Decision:

The Board recommends that the General Report on BFUG Activities 2003-2005 should be a short report on all activities in the Work Programme, to which recommendations from seminars and reports on the stocktaking and other projects may be appended. This report will be drafted by the Secretariat and submitted to the BFUG for approval.

The Board recommends that national reports should be submitted to the BFUG in good time before the Bergen Conference. A common format for the 2005 reports from member countries should be defined, and the Board asks the Secretariat to produce a draft format, to be submitted to the next Board meeting.

The Board asks the Chair and the Secretariat to coordinate with the EUA the preparation of the Trends 2005 Report and the reporting to be carried out by the BFUG.

5. CONTRIBUTIONS BY THE EU COMMISSION

EUROPASS

Document: COM(2003)796 final 17 Dec 03 on EUROPASS
(available at <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/b/hind.htm>)

EUROPASS is intended to function as a framework to which different transparency instruments may be attached, including the Diploma Supplement. The format of existing instruments will not be changed. In his presentation, the representative of the EU Commission pointed out that there are legal issues, issues of ownership etc. that would need to be resolved, partly because some of the documents included originate outside the Commission, for example the Diploma Supplement. He further stressed that EUROPASS is a *proposal*, to be decided on later. In the meantime working groups are being set up to explore its viability. Information technology will be important.

Members of the Board pointed to the commitment made by the Berlin Conference with regard to the Diploma Supplement and questioned its inclusion in EUROPASS. The status and character of the Diploma Supplement give rise to certification and “ownership” issues, as was also acknowledged by the Commission representative. The Commission also raised the possibility of changes to the Diploma Supplement, which would clearly have an impact on the efforts of members to meet the commitments in the Berlin Communiqué. Since the other transparency instruments involved are at vocational training level, it was in any case felt to be important that higher education is represented in the process. On the basis of the concerns expressed the Chair concluded that a communication channel should be opened to the European Commission to make it aware of the links with the Bologna Process.

Decision:

The Board asks for a link to be established to the BFUG in the follow-up work to be carried out, especially with regard to the Diploma Supplement.

Report on European Cooperation in Quality Assurance

In February 2004, the Commission will present a report to the EU Parliament and the Council of Ministers on cooperation in quality assurance in higher education, with proposals on how to make European quality assurance more coherent.

Action:

The Board took note of the information given by the Commission representative.

Financing Activities of the BFUG Work Programme

Document: SOC/COM/03/061 22 Dec 03 Draft proposal
(available at <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/b/hind.htm>)

The EU Commission is preparing a call for proposals for projects contributing to the Bologna Process, which will probably be published on 16 February. The representative of the Commission made it clear that ministries are eligible to apply. Furthermore, reflecting the concerns expressed by members, the Commission agreed to remove “stocktaking” from the suggested list of projects. All countries that are members of the Bologna Process or eligible to become members may apply either through Socrates or Tempus, except Andorra, the Holy See and Switzerland, which may participate in the activities covered on a self-funding basis.

Action:

The Board took note of the information given by the Commission representative.

Bologna Promoters

Document: “Bologna Promoters 2004-2005: Preparation and Organisation”. Draft dated 28 Jan 04. (available at <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/b/hind.htm>)

The representative of the EU Commission presented the draft document, which provides some operational details regarding this Commission initiative. The initiative is part of the Commission plan *From Berlin to Bergen: The EU contribution*, presented to the BFUG and Board in Rome, and has received the green light from the Socrates Committee. The aim is to make the Bologna Process better known and understood by providing documentation material and supporting National Teams of Bologna promoters. Both the Commission’s ECTS counsellors, the EUA, ESIB and national rectors’ conferences receive a large number of questions about the process which they do not have the capacity to answer. In particular, there is too little knowledge at the grassroots level of higher education about what is happening in other countries. According to the proposal, the national Socrates/Erasmus national agencies would handle grants, but ministries would be in charge. The promoters would be selected and chaired by the ministries.

There was concern among the Board that the proposal could be seen as top-down interference by the Commission in the Bologna Process, as well as creating a possible parallel structure which could impact on the structures approved by Ministers in Berlin. On the other hand the idea of more dissemination of information nationally as well as internationally was supported, and support for implementation of Bologna goals at the national level welcomed. It was therefore suggested that the Commission might instead fund projects aimed at providing information about the process. This could include institution-to-institution advice. The Chair stressed that if the proposal goes ahead, the relation to national structures needs to be clarified.

In conclusion, the Board welcomed EU/Socrates support for nationally driven activities which are in line with the BFUG Work Programme and national Bologna plans/strategies in the Bologna countries, drawing on expertise gained in other countries and in European

institutions and organisations participating in the Bologna Process. The Board questioned the usefulness of restricting such support to the use of specific instruments like the proposed team of promoters, and of creating new structures at the European level. The Chair and Vice Chair will follow up the matter with the EU Commission. The Commission representative indicated that it will be considered which revisions can be made in the draft document at this stage, taking account of the comments in the meeting.

Decision:

The Board asks the European Commission to consider the arguments brought forward in the discussion when the document is revised.

6. PROGRESS REPORT FROM ENQA

The Board took note of the information given by the ENQA representative. ENQA was asked for an updated written report to the BFUG meeting on 9 March 2004.

Action:

The Board noted the report from ENQA.

7. MAIN ITEMS FOR THE NEXT BFUG MEETING

Decision:

The Board recommends that the agenda for the BFUG meeting on 9 March 2004 in Dublin includes the following items for decision by the BFUG: the BFUG Work Programme 2003-2005, the Bologna Follow-up Seminar Programme, and a plan for the BFUG Stocktaking exercise. The meeting should also consider a comprehensive system for reporting to the next Ministerial Conference. An updated report from ENQA will be expected.

8. DATE AND PLACE FOR THE NEXT BOARD MEETING

Action:

The Board accepted the invitation from the Chair that the next BFUG Board meeting will be held in Dublin on Monday 14 June 2004.