

NEWSLETTER AUGUST

Bologna Process Committee

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. FORMING BOLOGNA PROCESS COMMITTEE

On behalf of the Bologna Process Committee (BPC) and of ESIB I would like to welcome you to the very first edition of the BPC's newsletter. The BPC was mandated by ESIB's BM40 in Slovakia to continue in the footsteps of the Committee on Prague 2001 (CoP 2001) in dealing with Bologna Process issues. Therefore continuing the tradition of our predecessors the BPC has decided to issue a monthly newsletter in order to keep both ESIB members and contacts and friends of the CoP2001 and of the new BPC, informed about the activities of the BPC as well as anything new that is happening in the Bologna Process. We hope that you will find this newsletter as interesting and useful as possible.

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1.2. MEMBERS OF BOLOGNA PROCESS COMMITTEE

Mads Aspelin an engineering student from Denmark, also an international officer of DSF (The National Union of Danish Students). He has been working with quality assurance issues on national level over four years. Recently he has worked on the Bologna Process at both, national and international level. He participated as a student representative in the Prague Meeting. Mads believes that the work of the Bologna Process Committee comes around almost all of ESIB's most important working areas and his most important role in the BPC will be the distribution of news and best practices.

Paulo Fontes is a 27 years old Portuguese Student. He studies Environmental Engineering in Aveiro University. He was President of the Executive Board of the local Student's Union and in the moment he is one of three students in charge of the installation commission of FAIRE, The Academic Forum for Information and External Representation of Portugal, a candidate member of ESIB. He started working on 1999 in issues related to the internationalisation of Education in his local union and also has the promoter for Portugal of ESIB's project "Socrates on The Move". He has attended several Bologna related events and was present in the Salamanca Convention and also, has a member of the National Delegation, in the Prague Ministerial Summit. He was selected to the Bologna Process Committee (BPC) with the support of SYL-Finland. Obstacles to mobility and Life Long Learning are issues that call his attention. In the BPC he is also responsible for Internet solutions. The opportunity to give the student's input and be actively involved in the construction of the future of education in Europe was the reason for his application to the BPC.

David Galea is a Maltese, 22 year old Law student. A former international officer of KSU David has been involved in issues related with the Bologna Process for over a year. KSU, being chair of the Mobility Working Group headed the discussions about obstacles to mobility and David chaired a number of workshops on the subject as well as organised a meeting of the Mobility Working Group in Malta last December. Having attended a number of seminars on different subjects amongst them Quality Assurance, Accreditation, Student Rights as well as being present in the CRE and Confederation (now EUA) meeting in Salamanca David applied for the post on the BPC in order to continue his active participation in Bologna Process issues. The work will be tough and tiring but he is looking forward to this new experience in student representation.

Birgit Lao is a 23 years old Law student from Estonia. She has been active in student politics since 1999, first connection with ESIB took place a year later. While being the chairperson of the board of the Federation of Estonian Student Unions she is actively involved in the Bologna Process. She is representing FESU in several working groups in the Ministry of Education as well as FESUs high educational views in international level. Birgit has attended several ESIB seminars and conventions, also the Conference of European High Educational institutions in Salamanca and since July she is also the Socrates promoter for Estonia. While being the member of BPC she wishes to be continuously active in Bologna Process.

Stephan Neetens is a 25 years old Law student from Belgium. Being the board member of VVS – National Union of Students in Flanders, he is also working with Bologna Process issues in national level.

Jacob Henricson is a student of political science at the University of Stockholm, Sweden. Since spring 2001 he is the chairman of ESIB, the link between BPC and Executive Committee and will as such take part in all the work of BPC. Jacob is also a former member of the infamous Committee of Prague 2001.

2. REPORT OF ACTIVITIES

2.1. THE NEWSLETTER

This BPC Newsletter is the first one issued by BPC. From now onwards it will be distributed monthly, during first week of the month. The BPC Newsletter will be sent to same mailing lists as the Committee on Prague 2001 one - bologna@esib.org and members@esib.org. We encourage more student representatives, national and local student unions, student organizations etc to subscribe to the members@esib.org mailing list. All other interest groups will be added by their request to bologna@esib.org mailing list.

To make this Newsletter more accessible we are going to use PDF-format and after the updating the BPC web page the Newsletters as well as old CoP 2001 ones, will be readable online.

We are continuing the tradition of providing you with the summaries and country reports and also analyses about the Bologna Process. You are most welcome to send us any materials about the Bologna Process, especially the reactions to the Prague Summit.

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2.2. MEETINGS OF BOLOGNA PROCESS COMMITTEE

BPC held its first meeting on the 3 - 4 of July 2001 in Brussels, Belgium at the same time with the Socrates on the Move training. The hand over of the activities was done by ex CoP members Axel Aerden and Jacob Henricson. BPC drafted its calendar of events, the plan for future activities and division of responsibilities. The main events during the upcoming fall are: the enlarged Bologna follow-up meeting, ESIB Board Meeting in Coventry, UK and European Student Convention in Belgium.

It was decided that Jacob Henricson would be the person from the EC who will be responsible and participating in BPC activities during 2001. The second responsible person from EC is Martina Vukasovic.

The second BPC meeting was held in Leuven on the 19th of July, after finishing the steering group meeting for the European Student Convention. The main focus was on team building and co-ordination as well as updating the BPC agenda for the coming months. Within one month, the BPC got a number of invitations to different seminars and this meeting was used to coordinate BPC work through the coming months. Axel Aerden gave the members of BPC an excellent overview of accreditation schemes in North-America and Europe, knowledge we can use in our future presentations.

3. ARTICLES

3.1. THE STUDENTS IN THE BOLOGNA PROCESS BY AXEL AERDEN

After the Prague Summit some European papers wrote about the fact that the students are now part of the Bologna Process and thus they will be able to help and create the European Higher Education Area. By this, Europe became the only region in the world where the students can play such an important role in making policies about the future of higher education. All this sounded as if European policymakers had invited the students in on their own account. They couldn't be further from the truth.

The Sorbonne Declaration came as lightning in a clear sky. Not only the other European ministries of education were taken by surprise, also the students were amazed. Afterwards the ministries could at least say they got the Sorbonne Declaration directly from the signing ministries while the students had to get it from wherever they could. The events that were lined up in Bologna didn't promise to be much better. Transparency towards student representatives and national unions of students (NUSes) was non-existent. And even if ESIB existed as the umbrella organisation of the NUSes it was still not accepted as being the voice of the European students and thus not acceptable.

The current generation of student representatives sometimes forgets where ESIB comes from and which long struggle it already has behind it. The organisation started in 1982 as the European Student Information Board and that was just what it was. It didn't have a chairperson or a committee handling the day to day tasks. It didn't make policies or represent the NUSes on the European level. It was an organisation that facilitated the interaction between national unions. Full stop. Since then ESIB has moved away from being chaired by one of the member organisations and taken up the system of having an elected chairperson and an elected executive committee. Furthermore ESIB started making policies. These two developments can be situated halfway the nineties. ESIB became a real representative organisation with every year stronger policymaking

and good contacts on the European level. Forgotten in this transition was communicating this important change to the ministries all over Europe and thus ESIB was, even in 1999, still seen as an unrepresentative organisation that didn't have a place in the Bologna Meeting.

A committee?

But ESIB was there. Two members of ESIB had student representatives in the national delegation of their country while the others got in with the gentle help of the local student union at the University of Bologna. Through strong lobbying Antti Pentikoinen, the chairperson of ESIB, got to do a speech of 15 minutes to the ministers. But that was already too late. The Bologna Declaration was drafted, it only had to be signed. ESIB's disapproval of the declaration's stress on competitiveness and its labour market orientation couldn't make any impact anymore.

The executive committee of ESIB drafted the Bologna Students Joint Declaration, which the national unions, via email, commented, amended and later by majority approved. The last paragraph reads as follows: *"Finally, we would like to state that we deeply regret that the students were not involved in the drafting of the Sorbonne and Bologna declarations and in the definition of their objectives. This even though we are one of the most important populations concerned by the potential reforms. Transparency is needed in the process. Otherwise it will only create unnecessary opposition and confusion. We hope that in future discussions, NUSes will be consulted at the national level and that ESIB will be consulted at the European level."*

In September 1999 ESIB's members gathered in Delft, The Netherlands for ESIB's Accreditation Conference and ESIB's Education Working Group. During the working group meeting the later chairperson of ESIB, Rémi Bourdu, proposed to set up an expert committee that would be responsible for the developments in the creation of the European Higher Education Area, later called the Bologna Process (BP). The Board Meeting in October 1999 in Cyprus approved this. Calls for individual members were sent out and by January 2000 an expert committee was selected and set up. In the first months of 2000 the members of the committee set out to find the necessary documents and establish expertise in different fields. In short, gain knowledge. Before the Board Meeting in April 2000 in Lithuania the committee had organised itself well enough to propose the board a decent plan of work. And then the official work as representatives of ESIB began. But how do you get acknowledged as the student voice on the European level? How do you become visible? Where do you start?

Activities

Each member of the newly baptised Committee on Prague 2001 (CoP2001)¹ was responsible for a cluster of ESIB members and the country of that member. CoP2001 members had to get all the necessary national info from their cluster and be there as a source of information for the members. To get the information CoP2001 used the CoP2001 Checklist.

To inform the members of ESIB of the activities of CoP2001 and to show ESIB's involvement to the outside world monthly newsletters were written and sent out to all the contact persons in the BP. In the newsletters CoP2001 gave a report of their activities, presented their calendar for the next month, gave a country report, presented the full then known calendar of events in the BP and did a focus. This focus could be an analysis of an important recent trend or a summary of a newly published document.

Closely connected to the monthly newsletter was the website. The website was set up first to bring together all the documents CoP2001 members were sharing with each other in order to gain knowledge. From this sharing came the idea to give the members of ESIB the same opportunity. Furthermore the members of the committee had experienced difficulties in finding the right information and didn't find any publicly available resources. The website soon became the most visible part of the whole of ESIB and by mouth to mouth it soon grew out to be the reference website for all the people interested and active in the BP.

And finally it was necessary to have direct contact with all the different actors in the BP: the ministries and the universities organisations (CRE & Confederation, which later merged into the EUA). These were the official actors in the official follow-up structure of the BP. CoP2001 got a mandate to get in there too but was not alone. The European Commission, the Council of Europe and Eurashe were also knocking on the big, still closed, Bologna door. The members of CoP2001 used their local ministries to get as much information as possible and to show that ESIB was the European organisation representing the NUSes. And this was an important shift in the policies of most NUSes. Most of these had never presented ESIB in that way in their own country. The impact of an NUS presenting ESIB to the ministry of education as their European representative organisation was soon noticeable all over Europe and in June 2000 the decision was taken to invite ESIB into the enlarged follow-up group of the BP (in which all the ministries and the above mentioned organisations were represented) and to all the official meetings.

¹ The name was chosen because of the aim of the committee. The mandate of the committee would finish in Prague and that's where the committee would have to be present to have been at least minimally successful.

Democracy

To represent an organisation you need the tools and the content. The tools were in place but the content was lacking. CoP2001 chose to focus on a few topics which would, according to them, have the most impact or would be the most important later in the process. Social issues would have the most impact and accreditation would later on be the most important. For the social issues ESIB had two important policy papers but needed an extra policy on the social implications of mobility. For accreditation there was absolutely nothing. In order to get these policy papers CoP2001 co-ordinated the appropriate working groups and prepared questions the working group meetings would have to tackle. While the Social Working Group (Maribor, June 2000) discussed the social implications of mobility, the Education Working Group (Stockholm, September 2000) and the Prague 2001 Working Group (Helsinki, September 2001) prepared a proposal for policy on accreditation. The Board Meeting in Geneva in October 2000 adopted both policy papers and thus CoP2001 got the content by which they could represent ESIB.

According to CoP2001's plan of work once in the process the committee had to start influencing the process. The first meetings took the members of CoP2001 a bit by surprise but after that ESIB's input in discussions and workshops got a high level of visibility and appreciation which resulted in being asked to do keynote speeches or to be part of reference panels.

As the BP evolved further it became clear that ESIB needed more meetings to democratically prepare the students input. With the support of the European Commission VVS (National Union of Students in Flanders) set up a project called 'The student follow-up of the Bologna Process'. This project for example got together the representatives of the NUSes for a seminar in Antwerp in March 2001 to prepare the ESIB representatives who were going to Salamanca for the meeting of the European higher education institutions. Here these institutions would prepare their message for the Prague Summit.

Next to this project the Swedish ministry of education gave SFS (National Union of Students in Sweden) the possibility to organise the Student Göteborg Convention where more than 120 student representatives from all the countries in Europe prepared the Student Göteborg Declaration which was ESIB's direct input in the Prague Summit.

Results

The first aim of ESIB was to become part of the BP, the second was to influence the BP and the third was to have an impact on the Prague Summit. ESIB became a part of the BP and got opportunities to influence the process. And then there was the Prague Summit. There were 10 representatives of ESIB and 16 student representatives in the national delegations.² During the Prague Summit there were three content speakers. These speakers were Pedro Lourtie, the rapporteur of the BP, Eric Froment, the president of the European University Association, and Jacob Henricson, the then freshly elected chairperson of ESIB. The impact the student speech made was very apparent for everyone present. The Communiqué has incorporated some of the issues CoP2001 had put on the agenda and which the student speech had stressed once more:

- the social dimension of mobility
- education as a public good
- students are not consumers
- student participation in the BP
- participation of non-EU countries

But can the impact of the student representatives be measured? Although important sentences and words coming straight from ESIB are now part of the Prague Communiqué this is not the most important result. The real results in the long run are actually 'collateral damage'.

The first important result was ESIB's policies being introduced into the actual thinking about and discussions on European higher education. Since CoP2001 was consistent in their message on quality assurance, accreditation and social issues the impact on the actual actors there became stronger and stronger. For example, until ESIB's disapproval of calling students customers or consumers nobody had even paid attention. People who afterwards still persisted in using these terms even started apologising before using them.

The second important result was ESIB's general recognition as the European representative student organisation. The BP had proven that the members of ESIB, the NUSes, supported ESIB fully and now actually made up ESIB. NUSes started representing ESIB in their own countries and used ESIB policies to discuss the BP. This was thoroughly visible all over Europe and brought along an important shift towards the general recognition of ESIB.

² Austria (2), Belgium (2), Czech Republic (1), Denmark (1), France (2), The Netherlands (1), Norway (3) & Portugal (3)

3.2. THE PRAGUE SUMMIT – STUDENTS CLAIM VICTORY, BUT WAS ANYTHING ELSE ACHIEVED?

BY JACOB HENRICSON

The process leading up to the Prague summit was an intense one with countless meetings on all levels. Expectations were high before the meeting and afterwards, no one is really sure whether they were met. The result of the meeting is a communiqué full of innuendos and open-ended sentences that erects few borders for variations in interpretations. This was, by some, an expected outcome of the fact that the Bologna process relies on cooperation, rather than legislation, meaning that every sentence in any joint communiqué must be approved by all signatory countries. Hence the vagueness.

Nevertheless, some of the sentences and things said have caused joy in ESIB. In comparison with the Bologna declaration, the Prague communiqué seems like a profound advocate for student participation. No doubt some of these formulations came about due to the charming presence of some 25 students at the summit.

Another important point that has been put forward in the communiqué is the definition of Higher Education as a public good, under public responsibility. This has a significant importance for the upcoming negotiations on the inclusion of education in the GATS-treaty (which, by the way, we totally oppose).

As we and others had predicted, quality assurance and accreditation became one of the focal points of the summit. ENQAs role was strengthened, something that we welcome. We hope that this will lead to the eventual development of European standards on accreditation (for specifics on this, please refer to our policy paper on QA & Accreditation).

However moist-damaged a document came out of the summit, the important thing is that we do not lose momentum in the process. This seems to be achieved.

We hope that the ministers will have the courage and dedication to live up to their appraisals of student influence, by continually supporting it. On the European level, as well as the national.

4. CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DATE	PLACE	EVENT
07 September	Brussels, Belgium	European Youth Forum consultation about Lifelong Learning
09 – 10 September	Brussels, Belgium	European Commission Conference “Putting lifelong learning into practice - consultation of civil society”
10 – 11 September	Paris, France	UNESCO Accreditation seminar
12 September	Copenhagen, Denmark	ENQA meeting European Standards of Accreditation
13 September	Brussels, Belgium	Follow-up meeting of Bologna Process Steering Group meeting
26 – 28 September	Barcelona, Spain	Spanish Bologna Seminar
End of September	Madrid, Spain	Meeting with the Secretary of the State for Education
September/October	Zagreb, Croatia	Meeting with the Ministry of Education
28 – 29 September	Dubrovnik, Croatia	EUA Conference “Knowledge Transfer”
15 – 21 October	Coventry, UK	ESIB 41 Board Meeting and international seminar “Improving Education: Students Perspectives on Quality Assurance”
26 October	Athens, Greece	Bologna Process seminar of the University of Crete
12 – 13 November	Paris, France	Lifelong learning seminar
16 – 18 November	Brussels, Belgium	European Student Convention (VVS-FEF-ESIB)

4.1. EUROPEAN STUDENT CONVENTION

The European Student Convention brings 150 European student representatives to Brussels on 16-18 November 2001 to discuss the social dimension of the European Higher Education Area.

This European Student Convention will result in the European Student Declaration which the current chair of the Council of Ministers of Education, Minister Vanderpoorten, will present to the Council of Ministers on 29 November 2001.

Furthermore there is a plenary discussion between student representatives and prominent figures of the European Union scheduled, among whom Romano Prodi (tbc). Here they will discuss the future of Europe from a pan-European perspective.

BPC is actively involved in the steering group work of the Convention. All BPC members are also facilitators for the different workshops.

For more information: www.vvs.ac