

BFUG(SI)13_11.2

26 February 2008

Working group on employability

1. The group comprises the following members: Austria, Belgium/French Community, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Poland, Spain, United Kingdom (Chair), as well as BUSINESSEUROPE, Education International, ESU, EUA. EURASHE, UNESCO-CEPES, Bologna Secretariat.
2. The objective of this group is to provide a report to ministers for the 2009 Bologna conference on how to improve employability in relation to each of the three cycles (but with a particular emphasis on graduates with Bachelor degree), and in the context of lifelong learning.
3. The group has met twice, on 31 October 2007 and on 1 February 2008 in London.
4. In its first meeting, the group reviewed and agreed terms of reference. It was agreed that the report to Ministers should not be prescriptive but should help to extend understanding of the meaning of the concept of employability and provide practical examples of good practice from a range of areas but in particular in relation to Bachelor degrees. In order to inform the work of the group, individual members of the group agreed to contact a number of Bologna countries to conduct short informal surveys, covering the following questions:
 - What are the main challenges for your country in terms of employability? (eg Is graduate unemployment a problem? Are there restrictions on access to certain jobs? Is there a careers and guidance service?) What would help you most as an output from this working group?
 - Is there a dialogue in your country between higher education institutions and employers? If so, at what level does this take place – national, regional, institutional etc? What sort of issues does it cover?
 - Can you provide two examples of good practice in your country in relation to any of the themes to be covered by the report?

The survey produced information about some 19 countries and work is in hand to get information from as many countries as possible to ensure that the eventual report of the group responds to identified needs.

5. The group confirmed that a seminar on employability would be held in November, hosted by Luxembourg.

6. In its second meeting, the group examined the main challenges identified in the short country surveys and recommendations arising. The members discussed the structure of the group's report to ministers for the 2009 Bologna conference and agreed that the first draft of the report was to be considered in the group's third meeting.

7. The group revised a question for stocktaking proposed by the working group on stocktaking, and suggest two additional questions. These suggestions were fed back to the working group on stocktaking.

8. The group discussed the programme for the seminar on employability to take place in Luxembourg and identified the following objectives: to improve communication between higher education institutions and employers; to build up mutual trust; to raise awareness among employers (but also higher education institutions and students) that bachelor graduates are employable.

9. The third meeting is scheduled to take place in early July in Berlin.