

BFUG4 5a  
9 February 2005

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BFUG STOCKTAKING WORKING GROUP**

Brussels Airport, 26 January 2005, 09.30-13.00 hrs.

### **PARTICIPANTS**

#### Stocktaking Working Group:

Ian McKenna, Ireland, Chair  
Germain Dondelinger, Luxembourg, BFUG Chair  
Marlies Leegwater, Netherlands  
Jan Levy, Norway  
Victor Chistokhvalov, Russia  
Peter van der Hijden, EU Commission

#### Others:

Mirjana Polić Bobić, Deputy Minister for Higher Education, Croatia  
Ruard Wallis de Vries, EU Commission  
Patricia Wastiau-Schlüter, EURYDICE  
Cynthia Deane, BFUG Secretariat  
Per Nyborg, BFUG Secretariat  
Sverre Rustad, BFUG Secretariat

#### Apologies:

Aleksa Bjeliš, Croatia

### **1. OPENING OF THE MEETING**

The Chair welcomed the participants, at the same time introducing Cynthia Deane, the expert hired to assist in preparing the stocktaking report. Her role will be mainly analytical, providing the basis for a political commentary and recommendations by the Working Group to the BFUG. Cynthia Deane herself commented that based on a first impression of the material available, her report would be not so much quantitative as an indicative picture of what parts of the process are going well and areas in which goals may need to be further refined. Other speakers pointed out that the stocktaking report will also be a tool for Ministers to use in their own countries to achieve changes, and that in this way even negative impressions may be turned into something positive. Countries should therefore be able to see where they stand in relation to others. There should be clarity, but in a constructive tone. The Chair pointed out that the format of the report would be discussed later in the meeting.

## **2. STATUS REPORT FROM EURYDICE**

### **A. The information gathering process**

Patricia Wastiau-Schlüter noted that the first 14 country reports had been sent to the Secretariat, and that the remaining ones would be sent soon. The collection of information was thus mostly *en route*. A table was handed out showing the status for each participating country. There are several levels of checking. “Approved” means that the final description has been agreed by the national unit. Even then, new information may be added until the end of March. “Under verification” means that the report has been sent to the national unit for questions to be answered etc. “In preparation” means that EURYDICE is still working on it. The information will be cross-checked with the national reports and any inconsistencies reported to the Secretariat. However, EURYDICE will not add information on the basis of the national reports.

A comparative summary will be presented at the Working Group meeting in February, although it may not be completely finished. It will be on the same model as in the 2003 study, with maps and tables in addition to a descriptive analysis. There will be no identification of obstacles, no examples of good practice and no evaluative judgements. It is not a critical analysis, but a summary of basic information.

### **B. A first impression of results**

A second table was handed out in order to illustrate how results may be presented, based on the 14 reports that had been sent to the Secretariat. It was stressed that the table was provisional and should not be distributed to others. “No information” means no information *yet*; the column should not be there in the final report. The Chair stated that the kind of presentation illustrated would meet the purposes of the stocktaking. Some possible definition problems were pointed out; these will be clarified in the final phase. The table should also be seen in the context of the questions and definitions in the guide sent to the participating countries. The results will be sent back to each country for verification. In some areas, it may be difficult for the national units to collect the information asked for, e.g. with regard to statistics for the number of students taking part in two-cycle programmes. The Chair pointed out that this is something that the Working Group could comment on in its report to the BFUG. He also pointed to the danger of drawing conclusions too early.

It was agreed that the material from EURYDICE will be made available to the Working Group through the service page of the Bologna-Bergen website at <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/b/hind.htm>. The material will be protected by a password, which will be sent to the members of the group by the Secretariat when the page is ready.

## **3. STATUS FOR THE NATIONAL REPORTS**

32 national reports had been received before the meeting. Cynthia Deane presented a possible framework of analysis based on a sample of 15 reports. The reports contain information that complements that collected by EURYDICE, and it should therefore be ensured that the analyses will also be complementary. EURYDICE agreed to this and to keeping contact during the further process of analysis. The illustrative analysis was of the questions asked on quality assurance, where the countries had provided thorough, good quality information. The

framework for analysis was partly based on the 2003 ENQA survey of methodologies of quality assurance in Europe. Different categories of achievement were identified, which could be harmonised with similar categories used in the provisional analysis presented by EURYDICE.

Several speakers stressed that the answers given must be read in the context of the questions asked. Countries have replied to these in good faith. On the other hand, questions may have been interpreted differently by different countries. As the situation in any country may change quickly, the analysis will be based on a snapshot picture. The group expressed satisfaction with the kind of results indicated. It was furthermore pointed out that the analysis of the material both from the national reports and from EURYDICE may provide valuable inputs for planning similar reports in the future. There was also agreement on the importance of making use of existing frameworks for analysis. For instance, the four-stage model in quality assurance is a benchmark.

In conclusion, Cynthia Deane undertook to draft a more complete analytical model and send it to the members of the Working Group as soon as possible. The aim should be as many categories as are consistent with a good, rigorous commentary and as few as are consistent with a sophisticated analysis. The Chair undertook to write to any countries that have not submitted their national reports by the end of January.

#### **4. FORMAT OF THE STOCKTAKING REPORT**

##### **A. Presentation by Jan Levy**

Jan Levy pointed out that the main product of the stocktaking will be the full report prepared by Cynthia Deane, alongside with the new EURYDICE study. These reports will be important for the communiqué, and for the detailed follow-up of the Bologna Process in the coming period. In addition, he proposed a shorter, more result-based document which may be presented to the Ministers, who will be looking for:

- overall results (is the process on track, what is the chance of reaching main goals for the EHEA as a whole?)
- the results for their countries
- results for neighbouring and/or comparable countries

The media will have the same focus, looking for headlines. There may still be arguments for not presenting data in a simple way; it may represent an over-simplification, relevant national explanations may be suppressed, and it may be unpleasant for countries not implementing the reforms and result in negative reactions at the Bergen meeting.

The paragraphs in the Berlin communiqué about the stocktaking were very firm. This gives the Working Group a mandate to present the results to the Ministers in a way that is precise and clear. Such a short presentation would come in addition to the main report and give a clear overview on progress and status.

The presentation should have at least three dimensions:

1. Country (or relevant administrative level). Federative states should mainly report on the federal level.

2. The object of the stocktaking (the three priority areas and a number of sub-areas). For the purpose of the reporting to Ministers, each sub-area might be weighted to add up to the priority level.
3. Success criteria for each area/sub-area. The presentation would need to be discussed (categories, colour-coding, points etc.)

Jan Levy then gave an example of a presentation along these dimensions as a basis for discussion. For the *overall picture*, all the areas and sub-areas could be listed in the vertical column, and a synthesis of the rate of success of all countries indicated. For the purpose of the discussion in the group, he presented an example of how colour-coding could be used to indicate different success rates:

- Green:* Progress very satisfactory in most countries. Goals will most likely be reached.
- Light green:* Satisfactory progress in general, but some countries lagging behind. Goals will most likely be reached in a majority of the countries.
- Yellow:* Good progress in a number of countries, but a majority is still below a trajectory leading to completion in 2010. Corrective measures must be taken in many countries.
- Orange:* Slow progress. Most countries will have to take corrective measures. Anyhow it is unlikely that a significant part of the EHEA will reach the goals.
- Red:* No significant progress. EHEA goals will not be achieved.

By allocating a value from 5 to 1 to each stage of success, an overall performance index can be worked out both for the priority areas and as a country total. For that purpose the different areas and sub-areas should be weighted. For the synthesis report, colour-coding will reflect the score on this index. The intervals must be decided after observing the outcomes. The special situation for federal countries will have to be discussed further.

In addition, *comparative tables* can be compiled on the basis of the numerical values, comparing countries on different performance indicators. Example:

<i>NO-LAND</i>	Average	Fully im-plemented	Implement. In progress	Proposed but not decided	Discussions No proposal	No significant progress
Priority area 1	3,8		Reach goals by 2010			
Subarea 1 (40%)	5					
Subarea 2 (30%)	4					
Subarea 3 (30%)	2					
Priority area 2	2,0				Slow progress	
Subarea 1 (50%)	1					
Subarea 2 (25%)	3					
Subarea 3 (25%)	3					
Country total score (Each priority area 50%)	2,9			Need for Corrective measures		

## B. Discussion

The Chair pointed out that in addition to the Ministers, not just the media, but also countries outside Europe will be interested in the results. The need for corrective measures will be an important message. The Working Group as a whole supported the proposal to present the results of the stocktaking in the form of a “scorecard”, which is more effective than just a text description. This would help improve the media coverage in Bergen as compared with the Berlin conference. It will be important to have a media strategy to get attention. At the same time the Ministers will get the information they want, and will have a basis for looking for more details in the full report. It was felt that the proposed model met two important purposes: 1) benchmarking of the action lines 2) benchmarking of countries. It provided a nice balance, was clear and easy to understand and therefore communicable. Colour coding is a “soft” way of grading, as opposed to numerical indicators.

A discussion of details of the model followed. It was argued that different definitions are needed for the country scorecards and the overall picture respectively. The weighting etc. must be carefully considered. The country total score may be what goes into the overall diagram. It also gives the possibility of producing lists of countries if desired. However, aggregating information from the countries to the overall level will not be easy. Also, a high level of aggregation would tend to iron out differences and nuances and result in a series of average values rather than a differentiated picture.

Several speakers argued that there should be an opportunity for countries to comment on their scorecards. After some discussion it was agreed that the scorecards might be sent back to the countries, but with a predefined structure for comments. The possibility of countries trying to appear in an unmerited positive light should be eliminated as far as possible. On the other hand allowing countries to give comments would make it possible to take into account the starting-point in each case and thus the effort made, i.e. how easy or difficult it had been for the country to achieve the goals. For instance, there could be a system of stars or the like to indicate this in addition to the colour coding. The Lisbon scorecard includes this aspect.

Cynthia Deane pointed out that a scorecard would require a harmonised point scale. For instance, The Lisbon scorecard uses a four-point scale. Each category (e.g. “fully implemented”) would need a descriptor to explain what it means. The first step would be to agree on an analytical framework, including the scale; the presentation can be decided later. In drafting a framework for analysis, cf. section 3, she proposed to start working with a five-point scale.

## **5. NEXT MEETING**

The meeting in Dubrovnik on 17-18 February was confirmed, beginning in the morning of the 17<sup>th</sup> and with the opportunity of returning in the afternoon of the 18<sup>th</sup>. Mirjana Polić Bobić will send details of flights and hotels to the Working Group via the Secretariat.

A further meeting was planned for the morning of 31 March in Glasgow prior to the EUA Convention, with the possibility of a dinner the evening before. The Secretariat was asked to book a room for the meeting in a conference hotel used by members of the Working Group participating at the Convention.

## **6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was some discussion of the relationship between the stocktaking and the EUA *Trends IV* report. The consolidated list of questions for the stocktaking does not make reference to *Trends* as a source, as opposed to the ESIB student survey. The Chair made it clear that the *Trends* report will be considered at the commentary stage, as it may contain observations at variance with the stocktaking. It is important that these are reconciled in advance of the results being presented to the BFUG. *Trends* will thus not feed into the stocktaking report as such. Several speakers acknowledged this. An executive summary of the *Trends* report will be available in time for the Glasgow meeting.