



BOARD MEETING

Saint-Petersburg (Russia), 26 September 2017

Draft Minutes

0. List of Participants

Delegation	First Name	Surname
BFUG Co-chair (Estonia)	Margus	Haidak
BFUG Co-chair (Estonia)	Janne	Pukk
BFUG Co-chair / WG3 Chair (Russia)	Nadezda	Kamyninan
BFUG outgoing Co-chair (Malta)	Tanya	Sammut-Bonnici
BFUG outgoing Co-chair (Norway)	Toril	Johansson
BFUG incoming Co-chair (Bulgaria)	Mariya	Fartunova
BFUG incoming Co-chair (Bulgaria)	Ivana	Radonova
BFUG incoming Co-chair (Serbia)	Katarina	Jočić
BFUG Vice-chair (France) / AG1 Chair	Marie-Odile	Ott
Council of Europe	Sjur	Bergan
EURASHE	Michal	Karpisek
European Commission	Vanessa	Debiais-Sainton
European Commission	Sarah	Lynch
ESU [via Skype]	Helge	Schwitters
EUA	Michael	Gaebel
AG3 Chair (Liechtenstein)	Daniel	Miescher
AG4 Chair (Romania)	Mihai Cezar	Haj
WG1 Chair (Norway)	Tone Flood	Strøm
WG2 Chair (Belgium fl.)	Noel	Vercruysse
BFUG Secretariat	Françoise	Profit
BFUG Secretariat	Mariana	Saad
BFUG Secretariat	Marina	Steinmann

Apologies: AG2 Chair (Germany)

1. Welcome and introduction to the meeting

The Co-chair from Russia opened the meeting. Igor Maksimtsev, Rector of UNECON, welcomed the participants. Aleksandr Sobolev, Director of the Department of Higher Education State Policy at the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, underlined the importance of the upcoming meetings during this semester preceding the Ministerial Conference and wished a fruitful meeting. The outgoing Co-chairs thanked for the co-operation during the last semester. The Vice-chair thanked the hosts for organising the meeting.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

3. Feedback of the last meetings

The outgoing Co-chairs reminded participants of the main outcomes of the Gozo BFUG meeting. The outgoing Co-chair (Norway) stated that the minutes were not correct in matters of AG2 (Belarus). It should conclude that the expectation from the BFUG is that the report has to be short and concise but has to cover all areas. The Secretariat was asked to change the minutes from the BFUG accordingly.

During the meeting of AG/WG chairs in Paris, the chairs were reminded of their tasks for the remaining working period. Drafting of recommendations should have priority in order to be ready for Tartu BFUG meeting. In particular, these recommendations should be focussed on a few concrete actions suggested for the future.

4. Fundamental Values of the EHEA

The Co-chair (Estonia) reminded that the discussion on Fundamental Values which had taken place at the BFUG meetings in Bratislava and Gozo will be on the agenda of the Tartu BFUG meeting. The Drafting Committee started to discuss the content of the Communiqué and wants to integrate references to this central message into the text.

Concerning the next BFUG meeting in Tartu, the Estonian Co-chair asked Board members which aspects of the topic should be looked at in more detail and how to deal with the topic. He explained that first results of WG1 on indicators for Fundamental Values should be presented before the discussion in Tartu, so that they could be taken into account.

Academic freedom and institutional autonomy have been mentioned frequently since the signature of the Bologna Declaration. As societies have developed since then, ministers should recall why these values are still – or even more – important. Board members underlined that this very important topic of course should be addressed at the level of HEIs, but first of all at the political level. Governments which have the public responsibility for higher education must develop policies which do not infringe on autonomy. Fundamental Values of the EHEA need to be shared (e.g. the freedom of speech). Issues with these rights in specific countries need to be mentioned. The BFUG might also discuss which new elements should be taken on board for reporting on implementation during the next working period.

Board members expressed the opinion that educational missions in the first place have to ensure that students and graduates become democratic and active citizens. Governance, accountability, and stimulation of cross-border co-operation of students and researchers should be somewhere further down on the EHEA agenda. New aspects would be: responsibility of public authorities, co-operation of HEI with society, and international co-operation.

The Estonian Co-chair proposed to approach the topic of Fundamental Values at the BFUG with some introductory speeches, a first report about the data collection results, and an open discussion. However, the WG1 Chair explained that no written document will be available for Tartu. The Implementation Report did not cover "Fundamental Values", but investigated academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and student & staff participation. A first oral presentation on these aspects will be given at the BFUG meeting.

Board members expressed the opinion to go one step further than the background document from Bratislava spelling out two aspects. It was agreed that the discussion on Fundamental values at the Tartu BFUG meeting could not be organised on the same model as in Bratislava. In order to give more focus to the session, it was agreed that precise questions should be prepared. As the first draft of the

Communiqué will not be in terms of Fundamental Values for Tartu, it was decided that Estonia would prepare a background document to be discussed at the BFUG meeting. The Council of Europe proposed that the BFUG could deliberate a short document on Fundamental Values for the ministers to discuss in May 2018 in Paris.

5. Update and discussion of the AG/WG work

The Future of the EHEA

As provided in the ToR of AG1, the group examined the possibility of having a "Bologna Policy Forum" and this was adopted at the Gozo BFUG meeting. The AG1 chair reported that the group meeting in July allowed reflecting on the "Bologna Policy Forum" with inclusiveness as a background concept. The proposed agenda will address the question of "Evolution of higher education in a changing society". It suggests the intervention of a keynote speaker as an introduction and then 2 round tables of one hour each. Half of it should be dedicated to interactive discussion with a moderator. Group members also proposed to have a balanced representation of different regions of the world. Concept notes for each of the round table will be drafted in the aim of the invitations.

The draft report of the group is in a progress and will tackle the issue of the importance of the international dialogue of EHEA. The group will be meeting on the 16th of October.

Board members announced to expect the recommendations to stress who the target groups are and how the success of the event will be ensured. Organising the event as a part of the Ministerial Conference may be a part of the answer but more measures have to be taken. The AG was encouraged to distribute invitations (or at least a save the date message) for non-EHEA countries quite early. The success of the Bologna Process was due to the political context of the time but in the future it needs to be reflected if the EHEA is providing the framework that guarantees success.

WG3 reported that on the basis of its last meeting this September, the draft recommendations are in the process of revision between WG3 members and chairs, and will be ready on 25 October for the BFUG meeting. They will cover the issues active citizenship, EHEA:ERA, digitalisation, teacher support, and professional recognition.

Board members regretted that the latest version is not at the stage they had hoped for. The topics are well chosen but recommendations have to be more concrete and ambitious. E.g. ministers could encourage the European Commission to link programmes, as they are working on new programmes.

AG4 finished the work on the Diploma Supplement and the guidelines. All remarks made at the Gozo BFUG meeting have been included. The group is now working on the report and on recommendations for the Communiqué. After formal endorsement by the BFUG, and the later by the Ministerial Conference and Communiqué it could be proposed to use this common version in the contexts of the European Commission, the Council of Europe, and UNESCO. The AG4 chair confirmed that digitalisation is included in draft recommendations of the group.

Implementation and Non-implementation

WG1 reported to have received data from all countries except Cyprus. Some countries submitted only one of both questionnaires, others left blank questions, and some others contradict themselves if both questionnaires are compared. Statistical data for the report will be taken also from the Eurostat report. ESU had only received partly information from national students' unions. During its next meeting in October, the group will also discuss what to report to the BFUG in November.

The EUA informed the Board members to have just finished the data collection for the Trends report and to intend presenting some first results during various upcoming events.

WG2 is finalising its report on the basis of a draft report which has been sent to WG2 members. It will consist of three chapters: reflections of the work done, quality assurance and recommendations (to the BFUG and some to ministers). Conclusions of events which have been organised will be added, e.g. that structural reforms have been successfully implemented, whereas policy challenges like the social dimension, or recognition of prior learning have been tackled less successfully. Ministers could commit themselves to engage in an active dialogue with countries that have/have not been successful. It might be

recommended to invest more resources in actions and activities in order to involve institutions. The group proposed to have a discussion on what "implementation" does mean in Tartu.

As member of AG2, the Council of Europe explained that on 18 October the group will discuss a first draft of the report with the implementation of the roadmap as the main subject (developments from 2015 to 2017). So far, the picture is mixed, e.g. even if there is a movement towards a qualifications framework many programmes are still following a single long degree structure. The Belarusian ENIC works well but the Lisbon Recognition Convention has not been fully included in the national legislation. No measures have been taken to establish an independent quality assurance agency. Mobility still depends on a written recommendation by the head of the institution. AG2 spoke to all the different stakeholders in the country. There are still intermediate organisations and HEI which are not recognised and unable to freely work. One question regarding recommendations from AG2 will be whether it might be recommended that Ministers prolong the roadmap.

Some Board members proposed that the BFUG takes a close look at the results of implemented European projects in Belarus. The majority was convinced that the impact on systemic level is decisive. This is a question of trust between countries, and of trust between different actors on national level. The latter has been stimulated a lot through the work of the group. ESU stated that some improvements have been made in terms of student involvement, but the way of selecting these students is problematic. ESU was questioning full commitment of the government. There has to be a decision taken on how to proceed with the country and if trust is still appropriate if there is no commitment on national level.

Some members suggested that the Communiqué includes a general paragraph without referring explicitly to Belarus, because Belarus is not the only country with implementation issues to be further tackled. However, most Board members supported explicitly addressing the Belarus question.

The AG3 chair explained that to foster on central aspects of implementations, the three key commitments had been identified and accepted by the BFUG in Amsterdam, 2016. The cyclic procedure had been adopted at the Gozo BFUG meeting 2017. Details of a dedicated body monitoring the procedure will be proposed at the Tartu BFUG meeting. Purpose of the body would be to catalyse implementation and to invite all countries to participate in the process. The process should not lead to losing members but to motivate all countries to actively improve implementation. The suggested body would include 12-15 members and report regularly to the BFUG. It is proposed to exist permanently (like the group on monitoring) and with strong continuity of members to transport expertise from one BFUG working period to another. The draft "Terms of Reference" will be presented in Tartu. If ministers should be in favour of in the future having the proposed body, they should be able to establish this group at the Ministerial Conference. The final report will concentrate on three key commitments, the cyclic procedure and the Terms of Reference. Furthermore, a specific report on implementation of the three key commitments will be prepared by WG1 for the Ministerial Conference.

On request of Board members, the AG3 chair explained that the proposed Terms of Reference will contain the possibility of proposing improvements to the three key commitments and the procedure towards the BFUG as part of its tasks. Board members were in favour of involving the body in further follow-up of activities. An alert mechanism for BFUG would be valuable, and improving the systems would enhance possibilities for institutions to improve their performance. It was also suggested to discuss how many times a country could go through the cyclic procedure and which consequences non-implementation should have. Board members underlined that decisions on all details will be always taken at Ministerial Conferences, not by the BFUG. Board members suggested that the BFUG should provide Ministers with proposal(s) for their decisions.

6. Presentation of the work of the Drafting Committee

The draft structure proposed for the Communiqué suggested a Preamble followed by three parts:

- I. General perspective of higher education and Fundamental Values and International Co-operation
- II. Analyses of challenges and progress made during the current working period (AG/WG results)
- III. Priorities for the next period

Details should go into annexes of the document.

The Board members expressed the opinion that Fundamental Values and the role of higher education are really valuable aspects. Nevertheless, developing the bullet points to a draft text would be necessary for commenting. The Communiqué has to acknowledge the achievements and spell out further actions agreed on. The text should avoid looking like a shopping list, and should concentrate on political messages. In addition, it has been asked where to take on board the topic of "EHEA after 2020".

The BFUG Vice-chair explained that drafting an accessible and short text which concentrates on political messages is actually what the Drafting Committee is aiming at. A roadmap including a written consultation process will be prepared.

7. Draft agenda for the Ministerial Conference 2018

The BFUG Vice-chair presented a first **proposal** for the agenda of the 2018 Ministerial Conference.

The Board members recalled traditional elements to consider (such as a presentation of the Implementation Report, a presentation from the results of the Bologna Process Researchers' Conference, and a presentation of stakeholders' positions). They underlined the lack of time to discuss Fundamental Values and EHEA reforms & challenges in depth. The main challenge is to make ministers come, and stay. Board members reminded the organisers that ministers want to speak, and that a sequence of six round tables seems too much. It was proposed to reduce the number of panels (e.g. including students in panels might allow eliminating the first panel). Another proposal was to offer sessions in talk show format. The names of the sessions need to be carefully chosen to make them attractive. Topics for the "Bologna Policy Forum" should be elaborated in more detail by AG1.

Regarding the timeline of the Conference, Board members underlined that rewriting parts of the Communiqué would be quite a challenge when it is discussed mainly on the second day. In addition, the proposal leaves little room for political discussion on the Communiqué. Especially regarding Fundamental Values this was regarded as problematic, as the position regarding this topic shall be in the centre of the Communiqué. Starting with French President Macron's proposal about building 20 top European universities network by 2024 and placing Fundamental Values in the beginning would afford ministers to discuss the Communiqué on the first day and continue on the second day in order to advance overnight. As ministers will stay if they will have the floor, giving enough space for interactive discussions with appropriate moderators was deemed indispensable.

EURASHE asked for a space for brief contributions from stakeholders which had always been the case considering the Bologna Process. This was supported by other E4 Board members.

On the basis of the comments made, the BFUG Vice-chair will further elaborate the proposal.

8. Update on the Ministerial Conference 2018

The French ministry sent the official invitation to all EHEA ministers, which was circulated to each concerned delegations by the BFUG Secretariat. The Secretariat is currently working on a platform for registration.

9. Lists of participants at previous Ministerial Conferences

The Council of Europe explained that the level of political representation is subject of current research. Only for 2003 and 2007, full information was available. Regarding other Ministerial Conferences, details have been found by contacting people. So far, data is missing only for 2001. A plea was formulated to ask future hosts to make lists of real participation available. Names and positions of delegations would be needed to allow further research. As the composition of a delegation often changes before or during the meeting, the organisers would need to provide a final list of participants after the Ministerial Conference.

The Board decided to support the proposal.

10. Draft agenda for the BFUG meeting in Tartu

The AG3 chair requested to have enough time for adding an extra point to present the Terms of Reference for the proposed "Key Commitments Implementation Group". The WG1 chair explained the

need of discussing the scoreboard indicators; this should be – in parallel to the AG3 proposal – mentioned separately on the agenda.

Board members agreed that discussing the draft Communiqué would be important; more time would be needed for this point of the agenda. It should follow directly after the discussion on Fundamental Values. The Fundamental Values session needs to be well-prepared. It should be different from previous sessions on values and focus on what Ministers should discuss in Paris.

For the item AOB, an invitation to Bologna Process Researchers' Conference was announced. A presentation on the European Student Card will also be included.

It was recalled that reports and recommendations from the groups are really needed in time in order to allow the BFUG in Tartu to have a genuine discussion about all these proposals. It was also requested that a complete as possible draft of the Communiqué should be added to the documents.

The Estonian Co-chair will redraft the agenda accordingly.

11. Information by the incoming Co-chairs

Serbia proposed a meeting of the Drafting Committee for 23 January and the Board meeting for 24 January 2018. Board members suggested a second Board meeting in due time lag before the second BFUG meeting in spring 2018.

Bulgaria informed that the foreseen dates for the BFUG meetings were 5/6 February and 20/21 March 2018. Still this proposal seems not to be suitable enough and one of the meeting can be held in April. Bulgaria asked which set of dates were better to be changed. Board members pointed out that the Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice (CDPPE) will be meeting on 21/22 March in Strasbourg and that many BFUG members will be involved. Therefore, the foreseen dates in March are inappropriate. Furthermore, having the final meeting of the BFUG later would be much better in relation to the Ministerial Conference.

Bulgaria will explore if a BFUG meeting could be held at the end of April (23-27), combined with 5/6 February as a first meeting, and will confirm the dates.

12. AOB

Business Europe requested that the consequences of the Brexit should be discussed. The Co-chairs and the Board decided not to put this question on the agenda of the Tartu BFUG meeting. The United Kingdom is still an EHEA member. Such an item on the agenda will be foreseen only on request of the respective country.