

**BOLOGNA STOCKTAKING WORKING GROUP
NOTES OF MEETING OF 9 DECEMBER 2005, RIGA, LATVIA**

Present

Prof Andrejs Rauhvargers, Latvia (Chair)
Ms Marie-Anne Persoons, Belgium (Flemish Community)
Dr Heli Aru, Estonia
Dr Uta Grund, Germany
Ms Foteini Asderaki, Greece
Mr Sverre Rustad, Norway
Prof Vasile Isan, Romania
Ms Darinka Vrecko, Slovenia
Mr David Crosier, EUA
Ms Ann McVie, Secretariat (notes)

1. Welcome

Professor Ina Druviete, Latvian Minister of Education and Science, welcomed everyone to the meeting and to Latvia. She explained that Latvia was introducing new legislation on higher education, which took Bologna reforms into account. She was proud that Latvia was so active in the Bologna Process and wished the group well with its work.

The draft agenda for the meeting was adopted.

2. The scope of the work of the Stocktaking Working Group according to the Bergen Communiqué

Andrejs Rauhvargers presented his paper on the scope of the stocktaking for 2005-2007. He reminded the group of the mandate outlined in the Bergen communiqué and the comments made by BFUG in Manchester on the suggested approach to the next stocktaking exercise. BFUG had emphasised the need for stocktaking to follow closely the priorities for stocktaking outlined in the Bergen Communiqué. Looking at these priorities, there was a need to review the indicators used for the last stocktaking, to determine whether they should be retained, amended or merged. There was also a need to include some new indicators.

In discussion, the following points were made:

The previous Stocktaking Working Group had developed a list of questions, which had been passed to Eurydice and to the Secretariat. The Secretariat, in conjunction with the Chair of the Stocktaking Working Group, had then developed the template for National Reports.

To ensure the process was open and transparent, there was a need to present draft indicators to BFUG in April 2006 for comment. There was also a need to give a progress report to the Board when it next meets in January 2006.

There was a need to include a new indicator on the implementation of ENQA's standards and guidelines for quality assurance. The detailed indicators would have to allow for all, some or none of the standards and guidelines to have been implemented.

It was agreed that:

The stocktaking exercise would not consider the social dimension. Work on possible indicators on the social dimension for stocktaking post 2007 would be developed by the Social Dimension and Data on the Mobility and Staff and Students Working Group.

3. Input of other parties into stocktaking exercise.

Andrejs Rauhvargers reported on his discussions with Eurydice, ENIC/NARIC and ENQA about how they might support stocktaking.

ENIC/NARIC may be developing a standard template for the national action plans to improve recognition of qualifications. These action plans could inform stocktaking and would cover all 45 countries participating in Bologna. However, according to the Bergen Communiqué these plans are part of the National reports. Therefore, the changes included in these plans may not happen until April 2007, by which time stocktaking would be more or less complete.

Eurydice had confirmed that they were willing to co-operate with the Stocktaking Working Group. Eurydice was planning to issue their survey at the end of March 2006, for reply by May 2006, one year before the next Ministerial meeting. This implied that the information collected by Eurydice may be outdated by the time of London Ministerial meeting. If the planned timing of Eurydice can not be shifted towards later stage (autumn of 2006), stocktaking would have to update the information based on National Reports.

David Crosier advised that EUA had already started work on Trends V. The exercise would combine the approaches used in Trends III and Trends IV to include both a survey and site visits.

The survey would be issued to some 2,000 higher education institutions across all the 45 countries. It would include instructions represented by EURASHE. Replies were due by the end of January 2006. The results of the survey would be used to inform the selection of the site visits. Some 65 site visits were planned, to take place over spring and autumn 2006. There would also be a questionnaire issued to national rectors' conferences. There would be no analysis carried out at country level, as the exercise focused on what was happening at institutional level.

Andrejs Rauhvargers advised that ENQA was planning a survey on the ENQA agencies' plans and intentions for implementation of its standards and guidelines. The resultant report was due to be available in April 2006.

In discussion, the following points were made:

The proposed Eurydice timetable would result in their report being based on the situation only one academic year later than the report they produced for the Bergen summit. There was therefore unlikely to be any marked progress between the two reports. It was suggested that the Chair should ask Eurydice if there was any scope to delay the timing of their survey.

As Eurydice did not cover all countries participating in Bologna, there would be a need to supplement the data gathered by Eurydice.

EUA was willing to share information and impressions arising from their work on Trends V. There was however a need to recognise that Trends was different in scope and would result in a separate report.

The timing of the issue of the Trends and ESIB reports would be too late to inform the scorecard element of stocktaking. The core of stocktaking would therefore be based on information from Eurydice and National Reports.

Eurydice undertook some validation of the data gathered. This was not the case for National Reports. There may therefore be merit in including some validation measures in the stocktaking exercise. This could, for example, include asking for a sample Diploma Supplement.

Ministers had asked for the stocktaking exercise to be widened. There was a need to take this into account when producing the final stocktaking report.

ENQA did not cover all 45 countries and the survey was taking place a year before the Ministerial summit. There would therefore be a need for the Stocktaking Working Group to gather its own data on the implementation of the standards and guidelines.

It was agreed that:

Andrejs Rauhvargers would ask Eurydice if there was any possibility of amending the timescale for their survey.

4. Possibilities to hire an expert for stocktaking exercise

Ann McVie reported that the Working Group could apply to the European Commission for funding under the Monopoly Fund. A bid could be submitted early in the New Year, which, if successful, would lead to funding being available in March.

In discussion, the following points were made:

There was merit in drawing on the expertise developed by the consultant used in the previous exercise.

It would be helpful if the consultant could offer advice on the questions to be included in the Eurydice survey and the National Report.

Working Group members would meet their own costs for travelling to and from meetings, if at all possible.

The bid should include costs of undertaking visits to the newer countries, to explain stocktaking and gather information.

The bid should also include the cost of group members taking a key role in drafting the final report.

It was agreed that:

The Secretariat would prepare a bid to the Monopoly Fund, on the basis discussed.

5. Draft timeline for the Stocktaking Group

Andrejs Rauhvargers sought views on the draft timeline for the stocktaking exercise.

In discussion, the following points were made:

The deadline for submitting National Reports should be brought forward to mid-December.

In future, it would be helpful for the consultant and Eurydice to take part in meetings of the group.

It was suggested that the Working Group might send a letter to all BFUG members, to underline the importance of meeting the deadlines set for the stocktaking exercise.

The timescale should be amended to include the need to check scorecards with individual countries.

The draft format for National reports should be presented to the April BFUG meeting, together with proposed indicators.

It was agreed that:

Andrejs Rauhvargers would revise the timeline on the basis discussed.

6. First discussion of the stocktaking 2007 benchmarks

Andrejs Rauhvargers presented draft high level indicators for comments. Where appropriate, indicators used for the 2005 exercise would be retained. The group preferred to use term “high level indicators” (or “indicators”) rather than “benchmarks”.

In discussion, the following points were made:

There was a need for clarity in all the indicators to be used.

According to the Bergen Communiqué, the degree systems should refer to three cycles, rather than two.

Access would be used in the terms defined in the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

There were different views on the value of including a separate indicator on the Lisbon Recognition Convention, as only five out of the 45 countries had still to ratify the convention.

The suggested indicators for assessing progress towards elaborating a national qualifications framework for higher education were broadly agreed.

It was agreed that:

There would be 12 high level indicators, including two on lifelong learning.

There was scope to amend the high and low level indicators brought forward from the previous exercise, but changes should be kept to a minimum.

The indicators should focus on goals for 2007, rather than 2010.

Sverre Rustad would draft two high level indicators on lifelong learning for consideration by the group.

Andrejs Rauhvargers would revise the high level indicators and circulate them to the group for detailed comments.

*Group members would submit comments on the revised indicators **by 27 January 2006.***

7. Date and place of next meeting

27 February 2006, Brussels

8. Any other business

No items were raised

Ann McVie
Bologna Secretariat
9 January 2006