

*From London to Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve
Report on the Work Programme of the Bologna Follow-up Group
2007-2009*

Benelux Bologna Secretariat
April 2009

Benelux Bologna Secretariat

Bologna Secretariat
H. Conscience Building
Koning Albert II-laan 15
B-1210 Brussels (Belgium)
T +32 2 553 98 09
F +32 2 553 98 45
E-mail: secr@bologna2009benelux.org
Website: www.bologna2009benelux.org

Secretariat team:

Head of Secretariat:

Marlies Leegwater - the Netherlands

General Coordination:

Marie-Anne Persoons - Belgium/Flemish Community

Advisers:

Cornelia Racké - Luxembourg

Françoise Bourdon - Belgium/French Community

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I. INTRODUCTION

With the Berlin Communiqué of 19 September 2003 the Ministers of the countries participating in the Bologna Process entrusted the implementation of the Bologna Process action lines, the steering of the Bologna Process and the preparation of the next ministerial meeting to a *Follow-up Group*. A *Board* was to oversee the work between the meetings and the overall follow-up work would be supported by a *Secretariat* provided for by the country hosting the next Ministerial Conference.

At their London meeting in May 2007, Ministers agreed that the next ministerial meeting would be hosted by the Benelux countries in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve in April 2009.

Consequently, a transnational Bologna Secretariat was set up. The Flemish and French Communities of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg each appointed one member to the Bologna Secretariat for the period 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2009. In this period four countries held the Bologna Process Presidency:

- Portugal – 2nd half of 2007
- Slovenia – 1st half of 2008
- France – 2nd half of 2008
- Czech Republic – 1st half of 2009

The representative of Luxembourg acted as Vice-Chair.

One of the main tasks of the Secretariat was to assist the subsequent Chairs and the members of the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) and the BFUG Board in the follow-up work for the period July 2007 to June 2009 – including planning of activities and following up on BFUG decisions; supporting Bologna working groups and carrying out any special tasks concerning the implementation of the work programme.,

II. BOLOGNA ACTION LINES

With the 2007 London Communiqué the Ministers in charge of Higher Education in the Bologna Process countries reaffirmed their commitment to completing the agreed action lines with a view to creating the European Higher Education Area and identified a number of priority areas for the following two years. Taking this as a starting point, the Bologna Follow-up Group at its meeting in Lisbon (Portugal) on 2-3 October 2007 agreed upon a work programme for the period 2007-2009. It integrated the proposals put forward by countries and organisations participating in the Bologna Process for follow-up activities at European level in the areas where the London Communiqué had identified a need for further action. Next to seminars and conferences, the BFUG also set up a number of working, coordination or steering groups on specific issues. At the end of the working period, the reports and recommendations of the various groups were endorsed by the BFUG as a whole and fed into the preparations for the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Ministerial Conference.

The following chapters provide an overview of the activities that were carried out per action line, highlighting the main conclusions and recommendations. More detailed information on the groups' activities and the seminars can be found on the Web pages mentioned.

1. Mobility

“Promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement” was already a commitment of the signatory parties to the Bologna Declaration in 1999.

The London Communiqué asked for actions to be taken at national level to promote the mobility of students and staff by tackling issues relating to immigration, recognition, financial incentives and pension arrangements. It also encouraged an increase in the number of joint programmes and the creation of flexible curricula; it urged higher education institutions to take greater responsibility for a more equitably balanced mobility within the EHEA.

At European level, Education International (EI) and the European Students’ Union (ESU) jointly organised the mobility campaign “Let’s Go”¹ in order to provide information on the benefits of mobility while promoting the removal of barriers to mobility.

Moreover, a series of *Bologna Seminars* were held to further promote work in the area of mobility:

- ◆ “Fostering student mobility: next Steps? Involving the stakeholders for an improved mobility inside the EHEA”, Brussels (Belgium), 29-30 May 2008, organised by the French Community of Belgium.²
- ◆ “Penalized for Being Mobile? National Pension Schemes as an Obstacle to Mobility for Researchers in the European Higher Education Area”, Berlin (Germany), 12-13 June 2008, hosted by the German Rectors’ Conference (HRK) and financed by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).³
- ◆ “Let’s Go! – Where To Now?”, Lille (France), 6-7 October 2008, validation conference organised by Education International and the European Students’ Union.⁴
- ◆ “The Europe of Higher Education: Strengthening Pan-European Mobility”, Nancy (France), 4-5 November 2008, organised by France.⁵
- ◆ “Joint Programmes and student mobility” organized by organised by the Russian Ministry of Education and Science, Federal Agency on Education in collaboration with the National Training Foundation in Chelyabinsk (Russian Federation) on 16-17 March 2009.⁶

To coordinate the different activities within the mobility action line, to analyse the results and to integrate them into a concise report, the Bologna Follow-up Group set up a coordination group on mobility.

Coordination Group Chair: Gayane Harutyunyan (Armenia)

Participants: Armenia, Austria, Belgium/French Community, Croatia, France, Germany, Hungary, Russian Federation, Spain, Education International, European Students’ Union

The report of the Mobility Coordination Group was endorsed by the Bologna Follow-up Group at its meeting on 12-13 February 2009 with the following recommendations:

¹ <http://www.lets gocampaign.net/>

² <http://enseignement.be/index.php?page=25072&navi=2273>

³ http://www.hrk-bologna.de/bologna/de/home/1945_3448.php

⁴ http://www.lets gocampaign.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=143&Itemid=152

⁵ http://www.ue2008.fr/PFUE/lang/en/accueil/PFUE-11_2008/PFUE-04.11.2008/enseignement_superieur_mobilite_compte_rendu

⁶ <http://www.fc.susu.ac.ru/bolsem.htm>

- ◆ increase and diversify the funding available for mobility at all levels (institutional, national, regional and European);
- ◆ increase and diversify the forms of mobility;
- ◆ integrate opportunities for mobility in the structure of all study programmes;
- ◆ provide transparent and fair recognition as well as credit transfer on the basis of learning outcomes and according to the Lisbon Recognition Convention;
- ◆ offer better information, guidance, and counselling to students, early stage researchers and staff;
- ◆ give students at all levels the opportunity to learn at least two foreign languages;
- ◆ make special provisions for higher education staff, early stage researchers and students, allowing them (and their families) to get visas and work permits relatively easily;
- ◆ recognise, both in terms of career advancement and teaching load, the work done by academics who are responsible for student mobility or who are mobile themselves.
- ◆ make (the quality of) mobility an integral part of quality assurance at programme and institutional level;
- ◆ develop national action plans for large-scale mobility, with clear benchmarks for inward and outward mobility, and include the national action plans in any future stocktaking exercise.
- ◆ explore the possibility of a common European Higher Education Area benchmark for mobility.

Making mobility work requires a comprehensive and strategic approach involving key ministries, higher education institutions, employers, staff and students. Therefore, it is crucial to devise a multilevel strategy to make substantial progress in increasing mobility after the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve ministerial conference.⁷

Network of Experts in Student Support in Europe (NESSIE)

Also related to the issue of mobility is the work of the Network of Experts in Student Support in Europe (NESSIE) that was set up in October 2007 in order to overcome obstacles to the portability of student support and to assist countries in the implementation of portable support. The Network meets once a year and in-between mainly functions on the basis of e-mail exchanges between its members.

Network Co-Chairs: Aldrik in't Hout / Jessica ten Bosch-de Jong (Netherlands)
Kathleen Robertson (Scotland)
Linda Norman-Torvang / Johanna Wockatz (Sweden)

Participants: Austria, Belgium/Flemish Community, Belgium/French Community, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, England, European Commission, ESU, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Scotland and Sweden.

In its report for the 2009 Ministerial Conference, the Network called for a more consistent data collection on portability of student support and a more permanent structure for the Network. Also after the 2009 Ministerial Conference the Network will continue to exchange

⁷ To view the full report please go to:
www.bologna2009benelux.org/conference/documents/2009_mobility_report.pdf

information and to encourage countries to make student support portable. For this purpose, all Bologna countries that are not part of the Network yet, are explicitly asked to join and to appoint an expert in student support as member of the Network.⁸

2. Degree structure

In 2007 and 2008, the European Commission launched two rounds of consultation to update first the “ECTS Key Features” and then the ECTS Users’ Guide. The Bologna Follow-up Group was involved in both consultations and a large number of BFUG members provided valuable input. The updated ECTS Users’ Guide was circulated by the European Commission in February 2009. The proper implementation of ECTS based on workload and learning outcomes is, indeed, still a priority for transparency and mobility. Yet, more work remains to be done in that field.

Bologna Seminars:

- ◆ “Learning outcomes based higher education: the Scottish experience” hosted by the Scottish Government at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh (Scotland) on 21-22 February 2008.⁹
- ◆ “ECTS based on learning outcomes and student workload” organized by the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia and the National Training Foundation in cooperation with the Council of Europe in Moscow at the Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia on 17-18 April 2008.¹⁰
- ◆ “Development of a Common Understanding of Learning Outcomes and ECTS,” organized by Portugal, in collaboration with EURASHE and ESU, in Porto (Portugal) on 19-20 June 2008.¹¹

3. Employability

With the London Communiqué, the Ministers asked BFUG to consider in more detail how to improve employability in relation to each of the three cycles and in the context of lifelong learning. To take this forward, the BFUG set up an employability working group and accepted the Luxembourg proposal to host a seminar on this issue.

Working Group Chair: Keith Andrews / Rachel Green (UK)

Participants: Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Luxembourg, Poland, Spain, UK, BUSINESSEUROPE, EI, ESU, EUA, EURASHE, UNESCO-CEPES.

Among others, the working group conducted mini surveys of the countries participating in the Bologna Process to learn more about the main challenges with regards to graduate employability and the nature of the dialogue between higher education institutions and employers.¹² The group also contributed to the seminar hosted by Luxembourg.

⁸ The full report of the Network is available at:

www.bologna2009benelux.org/conference/documents/2009_NESSIE_report.pdf

⁹ <http://www.bologna2009benelux.org/BolognaSeminars/Edinburgh2008.htm>

¹⁰ <http://www.bologna2009benelux.org/BolognaSeminars/Moscow2008.htm>

¹¹ <http://portobologna.up.pt/>

¹² It must be noted that not all countries replied and some of the evidence from the surveys, carried out in late 2007/early 2008, was largely anecdotal. The answers received can be found at:

www.bologna2009benelux.org/actionlines/employability_survey.htm

Bologna Seminar:

- ◆ “Employability – the Employers’ Perspective and its implications” organised by and in Luxembourg, on 6-7 November 2008.¹³

In its final report¹⁴ that was endorsed by BFUG at its meeting on 12-13 February 2009 the working group made the following recommendations to governments and higher education institutions:

- ◆ They should both continue to promote the benefits of the Bologna Process reforms as a whole, including the benefits of a first cycle/Bachelor degree, to students, potential students, employers and professions;
- ◆ Further progress should be made in establishing national qualifications frameworks in line with the Framework of Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area;
- ◆ Governments should ensure that their own public sector employment services cater to graduates with first cycle/Bachelor degrees;
- ◆ Governments should take the lead in ensuring the conditions which will promote and incentivise dialogue; and higher education institutions and their representative bodies should develop or strengthen links with employers and employer bodies (such as business and employers’ associations, chambers of commerce, trade associations or professional groups) to establish partnerships to share good practice in how to make higher education provision more responsive to labour market demands and advise employers of the range of skills that graduates can bring to their employment.
- ◆ Higher education institutions and employers need to work together, involving students, to identify ways in which courses and programmes of study can offer students the opportunity to develop and define for themselves the necessary employability skills (e.g. work placements as part of courses; strengthening entrepreneurial skills as part of the curriculum, interchange between staff in business and staff in higher education institutions).
- ◆ All higher education institutions, together with governments/government agencies and employers, should improve the provision, accessibility and quality of their careers and employment-related services to students and alumni.
- ◆ The actions highlighted in the employability report should be taken forward as appropriate within individual countries as a matter of urgency in the light of the economic crisis and progress should be monitored through future stocktaking.

4. Recognition

The London Communiqué asked the ENIC/NARIC networks to analyse the National Action Plans for Recognition that had been prepared as part of the 2006/2007 stocktaking exercise and to spread good practice for the recognition of degrees. The networks therefore set up a working party that was composed as follows:

Working Party Chair: Ms. Carita Blomqvist (Finland)

Participants: Armenia, Austria, Cyprus, France, Italy, Latvia, New Zealand, Council of Europe, European Commission, UNESCO-CEPES, ESU. Professor Andrejs Rauhvargers and Ms. Agnese Rusakova were commissioned to draft the study.¹⁵

¹³ <http://www.bologna2009benelux.org/BolognaSeminars/Luxembourg2008.htm>

¹⁴ The full report is available at:

www.bologna2009benelux.org/conference/documents/2009_employability_report.pdf

¹⁵ The full report is available at:

http://www.bologna2009benelux.org/actionlines/documents/Analysis_of_2007_RecognitionNAPs.pdf

The detailed study showed that a lot of work remains to be done to ensure more coherent recognition across the European Higher Education Area and therefore concluded with the following recommendations:

To the Ministers

1. Ministers of those 'Bologna' countries that still have not become Parties to the Lisbon Recognition Convention are recommended to sign and/or ratify the Convention without further delay.
2. Ministers of those countries that have not amended their legislation to adopt the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and its subsidiary texts are recommended to assist their Ministries in preparation of the amendments in line with the principles of the legal framework of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.
3. Ministers of those countries that have not amended their legislation to allow and encourage establishment and recognition of joint degrees are recommended to do so.
4. Ministers of all countries are recommended to include quality of institutional recognition procedures into the internal quality procedures of the higher education institutions and also include it into the external quality reviews.

To the ENIC and NARIC Networks

1. Clarify the differences in terminology used in the recognition legislation and practices of different countries and take steps to move towards a coherent terminology across the EHEA.
2. Organize discussion between the national ENIC /NARIC centres to clarify the differences in the recognition criteria and procedures among the countries. On the basis of that discussion, a revised Recommendation on the Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications and Periods of Study will be drafted by the Bureau of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee.
3. Draft a revised Recommendation on the Criteria and Procedures and submit it to the Committee of the Lisbon Recognition Convention for adoption in 2010.

To national ENIC/NARIC Centres

1. ENIC/NARIC centres of those countries that have not amended their legislation adopting the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and its Subsidiary texts are recommended to assist their Ministries in preparation of the amendments for adoption of principles of the legal framework of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.
2. The ENIC/NARIC centres are encouraged to apply the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention also at assessment of qualifications from such countries that are not Parties of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.
3. They should provide information, guidance and counselling to the higher education institutions to help them establish and maintain recognition procedures based on the principles of the legal framework of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

To higher education institutions

1. Make the recognition of qualifications a part of the internal quality assurance of the institution.
2. Draw up institutional guidelines and recommendations for recognition ensuring implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention across the institution.
3. Ensure implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention at the level of faculties and departments
4. Cooperate with other higher education institutions and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensure coherent recognition across the country

5. Qualifications frameworks

In the London Communiqué Ministers said: “We note that some initial progress has been made towards the implementation of national qualifications frameworks, but that much more effort is required. We commit ourselves to fully implementing such national qualifications frameworks, certified against the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA, by 2010. Recognising that this is a challenging task, we ask the Council of Europe to support the sharing of experience in the elaboration of national qualifications frameworks. We emphasise that qualification frameworks should be designed so as to encourage greater mobility of students and teachers and improve employability.”

Implementing national qualifications frameworks in line with the overarching Framework for Qualifications for the EHEA demands a lot of efforts at national level, supported by the sharing of experience facilitated by the Council of Europe and organizers of seminars. A Coordination group was formed, with the Council of Europe providing Chair and secretariat.¹⁶

Coordination Group Chair: Sjur Bergan (Council of Europe)

Participants: Czech Republic, Georgia, Germany, Ireland, Portugal, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Turkey, UK/Scotland, Council of Europe, European Commission, ESU, EUA, EURASHE, ENIC/NARIC Network, ECTS coordinator

- ◆ A Forum on Qualifications Frameworks, organised by the Council of Europe, was held in Strasbourg (France) on 11-12 October 2007.¹⁷
- ◆ “Aligning National against European Qualifications Frameworks: the principles of self-certification” was organized by Georgia in cooperation with the Council of Europe at Tbilisi (Georgia) on 27-28 November 2008.¹⁸

Other conferences, notably on ECTS and Learning Outcomes, (which were already referred to in chapter II.2) are linked to qualifications frameworks in that sense that describing and using learning outcomes is an important part of developing and implementing national qualifications frameworks. The Luxembourg seminar on employability was also relevant in that field.

¹⁶ The final report of the coordination group can be downloaded from:

www.bologna2009benelux.org/conference/documents/2009_QF_CG_report.pdf

¹⁷ <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/QF/>

¹⁸ <http://www.bologna2009benelux.org/BolognaSeminars/Tbilisi2008.htm>

The Council of Europe also encouraged regional cooperation in South East Europe and in New Independent States. A regional conference for South East Europe was held in Belgrade (Serbia) on November 1 – 2, 2007.¹⁹ One of the main recommendations of this conference was that a regional network on qualifications frameworks should be established. The launching conference for this network was held in Cetinje (Montenegro) on 8-9 July 2008 and was co-organized by the Ministry of Education and Science of Montenegro and the Council of Europe.²⁰

The coordination group met several times and came up with a series of recommendations concerning

- ◆ The development, description and implementation of learning outcomes;
- ◆ The qualifications frameworks and quality Assurance
- ◆ Stakeholder involvement
- ◆ Self certification
- ◆ Relationship to the EQF-LLL

and a timetable to report the progress made.

The Coordination Group proposes that Ministers in 2009 commit to submitting, in time for the 2010 ministerial conference, national road maps for the development of their national qualifications frameworks. These road maps should include information on how the country in question intends to complete the different steps and they should outline a realistic timetable for doing so. The report of the Coordination Group further recommended that self-certifications should be completed, preferably by 2012; at least in 2012 countries should indicate when they expect their self-certification to be ready.

More information can be found on www.Bologna2009Benelux.org/QF, the website which provides information on the working group and the activities to implement national qualifications frameworks in a coordinated way throughout Europe. It also provides the links to the national qualifications frameworks that have been self certified.

Like the overarching Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA-QF), adopted in 2005, the EQF-LLL formally adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in April 2008, is an overarching framework of qualifications against which national frameworks will be referenced.

Good cooperation has been established between the Council of Europe, as Chair of the Coordination Group, and the European Commission, as the institution providing technical support for the EQF-LLL. The European Commission is a member of the Coordination Group, and the developments with regard to the EQF-LLL have been considered at every meeting of the Coordination Group. At the same time, the Council of Europe is a member of the EQF-LLL Advisory Board. The Council of Europe was also a member of a sub group of the EQF-LLL Advisory Board that looked at referencing of national qualifications levels in relation to the EQF-LLL. The Advisory Board adopted the criteria and procedures, which are compatible with the criteria and procedures for self certification in relation to the EHEA-QF.

6. Lifelong learning

The London Communiqué asked BFUG to increase the sharing of good practices in the field of lifelong learning and the recognition of prior learning. For this purpose, a number of events were organised at European level:

¹⁹ http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/HigherEducation/EHEA2010/Belgrade/default_EN.asp#TopOfPage

²⁰ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/EHEA2010/QF/CetinjeEN_08.asp#TopOfPage

Activities:

- ◆ Under the Slovenian Presidency a seminar was organized on “Universities and Lifelong Learning” at Brdo (Slovenia), on 10-11 March 2008.²¹
- ◆ EUA also organized a conference “Inclusive and responsive universities – ensuring Europe’s competitiveness” at Rotterdam (Netherlands) on 22 October 2008.²² The publication of its Charter for Lifelong Learning was a significant step forward in promoting lifelong learning in a university context.²³
- ◆ EURASHE organized a seminar titled “Lifelong Learning at Institutions of Professional Higher Education” in Prague (Czech Republic) on 16-17 October 2008.²⁴ They also published "Lifelong Learning: Impediments and examples of good practice."²⁵
- ◆ “Recognition of Prior Learning, Quality Assurance and Implementation of Procedures” was organized in Amsterdam (Netherlands) on 11-12 December 2008.²⁶ The EURASHE event mentioned above partially served as input to this seminar.

To ensure complementarity across the lifelong learning related events included in the Bologna Work Programme for 2007-2009 and to review the conclusions and recommendations of these events, a Lifelong Learning Coordinating Group was set up.

Coordination Group Chair: Ann McVie (UK/Scotland)

Participants: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Georgia, Greece, Netherlands, Slovenia, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, UK/Scotland, ESU, EUA, EURASHE.

The coordination group concluded that considerable progress had been made towards increasing the understanding of lifelong learning in a higher education context over the last two years. Much, however, remains to be done, before lifelong learning becomes fully integrated within all higher education system across the EHEA. In particular, significant effort is required to enhance the development and application of the recognition of prior learning.

- ◆ Institutions should be encouraged to develop lifelong learning strategies as part of their institutional policies.
- ◆ Just as initial learners, lifelong learners should be at the centre of their education. This means that HEI management systems should deal with lifelong learners as an integral part of their education provision and quality assurance, respecting the differences between different learners and their needs.
- ◆ As employers need to trust qualifications, the recognition of qualifications and of prior learning should be part of regular quality assurance procedures and be related to the three cycle structure. This should apply to all forms of lifelong learning and cross border provision.

²¹ http://www.mvzt.gov.si/en/arhiv_predsedovanja_mvzt_svetu_eu/eu_higher_education/conference_III/

²² <http://www.eua.be/events/rotterdam-conference/presentations/>

²³ Copies can be downloaded from

http://www.eua.be/fileadmin/user_upload/files/Publications/European_Universities_Charter_on_Lifelong_learning.pdf

²⁴ <http://www.ssvs.cz/reg/>

²⁵ Copies can be ordered from the EURASHE website at:

<http://www.eurashe.eu/RunScript.asp?page=105&p=ASP\Pg105.asp>

²⁶ <http://www.dashe.nl/events/bologna/rpl.html>

- ◆ Procedures for the recognition of prior learning should be made more open and transparent, for the benefit of potential learners, students, staff, institutions and employers.
- ◆ Practice across the EHEA should be shared and analysed, in order to improve understanding of different approaches and the interests of different stakeholders.

7. Quality assurance

One of the main advances in quality assurance was the setting up by the E4 (ENQA, EUA, EURASHE and ESU) of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) in 2008. The Register will list Quality Agencies that have proven their reliability when reviewed against the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance. At its meeting in Lisbon in October 2007, the Bologna Follow-up Group elected five countries that would serve as observers to the Register Committee in the period 2008-2009.²⁷

Bologna Seminars:

- ◆ “Quality Assurance in Higher Education”, held in Strasbourg (France) on 9-10 September 2008.²⁸
- ◆ “Quality Assurance in Transnational Education (TNE) – from words to action”, organized by ENQA and hosted by the Quality Assurance Agency, in London (UK) on 1-2 December 2008.²⁹
- ◆ Also linked to the topic was “Recognition of Prior Learning, Quality Assurance and the Implementation of Procedures”, hosted by the Dutch Government on 11-12 December 2008 (see also chapter II.6 on Lifelong learning).³⁰

The E4 Group also organized two European Quality Assurance Forums, one in Rome (Italy) on 15-17 November 2007³¹ and the other in Budapest (Hungary) on 20-22 November 2008³² to facilitate the exchange of good practices.

8. Third cycle/Doctoral candidates

In the London Communiqué Ministers invited higher education institutions to pay increased attention to doctoral candidates, early stage researchers and doctoral programmes. EUA was invited to continue to support the sharing of experience among higher education institutions.

Bologna Seminar:

- ◆ “Third Cycle Degrees: Competences and Researcher Careers”, organised in Helsinki (Finland) on 30 September -1 October 2008.³³

9. Social dimension

The social dimension of Higher Education was defined in the London Communiqué in terms of participative equity:

²⁷ For more information on the Register visit the EQAR website: www.eqar.eu

²⁸ http://www.eu2008.fr/PFUE/lang/en/accueil/PFUE-09_2008/PFUE-09.09.2008/Conference_L_assurance_qualite_dans_les_etablissements_d_enseignement_superieur_en_Europe

²⁹ <http://www.bologna2009benelux.org/BolognaSeminars/London2008.htm>

³⁰ <http://www.dashe.nl/events/bologna/rpl.html>

³¹ <http://www.eua.be/events/qa-forum/>

³² <http://www.eua.be/events/quality-assurance-forum-2008/home/>

³³ <http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Tapahtumakalenteri/2008/09/bologna.html?lang=en>

“We share the societal aspiration that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations. We reaffirm the importance of students being able to complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background. We therefore continue our efforts to provide adequate student services, create more flexible learning pathways into and within higher education, and to widen participation at all levels on the basis of equal opportunity.”

Ministers committed themselves to draw up national strategies on social dimension which would be analysed as a part of the 2009 Stocktaking exercise.

A coordination group was thus formed as auxiliary to the stocktaking working group whose tasks included designing a template for reporting on national strategies and helping countries by facilitating the sharing of experience.

Coordination Group Chair: Efstathios Michael (Cyprus)

Participants: Belgium/French Community, Czech Republic, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, Montenegro, Portugal, Romania, Russia, United Kingdom, ESU, EUA, EURASHE.

A seminar was organised, intended to find some means by which the social diversity of Bologna nations could be reflected in their Higher Education:

- ◆ “Equality in a Knowledge-based Society – How to Widen Opportunities – Best practices in National Action Plans,” held in Budapest (Hungary), on 10-11 November 2008.³⁴

For the conclusions and recommendations of the Social Dimension Coordination Group, see section 12. Stocktaking.

10. Global Dimension

When adopting the strategy of “The European Higher Education in a Global Setting” in 2007, the Ministers identified five core policy areas where action should be taken: improving information on, and promoting the attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA; strengthening cooperation based on partnership; intensifying policy dialogue; and improving recognition. They asked BFUG to report back on overall developments at the European, national and institutional levels, focusing in particular on improving the information available about the EHEA and the recognition procedures for qualifications obtained outside Europe, on the basis of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. BFUG then set up a working group to take forward work in the five core policy areas of the strategy and to prepare the report on the overall developments.³⁵

Working Group Chair: Barbara Weitgruber (Austria)

Participants: Armenia, Austria, Belgium/French Community, France, Germany, Greece, Holy See, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Spain, United Kingdom, Council of Europe, European Commission, EI, ENQA, ESU, EUA, EURASHE, UNESCO-CEPES, and ACA.

³⁴ <http://www.okm.gov.hu/main.php?folderID=2177>

³⁵ The report is available at:

www.bologna2009benelux.org/conference/documents/2009_EHEA_in_global_context.pdf

Improving information about the EHEA:

The working group supported the Bologna Secretariat in preparing an update and extension of the existing website (www.bologna2009benelux.org). It drew up the first official Bologna information brochure, which can be downloaded from the Bologna website. It took stock of the existing sources of information, such as those provided by EUA, ESU, the European Commission's Bologna Experts website, the Council of Europe Higher Education Series or UNESCO-CEPES's quarterly review "Higher Education in Europe".

The group recommended that:

- ◆ The Bologna Secretariat should be mandated to provide information on the EHEA that would be specifically targeted at non-EHEA countries;
- ◆ Each Bologna country should provide information for international students and researchers in a common format, ideally through a website;
- ◆ On-line information on scholarships should be available at the level of the EHEA.

Promoting attractiveness and competitiveness:

The group took stock of the promotion activities held by countries themselves, which could take various forms and differ in importance from country to country. At European level, the European Commission has been very active in the field with its Global Promotion Project which runs till the end of 2009. It also financed European Higher Education Fairs and the EU-Asia Higher Education Platform.

The working group recommended that:

- ◆ Each EHEA country should designate a contact point for information and promotion activities;
- ◆ A European mapping of promotion activities should be carried out, based on a sample of higher education institutions in each country;
- ◆ A "road map" should be devised, to identify opportunities and actions for enhancing promotion at European-level.

Strengthening cooperation based on partnership and intensifying policy dialogue

Some countries outside the EHEA have expressed interest in the Bologna Process and are implementing some of its features. The Bologna Process responds to this interest by seeking to intensify policy dialogue and strengthening cooperation with non-EHEA countries for mutual benefit.

In that field, the working group recommended that

- ◆ Balanced bilateral and multilateral cooperation based on partnership should be intensified;
- ◆ A Bologna Policy Forum should be created for fruitful dialogue between EHEA and non-EHEA countries;
- ◆ Stakeholders from non-EHEA countries should be invited to Bologna-related events, including projects and initiatives of the BFUG work programme;
- ◆ BFUG should contribute to relevant projects and activities in other regions.

Furthering recognition of qualifications

The ENIC and NARIC networks are the main European platform for the development of recognition policy and practice. As the ENIC network includes several countries that are not members of the Bologna Process, it is also a platform for policy dialogue with other countries. Both networks are keen to develop policy dialogue on concrete issues to facilitate recognition procedures and to make them fair and transparent. At their 2008 meeting in Malta, the ENIC and NARIC Networks therefore decided to make recognition in a global context a focus of

their future activities and agreed to set up a specific working group on “Recognition within a Global Setting”, thus opening discussions and cooperation with other UNESCO regions on the issue of recognition of foreign qualifications.³⁶

The BFUG working group asked the ENIC and NARIC networks specifically to seek to:

- ◆ Establish dialogues on recognition policy with other regions;
- ◆ Explore the implications on recognition of the overarching frameworks of qualifications of the EHEA, the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, and compatible national frameworks as well as the development of qualifications frameworks in a number of countries outside of Europe;
- ◆ Improve the publicly available information on recognition in cooperation with other regions;
- ◆ Make use of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention and its subsidiary texts as a guide to good practice also in the assessment of qualifications from countries that are not legally bound by the Convention and as a basis for dialogue on recognition policy; and
- ◆ Report back to the BFUG on their work in this area and in particular the outcome of the specific working party on “recognition within a global setting”.

The recommendations for further follow-up were to

- ◆ Fully implement the Strategy “The European Higher Education Area in a Global Setting”, also taking into account the recommendations described in this report.
- ◆ Include the implementation of the Strategy in any future stocktaking exercises.

11. Data Collection

In the London Communiqué, Ministers entrusted Eurostat and Eurostudent “to develop comparable and reliable indicators and data to measure progress towards the overall objective for the social dimension and student and staff mobility in all Bologna countries”.

A steering group was formed, to give the political orientations and the contextual information necessary for the work.

Steering Group Chair: Germain Dondelinger (Luxembourg)

Participants: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Russia, Switzerland, United Kingdom, EI, EUA, European Commission (Eurostat and Eurydice), ESU, Eurostudent, ACA.³⁷

Conclusions to be completed

12. Stocktaking

In 2007 the Ministers asked BFUG to continue the stocktaking process based on national reports. As overarching action line, stocktaking aims at developing the qualitative analysis of the Bologna Process, especially with regard to mobility, its global context and its social dimension. The fields covered by the stocktaking should continue to include the degree system and employability of graduates, recognition of degrees and study periods and implementation of all aspects of quality assurance in line with the European Standards and Guidelines. With a view to the development of more student-centred, outcome-based learning, the 2009 exercise

³⁶ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001559/155919e.pdf>

³⁷ [Link to data collection report]

should also address in an integrated way national qualifications frameworks, learning outcomes and credits, lifelong learning, and the recognition of prior learning.

Working Group Chair: Andrejs RAUHVARGERS, Latvia

Participants: Armenia, Georgia, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Montenegro, Norway, Romania, Turkey, United Kingdom, European Commission (Eurydice), EUA, ESU.

A template for national reports and for national strategies on the social dimension (the latter prepared by the Social Dimension Coordination Group) was approved by BFUG, as well as the indicators that would help drafting the countries' scorecards.³⁸

The indicators for the 2009 stocktaking were designed to verify whether the original goals of the Bologna process - which were expected to be achieved by 2010 - were actually being achieved in reality. Whereas in 2005 it was sufficient to show that work had been started, and for the 2007 stocktaking it was often enough that some work towards achieving the goals could be demonstrated or that legislation was in place, in 2009 the criteria for the indicators were substantially more demanding.

Because of the more demanding indicators, the overall picture for the whole EHEA is not as "green" in 2009 as it was in the two previous stocktaking reports in 2005 and 2007, although there are a number of countries that have improved their scores in this stocktaking exercise (see the summary for the various action lines below).

The more detailed analysis that was applied to the information provided in the 2009 national reports clearly showed whether the reforms really concerned the whole higher education system or applied only to parts of it. It is likely that this has lowered the scores of some countries that might have given an overall answer "yes" in 2007, when in fact some parts of the HE system were not actually covered by the reforms.

Degree system

- Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle

Achieving the goal of implementing the first and second cycle degree system across all higher education in the EHEA seems to be only a question of time; however in some countries the actual proportion of students studying in the Bologna three-cycle system is still low, mainly because these countries have just recently started admitting students to bachelor and master programmes.

In some countries certain regulated professions and some specific disciplines are not yet included in the two-cycle system. With the present criteria these countries can still be in the "green" category. It will take more time and effort to include these disciplines and professions into the two-cycle system.

- Access to the next cycle

The overall picture for this indicator looks very "green", which demonstrates that there are no obstacles to access in legislation. However, the additional analysis shows that progress is not as significant as this suggests; in a number of countries graduates have to meet additional requirements to actually gain admission to the next cycle.

It is surprising that examinations, additional courses or work experience are quite often required when seeking access to next cycle in the same field of studies. This might suggest

³⁸ [Link to the Stocktaking Working Group Report]

that HEIs do not fully recognise qualifications, even in the same field, issued by other HEIs in their own country.

Some countries have two levels of bachelor degrees, both of which are regarded as first cycle end qualifications, but which do not actually offer the same access to the second cycle. Some other countries have introduced two levels of master degrees with different rights in the labour market and admission to the third cycle.

- Implementation of the third cycle

Overall, the implementation of the third cycle is progressing: the number of structured doctoral programmes is growing; more universities have established doctoral schools; the use of ECTS in the third cycle is becoming more widespread; more doctoral programmes include taught courses, and there are supervisory and assessment activities in place. There is no single model for the status of doctoral candidates: they may be considered students, early stage researchers or both; however in some of the new structured doctoral programmes, there is now a movement to introduce dual status. In some countries it seems that the need for interdisciplinary training and the need to provide doctoral candidates with the transferable skills for employment outside academia have not yet been fully understood.

- Implementation of national qualifications frameworks

There has been significant effort towards implementing qualifications frameworks and some progress has been made since 2007, however the deadline to have completed the implementation of NQFs for higher education by 2010 appears to have been too ambitious. Measuring success against the expectations for 2010, the picture is now less optimistic than it was in 2007 when countries only had to have started implementing their qualifications frameworks.

Six countries - some of which already had qualifications frameworks in place before 2005 - have completed self-certification of their NQF with the EHEA overarching qualifications framework, and some more are close to completion, while many are still at the early stages of development. There are still a large number of countries that are just beginning or have not yet started the implementation at institutional level, therefore the full implementation of national qualifications frameworks will take some time.

There is still not enough integration at national level between the qualifications framework, learning outcomes and ECTS, as was suggested in the 2007 stocktaking report. In attempting to improve their practice on each individual indicator, many countries appear to have pursued these action lines separately.

- Employability

While countries say that employability is important, they have not gathered sufficient data to support this assertion. Due to the rapidly changing economic environment and its impact on labour markets, there is an urgent need for countries to set up systems to track the employability of graduates in the future. The number of bachelor graduates is growing and therefore the efforts to ensure employability of bachelor graduates need to be strengthened. The acceptance of graduates in the labour market varies significantly: countries that have had a bachelor-master system for a long time see no specific problems and some other countries report increasing acceptance of bachelor graduates in the labour market, but there is a third group of countries with no bachelor-master tradition where the labour market seems to completely reject bachelor graduates.

It appears that the acceptability of bachelor degrees in the labour market can depend as much on the established custom and practice of different countries as on the effective implementation of the Bologna reforms.

Quality assurance

Implementation of internal quality assurance systems in accordance with ESG

While the implementation of external quality assurance is proceeding at a rapid pace, development of internal quality assurance (QA) systems at HEIs is progressing more slowly, especially because in some countries the internal QA systems are still thought to amount only to writing a self-assessment report for external review. As regards fulfilling Part I of the ESG on internal quality assurance, there has been good progress in some of the areas that have been established in HEIs for a long time, such as internal approval of programmes and publication of information. It is clear however that linking programmes with learning outcomes and designing assessment procedures to measure achievement of the intended learning outcomes are the most difficult parts and will take longer to implement. The 2009 national reports demonstrate that learning outcomes are often confused with overall programme goals which are not measurable and therefore cannot be used in student assessment.

The 2009 stocktaking clearly indicates that fully-fledged introduction of a learning outcomes-based culture across the EHEA still needs a lot of effort, and it will not be completed by 2010. It is important therefore to disseminate more actively the 2009 edition of the ESG where the link with learning outcomes is clearly underlined.

- Stage of development of external quality assurance system

All countries have introduced external QA systems including self-assessment and external review; nearly all publish assessment results and carry out follow-up measures. However, the requirement to have carried out an assessment of the QA agency or at least to have fixed the date for such assessment shifted some countries from the “green” zone in 2007 to “yellow” in 2009. The fact that just 15 countries have organised assessment of their QA agency suggests that while the scheme of external QA has been widely implemented, in some countries it may not yet operate entirely in accordance with the ESG.

- Level of student participation in quality assurance

Overall, student participation in QA has progressed since 2007; however the analysis of answers to additional questions pointed out some gaps: students often participate in reviews only as observers, they are not always involved in preparing self-assessment reports and they are very seldom involved in follow-up measures.

- Level of international participation in QA

With the requirement that international participation in review teams AND membership of an international QA network are now needed to score at least “yellow”, the number of countries in the “orange” category has substantially grown since 2007.

It is surprising that quality assurance agencies from only 22 countries are full members of ENQA. Given that full membership of ENQA requires compliance with ESG, this suggests that the standards and guidelines for external quality assurance and the work of QA agencies may not yet be fully implemented in some other countries.

The work on compiling the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) was just started in 2008 and the register as yet includes only a small number of agencies, therefore it was not considered appropriate to use the listing of the QA agency in EQAR as a criterion for this indicator in 2009.

Recognition

- Stage of implementation of Diploma Supplement

It is clear from the results that the Diploma Supplement (DS), which is an important transparency instrument, is being implemented, but not as widely as would have been expected. Despite the commitment to issuing the DS to all graduates automatically, free of charge and in a widely spoken European language by 2005, only half of the countries have managed to implement it fully by 2009.

While the overall proportion of countries in the “green” zone is a little larger than in 2007, the more detailed questions on the issuing of Diploma Supplements shifted some countries substantially backwards compared to 2007. Countries in the “yellow” zone mainly fail to issue the Diploma Supplement to ALL graduates, or to issue it automatically.

- Stage of implementation of Lisbon Recognition Convention

This indicator reflects only compliance of national legislation (or rather national legislation not being in conflict) with the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC). It is “greener” than in 2007 but the indicator alone does not measure the actual recognition practices, especially those inside the HEIs. Complementary analysis of the National Action Plans on Recognition submitted before the London conference shows that there is a long way to go before there is a coherent approach to recognition of qualifications within the EHEA.

As regards the practical implementation of the principles of the Convention, the analysis of the National Action Plans shows that the interpretation of these principles, as well as recognition procedures and even terminology used in different countries, differ enormously. There are still legal problems in implementing the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) and its subsidiary texts, sometimes because the LRC is considered as a threat to the autonomy of HEIs: it is not fully understood that the LRC can enable HEIs to use their autonomy to facilitate the recognition of foreign qualifications and thus support both mobility and their own internationalisation. Some countries have found a good solution by including institutional recognition procedures in the list of aspects evaluated within both internal and external QA.

- Stage of implementation of European Credit Transfer System

To score “green” or “light green”, credits had to be demonstrably linked with learning outcomes, so the scores of some countries shifted downwards compared to 2007, when it was enough that the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) was used for both credit accumulation and credit transfer.

Although ECTS has been part of the Bologna process since 1999, it is still not fully implemented across all the countries. ECTS credits are widely used for both credit accumulation and transfer, but there are two main challenges in fully implementing ECTS: measuring credits in terms of student workload and linking them with learning outcomes.

- Recognition of prior learning

While a small number of countries have quite advanced systems for the recognition of prior learning (RPL), the answers from many other countries suggest there is little or no recognition of learning undertaken outside the formal education system. There has not been much progress since 2007.

In some countries RPL appears to be included in national policy but it does not seem to be applied in practice; in other countries it happens in practice without any national procedures or guidelines being in place. Even where RPL systems exist, individuals are often insufficiently aware of the possibilities to have their previous learning assessed and recognised.

Some countries are using RPL to encourage more adults into higher education, thus improving the social dimension of higher education and promoting the inclusion of previously under-represented groups and improving the skill levels of the workforce. In some countries, the practice of RPL appears to be better developed in the non-university HE sector, although formal partnerships and linkages for RPL do exist between universities and other types of HEI in some parts of the EHEA. In a few cases, additional measures are being taken to increase access to HE by facilitating RPL for specific target groups.

It will not be possible to overcome the demographic and economic challenges through lifelong learning until RPL is systematically implemented in all countries. This requires firstly a change of culture in HEIs and secondly that credits are linked with learning outcomes, with appropriate methods developed to assess the full range of learning outcomes.

- Flexible learning paths

Few countries have made an explicit link between flexible learning and their national qualifications frameworks, and this is an obstacle that prevents people who are already in the labour market from becoming involved in education. In addition, very few countries keep statistical data about the results of measures to increase participation by under-represented groups in flexible learning paths.

- Joint degrees

Three quarters of the countries have amended their legislation to allow awarding of joint degrees, but half of the countries estimate that only between 1% and 25% of HEIs are involved in joint degree cooperation. It is evident that joint degrees are being established in all areas of study: engineering and natural sciences are clearly the most popular, followed closely by economics, business administration, social sciences, information technologies and health sciences. European studies, teacher training and environmental studies are also mentioned frequently. A number of actions are being taken to stimulate joint degrees: the most frequently mentioned are legal measures; support of joint programmes by additional funding; quality assurance/accreditation of joint programmes; codes of good practice and handbooks for establishing joint degrees.

In a number of countries there is specific support allocated for students studying on joint programmes, but several countries state that such students receive the regular student support.

European Higher Education Area in a Global Setting

It is clear that the Bologna Process has enhanced the cooperation between countries, organisations and higher education institutions inside and outside Europe. Considerable progress has been made in the fields of information, promotion, recognition and policy dialogue.

Social dimension of the European Higher Education Area

Virtually all countries take some action in order to enhance participative equity in their country, but only a minority of the countries has set up monitoring systems for measuring progress on the issue. Still fewer countries show evidence for an integrated strategy with synergies between social policy, government action and institutional practice, for example on matters such as funding arrangements, lifelong learning and recognition of prior learning. There is still a long way to go before the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels will reflect the diversity of populations in the EHEA.

13. Bologna beyond 2010

In the London Communiqué Ministers asked BFUG to consider how the EHEA could further develop after 2010 and to report back to them in 2009. Such a task required input from different sources, including surveys, publications and seminars.³⁹

Experts and stakeholders were consulted. A seminar was organised in Ghent (Belgium) by the Flemish Community of Belgium together with Luxembourg on 19-20 May 2008: “Bologna 2020: Unlocking Europe's potential - Contributing to a better world”.⁴⁰

An extra BFUG meeting held in Sarajevo under Slovenian Presidency was devoted to the topic. A report on “Bologna Beyond 2010” was gradually drafted, involving all countries and organisations participating in the Bologna Process and submitted to the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Ministerial Conference.⁴¹

14. Independent assessment of the Implementation of the Bologna Process

In the London Communiqué Ministers added: “We invite BFUG to consider for 2010 the preparation of a report including an independent assessment, in partnership with the consultative members, evaluating the overall progress of the Bologna Process across the EHEA since 1999.”

Such a task requiring a long preparation, BFUG first agreed on the terms of reference of an independent assessment, specifying the objectives to be attained and the scope of the work to be done.

It was also decided that the financing organisation, the European Commission would be assisted by an Advisory Board, consisting of elected BFUG representatives. Seven countries (Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Romania and Russia) were thus elected and three participating organisations (EUA, EURASHE and ESU) joined up. Their task was to advise the European Commission on the selection of the assessment team and to monitor the evaluation.

As a follow-up to the Call for Tender, launched by the European Commission, a consortium was chosen. The outcome of the Independent assessment is due to be ready by spring 2010 for the Bologna Anniversary Conference to be held jointly by Austria and Hungary. Until that time the Advisory Board will continue its work.⁴²

³⁹ For more information please consult: <http://www.bologna2009benelux.org/actionlines/Beyond2010.htm>.

⁴⁰ <http://www.bologna2009benelux.org/BolognaSeminars/Ghent2008.htm>

⁴¹ [Link to full report.]

⁴² [add link]

III. BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP GROUP AND BOARD MEETINGS

Portuguese Presidency July 2007 – December 2007

Board meeting	Lisbon	30-31 August 2007
BFUG meeting	Lisbon	2-3 October 2007

- Adoption of the work programme for the period 2007-2009.

Slovenian Presidency January 2008 – June 2008

Board meeting	Ljubljana	16 January 2008
BFUG meeting	Brdo	13-14 March 2008

- Approval of the template and the indicators for the 2009 stocktaking exercise.
- Election of three Bologna Board members for the period July 2008 – June 2009.

Board meeting	Bled	8-9 June 2008
BFUG meeting	Sarajevo	24-25 June 2008

- Discussion on “Bologna Beyond 2010”
- Identification of priorities among the existing action lines: mobility of students and staff, social dimension, qualifications frameworks, recognition, curriculum reform.
- Identification of new challenges: Global competitiveness, demography/lifelong learning, creative graduates, responsibilities of actors, resources.
- Establishment of the Independent Assessment Advisory Committee.

French Presidency July 2008 – December 2008

BFUG meeting	Paris	14-15 October 2008
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- Discussion on “Bologna Beyond 2010”

Czech Presidency January 2009 – July 2009

Board meeting	Prague	16 January 2009
BFUG meeting	Prague	12-13 February 2009

- Endorsement of the reports prepared by working and coordination groups
- Discussion of the draft Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué

Board meeting	Ostend	23 February 2009
BFUG meeting	Prague	26-27 March 2009

- Endorsement of the stocktaking report and the report on Bologna beyond 2010.
- Finalisation of the draft Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué

BFUG meeting	Leuven	27 April 2009
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- Last preparations for the 2009 Ministerial Conference in Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve.
- Election of three Bologna Board members for the period July 2009 – June 2010.

IV. THE OFFICIAL BOLOGNA WEBSITE

Following the tradition of previous Secretariats, the Benelux Bologna Secretariat took charge of maintaining the official Bologna Process website (www.bologna2009benelux.org). The main purpose of that website is to provide information about the Bologna Process and the emerging European Higher Education Area. During the 2007-2009 period a particular effort has been made to provide this information in such a way that it is interesting and understandable not only to a small circle of experts but to a wider audience, both within Europe and beyond.

As the user statistics show, the website attracts indeed considerable interest from all over the world. In the six months between 1 September 2008 and 28 February 2009, to just give one example, the Bologna website was visited more than 62,000 times by almost 40,000 unique visitors from 177 countries. The large majority of the visits came of course from within the European Higher Education Area.

As far as the content is concerned, the information to be provided for a global audience does not necessarily have to differ much from the information provided for a non-specialised audience within the European Higher Education Area. Currently, the website contains general information about the Bologna Process and what it is all about, as well as more specific, thematic information on the various action lines. For the issue of qualifications frameworks, the QF Coordination Group has in fact even developed its own website as part of the Bologna website (www.bologna2009benelux.org/QF).

Next to thematic pages, the Bologna website also contains information about the countries and organisations participating in the Bologna Process. Each participating country has its own “country page” with links that allow the visitors to find out more about the respective higher education system (e.g. the higher education institutions, quality assurance, or the recognition of qualifications) and the implementation of the Bologna reforms in that particular country. Countries and organisations can also make use of the “news” section to announce relevant events, reforms or other important developments.

The Bologna website can also be considered the electronic archive of the Bologna Process. It provides access to all the main documents, from ministerial communiqués to reports on the implementation of the reforms. Information can also be found on all official Bologna Seminars and of course the 2009 Ministerial Conference and the first Bologna Policy Forum.

To keep the website up-to-date and to cover more and more relevant topics and developments, the Secretariat relies upon the support of the entire Bologna Follow-up Group. The various working and coordination groups as well as the participating countries and organisations have provided extremely valuable input and will hopefully continue to do so in the future.

V. Concluding comments

[to be completed]

Acronyms

ACA	Academic Cooperation Association
BFUG	Bologna Follow-up Group
CEPES	Centre Européen pour l'Enseignement Supérieur/European Centre for Higher Education
E4 group	EUA + ENQA + EURASHE + ESU (in context of cooperation on quality assurance)
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EI	Education International
ENIC	European Network of Information centres in the European Region
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
EQF-LLL	European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning
ESG (QA)	European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
ESU (formerly ESIB)	European Students' Union
EUA	European University Association
EURASHE	European Association of Institutions in Higher Education
EUROSTAT	Statistical Office of the European Communities
HEI	Higher Education Institution
LLL	Lifelong Learning
LRC	Lisbon Recognition Convention
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
QF	Qualifications Framework
TNE	Transnational Education
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization