BFUG Work Plan 2012-2015

Proposal for a BFUG decision, based on the input received by 06/08/2012[1]

Introduction

The 2012-2015 BFUG work plan is aimed at reflecting the main follow-up activities in line with the priorities set by the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) Ministers via the Bucharest Ministerial Communiqué. The present document was discussed for the first time in the BFUG Board meeting on 31 May 2012 in Sarajevo and it should be discussed and adopted by the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) in its meeting on 28-29 August 2012 in Cyprus.

The structure of the BFUG work plan is based on the three main political goals outlined by the Bucharest Communiqué (quality higher education for all, enhancing graduates' employability and strengthening mobility as means for better learning) and the main priorities for action at the European level included in the final section of the Bucharest Communiqué. Based on the need to focus on full and proper implementation of the Bologna Process action lines, the future work plan makes an attempt to streamline the activity of the BFUG, as well as that of its sub-structures, in order to increase the overall transparency and effectiveness of the BFUG.

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[1] The input incorporates the feedback received from the following countries and organisations: Armenia, Austria, Belgium/Flemish Community, Belgium/French Community, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Holy See, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Turkey, CoE, EI/ETUCE, ENQA, ESU, Eurostat.

The basis for the proposal lies within the need to respond to three main questions, namely:
1. What are the major challenges according to the EHEA status-quo and the Bucharest ministerial commitments?
2. How to organise the follow-up work efficiently and oriented to meeting the Bucharest commitments?
3. How should the EHEA interact with other areas of the world and what are the main topics of interest for future policy dialogues?

The BFUG Board recommended that the discussion on the upcoming structures underpinning the 2012-2015 BFUG work plan should start with exploring possible answers to the three questions above, which could influence the set-up of the future BFUG work. At the same time, it underlined that in order to benefit fully from having a three year work period between the ministerial conferences as well as of having the first BFUG in this period very soon after the ministerial conference in Bucharest, it is important that the BFUG not only consider, but also reach a decision on, the new work programme at its meeting in Cyprus.

COMMENTS

Belgium/French Community: Concerning the calendar suggested in the document (p.1[2], §§1 and 4), although we fully agree on the need to go forward and adopt as soon as possible the work plan, it seems to us quite unrealistic to have the BFUG agreeing on the full work plan 2012-2015, the WGs and other substructures, their composition, etc. Therefore, we would suggest asking the BFUG to agree on the general outline of the work plan 2012-2015 and BFUG members to express interests in participating and/or co-chairing a WG or any substructures.

Considerations regarding the proposed structure of the 2012-2015 BFUG work plan

Taking into account the focus given by the EHEA ministers through the Bucharest Communiqué, the 2012-2015 work plan has to respond to both a need for continuity and to a clear mandate for deepening and renewing the efforts for the proper and full implementation of the Bologna Process.

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[2] Due to the changes made to the present document, the current page numbers do not correspond to those in the BFUG_CY_BA_33_6.1_BFUG draft work plan_2012-2015 document sent previously.

The BFUG Board, in its Sarajevo meeting on 31 May 2012, discussed the priorities set by the Bucharest Communiqué and considered the best structures needed in order to achieve them. Within the discussion, there was a clear agreement that a more streamlined structure is needed, which would allow the BFUG to play its role for strategic policy guidance, while concentrating on key policy issues. To ensure this, the number of working groups should be significantly reduced compared to previous years, while giving more responsibility and authority to the ones which will be operating. A structure with the BFUG as the final refiner of policy recommendations is thus envisaged and it is also recommended that each Working Group have some members who are also BFUG members. At least one of the Co-Chairs should be a BFUG member (see also below on Co-Chairs).

The proposal as it stands will require particular expertise from the Chairs of the different working groups, ad-hoc working groups and networks. Certain BFUG representatives have already informally indicated their willingness to take on particular responsibilities based on their past experience and expertise in the fields. In other cases, the role played by particular institutions in the development or use of particular tools (QF, ECTS, DS, etc.) means that they should be represented in chairing certain activities. Between them, members of working groups should provide expertise in the main areas covered by the group and should also be reasonably representative in terms of geographical origin. Working groups should be of a workable size.

Nevertheless, given the new, broader structures and with a view to ensuring both the involvement of a wide number of countries, the BFUG Board considers necessary that as many groups as possible should be co-chaired and invites countries which have not yet done so to indicate their willingness to co-chair the various groups and sub-groups.

The proposed structure of the work plan is presented below, with a brief proposal for the mandate of various elements. A new, revised version will be prepared for the Nicosia BFUG meeting, following a first round of feedback from the BFUG regarding the general concept and principles, as well as with regard to the willingness to co-chair the presented structures (to be received by 30 July).

Proposal for the structure underpinning the 2012-2015 BFUG work plan

The BFUG Board proposed in its Sarajevo meeting (31 May 2012) that four main working groups are set up, bringing together the main priorities for action under each of the Bucharest Communiqué political goals:

- WG on Reporting on the Bologna Process implementation;
- WG on qualifications frameworks, recognition, quality assurance and transparency ('Structural' WG);
- WG on the social dimension and lifelong learning;
- WG on mobility and the external dimension of the EHEA/ internationalisation.

Each of the above mentioned working groups would have the authority to set-up ad-hoc working groups and networks, as well as to organise Bologna seminars from which policy recommendations would be collected, analysed and synthesised for BFUG discussions. The aim is to achieve more coherence and comprehensiveness in formulating policies and implementation recommendations for the BFUG to discuss and endorse prior to the 2015 Ministerial Conference in Armenia.

It is expected that the responsibilities associated with chairing the BFUG WGs would increase substantially and thus a co-chairing system would be advisable, as outlined in the section above. In this context, the BFUG Board also recommended that at least one of the WG Co-Chairs is invited to the BFUG Board meetings. The BFUG Board Terms of Reference would be thus amended to this effect. A full overview of the possible areas of work and sub-structures which could be set-up under each of the four main WGs is available in the table below.

In terms of advancing the EHEA consolidation, the set-up of a voluntary peer learning system in the Bologna Process could be undertaken by the BFUG Board, in close cooperation with the WG on Reporting on the Bologna Process implementation (in light of the overarching view on the EHEA status-quo) and the other BFUG Working Groups. The BFUG Board would thus develop a system of voluntary peer learning, while reviewing and defining themes for this activity in the 2012-2015 timeframe, in close cooperation with the agreed BFUG working groups, in order for the BFUG to be able to discuss and endorse such a proposal. In terms of the sustainability of this initiative, support could be envisaged from the upcoming EU 'Erasmus for All' budget and national sources, but before that, other possible sources could be identified in the existing EU financial framework and national sources, such as the programmes associated with the Eastern Partnership etc.

The main types of BFUG sub-structures used in this work plan are:

Working groups:

➢ a generic term used for all groups established by the BFUG in order to fulfil a complex task within the 2012-2015 work plan. The specific nature and the precise tasks of each group are outlined in the respective Terms of Reference;

➢ open to participation from all Bologna countries, the European Commission and the consultative members;

➢ their composition should reflect the diversity of the EHEA. Where necessary, the groups can also decide to set-up ad hoc working groups and networks, which can involve external experts;

➢ the working groups are the main BFUG structures which can make policy recommendations, based on their Terms of Reference and the results of the ad-hoc working groups and networks under their direct coordination;

➢ it is advisable that each working group is coordinated by two co-chairs, at least one of which should be a BFUG member. One representative of the Co-Chairing team should attend the BFUG Board meetings, in order to ensure the coherence of the communication and of the documents discussed by the BFUG;

➢ the WG should report back to the BFUG. **The final reports / conclusions and policy recommendations for the 2012-2015 period should be presented and discussed no later than the BFUG meeting in the fall of 2014**.

Ad-hoc working groups:

➢ not a permanent structure, but smaller working groups to be established by the BFUG working groups or by the BFUG/ BFUG Board in order to fulfil a specific task within a limited timeframe dependent on the task at hand (shorter than the three-year period);

➢ can develop policy recommendations to be submitted to their coordinating structure (either the BFUG or a Working Group);

➢ their composition should reflect the task at hand and be chaired by a BFUG member.

Networks:

➢ they should be established by the BFUG working groups or by the BFUG/ BFUG Board;

➢ are meant to establish longer term cooperation between a large number of partners (potentially all countries and organisations participating in the Bologna Process);

- in terms of activity, these networks connect experts in a specific field (e.g. student support, recognition of prior learning or qualifications frameworks) from different countries and organisations and allow them to share information and examples of good practice, to assist each other, and possibly also to develop new policies, if this is clearly outlined in the Terms of Reference;
- are not expected to issue policy recommendations unless otherwise stated in the Terms of Reference;
- should be connected to a specific working group and include at least a BFUG member (preferably also one of the Co-Chairs of the 'parent' WG) in the meetings if only composed of national experts, in order to allow for good communication with the BFUG as a whole.

Seminars/Conferences:
- The EHEA has an open calendar of events, situated on the home page of the EHEA permanent website (www.ehea.info);
- The EHEA members and consultative members are encouraged to arrange seminars, conferences and workshops along the priorities set by the Bucharest Communiqué.
- For an event to be included in the calendar of events that is published on the official EHEA website, it obviously has to be related to the Bologna Process and should be organised or at least supported by one of the countries/ organisations participating in the Bologna Process or by a BFUG WG. Moreover, it should in principle be open to participants from all Bologna countries, which however does not exclude international events that have a more regional focus.
- Invitations, presentations, reports and conclusions can be published on the website and forwarded to the BFUG upon request of the organisers.

A more comprehensive list of working methods which could be employed in implementing the BFUG 2012-2015 work plan is to be found within the 'Background paper on additional working methods to facilitate the proper and full implementation of the agreed Bologna principles and action lines':

http://bfug.ehea.info/bfug3/Documents/BFUG/2011,%2017-18%20March,%20Gödöllő/BFUG_HU_AD_24_10a%20Additional%20working%20methods.pdf

This list of possible follow-up activities at European level does not claim to be comprehensive and the BFUG is actively encouraged to develop additional forms of cooperation taking forward the different priority areas at European level that can feed into the political decision-making process.

The Terms of Reference for each BFUG WG will be enclosed as annexes to the present document, once the overall structure is finalised.

COMMENTS

Belgium/French Community: We support the proposal sent by the Bologna Secretariat underlining the need for a streamlined structure in order to carry out more efficiently the WP 2012-2015, while giving a crucial role to the BFUG as main provider of strategic policy guidance.

However, we believe that the main challenge will be to make those groups work efficiently, being able to formulate focused/specific recommendations, considering the challenges of the implementation of the Bologna actions lines at national and institutional levels. Indeed, by establishing large WGs, including various actions lines/policy areas of the EHEA, there is a high risk to have the BFUG and its substructures not linked anymore to the national and/or institutional realities. This is particularly true for the WG on reporting the Bologna Process implementation and the 'structural' WG. Therefore, we would suggest every WGs, networks and ad-hoc WGs to carefully consider the ministerial commitments at national and institutional levels, when drafting and adopting their specific terms of reference.

Belgium/French Community: We agree with the proposed follow-up structure and its organisation. We strongly support the advice of having co-chairs of the WGs and the participation of the WG co-chairs within the BFUG Board. However, considering the broad sphere of actions of the proposed WGs, it is crucial to have strong information and communication mechanisms between the different BFUG structures. Therefore, we would suggest having systematically of brief oral report of the WGs co-chairs at the BFUG meeting. In the same perspective, we would suggest WGs co-chairs participating in the WG on reporting on the Bologna Process implementation. Moreover, we underline once again the crucial role of the BFUG as final decision body on the work programme and its implementation.
[...]
Concerning the proposed WGs (p.3), we would suggest having shorter but broader name, in order to facilitate the understanding but also underlining the large scope of activities. The WGs could be: WG on reporting, WG on EHEA structures

and instruments, WG on social dimension, WG on internationalisation.

Concerning the networks' main tasks (p.5), we would suggest deleting the fourth bullet point on the policy recommendations. Since it is mentioned that networks will possibly develop new policies, it is quite obvious that the networks might make policy recommendations.

Concerning the seminars/conferences (p.5), we would suggest adding that those activities should be, in principle, free of charge in order to avoid that some countries would not participate in Bologna activities for financial reasons.

Czech Republic: The Czech Republic welcomes the Work Plan, especially the more holistic approach in planning the WGs. It leads not only to reducing their number but mainly to the synergies in our activities.

Finland: We fully agree on reducing the number of working groups concentrating on the main priorities of the Bucharest Communiqué. The four main working groups proposed are important and well justified. It is a good idea to allow the working groups to decide how they will organize their work and for example to set-up ad hoc working groups and to involve experts when needed.

However, the overall structure still needs some clarification especially regarding to ad-hoc working groups, networks and structures/activities directly responsible to the BFUG.
In the draft the ad-hoc working groups are described to be not permanent structure with limited timeframe. However, there are now no indications that the ad-hoc WG's mentioned in work plan would work shorter time than the working groups.

Germany: […] we think that it goes into the right direction reducing the number of working groups, because during the last period we had too many. This situation caused difficulties in terms of coordination. The proposed solution can improve the outcome for the next Ministerial Conference.

Holy See: In general the BFUG work-plan provides a good impression and seams "fit for purpose".
We support the efforts to reduce the numbers of groups, streamline their work, make it more effective, etc. But in practise, some of these goals could be difficult to combine, as the past experience shows, like the ideas of having a balanced representation of members in WGs and, at the same time of keeping the size of groups manageable (15 is a good proposal …).

We agree with the suggestion to invite one co-chair of each WG to the board meetings. This will definitely help improving coordination. Since some of the WGs overlap in their scope (for ex. Recognition and External Dimension), I would also suggest that one co-chair should attend the meeting of the other group.

Having reflected with some colleagues on possible terms of reference for a WG, which we wanted to propose before this draft was presented, I would suggest the following more methodological possibilities that could be added to the terms of reference in order to improve the effectiveness of the WGs.

- Members of WGs, in order to be accepted into the group, have to bind themselves to a defined commitment, such as: hosting a meeting, chairing/co-chairing of the group; organising a sub-structure, preparing a draft document, etc.This is to avoid too many members, who act as "observers", rather than as part of a "WORKING"-group.

- The members of the WGs should be presented as representatives of Countries or organisations but should be accepted into the group, also on the basis of their personal competence. Normally they should present proof of specific competence in the field of the WG. Countries or Organisations should not easily change the delegate from meeting to meeting, without acceptance of the group.

- For each WG-meeting a clear theme/goal/task should be defined also with an expected concrete outcome, with more clearly defined preparations, as well as with "home work". These should be part of the obligatory commitment of each member. At the end of every meeting, aside from a report on the previous proceedings and discussions, there should be more concrete "outcomes" that can be brought to BFUG as kind of a result. This is also useful in avoiding meetings for the sake of just coming together. Also we ourselves should try to shift towards an "outcome-centred approach". Each single meeting could have one or some responsible delegates with specific competence regarding the "sub-theme", who should take care for the single meeting.

Norway: All in all we are quite pleased with the draft work plan and the suggested new structure for the WGs. We believe allowing the BFUG to focus more on key policy issue and strategic policy guidance is vital for the process in the years to come, and we believe bringing together the main areas in four major WGs could give better synergies and make it easier for the WGs to give clear and well founded recommendations to the BFUG and the BFUG in turn to the ministers. We are, however, a bit concerned that the range of some of the groups when it comes to the number of tasks as well as the subject areas to be covered is so huge and complex that it may be too demanding and difficult to grasp. It is, as you have said yourselves,

BFUG Work Plan 2012-2015 (with comments) as of 06/08/2012

important to keep the WGs manageable in size both when it comes to the size of the actual WGs as well as the tasks assigned to the group. That said, we support the new structure suggested by the Secretariat and the Board.

Poland: In general we support the new proposal, which makes structures more streamlined, and follow general message of the Bucharest Communiqué concerning the need of more coherence in the implementation of Bologna. Specific tasks are also formulated in very good way.

Romania: Firstly, we want to welcome the idea of introducing the concept of ad-hoc working groups for tasks, which are limited in their timeframe, but nonetheless important in the Bologna Process architecture. Also, we hope that there will be enough volunteering countries to cover the proposals for structures and that the synergies we saw in Bucharest will materialize in solid implementation and policy work for the next three years.

"the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia": Regarding the Nicosia BFUG meeting documents I have not any important comments to add and I agree with already given comments. We support all relevant comments that we provide success and make the task easy for implementation.

EI/ETUCE: From EI/ETUCE we agree in the basic aims and structures of the BFUG work, including the proposed reduction of the number of working groups.

ESU: Add possible synergies with the Bologna Experts network to strengthen the link among policy-makers and practitioners. Introduce IT-solutions for sharing good practices, peer-learning
[…]
To avoid confusion with core working groups and underline their orientation towards specific outcome, we could possibly consider renaming the ad-hoc working groups into task forces.

BFUG proposed structures underpinning the 2012-2015 work plan

Proposed WG	Proposed Co-Chairs	Corresponding priority for action within the Bucharest Communiqué	Main tasks	Proposed participants
WG on Reporting on the Bologna Process	Andrejs Rauhvargers (Latvia) Germain Dondelinger (Luxembourg)	Ask Eurostat, Eurydice and Eurostudent to monitor progress in the implementation of the Bologna Process reforms and the strategy "Mobility for better learning"; We ask for more targeted data collection and referencing against common indicators, particularly on employability, the social dimension, lifelong learning, internationalisation, portability of grants/loans, and student and staff mobility.	Assess the progress made with the implementation of Bologna reforms and the implementation of the strategy 'Mobility for better learning' In cooperation with the WG to develop a structured and standardised monitoring system consisting of indicators and qualitative analysis to evaluate the progress towards 2015 in core policy areas, like social dimension, mobility, implementation of structural reforms, etc. Produce one joint, comprehensive report, based on clear indicators,	Belgium/Flemish Community Finland Arūnas Mark (Lithuania) Norway Turkey ENQA Eurostat

			set for countries and qualitative analysis, on the implementation of the Bologna Process from a governmental perspective, to be complemented by other reports from the consultative members To support the development of a voluntary peer learning system and reviewing in the Bologna Process [For draft ToR, see Annex1]	

COMMENTS

<u>Eurostat</u>**:** We take note of the intention to "ask Eurostat,, ...to monitor progress in the implementation of the Bologna Process reforms and the strategy "Mobility for better learning"" through the WG on Reporting on the Bologna Process. Eurostat could be represented in that WG. I would participate to the meetings.

Proposed WG	Proposed Co-Chairs	Corresponding priority for action within the Bucharest Communiqué	Main tasks	Proposed participants
WG on qualifications frameworks, recognition, quality assurance and transparency ('Structural' WG)	Noel Vercruysse (Belgium/Flemish Community) Ditte Mesick (Denmark)	Coordinate the work of ensuring that qualifications frameworks work in practice, emphasising their link to learning outcomes and explore how the QF-	In co-operation with the ENIC and NARIC Networks, the Network of national QF correspondents, and ENQA, to develop policy	Armenia Finland Artūras Grebliauskas/Aur

12

		EHEA could take account of short cycle qualifications in national contexts. Design and support initiatives building on the recommendations of the Recognition Working Group. Support the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, overseen by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee, as applied to the EHEA, including by assisting member countries to ensure conformity of their legislation with LRC commitments, jointly with the ENICs/NARICs and other stakeholders. Further efforts to facilitate and improve cross border recognition of qualifications, including through the wide use of the European Area of Recognition manual and taking account of the long term objective of the	proposals aiming to improve the interaction between qualifications frameworks, quality assurance, and the recognition of qualifications; Develop policy proposals aiming to enhance and improve transparency instruments for describing individual qualifications as well as higher education systems, in particular as concerns the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS. In this, the Working Group should establish cooperation with the institutions and bodies charged with the oversight and implementation of the relevant transparency instruments; In consultation with the E4 group, prepare the	elija Valeikienė (Lithuania) Maria de Lurdes Correia Fernandes (Portugal) Romania Turkey ENQA
	Friedrich Bechina (Holy See) Bartlomiej Banaszak (Poland) Sjur Bergan (CoE)			

		automatic recognition of comparable academic degrees. Facilitate the alignment of EU legislation on professional qualifications with the EHEA (e.g. reference to learning outcomes, promoting even greater comparability in the use of ECTS as the basis for such recognition). Develop a proposal for a revised version of the ESG for adoption based on an initial proposal to be prepared by the E4 in cooperation with Education International, BUSINESSEUROPE and EQAR[3]. Develop EHEA guidelines for	BFUG's consideration of the revision of the European Standards and Guidelines; Engage in a dialogue with the European Commission and the national authorities responsible for professional qualifications in order to establish effective cooperation to facilitate the alignment of EU legislation on professional qualifications within the EHEA. Provide input to the working group(s) responsible for international openness and the social dimension on the role of structural reforms in furthering the goals of these groups;	

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[3] For the revision of ESG processes, timelines and structures, please refer to the following document: BFUG_CY_BA_33_6.1_Annex7_ESG revision outline to BFUG

14

		transparency policies and continue to monitor current and developing transparency tools.	Contribute to the general aim of enhancing employability of graduates within the EHEA through the full an proper implementation of Bologna tools;	
		Work to ensure that the ECTS Users' Guide fully reflects the state of on-going work on learning outcomes and recognition of prior learning.	Organise, or stimulate the organisation of, Bologna conferences, mini-seminars and events on issues related to structural reform;	
		Promote quality, transparency, employability and mobility in the third cycle, while also building additional bridges between the EHEA and the ERA.	Submit proposals to the 2015 Ministerial conference, through the BFUG, aiming to improve the coherence of the structural reforms of the EHEA ;	
		Allow EQAR-registered quality assurance agencies to perform their activities across the EHEA, while complying with national requirements.	Cooperate with EQAR on better recognition of its role towards the national governments.	
			[For draft ToR, see	

COMMENTS

<u>Belgium/French Community:</u> Concerning the 'structural' WG main tasks (pp.7-10), we would invite the BFUG to discuss the possibility to include the establishment of a 'pathfinder group' (as ad-hoc WG) on the automatic recognition issue. Although the automatic recognition is certainly of one of the strongest commitments of the Bucharest Communiqué, it seems very unclear for the whole BFUG what would be the actions/initiatives to be taken and how those will be taken. Therefore, we would strongly suggest having the 'pathfinder group' already mentioned in the work plan 2012-2015.

[…]

We have been active members of the previous WGs on recognition and QFs, the network of national correspondents on QFs. Kevin GUILLAUME has been vice-President of the ENIC network, currently member of the NARIC Advisory Board and general rapporteur of the stakeholders' conference on recognition organised by the Latvian authorities in 2011. For this reason, we also consider to volunteer as co-chair of the ad-hoc WG on recognition.

<u>Holy See</u>: In general the division of groups and the distribution of competences is good. The thematic field of the WGs , at least in the case of the "structural group" and (at least partly) in the case of the one on mobility, is very vast. It will be a real challenge for the chairs and co-chairs to get all the work done, probably it could be helpful to focus for some time on a limited number of issues, rather than to try working on everything during each meeting. Sub-structures would indeed be necessary with a caveat that we do not end up having the same structure/number of WGs again, as in the past.

Even if the themes of single WGs are broad and general, there is a considerable sphere of overlap, especially between the *Structural* Group and other groups, namely the one on the "*external dimension*". Recent discussions in the field of recognition (especially on the UNESCO proposal of a Global Convention, on the work on QFs and on Quality assurance) become more and more international/globalized. Here again, we have to be very careful to link and crosscheck the work of the groups against each other's results. Therefore, we plea for having a co-chair (or another "delegate") to be present at the meetings of the other group.

   a. Structural WG (QF, Recognition …)

   At least, looking at the themes and tasks, the *"structural" working group* will have quite a heavy burden to carry. We have therefore to be really careful in choosing the chairs and co-chairs as well as accepting members into this group.

Regarding one of the major concerns of that group, the "Recognition issue", we have to try combining two major tasks: firstly, to follow up the (excellent) work of the previous WG and to strive towards full implementation (addressing as well the – at least among practitioners such as ENICs and NARICs – very controversial topic of "automatic recognition"). Secondly, we have to attentively follow (and engage ourselves with a common "European voice") the discussions on the international level. with two major focuses: the UNESCO discussions on a possible "global Recognition Convention" and the rapid developments regarding the new Asia-Pacific Recognition Convention and the Asia-Pacific Area of Higher Education, which will gain more and more importance, quality, and strength in the future.

As these issues concerning two groups ("structural" and "external") are quite particular, some sub-structure or working methods must be found, applicable for the themes regarding *recognition* ("global convention") and *international collaboration* (especially with the Asia-Pacific region). This we could also to together with the EU-ASEM projects. One idea is to organise from time to time a very focused "round table discussion" with a limited number of BFUGs and experts from one or a very limited number of Countries (for example from the Asia-Pacific region), to update each other on HE-political developments, possibilities of collaboration and recognition issues. Until now, attempts to achieve concrete results during meetings with a big number of participants from very different countries and regions all over the world (like in the BPFs), did not have very impressive success.

Ireland: We note that the Ad-hoc WG on automatic academic recognition has been dropped from this draft – is the intention that the WG itself would undertake this work?

Proposed Sub-structure of the WG	Proposed Co-Chairs	Corresponding priority for action within the Bucharest Communiqué	Main tasks	Proposed participants
Network of National Correspondents	Council of Europe	Coordinate the work of ensuring that qualifications frameworks work in practice, emphasising their link to learning outcomes and explore how the QF-EHEA could take account of short cycle qualifications in	Facilitate the sharing of experience in the development of national qualifications frameworks compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA (QF-EHEA) as well as with	One representative of each EHEA member state, the European Commission, consultative members,

		national contexts	the EQF. Provide a forum for national correspondents to exchange experience and to discuss issues of particular relevance to the development and implementation of national frameworks. [ToR to be finalised]	CEDEFOP, ETF Denmark Czech Republic Giedrė Beleckienė (Lithuania) Norway Poland
Proposed ad-hoc WG on the revision of the ECTS Users' Guide	(TBC)	Work to ensure that the ECTS Users' Guide fully reflects the state of on-going work on learning outcomes and recognition of prior learning	Aid HEIs in their work to further link study credits with both learning outcomes and student workload, and to include the attainment of learning outcomes in assessment procedures. Work to ensure that the ECTS Users' Guide[4] fully reflects the state of on-going work on learning	Armenia Belgium/Flemish Community Italy Raimonda Markevičienė (Lithuania)

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[4] European Commission (2009): "ECTS Users' Guide", http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/ects/guide_en.pdf

			outcomes and recognition of prior learning [ToR to be defined]	
Proposed ad-hoc WG on the third cycle	Aarhus University (Denmark)\n\nNicola Vitorio/ Marzia Foroni (Italy)\n\nRomania	Promote quality, transparency, employability and mobility in the third cycle, while also building additional bridges between the EHEA and the ERA	Map the current arrangements for the second and third cycle in the EHEA, taking into account also the developments within the ERA\n\nExplore the need and feasibility of developing common principles for the third and second cycle programmes within the EHEA\n\n[For draft ToR, see Annex5]	Armenia\n\nBelgium/Flemish Community\n\nCzech Republic\n\nPoland

COMMENTS

Germany: Ministers decided to explore whether common principles for master programmes were feasible (see Paragraph 18 of the Bucharest Communiqué). This should be done by the structural WG itself. Ministers did not decide on common principles for the third cycle.
Explore the need and feasibility of developing common principles for the third and second cycle programmes within the EHEA.

Belgium/French Community: Still concerning the 'structural' WG, it is very unclear to us what would be the main tasks of the ad-hoc WG on the third cycle. Although we support working more deeply on the third cycle and its inclusion within the Bologna

19

Process, the tasks as defined in the document are unclear. Moreover, those tasks seem to cover both structural as well as policy elements linked to internationalisation/mobility. We would invite the BFUG to consider the mapping exercise of current European doctoral training carried out by the Working Group Skills of the SGHRM (Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility) ERA-Group, which is to be tested shortly through a feasibility study. In particular, the BFUG could consider the proposed set of best practice based Principles for Innovative Doctoral Training.

Proposed WG	Proposed Co-Chairs	Corresponding priority for action within the Bucharest Communiqué	Main tasks	Proposed participants
WG on the social dimension and lifelong learning	Brian Power (Ireland)	Widening access to higher education is a precondition for societal progress and economic development. We agree to adopt national measures for widening overall access to quality higher education. We will work to raise completion rates and ensure timely progression in higher education in all EHEA countries. The student body entering and graduating from higher education institutions should reflect the diversity of Europe's populations. We will step up our efforts towards underrepresented groups to develop the social dimension of higher education, reduce	In cooperation with Reporting WG, develop a set of core indicators for monitoring ~~Monitor~~ the national policies of widening overall access and raising completion rates, including measures targeting the increased participation of underrepresented groups and strategies for lifelong learning and report to the Ministerial conference on their implementation. Support the development of national access policies by elaborating core indicators that may be used for measuring and monitoring	Armenia Belgium/Flemish Community Finland Inese Sture (Latvia) Inga Milišiūnaitė (Lithuania) Norway

20

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inequalities and provide adequate student support 2

Lifelong learning is one of the important factors in meeting the needs of a changing labour market, and higher education institutions play a central role in transferring knowledge and strengthening regional development, including by the continuous development of competences and reinforcement of knowledge alliances.

Develop a system of voluntary peer learning and reviewing by 2013 in countries which request it and initiate a pilot project to promote peer learning on the social dimension of higher education.

Establish conditions that foster student-centred learning, innovative

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the relevant aspects of the social dimension in higher education, including lifelong learning.

To identify obstacles to participation and analyse best practice examples of how some countries have overcome these obstacles.

Identify obstacles and how ~~some~~ countries ~~have overcome~~ are tackling these obstacles. To analyse good practices put in place in some EHEA countries (i.e. national and institutional strategies) for reaching the goal that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels reflects the diversity of the European population, in a lifelong learning perspective.

To ~~analyse~~ promote the development of

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		teaching methods and a supportive and inspiring working and learning environment, while continuing to involve students and staff in governance structures at alllevels.	national/regional strategies at governmental level to widening access to Higher Education and mainstream lifelong learning approaches in higher education. Support the development of a pilot project to promote peer learning on social dimension with a general oversight mandate to further BFUG social dimension goals. Propose towards the Ministerial Conference 2015 a set of national targets for increased participation of underrepresented groups. Consider and make recommendations on specific policy issues related to the social dimension of higher education and lifelong learning, taking into account the insights of the Implementation Report.	

			Address the new pedagogical and didactical requirements which follow from a more diversified student population, the WG shall analyse and share good practices and give recommendations on how to develop the student-centred learning in correlation with other needed reforms. To reach this goal, a more supportive and inspiring working and learning environment for staff and students is needed as well as better engagement of students and staff in governance structures. [For draft ToR, see Annex3]	

COMMENTS

Czech Republic: **However there is one topic which we discuss quite often and which to my mind still lacks common understanding what we mean with it in reality. This is the relevance of higher education.** This is often reduced to employability of graduates and the employability is even more reduced to pure statistics of the numbers of graduates who found (did not find) jobs in a certain number of years after graduation. This is not a good approach from many aspects- it dos not tell us much about what we are interested most – whether higher education can help long term employability of graduates and how; it does not tell us anything about the **relevance of higher education** which we already agreed on (in London and Leuven Communiqués) and which stems from the CoE papers (sometimes in the middle of the past decade). Leuven Communiqué: "*We pledge our full commitment to the goals of the European Higher Education Area, which is an area where higher education is a public responsibility, and where all higher education institutions are responsive to the wider needs of*

society through the diversity of their missions. The aim is to ensure that higher education institutions have the necessary resources to continue to fulfil their full range of purposes such as **preparing students for life as active citizens in a democratic society*; *preparing students for their future careers and enabling their personal development*; *creating and maintaining a broad, advanced knowledge base and stimulating research and innovation**. *The necessary ongoing reform of higher education systems and policies will continue to be firmly embedded in the European values of institutional autonomy, academic freedom and social equity and will require full participation of students and staff."*

The relevance of higher education is often reduced to employability, however, we believe that there is time to discuss and say what relevant higher education means in all of the above mentioned areas. And what it means that "*all higher education institutions are responsive to the wider needs of society"*. **We would like to discuss a proposal of an ad hoc WG which would deal with the topic of relevance of higher education** *vis-à vis* the "full range of purposes of higher education" form the Leuven Communiqué.

EI/ETUCE: But in relation to the proposed work plan, there is one important issue, which to our big surprise isn't included. This is the future work on developing a more supportive environment for staff in EHEA.

[…]

We are aware that the development of a more supportive environment in the Communiqué is listed among the national priorities. But to develop national mechanisms in relation to improving the environment, it is also needed to exchange good (and bad) experiences and have a debate among the members of the EHEA on what elements will be required to establish a more supportive environment. On this background, we hope you can agree to include this dimension in the revised version of the work-plan for the debate in Cyprus. We are still considering to propose a seminar on the issue as mentioned in the mails below.

Proposed Sub-structure of the WG	Proposed Chair (s)	Corresponding priority for action within the Bucharest Communiqué	Main tasks	Proposed participants
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Network	Estonia	N/A	Help promote and inform the effective use and practice of RPL across participating countries Provide a means for	Armenia Belgium/Flemish Community Poland

			member countries to share and learn from policies and practice across Europe in relation to RPL development Build links between European countries at various stages in RPL development [ToR to be further developed]	Romania
Proposed WG	**Proposed Co-Chairs**	**Corresponding priority for action within the Bucharest Communiqué**	**Main tasks**	**Proposed participants**
WG on mobility and ~~the external dimension of the EHEA~~/ internationalisation	Gottfried Bacher (Austria) Peter Greisler (Germany) Romania	Evaluate the implementation of the "EHEA in a Global Setting" Strategy Examine national legislation and practices relating to joint programmes and degrees as a way to dismantle obstacles to cooperation and mobility embedded in national contexts	~~Oversee~~ Contribute to the implementation of the 2012 EHEA 'Mobility for Better Learning' Strategy and to the evaluation of the 2007 'EHEA in a Global Setting Strategy'. Support efforts to build mobility and internationalisation strategies at the national level.	Armenia Belgium/Flemish Community Belgium/French Community Denmark Finland Jolita Butkienė (Lithuania)

25

| | | Promote mobility as an integral part of the efforts to further internationalising Higher Education in the EHEA. | Develop a policy proposal for a specific European accreditation approach for Joint programmes, which should be applied to all those Joint programmes that are subject to compulsory programme accreditation at national level.

Propose recommendations on improving staff mobility.

Explore options of improving the information on study programmes and admission systems in the EHEA (measure 8 of the mobility strategy)

Explore whether a common approach on the portability of grants, loans and scholarships is feasible and to be recommended | Poland

Turkey

Council of Europe

ENQA |

BFUG Work Plan 2012-2015 (with comments) as of 06/08/2012

			Examine options of assessing and improving the international attractiveness of the EHEA and to propose a target on mobility into the EHEA	
			Propose guidelines for further internationalisation developments in the EHEA.	
			Consider and make recommendations on specific policy issues related to mobility and internationalisation of the EHEA.	
			[For draft ToR, see Annex4] [Possible sub-structures to be defined]	

COMMENTS

Belgium/French Community: Concerning the interactions of the EHEA with other parts of the world, we suggest the WG on internationalisation, and probably a subgroup on the global/external dimension of the EHEA, to discuss the possibility of integrating representatives from other regions.

[…]

Concerning the WG on mobility and the external dimension of the EHEA/internationalisation, we would suggest having

27

additional ad-hoc WGs on: joint degrees/programmes and global dimension of the EHEA. The ad-hoc WG on global dimension of the EHEA should carry out the main tasks of enhancing the cooperation with other regions, though the BPF, thematic seminars/conferences, information and promotion activities, etc.

<u>Holy See</u>: Having been in all "external", "global" and "Openness" WGs since the Ministerial of Bergen (2005), we propose to avoid working on new strategies, but rather to try implementing the one, which was already accepted some years ago. To be more effective, we need to split the different and somehow very contrasting themes. The two major issues that we would like to follow up more closely are the *global recognition* and the search for more concrete ways of collaboration with the Asia-Pacific Region. In this regard, we could think of a kind of a sub structure, which would link the work of the two WGs concerned.

Proposed sub-structure of the WG	Proposed Co-Chairs	Corresponding priority for action within the Bucharest Communiqué	Main tasks	Proposed participants
Network of Experts on Student Support in Europe (NESSIE)	Germany Romania Norway	N/A	Exchange information and to provide assistance in facilitating the portability of grants and loans Work on the promotion of positive incentives for the portability of grants and loans Explore the feasibility of a pan-European financial scheme to support mobility	Belgium/Flemish Community Czech Republic Denmark Poland
Proposed structures/ activities directly	Proposed Co-Chairs	Corresponding priority for action within the	Main tasks	Propsed participants

responsible to the BFUG			Bucharest Communiqué		
BFUG ad-hoc WG on Higher Education Financing and Governance	Armenia Denmark Romania	Bucharest Communiqué excerpt: '…and acknowledge the need to open a dialogue on funding and governance of higher education. We recognise the importance of further developing appropriate funding instruments to pursue our common goals.'	Present proposals for how to support the modernisation of governance and financing [For draft ToR, see Annex6]	Belgium/Flemish Community Czech Republic Norway

COMMENTS

Finland**:** The role of BFUG ad-hoc WG on Higher Education financing and governance is unclear. There seems to be need for exchange of views and experiences in this field. For example many countries are currently reforming their funding models and formulas. Therefore, we fell that it might be better idea to organize a thematic session in BFUG or use peer learning tool for this, rather than to set up a working group with slightly different status than other WGs.

Belgium/French Community: Concerning the ad-hoc WG on Higher Education Financing and Governance, we would invite the BFUG to discuss the necessity of establishing a specific ad-hoc WG already now. Considering the great variety of governance models and financing mechanisms, a first step on this topic might be the organisation of BFUG thematic sessions and then consider the possibility to establish such an ad-hoc WG.

Norway: **Corresponding priority for action within the Bucharest Communiqué:** 'With this in mind we commit to securing the highest level of public funding for higher education and drawing on other appropriate sources […]'.

Definition of the voluntary peer learning	BFUG Chairs / BFUG Board	Develop a system of voluntary peer learning and	Develop a system of voluntary peer learning	BFUG Board members

and reviewing in the Bologna Process (conducted by the BFUG Board in close cooperation with the WG on Reporting on the Bologna Process and other BFUG WGs)	Denmark Romania	reviewing by 2013 in countries which request it and initiate a pilot project to promote peer learning on the social dimension of higher education	and reviewing and define themes relevant to the Bucharest Communiqué priorities based on proposals from the BFUG WGs. [ToR (and further implementation) to be defined]	

COMMENTS

Finland: We agree that developing a system of peer learning and defining themes for it could be a task for the Board.

Belgium/French Community: Concerning the definition of the voluntary peer learning and reviewing in the Bologna Process, we would invite the BFUG to consider the cross-national peer reviewing and mutual learning mechanisms established in the context of the ERA via the ERAC (European Research Area Committee) Open Method of Coordination.

ESU: Add possible synergies with the Bologna Experts network to strengthen the link among policy-makers and practitioners. Introduce IT-solutions for sharing good practices, peer-learning.