

BFUGB6 Minutes

9 February 2005

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD  
OF THE BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP  
BRUSSELS, 25 JANUARY 2005**

The meeting was held at Brussels Airport. A list of participants is appended.

**1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

Documents: BFUGB6 1a Draft agenda 11 Jan 05  
BFUGB6 1b Draft annotated agenda 18 Jan 05

Action:

*The agenda was adopted.*

**2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS BOARD MEETING**

Document: BFUGB5 Minutes of the Board meeting 9 Dec 04

Action:

*The minutes of the Board meeting on 9 December 2004 were approved.*

**3. ENQA PROJECT ON QUALITY ASSURANCE**

Document: BFUGB6 3 Update for the BFUG Board on the ENQA report

ENQA Chair Christian Thune reported. The project will provide recommendations for three sets of standards: for internal quality assurance, external quality assurance and peer review of agencies. This is coupled with a proposal for a European register of external quality assurance agencies, which is now coming out as a clearer structure. It will be the task of the BFUG to turn the ENQA report into recommendations for the ministers. The summary may be helpful in this respect.

There had been a very positive response to the present draft from ENQA members and from the E4 partners. The partners do not necessarily agree to all details of the report, but agree that this is what will be presented. There had also been a wider dialogue with other quality assurance networks and the ENIC/NARIC network. A great deal of revision still remains.

Outstanding issues include ownership of the proposed register, on which legal advice may be taken. The register will be launched in 2005, as will the first cyclical reviews of agencies. The E4 partners will meet in June to draw up a roadmap for solving practical issues. Bergen is not the end of the project. Another question which has not been solved is how to enlarge the present partner group of the E4, cf. the point made by the BFUG in Noordwijk concerning wider stakeholder representation. The group should be kept small.

The European Commission congratulated ENQA and its partners on a considerable achievement, which ought also to be acknowledged by the Ministers. In its own work on European cooperation in quality assurance, the Commission will build on what is adopted in Bergen. The Chair followed up by stressing that the success of the ENQA project is crucial to the development of the EHEA. The EUA confirmed the positive impression given by Christian Thune by stressing that progress had been made in all the main areas of the project.

Action:

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

#### **4. THE STOCKTAKING PROJECT**

Document: none

The Secretariat briefly informed the meeting that with one or two exceptions, the Bologna member states had submitted the information required for the stocktaking to EURYDICE, which in its turn had sent draft reports for 14 countries to the Secretariat so far. The remaining countries would follow soon. The Secretariat had also received 31 national reports. The EUA noted that the 60 site visits for the *Trends IV* study had been completed, including non-university higher education institutions, and the results were in the process of being analysed. The study will not provide quantitative data. The European Commission commented that it is important to have the results of *Trends* fed into the stocktaking process, and that this should happen before the April meeting of the BFUG.

Action:

*The Board took note of the information given.*

#### **5. NATIONAL REPORTS 2004-2005**

Document: All reports received by the Secretariat are available at <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/>

Cf. item 4.

## 6. PROJECT ON OVERARCHING QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

Documents: BFUGB6 6a Conclusions of the report from the working Group  
(The complete report is available at [www.bologna-bergen2005.no](http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no))  
BFUGB6 6b Recommendations from the Bologna seminar on  
Qualifications Frameworks, Copenhagen, 13-14 January 2005.  
See also background documents at <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/b/hind.htm>

Working Group chair Mogens Berg presented the conclusions of the report and the recommendations from the seminar. The report makes a basic distinction between national and overarching frameworks. The proposed overarching European framework builds on three cycles, with additional provision for shorter higher education within the first cycle, adopting the Dublin descriptors as cycle descriptors. The credit ranges indicated are those recommended by the Helsinki seminars on the bachelor's and master's degree. A procedure for alignment between national frameworks and the overarching framework is proposed. The lifelong-learning perspective is integrated. Cooperation had been established with the Copenhagen process for vocational education and training, and Working Group members had been invited to participate in a working group set up by the European Commission to elaborate a European framework of qualifications for lifelong learning. The latter has established sub-groups on levels and descriptors and credit systems respectively.

The Copenhagen seminar had expressed general support for the proposed framework. The terminology used with regard to integration of shorter higher education in the first cycle will be reconsidered on the basis of comments from the seminar. With regard to the self-certification procedure, there had been a feeling that the criteria and procedures need to be made stronger, especially with regard to the role of quality assurance. These will need to be developed further. The Working Group will continue to meet until the middle of February to consider these issues for inclusion in the final version of the report. The Vice Chair pointed out that the BFUG will need to have the report in good time before its meeting on 1-2 March. It will then be debated together with the recommendations from the seminar.

EURASHE commented that its seminar on shorter higher education in Amsterdam the preceding day had shown that the existence of a national framework of qualifications does not guarantee a seamless transition from shorter higher education to the first cycle. On the other hand, in France, which does not have such a framework, relevant institutions have made agreements with universities in the same region to make the transition smooth. Mogens Berg noted that together with other new material, the results from the EURASHE seminar would be taken into account in the final revisions. The Chair emphasised that the lifelong learning context should be clearly established in the final report.

Action:

*The Board took note of the information given by the chair of the Working Group on an Overarching European Framework of Qualifications.*

## **7. THE BERGEN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE**

Document: none

An updated provisional programme was distributed by the Vice Chair. Invitations are due to be sent out by the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research at the end of January. Working groups had been established by the Ministry to plan the parallel sessions. The EUA offered to contribute to these sessions as it had done in Berlin and Prague. “The Bologna Process as seen by universities and students...” would be amended to “higher education institutions and students.”

Action:

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

## **8. DRAFTING THE BERGEN COMMUNIQUÉ**

Document: BFUGB6 8 Working document: Drafting the Bergen Communiqué

Following the discussion in the Board Meeting on 9 December 2004, the Drafting Group had met the next day to prepare a new draft. The revised draft had then been posted on the web site for electronic consultation in advance of the Board meeting, and all comments had been posted on the web site.

The Chair invited general comments to the text. With reference to remarks given by the European Commission and ESIB, the Vice Chair pointed out that there are formal difficulties related to designating the countries participating in the Bologna Process as “Member States” or “Signatory Countries”. After some discussion it was decided that the phrase “participating countries” should be used. The Chair stated that the purpose of the communiqué is both to sum up developments in the Process, responding to assignments from the Berlin Conference, and to make both short-term and longer-term commitments for the years to come. Several members expressed the view that some of these commitments could be made stronger than in the present draft.

The Vice Chair welcomed the emphasis on opening up the Process proposed by the European Commission. More concrete objectives could still be put in. It was pointed out that it is a matter of principle whether attention should be focussed on structural reforms in Europe or on cooperation with the rest of the world, and that increased cooperation would require more resources. At the same time it was noted that it is important to communicate properly to the rest of the world what the Bologna Process implies, e.g. with regard to the reform of the degree structure. Other parts of the world are interested in emulating the Process, and some mechanism for association should be found. The EUA pointed out that formal relationships with the countries and regions in question already exist at the institutional level. The Chair noted that this should be acknowledged. It was agreed that communication with the rest of the world is an important issue.

This was followed by a detailed discussion of the draft. Comments made will be reflected in a revised version. The EUA noted that higher education institutions and students have a special

status as partners in the Bologna Process, and that the partnership between governments and institutions and students should be stressed as part of the vision. It also emphasised the need for stable legal and funding environments for the institutions. With regard to recognition, it was noted that one of the recommendations of the Riga seminar in December had been to promote recognition of Bologna degrees outside Europe. The ENIC/NARIC networks have channels which they can use. Lifelong learning was mentioned as a possible priority for the next period. The vision should include linking the EHEA and the European Research Area.

Decision:

*The Drafting Group is asked to prepare a new draft for the BFUG meeting in March on the basis of the discussion in the meeting.*

## **9. CHALLENGES REGARDING MOBILITY**

Document: BFUGB6 9 Challenges regarding mobility

The Chair noted that mobility is a difficult issue. What commitments can be made at this stage? Problems should not be swept under the carpet, and the communiqué should not raise expectations that cannot be fulfilled. On the other hand including proposals in the communiqué may point the way forward. It was noted that establishing an effective EHEA is not within the power of education ministers alone, and that issues such as visa regulations must be addressed. Proposing mobility as an area of priority with targets for 2007, the Vice Chair pointed out that one of the purposes of the document was to allow the participating countries to consider the issues before the Bergen conference. With regard to finance, a lot of money is available through the EU programmes. The EUA supported making mobility a priority area where each country should make a commitment for the next two years. The impact of the new degree structures on mobility should be examined. The Chair also supported mobility as a priority area for 2007.

The Chair further noted that a commitment from an education minister commits the government of the country in question, and that it is therefore essential for the members of the BFUG to consult with other relevant ministries in their home countries before the meeting in March. Mobility was already an issue in Bologna in 1999. One of the arguments of the smaller countries for including the European Commission as a partner in the Bologna Process was just that an engagement to increase mobility would touch on Community policies in several areas, including visas. Mobility is a peace-keeping venture. At the same time the Bologna Process started with employment considerations, in this context making people employable on the global market. As the caretaker of the Process, the BFUG should not be oblivious to the initial targets. There might be two possible lines of action for the Ministers: 1) to call for further study of the issues by the BFUG; 2) to call on participating countries to simplify immigration and visa procedures and look at how the financial issues can be solved. Other speakers stressed the importance of clear definitions, and that not all types of mobility were covered by the document.

In conclusion it was proposed that the communiqué might call on participating countries to take action in one of the areas mentioned, possibly visas, and in addition ask the BFUG to further examine the issues involved. The document would be presented to the BFUG meeting in March for further discussion.

Decision:

*The Secretariat is asked to present document BFUGB6 9 to the BFUG meeting in March for further discussion .*

## **10. DRAFT DISCUSSION DOCUMENT FOR THE BERGEN CONFERENCE**

Document: BFUGB6 10 The EHEA – A common understanding or a legal instrument?

The BFUG meeting on 13 September 2004 asked the Secretariat to prepare a discussion document for the Bergen Conference on what the Bologna Process should lead to in 2010 and beyond and whether it should be institutionalised in a more formal way. The issue had been briefly discussed at the previous Board meeting. The Chair stated that the purpose of the document was to serve as a basis for discussion among the Ministers, which could possibly lead to a mandate to the BFUG to look into the topic in more detail. Examples of similar discussions among ministers were known from the EU. The document should therefore be understood as an input, not an output document. The Secretariat pointed out that questions of formalisation and ownership come up in different contexts, cf. the discussion about the self-certification process for the European Qualifications Framework and the Register Committee proposed by ENQA. A structure may be needed after 2010 to develop the EHEA further. An alternative solution might be to give the Lisbon Convention a broader platform. However, any discussion would need to be open; there was no presumption that different arrangements were needed – the present arrangements could continue.

It was felt that the tabled document was a good basis for further development. Some detailed comments were made which will be incorporated in a revised version for the BFUG meeting in March. It was pointed out that the questions formulated should not pose dividing lines between countries, and that some more *pro et contra* arguments might be added under each heading. The inclusion of a self-certification procedure as an alternative at the present stage was questioned. Several members of the Board stressed that a revised version of the document should be kept open, looking not for answers but for the right type of questions.

Decision:

*The Secretariat is asked to prepare a revised version of document BFUGB6 10 for the BFUG meeting in March on the basis of the discussion in the meeting.*

## **11. CANDIDATURES FOR THE 2007 MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE**

Document: BFUGB6 11 Letter from Minister of Education and Skills Charles Clarke dated 11 November 2004 to Minister Maria van der Hoeven

Only one proposal had reached the Secretariat within the 31 December deadline. The United Kingdom proposes to have the conference in London. No date has as yet been fixed. The Chair thanked the United Kingdom for offering to host the conference. It is understood that

the United Kingdom will also provide a Secretariat for the period leading up to the conference.

Decision:

*The Board recommends that the offer from the United Kingdom to host the next Ministerial Conference in the Bologna Process is accepted.*

## **12. APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE BOLOGNA PROCESS**

Documents:           BFUGB6 12a Application letters from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Kosovo.  
                          BFUGB6 12b National Report from Armenia  
                          BFUGB6 12c National Report from Azerbaijan.  
                          BFUGB6 12d National Report from Georgia.  
                          BFUGB6 12e National Report from Moldova.  
                          BFUGB6 12f National Report from Ukraine.  
                          BFUGB6 12g National Report from Kazakhstan.  
                          BFUGB6 12h National Report from Kosovo

By the 31 December deadline Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova and Ukraine had applied to join the Bologna Process as new members. The Secretariat stated that the applications were in accordance with the prescribed procedure. However, Kazakhstan is not party to the European Cultural Convention and does therefore not meet the criteria. After the deadline, Kosovo had also applied for membership in a letter dated 12.01.05. Kosovo is not recognised by the international community as an independent country, and therefore also does not fulfil the formal requirements for membership as an independent entity. Nevertheless, all applications must be presented to the Ministers in Bergen with a recommendation. The Secretariat stated as its general impression that both ministries and universities in the eligible applicant countries have worked actively to join the European process.

The Chair suggested that the Board should propose to the BFUG to recommend to the Ministers that the applications from eligible countries are accepted. For the BFUG meeting in March, a more analytical document should be prepared by the Secretariat, reflecting the content of the applications. Members should be asked to come back to the next BFUG meeting in April with definitive statements on behalf of their countries, a mandate to say officially yes. The Council of Europe pointed out that although Kosovo is not eligible for membership, it is important to involve the higher education community there in activities. The EUA explained the difficulties of working with the universities in Kosovo, but emphasised the need to continue to support the ministry and academic community. Effort is needed to address the challenges at the institutional level, which should be encouraged through the ongoing relations with the Council of Europe, ESIB, the EUA and other partners.

Decision:

*The Secretariat is asked to present the applications to the BFUG meeting in March together with an analytical document providing a basis for a recommendation by the BFUG to the Ministers.*

### **13. POSSIBLE BOLOGNA PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHER REGIONS**

Document: BFUGB6 13 Possible Bologna Partnership with other regions  
See also: Recommendations from the ACA conference 18-19.10.04:  
“Opening up to the Wider World? The External Dimension of the Bologna Process”

The Board meeting on 9 December 2004 had asked the Secretariat to consider how states outside Europe could form links with the Bologna Process. As a prelude to the discussion, the Vice Chair reported on the considerations made with regard to inviting representatives of other regions to the Bergen conference, concentrating on the UNESCO regions. This led to some discussion, and several members of the Board noted that the absence of important western countries such as the USA and Canada in Bergen would send a wrong signal. The EUA asked whether university representatives from other regions would be invited. The Vice Chair was asked to report the comments made back to the Norwegian Minister of Education and Research as host of the Conference.

The Secretariat then gave a brief introduction to the tabled document, underlining the need to define a strategy for the relationship between the Bologna Process and other regions, not individual countries. The European Commission noted that it has contacts with all the countries bordering the Bologna area, which all want to implement Bologna-inspired reforms. The Commission supports them through the Tempus programme. Both the Commission and the Council of Europe pointed to existing networks that might serve as a platform for contact. EURASHE noted that it had been asked to organise a meeting between European and Central Asian states, possibly in 2006. Several possibilities were discussed. One would be to use the UNESCO framework and have the Bologna Board meet with representatives from the regions. Another would be to apply the principle of subsidiarity; for instance, some of the new member countries might play a role. University associations also have formal agreements and networks with regional partners. The Vice Chair emphasised that a response should be given to the countries which had approached the Bologna Process. The Chair pointed out that higher education and research offer a means of opening channels of contact that might otherwise not be available. In conclusion it was agreed that a stronger, more strategic document should be prepared for the BFUG meeting, considering the possibility of differentiating between countries and regions.

Decision:

*The Secretariat is asked to prepare a revised version of document BFUGB6 13 for the BFUG meeting in March on the basis of the discussion in the meeting.*

### **14. CRITERIA FOR NEW CONSULTATIVE MEMBERS AND BFUG PARTNERS**

Document: BFUGB6 14 Criteria for new consultative members and BFUG partners



The Vice Chair stressed the importance of responding positively to an organisation representing academic staff, as staff organisations represent a major stakeholder, distinct from the institutions. A solution should therefore be found where they are accepted as a consultative member. However, ETUCE might not be the most representative organisation. The Vice Chair therefore proposed to ask for an application from an organisation which is more representative. The EUA pointed out that there may be a difference between countries with regard to the degree to which universities also represent the staff. The Vice Chair further noted that it should be stressed in the document on principles that organisations which are invited as partners, have a responsibility for reciprocation, and should not just be an advocate for certain interests in the Bologna Process.

Decision:

*The Secretariat is asked to prepare a revised version of documents BFUGB6 14 and BFUGB6 15 for the BFUG meeting in March on the basis of the discussion in the meeting. In the meantime ETUCE should be notified that an application from a more representative organisation is called for.*

## **15. POTENTIAL NEW CONSULTATIVE MEMBERS AND BFUG PARTNERS**

Document: BFUGB6 15 Potential new consultative members and BFUG partners

Cf. item 14.

## **16. DATE AND PLACE FOR THE NEXT BOARD MEETING**

Document: BFUGB6 16 Timetable for Board meetings January-May 2005

The meetings listed in the document were confirmed, with the following times:

1-2 March	BFUG (Mondorf). The meeting will start at 1100 hrs on 1 March and end no later than 1600 hrs on 2 March.
11 March	Drafting group (Brussels airport, 0930-1700 hrs)
11 April	Board (Mondorf, 1100 hrs-)
12-13 April	BFUG (Mondorf), times as on 1-2 March
25 April	Drafting group (Luxembourg, 1100hrs- )
26 April	Board (Luxembourg, 0830-1500 hrs)
18 May	Board (Bergen, 0900-1200 hrs)
18 May	BFUG (Bergen, 1300 hrs-)
15 June	Board (Luxembourg, 1100-1630 hours)

Decision:

*The next Board meeting will be held on 11 April in Mondorf, Luxembourg.*

## **17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Council of Europe informed the Board that together with the head of the Secretariat it had recently met with the Albanian deputy minister of education to discuss Albania's participation in the Bologna Process. Among the themes discussed were institutional governance and autonomy and issues related to recognition. The deputy minister will attend the two BFUG meetings in the spring as well as the Bergen conference. The Council had also met with the Albanian quality assurance agency and a representative of the students.