

bologna process

BFUG B3 Minutes
28 June 2004

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

DUBLIN, 14 JUNE 2004

A list of participants is attached.

1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Documents: BFUGB3 1a Draft agenda 4 June 04
 BFUGB3 1b Draft annotated agenda 4 June 04

Action:

The agenda was adopted.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS BFUG AND BOARD MEETINGS

Document: BFUGB3 2 Minutes of the Board meeting 29 Jan 04
 Minutes of the BFUG meeting 9 March 04 at
<http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/b/hind.htm>

Action:

The minutes of the Board meeting in Oslo on 29 January 2004 were approved.

3. WORKING GROUP ON STOCKTAKING

Documents: BFUGB3 3a Terms of Reference for WG on Stocktaking
 BFUGB3 3b Timeline for Reporting to the Bergen Conference
(both documents approved by electronic consultation)
 Minutes from WG meeting 21 April 2004 at
<http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/b/hind.htm>

Terms of reference for the stocktaking, as well as a timeline for reporting to the Bergen conference, were circulated and approved following the BFUG meeting on 9 March. The documents are found on the service page of the Bologna-Bergen web site. The Chair reported that the stocktaking Working Group met on 21 April and made good progress, and that the questionnaire would be finalised at its next meeting on 15 June. It is hoped that EURYDICE will be able to undertake the collection and analysis of data. If this is the case, one questionnaire (only) will be addressed to the EURYDICE contact points in the 31 Socrates

countries, and to the BFUG members in the nine remaining Bologna countries. The Chair stressed that cooperation with the EUA and ESIB is also important in order to avoid overlap between the different surveys to be carried out.

The EU Commission confirmed that EURYDICE will undertake the analysis for all the Bologna member States. In the introduction to its final report, it will be made clear that the information for the nine non-Socrates countries has not been subject to the same validation processes as that for the other countries, since there are no EURYDICE contact points there. All at the meeting welcomed this initiative.

An application for financial support of the stocktaking has been made in response to the joint Socrates-Tempus call for proposals. For formal reasons Luxembourg stands as applicant for the TEMPUS part. The outcome was not known at the time of the meeting. The Council of Europe indicated that if the TEMPUS application was not successful, it would explore the possibility of covering the expenses for the Working Group members from Croatia and Russia.

Commenting on the terms of reference, Italy argued that more descriptive and explanatory material should be allowed for in the stocktaking with regard to the national context in each country, challenges, planned measures, etc. The Chair replied that this kind of material will be included in the national reports, whereas the stocktaking should be objective and focus on measurable facts. Several members pointed out that the stocktaking and the national reports should be seen as complementary, and that the important thing is that together they may form the basis for a short, clear and readable report to the Ministers in Bergen. The surveys to be conducted by the EUA and ESIB will form a “third leg” in this process.

Action:

The Board took note of the information given by the Chair.

4. WORKING GROUP ON OVERARCHING QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

Document: BFUGB3 4 Terms of Reference for WG on Overarching Framework of Qualifications for the EHEA
(approved by electronic consultation)

The Chair reported that there have been two meetings of the Working Group appointed by the BFUG, on 11 March and 25 May. A further meeting is planned for late June to coincide with the UK seminar on learning outcomes. In addition there is a technical working group consisting of practitioners of frameworks, with members from Denmark, Ireland, Scotland and the UK. The Working Group intends to meet other key actors including the ECTS counsellors and representatives of the Copenhagen Process. In this connection the EUA pointed out that a meeting of the ECTS counsellors has made a draft recommendation on the role of credits in qualifications frameworks.

Furthermore, the Copenhagen group is also concerning itself with certain aspects of higher education; its work therefore has consequences for the BFUG Working Group, and it is important to have contacts between the two groups. The dialogue should go both ways.

Contact between the two processes was discussed at a meeting of the Copenhagen Coordination Committee at the beginning of June, where the Irish representative pointed to the mandate and work of the BFUG Working Group and the importance of complementary actions within both processes. The Chair emphasised that actions taken at this stage must not preclude the elaboration of a single framework later.

The Working Group intends to present a draft report in time for the Copenhagen seminar on qualifications frameworks in January. Although asked to give advice on national frameworks, prescribing such frameworks is not within its mandate. Instead, it must make sure that the European framework is sufficiently flexible to accommodate diverse national frameworks. The final result should not be a list of national frameworks, but a set of reference points which is simple and readable. It was pointed out that links to the other levels of the educational systems must be kept in view, not just VET. The Chair replied that the deliberations of the group included considerations related to lifelong learning, including informal learning. The EU Commission pointed out that the EU intends to develop an all-encompassing qualifications framework, including all types of education irrespective of the mode of delivery. The ministerial meetings in Maastricht and Bergen will be important milestones in this process.

Several members expressed the view that a written report would have been desirable, and should definitely be prepared for the BFUG meeting in October. It is important for member States to see how their work on national qualifications frameworks matches the development of an overarching framework. The Chair agreed and in the meantime undertook to circulate a presentation prepared by the chair of the Working Group, Mogens Berg. In addition working papers from the group will be posted on the service page of the Bologna-Bergen web site.

Action:

The Board took note of the information given by the Chair. A written report on the progress of the development of an Overarching Framework of Qualifications for the EHEA will be presented to the BFUG meeting in October.

5. PROGRESS REPORT FROM ENQA

The latest report from the ENQA project was presented at the BFUG meeting on 9 March. ENQA had been asked for a possible update. The Chair reported that no update was available, but that ENQA and its partners are proceeding according to schedule. A consultation meeting in Copenhagen on 25 May with other quality assurance networks had been very positive.

It was agreed that for the next Board meeting, ENQA should be asked for a written report, focussing on the substance of the proposals under discussion and indicating what the final, overall report will look like. The Board must make sure that all three Working Groups appointed by the BFUG report back to the BFUG meeting in October. At this meeting ENQA should be present.

Action:

The Board took note of the information given by the Chair.

6. FORMAT FOR NATIONAL REPORTS

Document: BFUGB3 6 National Reports 2004-2005

At its meeting on 9 March, the BFUG asked the Secretariat to draw up a standard format for the national reports to be submitted to the Bergen conference. The Chair commented that the purpose of the national reports is to give an opportunity to member States to describe where they are in the process. The deadline is important in relation to the stocktaking. Countries are anxious to get started.

The Chair and Secretariat had prepared a set of questions as a basis for discussion. The Vice-Chair pointed out that this should be regarded not as a questionnaire but as a template, i.e. a list of topics that should be addressed. The questions, which are intended as prompts, are as open as possible.

ESIB raised the point that national reports should not just reflect the point of view of ministries. At its meeting in March, the BFUG had indicated that questions should be put in such a way that countries are free to include the views of stakeholders. The Chair proposed to include the relevant quote from the minutes of the BFUG meeting in the revised version of the document.

The relationship between the national reports and the stocktaking was discussed. It was agreed to keep the three priority areas covered by the stocktaking as headlines in the national reports even though no specific questions may be asked. The stocktaking and the national reports are complementary in the sense that in the national reports member States can provide comments, reflections, explanations etc. on the facts brought out in the stocktaking. Since the stocktaking questionnaire will be addressed to the national EURYDICE contact points, which are not necessarily in the ministries, it is important that those who prepare the national reports are aware of the contact points and vice versa.

With regard to the language of the national reports, it was argued that member States should be required to submit a report in English by the 14 January deadline. In addition they may choose to supplement it with a report in their own language.

A number of detailed comments and proposals were made which will be reflected in a revised version of the template. The wording of questions should be kept as close to that of the Berlin Communiqué as possible. It was suggested that in addition to a proposed maximum length of 10 pages for the reports, an indicative length of answers to individual questions might be prescribed in some cases. At least one member expressed doubt as to the pertinence of prescribing a maximum length of the report. The Chair concluded that the template should be agreed by the end of June.

Decision:

The Chair and the Secretariat will revise the document on National Reports (document BFUG B3 6), including the proposed template, on the basis of the discussion in the meeting. The document will then be submitted to the BFUG for electronic consultation with the objective of finalising it by the end of June. Final adjustments following the electronic consultation will be made by the Chair and the Secretariat.

7. FURTHER ACCESSION TO THE BOLOGNA PROCESS. REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES

Documents: BFUGB3 7 Requirements and procedures for joining the Bologna Process
Recommendations from the seminar on HE in the Ukraine and the Bologna Process, 13-14 May 2004 and Statement of the Ministers of Education of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, 18 May 2004 at <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/b/hind.htm>

The Chair observed that potential applicant countries have sought guidance on the procedures and requirements for membership of the Bologna Process. There should therefore be a document on the Bologna-Bergen web site explaining exactly what is required to join and what the procedures are. The Chair and Secretariat had prepared a document designed to meet this objective in a fair and transparent manner. The document also consolidates for the first time both the action lines and, more importantly, the principles of the Bologna Process into a single document.

Several members voiced concerns with regard to the proposed voting procedure. It was pointed out that it represented a difference from previous accessions, that inter-governmental bodies reach decisions by consensus, and that this is also how decisions are made by Ministers in the Bologna Process. This does not mean that one country can block the decision, but that the Ministers commit themselves to reaching agreement. Some members also questioned the proposal to have applicant countries evaluated by a panel of experts, arguing that the BFUG should itself evaluate the candidates and present them to the Ministers. Others saw experts as important for assessing the quality of the higher education system of the applicant country and whether it conforms to the democratic principles underpinning the Bologna Process. In this connection it was argued that accession should not be automatic, but that the accession procedure should seek to assist countries in reforming their higher education systems. In response it was suggested that instead of a negative decision countries might be granted conditional admission depending on remedial measures. The exact nature of the advisory role of the BFUG in relation to the ministerial conference in this context was also discussed.

In conclusion of this part of the debate, the Chair decided to postpone the decision on the procedure for assessment of applications and instead to submit the question to the BFUG meeting in October for a more thorough discussion.

However, the Chair noted that there was agreement that the procedure for *applying* and the deadline for applications should be finalised and made clear to potential applicant countries as soon as possible. Countries should be required to submit a formal application signed by the minister, stating that they are committed to the goals of the Bologna Process and accompanied by a national report similar to the one to be submitted by member States. The reports should describe, as is also the case for existing members, the plans for fulfilling the Bologna goals. A similar template should therefore be used. It was agreed that the deadline for applications should be 31 December 2004.

Decision:

The Chair, together with the incoming Chair, will finalise the procedure for applying to join the Bologna process and make it public as soon as possible. The deadline for applications will be 31 December 2004. The procedure for assessing applications will be decided by the BFUG meeting in October.

8. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP SEMINAR ON JOINT DEGREES - FURTHER DEVELOPMENT, STOCKHOLM, 6-7 MAY 2004

Documents: BFUGB3 8a (Conclusions and recommendations)
 BFUGB3 8b (Report by the Rapporteur)

The Bologna Follow-up Seminar on Joint Degrees recommended that the BFUG should map the experience of higher education institutions and students regarding concepts and formats of joint study programmes and joint degrees, arrangements and agreements between partner institutions, and agreements between the partner institutions and the student safeguarding the rights of the student. The seminar also addressed three recommendations to the Bergen ministerial conference, including the recommendation that the format of the Diploma Supplement should be adapted to facilitate the description of joint degrees.

The Belgium (Flemish) delegate circulated the recommendations from the Ghent seminar on e-learning and distance education. The main focus of the seminar was on the integration of the lifelong-learning perspective in higher education, with a particular focus on widening access and on the relationship between “virtual” and physical mobility. The recommendations from the seminar underline that e-learning and other non-traditional modes of delivery should be considered an integral part of higher education and should thus be covered by quality assurance, accreditation and qualifications frameworks and subject to the use of “Bologna tools” such as ECTS and the Diploma Supplement. A specific recommendation was to explore how the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention could be used to establish a common basis for the validation of both formal and non-formal prior learning.

The Chair raised the question of how the BFUG should handle recommendations. The work programme in the period leading up to the Bergen conference includes 14 official Bologna follow-up seminars. Given the limited time-scale, additional working groups would not be viable, except to prepare the communiqué for Bergen. Many at the meeting noted that recommendations from all the seminars in the previous period were reflected in the Berlin Communiqué. The Vice-Chair suggested that for seminars to be successful in the present phase of the process, a more systematic, analytical approach may be needed, and proposed that the question of how to follow up the seminars should be put on the agenda for the next Board meeting.

The Netherlands pointed out that before the drafting of the Bergen Communiqué begins, there should be a discussion paper for the Board presenting the issues. This could be prepared by the Secretariat.

Action:

The Board took note of the report and conclusions from the seminars. The question of BFUG follow-up of seminars will be put on the agenda for the next Board meeting.

9. ELECTION OF BFUG BOARD MEMBERS JULY 2004 - JUNE 2005

Document: BFUGB3 9a Letter from the Chair dated 26 May 2004

The Chair referred to the election procedure carried out and informed the meeting that Latvia, Malta and Slovenia have been elected as members of the Board for the period from 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2005. At the same time he expressed his appreciation for the many positive contributions from the outgoing members.

Action:

The Board took note of the information given by the Chair.

10. CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE EU COMMISSION (FOR INFORMATION)

The Commission representatives informed the meeting that in response to the joint Socrates-Tempus Bologna call, 58 proposals had been received, covering most of the action lines and a wide range of measures. Around half the proposals had been evaluated favourably. The Socrates committee will give its opinion on 17/18 June, after which the European Parliament has the “right of review” for one month. The selection decision will be taken by the Commission at the end of July.

With regard to the report on European cooperation in Quality Assurance which was due to have been published in March, it has been postponed pending a decision on whether it should take the form of a report or a recommendation. Publication may now be expected in September-October.

In response to the call published for Erasmus Mundus, several proposals had been received under the heading of promoting the attractiveness of European higher education, and 140 proposals for joint masters projects.

Action:

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

11. CONTRIBUTIONS FROM CONSULTATIVE MEMBERS

The Council of Europe announced that the next plenary of its Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research (CD-ESR) has been moved from 7-8 October to 21-22 September.

Action:

The Board took note of the information given by the Council of Europe.

12. REPORT FROM THE SECRETARIAT

Documents: See presentations at <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/>

In consultation with the Chair and the Vice-Chair, the Secretariat has given talks about the Bologna Process on a number of occasions, including meetings of Russian private and state universities (Moscow), the seminar on Ukraine and the Bologna Process (Kiev), with the Chair at the CoE ministerial conference for the Caucasus (Strasbourg), the OSCE Economic Forum (Prague), and the UNICE Education and Training Working Group (Brussels).

The Secretariat has also established a *News and Current Issues* column on the web site and invites contributions from BFUG members and stakeholders.

Action:

The Board took note of the information given by the Secretariat.

13. MAIN ITEMS FOR THE NEXT BFUG MEETING

In response to a proposal that more time should be set aside for both Board and BFUG meetings, it was agreed that a full day should be available for the next Board meeting. In addition it was decided to extend the BFUG meeting in October until noon the following day.

Decision:

The next BFUG meeting, to be held in Noordwijk, the Netherlands, will last from 1300 hrs on 12 October to 1200 hours on 13 October.

14. DATE AND PLACE FOR THE NEXT BOARD MEETING

Decision:

The next Board meeting will be held on Monday 13 September in the Hague. The meeting will last from 0830 to approximately 1700 hrs.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business.