

WORKING GROUP ON QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS

BFUGB13 3c

1 September 2006

Self-certification of national qualifications frameworks

1. During one of the workshops on national qualifications frameworks, organised by the Bologna Working Group, the question was raised whether or not the ministers' conference in Bergen in May 2005 has adopted the procedures and criteria for the verification that national frameworks are compatible with the EHEA framework as proposed by the previous working group.

The present Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks has based its work in this respect on the assumption that the proposal was adopted and that the task for the Working Group only was to test the procedure and – if needed – to propose amendments to the criteria and procedure.

2. In Bergen the ministers agreed on the following as stated in the communiqué:

We adopt the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA, comprising three cycles (including, within national contexts, the possibility of intermediate qualifications), generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences, and credit ranges in the first and second cycles.

*We commit ourselves to elaborating national frameworks for qualifications **compatible with the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA** by 2010, and to having started work on this by 2007.*

We ask the Follow-up Group to report on the implementation and further development of the overarching framework.

The text is not very clear especially about the kind of compatibility and an interpretation thus has to take into consideration the procedure leading up to the conference.

3. The working group on qualifications framework 2003-05 presented its analysis and proposals at a Bologna seminar in Copenhagen in January 2005. The report contained a chapter on linking frameworks of qualifications in higher education based on the idea of self-certification. Many participants found it too soft and in the conclusions from the seminar the issue was postponed to 2007.

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Urged by the chair and vice chair of BFUG the working group decided to rewrite the proposal. In the covering letter to the revised report the working group stated to BFUG that

The comments and suggestions from the seminar mainly concerning the role of quality assurance and the procedure for verification of compatibility of national frameworks with the framework of EHEA are now included in the final report.

The Working Group recommends for the consideration of the Bologna Follow Up Group that the Bologna Ministerial Conference in Bergen adopts

- *The proposal on a Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*
- *The proposal on criteria and procedures for verification of compatibility of national frameworks with the framework of EHEA*
- *The recommendation that all signatories will complete the verification procedure by 2010.*

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It was the opinion of the working group that this (with some specific exceptions and with a different wording) was adopted by the conference in Bergen.

4. At the BFUG meeting in Manchester in October 2005 the BFUG decided to establish a working group to consider and report on the implementation and further development of the overarching framework.

In the terms of reference BFUG decided that

In order to realise the objectives set by the Ministers, the Working Group shall consider what further development of the framework may be required, particularly the linkage between national frameworks and the EHEA-framework; the Working Group may invite member countries to participate in pilot projects of self-certification of national frameworks

In the interpretation of the working group this meant that we were supposed to test the adopted verification procedure and if needed propose any amendment that was felt necessary. We didn't see our task to propose a full set of criteria and procedures for the verification.

5. In this situation of uncertainty we ask BFUG for clarification.

One solution would be a decision by BFUG stating an interpretation of "compatibility" in the Bergen Communiqué as a reference to the criteria and procedures for self-certification in the same way as "generic descriptors" and "credit ranges" referred to the Dublin descriptors and to the ECTS.

Another solution would be an opinion by BFUG that the verification procedure was not included in the Bergen Communiqué and that the working group is expected to present a proposal on that.

Mogens Berg
Working group chair