MEETING OF THE BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP  
BRDO, 13-14 MARCH 2008  

Draft Outcome of Proceedings

The meeting was held at the Brdo Conference Centre from 9.30 on Thursday 13 March to 13.00 on Friday 14 March 2008. A list of participants is appended.

Welcome and introduction to the meeting
Darinka Vrečko, the Slovenian Chair welcomed the participants and opened the meeting. She particularly welcomed the Montenegro delegate, Sreten Škuletić, who had just been appointed Minister of Education and Science of his country. Apologies had been received from Iceland, Italy and Turkey.

1. Adoption of the agenda
Documents: BFUG (SI) 13_1a [draft agenda]  
BFUG (SI) 13_1b [draft annotated agenda]
The agenda was adopted with a slight change of order: the template for reporting on the social dimension would be discussed the second day.

2. Minutes of the last BFUG and Board meetings
Documents: BFUG (SI) 13_2a [BFUG 12 minutes]  
BFUG (SI) 13_2b [Board 16 minutes]
The BFUG approved the outcome of proceedings of the last BFUG meeting and took note of the minutes of the Board.

3. Information by the Slovenian Presidency
The Chair shortly presented the priorities of the Slovenian Presidency and explained that the focus of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology was on research. In the field of education, lifelong learning was also considered especially important, where much progress still had to be done.

4. Stocktaking: template for national reports and indicators
Documents: BFUG (SI) 13_4a [stocktaking WG report]  
BFUG (SI) 13_4c [stocktaking indicators]
Andrejs Rauhvargers (Latvia), Chair of the Stocktaking Working Group presented the proposed indicators and template for reporting.

The 2009 exercise will be the last stocktaking before 2010. The situation differs slightly from previous years as there will be no EUA Trends report and no full Eurydice Focus, but the working group benefits from the participation of EUA and Eurydice in the group. Also ESU participates as an observer in the group. The working group paid much attention to the liaison with other groups. The Chair also participates in the Data Collection Coordination Group and several members of the Stocktaking Working Group also participate in other Bologna Working/Coordination Groups. A challenging task for the stocktaking is that its mandate requests to approach the different action lines in an integrated way, e.g. learning outcomes, ECTS, qualifications framework, quality assurance etc.

10 indicators are proposed (instead of 12 in the previous exercise). As there is no explicit mandate for stocktaking on joint degrees, that indicator has been dropped.
For quality assurance the indicator is limited to external quality assurance. After consultation of the E4 group it appeared inappropriate to draw up a checklist for internal quality assurance. So there is no indicator for internal quality assurance.

Both issues (joint degrees and internal quality assurance) are included in the template for reporting.

The remaining 10 indicators are mostly the same as in the previous exercise but the requirements have been made a bit stronger or the questions in the template have been made more precise in order to receive more precise answers.

The Working Group has made an attempt to make the format for the template for reporting more user-friendly. For many questions it is possible to tick boxes only while comments can be made in the textboxes, if necessary. The comments are not compulsory.

In the question-by-question discussion, the following agreement was reached.

- **Cover page of template for national report**
  Issues raised: should the consultation of other stakeholders by the BFUG members not be made compulsory?
  Decision: leave the text as it stands but strong recommendation to effectively consult the stakeholders. This recommendation also applies to the preparation of the national positions on the future of the Bologna Process.

- **Q 2 Partnership**
  Issues raised: difference between academic staff and staff trade unions? What about involvement of national quality assurance bodies? How to take into account that in the call of the European Commission the composition of the national Bologna experts’ (former promoters) teams is already defined?
  Decision: leave room to the countries to involve more stakeholders in the Bologna promotion than those required by the European Commission. Leave the text as it stands but add extra box for national quality assurance bodies, both for the national working group as for the national Bologna promoters’ group.

- **Q 3 Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle**
  Issues raised: why not include short cycle in the template? What if recent figures are not available by November 1? What about medical studies? Should “heads” of students be counted or only full-time students?
  Decision: leave text as it stands. The short cycle is incorporated in the first cycle. All students from all programmes to be included, and counted as “heads”. The fact that for dark green it is not required to have 100 % already anticipates students from specific disciplines, like medicine, to be included in the counting.
  The footnote for the corresponding indicator will be repeated in the template. If countries have more recent data available after November 1, they can provide an update, but no later than January 15, 2009.

- **Q 4 Stage of implementation of third cycle**
  Issues raised: not all doctoral candidates are “students”. Will application of ECTS to the third cycle have a positive effect on the scorecard? This was not agreed in the context of the qualifications framework that only defined ECTS credit ranges for the first two cycles. The formulation of the question introduces de facto a definition of “structured doctoral programmes” by reference to “taught courses and independent research”. What if the majority of the third cycle students pursues the studies abroad?
  Decision: replace the word “students” with “candidates”. No need for changing the questions as the results will only be looked at in the qualitative analysis, not in the score-
card part of the report. Countries can only provide information on students in institutions on their national territory.

- **Q 5 Relationship between higher education and research**

Issues raised: need for distinguishing between public and private expenditure. Funding should not be the only reference when describing the role of higher education institutions to research. It would be good to have certain data which are collected by other organisations (e.g. OECD) for all Bologna countries.

Decision: 4 bullets will be kept but with distinction between public and private funding for the first 2 bullets. For bullet 3 other indicators can be considered, taking definitions from other data collection exercises into account and making this explicit by a reference. A question on funding mechanisms for doctoral students can be added.

- **Q 6 Access and admission to the next cycle**

Issues raised: is the definition of access as defined in the Lisbon Recognition Convention appropriate as it does not exclude selection of students? Should recognition of prior learning not be added to the boxes? Is automatic progression between cycles a positive sign in the case of de facto integrated long programmes?

Decision: Leave the formulation as it stands as it is coherent with previous exercises. The question is focussed on obstacles; recognition of prior learning is no obstacle and therefore should not be mentioned here.

- **Q 7 Employability of graduates**

Issues raised: should not be asked how many graduates find employment in their specific field? Problem of employability of first cycle graduates and access to second cycle is different for professional bachelor programmes.

Decision: the question addresses employability in general; leave the formulation as it stands but add textbox for extra information on graduates of professional bachelor programmes.

- **Q 8 Implementation of national qualifications framework**

Issues raised: should stakeholder involvement not be part of the criteria?

Decision: leave formulation as it stands. It follows the advice of the Qualifications Frameworks Coordination Group. In the list of indicators point 3, for clarity of the text, the reference to stakeholder involvement is not repeated in the higher levels but nevertheless implied.

- **Q 9, 9a and 10 ESG, internal and external quality assurance**

Issues raised: too much attention to the review of the national quality assurance system could lead to starting it up prematurely. For internal quality assurance, the word "system" might be less appropriate. There is overlap between the first bullet of Q 9 and the last bullet of Q 10.

Decision: leave the formulations as they stand but for internal quality assurance rephrase as "Describe the internal QA systems in place in your HEIs". In the indicator replace "the above levels" by "levels mentioned above". The rephrasing will try to avoid the overlap.

- **Q 11 Student participation**

Issues raised: is the participation in self-assessment report necessary? Seems to belong to another methodological order. Do these questions not add elements to the ESG which were not agreed earlier?

Decision: leave the formulation as it stands. The elements were asked earlier, the requirements will be stronger this time, therefore more elements will be needed in order to obtain dark green.
• Q 12 International participation

Issues raised: legal obstacles in some countries, difficult to achieve in countries with not widely spoken instruction languages, is membership of ENQA not of higher order than the other criteria?

Decision: leave the formulation as it stands as it is preferred to remain in conformity with questions asked in the previous stocktaking. To obtain dark green more items will have to be fulfilled than in the past. Compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines is not always guaranteed by membership of international networks other than ENQA.

• Q 13 Diploma Supplement

Issues raised: should these questions also apply to the third cycle? ECTS is not mandatory for the third cycle, why insist on a DS at this level? It was understood that at present the DS for a doctorate is not made mandatory by any communiqué. It could, however, be a suggestion for the next communiqué.

Decision: leave the formulation as it stands encompassing three cycles. The DS describes the outcome and the level of the qualification. There is no direct link with ECTS.

• Q 14 National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention

Decision: agree with the formulation.

• Q 15 Implementation of ECTS

Issues raised: teachers may need support in applying ECTS, could a question on support for teachers or institutions be added? Information is needed on national credit systems. A footnote on what is meant by “workload” should be added. Definitions of key terminology e.g. workload can be found in ECTS users’ guide.

Decision: question on support of stakeholders (teachers...) will be added. A textbox for information on national credit systems will be provided. Footnotes will refer to ECTS users’ guide definitions.

• Q 16 Recognition of prior learning

Issues raised: procedures should be established nationally.

Decision: question will be rephrased according to this remark.

• Q 17 Flexible learning paths

Issues raised: a question should be added on teacher support. Differentiation should be made between the three cycles. Countries should be given the possibility to add comments.

Decision: points will be taken on board in rephrased questions.

• Q 18 Joint degrees

Issues raised: should it be asked how many domestic students participate in such programmes? What about a reference to mobility windows in the curriculum? Shouldn’t we count students or even programmes rather than higher education institutions?

Decision: leave the formulation as it stands. It is not realistic to expect information on programmes and students. Countries will only be asked to provide a motivated feeling, no exact figures, on the number of higher education institutions involved. Additional information can be added in textbox.

• Q 19 Statistics on mobility and Q 21 Removing obstacles to mobility
Issues raised: which definition of mobility? For which kind of mobility: programme mobility only? And for how long? Problem of non-availability and incomparability of data. Overlap with future work of data collection group.

Decision: questions about figures will be dropped. Questions on how student and staff mobility is monitored in the country and which actions have been taken for enhancement of mobility will be included. Q 19 and 21 will be merged. Reference to student and staff will be consequently added in all questions on mobility.

- Q 20 Portability of grants and loans

Network of experts on student support did not yet provide its input to the Stocktaking Working Group.

Provisional decision: leave the formulation as it stands.

- Q 22 Global dimension

Issues raised: is it necessary to refer to UNESCO/OECD guidelines for quality provision in cross-border higher education under “to implement the strategy “European Higher Education in a Global Setting”? Smaller countries might be disadvantaged in answering the questions.

Decision: leave the formulation as it stands but strategy and guidelines can be put in different paragraphs. The UNESCO/OECD guidelines are more elaborated than the European Standards and Guidelines with respect to cross-border higher education provision and protection of its students. There is parallelism between the UNESCO/OECD guidelines and the code of good practice on transnational education in the Lisbon Recognition Convention. The answers to the questions will be used for the analytical part only. Every country can provide interesting input.

- Q 23 Future challenges

Issues raised: link with Bologna Beyond 2010 issue. Should a separate question on the future of Bologna be added here? Stakeholder involvement in identification of the challenges?

Decision taken: leave the formulation as it stands. No extra question on Bologna Beyond 2010 as an answer by November 1, 2008 will be too late. Consultation with national stakeholders should have taken place already, by preference before the extraordinary BFUG in Sarajevo, 24-25 June 2008.

- General conclusion

The Chair of the Stocktaking Working Group receives the mandate to adjust the template taking on board the adjustments decided by the BFUG. The 10 indicators are accepted in the formulation proposed.

The new version of the template will be sent out by the Secretariat once available.

Deadline for submission of country reports according to the template remains November 1, 2008.

5. Preparing the 2009 report on Bologna Beyond 2010

Documents: BFUG (SI) 13_5a [non-paper BolognaBeyond2010]
BFUG (SI) 13_5b [Bologna seminar in Ghent]

BFUG approved the structure for the BFUG 2009 report on Bologna Beyond 2010 and took note of the timeline and the planned actions for preparing this report, including the Bologna seminar in Ghent and the extra BFUG in Sarajevo.
The paper will be amended to take into account the remarks made, especially the suggestion to pay more attention to the question of lifelong learning. After the Bologna Seminar in Ghent, the paper will be further developed to incorporate the outcomes of the Seminar. BFUG will receive the new document before the extraordinary meeting in Sarajevo, where BFUG will then discuss the content of the report.

It is important that in preparation of the Sarajevo meeting all BFUG members organise an intense consultation process at national level so as to be able to feed their country’s position into the discussions to be held in Sarajevo.

At European level, any other contributions will be welcomed to feed into the process of preparing the 2009 report.

6. Independent assessment of the Bologna Process

The documents prepared by the Secretariat were discussed.

Terms of reference

It was agreed that:

- a reference would be made to mobility as one of the core Bologna objectives
- the enumeration of countries should not differentiate between EU, EFTA etc.
- the word “validation conference” should be avoided as the outcome of this conference will not be binding for the BFUG. Suggestion to use “testing conference” instead.
- the interim report should not be delivered in an earlier stage than proposed, it might even be later
- in the enumeration of reports the researchers should take into account, the reports made in preparation of the Ministerial conferences by P. Lourtie (2001) and P. Zgaga (2003) should be added.

Moreover, the editing mistake of a superfluous bullet point will be solved.

Composition of advisory board

It was agreed that the advisory board with representatives of the BFUG for the independent assessment of the Bologna Process would be entrusted to advise the European Commission on the selection of the tenderer and the monitoring of the project. It will consist of 7 elected countries and 3 consultative members (EUA-EURASHE-ESU). Countries can express their interest by May 1, 2008 to the Secretariat. If more than 7 countries express interest, an electronic vote will be organised. At least one country that joined the Bologna Process in 2003 or later should be incorporated.

Secretariat and European Commission receive the mandate to finalise the documents in the light of the conclusions of the BFUG discussion.

7. Founding of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) on 4 March 2008

The project manager of EQAR reported on the founding assembly of EQAR which took place in Brussels on March 4, 2008.

The first meeting of the Register Committee is planned for May 2008. EQAR is exploring the possibility to schedule the next meeting of the general assembly in the afternoon of June 25, 2008 in Sarajevo.

The Council of Europe drew the attention to the fact that quite a number of countries are not represented (yet) in the general assembly. Moreover, there are legal obstacles for
international organisations like Council of Europe and the European Commission to join. The European Commission declared that there was no need for such organisations to join as a member in order to stay in touch with EQAR from an observing position. EQAR will consider the possibility to invite Council of Europe and also UNESCO-CEPES as observers to further General Assemblies.

8. 2009 Ministerial conference
Document: BFUG (SI) 13_8 [2009 ministerial conference]

The Secretariat briefly presented the draft programme of the 2009 Ministerial conference.

The suggestion by UK-Scotland to include a presentation of the stocktaking results and to give Ministers time to reflect on the stocktaking conclusions will be taken on board.

As far as the conference participation is concerned, the Benelux will apply the same principles as previous organisers. This means that the size of delegations will be limited to five persons. The composition of the delegation to accompany the Ministers will follow the previous examples and consist of representatives of government, rectors’ conference and a student. There will be a small number of exceptions to this limit for countries where more than one Minister is responsible for higher education.

The conference organisers will also take good care of the suggestion to pay attention to the programme for the press.

9. 2010 Ministerial conference
Documents: BFUG (SI) 13_9a [letter Austria and Hungary]
BFUG (SI) 13_9b [EUA and ESU conferences 2010]

Austria and Hungary had offered to co-host the 2010 anniversary celebration conference in Vienna and Budapest, with parallel events by ESU, EUA and EURASHE. All BFUG members had received a letter of the two ministers confirming their commitment.

EURASHE informed the group about their plans to organise a conference in Budapest on the topic of professional higher education.

EUA will hold its general assembly 2009 in Vienna to look at Bologna since 1999.

ESU applied for Commission funding and hopes to present a Bologna With Student Eyes 2010, called “Bologna at the finish line” as well as a documentary with “faces of Bologna”.

BFUG took note of the information provided by EURASHE, EUA and ESU and approved the proposal by Austria and Hungary to co-host the 2010 ministerial conference in Budapest and Vienna on 11-12 March 2010.

10. Election of Bologna Board members for the period July 2008-June 2009
Documents: BFUG (SI) 13_10 [Board voting procedure]

Five countries had expressed their candidature for the three places on the Board by the 25 February deadline. Norway, Holy See and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” were elected to join the Board for the period 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009.

Documents: BFUG (SI) 13_11a [Bologna work programme]
BFUG (SI) 13_11b [calendar of events]

BFUG took note of the updated calendar of events and the information provided by the various working and coordination groups (see below).
11.1 Lifelong learning
Document: BFUG (SI) 13_11.1 [LLL CG report]

Ann McVie (Scotland), chair of the lifelong learning coordination group, informed the BFUG that the group had held a short meeting before the BFUG meeting. The group had reflected on the LLL conference of the Slovenian EU Presidency and had looked ahead to the two conferences by EUA and the Netherlands as well as the LLL Charter to be prepared by EUA. The group agreed to meet again after the three events to consider the results with a view to making proposals for the communiqué.

On request of the Chair, EUA informed the BFUG about the latest developments concerning the LLL Charter. At a meeting in December 2007, French Prime Minister François Fillon and Education Minister Valérie Pécresse had asked EUA to prepare such a Charter and to present it at the informal Education Council in Bordeaux in November 2008. EUA has started a process of intense consultations, including also discussions with the European Commission, and will keep BFUG informed about the further developments.

11.2 Employability
Document: BFUG (SI) 13_11.2 [employability WG report]

The Secretariat encouraged the BFUG members that had not yet responded to the short country survey of the employability working group to still do so and informed the BFUG that the next working group meeting would take place on 9 July 2008 in Berlin.

EURASHE remarked that the minutes of the first working group meeting did not reflect the situation of professional higher education, where there had always been close cooperation with employers and less than 20 percent of bachelor graduates continued their studies to do a master degree.

11.3 Global dimension
Document: BFUG (SI) 13_11.3 [global dimension WG report]

Barbara Weitgruber (Austria), chair of the working group “European higher education in a global setting” informed the BFUG that the next meeting of the working group would take place on 28 May 2008 in Brussels.

11.4 Data collection
Document: BFUG (SI) 13_11.4 [data collection WG report]

Germain Dondelinger (Luxembourg), chair of the data collection working group had nothing to add to the written report.

11.5 Social dimension
Documents: BFUG (SI) 13_11.5 [social dimension CG ToR]
BFUG (SI) 13_4d [template Social Dimension NAPs]

The template for reporting on the social dimension national strategies and policies including action plans was introduced by Efstathios Michael (Cyprus), chair of the coordination group. He stressed that the group had taken the option of a lightweight questionnaire.

In the discussion the issue was raised that according to the exact wording of the London Communiqué not every country is expected to provide a national action plan. The template should therefore be suitable to a broader range of policy papers or political orientations. Some delegates expressed the wish to add more questions, e.g. on funding or on social integration of students at the university campus.

The coordination group will meet April 7, 2008 in Budapest and will adjust the heading and the questions of the template accordingly and send it to the Bologna Secretariat in
order to be annexed to the general template for the national reports for stocktaking. Deadline for national reporting on both will be November 1, 2008.

11.6 Mobility
Documents: BFUG (SI) 13_11.6 [mobility CG report]
BFUG (SI) 13_11.6a [student support network report]
BFUG (SI) 13_11.6b [annex 4 to 11.6a]

Hélène Lagier (France) confirmed that a conference on the broad issue of mobility would take place in France on 4-5 November 2008.

11.7 Recognition
Document: BFUG (SI) 13_11.7 [recognition report]

Sjur Bergan (Council of Europe) recalled that the Lisbon Recognition Convention had been ratified by a large number of countries, also outside the European Higher Education Area. A number of countries participating in the Bologna Process had, however, not ratified the Convention yet and were therefore called upon to do so as soon as possible. He also reminded the group that once the national procedure had been completed, the document still had to be deposited with either Council of Europe or UNESCO.

The working party that had been set up to analyse the National Action Plans on Recognition will have a meeting in early April and at the Board meeting in June it should be possible to see whether the National Action Plans will have to be a specific item at the BFUG meeting in October. The first impression is that while most countries submitted documents called National Action Plans, the planning part is actually missing.

11.8 Qualifications frameworks
Document: BFUG (SI) 13_11.8 [QF report]

Sjur Bergan (Council of Europe), chair of the qualifications frameworks coordination group, informed BFUG that the official Bologna website had been extended to include information on qualification frameworks (overarching frameworks, national frameworks, events, etc.). The address is: www.bologna2009benelux.org/qf.

Members of the BFUG are encouraged to organise national or regional events and to use the website to inform others. Moreover, those who have not yet done so are asked to inform the Bologna Secretariat about national contact persons as well as national QF websites.

12. Applications for Bologna membership and Bologna partnership
Documents: BFUG (SI) 13_12 [applications BP Febr 2008]
BFUG (PT) 12_10a [Euroscience, cover letter]
BFUG (PT) 12_10b [Euroscience, application]
BFUG (PT) 12_10c [Euroscience, annex_1]
BFUG (PT) 12_10d [Euroscience, annex_2]

BFUG decided to accept Euroscience as Bologna partner. BFUG also took note of the state of affairs concerning applications for membership and approved the procedure to be followed.

San Marino and Monaco will receive the template for the national reports on the Bologna implementation to fill out by November 1, 2008.

For the application of countries outside the geographical scope of the European Higher Education Area the working group on European higher education in a global setting will discuss cooperation based on partnership, including partnership arrangements, at its
meeting in May and will prepare a proposal on the issue for the extraordinary BFUG meeting in Sarajevo.

13. Updates from EC and consultative members (written contributions only)
Documents:  BFUG (SI) 13_13a [CoE update]
             BFUG (SI) 13_13b [EI update]
             BFUG (SI) 13_13c [EURASHE update]

BFUG took note of the information provided by Council of Europe, Education International, EURASHE and ESU. UNESCO gave an oral update and asked for the following events to be included in the calendar of events: UNESCO World Conference on 6-10 July 2009 in Paris and the preparatory meeting for the Europe region on 22-24 May 2009 in Bucharest.

The European Commission agreed to provide an update on the Commission’s contribution to the Bologna Process before the Sarajevo meeting.

14. Date and place of the next BFUG meeting
- Extraordinary BFUG on Bologna Beyond 2010 on 24-25 June 2008 in Sarajevo, hosted by the Ministry of Civil Affairs and Rectors conference of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with support from Council of Europe and Slovenian Presidency.
  It is advised to book flights to Sarajevo in time.
- Next regular BFUG on 14-15 October 2008 in Paris

15. Any other business

Victor Chistokhvalov (Russia) invited the BFUG members to the Bologna Seminar on ECTS, which will take place in Moscow on 17-18 April 2008.

Sebastiao Feyo de Azevedo (Portugal) announced that the information for the seminar on ECTS in Porto on 19-20 June 2008 would be available soon.

Efstathios Michael (Cyprus) informed the BFUG about a Ministers’ meeting on Bologna issues of small European countries to be held in Cyprus.

The Chair informed the group that it had been the last BFUG meeting of Peter Williams (ENQA) and thanked him for his work.

The Chair thanked all participants and closed the meeting with the wish to see all BFUG members in Sarajevo on 24-25 June.
### List of participants

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