

STOCKTAKING WORKING GROUP: NOTES OF MEETING OF 26-27 MARCH 2007, LISBON, PORTUGAL

Present

Andrejs Rauhvargers, Latvia (Chair)
Marie-Anne Persoons, Belgium (Flemish Community)
Heli Aru, Estonia
Uta Grund, Germany
Sverre Rustad, Norway
Camila Sturza, Romania
Darinka Vrecko, Slovenia
Aybar Ertepinar, Turkey
Cynthia Deane, Options Consulting
Stephanie Oberheidt, Eurydice
Cornelia Racke (observer)
Ann McVie, Secretariat (notes)

Apologies:

Foteini Asderaki, Greece
David Crosier, EUA

Welcome

Andrejs welcomed everyone to the last meeting of the Working Group.

Report from BFUG

Ann gave a short report on the progress report given to the last BFUG meeting. She had confirmed that the Stocktaking Working Group was making good progress, and that the results suggested good progress was being made overall. Few comments had been raised by BFUG members. EUA had confirmed the stocktaking outcomes were broadly in line with those from Trends V. ESIB had confirmed that their study had found an improvement in student participation in quality assurance processes. They also supported the view that there was a need for further improvement in the application of recognition tools. ESIB continued to have concerns about access, noting stocktaking's focus on the definition of access given in the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

It was noted that ESIB had since provided the Working Group with a copy of the presentation given on 'Bologna with Student Eyes' at the most recent ESIB Convention.

Update from Eurydice

Stéphanie gave an update on the preparation of the Eurydice Focus report. The report was nearing completion, and would be printed in early April and ready for distribution by mid May. The comparative overview was expected to be available in French and German as well as English for the London Ministerial Conference.

Information had been obtained for all bar a few Bologna countries. Spain had recently requested a significant change relating to the use of a credit system compatible with ECTS. It would be useful to cross reference this with the stocktaking scorecard.

Stéphanie thanked all those who had helped provide the information for the Focus report. She also offered to send group members a copy of the key data and governance reports for information.

Discussion of Chapter 3

Andrejs presented the most recent results of the scorecard analysis. The recently agreed changes had resulted in a change to the mean and highest scores, but not the indicators attracting the lowest scores.

Cynthia then presented the draft Chapter 3, which analysed the results of the scorecard. Individual country scorecards had been issued for checking. A number of requests for changes were received, some down as well as up. Most were supported by additional information that had not been provided in the National Reports. Some requests for changes had been accepted, others had not. Some were identified as being points for inclusion in the short summary that would accompany each country scorecard. The summary text for each scorecard would be issued to the relevant country for comment. All texts would be issued to the Working Group for info.

In discussion, the following points were made:

- The report should refer to the problems arising from late submission of the National Reports. One had been three months late.
- The report should also refer to the continuing need to improve the quality of the data on which stocktaking was based. This included validating the data by reference to data sources other than the National Reports, such as Trends, Eurydice etc. This should not however detract from the role of stocktaking in helping to develop a self evaluation culture within the Bologna Process.
- Comments were raised on the apparent contradiction between the 'greenness' of the scores for quality assurance, and the intention to highlight the need for further development of a quality improvement culture in the next period. It was, however, recognised that there was a difference between establishing a system and embedding a quality improvement culture.
- The text should identify the future challenges evident from the stocktaking exercise. They might not necessarily align with the future challenges identified by individual country members. For example, collectively, there was still a need to improve recognition.
- There was a need to acknowledge that some countries had improved their recognition procedures, without necessarily being able to ratify the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

- It was suggested that the mean score tables might be moved to the end of Chapter 3 and included in the Executive Summary.
- To add understanding, percentage figures should be included in the horizontal bar charts. Key points in the text should also be highlighted in some way.
- Further examples of good practice should be incorporated in the text, including illustrations of how some countries had made good progress in specific areas.
- The rationale for revising some of the indicators from the last exercise should be included in Chapter 2. A weblink to the previous indicators should also be added.
- It was acknowledged that a glossary of key terms might be a useful addition for future stocktaking exercises. This could be included in Chapter 5.
- In view of the stage of development of National Qualifications Frameworks it might be helpful for the report to suggest that the London Communiqué should confirm that the underlying principles of a National Qualifications Framework should be in place by 2010. This would allow full implementation to take place over a longer timescale, as full implementation of the frameworks, incorporating credit rated curricula and learning outcomes, might take some time longer.
- The text on National Qualification Frameworks should also comment on their relationship to quality assurance.
- A key point should be included in the text under each indicator.
- References to other data sources should be added as appropriate throughout the report.
- The conclusions should highlight the need for a greater emphasis on internal quality.
- Germany, the Netherlands/Belgium and the Nordic countries might provide illustrations of how to enhance international co-operation in quality assurance. ENQA might also be asked to describe how countries had organised a peer of their national quality assurance agencies.
- In future, it might be useful to consider how effective Diploma Supplements were in improving recognition of qualifications. The ENIC/NARIC network might be asked to review the implementation of Diploma Supplements and advise on whether they followed the correct format.
- The text might refer to the fact that ratification of the Lisbon Recognition Convention was taking longer than might have been expected. Despite

progress in awarding national legislation in a number of countries, only one country had ratified the Convention over the last two years.

- The text on ECTS might refer to ESIB's concerns about inappropriate workload measurement and application of learning outcomes.
- Flanders, France, Norway, and the UK might provide examples of how to improve recognition of prior learning.
- Future exercise should focus on the number of joint degrees in place, now that legal barriers to the establishment of joint degrees had been largely removed.
- The Eurydice analysis suggested there might be some discrepancies with the scorecard, Cynthia and Stephanie would check.

It was agreed that:

Cynthia would check the score for indicator 1 for Azerbaijan.

Sverre and Camelia would assist with proof checking the report.

Chapter 2

Cynthia led a discussion of the draft Chapter 2.

- In discussion, the following points were made:
- The focus of the section should be on what had been done differently since the previous exercise.
- Comments on the strengths and limitations of the methodology should be included in the final section, rather than with the scorecard.
- A reference should be added to the Working Group's co-operation with EUA, Eurydice, ESIB, ENQA and the Qualifications Working Group.
- The section should describe the approach taken, including securing BFUG's, and the Board's, approval of the approach and the indicators used.
- In describing the approach taken to developing the indicators for 2007, the text should highlight the Working Group's conclusion to omit flexible learning paths and the development of the third cycle from the scorecard element of stocktaking.
- Chapter 1 or Chapter 2 should refer to the expectation in the Bergen Communiqué that the three intermediate priorities set in the Berlin Communiqué should be largely completed by 2007. The text should also comment on the broader purpose of stocktaking, to assess overall progress

towards the goals of the Bologna Process, rather than comment in detail on the status within each country member.

- In summary, Chapter 2 should explain:
 - Why only some elements had been included in stocktaking;
 - Why the scorecard had not been applied to all elements; and
 - Why the indicators were more demanding.

Chapter 1

Cynthia sought comments on the draft of Chapter 1.

In discussion, the following points were made:

- The report should be collapsed into 3 sections:
 - Introduction and methodology
 - Analysis
 - Conclusions and recommendations.
- The reference to the recommendations from the previous stocktaking exercise should be omitted. Rather, it should only refer to the Bergen Communiqué and the agreement that stocktaking should continue.

Chapter 4

Cynthia sought comments on the draft Chapter 4.

In discussion, the following points were made:

- Comments on issues for the future should be moved to the new section three.
- References to credit should refer to the use of credit for transfer and accumulation. The linkages between quality assurance and recognition should also be underlined.
- Comments on the employability of Bachelor graduates should refer to the gradual introduction of Bachelor courses in some countries. This meant their employability was as yet largely unproven. The text might also comment on the need to improve the employability of Bachelor graduates in the public service.

Conclusions and recommendations:

Andrejs opened the discussion on conclusions and recommendations by reminding the group of the areas where most and least progress appeared to have been made. He then invited comments on possible conclusions and recommendations.

In discussion, the following points were made:

- The issue of the recognition of qualifications within cycles should be addressed within the context of the elaboration of National Qualifications Frameworks.
- Lifelong learning, flexible learning paths and the recognition of prior learning should be included as areas where less progress appeared to have been made.
- The conclusions and recommendations should look ahead to 2010 and the realisation of the EHEA. It was, however, difficult to be too precise, as few concrete goals had been set for 2010.
- The conclusions should be based on the results of the stocktaking. This included highlighting the uneven nature of the progress being made; and the fact that setting clear objectives appeared to drive change.
- Analysis of the stocktaking results suggested future efforts might be concentrated on the following areas:
 - employability
 - learning outcomes and the interdependency with credit transfer and accumulation; quality assurance; lifelong learning and recognition.
 - developing a quality improvement culture
 - fully implementing recognition tools, such as Diploma Supplement and ECTS
 - enhancing the links between ENIC/NARIC network and BFUG
 - improving the situation for learners
- There should not be any more than 3 or 4 main recommendations. The general comments on progress in the current draft of Chapter 5 could form the basis of the Executive Summary.
- The overall tone and message from the report should be positive. Good progress was being made and stocktaking was an effective method of assessing collective progress towards the overall goals of the Bologna Process.
- There should also be some recommendations for future stocktaking. This should include recommending that stocktaking should continue, highlighting its constraints as well as its positive features.
- It might also comment on the fact that use of quantifiable scorecard indicators was only appropriate after a certain stage of development.
- It might not be appropriate to apply the scorecard approach to recognition of prior learning, lifelong learning or employability at this stage. Any future stocktaking on those issues should be based on a clearer definition of the concepts and a qualitative assessment, rather than on a quantitative assessment of progress only.

- Future scorecard indicators might be clustered under different headings such as the use of learning and implementation of the Standard and Guidelines for Quality Assurance adopted by the Ministers in Bergen. The interdependencies amongst the elements in stocktaking should also be reconsidered.
- Given the progressive nature of stocktaking, the deadline of 2010 and the short timetable between April 2009 and 2010, future indicators should be set against the progress expected to have been made by 2010.
- The need for continued, and enhanced, cooperation with Eurydice, EUA, ENIC/NARIC Network, and other partners should be included in the conclusions.

Close

It was agreed that Cynthia would revise the report to reflect the comments made.

The final draft report would be circulated to the Working Group for comment at the same time as it went to BFUG by 4th April.

Andrejs closed the meeting by thanking all members for their contributions over the last two years.

Ann McVie
Bologna Secretariat

27 March 2007