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Advisory Group 1: EHEA International cooperation

Seventh Meeting

Berlin (Germany), 16 October 2017

Minutes

List of participants

COUNTRY/ ORGANISATION	NAME
BELGIUM VL	Noel VERCRUYSSÉ
BFUG SECRETARIAT	Françoise PROFIT Mariana SAAD
EAIE/European Association For International Education	Markus LAITINEN
EI/ETUCE	Mike JENNINGS
ESU	Caroline SUNDBERG
EUA/European University Association	Henriette STOEBER
FRANCE chair	Marie-Odile OTT
GERMANY	Katrin FOHMANN
GREECE	Alexandra KARVOUNI
IRELAND	Gerry O'SULLIVAN
LICHTENSTEIN	Daniel MIESCHER
OECD	Shane SAMUELSON
RUSSIAN FEDERATION	Alexander GRUDZINSKY
SPAIN chair	Margarita de LEZCANO-MUJICA NUÑEZ
UNITED KINGDOM chair	Ella RITCHIE

Apologies received from ACA, Azerbaijan, AUF/ Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie, Cyprus, ENQA, Estonia, EU Commission, IAU/ International Association of Universities, Kazakhstan, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, UfM and UNESCO.

1. Welcome and Tour de table

The chairs thanked the German representative for organising the meeting and welcomed the participants. A tour de table allowed all members to introduce themselves to the group.

The British chair explained that the many tasks ahead and the need for proper feedback meant that it would be good for the group to hold one or two more meeting. It was finally decided 1) to have the next meeting in Brussels, on Friday 15th December and to ask the Irish permanent representation to host it and 2) to hold if necessary the last meeting in London.

2. The tasks ahead

2.1: Bologna Policy Forum: update and presentation of the Agenda

The French chair presented briefly how the BPF fitted into the Ministerial agenda. She confirmed that the general theme of the BPF would be “The role of HE in a changing society”. She also updated the participants on France’s views on the keynote speaker to invite to the Forum. She explained that France particularly supported Mrs Helen Clark as a candidate and then M. Allan E. Goodman and asked for the group’s feedback.

The British chair agreed that Helen Clark would be a good idea but underlined that the group had not engaged with America or New Zealand. She argued that there was some scepticism about the EHEA in Australia.

The group agreed on inviting Helen Clark and asked the French chair to contact her as quickly as possible as time is short. The representative from ETUCE mentioned that his organisation had some caveats about Helen Clark’s positions on several issues such as fees and inclusiveness

It was decided that in the case she was not available, one of the identified speakers would be contacted. The French chair also suggested to establish a table with all the proposed names and circulate it to have the priorities of the group.

The group proceeded to discuss the BPF Statement. The Secretariat presented a roadmap for the drafting of the statement. The French chair explained that it had to be prepared by the group and then circulated to the non-EHEA delegations participating in the BPF. The EAIE representative asked how this was going to be done and the Secretariat replied that this could only be achieved by organising two more meetings, one in December 2017 and one in 2018, as planned in the roadmap.

The participants agreed that the Statement had to take into account the diversity of the many countries invited to participate. The Belgian representative reminded the group that they would be asked to take into account the remarks and new ideas that would arise during the BPF and that the Statement would be re-drafted before being adopted.

It was decided that a draft 0 would be circulated at the end of October.

2.2: Concept notes for the round tables

The French chair informed the group that France had sent diplomatic notes to its diplomatic representatives abroad asking them to get feedback on interest for the BPF. She also pointed out that before sending formal invitations the group needed to take into account who was available, who wanted to come and who the group would like to participate.

In the following discussion on the draft notes prepared for the two BPF round tables (RT1 and RT2), the participants made several remarks.

Discussion on RT1:

The Irish representative underlined that at a time when the USA seems to be less interested in international collaboration it might be a good opportunity for EHEA countries to try and fill that space.

He also argued that the round table should address the problem of resources and how to make them available. He stressed the importance of teaching and added that the discussion should also address the fact that the EHEA has attracted millions of students that come from non-EHEA countries.

The British chair asked if these students came to the EHEA or to one specific country, to which the Irish representative replied that the EHEA was mainly a framework for a conversation between members.

The Belgian representative argued that mobility of HE Institutions needed to be tackled during the round table, and the French chair raised the question of students' mobility.

The ESU representative proposed the expression "mobility for all" to address all mobility issues.

Discussion on RT2:

The German representative argued that the presentation of RT2 was too economically orientated and that it was not clear who was talking and who was the authority behind the reasoning. She also asked if the concept note would be sent with a cover letter and if representatives would be free to approach the theme of emigration. She received a positive reply to both points.

The EUA representative proposed to send comparative data to enrich the concept note.

The Belgian representative underlined the importance of the teaching community and mentioned the *Talloires Declaration on the Civic Roles and Social Responsibilities of Higher Education*. The group agreed that the contribution of research had to be mentioned.

The Irish representative remarked that the Statement could not be anodyne and that it had also to be a way for the group to tell the BFUG what the BPF is for.

In reply to a question by the French chair, it was confirmed that the concept note had to be wide.

The British chair closed the discussion on the RT2 concept note asking the participants to send comments and suggestions by email.

2.3: Invitations and defining the audience

The French chair explained that France had sent information about the BPF to its diplomatic representations as a survey for interests and had already received expressions of interest from several countries. She also underlined the importance for the BPF success to have all regions represented. She proposed to reach for specific countries once the first round of contacts has been completed.

In reply to a question by the British chair, it was decided to invite international organisations.

The group then proceeded to discuss who would be allowed to take the floor in order to give the possibility to as many representatives as possible to be heard as opposed to only ministers being able to present their views.

The Secretariat explained that in the BFUG layout only the heads of delegations were allowed to speak and that the microphone were only on the first row. The Head of the Secretariat pointed out that there were at the moment 40 seats available on the first row for non-EHEA delegations.

The OECD representative thus asked if it would not be possible to have a different layout for the BPF and move the session to a conference/ auditorium type room in order to have a more open and interactive discussion. In the following discussion on possible arrangements the Secretariat indicated that it was possible to use the lecture halls of the venue instead of the Conference room itself but without the translators who would stay in the main conference room.

To a question of the German representative on deadlines for responses to France's invitations, the French chair replied that it was diplomatically difficult to give such time limits.

3. Draft of the group's report

The discussion on the draft report, prepared by the British chair, started with a few remarks on the acronyms. It was asked that the acronyms were checked and that an explanatory list was provided.

Point 1: The Belgian representative argued that the ToR included the composition of AG1 and that it had to be added in point 1.1. It was decided to put the full list of AG1 members in an appendix.

Point 2: At a question of the British chair about members who never came to the meetings, the group decided that it was not necessary to name them but that the statement should be made. The representative from Lichtenstein argued that it was put in an undiplomatic way, and that it would be better to rephrase it.

The group agreed that to retain the point that changing representation across the period of AG1 had led to a variety of inputs (that sounds more neutral). There was some discussion about the the draft 2.4 where the British co-chair that there was not enough direct representation of academics in AG1. It was pointed out by some colleagues that academics were represented on the group by member organisations such as the ETUCE and the EUA that were expert in presenting the views of their members.

The representative from the ETUCE underlined that the BFUG needed to find a way to accommodate more representation of practitioners. The representative from the EIAE proposed to replace “limited” with “indirect”. It was agreed to keep the idea but to rephrase it.

Point 3: The mention of the importance of international league tables raised a reaction from members of the group, especially the ETUCE and EUA representatives who stressed their negative influence for the staff and the students. It was agreed to make clear that the group is not endorsing this practice.

In 3.2, the participants asked for “benefits for all” to be replaced by “equal distribution of benefits” arguing that they could not blame the people.

In 3.3 the group proposed to replace “harmonizing” by “converging”. The participants were not very comfortable with the idea that EHEA could be seen as a model to emulate and asked for a new wording of this sentence. It was also stressed that not all EHEA countries have implemented the reforms and that especially QF were far from being adopted everywhere.

Point 4: It was agreed that the Nizhny Novgorod concept note would be called “a working paper prepared for the Nizhny Novgorod meeting”.

The Irish representative argued that the group first focused on a spatial approach and then secondly tackled topics.

The ETUCE representative warned that the report should not sound colonial in the group’s approach to other regions.

It was decided to change point 5.1 into point 4.3.

Point 5: The participants agreed on the point made about the expectations on funding from the EHEA.

The following changes in wording were decided for point 5.2:

- “limitations” to be replaced by “challenges”;
- replace “monopoly” with a less controversial word.

Point 6: It was decided to remove the remarks on the permanent secretariat as these were discussions that took place outside the meetings and only with some of the participants.

The Lichtenstein representative asked for dialogue with other regions to be put as the primary point.

The group agreed that point 6.2 had to be revised as it was difficult to understand if it was about the EHEA or about another association.

Point 7: It was decided to change the word “impact” in the third sentence and replace it with “visibility”.

The OECD representative asked for more consistency in the choice of words and pointed out that the report mentioned non-EHEA “countries” and “States” and said that a choice had to be made.

4. Recommendations:

The Lichtenstein representative asked to suppress the words “still” and “important” in point (i). There was some discussion on the word “beacon” that some of the participants did not like whereas others did.

On point (ii) it was suggested to skip the word “association” in the phrase “membership and association with the EHEA should be”. It was suggested to write instead: “being in association with the EHEA ...”.

A few changes were suggested for point (iv). The word “harmonisation” should be replaced and the objective to reach interoperability stressed instead. It was also noted that there should be no “s” in “the area of pedagogy”.

The German representative asked about the difference between “recommendations” vs “conclusions”. She pointed out that the group needed to present recommendations for the Communiqué and that they should be more practical orientated.

Point (vi): The Secretariat remarked that it mixed a wish and a concrete event. It was underlined that the group had to be clear about what they expect from the ministers.

The Belgian representative argued that the AG1 had to say what it wanted from 2018 to 2020 and proposed a PLA on a central topic for which the group could ask for applications from inside the EHEA or outside.

5. Outputs for the ministers:

A discussion followed on what had to be included in the communiqué.

The group also discussed how much it could address the expectations for beyond 2020.

It was decided to recommend to set up a global group/task force to organize the next BPF.

It was also agreed that it was not necessary to have a group already set up for the PLA, and that what was necessary was to design a host country.

6. AOB

It was agreed that the group would meet twice again, and that the next meeting would take place in Brussels on the 15th December as long as a venue could be secured. The last meeting, it was decided, would be in February, preferably in London.

The chairs asked the Secretariat to establish a list of acronyms and of AG1 members to be added as appendix to the report.