

BFUG7 minutes
31 October 2005

Minutes of the Bologna Follow-Up Group

Manchester 12-13 October 2005

The meeting was held at the Manchester Conference Centre from 14.00 on Wednesday 12 October to 13.00 on Thursday 13 October. A list of participants is appended.

1. Welcome and adoption of agenda

Documents BFUG7 1a Draft agenda
BFUG7 1b Draft annotated agenda

The Chair welcomed members of the BFUG to the meeting and Manchester. She also welcomed the new consultative members; EI Pan- European Structure, UNICE and ENQA. The five new countries who had joined the process in Bergen had been invited, but, unfortunately, none had been able to attend this meeting.

2. Minutes of the last BFUG and Board meetings

Documents BFUG6 Minutes of the BFUG meeting 18 May 2005
BFUGB 10 Minutes of the Board meeting 15 June 2005

The minutes of the last BFUG meeting were approved. The contents of the minutes of the last Board meeting were also noted.

3. Role of Secretariat

Documents BFUG7 3 Role of Secretariat: proposed terms of reference 2005-2007

The Chair introduced and welcomed the new Secretariat members to their first meeting. Head of the Secretariat, Ann McVie presented the proposed Terms of Reference for 2005-2007.

It was agreed that:

The Secretariat would operate on the basis of the Terms of Reference outlined in paper BFUG7 3.

The Secretariat's role in relation to representing BFUG at external events would be agreed in conjunction with the BFUG Chair.

4. Reflections after the Bergen Ministerial Conference

Documents none

Toril Johansson (Norway) offered some reflections on Norway's experience of hosting the Ministerial conference in Bergen, with a view to informing early planning for the London summit. The conference had been split into two parts, with a Ministerial meeting and parallel sessions for delegates over one and a half days. The object was to focus on the Ministerial meeting while securing the participation of other stakeholders in the parallel sessions. It was considered essential for students and higher education institutions to take part in the event, but there were constraints on the number of participants. On reflection, the value of the parallel sessions was however questionable.

The use of a communiqué drafting group was considered to have worked well. However, a number of last minute interventions had still arisen during the Ministerial meeting. This suggested there might be a need for greater dialogue between BFUG representatives and their Ministers. It also suggested that allowance for last minute interventions should be made when planning the meeting.

In discussion, the following points were made:

There was broad consensus that, while they addressed topics of interest, the parallel sessions had added little to the overall success of the event.

Less emphasis should be placed on progress reporting, particularly by individual countries, since the previous meeting.

There was a need to consider how guests from outside the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) could take part.

It was considered essential for students and higher education institutions to continue to take part in the Ministerial events.

The transparency and openness of the process could be increased, if the Ministerial meeting could be held in a more open format. Consideration could also be given as to how to engage the Ministers in more open discussion, to add more dynamism to the meeting. Possible topics included: their vision for the EHEA; how higher education polices might develop in the future; or how to co-operate with other parts of the world.

It was agreed that:

The UK would produce outline proposals for the London event for discussion with the Board in January and then BFUG in April.

BFUG members should email any further reflections to the Secretariat.

5. Bologna Work Programme 2005 – 2007 – initial discussion

Documents BFUG7 5a Work Programme 2005 – 2007 for the Bologna Follow-Up Group
BFUG7 5a Annex A Final draft
BFUG7 5a Annex B Terms of Reference from EUA
BFUG7 5b Letter from Christian Thune, President of ENQA, to Bologna Secretariat 12 September
BFUG7 5c Qualifications Working Group Draft Terms of Reference
BFUG7 5d Working Group on External Dimension's Terms of Reference.
BFUG7 5e External Dimension – Proposal for a Seminar
BFUG7 5f Comparable data draft Terms of Reference

The Chair emphasised that the papers were proposals but hoped broad agreement on the Work Programme would be reached by the end of the meeting. Preferences had been expressed for membership of working groups, but remained open to discussion and change. The programme was ambitious and all participating countries would need to commit to take forward appropriate aspects of the Work Programme in their own countries. The Chair then invited comments on each aspect of the Work Programme in turn.

In discussion the following general points were made:

It was important to ensure that working groups were not so large as to become unmanageable. It was suggested that groups should generally comprise about 6-8 members. Membership should include both EU and non EU participating countries.

Whilst it was noted that the suggested representation on the working group reflected the expressions of interest submitted to the Secretariat. It was desirable to include a better spread of countries who were new to the process.

It would be helpful for the chairs of all working groups to meet on a regular basis, to exchange interim progress reports and identify any areas of overlap.

All working group chairs, ENQA and EUA would be asked to provide written updates in advance of each BFUG meeting.

London Communiqué Drafting Group

It was agreed that:

The composition of the Drafting Group would follow the same principles as the last Communiqué Drafting Group. It would be chaired by the appropriate EU Presidency and include some non-EU members.

The work of the group would be informed by a preliminary discussion at BFUG about the issues to be considered in the next Communiqué.

External Dimension Working Group

Toril Johansson (Norway) gave a brief introduction to the draft Terms of Reference for the external dimension. Activity would be divided into two phases, with the first being a reference group for the two seminars being organised by Norway and the Holy See. The second phase would be to consider the outcomes from the seminars and produce a strategy on the external dimension for discussion at BFUG and subsequent presentation to the Ministers in London.

In discussion the following points were made:

There was a need for greater clarity about the focus of, and the outputs from, the working group. This was particularly important given the considerable international interest in the Bologna process and the need to convey accurately to the rest of the world what reforms were taking place in degree structures etc.

Membership of the working group would need to encompass the wide range of interests in the external dimension.

There was a need to link with Greece's plans to hold an event on Bologna in association with the OECD conference on education taking place in June 2006.

Portugal, Estonia, and the EC expressed an interest in taking part in the working group.

EI was willing to assist the working group, particularly given their plans to hold an international conference in Australia this December.

The Holy See would take part in the working group to ensure co-ordination with their proposed seminar on the cultural values underpinning the attractiveness of the EHEA.

It was agreed that:

Any further comments on the draft Terms of Reference should be sent to Norway as soon as possible.

Norway would revise the draft Terms of Reference for re-circulation by the Secretariat by the end of October.

Greece would join the working group, to ensure good co-ordination with their plans to hold a seminar to present the Bologna process to an international audience.

Portugal would join the working group.

Qualifications Framework Working Group

Mogens Berg of Denmark presented the draft Terms of Reference for the Qualifications Framework Working Group.

In discussion the following points were made:

There was a need to amend the Terms of Reference to enhance the links to the proposed European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

The EC and consultative members were at the disposal of the working group, to provide expertise as necessary.

Cyprus expressed concern that the work of the Qualifications Framework Working Group might pre-judge the outcome of the consultation on the proposed European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. It was however stressed that it was not the role of the working group to suggest how individual countries might respond to EC's consultation or develop qualifications frameworks in their own country.

It was agreed that:

The Qualifications Framework Working Group would proceed on the basis of the proposed Terms of Reference, subject to incorporating the revision circulated at BFUG.

Comparable data on the mobility of staff and students and the social and economic situation of students

Germain Dondelinger (Luxembourg) introduced the draft Terms of Reference for the working group to explore comparable data on staff and student mobility and the social and economic conditions of students. Sweden had suggested that there should be a separate group set up to define the social dimension and explore data on the social and economic condition of students, based on the draft Terms of Reference tabled at BFUG. However, it had been agreed meanwhile that the two strands should be co-ordinated by one overarching working group. This working group would require support from experts e.g. statisticians, which might carry financial implications. Countries taking part in the working group should be prepared to offer financial support if necessary.

It was agreed that:

Luxembourg and Sweden would produce revised Terms of Reference by the end of October for circulation by the Secretariat.

Sweden would lead on organising a seminar to define the social dimension.

EUA project on the further development of doctoral programmes

Lesley Wilson (EUA) presented a draft Terms of Reference on the further development of the doctoral programme. In addition to the steering group, (which currently comprises EUA, Austria, France ESIB, Eurodoc), three focus groups and two seminars are included within the project which has been designed to facilitate widening participation.

The project would conclude with a seminar to be held in France in December 2006.

It was agreed that:

The EUA Terms of Reference should be endorsed.

Any further countries interested in taking part should contact EUA.

ENQA project on the practicalities of implementing a European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies

Peter Williams (ENQA) reported that the E4 Group had already started work on this project and was planning to pilot the process for inclusion on the register of quality assurance agencies. The Presidency would be invited to take part in E4 Group meetings, which would be chaired by each E4 member in turn.

In discussion the following points were made:

Referring to the draft EC recommendation on quality assurance, it was considered essential for there to be only one register, not two. This would however require some discussion within the E4 group, as there were differences in the role envisaged for the register.

The proposed European Consultative Forum on quality assurance would provide a useful platform for discussion.

It was agreed that:

ENQA, with the other members of the E4 group, would continue its work to develop quality assurance, as outlined in the Bergen Communiqué, taking account of the EC recommendation.

ENQA would provide a full progress report at the next BFUG.

Policy development seminars

It was agreed that:

The number of Bologna seminars would be restricted to a manageable number. There was less need for policy development seminars, now that implementation of reforms was the main focus of activities.

The Greek proposal to present the Bologna process to an international audience would be added to the list of Bologna seminars.

Germany's plans to hold an event on quality assurance would not be added to the list of Bologna seminars, given ENQA's plans to hold a European event on quality assurance.

E4 Group would liaise with Germany over their plans to hold a seminar on quality assurance.

The Swedish proposal to hold a seminar on the social dimension would be added to the list of Bologna seminars.

Details of other events of interest could be put on the Bologna Secretariat website.

Topics for discussion at BFUG

It was agreed that:

BFUG would discuss the suggested list of topics over the next two years. The Secretariat would prepare a paper on suggested priorities for discussion at the next Board meeting.

BFUG members would email the Secretariat with any views on priorities for discussion at future BFUGs, as well as indicating whether there were any particular topics on which they would like to lead the discussion.

Where possible, discussion of key topics would be aligned to reports from relevant working groups.

National priorities

It was agreed that:

The draft Work Programme included a comprehensive list of the areas for consideration by participating countries.

Appropriate action against each priority would be taken by each participating country.

6. Eurostudent – presentation on how it might contribute to Bologna Work Programme followed by short discussion

Eurostudent gave a presentation on their work, highlighting how they might contribute to the work of BFUG. The purpose of the network is to collect

comparable data on the socio-economic framework of students studying higher education in Europe. Eleven countries had participated in the last survey. Using data from the last survey, Eurostudent demonstrated how benchmarks and comparisons could be drawn across participating countries. The next survey would take place during 2006, with the results due to be published in 2008. It would however be possible to make some interim results available for the 2007 Ministerial conference.

In discussion the following points were made:

Currently, the survey had only limited geographical coverage. Its scope would have to be extended, if the results were to give a more accurate representation of the situation across the EHEA.

It would be helpful if further surveys could include data on groups underrepresented in higher education.

It would not be possible to have a complete data set across all 45 participating countries by May 2007. Eurostudent was however willing to expand its coverage, if other countries wanted to become involved.

It was agreed that:

The working group looking at comparable data on staff and students would draw on the expertise of Eurostudent, recognising that other data would also be required.

The Stocktaking Working Group would consider how Eurostudent might contribute to its work.

Any country who would like to take part in the next Eurostudent survey should contact Eurostudent directly (Dr Dominic Orr, email: orr@his.de / Dr Klaus Schnitzer, email: schnitzer@his.de).

7. Mobility and portability of loans and grants – views on next steps

Documents BFUG7 7 Mobility and portability of loans and grants – views on next steps

Aldrik in t'Hout (Netherlands) introduced a paper proposing the development of bilateral and multilateral agreements on the portability of grants and loans. It was proposed that countries interested in taking part identify experts in the legal and financial aspects of portable student support, to explore how bilateral or multilateral agreements might operate in practice. Marlies Leegwater, the Dutch BFUG representative, would act as the link between the group of experts and BFUG.

In discussion the following points were made:

Concerns were expressed about the limited scope and geographical

coverage of the proposal. There was, for example, a need to consider how to support students who did not have any access to loans or grants and a need to identify good practice in exchanges between EU and non-EU countries.

There was a need for the group to have access to experts in European law, given the implications the portability of loans and grants could have for access to social security and other benefits in the host country.

It was agreed that:

Further work on this proposal was needed and that the Netherlands, in conjunction with other interested countries, would produce a more detailed paper for discussion at the next BFUG.

8. Consultation on European Qualifications Framework

Documents BFUG7 8a Overarching Framework for Qualifications
BFUG7 8b Note EHEA –EQF

Mogens Berg (Denmark) explained the background to the papers prepared for BFUG on the EC's consultation about the proposed European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. It had been suggested by the Commission that it would be helpful for the BFUG to submit a collective view, focusing on the relationship between the existing Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA and the proposed European Qualifications Framework. This would not, however, preclude individual countries or organisations from responding separately to the consultation.

In discussion the following points were made:

There was broad consensus that there should be a BFUG response, along the lines suggested by Denmark.

There were concerns about the possible mismatch and consequent confusion between the scope of the EC proposal and the Framework agreed in Bergen.

As well as differences in geographical coverage, there could be a number of differences in range and scope. For example, the EC proposals would include higher education entry level qualifications, which had not been included in the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA. However, it was generally felt that the two systems were not inconsistent or incompatible.

The draft letter was not intended to be an evaluation of the EC proposal, but was to highlight the degree of broad alignment with the existing Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA.

It was agreed that:

A revised response from BFUG would be circulated by the Secretariat for agreement.

If not all BFUG members were able to agree the final wording, this could be reflected in the response to the EC.

Individual countries and organisations would respond in detail as they saw fit to the EC's consultation.

9. Stocktaking – review of process and methodology for next exercise

Documents BFUG7 9 Stocktaking Working Group draft Terms of Reference

Andrejs Rauhvargers of Latvia outlined the suggested approach to the next stocktaking exercise. It would draw on the experience of the previous group, but develop the process to include the priorities for stocktaking highlighted in the Bergen Communiqué.

In discussion, the following points were made:

EUA advised that the next Trends report would be more comprehensive than the previous exercise and requested close co-operation between EUA and the stocktaking group.

EUA and Germany expressed an interest in joining the working group.

It was recommended that the working group engage an external consultant to assist with the exercise as soon as possible. The group should also make contacts with Eurydice at an early date. Eurydice would however only be able to provide data for 25 countries. Other sources would need to be identified for the other 20 countries.

ESIB was planning to undertake a further student survey, funding permitting.

EURASHE expressed interest in liaising with the Stocktaking Working Group, in light of its plans to undertake a survey on the employability of graduates.

To ensure the exercise was manageable in scale, the stocktaking exercise should focus on the priorities in the Bergen Communiqué. This would include flexible learning paths and the recognition of prior learning, as outlined in the Communiqué.

There was a need for close collaboration with the working group

considering data on staff and student mobility and the social and economic condition of students. It was recognised however that neither group would have much opportunity to gather new data before 2007.

The working group should explain clearly to the new countries what they were expected to do as part of the stocktaking exercise.

It was agreed that:

The Stocktaking Working Group would proceed on the basis of the suggested Terms of Reference taking into account the points made above.

Germany would join the working group.

10. Capacity building across the EHEA

Documents BFUG7 10 Capacity building across the European Higher Education Area

Emilija Stavridis ('The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia' -FYRM) presented an illustration of their experience of receiving external support to implement Bologna reforms. She explained how the Ministry of Education, supported by the Council of Europe, had held a series of seminars and workshops to explore how to implement the Bologna Action Lines within the academic community in the FYRM. This resulted in a number of legislative changes being made. It also identified the need to work to enhance the quality of higher education, to offer more flexible learning opportunities and increase the effectiveness of undergraduate and postgraduate studies.

The Council of Europe added that the FYRM had made good use of the external support available. The country had developed a clear internal programme of work to underpin the Bologna reforms, before engaging external assistance. This had resulted in the external help being more effective. This experience suggested that countries newly engaged with the Bologna process needed to identify their priorities for reform, before seeking external assistance.

In discussion the following points were made:

Assistance from EUA and EURASHE was key if any country was trying to change its teaching practice.

There could not be a one-size fits all approach to reforms: the effectiveness of the approach taken to reforms varied according to the particular circumstances of the country concerned.

Greece had agreed to take on the co-ordinating role for the 12 countries in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Working Group on Education for the next two years. The first regional co-operation event

had taken place in Athens on 29 September. It would be important to link any BFUG activities to this network.

The Commission is supporting a broad range of capacity building projects in higher education through the programmes Tempus Cards, Tempus Media and Tempus Tacis.

ESIB has a very broad-based membership and has organised training events according to national needs. ESIB suggested that students should be involved in Bologna related reforms, even in countries where there was no organised student representative body.

Austria advised that as part of their EU Presidency they planned to hold a special introductory event for the newer countries, to explain how the Bologna Process worked. This would provide an opportunity to explain what sources of help could be available.

It was agreed that:

Primary responsibility to identify the need for external help lay with individual countries.

Experience to date suggested external help was most effective when it was part of a co-ordinated national plan for reforms.

The Council of Europe and other consultative members would continue to offer their support as appropriate.

The Secretariat could act as a broker between countries looking for external assistance and countries or organisations willing to help.

11. Consultative members – contribution to the Bologna Process

Documents None

The Chair invited all the consultative members and the EC to update BFUG on any relevant activities. The key points raised included the following:

Council of Europe: The Council of Europe was continuing to contribute to the EHEA through intergovernmental, bi-lateral and regional activities in HE and research, in particular issues concerning the public responsibility for HE and research, HE governance and the recognition of qualifications. It has maintained its active role in the Bologna Process and provides advice and assistance to 'new' countries. A Higher Education Forum on Quality Assurance is in preparation for 2006, which will draw on the CDESR's work in these areas. Further cooperation on recognition issues will be explored with appropriate bodies and partners internationally, particularly N America, with the ENIC network. Forthcoming conferences include Armenia November 2005 and in Georgia November 2005.

ENQA: An agreement had been reached in the E4 Group about the structure and concept of the European Consultative Forum, as proposed in the ENQA report submitted to the European Ministers for their Bergen meeting. The main purpose of the Forum would be to bring together European stakeholders involved in higher education quality assurance. The E4 Group had also made progress in respect of the function, structure and practicalities of the European register of quality assurance agencies operating in Europe.

ESIB: ESIB were pleased to continue to be involved in the E4 Group. If sufficient funds were made available ESIB hope to be able to conduct a student survey for the next summit. If funding was available ESIB hoped to organise training sessions on the Lisbon Process and its linkage to the Bologna Process.

EURASHE: EURASHE continued their interest in taking an active part in working groups, projects and the E4 group. EURASHE were interested in co-organising the seminar on preparing students for the labour market and Life Long Learning. This is in line with their involvement in initiatives undertaken by UNESCO-CEPES and with their own activities, such as a survey among members on the employability of bachelor graduates from professional HEIs. EURASHE was also very much aware of the importance of the external dimension, and therefore intends to organise a conference/seminar in Kazakhstan in Autumn 2006, on Quality Assurance in (transnational) education, in cooperation with three Kazakh universities; if additional funding can be obtained the seminar will take the form of a 'regional' conference for Eurasian universities, involving the participation of HEIs from Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan/Turkmenistan. EURASHE's next conference will be in Dubrovnic (Croatia) on 19-20 May 2006 on the theme of Life Long Learning as a logical step in the Bologna Process.

EU Commission: The Commission was continuing to support HE reforms as part of its commitment to the Lisbon Process. The production of policy papers and recommendations was an ongoing process and a number projects in the area of HE reform were underway. Policy consultations currently taking place included the EQF which closes at the end of December 2005. Calls for proposals under Socrates and Tempus would continue as before. Other projects were also underway to assist the Bologna Process, such as offering courses for academics on how to write learning outcomes.

UNESCO-CEPES: UNESCO-CEPES described three projects which were relevant to the implementation of the Bologna Process: They were (a) the project on the state of private HE in Europe; (b) analysis of current conditions of employment of the academic staff; (c) policy implications, at regional, national and institutional level, deriving from the impact of demographic trends and prospective flows of students in Europe and changes in life cycles and professional development imperatives.

Education International (EI): EI were pleased to be taking part in BFUG for the first time and looked forward to contributing to the process. EI's unions represented academics and other personnel engaged in the re-modelling of

courses to fit the Bologna structures and provided the expertise which underpinned quality assurance systems. To support this process seminars were being organised at different levels to increase awareness and knowledge of members and to strengthen union capacity. A brochure on Bologna had recently been published for dissemination through its membership.

UNICE: Also attending for the first time, UNICE explained it represented a range of businesses and included 33 federations from 29 countries. It supported the Bologna Process and had a particular interest in quality and quality assurance, in employability of graduates and in the mobility of students and staff. UNICE arranged several workshops and seminars concerning these issues, partly organised in cooperation with other BFUG-members such as ENQA. The group expressed an interest in taking part in the UK employability seminar and being part of the qualifications framework working group.

12. Bologna Work Programme 2005-2007 – approval of way forward

Documents BFUG7 5a Work Programme 2005 -2007 for the Bologna Follow Up Group

The Chair summarised the agreements reached thus far in relation to the Bologna Work Programme:

The Stocktaking and Qualifications Framework Working Groups would start work on the basis of their agreed Terms of Reference.

Norway would produce revised Terms of Reference on the external dimension by the end of October for circulation and agreement.

Luxembourg and Sweden would work up a further set of Terms of Reference for the working group looking at data and the social dimension for circulation by the end of October.

BFUG representatives would provide the chairs of working groups with contact points for group members.

The suggested working group on the portability of grants and loans had not yet been agreed: the Netherlands would take the lead in producing a more detailed paper for discussion at the next BFUG meeting.

The aim was to put the agreed Work Programme on the Bologna website by early November.

The EUA and ENQA projects would proceed as agreed.

The seminar programme would go ahead as agreed, including the three seminars relating to the external dimension being organised by Norway, the Holy See and Greece. The E4 Group would liaise with Germany over their

plans to hold a seminar on quality assurance. All Bologna seminars would follow the same procedures used for the last series of seminars. The Secretariat would communicate details to the organising countries.

13. Candidates for 2009 Ministerial Conference

Documents none

The Chair sought an update on countries likely to bid to host the 2009 Ministerial conference. As well as organising the conference, the host country would have to provide the Secretariat for a two year period, supporting BFUG, the Board and any BFUG working groups. Benelux, Croatia and Slovakia confirmed their intention to bid.

It was agreed that:

Bids should be finally submitted to the Secretariat by 31 December 2005 for further consideration by the Board.

14. Any other business

It was noted that France may propose an event to mark 2010.

15. Date and place of next meeting

The next Board meeting will be held in Vienna, Austria on 25 January 2006. The next BFUG meeting will be held in Vienna, Austria on 6-7 April 2006.

Yvonne Clarke
Bologna Secretariat