

04. BERNE UNION STRATEGY - DRAFT ACTION PLAN FOR IMPROVING INFORMATION EXCHANGE AND VISIBILITY

For Discussion

Strategy Review 2020 – 2025

INTRODUCTION

The following is a draft action plan which targets a practical implementation of the strategic priorities identified in the Segovia brainstorming meeting with respect to “*information exchange*” and “*visibility and influence*”.

The action plan is an interpretation of the identified priorities which aims to codify these into a guiding policy and put forward a coherent overall suggestion for improvements.

These two topics are linked through the concept of ‘content’ which feeds both exchange of information and promotion of visibility. As such, there is considerable overlap in the output, systems and processes involved in articulating the action plan.

This draft presents a detailed consideration of the following:

Statement of:

1. **Status Quo** – how current resources and systems are applied in respect of these objectives and the outputs they target

Concrete proposals for changes to:

2. **Policy Summary** – a top level proposal of how the Berne Union should direct its approach to each topic (informed by the output of Segovia meeting)
3. **Content Output** – specific activities designed to produce valuable outputs – divided into “changes to current activities”, and “new activities”
4. **Systems** – delivery mechanism of content
5. **Processes** – workflow of the secretariat to deliver desired outputs
6. **Resources** – HR, external, investments

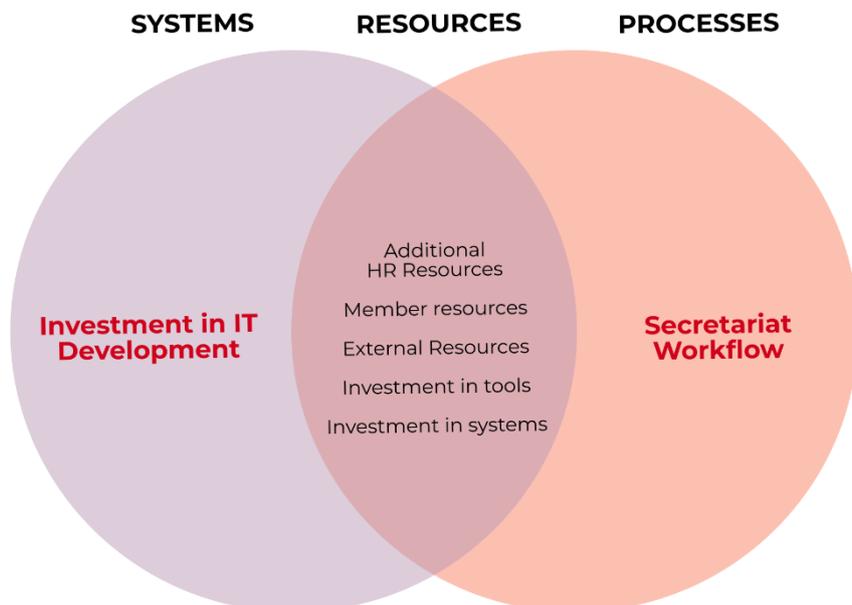
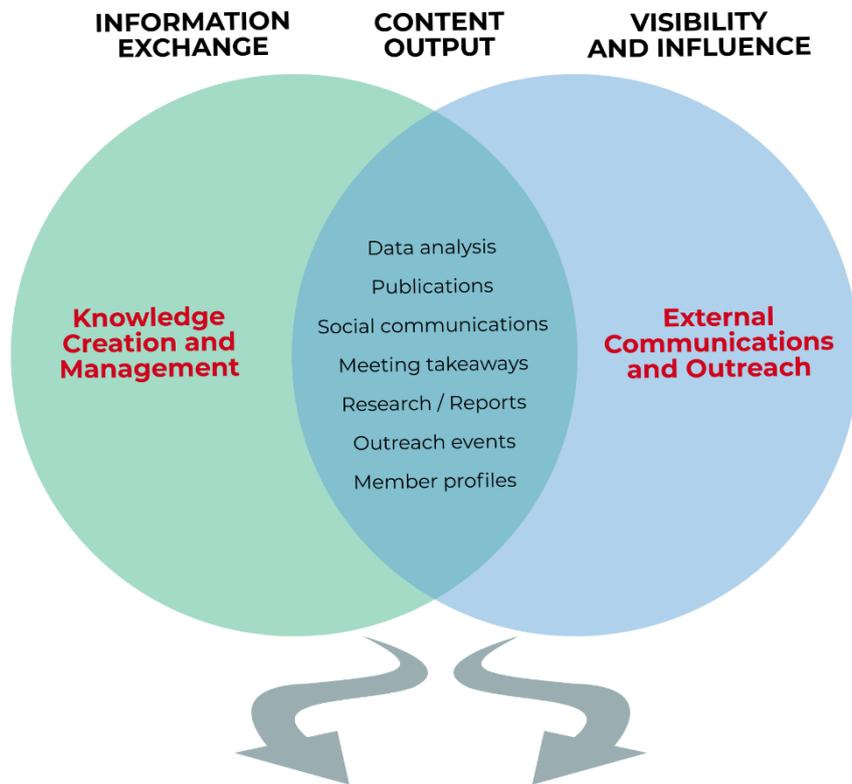
The overall recommendation is to **reorient the focus of the Secretariat’s workflow away from meetings, and towards generating useful content**. Meetings are still a core component of Berne Union output, but according to these proposals, they would no-longer dictate operations as strongly as at present.

No specific presumption on the outcome of the process to restructure committees is made here, except that it provides a corresponding opportunity to restructure target outputs and workflow, making these two objectives mutually compatible.

In order to meet the ambitions of the objectives outlined here (and interpreted from the outcome of the Segovia meeting) there is a need for more suitable, useful, professional content creation: Proposed changes to work-flow should, if successful, allow more efficient collection and production of content. IT developments should ensure more effective delivery. However, if the ultimate goal is to *increase overall output*, there will of course also be costs associated.

Potential costs are predominantly recorded under the “Resources” section. No estimates are available for this draft, but will be obtained if follow-up research is indicated by the MC.

OVERLAP OF CONCEPTS AND PROCESSES



SUMMARY TABLE OF PROPOSALS

Policy Summary	<p>Information Exchange: Shift focus of content away from meetings to increase longevity and utility. Build systems and adjust processes to improve accessibility of information.</p> <p>Visibility: Focus on promoting reputation as ‘thought leader’ and enabling member self-promotion. Create new content. Invest in marketing. Outsourced PR support.</p> <p>HR: Shift from ‘committee’ focus to ‘content/output’ focus. Foster skills in data analysis (hard) and research (soft). Target flexibility and industry knowledge. Augment with external input on project basis.</p>
Adjusted Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical analysis of data to be augmented with business insight • Online ‘Member Profiles’ made more informative • Change meeting ‘minutes’ to Summary • Improved presentation of information, inc. greater use of multimedia
New Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of an information resource on ‘key topics’ – ‘over view of industry approaches / best practice’ – to be constantly developed and maintained • Produce research reports / whitepapers on broad industry topics • Host regular evening roundtable meetings (on model of BU85)
Process Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretariat conducts annual forward plan for <i>content</i> + quarterly status review • More structured collection of research input from members – not based around meetings • Full team active with social communication channels (Creation of guidelines for effective and consistent social communication)
IT Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Powerful website search will scan document content • Online ‘knowledge repository’ organises tagged content by topic • New system to enable members to post content to BU website (Beta already online)
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use rotating ‘guest’ data research teams from members [M COST] • Engage professional PR agency [\$ COST] • Consider professional design agency to develop templates for content [\$ COST] • May need to outsource bulk upload of historic documents due to time demands [\$ COST] • Invest in marketing at non-industry finance events [\$ COST]
HR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire at least one additional resource to complete team: focus on skills and flexibility rather than specific function. [HR Cost] • Consider hiring junior staff to increase capacity of day to day marketing activities if increased volume is a priority [HR Cost] • Look for additional skills complimentary to team and proposed activities. Especially in case of future interns / secondees

DETAILED PROPOSALS

1. Status quo

INFORMATION EXCHANGE

- 1.1. **Content Output:** produced largely from meetings (presentations, surveys, minutes) and data (pre-cooked reports, half year publications, business trends)
- 1.2. **Systems:** delivered predominantly through website, and publications/data reports
- 1.3. **Processes:** organisation, collection and distribution primarily built around meetings. No systematic content generation, maintenance or forward planning except for meeting and publications

VISIBILITY / INFLUENCE

- 1.4. **Content Output:** press release, data, curated content for BUlletin, miscellaneous info from meetings (slido polls etc.)
- 1.5. **Systems:** website, social media, trade press, self-publication, outreach meetings, external events and conferences, interviews for external publications
- 1.6. **Processes:** external engagement is built around publications, outreach and participation in external events. No *true* PR activity.

2. Policy Summary

INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Improving information exchange requires us to look at the nature of the content being shared, as well as its structure and method of delivery. In order to share knowledge in the most useful way, it should ideally *be created with this in mind*.

As such, this proposal includes both technical recommendations as well as a proposed shift in focus of staff, and a much more *intentional approach* to producing and managing content.

2.1. Refocus content creation and separate this from a strict adherence to meeting structures and formats

- Creation of more focused and 'durable' content which is designed to be accessible and useful outside the specific scope of meetings
- Objective to 'synthesise' and not merely collect information

2.2. Target more insightful data analysis

- Analysis of data, either for 'business trends' or elsewhere, should target a less neutral delivery of statistical trends and rather target an overlay of insight upon this – *why* do we see the relevant trends in our business data?

- To add more context, analysis may include comparison with or addition of external resources

2.3. Improve accessibility of information resources and systematic knowledge management

- The Secretariat should adopt processes to ensure that all information resources are as accessible as possible and systematically organised for greatest utility – i.e. by topic and not by meeting
- This is *largely* a technical objective, but also relates to workflow: ensuring that relevant opportunity to collect and document information resources are not missed

2.4. Promote transparency and open sharing of all resources in so far as is feasible

- All knowledge should be shared as widely as possible among members within the Berne Union. As a consequence, any limitation of information by committee should be reconsidered or even fully abolished.

VISIBILITY / INFLUENCE

3 different things to promote:	Corresponding loosely to three target audiences:	Reached through
The Members	Business partners in trade finance	trade press, self-publication and meetings (internal / external)
The Market (products)	Policy makers	Directly
The Berne Union (as a thought leader)	The above + General population	The above + general financial press

We will inevitably cover all of these targets to some degree, one way or another. But in order to be most effective, we either need to focus, or invest further resources (or both).

Promoting members is difficult

- 85 very different comms objectives
- Some members are competitors
- We are a global association while many members are focused on a specific geography only (including local language)

Promoting the Market, to regulators:

Is the domain of the LRTF and is addressed in a separate paper which directly considers policy with regards to advocacy – a topic which requires a different approach to the kind of ‘visibility’ addressed here.

Therefore, Proposals:

2.5. Our primary objective should be to promote the Berne Union as a thought leader

- We need to focus on creating and distributing valuable content

2.6. Promoting the market / products relates heavily to work of LRTF,

- This also requires some core content creation

2.7. Work on empowering members to promote themselves through our network

- We can achieve this through improvements to our systems

2.8. Increase volume of comms and PR through a mix of insourcing and outsourcing

- Engage with a professional PR firm
- Consider hiring junior marketing staff
- Make use of all staff for external content creation and engagement

3. Content Output

CHANGES TO THINGS WE ALREADY DO

3.1. Move to broad summary of discussions instead of transcribed minutes

- Transcribed minutes are expensive and slow to make and inaccessible to read. A well-structured and informative summary of key takeaways from the discussions should be easier and faster to produce and creates an immediately useful output for attendees, non-attending members and (in some cases) external publication
- Any resolutions can still be formally recorded within this format

3.2. More insightful analysis of data through content research

- Preparation of data reports (business trends / other) should combine technical analysis (graphs and calculations) with thorough research (desk and phone research with members / others) in order to provide both technical analysis *and* content analysis / insights into the trends we see
- We can invest more in staff (new hires as well as training/resourcing of existing staff)
- We should target putting this activity at the core of secretariat work. This allows us to increase our output and capitalise upon the industry knowledge already contained in the team

3.3. Improve the visual appeal of information presentation

- Creation of a new set of templates / guidelines for presentation of information (including data) which covers a range of different applications: presentation style, report style, publication style
- Greater use of multimedia content: videos, podcasts

- A lot of this can be achieved internally already, but we could also consider commissioning some professional design input for the creation of some improved templates
- Graphic design and / or media production skills are also worth seeking (as additional skills) in future hires and / or secondees

3.4. Improve the quality, accuracy and utility of 'Member Profiles'

- 'Member profiles' are stored and presented on the Berne Union website, and maintenance of the information is in the hands of members directly via their 'company admins'. The same information is available for internal use and external users
- We should formalise the information collected and allow a more useful comparison of the products, markets, capacities and contact persons (per department, ideally) for each member. Elements of this can be reserved for internal (Berne Union member) use only
- Ensuring the information is maintained properly will require an annual 'check' / prompt from the Secretariat (in addition to the current facility to maintain information directly, for those members who are proactive)

3.5. Review of Outreach Strategy

- Current outreach strategy has been in place for 1 year. It is largely based around small outreach meetings targeting interactive exchange with a select group of external industry partners: At present focused on Banks, DFIs, MDBs and Eximbanks
- The end goal is both to increase the visibility and influence of the Berne Union among these communities, and also to capitalise from the exchange of information and mutual learning opportunities
- The meetings are successful, but relatively-small scale and have limited access to resources due to attachment to BU General Meetings
- They are currently financially subsidised (no participation fee)
- We were asked to consider the current approach to outreach and in particular the format of the meetings
- The current strategy defined by the OTF is relatively narrow and we may consider a broader remit for outreach in general if there something more that we want to achieve which is not possible under the current structure of the OTF, combined with our broader communications activities
- A larger 'all industry' event could signal more strongly the BU's ambition to be at the centre of a 'network of networks', but would require considerably more investment and resources, and may potentially lose some of the benefits of a smaller-scale 'workshop-style' event
- We need to consider the USP and the funding: How much could we invest? How much could we charge participants (and still get them to attend)? Do we have enough HR capacity to manage an additional large-scale event? How would this kind of meeting differ from commercial industry conferences (TXF, GTR, informa)? Would we / can we compete?

- At the same time the 'Capacity Sharing Marketplace' has only just begun building a brand, and has received positive feedback so far
- Recommendation is to assess these questions in parallel with a retrospective review of the outcomes of the current outreach meetings, following the end of the agreed term (after the 2021 SM in Brussels)

NEW THINGS

3.6. Identification, creation and maintenance of resources on 'key topics'

- This is not purely an exercise in organising existing information, but an explicit objective to collect, research, synthesis and create useful information resources on the subject areas and topics which are most important to our members and our industry
- We should maintain up to date reports providing an 'overview of industry approaches / best practice' regarding each specific topic / subject area
- In many respects the concept (and topics selected) may be similar to our current specialist and technical meetings, and a large part of the input to these key topic summaries could be provided by those meetings (and using the steering committees to achieve this).
- But the content produced should be more substantial, have broader scope and a more intentional structure than just a collection of presentation papers.

3.7. Conducting or commissioning research / reports

- Quite often, through the course of meetings and exchanges between members, topics arise which are of broad significance to the Berne Union membership and our industry – e.g. fintech / insuretech trends / sustainability etc.
- Bespoke research of these topics could provide a valuable resource for members as well demonstrating significant thought leadership
- This research need not necessarily 'take a position' or any topic, nor should it necessarily 'represent the views of the Berne Union', in cases where the subject matter could be construed as sensitive, or straying into 'lobbying' territory
- We should put in place a mechanism for proposing, considering and approving candidate topics for research
- Use of external researchers / experts can be expensive, but for topics with broad relevance, spreading this across the membership makes more sense than relying upon the investment of individual members and is a worthwhile use of Berne Union capital reserves.
- Costs can be contained by cooperating with e.g. academia, where interests align.

>>INVESTMENT COST<<

3.8. Schedule regular evening roundtable meetings

- BU85 roundtable on 'mega trends' was successful and well-received by attendees, including industry partners and media
- A regular schedule (once a quarter perhaps?) is a good way to keep a physical connection with the London insurance market, and explore niche topics relevant to members and the industry

3.9. Direct promotion of the industry to wider audience through events

- To achieve greater visibility for the industry we need to target audiences who are not already directly connected to the trade / export finance community
- We should consider the value of investing in marketing to a wider range of general financial, or broad-trade promotion conferences, events and trade-shows
- E.g. participation along with promotional stand and info / marketing materials on the industry, members and products etc.

4. Systems

Information resources are made available to members through the Berne Union Web Platform (logged in section of BU website). Most content relates to meeting documents and is available for download within the relevant section of each meeting, organised chronologically. Access to documents is currently restricted by committee membership. Plenary, outreach and specialist meeting documents are available to all.

4.1. More powerful content search on website

- Current search function examines document title, file name (if different) and context (usually the meeting it is attached to). This is of limited use when searching for specific topics, which may not be included in the document title
- Website global search will be upgraded to have the capacity to scan *document contents* (text inside .doc, .pdf .ppt files etc.) and return more useful results
- Use of meta-tags in the document filing system can also be fed into the search system to improve results

4.2. Creation of online 'knowledge repository'

- This is a system within the BU Web Platform to structure all information resources according to key topics
- Users will be able to browse a 'library' which hosts a hierarchy of topics from general to more specific. The library will index and display all content added to the website (documents, pages, publications)
- The system is based on a process of 'tagging' content according to the topics featured. Some content will include multiple tags and will appear in multiple places in the library, if appropriate.
- This allows users to find useful content, even if they don't know exactly what they are looking for

- It is proposed to combine this with some of the work of the YP group, to build a 'glossary of terms' – the overlap would be that all content tags would correspond to a subset of the defined terms in the glossary, and be linked on the system.
- The broad structure has already been designed, scoped and budgeted with respect to software development, but work has not yet commenced
- The system will be dynamic with the ability to add, remove and reorganise tags and categories at will
- The next step is to define the initial categories, hierarchies and tags for the system

4.3. **Organise bulk upload of historic and archived documents (from meetings prior to 2017)**

- This task needs some investigation as it is both a huge manual task (uploading and adding documents) and may require detailed examination of document contents (if, for example, we also wanted to add meta tags to these documents, as per above)
- Some of the 'bulk upload' could be outsourced as a paid 'manual labour'

4.4. **Position Berne Union website as a centralised resource for news on our Members' activities**

- New system to allow members to post news updates and share links directly to the BU news page – already in beta
- System includes moderation facility to ensure suitability of content: e.g. press releases, white papers, research, blog post, deal info, product and policy changes – no *pure* marketing.

5. Processes

RELATES PREDOMINANTLY TO SECRETARIAT WORKFLOW

5.1. **More structured plan for collection of research input from members**

Reduction of *ad hoc* and *meeting focused* surveys requesting topics
 Plan in advance an acceptable schedule for collection of information from members, structured in a way which allows it to be used across channels, e.g.: meeting topic ideas, business/product state of play, external comms etc. can potentially all be informed by the same survey

5.2. **Annual review of content and forecast of opportunities for year ahead, augmented with quarterly content planning meetings**

Annual review should look at:

- The type of content we want to create (educational / research / promotional), including consideration of format (paper, info-graphic, video) and proposed distribution (internal / external)
- What content will be generated in the course of planned meetings
- Which 'key topics' need maintenance (updates from meetings held)
- Identifying where there is overlap between topics
- Setting external communications objectives (which audiences are we trying to reach and with what messages), and planning content to support this

Quarterly planning should:

- Review and adjust yearly plan as appropriate
- Add additional details and assign resources, including designating persons responsible (if not already agreed)

5.3. Full secretariat should be engaged in content creation, and communication

- Draw up guidelines for effective and consistent social communication

6. Resources

HR

6.1. Hire at least one additional resource to complete team: focus on skills and flexibility rather than specific function

- Creation of valuable content is resource demanding and targeting new / additional outputs will require extra support to cover all tasks
- The importance of data to internal and external output should make this a priority across the whole team, in addition to a specialised function
- The anticipated move away from committee-based structures also allows us to re-examine HR and to prioritise: industry knowledge combined with hard and soft skills in analysis, research, writing and presenting
- Team size and the varied nature of work means that flexibility and proactivity are of primary importance
- New hires should be selected in alignment with our proposed activities and outputs rather than to fill a single specific function

>>HR COST // BUDGETED<<

6.2. Use rotating 'guest' data research teams from members

- Some Berne Union members have significant resources in data / economic / business analysis
- The internal expertise and manpower of the secretariat could be augmented for specific output by having a schedule of 'guest' research spots

- These would be fixed-term project-based research activities focused on one specific topic / area / question, and ideally making use of Berne Union resources (data / survey input etc.) as well as external inputs
- This could either work as a seconded position (in person, in London), perhaps for a relatively junior person or as a remote project undertaken by a Member's internal research team
- TBD whether this would need to be subsidised out of secretariat budget, or if some members would be in a position to offer these resources without charge

>>HR COST // TO MEMBERS?<<

6.3. Look for additional skills complimentary to team and proposed activities

- While industry knowledge and flexibility are the main focus for new hiring, we should seek to compliment this with additional skills which benefit the content output we are looking for
- E.g. skills in graphic design, video editing, software coding, database management
- This is especially true in case of future interns / secondees

6.4. Engage with a professional PR agency to improve our access to external media

- Even the largest organisations use PR agencies to achieve regular volume of placed content with target groups
- Such an agency has dependable contacts across media
- A full-time in-house PR function is not realistic in such a small team, but if we wish to increase visibility beyond our typical channels and audiences this may be one way to achieve that, at a cost

>>SUBSCRIPTION COST<<

6.5. [Consider] hiring junior staff to increase capacity of day to day marketing activities if increased volume is a priority

- If volume of day to day marketing activity is important (and proves unachievable with full team engagement) we could consider hiring junior (relatively low cost) support staff with knowledge of online marketing management and other support functions in e.g. CRM, helpdesk support etc.

>>HR COST<<

INVESTMENTS

6.6. **[Consider] professional design agency to develop templates for content**

- Improving overall presentation of output, presentations, documents etc. can be achieved internally
- But in order to free up internal resources for other work use of a professional design firm could be considered to create a series of flexible templates to meet various purposes: presentations, reports, research documents etc.

>>INVESTMENT COST<<

6.7. **May need to outsource bulk upload of historic documents due to time demands**

- This task needs some investigation as it is both a huge manual task (uploading and adding documents) and may require detailed examination of document contents (if, for example, we also wanted to add meta tags to these documents, as per above)

>>INVESTMENT COST<<

6.8. **[Consider] working with external agency logistics support staff to manage elements of meetings**

- Could free up capacity for more output-oriented activity of permanent staff
- Depends on final stable head count for Secretariat –

>>SUBSCRIPTION COST<<