

## **REPORT FROM BOLOGNA FOLLOW UP GROUP MEETING, ALDEN BIESEN, BELGIUM, 24-25 AUGUST**

The Bologna Follow Up Group meeting took place on the 24<sup>th</sup> -25<sup>th</sup> August 2010, in Alden Biesen, Belgium. This was the first meeting of the Bologna Follow-up Group after the Budapest and Vienna ministerial conference jointly chaired by the country holding the EU presidency, Belgium, and a non-EU country, Albania. The meeting was reserved to participants coming from the 47 European Higher Education Area member states, the European Commission, stakeholders and international organizations. As it well known the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was launched along with the Bologna Process' decade anniversary, in March 2010, during the Budapest-Vienna Ministerial Conference. The main goal of EHEA is to ensure more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe. All the efforts of the Bologna Process members done in period from 1999-2010 were targeted to creating the European Higher Education Area. It became reality with the Budapest-Vienna Declaration in March, 2010. Now, all of us have to work on its consolidation and establishing intensified internal and external communication.

Starting from July 1st, 2010, the Secretariat of the Bologna Follow-up Group is held by Romania, as organizer of the 2012 Ministerial Conference. The team representing the Romanian Bologna Secretariat includes six members and three consultative experts. For the first time they presented new web site of Bologna Secretariat, which all of BFUG members assessed as very comprehensive and informative. In the frame of this presentation we met with Terms of Reference of Secretariat in period from 2010-2012. BFUG approved this document on the role of Secretariat which includes further maintaining European Higher Education Area, updating the important information and make them available at all times for the BFUG and to the wider public. Also, they are responsible for practical arrangements in cooperation with the hosts, if necessary. The Secretariat provides assistance and support for each Bologna working group and carries out other specific tasks, as agreed by the working groups. Its role is emphasized in the preparation and support in organising of the Ministerial Conference and Bologna Policy Forum in Bucharest on 26-27<sup>th</sup> of April 2012, by both preparing the background documents and assisting in the logistical preparations.

At BFUG meeting participants gave some feedback on Budapest/Vienna Ministerial Conference and Second Bologna Policy Forum. As it is very important as experience in the preparation of the following conferences and political forums all of Bologna countries are asked to provide feedback regarding the last Ministerial conference and Bologna Policy Forum in

Budapest and Vienna, as well as suggest improvements for the next Ministerial meeting and edition of the Policy Forum in Bucharest, in all aspects.

BFUG also took note of the updated Work plan (2009-2012) which includes calendar of events and BFUG work plan (2009-2012).

As it known the main aim of the Bologna Process by 2010 was to put in place a European Higher Education Area, as stated in the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué. The main priorities for the next decade are: social dimension, lifelong learning, employability, student-centered learning, education, research and innovation, mobility, data collection, multidimensional transparency tools and funding. Therefore, the Bologna Follow-up Group set up the following working groups for the 2009-2012 period:

- Social dimension
- Qualifications frameworks
- International openness
- Mobility
- Recognition
- Reporting on the implementation of the Bologna Process
- Transparency mechanisms

At this meeting all participants had the opportunity to hear directly about the progress of working groups, plan for future work and give suggestions and comments on the draft version of questionnaires. Bearing in mind that the development of the questionnaire requires time and hard work, all comments and suggestions are welcome and will be taken into account. They are primarily related to the massiveness of the questionnaire comparing to the earlier practice. Explaining the massiveness of the questionnaires the chairmen of the working group stressed that they are really massive but plenty of questions are answered by simple facts.

The working group on mobility informed BFUG that they aimed to develop a mobility strategy for the ministerial conference in Bucharest in 2012. This strategy shall contain proposals on how mobility of students and staff can be improved and how the 20 percent target in the Leuven communiqué can be reached. Also, they informed the participants that the questionnaire on mobility will be delivered to all Bologna countries by the end of August. This questionnaire is part of the general questionnaire used to collect information for the 2012 integrated report. In order to give the Working group on mobility sufficient time and necessary material to fulfil its terms of reference of drafting EHEA Strategy for Mobility, which will be decided by the Ministers in 2012, the questions of mobility will be asked a few months earlier than the questions on the other themes. So, all of Bologna countries will have enough time to update their responses if any significant changes have occurred in the meanwhile, before the general questionnaire is sent out in 2011.



Working group on International openness prepared information related to establishing of EHEA Network. Namely, on 28 May 2010, the **EHEA Information & Promotion Network** held its kick-off meeting in Vienna. The Network, which the Ministers at their meeting in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve in 2009 had agreed to set up, is open to all 47 Bologna countries, the European Commission, the consultative members as well as the Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) and the European Association of International Education (EAIE). One of the main purpose of the network is enhancing the international promotion of the EHEA and provision of clear and consistent information on the Bologna process.

**As Budapest/Vienna Declaration and the Leuven/Louvain /la/Neuve Communiqué emphasise the need for better integration of education and research at all levels Denmark suggested the BFUG to extend its work programme and include this initiative. They proposed to start up with peer-learning activity in which Denmark would head it and which would be open to all interested BFUG. In order to successfully carry out this activity they foresee the maintenance of PLA seminars in 2011 which can deliver inputs and recommendations for further steps in this field.**

At this BFUG meeting proposal on language regime for ministerial conference was discussed. Two options were given, so BFUG was asked to select one of options. First option was: "English plus the language(s) of the host country or countries will be offered, unless the host waives its right. Furthermore, the Chairs of the conference will be allowed to provide for their own interpretation for the purposes of chairing the conference. With the Bologna Process being chaired by 2 countries since 1 July 2010, this option could lead to four (or more) languages being used: English, the language(s) of the host(s), and the language(s) of the Chairs".

Second option was :

"The host(s) will inform the BFUG whether – in addition to option 1 - it is logistically possible to offer simultaneous translation for a number of other languages (and how many). Provided the logistical situation permits (e.g. number of interpretation booths), countries participating in the Bologna Process will be given the opportunity to request further languages to be added for simultaneous translation *at their own costs*. If the requests submitted extend the logistical capacity of the conference venue, the host(s) will inform the BFUG about their selection procedure".

France suggested third option: "In addition to option 1 – EN and language(s) of the host country or countries (unless the host(s) waives this right) -, a wider linguistic pluralism for the period 2010-2020 would be ensured with French and German.

One year ahead of the Ministerial Conference, the host country (or countries) and the Chairs will communicate to the BFUG which languages in addition to English, French and German, will be used for the Ministerial Conference”.

Taking into account that this theme is very sensitive it is concluded that the Bologna Secretariat send the revised version on language regime to BGUG members on consideration, by the end of November. So, this issue will be discussed at the next BFUG meeting.

Italy informed BFUG members about conference with title “Conference Bologna 2010 – the European Higher Education Area: proposals for the future”, which will be held in Bologna in September 15, 2010. The purpose of this conference is to analyze the European Higher Education Area from a different angle, beyond the framework of the development of the Bologna process which has been the central focus, so far.

Next Bologna Follow up Group meeting will be held in Budapest, 17-18 March 2011.

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