

# BOLOGNA WORKING GROUP ON EXTERNAL DIMENSION OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

## *NOTES OF MEETING OF 7 APRIL 2006 PARKHOTEL SCHÖNBRUNN, VIENNA*

### **Present**

Toril Johansson (Chair)	Norway
Alf Rasmussen	Norway
Barbara Weitgruber	Austria
Mogens Berg	Denmark
Eric Froment	France
Hélène Lagier	France
Birgit Galler	Germany
Friedrich Bechina	Holy See
Joseph Mifsud	Malta
Pedro Lourtie	Portugal
Félix Haering Pérez	Spain
Foteini Asderaki	Greece
Annika Persson	Sweden
Bernd Wächter	Academic Cooperation Association (ACA)
Sjur Bergan	Council of Europe (CoE)
Monique Fouilhoux	Education International (EI)
Daithí Mac Síthigh	Students in Europe (ESIB)
Peter van der Hijden	European Commission (EC)
Alan Smith	EC Erasmus Mundus
Lesley Wilson	European University Association (EUA)
Michael Gaebel	EUA
Stefan Delplace	EURASHE
Jan Sadlak	UNESCO
Yvonne Clarke	Bologna Secretariat
Pavel Zgaga	Rapporteur
Cornelia Racké	Observer

### **1. Opening of the meeting**

Working Group members and new members attending the meeting for the first time were welcomed.

### **2. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda was agreed and adopted.

### **3. Minutes of the last meeting**

Minutes of the last meeting in Brussels were prepared by Alf Rasmussen (Norway) and Yvonne Clarke (Bologna Secretariat). No comments were received on either version. It was agreed that the Secretariat would be responsible for drafting the minutes of all future Working Group meetings and the Chairmanship (Norway) would circulate it to members.

### **4.0 Reflection on the work during the first and second meeting**

#### **4.1 General Working Plan (developed after the first meeting and attached)**

The working plan had been developed by Pavel Zgaga on the basis of discussions in the first Working Group meeting in Brussels. It was agreed that Toril Johansson would present the conclusions and recommendations of the Working Group at the seminar in Oslo in September 2006 and a preliminary report to BFUG in October 2006.

#### **4.2 Interim report to BFUG 6-7 April 2006 Vienna**

There were no comments on the report to the meeting of BFUG.

#### **4.3 Contributions of Working Group members**

(see Secretariat minutes of the first meeting point 6 – work procedure)

Spain reported on institutional networks in Latin American countries and other activities which were in the early stages of development. It was hoped there would be a report back on a meeting that took place at the same time as BFUG at the next working group meeting.

In 2004 the Guadalajara Declaration supported the creation of an integrated higher education and research area between the EU, Latin America and the Caribbean. EUA were working in cooperation to develop a programme of activities to bring together universities from Europe and Latin America. There were a number of actions to take forward under the Austrian Presidency. Barbara Weitgruber referred to the preparatory work in view of the EU- Latin America and Caribbean summit in mid-May in Vienna which took place in research at the beginning of February in Salzburg and will take place at the EUA-CUIB meeting in Oviedo.

The EC had commissioned a report on the view from outside the EHEA. Questionnaires were distributed (and collected) by hand to schools and universities in selected countries eg China, Mexico and Thailand. Students/undergraduates, pupils and Higher Education administrators were asked for their views of European HE, what governed student choice and the quality and quantity of the sources of information on HE courses.

The perception was of small country groups not of a 'Europe of Higher Education'. The concerns identified were: the reputation of institutions and recognition; and that the qualifications offered promoted employability in the home country. European HE was regarded as good quality, traditional but not world class, not as innovative or dynamic as the US for example. Not enough information sources were available on study opportunities in Europe; however, HE institutions in the UK were thought to be well advertised internationally.

The next step was to consider how to promote the content and image of HE in Europe and broadcast the message without the introduction of bureaucracy.

The exercise might be repeated if the EC would be willing to fund it in six months or a year's time. The project results would be followed up through Erasmus Mundus action to promote European HE in the rest of the world.

Group members commented the EC work might be extensive, but it might also affect the 'brain drain' in some countries in Erasmus Mundus projects. It would be sensible to keep in mind the link to Bologna and the Bergen Communiqué mandate for the external dimension strategy.

#### **4.4 Other events/information/reports**

A report on Bologna Process work in universities in Portuguese-speaking countries would be circulated by Pedro Lourtie to working group members.

The Mediterranean University Forum would take place in Malta 8-10 June 2006 as part of the Jean Monnet action. Representatives of North and South Europe including the Arab University league and Pavel Zgaga had been invited to take part. Objectives were to foster dialogue, cultural knowledge and academic exchange in the Mediterranean area and to enhance the attractiveness and visibility of European higher education.

#### **5.0 A strategy for the external dimension of the Bologna Process**

Pavel Zgaga presented his discussion paper. It opened with an introductory remark that asked why a common strategy was needed, could it be justified and on what basis could it be built? The discussion paper went on to address the external dimension in a historical perspective, listing significant documents and contributions which had developed and promoted the concept. The last part of the paper brought the work of the group up to date and introduced the next steps. Zgaga underlined that instruments were needed to the external dimension strategy document.

Three particular questions from part 3.2 in the paper were put to the members at the meeting for discussion.

In discussion, points on the structure of the strategy were raised.

- The historical view was still relevant, as the European model for universities has spread all over the world. But in the modern EHEA, economic and competitive factors had introduced a more diverse model for the external dimension, thinking about the development in areas like China, India, Latin-America and so on.
- It is important to stress that the external dimension is a part of the Bologna Process, and should not be mixed with other processes. It is furthermore crucial to be open to the rest of the world, not restrictive. What about an invitation to a conference to the outside 45 in order to prevent the Bologna area from being an unnecessary obstacle?
- There was a need for an agreed direction for the strategy, whether it would extend beyond the final report and 2010; distinguish the 25 EU countries and 45 Bologna countries and truly reflect the view of the majority. It would be helpful to devise a strategy for the 45 Bologna

countries as the Process itself did not have an international strategy beyond its membership.

- To progress a strategy, agreement was needed on the image of the Process and HE institutions seen from abroad and on how to manage information internationally to promote the EHEA.
- In summary the focus of the strategy would be to let the world know about the EHEA as a model for regional cooperation to facilitate movement, explain the purpose and share the values of HE in Europe and reflect labour market changes. The nature of the Bologna Process and common themes across the regions would be included. It could encompass different strategies for regions or other countries.

In going back to the report structure and strategy, there appeared to have been development at two different levels: national and institutional values on one level; and 'common' in the EHEA on the other. It was agreed that it was good to keep the focus on the values already part of the Bologna Process. However, the strategy needed a common overarching structure to cover these plurality aspects.

In further discussion the following points were made:

- It is a complex environment for the Bologna 45, with many higher education areas all over the world.
- We are also looking at ourselves in this strategy work. We already have different structures within the Bologna area, with a common back bone, but also differences.
- We must focus on the content of the Bologna process, look at Bologna as a label – based on solidarity and equity.
- There is a need for a strategy of cooperation and mutual exchange between Bologna countries and others, avoiding 'we' and 'they'. Cooperation will be seen as a key to attractiveness and competitiveness.
- We have to remember that the Bergen communiqué says that our contribution should be based on the principle of sustainable development.
- Successful cooperation can lead to competition later on.
- Asia is very interested in the Bologna Process, but some practical information and concrete cooperation is needed.
- An International dimension of the Bologna Process – is that possible? And how can we transmit our process and make it interesting to others?
- We need to be open to the rest of the world, but let them find their own answers.
- How can we cooperate if we are so diverse within the Bologna area?
- It is important to remember that the Bologna Process is about working together in a collective process.

Following a full and lively discussion, Pavel Zgaga summed up the points he would take forward in the interim report and the strategy. These included co-

operation and attractiveness, a common brand for the Bologna Process built on values and an external dimension in the singular not dimensions. The draft would not be detailed, but overarching and would be circulated to the group by 1 June 2006 by the Secretariat for comment on the concept and wording for the next meeting on 12 June 2006.

## **6. Bologna Seminars on the External Dimension**

Working Group members were encouraged to attend the seminars which were important for dissemination of discussions and outcomes in the Working Group and other, wider, issues relating to the Process.

Padre Friedrich Bechina (Holy See) reported back on the seminar that took place in Rome. Foteini Asderaki (Greece) and Alf Rasmussen (Norway) gave short presentations on the forthcoming External Dimension seminars that would take place in Greece and Norway later in the year. Working group members were encouraged to attend as the content of the seminars contributed to the Strategy for the External Dimension and to the content of the final report for Ministers.

### **The Holy See Seminar Rome 30 March-1 April 2006**

The sessions gave a broad overview of the historic development and changes in European universities and looked again at elements of mobility and diversity in addition to emphasising academic values and contemporary influence. In the workshops there were interesting interpretations of academic values and lively discussion on the identity and mission of the European University.

### **The Athens Seminar 24-26 June 2006**

The seminar is called “Putting European Higher Education Area on the Map: Developing Strategies for Attractiveness” and will focus on the exchange of ideas, expertise and good practice on issues of international interest concerning the EHEA. The seminar will consist of plenary sessions and parallel workshops. Attendees expected will be stakeholders and representatives from all 45 countries of the Bologna Process, representatives from OECD and OECD countries, other organisations, as well as European and International experts. In the seminar the Bologna Process would be highlighted –the way it operated, what had been achieved so far and its links with other areas of the world. International, European, national and institutional strategies and good practice to enhance attractiveness will be presented as well as Quality Assurance practices related to cross border higher education.

For further information: [aseminar@ypepth.gr](mailto:aseminar@ypepth.gr)

### **The Nordic Seminar 28 – 29 September 2006**

The Nordic seminar is collaboration between the Nordic countries Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, and will be arranged from lunch to

lunch 28 – 29 September 2006 in Oslo, Norway. The number of participants will be 200-250,  $\frac{3}{4}$  from the Bologna area and  $\frac{1}{4}$  covering the rest of the world. As for the Athens seminar the seminar language in Oslo will be English. The seminar will discuss a draft report on the external dimension, with an emphasis on areas that has not been focused on in the previous seminars, e.g. competitiveness and capacity building. There will be six parallel sessions, where the following topics will be discussed:

- a) Conditions for Institutional co-operations between European and non-European Higher Education Institutions
- b) International mobility - transparency - recognition
- c) Recognition of different student programme structures
- d) Strategy for international cooperation
- e) Attractiveness/competitiveness - brain drain - capacity building
- f) What makes the European Higher Education Area attractive?

For further information: [www.bolognaoslo.com](http://www.bolognaoslo.com) (to be launched)

## **7.0 Further work procedure and next meeting**

The next meeting is decided to be in **Vienna 12 June 2006** (10.00 - 17.00) and the second one in **Brussels 4 September 2006** (10.00 - 17.00).

**The WG also decided to establish three specific sub working groups to collaborate (by e-mail) on different issues in order to prepare 1-2 pages to WG before 1 June 2006. A mid-term report on this to the WG is expected on 15 May 2006. There will be a contact person for each group.**

### **The sub working groups will be:**

**Identity** - contact person Friedrich Bechina (vati745@cec.va **or** [vati169@cec.va](mailto:vati169@cec.va))

**Information** - contact person Barbara Weitgruber ([barbara.weitgruber@bmbwk.gv.at](mailto:barbara.weitgruber@bmbwk.gv.at))

**Attractiveness - collaboration - competitiveness** - contact person Pedro Lourtie (lourtie@dem.ist.utl.pt)

Please let the contact person and the secretariat know when you have decided which group you want to attend. You can of course give your contribution to more than one of the groups.

Yvonne Clarke  
Bologna Secretariat