

Minutes of the Bologna Board Meeting

Helsinki 1 September 2006

The meeting was held at the Finnish Ministry of Education Helsinki on Friday 1 September 2006 from 9.00 to 15.30. A list of participants is appended.

Apologies had been received from Toril Johansson (External Dimension); Aldrik in 't Hout (Portability of Grants and Loans) and Sjur Bergan (Council of Europe). Andrejs Rauhvargers was representing the Council of Europe on this occasion.

1. Welcome and adoption of agenda

Documents BFUGB13 1a Draft agenda
BFUGB13 1b Draft annotated agenda

1.1 The agenda was adopted with the EU Commission's request to be named separately under item 11.

2. Minutes of the last BFUG and Board meetings

Documents BFUGB13 2 Minutes of the Board meeting 13 June 2006

2.1 The minutes of the last Board meeting were approved with an information point on the International Dimension from Germany. There would be no higher education event in China during the German Presidency.

3. Review of Bologna Work Programme

Documents: BFUGB13 3a Working Group on Social Dimension and Data on mobility of staff and students
BFUGB13 3b Update on Portability of Grants and Loans Working Group
BFUGB13 3c Self-certification of national qualifications frameworks
BFUGB13 3d Report of the E4 Group on Quality Assurance
BFUGB13 3e External Dimension meeting note 12 June 2006 and provisional agenda for meeting on 4 September 2006

3.1 In this item, the Chair suggested discussion should focus on how the Working Groups might contribute to the London Communiqué.

3.2 Updates from the Portability and External Dimension working groups were presented as papers only, as the Chairs were not present at the meeting. There was no activity to report under the International Dimension agenda item.

External Dimension

3.3 Denmark (Mogens Berg), as a member of the External Dimension Working Group, gave a short report of recent progress. The Working Group report by Professor Zgaga had been circulated two days previously and would be discussed at the next seminar in Oslo at the end of September. This would be followed by a strategy paper for presentation to BFUG in October.

3.4 In discussion the following points were made:

It would be important to develop realistic, but not overly ambitious, proposals. The main focus of the external dimension strategy should be on providing information about the Bologna Process.

There was some concern that developing a common European brand for HE would undermine the diversity of HE in Europe. There was also a question as to the extent and source of funding that would be required to support proposals.

Latvia (Andrejs Rauhvargers) underlined the importance of increasing international recognition of degrees awarded by European universities.

It was agreed that:

It would be important to circulate the draft External Dimension strategy in good time, to enable a useful discussion at BFUG in October.

Stocktaking – Andrejs Rauhvargers

3.5 Latvia (Andrejs Rauhvargers) gave a report on the Stocktaking Working Group. The next meeting would take place on 11 October, at which there would be a preliminary discussion about the format of the stocktaking report. It was expected that the previous format would largely be used, but there was concern about the over emphasis placed on the 'traffic lights'. It was hoped that the text of the report would have greater weight.

3.6 Eurydice was still gathering data for its Focus report. Information was still required from Azerbaijan, 'the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia' and the Holy See. Parts of the reports from Russia and Croatia remained incomplete. While acknowledging the challenges involved in gathering the data, there were some concerns, particularly about the delays in the newer countries providing the information requested. The Secretariat was thanked for circulating the papers and chasing responses from countries outside the Eurydice network.

It was agreed that:

The stocktaking report should be analytical and the text of the report should have greater importance than in the previous exercise. The aim should be

that the traffic lights were not the only element noticed within the report. .

Social Dimension and Data on Mobility of Staff and Students – Annika Pontén

3.7 Sweden (Annika Pontén) presented a summary of Working Group discussions in April on the social dimension side. The Data sub-group had not reported yet. The group was aware of the need for progress on the social dimension to be seen in the context of the country concerned. This suggested the “traditional” approach to stocktaking would not be appropriate for the social dimension. Rather, the group was likely to take a more strategic approach to developing the social dimension, recommending that data collection should continue.

3.8 In the meantime, the collection of data on mobility and social dimension was continuing. An inventory of existing data had identified gaps where more work needed to be done. Eurydice results were available, but timing of data collection by various groups would prevent the delivery of much data before 2008.

3.9 It was a major challenge for the group to develop a policy for two such large issues. The Working Group would however continue to take its work forward at its next meeting in Stockholm on 11-12 September 2006. The final report would be ready for discussion at BFUG before the Ministers met in London.

3.10 In discussion the following points were made:

ESIB (Nina Gustafsson Åberg) raised a concern about how countries would be encouraged to make progress, if stocktaking was not envisaged. The need for progress in this area would however continue to be highlighted and data collection would continue.

There would be a need to explain to Ministers why traditional stocktaking was not considered to be appropriate, given their request for this to be explored in the Bergen Communiqué.

There was general support for taking a strategic approach. This might include asking countries to develop their own strategy, in line with national priorities, drawing on good practice from others. However, in any such work, it would be important to minimise the reporting burden on countries.

It was agreed that:

The Working Group should continue its work, developing a strategic approach to the social dimension and continuing with data collection.

Portability of Grants and Loans

3.11 EUA (Lesley Wilson) passed on a request for the Working Group to include the third cycle issue as part of the work programme.

National qualifications frameworks – Mogens Berg

3.12 Denmark (Mogens Berg) gave an update on the national qualifications seminars. The programme had started in the Netherlands at the end of June and the Eastern European region would be next on 4 September in Budapest. A good range of representatives had taken part in the first event.

3.13 A query had arisen about whether the self certification procedure had been adopted by Ministers in Bergen. The Board was asked for a view.

3.14 In discussion the following points were made:

There was no dissent from the suggestion that Ministers had agreed the criteria and procedure for self certification against the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA.

The increasing number of points of interpretation being raised on Communiqués suggested the London Communiqué should be as clear as possible.

It was agreed that:

The Board supported the view that Ministers had agreed the self certification criteria and procedures as part of their overall endorsement of the report on the qualifications framework. There was no need to refer the matter to the full BFUG.

ENQA – Register of QA Agencies – Peter Williams

3.16 ENQA (Peter Williams) reported that two E4 meetings had taken place since the last Board meeting in June. Bastian Baumann had produced a useful report in the time available, based on interviews with stakeholder groups in the Bologna Process. Drawing on this, E4 had identified a possible model for the Register. There were two schools of thought on the register: it could interact as basic information tool, listing all applicant agencies, or only list those that the Register Committee found to comply substantially with the criteria of the European Standards and Guidelines. The purposes, as outlined in the paper and as amended following the most recent E4 meeting, would result in the Register Committee acting in an accreditation role. The dominant view in E4 was that the Register could serve a useful function in reducing opportunities for bogus institutions and bogus accreditations agencies to operate within the EHEA.

3.17 E4 had agreed at the last meeting to produce an interim report for BFUG. The report would explain the background to the proposed model for the register, the alternatives discussed, and the implications of setting up a register on the basis proposed. Bastian Baumann's report would be attached

as an Annex. BFUG would be invited to give a steer on the way forward.

3.18 In discussion the following points were raised:

EUA (Lesley Wilson) explained that EUA was supportive of a register model which only listed agencies which were substantially compliant with the criteria of the European Standards and Guidelines. Either form of register would require a form of European Register Committee.

The proposed register should clearly increase trust and understanding amongst QA agencies, or add value to arrangements already in place. This suggested the need for careful scrutiny of the costs and benefits, before any decision was taken to proceed.

It was agreed that:

The interim report and proposal for BFUG should be available by the end of September, to facilitate a full discussion at the October meeting.

EUA – Principles of Doctoral Programmes – Lesley Wilson

3.19 EUA (Lesley Wilson) thanked the Finnish Ministry for hosting the Steering Committee meeting the day before. The timing of the meeting had prevented EUA producing a written report. The content of Doctoral Programmes had been discussed, as one strand of the project. Work was also under way to develop the programme for the Nice seminar.

3.20 issues from recent discussions included: the role of the Masters and how it related to PhD level; researcher careers and post doctoral studies; and what professional doctorates were. Recurring issues included supervision, skills training and Doctoral/PhD schools and the financing of Doctoral programmes. EUA were looking to collaborate with OECD research into financing doctoral programmes. A consultant from OECD was gathering and preparing information for a questionnaire on funding of doctorates for issue to BFUG by beginning of October.

4. Bologna seminar – request from Germany

Documents: BFUGB13 4 German proposal for a Bologna Seminar on quality assurance

4.1 Germany (Peter Greisler) outlined the background to Germany's request to add a further seminar on quality assurance to the official Bologna Work Programme. The seminar would take place on 15 and 16 February 2007, with the intention of facilitating discussion about the European register and its consequences for national authorities. The seminar would take into account the outcome of the E4 Quality Forum taking place in Munich in November. All members of E4 had agreed to take part in the event.

4.2 In discussion the following points were made:

There was general recognition that the event could make a useful contribution to the debate on quality. However, there was reluctance to amend the Work Programme which had been agreed some time ago. The event could however be advertised on the Bologna website and BFUG members invited to take part.

It was agreed that:

The seminar would provide a useful opportunity for further discussion about quality issues. Feedback from the seminar would be considered along with E4's report to BFUG from the Quality Forum.

5. Preparation for London

Documents: BFUGB13 5 Conference of Ministers responsible for HE

5.1 The UK (Rachel Green) gave a brief update on preparation for the conference and preparations for the Communiqué Drafting Group. Letters had been sent to all BFUG Ministers and copied to the London Embassies to bring the event and the dates to their attention. A formal invitation would follow at a later date.

5.2 BFUG would be asked to agree the membership and timetable for the Communiqué Drafting Group at the October meeting. The intention would be to keep the Communiqué as short and realistic as possible. BFUG members would be asked to keep in touch with their Ministers as the Communiqué developed, to avoid last minute surprises. It would be important to focus on implementing agreements already made, as we approach 2010, rather than adding new commitments. An open discussion on the possible contents of the Communiqué was hoped for in October, to allow all BFUG members to contribute. Thereafter, the working group would prioritise the suggested topics and develop a draft for subsequent discussion at BFUG.

5.3 In discussion the following points were made:

There was general agreement on the main topics for the Communiqué and on the need for it to reflect the outcome of Stocktaking.

It was possible that individual Ministers might want to present reports of achievement and good practice in the Bologna Process. Georgia (Lela Maisuradze) had been asked to raise this point on behalf of her Minister. Time would be very tight at the event. Written progress reports might be preferable.

The Communiqué should be specific and strategic. It should avoid adding new action lines for the Process and concentrate on pursuing existing commitments in the run up to 2010.

It was agreed that:

BFUG would be asked to agree the membership of and timetable for the Communiqué Drafting Group and be invited to comment on the contents of the London Communiqué.

6. Possible arrangements for supporting the EHEA post 2010

Documents: BFUGB13 6 Possible arrangements for supporting the continuing development of the EHEA post 2010.

6.1 The Chair introduced the paper on possible arrangements for supporting the EHEA after 2010.

6.2 In discussion the following points were made:

It was helpful to raise this important issue now and open discussion at BFUG. It was however recognised that it was far too early to reach any firm conclusion. Other issues would take priority while the Bologna Process was ongoing.

It was agreed that:

There would be an initial discussion at BFUG in October on how the EHEA might be supported after 2010, but no final conclusion should be reached at this stage. The Secretariat would produce a paper for this purpose.

7. AEGEE – possible request to join BFUG

Documents: BFUGB13 7 AEGEE request to become a consultative member of BFUG

7.1 The Secretariat (Ann McVie) advised that AEGEE had made an informal approach to join BFUG some months ago. In the intervening period, the Secretariat had prepared an initial evaluation against the criteria for BFUG membership. AEGEE had however recently contacted the Secretariat again, advising that they did not want to pursue consultative membership. The organisation would work closely with ESIB and other European student groups on projects to promote European Higher Education and the Bologna Process.

8. Voting procedure for Board elections

Documents: BFUGB13 8 Election procedures for BFUG Board members

8.1 Following the last BFUG, the Secretariat had revised the paper describing the Board voting procedure, in an attempt to clear the misunderstandings which had arisen at that meeting. In producing the revised paper, advice had been sought from Sjur Bergan (CoE) and Cornelia Racké on Bologna protocol. A minor change to the procedure was being proposed, to allow current and previous Board members to re-apply for membership after two years.

It was agreed that:

The election procedure as drafted would be adopted and posted on the Bologna secretariat website for information.

9. Voting procedure for country to host 2009 conference

Documents: BFUGB13 9a issues concerning voting on the venue for the 2009 Ministerial conference of the Bologna Process
BFUGB13 9b voting on the venue for the 2009 Ministerial conference

9.1 The Board considered the papers on the voting procedure to be used to identify who would host the 2009 event.

9.2 The Chair reminded the Board about the course of events that led the countries concerned to suggest the vote take place at the next BFUG meeting in October in Helsinki. It was desirable to agree a straightforward voting procedure in good time and to notify Ministers of when and how it would take place. Once agreed, the Secretariat would prepare a draft a letter in the next week for issue to the applicant countries, seeking their agreement to the procedure.

9.3 In discussion the following points were made:

It was suggested that an example voting paper should be included in the paper describing the procedure.

It would be important for BFUG members to liaise with their Ministers to agree authority to vote on their behalf.

It was agreed that:

To facilitate this, there would not be any presentations made at BFUG. The original bids would however be re-circulated for information. The voting procedure would be re-drafted to include the comments from the Board and re-circulated for any further comments, before being issued to the applicant countries.

10. Draft agenda for BFUG9 – 12-13 October 2006

Documents: BFUGB13 10 (draft agenda)

10.1 A few changes and additions to the agenda were proposed. The election would be moved to the second day and would include the election of tellers.

10.2 Consultative members would present written papers in advance and would not present oral updates at BFUG. This would allow extra time for discussions on the Communiqué and other more substantial topics.

10.3 Topics for discussion on the work programme would include feedback from the External Dimension seminars in Athens and Oslo.

It was agreed that:

The draft BFUG agenda would be adopted with suggested amendments.

11. Updates from consultative members

EURASHE – Andreas Orphanides

11.1 In accordance with the Constitution of EURASHE, Lars Lynge Nielsen (Denmark) is the Acting President of EURASHE for the next two years. Vice-President Andreas Orphanides will represent EURASHE in the BFUG and on the Board.

Forthcoming events:

European Forum for Quality Assurance – Munich 23-25 November 2006

EURASHE Seminar on short cycle HE 'involvement of stakeholders in SCHE – Stuttgart (provisional) February 2007

EURASHE Seminar on institutional QA in professional HE (in cooperation with other E4 members) – Brussels (provisional) March 2007

EURASHE Conference – Copenhagen 25-27 April 2007

Council of Europe – Andrejs Rauhauvargers

11.2 A report was given of forthcoming and events that had taken place since the last meeting of BFUG:

11.3 The Forum on the Responsibility of Higher Education for Democratic Culture, took place in Strasbourg on 22-23 June; around half of the participants were from the US which provided an opportunity to network outside the EU.

11.4 Two forthcoming Ministerial conferences on HE reform for different country groups:

Ministerial Conference on reforming HE in South East Europe – Strasbourg 27-28 November 2006

Ministerial Conference on reforming HE in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – Strasbourg 12-13 December 2006

EUA – Lesley Wilson

11.5 The Bologna Handbook had been published and distributed to subscribers. EUA (Lesley Wilson) thanked the Secretariat for support with a contribution to a newsletter which would accompany handbook updates and sent out every three months.

11.6 EUA proposed to commission another Bologna Promoters event following the very successful event in Edinburgh which was very helpful for non-Socrates countries.

Other events mentioned included:

EUA/US Global Summit on Graduate Schools -

Salzburg, Austria, 3-6 September 2006

Transatlantic Dialogue Meeting

Cooperation between Europe, the United States and Canada -

Barcelona, Spain, 6-9 October 2006

4th EUA Convention of Higher Education Institutions -

Lisbon, Portugal, 29-31 March 2007

ESIB – Nina Gustafsson Åberg

11.7 ESIB (Nina Gustafsson Åberg) reported that Bologna Process training had taken place in Slovenia.

11.8 The Presidency and Board members would be welcome to attend the ESIB convention in Helsinki. The Chair would look forward to the event.

11.9 The ESIB publication 'Bologna through student eyes' continued to make good progress. An online interface had been developed for students to reply to questionnaires more promptly.

EU Commission – Peter van der Hijden

11.10 The EU Commission (Peter van der Hijden) gave an update on the 2006 project call; 53 countries had applied which was an increase of 83% on the previous year; 20 projects had been selected which included the London 2007 Ministerial conference and support for the EUA post 2010.

11.11 ERASMUS MUNDUS and ENIC NARIC had received support for training courses for evaluators.

11.12 The Bergen to London paper would be updated to include a list of all the new projects including Tempus for countries outside the EU.

12. Any other business

12.1 The position of Montenegro had been discussed at the last Board meeting. It had been agreed that Montenegro would continue to take part in BFUG, but not as a full member. Full membership of BFUG would be re-established by Ministers at the conference in London in 2007. This concurs with the approach international organisations and countries are taking towards Montenegro. The BFUG representative for Montenegro would be informed of the situation.

13. Date and place of next meetings

12-13 October 2006
23 January 2007
5-6 March 2007

BFUG9 Helsinki, Finland
BFUGB14 (Board), Berlin Germany
BFUG10 Berlin (note change to dates)

Yvonne Clarke
Bologna Secretariat