

**MEETING OF THE BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP  
HELSINKI, FINLAND 12-13 OCTOBER 2006**

The meeting was held at the Wanha Satama (The Old Harbour) from 9.30 on Thursday 12 October 2006 to 13.00 on Friday 13 October 2006. A list of attendees is appended.

**1. Welcome and Introduction to meeting**

The Chair (Anita Lehtikoinen) welcomed everyone to Helsinki and to the meeting. She indicated that apologies had been received from Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Italy and Moldova.

**2. Adoption of agenda**

Documents: BFUG9 2a Draft Agenda  
BFUG9 2b Draft annotated agenda

**2.1** The agenda was adopted without comment.

**3. Minutes of the last BFUG and Board meetings**

Documents: BFUG9 3a Minutes BFUG8 6-7 April 2006  
BFUG9 3b Minutes BFUGB13 1 September 2006

**3.1** The minutes of the last BFUG were agreed. No questions were raised about the minutes of the last Board meeting.

**4. Request to join Bologna Process: Montenegro**

Documents: BFUG9 4 Request to join the Bologna Process Montenegro

**4.1** The Secretariat (Ann McVie) outlined the background to, and suggested approach, for responding to Montenegro's request to become a full member of the Bologna Process. It was agreed that Montenegro would continue to take part in the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) as an observer until re-established as a full member by Ministers at the conference in May 2007.

**4.2** The Council of Europe (Sjur Bergan) noted that Kosovo was likely to apply to join the Bologna Process. The current status of Kosovo prevented full membership, but the BFUG might wish to consider other ways in which Kosovo could participate in the Process.

**4.3** In the event of a formal application from Kosovo, it was agreed that the Secretariat should liaise with Council of Europe as appropriate over how BFUG might respond.

## **5. Board election procedure**

Documents: BFUG9 5 Procedure for election to Board

**5.1** The Secretariat (Ann McVie) explained that, following the last BFUG, the Secretariat had produced a paper clarifying the procedures for future Board elections. A minor change to the procedure was proposed, to allow current and previous Board members to re-apply for membership after two years. This would ensure a continuing pool of potential candidates. The proposed Board election procedure was agreed.

## **6. BFUG work programme: progress reports from working groups**

Documents: BFUG9 6a i Update from External Dimension  
BFUG9 6a I Report from Oslo Seminar  
BFUG9 6a ii Report from Greek Seminar  
BFUG9 6a iii Draft Report B  
BFUG9 6a iv Draft Strategy

### **6.1 Report from Greek Seminar - Athanasios Kyriazis**

Greece (Athanasios Kyriazis) gave a report on the Athens seminar on the External Dimension. The seminar was the second of three contributing to the draft External Dimension strategy on the attractiveness of the EHEA and cooperation with other parts of the world. Participants were drawn from Higher Education Ministries and Higher Education institutions (HEIs) in Bologna countries, the OECD and a number of international organisations. Recommendations included the creation of consortia for joint delivery of graduate-level study programmes with integrated mobility and the exchange of good practice and experience with other world regions on the development of higher education systems. To facilitate this, Greece had offered to host a portal to disseminate information and promote the EHEA in other parts of the world.

### **6.2 External Dimension draft strategy report and Oslo Seminar – Pavel Zgaga**

As a consultant working for the External Dimension Working Group, Pavel Zgaga joined the meeting to present his draft report. The Working Group had agreed that there should be an analytical background report as well as a strategy on the External Dimension. He briefly outlined the contents of the report, focussing on the development and importance of the External Dimension. Key issues concerned: the attractiveness of the EHEA being dependent on its distinctiveness from HE provision in other areas; the role of competitiveness in strengthening quality; the need for co-operation to be of mutual benefit and to be based on academic values; and the need for greater dissemination of information about the EHEA.

**6.3** Pavel Zgaga then reported back on the third seminar on the External Dimension, held in Oslo and hosted by the Nordic countries. It had attracted significant interest from a number of countries worldwide. The issues and

conclusions discussed included the need for: a workable strategy to be sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of different groups at different levels; inter-HEI co-operation within the EHEA; all EHEA partners at all levels to improve information flows; better understanding and use of existing recognition and transparency tools; removal of barriers to mobility; underlining the importance of the values of European HE; and principles and concrete actions to enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of the EHEA. There was also some discussion about terminology and the inappropriateness of the term “External Dimension”. However, no final conclusion had been reached on that point.

#### **6.4 External Dimension strategy – Toril Johansson**

Toril Johansson (Norway) gave an update from the External Dimension Working Group. She explained the intention to complete the work by the end of the year and thanked all group members for their contributions. Having reminded BFUG of the group’s mandate, she presented the draft strategy, which had been circulated to BFUG two days before the meeting. The strategy had to be sufficiently flexible to balance Ministerial expectations with a range of other needs. The strategy would address the promotion of, and information on, the EHEA to enhance attractiveness, competitiveness and cooperation based on partnership and mutual recognition. The WG anticipated the need to monitor implementation of the strategy and report on progress. This suggested the WG would continue to 2009 and that the External Dimension might become part of the overall Bologna Stocktaking process.

BFUG were invited to send comments in writing to Toril Johansson, copied to the Secretariat.

#### **6.5 In discussion the following points were made:**

There were mixed views on whether the strategy should contain elements that went beyond 2010. Some thought there should be a clear focus on what could realistically be achieved by 2010. Others considered the strategy should look beyond the creation of the EHEA.

More generally, there was broad agreement that the strategy should be more focused, making clearer what action was appropriate at EHEA, national and institutional level and how existing structures might best be used to further the External Dimension. It might also be helpful to delineate more clearly areas of co-operation and areas of competition. Further consideration might also be given about how student participation could be taken forward within the External Dimension.

There were concerns about how some actions in the draft strategy might be funded. In prioritising the possible actions, the focus should be on actions that could be delivered by 2010. At this stage, Ministers had not given any commitment about how to take forward the EHEA post 2010. Greater emphasis should also be given to increasing both the amount of, and consistency of, information about the Bologna Process. The starting point for this should be to examine the scope for building on existing structures, such as the Bologna website and the Bologna Handbook, recently produced by EUA.

## **6.6 It was agreed that:**

*The WG would revise the draft strategy in light on the comments made. This would include: reviewing the term “the External Dimension”; addressing the role of institutions more clearly; considering the level of ambition and the funding implications; focusing on the need for information; making clearer the balance between cooperation and competition; emphasising the role of research in European HE; and considering what elements of the strategy could be delivered by 2010.*

*Written comments on the External Dimension strategy would be sent to Toril Johansson, copied to the Secretariat, by the end of October.*

*Any comments on the EUA Bologna Handbook would be sent to EUA by the end of October.*

## **6.7 Qualifications Frameworks – Mogens Berg**

Documents: BFUG9 6b Update from Qualifications Frameworks Working Group

Mogens Berg (Denmark) updated BFUG on the work completed so far and asked for comments on the interim report. He drew particular attention to part II of the report on how the framework related to the European Commission’s proposed Qualifications Framework (EQF) and part IV on self-certification against the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA. The final report would comment on the role of international experts in the self certification process and offer some reflections on how the further development of the guidelines might be supported. The WG had not yet looked beyond 2010.

## **6.8 In discussion the following points were made:**

Short-cycle programmes made an important contribution to the lifelong learning agenda. This should be reflected both in the proposed EQF and the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA.

The regional seminars had been valuable for the exchange of experience, particularly from pilot projects. Questions remained however on how the involvement of external experts would be financed and resourced, given that it would take time for a pool of experts to develop.

It would be helpful if the final report could articulate clearly the relationship between the EQF and the Bologna Framework. Some considered it would be unfortunate if Europe were to end up with two distinct qualifications frameworks covering higher education. There might be a need to refer to this relationship in the London Communiqué.

## **6.9 It was agreed that:**

*The report would be revised to reflect the comments raised and presented again at*

*the next BFUG.*

## **6.10 Stocktaking – Andrejs Rauhvargers**

Documents: BFUG9 6c Update from Bologna Process Stocktaking Working Group

Andrejs Rauhvargers (Latvia) reported that a WG meeting had taken place the previous day. The WG had noted that Eurydice was continuing to collect country data for their Focus report, a draft executive summary of which was expected by mid-November. The Focus report, National Reports and National Action Plans for Recognition would form the basis of the stocktaking report. Information would also be drawn from EUA's Trends V survey and the ESIB survey. In this context, he reminded BFUG that the deadline for submitting National Reports, including national action plans for recognition was **15 December 2006**.

**6.11** The WG had had a first discussion of the outline for the stocktaking report. They had noted the recommendation from the Board that they should take an analytical approach and de-emphasise the 'traffic light' score card. The report would highlight the differences in criteria and indicators from the previous exercise and therefore no direct comparisons could be drawn from the previous exercise. It would also highlight the fact that the indicators were set against expectations for 2007, not 2010.

**6.12** Looking ahead, data gathering would continue to January. The WG would consider the first draft report in mid February, with a view to the draft report being available for discussion at the March BFUG. Individual scorecards would be checked prior to that. An updated timetable for the WG's work would be issued to BFUG for information. The final report could be amended as necessary to reflect updates up until the April BFUG.

### **6.13 *It was agreed that:***

*The WG would proceed with its work on the basis proposed. The Chair would liaise with the Chairs of other WG's to ensure there was no duplication of work. An updated timetable would be issued for information.*

## **6.14 Social Dimension and Data on Staff and Student Mobility – Annika Pontén**

Documents: BFUG9 6d Update from Social Dimension and Data on Staff and Student Mobility Working Group

Annika Pontén (Sweden) gave a short presentation on the WG's work, including a suggested outline for the final report. The discussion document circulated sought advice and comments from BFUG on the WG's view of the overall objectives at national level and for BFUG, and also on the content and structure of the proposed report.

**6.15** Germain Dondelinger (Luxembourg) gave an update on the data collection strand of the WG. His presentation outlined the limitations and complexities of the data available. If the data gaps were to be addressed, current findings suggested it would be necessary to appoint an international organisation with suitable expertise to take this forward. The implications of this, including the financial consequences, would be considered over the next few months. Current findings also suggested that the “traditional” approach to stocktaking would not be appropriate for the social dimension.

In discussion the following points were made:

EUA (Roderick Floud) suggested the proposed objective for the social dimension could not be achieved by higher education alone. He suggested wording to change the emphasis to access ‘HE should be open at all levels to all citizens...’

ESIB (Nina Gustafsson Åberg) was keen to keep the objective to encourage governments to take responsibility for widening student participation and increasing retention. It might be possible to identify common indicators on the financial support available to students across all 45 countries. Countries could benefit from WG guidance on how to develop National Action plans, which should be followed-up by BFUG.

EI (Monique Fouilhoux) supported of the need for continuing work on staff mobility, as so little work had been done on this area thus far. It was hoped that the Bologna seminar on staff and student mobility taking place in London on 8/9 February 2007 would be a useful step forward in this regard.

There was broad support for the approach being suggested by the WG. Factors to consider included the fact that some of topics highlighted were outwith the scope of HE Ministers.

**6.16 *It was agreed that:***

*There was broad support for the suggested strategic approach, subject to some further refinement of the overall objective. The WG would only rely on data collected by international organisations. The strategy should focus on the policy remit of Higher Education Ministers. Further consideration of stocktaking in this area would only be possible once comparable data were available.*

**6. 17 Portability of Grants and Loans – Aldrik in ’t Hout**

Documents: BFUG9 6e i Update from Portability working Group  
BFUG9 6e ii Portability Working Group Terms of Reference

**6. 18** Aldrik in ’t Hout (the Netherlands) gave an update and presentation on the work of the group looking at the portability of grants and loans. He reminded BFUG of its remit and work timetable. Three sub-groups had been formed to collect information on the role of EU Law, current systems and good practice. Emerging conclusions suggested EU Law was relatively neutral towards portability. A questionnaire had been used to gather basic data on current systems. This

suggested that, while they were different, there were a number of similarities. At the same time, good practice was being identified from the countries that already had portable systems. Current findings suggested the WG would conclude that: a residency requirement was essential for portability; key organisations should be identified in each country, to facilitate the sharing of information; there was a need to explore further data protection issues; and the main concern was to avoid the potential for double funding. BFUG were asked for any comments on the four draft recommendations.

In discussion the following points were made:

The WG had not made any distinction between grants and loans. It was up to each country to decide on the mix of support.

It was recognised that while portable grants and loans would contribute to mobility, it was not the only necessary component.

#### **6.19 *It was agreed that:***

*There would be a further update on the progress of the WG to the January Board.*

### **7. BFUG work programme: London Communiqué**

Documents: BFUG9 7 London Communiqué and update on conference

**7.1** The UK (Rachel Green) introduced the paper on the London Communiqué and preparations for the London conference, suggesting BFUG consider each aspect in turn.

#### **Communiqué Drafting Group: composition and timetable**

**7.2** The Chair asked for comments on the drafting group membership and timetable first.

#### **7.3 *It was agreed that:***

*The Communiqué drafting group would comprise the membership and structure proposed. Active communication between WG Chairs and the Communiqué Drafting Group would be encouraged.*

### **London Conference**

**7.4** Rachel Green went on to update BFUG on progress with plans for the London Conference. Suggestions would be welcomed for effective facilitators for the panel sessions to discuss the key characteristics of the EHEA.

In discussion the following points were made:

There was a need to resolve quickly how best consultative members might contribute to both the plenary and the panel sessions. It would be important to allow time for Ministers to make meaningful contributions and take part in

both plenary and panel discussions.

ESIB sought and received an assurance that the inclusion of students would be on the same basis as Bergen.

The media would be invited to the event, as before.

#### **7.5 It was agreed that:**

*The UK would reflect on the comments made. In particular, consideration would be given about how best to involve the consultative members and ensure countries could report progress in an appropriate way.*

### **London Communiqué**

**7.6** Rachel Green invited an open discussion on possible priorities for the London Communiqué, bearing in mind that it should be both ambitious and realistic. It was suggested that the Communiqué should be short and focussed on the progress made against the priorities set out in the Bergen Communiqué, closely following the agreed Work Programme for 2005-2007.

In discussion the following points were made:

There was general agreement on the suggested approach. There was a need to avoid new priorities beyond what could be achieved by 2010. This was particularly relevant for the newer members. There should be considerable focus on the role of the academic community in the Process. Progress should be shown against the original Action Lines, underlining the emphasis on implementation and consolidation, without anticipating any specific developments or support structures that might be required after 2010.

The proximity of 2009 to 2010 made it important to consider how we might prepare for the creation of the EHEA. This could include commenting on the values on which the EHEA might be based and anticipating stocktaking for 2010. There might also be a need to reflect on how the EHEA might develop after 2010, without taking any final decisions.

The language of the Communiqué should be both clear and inspirational. There should be significant emphasis on what has been achieved as a consequence of the Bologna Process.

#### **7.7 It was agreed that:**

*The Secretariat would draw on the discussion to prepare a first draft for discussion at the first meeting of the Communiqué Drafting Group. This draft would try to keep an appropriate balance between celebrating achievement, focusing on implementation and setting out vision for the future.*

### **8. BFUG work programme: topics for discussion**

Joint degrees/European Dimension – Draft Report from German seminar

**8.1** On behalf of DAAD, Lesley Wilson (EUA) gave feedback from the recent Joint Degrees seminar. There appeared to be a great deal of interest from institutions across Europe in developing joint study programmes, although there was less demand from students at this stage. The seminar had focused in particular on legal definitions of joint programmes of study or joint degrees. Recommendations included suggesting there should be incentives for institutions, as set up and implementation costs could be extensive. There was a need for continuing work in a number of areas, including improving visa processes, recognition and quality assurance processes. A common definition of a joint degree might also be helpful.

In discussion the following points were made:

There had not been enough time to discuss the conclusions at the event. Since the event, there had only been limited circulation of the draft conclusions. Translations would have helped where English was not the first language.

France (Eric Froment) suggested that currently joint degrees were being perceived as the only aspect of the European Dimension. It might be useful to have a wider discussion about the European Dimension within BFUG.

Germany (Birgit Galler) reported an administrative error had meant the recommendations were issued to BFUG, before they had been agreed by seminar participants, and invited comments from any BFUG members who had attended.

**8.2 *It was agreed that:***

*The proposal to discuss the European Dimension might be taken up at the BFUG spring meeting.*

**8.3 **Employability – feedback from UK seminar****

The UK (Rachel Green) gave a brief account of the seminar that took place in Swansea University. The subject was an important part of the Bologna Process and the event had been well attended. The main messages arising from the seminar concerned the importance of universities working with employers to help make generic transferable skills clear within curricula and the need for more effective career guidance in institutions.

In discussion the following points were made:

EURASHE (Stefan Delplace) advised that Eurashe had had to defer their plans to undertake a survey on employability. This was now however going ahead and the results would be available next spring.

As President of the EU, Finland was organising a seminar in November on lifelong learning policies and career planning as routes to employability.

## **9. Candidates for 2009 Ministerial Conference – vote**

Documents: BFUG9 9a	Candidates to host 2009 conference: voting procedure
BFUG9 9i	Benelux expression of interest
BFUG9 9ii	Croatia expression of interest
BFUG9 9iii	Slovak Republic expression of interest

**9.1** The Secretariat (Ann McVie) confirmed that the Ministers of the countries concerned had agreed the suggested voting procedure. Following the outcome of the vote, the Chair of BFUG would write to the Ministers of the countries concerned. This would have the effect of the two countries receiving the least votes withdrawing their offer to host the 2009 Ministerial conference.

**9.2** Germany (Birgit Galler) and Greece (Foteini Asderaki) volunteered to be Tellers to oversee the count by the Secretariat. Members of BFUG with the exception of those bidding to host the event (Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands; Croatia; and the Slovak Republic), took part in a secret ballot.

**9.3** Later, the Chair (Finland) announced the result of the vote. A total of seventy six votes were cast of which thirty seven were for the invitation from Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands; twenty nine for that from Croatia and eight for that from the Slovak Republic.

**9.4** The Chair would write to the Ministers responsible for higher education in Croatia and the Slovak Republic to invite each to withdraw the offer to host the Ministerial Conference in 2009 in view of the results of the vote. This would enable Ministers at next year's meeting in London to confirm the Benelux countries as the joint hosts and providers of the Bologna Secretariat for two years from July 2007.

## **10. BFUG work programme: topics for discussion**

Possible arrangements for supporting the EHEA post 2010

Documents: BFUG9 10 Initial discussion on possible arrangements for supporting the EHEA post 2010

**10.1** Drawing on discussions at Board meetings in June and September about how BFUG might fulfil the Ministers' request at Bergen to "explore the issues" surrounding the arrangements to support the continuing development of the EHEA beyond 2010, the Secretariat (Ann McVie) suggested BFUG agreed the recommendation to retain the current informal approach, but to keep it under review as 2010 approached.

In discussion the following points were made:

Rather than looking at possible structures in isolation, there was a need to consider what the EHEA might look like in 2010 and develop an appropriate support structure. This might be informed by stocktaking that suggested that progress was not being made consistently across all Bologna countries. In

future, there might therefore be a greater need for sharing expertise and capacity building. Ministers would however have to set the strategic direction and agree principles on which further developments should be based. New goals would be needed, but at the right time.

There was a need to consider how the transition from the Bologna Process to the European Higher Education Area could best be made. This would include deciding how to react if stocktaking for 2010 showed that a number of countries had yet to implement or achieve key goals of the Process. Options could range from deciding that all countries of the Bologna Process would automatically become members of the EHEA; deciding that all countries would become members but that assistance would be offered to those that had not yet achieved all the key goals; or deciding that only those who had achieved the key goals could become members of the EHEA in the first instance. It would be important to consider the range of possible options prior to 2010.

There was widespread recognition that current informal, flexible approach had served the Process very well. Some thought that the London Communiqué might give BFUG a mandate to explore options for supporting the continuing development of the EHEA after 2010. There could, for example, be other ways in which the EHEA might be supported beyond those described in the Secretariat's paper.

The Council of Europe (Sjur Bergan) commented that BFUG had adopted different voting rules for the elections to the Board and hosting of the 2009 Ministerial conference. In his view, this suggested there was a need for a more structured way of transmitting the institutional memory of the Process.

It might be helpful to take stock of the progress made by undertaking an external evaluation of achievement of the Bologna goals, involving all stakeholders.

The primary focus at this stage should be on completing the goals set in 1999. It was important not to get side tracked from implementing the agreed goals by looking ahead to the next stage too early.

## **10.2 It was agreed that:**

*The topic of how the Process might develop and be supported beyond 2010 would be considered further in the context of drafting the London Communiqué.*

## **11. BFUG work programme: progress reports from projects**

European register of Quality Assurance Agencies

Documents: BFUG9 11a E4 report  
BFUG9 11b Annex to E4 report

**11.1** ENQA (Peter Williams) presented the E4 interim report on the Register of European Quality Assurance Agencies. BFUG were asked to consider the interim

report and proposed register model; the implications of setting up a register on the basis proposed; whether the organisational structure and implied bureaucracy would be acceptable; and offer advice on funding and procedures for revision of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).

In discussion the following points were made:

There were concerns that the suggested funding and bureaucracy looked too complicated, and a steer that the Register should be self financing.

There was a need for a clearer explanation of the relationship between the Register and ENQA. Many commented on the need to capitalise on the existing ENQA procedures and queried what the added value of the Register would be. The role of national authorities and reviews should also be clarified.

There was general support that any Register should be selective, rather than inclusive. An inclusive categorised register could provoke false claims and legal dispute.

It would be important to have a clear user-friendly Register to improve recognition and avoid bureaucracy. The Register should be based on a partnership approach, in line with the spirit of the Bologna Process. The costs of the Register would be modest, against assuring the quality of higher education for the significant number of students studying in Europe.

There was a need to clarify the position of QA agencies based outwith Europe. Inclusion on the Register should be as simple as possible and open to non EU agencies.

### **11.2 It was agreed that:**

*There was general support for a selective Register. There were however still a number of legal and funding implications to be resolved, before E4 could complete its mandate to explore the practicalities of implementing a European Register of Quality Assurance Agencies.*

## **12. BFUG work programme: progress reports from projects**

Principles for doctoral programmes

Documents: BFUG9 13 Update from EUA on Doctoral programmes Project  
BFUG9 13i EUA Funding Questionnaire  
BFUG9 13ii EUA Invitation to Nice Seminar

EUA (Lesley Wilson) gave a presentation to update BFUG on the Doctoral Programmes project, referring to the agreed Terms of Reference for this project.

**12.1** Due to the paucity of information about the organisation and funding of doctoral studies across Europe and the variety of approaches, EUA had concluded

that they had no option but to issue a questionnaire to BFUG members. Responses were invited by 10 November 2006. As some members had not received the questionnaire it would be sent out again from the Secretariat.

**12.2** The seminar in Nice in December would discuss the issues that had been raised by universities over the past year. These included the question of Masters leading to Doctorate; mobility at Doctorate level; what were professional Doctorates and were they needed; and the post Doctorate academic career. BFUG members were invited to register for the event from the EUA website.

### **13. Any other business**

Documents: BFUG9 14a Update from Council Europe  
BFUG9 14b Update from EURASHE  
BFUG9 14c Update from Education International  
BFUG9 14d Update from ENQA  
BFUG9 14e Update from UNICE  
BFUG9 14f Update from ESIB  
BFUG9 14g Update from UNESCO-CEPES  
BFUG9 14h Update from European Commission

**13.1** The Chair invited BFUG to email any comments and questions to the Secretariat on the Consultative Members' papers. It was noted that the update from the EC would be circulated shortly.

**Date of next Board meeting (BFUGB14) – 23 January 2007, Berlin.**

**Date of next BFUG meeting (BFUG10) – 5-6 March 2007, Berlin.**

**Date of following BFUG meeting (BFUG11) – 17-18 April 2007, Berlin.**

Yvonne Clarke  
Bologna Secretariat