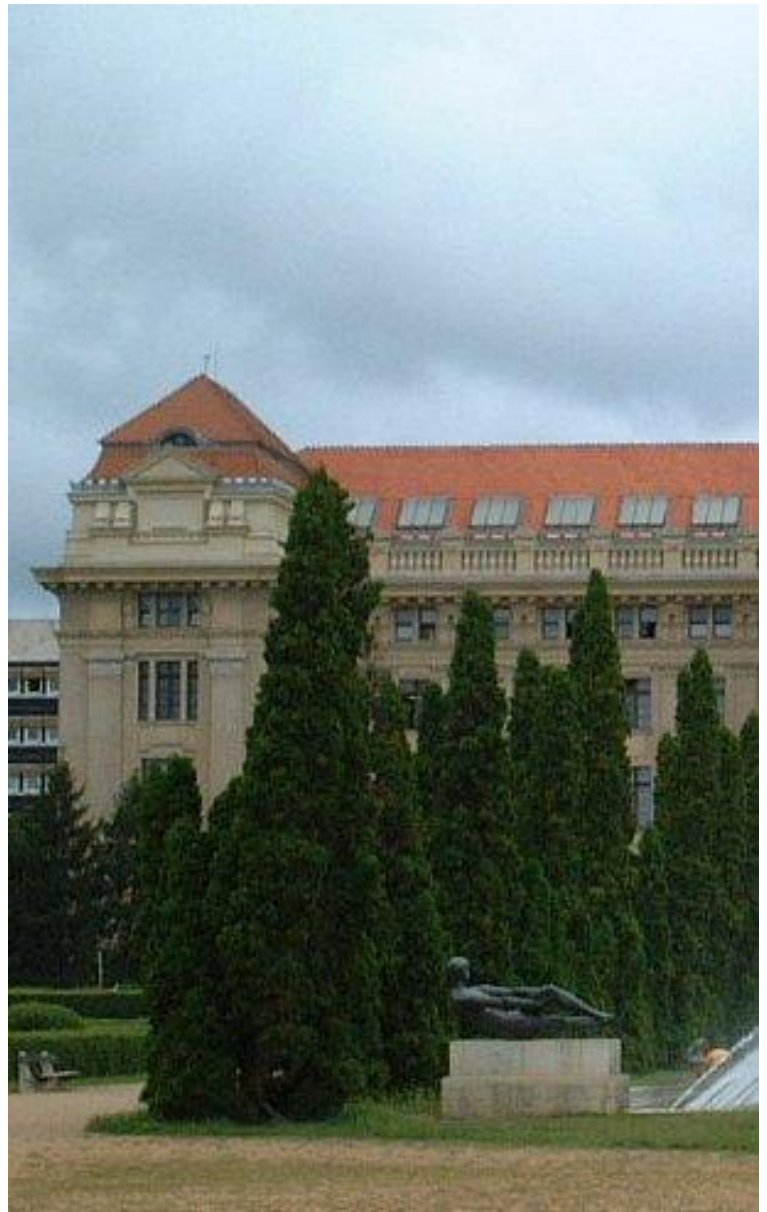




Center for  
Higher Education  
Policy Studies



International Centre for  
Higher Education Research Kassel



*The Bologna Process Independent Assessment*

**The first decade of working on the  
European Higher Education Area**

*Volume 2 Case studies and appendices*



# The first decade of working on the European Higher Education Area

## *The Bologna Process Independent Assessment*

### *Volume 2 Case studies and appendices*

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## The Bologna Process Independent Assessment reports

The consortium of CHEPS, INCHER-Kassel and ECOTEC have made an assessment of major elements of first decade of the Bologna Process. The study was commissioned by the European Commission in cooperation with the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) in order to obtain an independent view on the progress of the Bologna Process.

We publish the study in two volumes online, the detailed assessment report and the current volume containing the case studies and appendices. They are available on [http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/doc1290\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/doc1290_en.htm) and through the CHEPS website: [www.utwente.nl/cheps/publications](http://www.utwente.nl/cheps/publications).

The Executive summary, together with the overview and assessment sections have also been published separately.



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## Case studies



## 0 Selection of case studies

### 0.1 Place in the independent assessment study

The Independent Assessment Study consists of three main empirical parts:

- Overview of national situations, based on indicators and available studies.
- Twelve case studies.
- Stakeholder interviews.

The current chapter lists the rationale for choosing the 12 cases that were selected in consultation between the study's Advisory Board and the research team.

The direct aim of the case studies is to gain in-depth insight into the various ways in which countries and other actors strive for the strategic goals of the Bologna Process and how these are related to each other, to environmental factors outside the Bologna Process *strictu sensu*, and to achievements towards the operational or intermediate goals of the Bologna Process. The *purpose of the case studies* is to provide other actors with lessons learnt that may help them in emulating successful polices—or avoiding problematic ones, in case of negative lessons—in their implementation of the Bologna Process.

### 0.2 Methodology

The selection of the cases is based on the preliminary results of Phase 2 and on our background knowledge as researchers of the issues involved. The data collected for Phase 2 are organised as indicators, based on the National Reports for the 2009 ministerial Follow-Up conference (Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve), on statistics of Eurydice, Eurostat, OECD, etc., and on several dedicated empirical studies.

The general aim of the proposed case studies is to provide readers of the final report with in-depth knowledge about good or interesting practices on a number of crucial issues. The character of the case studies therefore should be 'didactical', i.e. they should point readers to positive and negative lessons learnt that may help them shape their own policies and strategies for further implementation of the Bologna Process action lines.

The main division among the indicators collected was between indicators of goal achievement (strategic, intermediate and operational goals) and indicators of application of means. The other major division was into the four broad areas of activities distinguished in this study: degree structure/curriculum, mobility, quality assurance and the social dimension.

With our case studies, we aim to cover all of the eight cells in the matrix resulting from goals/means and the four activity dimensions; most of them through thematic case studies and the totality through across-the-board country studies (the right-hand column of Table 1). It should be noted that the 'white cells' of means regarding curriculum reform and of goals regarding quality assurance will be taken up in across-the-board country studies. It would have needed more resources for our study to develop case studies for these two cells as well. Besides, these two cells seemed to have least priority. For one

thing, the formal means of degree reform have already been applied in most Bologna Process countries so that our study comes too late to guide other countries in their choice of policy in this respect. The argument concerning the other ‘white cell’ is that quality assurance is intended to be a means to achieving the operational goals of the Bologna Process, more than the other dimensions distinguished, so that exclusive attention to it as a policy activity rather than as a goal in itself seems warranted.

Table 1 Matrix for case studies

	Curriculum and Degrees	Recognition and Mobility	Quality Assurance	Social Dimension	All dimensions
Means applied		Policies for recognition and mobility	Adaptation of Q.A. to Bologna Process	Flexible access and curriculum	4 country cases
Goal achievement	Easily readable and comparable degrees	Levels of Mobility		Equity of participation	2 country cases

In addition, we aim to achieve a distribution across different types of countries involved in the Bologna Process (especially focusing on ‘old-time’ members and new-comer countries from East and West, small and large ones) and to ensure that not too many studies focus on the same countries.

### 0.2.1 Perspectives: From means to goals and from goals to means

Some of the case studies below are starting from means (policies) chosen and are directed towards two types of questions. First, what are impacts of choosing these means? Different means (policy mixes, i.e. combinations of regulation, funds, communication etc.) may lead to different levels of goal achievement but also may differ in the secondary impacts they have (side effects), be they beneficial or undesirable. Second, choice of means may not be a completely free choice: policies tend to be contextually bound and path-dependent. Major factors affecting choice of means (policy mixes) will be explored in these studies too, aiming to give others a more grounded choice of options for their future policies.

Other case studies start from the question of goals achieved. Cases are chosen that seem to be successful. In these cases the view will be mostly backwards: which means and conditions made this success possible?

As a result, the differences between the two lines of case studies will not be that large in terms of issues covered, but the perspective will be different.

### 0.3 Across the board country case studies

The first set of proposals is about countries studied ‘completely’, i.e. across all areas distinguished, and relating means to goal achievement. These will constitute 6 of the 12 cases.

### 0.3.1 Cases 1-2: Across the board high performance on goals

Eventually, a high level of performance on the goals (strategic, intermediate and operational goals) is desired. The main research question for the cases in this category is: what did they do by way of policies, how did they involve higher education institutions and stakeholders, and what were the relevant contextual factors that contributed to their level of 'success'? Two cases are selected.

Countries: Ireland, the Netherlands.
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Admittedly, Ireland had a two-cycle structure already before the Bologna Declaration, and it also was in the *avant-garde* with regard to qualifications structures. Their example may show to countries starting later what further developments or outcomes are possible after a longer period of time.

### 0.3.2 Cases 2-6: Across the board good level of application of means

Some countries showed a generally high level of application of means for the Bologna Process. The main research question for these cases is how the different means are correlated in policy and empirically, and how these help to achieve the operational, intermediate and finally strategic goals of the Bologna Process, or what prevents their achievement (given that these are not always high-performance countries when goals are considered)? In the context, we will look for factors enabling or hindering policy development towards operational goals of the Bologna Process.

We chose one 'early' and three 'late-coming' countries, bringing the total of the six countrywide studies in balance (three long-time signatories of the Bologna Declaration and three more recent joiners in the Process).

Countries: Estonia, Georgia, Serbia, Turkey.
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## 0.4 Thematic comparative case studies on degrees and curriculum reform

For the other half of the case studies, we are focusing on comparative case studies across in principle three countries, a main country (indicated below in bold) and two secondary ones. The sets of three countries are chosen to be interesting examples on a narrow set of issues. As a rule, the three countries provide contrasting experiences, usually of alternative but all somehow successful ways towards the same goal, sometimes of successful (primary) cases in contrast to 'struggling' (secondary) cases.

### 0.4.1 Case 7: Easily readable and comparable degrees

In a formal sense, it may be easy to regulate a new degree structure, but it may take much more than regulation to make a real transformation of study programmes into meaningful programmes under such a new structure. Do they apply the ECTS in-depth, i.e. focusing on actual students' workload and on expected learning outcomes? Is this connected to modularisation of curricula and does modularisation entail flexibility? Is all of this communicated clearly to students and employers to stimulate employability of new-degree graduates in practice, e.g. through the Diploma Supplement? The influence of

contextual factors will be investigated as well: the countries chosen display different higher education traditions, resource levels, policy styles, relations with stakeholders, etc.

In this study, some countries that are struggling with converting to real transformation will be focused upon, and their achievement will be contrasted with literature on some of the better-known examples (not formally part of this case study) in order to highlight success factors.

Countries: Italy, Poland, Romania.
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## 0.5 Thematic comparative case studies on international recognition and mobility

### 0.5.1 Case 8: Policies for recognition and mobility

This study is to investigate the complex of policies needed to set the conditions for successfully increasing mobility of students (and staff): ECTS, Diploma Supplement, Lisbon Recognition Convention (additionally: National Qualifications Frameworks and Recognition of Prior Learning). How are these different elements combined successfully? Are there necessary linkages and/or are compensatory policies possible? How do contextual factors influence the options and their implementation?

Countries: Norway, Denmark, Estonia.
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### 0.5.2 Case 9: Achievement of increased mobility

Three aspects of mobility are considered under this heading: increase of inward mobility of students from outside the EHEA, increase of inward intra-EHEA mobility and increase of outward intra-EHEA mobility and the balance between them. The UK has a high volume of incoming student mobility both from outside and inside the EHEA; it is a special case regarding mobility due to its language advantage: what lessons can we draw from it for other countries? Yet, it is a big player for international students and it is actively engaged in 'nation branding' for mobility from a revenue-generating point of view. The UK's approach can be fruitfully contrasted with France's approach to international mobility. In addition, some of the Central and Eastern European countries showed large increases in outward mobility, while for others this remained mainly stable: is such an increase a 'success' and which factors, such as language of the country and language of instruction, influence its occurrence?

Countries: UK, France, the Czech Republic.
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## 0.6 Thematic comparative case studies on co-operation in quality assurance

### 0.6.1 Case 10: Adaptation of quality assurance schemes to the EHEA

Given the importance that quality assurance has in the Bologna Process, it is interesting to contrast countries making their quality assessment system 'heavier' to comply with the perceived needs of the EHEA with countries opting for a light-touch external quality assurance model: does the choice of either path make a difference for international

recognition of degrees and for mobility of staff and students in the higher education institutions? Spain is an example of a country where quality assurance seems to be strongly developing in reaction to the Bologna Process; Sweden seems to be a good contrasting case maintaining an organic, only incrementally-changing relation with its long tradition in quality assurance. Are these two alternative routes to achieving the EHEA, or is one evidently more successful than the other? Under which circumstances is the previous answer valid? In the latter respect, the contrast with Hungary can be illustrative, with its previous tradition of major changes in higher education in the transition period in the 1990s, which then already included a strongly-developed quality assurance system, against the backdrop of strong but very different traditions from e.g. Sweden with regard to involvement of students and stakeholders.

Countries: Spain, Sweden, Hungary.

## 0.7 Thematic comparative case studies on the social dimension

### 0.7.1 *Case 11: Policies to widen participation in higher education*

In this comparative case study we aim to compare and contrast policy strands intended to widen access into higher education for groups of society who had limited access to higher education through traditional ways. Alternative entry into higher education is the first object in a number of countries and several different ways are tried. Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is one of the means to widen access to higher education. The practices and policies of RPL measures are different among the countries, including the levels of the recognition of RPL. RPL is not only intended to give access to traditional, full-time degree-awarding study programmes, but plays a role in making higher education more flexible and accessible in the framework of lifelong learning. Although not a major focus, some 'points of contact' between RPL and lifelong learning will come to the fore in this study. The choice of countries should enable getting a broad overview of options chosen.

Countries: France, Portugal, Slovenia.

### 0.7.2 *Case 12: Increased equity of participation in higher education*

There are only few countries that show high levels of achievement regarding increased social equity of participation. A study of some of them may assist other countries in the Bologna Process of defining benchmarks and learning from their experiences. The Finnish case is worth of choosing especially for its good progress in participative equity within and beyond Bologna context implementations. Some other countries showing indicators of fair social participation are included in this study too. As with all studies starting from goal achievements, the research questions will centre on which policies and circumstances made these successes possible; student services are one of the factors to be given attention here.

Countries: Finland, Germany, UK-Scotland.





# 1 Ireland

## 1.1 Introduction

This case study examines the progress made by Ireland in implementing the aims, objectives and requirements that stem from the nation's involvement in the Bologna Process. It is based on desk research using a range of Bologna related documentation and on interviews with key stakeholders connected to the implementation of the process in Ireland.

In terms of the structure of the case study, section two outlines the key characteristics of the Irish higher education system, the main national goals connected to the Bologna Process upon Ireland becoming a signatory, and the initiatives put in place to achieve these goals. Section three examines the actual implementation of these initiatives, stakeholder involvement in respect to this, and assesses progress in implementation from the perspective of key achievements and challenges faced. Section four considers future priorities and challenges in terms of ongoing implementation of Bologna-related aims, while section five concludes the case study through summarising the main findings of the preceding sections along with outlining the main lessons that can be drawn from Ireland's experience.

## 1.2 Policy process

This section first briefly outlines the key characteristics of the higher education system in Ireland by way of providing a context for the case study. It then discusses the situation at the point of Ireland joining the Bologna Process in terms of the main aims to be reached and/or hurdles faced at this point. Finally it describes the policy initiatives put in place in the national context to respond to these aims and hurdles.

### 1.2.1 *Characteristics of the higher education system in Ireland*

During the 1990s several key pieces of legislation were enacted that served to shape the structure and key characteristics of the higher education system in Ireland that is still in place. In general terms the country has a binary system of higher education, with 13 (mainly vocationally oriented) Institutes of Technology (IoTs), designated under the Regional Technical Colleges Act 1992, the Dublin Institute of Technology,<sup>1</sup> in addition to the 7 universities. Alongside these higher education institutions there are also 12 institutions assisted by the Department (including colleges of education and specialist institutions such as the Royal College of Surgeons) as well as a number of private institutions providing courses accredited by the State.

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<sup>1</sup> DIT sits to some extent outside the other 13 IoTs, having been established as an autonomous institution under the DIT Act in 1992 bringing together six colleges of higher education formerly under the City of Dublin Vocational Educational Committee.

In terms of governance, the Department of Education and Science (DES) has overall responsibility for the higher education system in Ireland. It is assisted in its task by a number of executive agencies:

- The Higher Education Authority (HEA; [www.heai.ie](http://www.heai.ie)), established in 1972, is responsible for furthering the development and assisting in the co-ordination of State investment in higher education, having a dual funding and policy influencing role. With the passing of the Institute of Technology Act 2006 the HEA now has responsibility for these institutions.
- The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI; [www.nqai.ie](http://www.nqai.ie)) was established by the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999, and is responsible for establishing and maintaining the National Framework of Qualifications (see below for further detail).
- The Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) ([www.hetac.ie](http://www.hetac.ie)) which was also established as part of the 1999 Act, is the qualifications awarding body for the Institutes of Technology and other non-university higher education colleges and institutions. HETAC may also delegate the authority to make awards to the Institutes of Technology.

In terms of the size of the Irish higher education system, statistics from the DES show that numbers in full time education at the higher education level have grown from 107,501 in 1996/7 to a total of 141,640 in 2007/08. Figures for part-time students in 2007/08 are: 16,518 in universities and 15,909 in the IoTs, giving a total of 32,427. This suggests that the overall size of the higher education sector in terms of enrolments in 2007/08 was over 173,000. With a population of just over 4 million, Ireland now has relatively high participation rates in higher education, having increased markedly over the last two decades. Using 2004 data a HEA report estimated that between 50-55% of 17-18 year olds enter higher education (O'Connell, McCoy & Clancy, 2006).

### *1.2.2 Main Bologna related goals and challenges*

Ireland already had a 2/3-cycle system upon joining the Bologna Process in 1999, along with possessing a number of pre-existing and developing national initiatives that themselves closely reflected key elements of the Bologna goals. A number of key reforms associated with the Bologna Process were effectively occurring in parallel at the Irish level in the late 1990s. In other words, the Irish experience is in many ways about a parallel process of national reform, with national policy drivers being key rather than Bologna itself acting as a driver for change. Importantly, however, these national drivers and the initiatives and reforms that followed broadly fit in with the overall principles behind Bologna, and reflected some of the specific action lines associated with the process.

The rationalisation and reform of qualifications in particular were a key element of the wider infrastructural reforms of the 1990s, and were thus a key national goal at the time Ireland became involved with Bologna. The process leading to the 1999 Qualifications (Education and Training) Act predated Ireland's signing the Bologna Declaration, and the Act is seen as important in this area through establishing the NQAI and HETAC, along with taking forward the process of qualifications reform at the national level.

Likewise, the infrastructure and statutory backing for processes around awarding degrees, validating qualifications, and other quality assurance elements were initiated

through the Qualifications Act (1999), along with the Universities Act (1997), Regional Technical Colleges Act (2002) and DIT Act (1992). Fully instituting the reforms—for instance, the National Qualifications Framework was adopted in 2003—and embedding them at the institutional level thus represented key goals at the time of joining Bologna. In a similar manner, another (ongoing) key goal at the time of joining Bologna involved increasing equality in access to higher education (reflected, for example, in the Universities Act (1997) charging the institutions with promoting and preserving equality of opportunity and access). Again, all of these goals are best interpreted as national policy objectives stemming from national concerns, which would have been goals for Ireland without the Bologna Process but which are compatible with it.

The feeling amongst interviewees was that Ireland did not face any particularly large difficulties in ensuring its system reflected the process's broad goals process. One interviewee observed that, possibly due to Ireland's higher education system being 'Bologna-compliant' in the broad sense at the time of the Bologna Declaration, the country was perhaps a little complacent in terms of fully instituting the requirements of the process at the start, specifically in the first years, between 1999 and 2002.

Rather than at the overall systemic level, therefore, the ongoing aims and challenges in this area were largely at the more specific level of fully implementing particular aspects of institutional reform such as modularisation, course descriptors, and transferable credit systems. However, it is also clear that aspects related to the social dimension of Bologna around equality of access represented key challenge at this point, despite increases in numbers studying at the higher education level in previous decades. In addition, although the infrastructure for developing a qualifications' framework was in place, there was still work to do in actually developing it, in achieving stakeholder buy-in and implementing it.

### 1.2.3 *Policy initiatives put in place*

A series of policy initiatives in Ireland supported the goals of the Bologna Process, though not all of these directly stemmed from Bologna itself. As noted, the legislative basis to support and implement degree reform stemmed largely from the 1999 Qualifications Act and associated developments such as the establishment of the NQAI and HETAC. A key element to this was the development of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF), principally taken forward by NQAI and representing a central part of its initial remit.

The view was that instituting the NQF was the key infrastructural development that would support and enable the (further) implementation of many of the Bologna action lines at the national level. Indeed, key stakeholders involved in developing the NQF in Ireland also worked at the European level to raise the significance of qualifications frameworks in the Bologna Process itself, along with the development of the overarching qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and descriptors for the three cycles. In terms of developing and instituting the NQF, NQAI led a collaborative and consultative process including holding a national forum and producing a series of consultation and subsequent policy documents (NQAI, 2003).

A number of other policy initiatives to forward degree reform were taken alongside and on the back of the development of the NQF (officially launched in October 2003). Alongside HETAC and the HEA, NQAI sought to encourage full adoption of the NQF and associated elements to degree reform such as adopting course descriptors and learning outcomes for all programmes. In essence the aim was to rationalise and 'tidy up' the degree awards

system and to increase transparency. Given its remit overseeing the IoTs and the non-University higher education sector, HETAC was able to adopt a policy to ensure that all qualifications offered by providers under its responsibility would be framework compatible and compliant by 2005.

In the universities, the HEA used its funding models and mechanisms to encourage the institutions, which had been given a significant degree of autonomy under the 1997 Universities Act, to implement and deepen use of the qualifications framework across their processes and activities.<sup>2</sup> Regarding joint degrees, the HEA has encouraged their development as a policy aim through similar funding mechanisms and the Irish Universities Association has undertaken studies and workshops on the topic, but there has been no major national policy initiative as such designed to establish such study programmes. Also because of universities' autonomy, establishing joint degrees has largely been left to individual institutions.

Policies to encourage mobility also in part related back to the development and institution of the NQF, given that the framework was seen as key to enabling and encouraging institutions to adopt credit-based awards and assess other qualifications against the framework. Again, however, as yet there have been few significant moves to institute specific policies or initiatives at the national level to enable and encourage mobility. While it is seen as a part of the strategic objectives of bodies such as the HEA and the Irish Universities Association, along with the DES, in practice no major funding has been allocated to support this. Accepting this, there has been some work involving the HEA, DES and NQAI on developing and promoting Diploma Supplements, for example, and some funding has been allocated by individual institutions to develop, for example, bilateral exchange programmes and four-year degree programmes with one year spent abroad. Additionally the DES has provided a small number of scholarships to support Irish students to attend the European University Institute in Florence.

Concerning quality assurance Ireland has implemented a number of policies allied to the development of a supporting infrastructure to advance and develop quality assurance processes across the different higher education sectors. Thus, the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB; [www.iuqb.ie](http://www.iuqb.ie)) was established in 2002 to increase inter-university co-operation in instituting quality assurance processes and procedures, building on often long-standing engagement with quality assurance in separate universities, codified in the 1997 Universities Act. However, the statutory requirements for quality assurance in universities were very light touch, only mandating a review every ten years at least. The establishment of the IUQB, with the HEA playing a key role in this, was partly intended to encourage a pro-active approach to quality assurance. IUQB has established itself as an important voice in the area of quality assurance. IUQB is funded by subscriptions from the seven Irish universities and an annual grant from the Higher Education Authority. The IUQB conducts regular external reviews of how effective quality procedures are in Irish universities; provides information on quality assurance to stakeholders; promotes quality assurance in Irish universities; and partners with the universities on quality assurance and enhancement initiatives; publishes and promotes national guidelines of good practice on various higher education themes. Obviously it operates in line with national legislation and the European Standards and Guidelines.

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<sup>2</sup> Through, for example, the HEA's Strategic Initiatives Scheme wherein projects were funded to achieve this.

Outside the university sector,<sup>3</sup> HETAC has statutory responsibility for agreeing and monitoring institutional quality assurance processes, as well as having a direct overseeing role for setting standards and validating higher education programmes. The main policy put in place by HETAC to support its role in this area involves the publication in 2002 of 'Guidelines and Criteria for Quality Assurance Procedures in Higher Education and Training'. These Guidelines require all providers of higher education and training programmes within HETAC's remit to establish quality assurance procedures and agree those procedures with HETAC. Regular reviews are then conducted by independent panels of experts operating under HETAC's auspices.

Perhaps most significant in the context of Bologna was the 2003 decision to establish the Irish Higher Education Quality Network (IHEQN), covering all of higher education including the universities, IoTs and other higher education providers. IHEQN's membership thus includes the key bodies with a stake in quality assurance in higher education including DES, HETAC, IUQB, HEA, NQAI and Irish Universities Association along with institutional representation from universities, DIT and other IoTs and student representation in the shape of the Union of Students Ireland (USI). IHEQN was established to provide a forum for these stakeholders to meet and seek to establish a common national position on key quality assurance issues, principles and approaches. For example, it included drafting common principles for student involvement in quality assurance and principles for reviewing quality assurance procedures. The network was also established to link in with the Bologna Process, and to inform ongoing quality assurance debates and progress at the European level.

The final area of policy initiatives linking with the Bologna goals concerns those established to take forward the social dimension of the process. In this area, part of NQAI's remit has been to advance access and progression in higher education partly through the development of the NQF itself, the idea being that transparency and clarity in this sense would play a role in facilitating and encouraging access and progression. The other main policy development connected with the social dimension of Bologna is the establishment of a National Office for Equity of Access to higher education (National Access Office, or NAO) under the auspices of the HEA. Along with the DES, the NAO provides funding through a number of schemes and mechanisms to support institutions to enhance equity of access in respect of under-represented groups, along with having a policy influencing and monitoring role in this area and developing and implementing a national action plan to support this.

### 1.3 Implementation

On the basis of the evidence collected, it appears that Ireland has made significant progress in line with the key objectives of the Bologna Process. In general it appears that most progress has been made in the areas of degree reform and quality assurance co-operation, certainly in terms of establishing the national level infrastructure, policies, and support mechanisms required to assist implementation at the institutional level. More significant challenges appear to remain in respect of mobility and the social dimension of

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<sup>3</sup> Other than in the case of DIT which has primary responsibility for putting in place its own procedures which are reviewed by NQAI.

the Bologna Process, despite some progress that undoubtedly was made also in these areas.

#### 1.3.1.1 *Degree reform*

Progress towards the implementation of degree reform has been particularly evident in the Irish context. In part this is due to the fact that Ireland started from an advanced position, in terms of having a 2/3-cycle system in place and having made a number of legislative reforms in the 1990s consistent with key Bologna objectives. The establishment of the NQAI and the work undertaken to develop the NQF is widely seen as key in providing the broad infrastructural framework needed to progress and deepen Bologna objectives in this area. In terms of implementation, the role and remit of the NQAI was established on a statutory basis through the 1999 Qualifications Act. NQAI's work on developing and establishing the NQF itself involved a consultative and collaborative process with other key stakeholders, involving a series of discussion documents and consultative papers supported by a series of workshops and other fora between 1999 and the NQF launch in 2003.

After the launch of the NQF, the widely held view is that the framework has been successful and effective in meeting its aims of rationalising the higher education awards system and enhancing clarity and transparency within this. In particular, the framework is seen as having achieved significant visibility and acceptance within the education system, partly due to the collaborative work done to develop it, and partly due to ongoing efforts by the NQAI and partners to promote the ongoing implementation of the NQF after its launch. In addition, as noted in the previous section, a number of those involved in developing the NQF also played a role on the European level in establishing and shaping the Framework for Qualifications in EHEA (QF-EHEA).

As a result of these developments, the view of a number of key stakeholders involved in the Bologna Process is that the NQF exemplifies one of the clearest samples of progress that has been made. The progress made is further highlighted by Ireland being the first country to verify, in 2006, the compatibility of its NQF with the QF-EHEA, and the fact that it is well advanced in fully referencing the NQF against the QF-EHEA. However, it is also recognised that there has been some variation in the degree of implementation of the NQF and associated requirements at the level of individual institutions.

At this level, HETAC has been successful in ensuring that all awards offered by institutions falling under its remit were mapped against the NQF and ensured as being compatible and compliant within two years of its launch. When it comes to universities, however, the process is seen as taking longer and is patchier, in part because of the level of autonomy accorded to these institutions and in part because other institutional changes such as semesterisation took place simultaneously. The view is that at the practical level of implementation there are differences in progress in some of the process reforms connected to the NQF (for example, fully establishing a modular structure with course and module descriptors for all degree programmes along with specified learning outcomes).

Regarding joint degrees, the other notable aspect of degree reform connected to the Bologna Process, progress has been slower and less apparent. While the HEA has encouraged their development as a policy aim through funding mechanisms, and the Irish Universities Association has undertaken studies and workshops on the topic, there has been no major national policy initiative as such designed to establish them.

Therefore, also in the establishment of joint degrees, progress has largely taken hold because of individual institutions some universities are keener to develop and implement them and others are more concerned about quality and their own institutional independence. Similarly, there is significant variation within institutions, with some departments establishing a number of programmes while others have given little attention to this area. It is also worth noting that joint degrees involve partnerships with American and East Asian universities as much as European ones. Therefore, the overall perception is that the progress on joint degrees, while present, has been uneven and that a more comprehensive introduction of these programmes across the Irish higher education sector remains a challenge.

#### 1.3.1.2 *Mobility*

As noted above, the perception is that mobility represents an aspect of the Bologna Process where Ireland has made less progress (however, see chapter 7 in volume 1: actually the percentage of foreign students more than doubled between 1999 and 2007). Accepting this, some of the institutional and infrastructural reforms required facilitating and encouraging greater mobility has been put in place. In line with the implementation of the NQF, key bodies such as the HEA, NQAI, and HETAC have put measures in place requiring and / or encouraging institutions to adopt credit-based award processes and the general perception is that good progress has been made in setting up systems compatible with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation Scheme (ECTS). However, also in this case there are variations among institutions. More traditional universities are slower to incorporate such processes and arrangements.

Similarly, some progress has been made but with variations between institutions regarding the widespread issuing of Diploma Supplements (DS). As of October 2008, around 75% higher education institutions were issuing Diploma Supplements and all institutions would issue supplements by the end of 2009 (Bologna Process National Report 2007-2009, p. 28). A similar situation would appear to exist in terms of institutions recognising Diploma Supplements presented by foreign students applying for courses. The Bologna Process national report referred to this development as a 'growing concept' amongst institutions. Accepting that more still remains to be done to fully institute credit transferability and Diploma Supplements, it is clear that progress has been made, in part through the institution of working / steering groups established by relevant agencies to progress widespread adoption in the sector.<sup>4</sup>

Also in implementing the principles of the Lisbon National Recognition Convention (LRC) some progress has been made. However, progress is clearer at the national policy and infrastructure level rather than in institutional implementation on the ground. A leading role was taken by the NQAI and key partner agencies in producing an initial outline of a national approach to the recognition of international awards in 2004 (NQAI, 2004) and the subsequent National Action Plan for recognition in December 2006 (NQAI, 2006). To support implementation, NQAI co-operates with stakeholders in progressing the national approach through its implementation advisory group. As part of the group's activities, for example, documentation has been distributed to all higher education institutions regarding the implementation of the Convention. However, the general perception of stakeholders is that while positive work and progress has been accomplished through

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<sup>4</sup> E.g. NQAI established a steering group including the DES, HETAC, DIT, IUA and other partners to progress the implementation of the diploma supplement in higher education institutions in 2007.

these national level measures, full implementation on the shop floor level remains variable in particular institutions.

In general, it is widely recognised that there has been progress in the area of mobility (both for students and staff), but it could have been more, because of difficulties such as knowledge of foreign languages, costs (given Ireland's geographical location relative to the rest of Europe), and a longstanding trend of Irish higher education having much less outwards than inward mobility. The view amongst interviewees was that mobility remained an issue in Ireland, and a number of workshops have been held to discuss possible further improvements, but that little practical progress has been made at the national level in putting initiatives and significant funding in place. Mobility increases tended to be driven more by individual institutions setting up student and staff exchange schemes in bilateral agreements with partner universities. Moreover, most funding to support mobility was allocated at the institutional level, though clearly some of this funding came initially from the Irish state. On a national level the DES has sought to ensure that grants offered to students are fully portable should they study in other EU countries, and offered some scholarships for Irish students to attend the European University Institute in Florence. Equally, the HEA as the national managing agency for Erasmus takes an active role in promoting the Erasmus programme.

#### *1.3.1.3 Quality assurance co-operation*

Moves to implement quality assurance in Ireland in line with the Bologna agenda can be seen on two levels – that of the structures and agencies established with a quality assurance focus on the one hand, and the actual implementation of quality assurance procedures within individual institutions on the other hand. At the agency level much of the statutory backing for progressing quality assurance broadly in line with Bologna principles was, as earlier noted, already in place in Ireland from the late 1990s onwards.

The organisations with a key quality assurance remit (NQAI, HETAC, IUQB, and HEA) have adopted different routes to implement and develop their roles, in large part because of the varying levels of statutory influence accorded to them and the different focus of the respective organisations themselves. In general the perception of key stakeholders was that each organisation has been effective in defining and operationalising their roles, and that quality assurance has been a key policy focus of each.

In the case of the NQAI, HETAC and IUQB, their quality assurance roles and approaches have themselves undergone quality reviews, which have reported positively (Bologna Process National Report 2007-2009, p. 20-21). Where applicable, agencies were assessed as operating in line with the ESG in terms of their functions, processes and guidelines as regards quality assurance. As a consequence of these reviews, NQAI, HETAC, IUQB, and the HEA have all achieved full membership of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

While significant positive progress has occurred at the agency level, the picture at the level of institutions has been more varied. In the non-university sector, HETAC was able to build relatively straightforwardly on the quality assurance processes and remit of its predecessor organisation, the National Council for Educational Awards (NCEA) given its statutorily defined role. Processes for agreeing and reviewing quality assurance procedures within each institution under HETAC's remit have been put in place, with the results of the quality assurance procedures operational at institutional level being reviewed by an expert panel under HETAC's auspices. As such, the view of stakeholders



with knowledge of Ireland's approach to quality assurance was that a strong and robust system has been successfully put in place in this sector. As a result of the statutory powers given to HETAC, this has effectively been progressed within all applicable institutions.

The picture is slightly less straightforward when it comes to the university sector, as none of the main quality assurance agencies has direct statutory power over quality assurance processes in each institution. This is devolved to the universities' own governing bodies. Partly as a result of this, and other internal factors such as ongoing restructuring of faculties and so on, the perception in some quarters was that certain institutions pushed quality assurance down the agenda. The importance accorded to quality assurance, in the sense of establishing and fully implementing transparent and robust procedures, has thus varied between institutions. The sense is that, overall, progress has been slower in the university sector than in the non-university sector. In general there is a feeling that in recent years significant progress has gradually been made in most institutions concerned, with the HEA offering funding to progress particular quality assurance elements, and the establishment of the IUQB to enhance co-operation and promote implementation of quality assurance in the sector.

Finally with respect to quality assurance, some progress has been made in establishing a common national approach to quality in higher education that covers both the university and non-university higher education sectors. The development of a quality assurance network involving all relevant partners in the shape of the IHEQN has been significant. The IHEQN has, for example, drafted common principles for student involvement in quality assurance along with producing the document *Principles for Reviewing the Effectiveness of Quality Assurance Procedures in Irish Higher Education and Training*. This document serves as a reference for reviews undertaken at HEIS by bodies or agencies external to the higher education institution under review. Given that plans are in place to create a single quality assurance agency some time soon, this development of a more coherent and consistent national approach to quality assurance covering the whole sector is likely to continue apace in the future.

#### 1.3.1.4 Social dimension

The overall perception of interviewees was that the social dimension is an area where less progress has been made than in degree reform or quality assurance. This is generally contributed to the extent of the challenge rather than lack of activity in the development of policies and initiatives to support this aspect of the Bologna Process. For instance, as Ireland's 2008 national report noted, 'achieving a more equitable higher education system has been a priority for the Irish state for over a decade' (p. 45). Although primarily driven by national concerns rather than Bologna per se, as the priority accorded to equity of participation would suggest, Ireland has put a range of structures and initiatives in place to support this aim since becoming a signatory of the declaration.

The key aspects of this involve the work undertaken by the higher education Equity of Access Unit that sits within the DES, along with that of the National Access Office established within the HEA. The view of stakeholders tends to tally quite closely with the last national report to the Bologna Secretariat, namely that while access has increased in terms of the numbers of young people in third level education overall, less progress has been made in ensuring significant growth in under-represented groups entering higher education. The production of two successive *National Plans for Equity of Access to Higher Education* by the NAO is, thus, a sign of progress at the level of strategic planning to

enhance performance on the social dimension. In Ireland, there is a no-fee policy, so further reductions of tuition fees for disadvantaged groups were out of the question, but maintenance funding for them is higher than for other students (most of whom do get such a support).

Similar to some of the other Bologna related aspects discussed, the feeling is that real institutional commitment to enhance access particularly amongst disadvantaged groups, is variable, despite a national level structure and associated policy initiatives being in place. While some institutions have, for example, set entry quotas for high demand courses, this has not been consistent across the board, though recent work by the NAO in harness with the IoTs and universities is seen as having the potential to make more progress in this area. Additionally, new 'whole community' pilots have been set up among specific disadvantaged communities to promote and facilitate access to higher education. The perception amongst stakeholders is that these renewed efforts are likely to improve the picture but that it is too soon to fully judge their efficacy.

As reflected in the national reports to the secretariat, and the lobbying concerns of bodies such as the USI, there remain some notable structural challenges in the progress of Bologna's social dimension. From the perspective of the USI, for example, there remain significant financial barriers for students from disadvantaged backgrounds in terms of actually having the necessary income to complete third level courses even where they are able to enter higher education. Similarly there are concerns that the additional costs faced by mature students along with those with children and disabilities are not always fully met through the funding streams available, and that the presence and operation of 'hardship funds' at the institutional level varies. The recent financial difficulties facing Ireland as a whole are further seen as complicating efforts to secure full equity of participation. Thus, overall, while progress has been made, significant challenges remain with regard to the social dimension.

### 1.3.2 *Stakeholder involvement*

The widely shared view of those involved in implementing Bologna Process policies was that stakeholder involvement, both in developing and implementing activities, represents an area where Ireland has been particularly strong. In particular, the extensive consultation processes around the development of the NQF, designed to ensure buy-in was as wide as possible, were frequently cited in this area. More broadly, the feeling was that Ireland has been relatively successful in developing an inclusive approach to policy development and implementation of key aspects of the Bologna Process. All key stakeholder groups are represented in steering and working groups. In addition, at the strategic level a National Steering Group was convened early on by DES to oversee the implementation of the Bologna Process in Ireland.

This level of involvement stems partly from a tradition of key agencies' partnership working with respect to higher education. But it was also frequently noted that Ireland is a relatively small country where key players tend to know each other. Importantly, stakeholder involvement is also frequently given a statutory backing. This was the case of student representation on the governing bodies of all higher education institutions for example, along with students having a statutorily defined role in respect of quality assurance. Stemming from this the USI participates in most key strategy and decision-making fora connected to the Bologna Process. It was also noted that student

representatives have relatively good access to key agencies such as DES, NQAI, HETAC and HEA.

### *1.3.3 Achievements*

Many of the main achievements of Ireland in implementing the Bologna objectives have been summarised above with respect to the key policy areas connected to this process, and so are not repeated here. However, it is worth identifying some broad areas where these achievements can be seen as particularly notable, as well as some of the main explanatory factors behind this. Perhaps key amongst the achievements is the development of the necessary infrastructure to support implementation, and the priority accorded to successfully developing and implementing the NQF – widely seen as being the main element that has enabled progress in a range of areas to be advanced on the back of this.

Three main factors can be seen as contributing to these achievements. First comes the concern with reforming and rationalising the higher education system from the 1990s on, which, although not stemming directly from the Bologna Process, has been complementary to and supportive of it. Second, a tradition of social partnership working and the co-operation between agencies in implementing Bologna objectives that this has engendered. And thirdly, taking an inclusive and consultative approach to implement changes.

### *1.3.4 Main challenges*

Paradoxically, some of the challenges relating to progressing the goals of the Bologna Process stem from the institutional reforms and mechanisms put in place in the 1990s, which, as noted throughout, in many ways are also a key source of Ireland's progress in respect of Bologna. In particular, the level of autonomy enjoyed by the universities under the provision of the 1997 Universities Act has meant that encouragement on the part of key agencies is the only option, rather than forcing through reform on any statutory or legal basis. Compared to institutions under HETAC's remit therefore, fully embedding curriculum reform and quality assurance at the institutional level has been made slower, more difficult and patchy in the university sector.

More broadly, and connected to this point, institutional level implementation has clearly been a big challenge across the board, as indicated throughout the above analysis. The relative autonomy of the universities and limited recourse dedicated to implement reform has been one factor in this, though there are clearly a number of others. For example, fully and uniformly implementing new or revised processes across all departments within institutions is inevitably a challenge that necessarily takes time. Varying priorities and commitment levels of senior management in different institutions, has similarly played a role here, as has the fact that national reforms over time have significantly changed HEIS in Ireland.

In recent years Ireland has also faced contextual challenges regarding the Bologna objectives on two main fronts. Like other countries, the nation has suffered considerable economic difficulties resulting in fiscal tightening after a period of long economic growth. The difficulties provide a particular challenge to agencies in terms of the budget available to induce reforms and to fund new initiatives.

Finally, it is worth noting that in some areas connected to Bologna, notably quality assurance, there is a feeling that the presence of multiple agencies with partially overlapping, or perhaps not clearly defined, remits has been an issue. Therefore, while Ireland's higher education infrastructure is generally seen as a very positive factor in supporting Bologna's objectives, in some specific areas it has challenges. The development of four different organisations with significant quality assurance roles represents the most notable of these and, as outlined above, this factor is significant in the 2008 Budget announcement that these organisations would be rationalised and merged in future, with this also likely to have the benefit of creating a more coherent national approach to quality assurance in higher education. The government announced in 2009 the amalgamation of NQAI, HETAC and FETAC. The new body should also take responsibility for quality assurance assessments universities. The process to amalgamate these bodies is ongoing and will require legislative change.

#### 1.4 Future priorities

In broad terms deepening implementation of Bologna objectives at the institutional level is undoubtedly the main future priority across all areas connected to the Bologna Process. As noted throughout, this tends to be a bigger challenge in the university sector rather than in other higher education institutions such as the IoTs. The general view of interviewees was that this process of 'deepening' and 'consolidating' remained a priority at the institutional level.

Connected to this general priority, a number of other priorities in specific areas were highlighted during this case study. Particular elements relating to the mobility agenda were frequently cited by stakeholders for example, notably the need to fully establish the issuing of Diploma Supplements and raise understanding of their nature and purpose, to encourage greater internationalisation and a greater international outlook in the sector in general, to ensure that bureaucracy is reduced and pension issues addressed in terms of enabling greater staff mobility, and to fully embed credit systems and ECTS in order to increase student mobility. In addition, there was a view expressed in some quarters that Ireland needs to decide whether greater mobility is likely to be of strategic economic benefit for 'Ireland PLC' and, if so, to dedicate significant resources to promoting, encouraging and facilitating this.

In terms of quality assurance and degree reform respondents saw rationalising the structure of agencies with a remit in these areas a key priority. In addition, the view of respondents was that if joint degrees are genuinely seen as a good idea in national policy terms, then more would need to be done to both convince particular institutions of this and to facilitate the removal of any institutional barriers that may remain (e.g. in the Charters of universities). A number of the persons consulted also cited the need to focus on developing a fully student-centred approach in all institutions given that, for example, there is institutional variation in the extent to which students' feedback is acted upon as part of quality assurance processes, and in the extent to which students' needs are considered as against focussing mainly on staff research activities.

Finally, while it was noted that advancing the social dimension remains a priority, both from the Bologna perspective as well as a national policy aim, the scale of this challenge was widely cited. It was noted in some cases that this was as much about long term cultural change as instituting initiatives likely to have a more short-term effect.

Increasing institutions' commitment in this area was seen as an important short term priority, as was ensuring that all stakeholders retain a focus on the priorities and actions outlined in the current National Plan for Equity of Access to higher education (2008-13).

## 1.5 Summary and conclusions

It should be clear from the previous sections that Ireland has made significant progress in implementing key aspects of the Bologna Process, accepting that the country started from a reasonably strong position in terms of the general structure of its higher education system. A range of infrastructural and policy developments have been enacted to support this implementation, though it should be noted that a considerable proportion of these stem from national policy drivers not the Bologna Process itself. Key amongst these are the development of the NQF and achieving widespread buy-in to the approach taken, the development of executive agencies with statutory backing and a specific focus on Bologna-related aspects of higher education reform such as the NQAI, and the various support, encouragement and persuasion mechanisms employed by these agencies to fully implement changes on the institutional level.

Clearly some notable challenges remain, many of which relate to the need to deepen and consolidate the reforms related to Bologna at the level of individual institutions. This is in a number of areas more of an issue in the university sector than in other types of higher education institutions. In addition respondents generally agreed that Ireland has further to travel as regards enhancing mobility and the social dimension of Bologna than in respect of degree reform and quality assurance where, in general, notable progress and change is already in place, particularly at the national infrastructural level.

The economic difficulties that Ireland faces represent the main external threat to continuing to meet the remaining challenges in these areas, and take forward future Bologna related priorities, although the general view was that Ireland's strong infrastructural basis would facilitate efforts as it moves forward.

A number of key lessons emerged from Ireland's experience. These can be summarised as follows:

- Getting the correct infrastructure in place first to support and facilitate the success of particular initiatives that may follow.
- Establishing a legislative basis to back the implementation of reform where possible.
- Establishing executive agencies separate to the main Ministry concerned with higher education where appropriate, in order to create dedicated knowledge centres with the technical expertise required to, for example, develop and implement quality assurance procedures and qualifications reform and act in a more neutral way in dealing with stakeholders.
- The benefit of extensive partnership working with a great deal of formal and informal contact between relevant agencies.
- Placing priority on developing a clear NQF with widespread buy-in that can then be used to encourage, structure and facilitate wider reforms that follow.

- **Decide on an implementation plan and strategy and stick to it so as not to confuse and demotivate key stakeholders.**
- **Significant changes take time and cannot be overly rushed through if the buy-in of key stakeholders is to be maintained.**
- **The importance of using a carrot and a stick to encourage institutional compliance national objectives, balancing funding related incentives with more direct compulsion where needed.**

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<sup>5</sup> The lists of references in this volume include the special literature per chapter, but exclude common reports referred to throughout such as the Bologna Declaration, national and stocktaking reports.

## 2 The Netherlands

### 2.1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

#### 2.1.1 *The Dutch higher education system*

The Netherlands has a binary higher education system, separating the university sector from the sector of *Hoger Beroepsonderwijs* (HBO). The university sector consists of 14 universities. Nine of them offer programmes in a wide range of disciplines and subject areas, three provide mainly technical and engineering programmes, one is specialised in agriculture, and there is one Open University. The HBO-sector consists of 42 *hogescholen* (HBOs), also referred to as ‘Universities of Applied Sciences’ (UAS). UAS offer programmes in a wide range which prepare students for professional practice, including a substantial number of part-time programmes.

The total number of students in 2007/08 was 587,000. About 65% were enrolled in UAS (374,000) and 35% (213,000) in universities. This nearly 2:1 balance in favour of the UAS is much higher than the OECD averages and higher than in most other countries with a binary higher education structure. UAS have taken most of the burden of widening participation in higher education over the last four decades; about 20% of total enrolment in this sector concerns part-time students. Consequently the university sector serves about 15% of the youth generation, whereas the UAS sector serves roughly 30% of the relevant youth generation, making the total participation rate in higher education around 45%.

The Higher Education and Research Act, which dates from 1993 (WHW, with several amendments since then), regulates the administrative relationships between the government on the one hand, and universities, UAS and research institutes on the other hand. Previous legislation was to a large extent based on *ex ante* regulation and planning, whereas the current law stresses *ex post* control of a more general nature. The governance of higher education is based on the principle of institutional autonomy in combination with a high institutional responsibility for quality assurance and accountability. Subsequent policy documents focused on the functioning and the strategic orientation of the higher education system as a whole and government responsibility is focused on quality, accessibility and effectiveness of the system. Institutions are in principle autonomous regarding education, personnel and resources. This gives the sector more autonomy in determining their own affairs, within the parameters set by government. The government remains responsible for the macro-efficiency of the system and intervenes if necessary.

Dialogue occurs on a regular basis between the government (Ministry of OCW), the university sector and the UAS sector (through their respective intermediary bodies (VSNU for the universities and the HBO-raad). Various other stakeholders, such as employer organisations, professional organisations and advisory boards such as the

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<sup>1</sup> We thank Marlies Leegwater, Ministry of OCW, for her critical reading of the draft text.

Inspectorate for higher education, the Accreditation organisation (NVAO), and other advisory bodies are involved on a continuous basis.

Funding mechanisms are seen as tools to enforce common goals set for higher education, to set incentives for and attempt to maximise the desired output with limited resources. In principle, the government assesses on an ex post basis whether funds have been allocated efficiently and whether the intended results have been achieved. The funding system is based on student numbers and numbers of degrees awarded. Tuition fees are determined nationally for both full time Bachelor and Master programmes, for EU students under the age of 30 years. For 2009–2010 they were set at € 1,620 per year. For students from outside EU, or those over 30 years of age, higher education institutions are free (within limits) to set their own fees.

### 2.1.2 *The Bologna Process and before*

In 2002 the Dutch parliament approved to reform the degree structure in compliance with the Bologna Process. In the same year two amendments to the WHW came into effect that had a major impact on Dutch higher education, one introducing the Bachelor-Master system, and one on accreditation. These laws made it legally possible for Dutch higher education institutions to grant Bachelor and Master degrees from the academic year 2002/3 onwards. At the same time a reform of quality assurance took place towards a programme accreditation system and implementation of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).

#### 2.1.2.1 *Degree structure*

Prior to Bologna, Dutch higher education programmes had a one-tier structure. Most university programmes had a four-year single-cycle structure, whereas for several fields like engineering and sciences the duration was five years. University degrees were deemed equivalent to a Master degree.

The UAS-sector also had a four-year one-tier curriculum, leading to a Bachelor degree. Students have access to universities of applied science after five years of secondary education, whereas access to universities requires six years of secondary education; this partly explains that four years of higher education led to different degrees. In addition, the sector includes co-operative programmes (work-based learning) and recently expanded its role in shorter programmes (two-years Associate Degrees, similar to the Foundation Degrees in the UK).

Before joining the Bologna Process, Dutch higher education institutions already took part in the Erasmus programmes.

#### 2.1.2.2 *Quality assurance*

The current quality assurance system, in which programme accreditation is a dominant feature, became operational in 2003. The previous system had been based on evaluation of study programmes, i.e., the collection of courses leading to a specific degree. Although evaluation of university and UAS programmes was done separately, basically the same procedures applied. Starting in 1987, *ad hoc* visiting committees of external peers evaluated all study programmes in the country in an area of knowledge or discipline, in a six-year cycle. They based themselves on the information provided by faculties in their self-evaluation reports and on their own observations during two-day site-visits to each of the faculties responsible for the programmes. The structure of the self-evaluation report



and the data to be used were prescribed in detail to ensure comparability between the respective disciplines across the country. The peer committee's judgements were published in national, public reports indicating strengths and weaknesses of each programme, and recommendations for improvement. The government, through the Inspectorate for Higher Education, monitored the soundness of visiting committees' reports and the follow-up activities by the institutions. In case of shortcomings in the field of quality, the government had the option of using coercive powers backed by sanctions.

In the 2003 accreditation system, the principles of self-evaluation and involvement of external peers remained in place, but the sanction in case of shortcomings was that no accreditation would be granted. This means that shortcomings must be addressed before accreditation could be granted. The criteria used and accreditation results are publicly available on the NVAO website ([www.nvao.net](http://www.nvao.net)). Accreditation of a programme ensures that degrees are legally recognised, that enrolled students are eligible for grants and loans and that these students are counted in the formula funding for public higher education institutions. Private higher education institutions and their students benefit from the former two effects of accreditation, but the institutions (mainly active in the UAS-sector) do not receive state funding.

#### 2.1.2.3 *Equity and equality*

Policies for equity and equality of participation in higher education are based on the principle that anyone who has the required entry qualifications obtained in secondary education is admitted to higher education. Financial conditions should never be a hindrance and the government, through a system of student financial aid (grants and loans) across social strata, provides the opportunity for all who are eligible to participate. There are selection moments throughout curricula especially in the first year in higher education, but there are no restrictions at entrance. However, there are courses with an entrance restriction (*numerus fixus*), such as in medical education, and some professional areas in UAS that are more selective. But this does not affect the overall principle of open access.

Over time, special policy measures have focused on underrepresented social groups to increase their participation. Also in a broader sense participation in the context of the Lisbon goals is high on the policy agenda (see below).

#### 2.1.3 *Aim of the case study*

The Netherlands is chosen as a case study because of its quick acceptance of the two-cycle structure according to the 1999 Bologna Declaration. It was among the first countries that scored 5 out of 5 on the indicator 'stage of implementation of the first and second cycle'. Also on other indicators in the 2007 Stocktaking report, the Netherlands had a relatively high score. From a European perspective the new system can be seen as quite successful in terms of educational content and full application of ECTS in the first and second cycles (replacing the previous study point system).

The case study analyses how the Dutch Bologna Process is evolving towards a fully-fledged Bachelor-Master system. At the end some prospective developments and challenges for Bologna after 2010 will be sketched which can be relevant in the broader European context.

## 2.2 Major aims and hurdles when joining the Bologna Process

In a broad sense changes in Dutch higher education had two objectives at the turn of the century. The first objective was to offer students more choice and to give institutions leeway to develop education that is open, flexible and international, a higher education system that is flexible, with freedom of choice for students, with smooth transitions to the labour market, and with increasing permeability within and between the higher education sectors. Openness and flexibility were put into the perspective of life-long learning, with learners moving repeatedly between study and work—or both in part-time simultaneously—from the beginning.

Second, internationalisation became an increasingly important issue. Dutch higher education had to become more attractive for foreign students, and chances for Dutch students and graduates to acquire international experience should increase. The introduction of the Bachelor–Master structure was seen as one of the means to this end. A harmonised credit system (ECTS) is another, as are the more traditional means of internationalisation such as the EU Directives for regulated professions and international covenants for degree recognition, in particular the Lisbon Recognition Convention. The newly developed accreditation system should reinforce these international ambitions and enhance the transparency of the quality of provision as well as the visibility of the growing pluriformity and different profiles of higher education institutions.

In addition, the Bologna Process was expected to meet some discontent with the existing system, in particular the high dropout rates and the rather homogeneous character. The degree reform should yield efficiency gains by motivating students to attain a Bachelor degree rather than dropping out without any educational qualification. Moreover, it was believed that more differentiation between higher education institutions would be possible in a two-tier system, especially in the Master cycle, thereby creating more opportunities for students to obtain a degree in line with their talents and preferences.

There were several hurdles for the transition process from the old to the new system. One hurdle concerned the administrative procedures and the monitoring of the transition process, which took some time before transition issues were completely settled. Also provision of correct, up-to-date and detailed information to students who transferred from the old to the new system was a major concern. Another effect of the degree reforms was that the workload of examination committees increased substantially, which according to the Inspection could lead to risks of arbitrary decisions and infringements on students' rights (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2005).

A major hurdle experienced by several actors relates to the longer-term aims of the new system and particularly how the Bologna Process could be implemented in a binary higher education system that basically should remain intact. The university degrees and UAS degrees should be transparent in the new system, and curriculum reform in one sector should take account of the developments in the other. For example, the Parliament determined (in 2003) to prohibit universities setting up professionally-oriented programmes belonging to post-initial training or competing with UAS programmes. Also, university Bachelor programmes designed as an exit point for the labour market were undesirable, as this would create unfair competition with UAS Bachelor programmes. Additionally, the UAS sector was afraid of unfair competition at the Master level because universities would continue to get state funding for them, whereas state funding for universities of applied sciences was available only for Bachelor programmes (with a few exceptions e.g. in performing arts). From the beginning of this process, tension was felt

between maintaining the binary structure and the Bologna Process; this imposed restrictions on both sides of the binary divide.

## 2.3 Goal achievements

### 2.3.1 Degree reform

By 2004, less than two years after the introduction of the law, 90% of the study programmes had been restructured. In 2007 virtually all study programmes had been restructured (Ministerie OCW, 2007). In some professional areas such as medicine, the change was not straightforward, but with one exception, all medical programmes currently operating have implemented the BaMa structure. These programmes (including dentistry and veterinary medicine) are structured on a three years' Bachelors programme followed by a three years' Master programme.

#### 2.3.1.1 Universities

Generally speaking the former four-year single-cycle studies in universities have been divided into a Bachelor of nominally three years (180 credits) and a Master programme of one year (60 credits). The former five-year studies have been transformed into 3+2 year programmes, i.e. 180 credit Bachelor programmes followed by a 120 credit Master phase.

Dutch universities by and large chose a model of first broad, multi-disciplinary Bachelor programmes, followed by specialised Master programmes. After the Bachelor–Master introduction there were fewer Master programmes compared to graduation specialisations in the former, pre-Bologna programmes (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2005). In 2008/09 there are about 600 Bachelor programmes and 1,600 Master programmes. The enrolment in Master programmes increased substantially over the years: 4,800 in 2002, 16,300 in 2005/6 and 23,300 students in 2008/9.

#### 2.3.1.2 Universities of Applied Sciences

For the publicly funded UAS institutions the introduction of the Bachelor–Master model did not lead to major changes, as the previously existing four-year programmes were automatically recognised as 'new-style' (four-year) Bachelor programmes. UAS can set up Master degrees programmes, but contrary to the universities these programmes were originally not funded by government. However, a restricted number of 'professional Masters' in some 'priority areas' have been made eligible for public funding on a temporary basis. As such, the two-phase model has been recognised in this sector as well. Student numbers in UAS Masters are still low, around 12,000 students, which is 3% of the total UAS enrolment. The growing interest in 'professional Masters' as part of life-long learning schemes is expected to lead to a steady growth in UAS's share of the Dutch postgraduate market. Masters in UAS are concentrated in fields such as fine arts, health, and teacher training, but the number of courses in engineering and economics/management is now increasing. Many of the former Advanced Professional Diploma courses have been converted into Master programmes under the national accreditation scheme.

#### 2.3.1.3 Variety in Masters programmes

From the beginning, various types of university Masters were considered. The current distinctions are between the (1) 'consecutive Masters', (2) top or prestige Masters and

(3) research Masters. The ‘consecutive’ Master refers to the legal requirement that every university Bachelor programme should be connected to at least one Master programme in which those Bachelor graduates can enrol without additional entrance requirements. This legal requirement acknowledged the view that a ‘complete’ university education was only attained at the Master level and that in principle all students have the right to do so. Consecutive Masters have been established in all universities for all Bachelor programmes.

The research Master is a distinct type of Master programme based on separate accreditation criteria, including a two-year (120 credits) size, which makes them especially popular in those disciplines where ‘consecutive’ Master programmes are only 60 credits (e.g. humanities and social sciences). ‘Top’ and ‘prestige’ Masters are highly-demanding and very selective graduate programmes attracting talented students from everywhere that universities can set up on their own initiative to profile themselves, but without formal separate (accreditation) recognition. The professional Masters in the traditional professional areas in the universities mostly remain aloof of the debate (such as in medicine, accountancy).

Apart from the more or less automatic transition from Bachelor to consecutive Master programmes, other trajectories have been created to switch in the degree system:

- University Bachelors can be admitted directly to Master programmes. This applies if the receiving Master programmes judges that the student’s Bachelor degree is related to the Master or that it is comparable to the Bachelor programme.
- For those with another Bachelor background admittance takes place on the basis of individual assessments.
- University students can be required to follow a pre-Master programme *after* completing their Bachelor, or they may take several courses *during* their Bachelor study at the receiving university, to make up for ‘deficiencies’. In the latter case they avoid the pre-Master track so that they are directly admissible once they fulfilled the courses and completed their Bachelor.
- Transition from UAS Bachelors to university Master programmes. Although not an explicit policy aim, provisions have been created to facilitate the transition of UAS Bachelors to university Masters, such as pre-Master tracks like those mentioned above, and the introduction of ‘transition profiles’ during the Bachelor phase in the UAS.

Until 2005-2006, 58% of Master students had not encountered a selection process (other than final exams of secondary education); 35% had had to fulfil requirements regarding courses (or, less often, grades and motivation) and 6% had to succeed in a competitive selection process (Van den Broek, et al., 2007). With growing mobility (see below), selection processes may become even more common in the future.

### 2.3.2 Mobility

One of the aims of the reform process was to create more flexibility in the system with the effect that student mobility would be facilitated within and among higher education institutions in the Netherlands and also with higher education institutions abroad.

The flexibility of the new degree structure would enable students to obtain a Bachelor qualification rather than leaving the system prematurely without a degree. Current data however, do not show a significant reduction of dropout numbers and it is difficult to assess how these rates are related to the introduction of the BaMa system (Westerheijden et al., 2008).

Around 5% of university Bachelor graduates do not continue immediately with a Master programme in a Dutch university. Part of them start working, another part concerns students who enrol in higher education institutions abroad.

Table 2-1: Destination of university Bachelor degree holders

Year acquired Bachelor	Total	Master at same university	Master in another university	Not in Dutch university Master
2002/03	1,994	92%	1%	6%
2003/04	5,575	87%	3%	9%
2004/05	12,820	86%	5%	9%
2005/06	19,182	85%	5%	10%
2006/07	22,123	78%	5%	17%

Source: VSNU analysis of 1cHO2007 data

As table 2-1 shows, most students continue their Master programme at the same university, although there is a downward trend since the introduction of the BaMa-system from 92% in 2002/3 to 78% in 2006/7. A constant percentage of 5% of university Bachelor graduates continue with a Master programme at another university.

The percentage of Bachelors not continuing at a Dutch university Master increased over the years from 6% to 17% in 2006/7. Part of them enter the labour market, others might go abroad for a Master degree or enrol in other institutions.

According to the annual *Studentenmonitor* questionnaire of 2006, 87% of full-time Bachelor students in universities planned to continue studying in the Master phase; For 68% of Masters students in universities the fact that their programme was directly consecutive to the Bachelor was one of their motives in choosing the programme (van den Broek, et al., 2007, pp. 59, 63)).

An important objective of the degree reforms was to improve the international mobility of students, both the inflow of foreign students and outflow of Dutch students. The number of international students in the Netherlands has consistently increased to about 70,000 in 2007/08 (Nuffic, 2008). This includes 46,000 foreign students who came to the Netherlands for a diploma and about 24,000 inbound credit mobile students participating in mobility programmes (credit mobility). Most foreign students are enrolled in Bachelor programmes. Outbound mobility is lower: over 13,000 Dutch students registered for a diploma at a foreign higher education institution and 28,000 credit mobile students (5,900 of the latter group took part in the Erasmus or Leonardo programmes).

The figures show a growing discrepancy between inbound and outbound mobility. The number of foreign students at Dutch higher education institutions is growing and is above the EU average (8.7% of all Dutch students, compared to the EU average of 7.2%).

However, there is a decline in interest among Dutch students to study abroad (about 2.4%, which is slightly below the EU average of 2.7%).

Foreign students increasingly find their way into Dutch Master programmes, as Table 2-2 shows. Although it decreased percentagewise (due to the transition period when the Dutch cohort entering Master programmes was not yet up to full strength), the increase in absolute numbers illustrates the international attractiveness of Dutch Master programmes.

Table 2-2: Enrolments in University Master programmes

	2005	2006	2007
Total	27,645	41,176	51,795
Foreign nationality and foreign previous education	4,614	5,736	7,040
%	16.7%	13.9%	13.6%

Source: VSNU 1cHO2007: Enrolments per October

### 2.3.3 Quality assurance co-operation

Since the Bologna Declaration, a general need was felt to move the prevailing quality assurance system based on self-study reports and visiting committees towards accreditation. Arguments for such a change were transparency in Europe and beyond by positive statements of proven quality, open access of higher education, and the emergence of non-traditional higher education providers. By ensuring the transparency of Dutch higher education in the international community, it was expected that its competitive position in the European knowledge market would improve.

This resulted in the establishment of an independent accreditation organisation in 2002, which merged in 2003 with the Flemish organisation into to Netherlands Flemish Accreditation Organisation (NVAO). This is unique as the NVAO operates in the two distinct higher education systems of Flanders and the Netherlands. Its members, who are appointed by the two ministers, have expertise in the fields of higher education, professional practice and evaluation. The accreditation system in the Netherlands is based on the same principles of self-evaluation and peer review as the previous quality assessment system. A programme is accredited either as academic or professional, and Bachelor and Master programmes are accredited separately. Also private higher education institutions that want to have their degrees recognised and their students qualify for state grants are subject to accreditation on the same criteria. In addition to accrediting existing programmes and licensing new programmes, the tasks of the NVAO are to check existing programmes for specific, additional quality features (on request of higher education institutions), to strengthen the European and international dimension of Dutch accreditation and to maintain contacts in this area.

Already in 2003, the first Dutch study programmes were accredited. Until August 2009, the NVAO made 2,381 positive accreditation decisions in the Netherlands. With this number, the NVAO was practically on schedule to complete the first round by the end of 2009.

The international dimensions of the quality assurance system are the following:

(1) The external assessment is carried out by quality agencies, the so-called visiting and assessing bodies (VBIs) and the accreditation is given by the NVAO. Although the previously existing agencies continue to play an important role in the evaluation process, the new system opened the market for other private companies to become VBIs. This was connected to arrangements with separate organisations that can carry out evaluations and assessments for accreditation. The idea was to promote diversity in the system and to make it more open to international agencies. In 2008, the list of VBIs fulfilling the criteria to carry out visitations included seven agencies. Some are specialised agencies for particular disciplinary areas, (engineering, business studies, public administration), two of them are based in Germany, and one is a European association.

(2) Although accreditation is a process to determine whether a programme meets the quality standards, it is seen in the context of the previous quality assessment system, which focused on quality improvement. Therefore, quality should be stimulated by setting high standards. Clearly, the NVAO applies European standards with regard to output levels according to the European Qualification Frameworks. Also the international review of the NVAO in 2007 (Committee for the review of NVAO, 2007) confirmed that it operates in substantial conformity with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). Similarly, a study among international experts agreed that NVAO standards were high and that Dutch students going abroad were well qualified (Westerheijden et al., 2008).

(3) The collaboration of the Netherlands and Flanders in the NVAO resulted in a treaty, signed in 2009, according to which accreditation decisions will be mutually recognised. This does not imply that the equivalence is guaranteed in all respects, and additional requirements can be made, especially in professional areas. But generally the students do not have to submit a request for recognition anymore as this occurs automatically. This makes it easier for foreign students and alumni to continue their studies or find a job in the Netherlands and Flanders.

#### 2.3.4 *Social dimension*

An important principle of Dutch higher education is that anyone qualified for higher education has the right to be admitted. There is relatively open access for the majority of students with minor structural or procedural problems and the Netherlands had the maximum score on this point already in the 2007 Stocktaking process. This is confirmed by research of Eurostudent, which shows that the accessibility in the Netherlands is high (together with Finland) in terms of the reflection of the socio-economic diversity: there are relatively many students with a lower-educated father (Orr, Schnitzer & Frackmann, 2008).

The social dimension involves that students should be a reflection of the societal composition. The UAS more than universities meet this dimension, although still some improvements to attract students from lower income groups and ethnic backgrounds are to be made; this issue gets continuous political attention. Regarding retention rates, students who enter higher education from the vocational stream have a lower success rate than those from general secondary education. Students with an ethnic background have a higher dropout rate than others, but within the ethnic group particularly women are catching up compared to their male counterparts (HBO-raad, Factsheet graduates and dropouts 2009).

Disabled students generally do better in universities than in UAS where the dropout rate is relatively twice as high as in universities (Ministry of OCW 2009).

In developing the new degree structure it was assumed that the new system would facilitate the transition from UAS Bachelor to a university Master programme. Although not a particular aim of the degree reforms as such, more (centralised) attention was given to the transition of UAS graduates to university Masters. As Table 2-3 shows, the UAS inflow increased from 4,000 in 2005 to over 5,000 in 2007. In 2007 the number of UAS Bachelors in university Masters is about 25% of all newly enrolling Master students in universities.

Table 2-3: Students with a UAS Bachelors continuing with a University Masters

	2005	2006	2007
Total Entrants in Master	14,434	18,762	20,888
With UAS Bachelor	3,969	4,616	5,087
%	27.5%	24.6%	24.4%

Source: 1cHO2007 (VSNU)

Another new type of degrees is the Associate Degree, a short-cycle two-year programme in UAS. Although shorter degrees than the Bachelor are not explicitly covered by the Bologna Declaration, they are important because of the social dimension. Associate Degrees in the Netherlands are meant to play a role in life-long learning, by giving opportunities to vocationally trained persons already on the labour market to obtain a higher degree. Experiments with associate degree programmes have begun in 2006–2007. The first ten associate degree diplomas were awarded in 2006–2007.

## 2.4 Policy measures to achieve these results

### 2.4.1 Degree reform

The implementation of the new degree structure took place rather smoothly and legislation was relatively uncomplicated (Ministerie OCW, 2000). The Bologna proposals were debated at a number of national conferences in which the major stakeholders participated actively, before putting the reforms into laws. The meetings displayed a readiness for major reforms throughout the sector. Important issues were the nature and function of the Bachelor degree and how the binary structure could be maintained.

Student organisations for example supported the degree reforms on condition that student funding would remain untouched and that the Bachelor degree would not become the main exit point from university education but an intermediate degree (guaranteeing that all university students could enter into the Master cycle). Neither did employers see a demand for university Bachelors on the labour market and insisted that only a Master course would qualify as a full university degree. Also the universities stressed that their Bachelor programmes should be primarily treated as an immediate transition to the Master phase.



A shared agenda with preconditions was set, which facilitated a quick implementation of the reforms:

- The degree reform should be achieved while maintaining the existing binary divide between universities and UAS.
- The reform process should seek equivalences between the traditional UAS diploma and the professional Bachelor degree, and the traditional university degree and the Master degree.
- The university Bachelor degree should be seen as a point for choice and mobility rather than as an exit point for university studies.
- The right of each student to continue after a university Bachelor at least with one Master without selection procedures.

For university programmes, the old degree had to be divided in two cycles. To facilitate implementation as much as possible, the previous undivided duration of 4 and 5 years were split respectively in a 3+1 or 3+2 structure. For the UAS there were essentially no major changes, as the study duration in the old and new structure remained the same.

In addition, it was agreed that the implementation process should be monitored closely. The Inspectorate was charged with this task and should report to the Minister annually, informing on all introduction problems faced by higher education institutions. Evaluations of the process should be carried out on a regular basis, interweaving the degree reform and accreditation. Another measure was to install a 'direction group' consisting of representatives of the minister, the universities (VSNU), UAS (HBO-raad), private institutions, student organisations, the accreditation organisation NVAO, employer organisation and unions. This group has a signalling function regarding strengths and weaknesses of the implementation process (Staatssecretaris Hoger Onderwijs, 2003). Furthermore, a total of € 45 million government funding was made available for the introduction of the two-cycle structure, divided over 2001 and 2002. Note that the law was only passed in Parliament in 2002; the consultative process made parallel legislation and preparation of the reform possible.

Another policy goal was to develop views on the nature of the two-cycle structure, the curricular approaches and the connection between Bachelor and Master courses. Various committees were established to advise on these issues and to present a longer-term vision. For universities and UAS this had several consequences.

**Universities.** Although the new degree structure seemed a rather simple splitting and renaming of existing programmes, the Bologna reforms evoked important curricular innovations in Dutch higher education. Many universities took the transition towards the Bachelor–Master system as a chance to change the content of their curricula (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2003a, p. 18).

The basic idea was a broad, multi-disciplinary Bachelor cycle to be followed by stronger differentiation and specialisation at the Master level. However, the increased demands on specialised Masters implied that the breadth of the Bachelors was harder to accomplish (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2004b, 2007). As a consequence, broad Bachelors remained a small part of the offer and did not (yet) replace the more specialised first-cycle programmes (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2003).

Government policies regarding the nature of university Master courses were both to guarantee the right of every Bachelor to continue with a Master ('continuation' Master programmes) and the establishment of top or prestige and research Masters. These latter types were meant for further profiling of Master programmes. Their aim was to attract the very best students (also internationally) and to prepare them for research careers (cf. Commissie *'Ruim baan voor talent'*, 2007). These distinctive profiles contributed to more diversity in the university system, a strategy much supported by the universities themselves. However, the desired numbers and types of programmes continued to be subject of discussion.

Another important policy measure initiated by the Minister was the introduction of the so-called 'hard cut' between Bachelor and Master courses (Ministerie van OCW 2009), rather than letting students into 'continuation' Master programmes before completely finishing their Bachelor programme (see below, the section on Mobility). The Minister stressed that the positioning of Bachelor as a separate, completed programme would enable students to reconsider the follow-up of their studies. From the viewpoint of the Bologna Process such a clear demarcation between the two phases can be seen as an important step towards a more fully developed Bachelor-Master structure.

A new phenomenon in Dutch higher education was the establishment of graduate schools. Graduate schools were primarily meant for Doctoral education as the third cycle, but some universities incorporate their research Master programmes into these schools as well. Such a close link between the second and third cycles will be stimulated particularly for those students who intend to pursue a research career. Sometimes the connection becomes so tight that alternative durations have been introduced, for example the 2+3 model (whereas the standard Doctoral training is a four-year period, which would mean 1+4 or 2+4).

**UAS.** In the sector of UAS the main changes included a stronger 'work-field orientation', more emphasis on the applied and multidisciplinary nature of the curriculum, and a greater differentiation (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2003b, p. 18). The degree reform coincides more or less with the recognition of applied and practice-oriented research as a legal task for UAS.

A much-debated topic is which titles to grant to UAS graduates. The sector itself felt subordinated in the Bologna Process as far as their professional titles are concerned. Since the amendment of the higher education Act in 2002 the UAS complained that the denial to grant titles with the accretions of 'Arts' and 'of Science' (e.g. B.Sc.) would lead to much international misunderstanding. It would hamper their positioning on the international student market and of their graduates on the European labour market. Several advisory committees reported on this issue. On the basis of the most recent report in 2009 the Minister suggested to add to the existing Bachelors and Masters titles (with the addition of subject area) those of 'Applied Arts' or 'Applied Sciences' (BAA and BASc), with the argument to do justice to the binary system. Rather than a dispute about titles, the Minister considers it more important to arrive at a univocal profiling of UAS as *Universities of Applied Sciences* and more transparent information about nature, orientation and content of curricula in the Diploma Supplement. This would enhance the international recognition of Dutch degrees in this sector.

The UAS Masters were subject of much debate, too. According to an expert meeting, UAS Masters have considerable added value in comparison with the old situation, particularly

because of their explicitly professional orientation (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2006, p. 7). As mentioned before, government policy made a restricted number of 'professional Masters' in UAS eligible for public funding. These concern labour market relevant UAS Masters in some priority areas. The funding is on a temporary basis for a maximum of four years and thereafter these programmes have to be financed privately. This public funding of UAS-Masters occurs on a structural basis which means that there will be a reserved budget for new Masters to be eligible for public funding (a budget of € 5 million available in 2008, growing to € 20 million by 2011).

#### 2.4.2 *Mobility*

##### 2.4.2.1 *National mobility*

As shown in the previous section on mobility, the majority of students at universities continue their study in a Master in the same or related field and at the same university. Other transition trajectories in higher education are less common, although they are increasing. Apart from the fact that students make their choices on the basis of the attractiveness or vicinity of the city in which the university is located, other factors may have kept university–university mobility rather low at the beginning.

First, there is the factor of the legal requirements to provide at least one 'consecutive' Master for each Bachelor programme. Entry of the 'own' students is guaranteed whereas candidates from other Bachelor programmes often must fulfil additional conditions with regard to knowledge, skills and competences. For students, the consecutive Master course is a rather obvious move and corresponds with the pre-2003 undivided structure. This was reinforced by the fact that most universities admitted their 'own' Bachelor students into the consecutive Masters even before they fully completed their Bachelor or complied with the entry qualifications (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2004, p. 21). So for most students the consecutive Master at their own university was the most obvious decision. The introduction of the 'hard cut' between Bachelor and Master courses may change this situation.

The perceived lack of information is also a factor. University students in the beginning felt well informed about the entry qualifications and inflow moments of their 'consecutive' Master. They mostly received information directly supplied to them by their own university, while information from other Master courses offered by other universities was rather scarce in the first years (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2004, p. 15)).

The facts that students predominantly opt for the consecutive Master and that international mobility has not increased substantially are signs to the Ministry that the two-cycle structure does not yet function optimally. In recent years the information services have improved considerably. Higher education institutions are organising information fairs about their Masters and they are increasingly active on the Internet. The institutions have made mutual agreements to tune their information and their way of advertising on the educational market for Master courses. The Ministry financially supports the national database for study choice, meant both for students first entering higher education and for the transition from Bachelor to Master: [www.studychoice123.nl](http://www.studychoice123.nl).

##### 2.4.2.2 *International mobility*

As was shown above, the number of foreign students at Dutch higher education institutions is growing while the interest of Dutch students to study abroad is declining.

In order to reduce this discrepancy, Nuffic continues its *'WilWeg'* campaign, to make first or second year students enthusiastic about studies or internships abroad. In addition a more effective and probing information service will support this activity (Nuffic, 2008).

The Dutch government, in co-operation with international organisations and numerous private organisations, has established programmes to encourage and support programme mobility among students and staff.

A policy measure on the institutional level is that some institutions for some programmes require from their students that they do part of the study abroad before they can continue in a particular programme.

The situation regarding joint degrees is that although the Netherlands belongs to a group of countries with a relatively high degree of participation in study programmes in which higher education institutions from several countries take part (Crosier, Purser, & Smidt, 2007), regulation of the ensuing degrees is still only partially in place. Double degree programmes (two participating higher education institutions from different countries *both* issue a diploma to graduates) are not uncommon. In July 2009, legislation to establish joint degrees was approved by the Parliament (Second Chamber) and subsequently was submitted to the Senate (First Chamber) of Parliament to become effective.

In 2009 the Minister announced a plan to restructure Master programmes in order to keep up with international developments. One of the policy measures was the option to extend the duration of Master courses to 1.5 years (90 credits). One of the arguments used is that this would enhance the international collaboration, especially towards the development of joint degrees. The VSNU added that also Master programmes with a heavy study load should be eligible for such an extension. This would create more flexibility in the choice for 60, 90 or 120 credits.

Opportunities for international student mobility have been further increased by the introduction of portable student grants. Scholarship programmes in the field of research (e.g. Huygens programme) are also instrumental to international mobility. Institutions have extended the possibilities for the recognition of ECTS obtained in other countries. Reversely, institutions signed a 'code of conduct' to guarantee the quality of education (including facilities and coaching) offered to students coming from abroad.

Universities provide a wide range of courses (especially Master programmes) taught entirely or partly in English. National policies have clearly stimulated this and previous ministers attempted to prescribe this legally, though without success. Nowadays many Master courses are taught in English (including written material) and students are supposed to write papers in English (often obligatorily, also for Dutch students). Master courses increasingly get the character of an international learning climate in which interaction between Dutch and foreign students is central. Not the quantity as such but the qualitative input of foreign students is key. In 2009/10 there were 1,348 accredited programmes completely provided in English, mostly at Master level. Mastering of English by teaching staff is subject of the accreditation process.

#### 2.4.3 *Quality assurance co-operation*

Although the system of quality assurance based on self-evaluation was highly valued, there was a need for stronger international orientation and the comparison with international standards as benchmarks for Dutch degree programmes. Policy measures

were aimed at incorporating the beneficial aspects of the previous quality assurance system into the accreditation system. This would increase the chance of its being accepted by the major stakeholders. Also the establishment of the independent accreditation agency was well prepared and legislation was rather smoothly adopted.

The accreditation process since some years includes the option to publicly recognise specific profiles of study programmes and the assessment of specific qualities of programmes. Institutions may obtain 'special marks' as a quality label for their effort to exceed the threshold of standard quality or to show quality on aspects not part of the standard criteria. In addition, the research Master programmes could be seen as a 'special mark' accreditation. This practice shows that accreditation is not just setting a basic standard, but includes stimuli for improvement and profiling.

In 2008 the Minister launched proposals for an adaptation of the accreditation system to be effective after 2010. This would involve a combination of programmatic and institutional accreditation. The basic idea was that not all programmes would be accredited separately by the NVAO as is currently the practice, but instead an encompassing assessment would take place at the institutional level. Through an institutional audit the internal quality assurance system of the institutions would be assessed and if this turned out positively, the institution would receive the status of 'gained trust' on the basis of which the programmatic assessments would be carried out according to a light-touch procedure. Important considerations for such an adjustment were the transparency and comparability of the programmes as well as the independence of the visiting panels. Two categories of conditions would belong to the competence of the NVAO: guaranteeing the independence and (international) expertise, and drawing up guidelines regarding the content of the assessments. For both categories the European standards and guidelines (ESG) have become determining conditions.

The accreditation organisation NVAO is internationally very active. It has full membership of ENQA, is registered in the EQAR, it houses the secretariats of the worldwide network of quality assurance agencies (INQAAHE) and of the European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education (ECA). Moreover, NVAO signed half a dozen mutual recognition agreements with other European accreditation organisations, and it encourages policy dialogue with foreign partners.

#### 2.4.4 *Social dimension*

The policy view that Master courses are part of a complete university degree implies that in principle all students with a Bachelor degree have the right to be admitted to at least one Master. The prevailing system of student funding should not pose any obstacles towards continuation of studies after the Bachelor. As such, the new degree structure assures open access that characterises the Dutch system.

In the context of the Lisbon strategy the Dutch government has expressed its goal to increase participation in higher education and raise the educational level of the population so much that 50 percent of the labour force in the age group 25–44 should at least attain a Bachelor degree. This should be achieved amongst others by increasing the number of students who proceed from the vocational streams (who are relatively from lower social strata) as well as the number of students in the age group above 30 years of age.

Other policy measures are focusing on the participation and success rate of non-traditional groups in higher education.

#### *2.4.4.1 The establishment of Associate Degrees.*

These two-year short-cycle programmes in the UAS are primarily meant for those who are already in the workforce and want to upgrade their knowledge and skills. Pilots so far show that these shorter and more practice-oriented higher education programmes actually attract new social groups who otherwise would not have entered higher education. These programmes are embedded in the Bachelor's programme in such a way that progression to a full Bachelor's degree programme is possible without obstacles for those who have the capacity to do so. The associate degree is a distinctive degree with a clear status as short-cycle higher education (short cycle within the first cycle in the QF-EHEA and level 5 in the EQF-LLL).

#### *2.4.4.2 Participation of ethnic minorities*

An important policy goal is to increase the participation of ethnic minorities that are underrepresented in higher education. With targeted government funding, various projects in universities and UAS have been developed, aiming to increase the number of ethnic minority students and to improve their study success. A national expertise centre has been established to support institutions in their efforts to find effective ways of bringing them in and keeping them on board.

#### *2.4.4.3 Recognition of prior learning (RPL)*

RPL is an essential element of the lifelong learning policy and increasing participation in higher education. On the basis of RPL, in the Netherlands candidates can obtain exemption from some entrance requirements. RPL procedures are not nationally established, but developed by educational institutions (both public and private) and specialised RPL agencies. These RPL procedures need to be accredited according to the national quality code for RPL. The government promotes this development by subsidizing tailor-made programmes, flexible learning paths, and work-based learning especially designed for this group of students.

## **2.5 Involvement of institutions and stakeholders in the implementation process**

A major characteristic of Dutch higher education system is the involvement of stakeholders in the decision-making process as much as possible. All major decisions on the degree reforms and the quality assurance system were prepared by committees or trailblazer groups to present proposals that would be broadly accepted. The implementation of the degree reform went so smooth because the views from institutions and student organisations had already been taken into account. For example, the policy acceptance of the view advocated by most stakeholders that a 'complete' university education meant attaining the Master level and that every university Bachelor has the right to continue to that level clearly contributed to the success of the degree reform.

The newly developed accreditation system was intensively discussed with the institutions, experts, trade unions, students and professional organisations. Particularly student organisations stressed control of quality of delivery and the effect on quality improvement. These elements, which were central in the previous system, could quite successfully be adopted in the new accreditation system. For external stakeholders the change to an

accreditation system promised greater transparency of quality judgements. In fact, employers' demands for more transparency were one of the drivers behind the accreditation system.

Also the strong representation of the higher education community in the board of the NVAO resulted in much credibility and acceptance by the higher education institutions. The current accreditation system intends to reinforce the internal quality assurance of higher education institutions. This entails a strong impulse to the development of a critical culture of quality within institutions by putting more 'trust' in higher education institutions with less regulations and bureaucracy. Such an approach was generally approved by the institutions.

The recent proposals to introduce the 'hard cut' between Bachelors and Masters were strongly opposed by the student organisations, fearing that students would unnecessarily be faced with severe study delay as students who have completed all but only one or a few requirements of their Bachelor degree would have to wait another year before continuing with the Master. In order to meet this objection the minister formulated preconditions, such as a carefully prepared introduction over the next few years, the possibility of more entrance moments in the Master during the academic year, and the acceptance of exceptional cases (on an individual basis, to be judged by the universities).

## 2.6 Contextual factors for the level of success

Prior to the Bologna Process there was much support for a structural change of Dutch higher education and several advisory bodies foreshadowed a degree reform. The scientific council for government policy (WRR) presented in 1995 a model of higher education in two phases that in essence contained several element of the degree structure according to the Bologna Process. This report was well received in the social and political arena and provoked much debate since then. Subsequently, the Educational Council (Onderwijsraad, 2000) advised the government about the creation of the European higher education area, about the mobility programmes of the EU and the Lisbon convention on the recognition of degrees. In this context the Council recommended the adjustment of the Dutch degree structure in the direction of the Bachelor-Masters system. Both the WRR and Educational Council created a breeding ground for systemic change.

Developments within the higher education institutions are also worth mentioning. One example is the establishment of the University College in Utrecht in the late 1990s, which provides a three-year broad Bachelor programme in the tradition of liberal arts. This model was subsequently copied, with variations, in some other higher education institutions. Another example is the introduction, initiated by some universities, of the 'major-minor' model, i.e. curricula in which a main subject or discipline is combined with a coherent 'package' of modules in one or more other subjects or disciplines (possibly in different institutions, domestic or foreign).

These developments foreshadowed a rather quick acceptance by institutions of the new degree structure and several higher education institutions took the initiative to move to the new degree structure even prior to the approval by Parliament.

Political pressure also created a policy environment for change, such as a broadly shared need to make the system more efficient (reducing dropout rates), to create more differentiation in what is traditionally a rather homogenous system, and to extend flexible

learning paths in the context of lifelong learning. Also the demographic factor and the Lisbon objectives to increase the participation from non-traditional groups played a role. The goals of the Bologna Process were seen as ways to overcome these shortcomings.

As an influential university leader put it: 'We greeted the Bachelor-Master structure as a blessing for universities because it offers a chance to differentiate and to make the university attractive for a more diverse student population, both nationally and internationally'.

Both universities and UAS are putting in efforts to create more challenging programmes for students of different talent levels and ambitions, both in the Bachelor (honours) and Master programmes. This view is broadly supported by all major actors in the policy environment and corresponds with the view of the Minister to develop a more ambitious study culture for students.

The accreditation process linked up well with this and leaves room for the recognition of specific institutional profiles, specific quality features of programmes as well as discipline-relevant aspects.

## 2.7 Outlook for Bologna after 2010 and new challenges

For institutions the goal is to go ahead with the formal separation between the two cycles and, as some higher education institutions have already done, to set clear admission criteria and selection procedures. A further profiling of institutions involves responsiveness to the diversity of students including non-traditional groups and adult learners.

A further profiling of universities would be a major challenge, differentiating between Masters in close connection with Doctoral programmes in the context of graduate schools and others of a more general nature. Questions arise such as: how can they distinguish themselves from others? Are they prepared to set selective admission standards in the context of a demographic downturn? Do they develop highly demanding Master courses that are attractive for highly talented students nationally and internationally, or do they cater for a much wider student population? Are institutions prepared to create distinctive profiles both with the university and UAS sector and across the binary divide, and where can they seek collaboration?

For UAS institutions the challenge is to develop professional Masters that are attractive particularly for those already in the workplace who might use these Masters as an effective way to deepen their professional knowledge and skills.

For students the challenge is to move away from seeing the Master as an automatic continuation of their Bachelor study in the same field and institution, and to make conscious decisions about their further steps in higher education. Such a change in attitude is already impacting on the overall mobility of students. A basic condition for this mobility is that information services should be well developed and reliable, giving insight and guidance in course options.

For higher education policy the major challenge as formulated in the *Strategic Agenda for Higher Education, Research and Science* (Ministerie OCW, 2007/8) is to build up a higher education system that is internationally attractive and competitive, that has an



international reputation and appearance, and is closely connected to modern societal needs. The Minister advocates an 'ambitious learning culture in terms of motivation, effort, and attitude'. This challenges institutions to provide more than just the basic quality and students to develop their talents in an optimal way.

The National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education has been self-certified against the QF-EHEA in January 2009. The outcomes of the self-certification review have been published at [www.nvao.net](http://www.nvao.net). Self-certifying the entire education system against the EQF-LLL is in progress.

In order to finalise the initial Bologna Process the following short-term issues are on the policy agenda:

- Full implementation within all the higher education institutions.
- Legalising the possibility of joint degrees.
- Ensuring the standard use of Diploma Supplement in European format.

Another challenge for Dutch higher education, supported by changes now put in process, is to make a real quantum leap in the mobility of students and staff. The portability of student grants may stimulate universities to offer truly international education. More joint programmes and degrees (facilitated by legislation and the possibility of extending the duration of university Masters), attractive schemes to facilitate staff mobility (for example portability of social security instruments, pension schemes), and the development of a truly international student environment and a multi-national teaching faculty are instrumental to this leap. This will be reinforced through further international co-operation, leading to mutual acknowledgements of accreditation decisions between the national accreditation agencies to really enhance joint programming (cf. VSNU position paper, 2009).

## 2.8 Summary

The implementation of the Bologna Process in Dutch higher education has been fairly complete, although in some areas the country is not at the forefront (see above: legislation regarding Joint Degrees and regarding the Diploma Supplement in the European format). The degree reform has led to curricular reforms both in the Bachelor and the Master programmes and increasingly universities have made a clear distinction between the two cycles. This enables institutions to formulate their own admission policies to Master courses. It challenges them to recognise prior learning experiences and it challenges students to make conscious choices about their study.

The Bologna Process aims towards international transparency and mobility within Europe and across the world were welcomed by Dutch policy-makers and all major stakeholders. Some issues are on the agenda to finalise this process.

The Netherlands is well in the forefront of working towards mutual recognition of accreditation decisions in the EHEA. This will result in increased compatibility and comparability of higher education systems, in order to facilitate internal mobility for students, graduates, and staff members. The NVAO plays a leading role internationally in making further steps towards mutual recognition and mutual accreditation decisions.

The Dutch case also shows that changes in the system have been made in the light of international developments. This all has led to a further development and refinement of the intentions that are inherent in the Bologna Process.

From the Dutch case study some practices can be derived that appeared to be important for a successful implementation of such a comprehensive policy process, in particular:

1) *Monitoring of the process from the beginning.* An important role of the Inspectorate was to monitor the process on a continuing basis, to signal bottlenecks and to make proposals for adjustments where necessary. Also the 'regie' group, consisting of representatives of the government and major stakeholders, has the brief of following development and signalling strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of the process.

2) *Involvement of all major stakeholders.* This appeared to be a crucial element in the acceptance of the reform. The initial conditions for implementation of the reform were favourable, but it remained important to involve all major stakeholders in the decision-making process and to take their views into account. The role and views of independent advisory organisations were important in the acceptance of the reform as well. Generally, the communication between government actors and co-operation among all stakeholders takes place in an open dialogue, which affects the decisions-making process positively. The continuous dialogue has led to commitments to the overall plan leaving room for further refinements of the system. These appear to be supported by most stakeholders.

3) *Growing insight in the potentialities of the new system.* It appears that the Bologna Process creates more opportunities to a more diversified higher education system. Creation of talent clusters, Master classes and honours are recent initiatives that fit very well in the new degree structure. The system offers possibilities for creating more flexible learning paths and more permeability between sectors to meet a more heterogeneous student population with various ambitions, talents and capabilities. Such a development is supported by the accreditation process in terms of quality and transparency thereby contributing to further the European Higher Education Area.

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## 3 Estonia

### 3.1 Introduction

#### 3.1.1 *Major aims of the study*

The direct aim of this case study is to gain in-depth insight into how Estonia and its actors strive for the strategic goals of the Bologna Process and how these relate to each other, to environmental factors outside the Bologna Process, and to achievements towards the operational or intermediate goals of the Bologna Process. The purpose of the case study is to provide actors from other Bologna Process countries with lessons learnt to help them formulate successful policies for their implementation of the Bologna Process.

As Estonia has been a full member of the Bologna Process since 1999 with National reports on Bologna reforms available from 2009, 2007, and 2005 this study fits the generally high level of application of means for the Bologna Process.

For almost 50 years Estonia was ruled by the Soviet ideological, political and economic policies. A republic within the Soviet Union, the drive for independence came in the late 1980s and culminated in the 'Singing Revolution' and the re-establishment of independence in 1991 (OECD 2001:1). Estonian is a highly distinct language and belongs to the Finno-Ugric languages. It is an important part of the country's heritage and not wanting to lose the language, they do recognise that this is an obstacle for some with regard to European mobility for many staff and students.

The country has an area of 45,000 sq. km and is larger than, for example, Slovenia, Holland, Denmark or Switzerland ([www.Estonica.org](http://www.Estonica.org)). Yet Estonia's population ranks amongst the smallest in Europe and human resources are an important challenge to some areas of implementation of the Bologna Process.

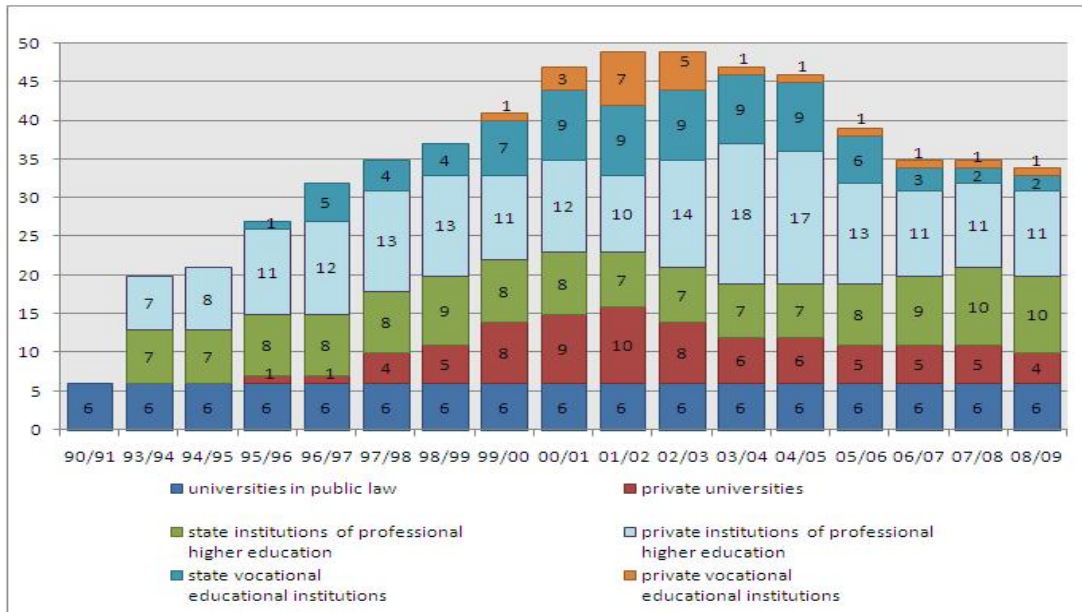
Estonia has largely a low-technology economy, with productivity and wealth creation lagging behind other EU Member States. Shifting the economy to more high-technology manufacturing and knowledge-based services will help ensure the country's long-term sustainability but this means making more education and training available to improve the qualifications of the young and support lifelong learning amongst Estonia's rapidly ageing population (European Commission - The European Social Fund in Estonia, 2007-2013). The collapse of the Soviet-oriented command economy and the slow development of new social and economic policies created severe hardships for Estonia's education system in the period 1992-94.

#### 3.1.2 *The higher education system*

There are three types of educational institutions that provide higher education: universities (*ülikool*), professional higher education institutions (*rakenduskõrgkool*) and vocational education schools (*kutseõppeasutus*). Both public (i.e. state) and private higher education institutions are authorised to operate and there are 34 educational institutions offering higher education in Estonia. As of 30 June 2008, these included 6 public universities, 4 private universities, 10 state institutions of professional higher education, 11 private institutions of professional higher education, 2 state institutions of vocational

education, and 1 private institution of vocational education). Changes in the total number of higher education institutions from the academic year 1990/91 to 2008/09 are shown in the following graph (Figure 3-1).

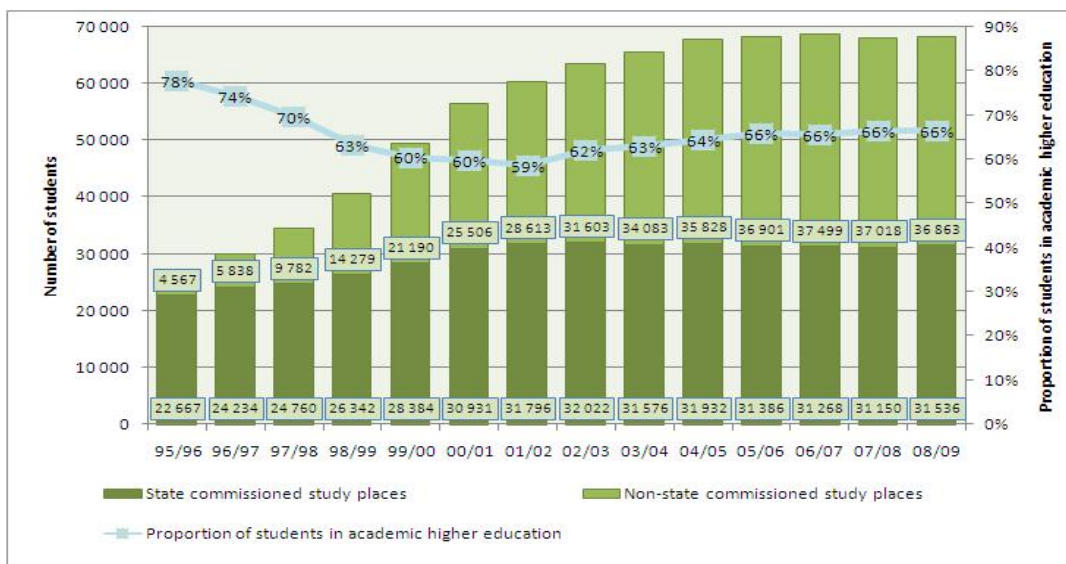
Figure 3-1 Numbers of higher education institutions by year



Source: Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, 2009.

The total number of students registered in 2008 was 68,399 (Source: Estonian Statistical Office) with Estonia’s population at 1,340,935 as of 1 January 2008 (for the development of student numbers, see Figure 3-2).

Figure 3-2 number of students in higher education, 1995/96 to 2008/09



Source: Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, 2009

Enrolment rates in tertiary education by age (i.e. students aged 20-29 as a percentage of population aged 20-29) in 2005 was 21.94%; 2006 – 22.05%; 2007 – 21.77% and 2008 – 22.01% (Source of information: Estonian Statistical Office, Estonian Education Database).

### 3.1.3 *Major characteristics of governance and funding*

The Estonian government and parliament determine the overall direction of the higher education system, including the available funds for higher education and research. All higher education institutions in Estonia are sponsored and supported by the Ministry of Education and Research. The Ministry is assisted by a number of semi-independent organisations and advisory councils whose members are appointed by the government. The National Defence College and the Public Service Academy are professional higher education institutions under the supervision of the Ministry of Defence and Interior Affairs, respectively (OECD Reviews of Tertiary Education – Estonia, 2007).

Local governance differs by institution and institutional type, following the format: the rector, the highest authority, is elected for typically five years by an ‘Electoral Body’. The Electoral Body is a small body with representatives of academics and students. The rector may appoint vice-rectors with specific task areas, e.g. research, teaching and learning, and development. Academic councils (also termed government boards), typically consist of the rector, vice-rectors, directors, deans and representatives from the staff and students. The council is the highest decision-making body of the institution. In addition, there is an external advisory body, the kuratorium (OECD Reviews of Tertiary Education – Estonia, 2007).

Regarding funding of higher education, basic facts include (cf. [http://www.lu.lv/materiali/eng/bsua/est\\_he\\_governance1405.ppt](http://www.lu.lv/materiali/eng/bsua/est_he_governance1405.ppt)):

- The total funding for higher education (from public and private sources) was 1.37% of GDP in 2005.
- The private sector contributes about 1/3 of overall educational expenditure in higher education.
- Public expenditure on higher education was 1.07% GDP (2008).
- State-commissioned study places in first cycle are for circa 50% of persons who have acquired general secondary education and 10% of persons who have completed secondary vocational education curricula.

### 3.1.4 *The European Social Fund in Estonia, 2007-2013*

As Estonia continues to adapt to its independent political situation, developing its growing economy towards more high-technology and knowledge-based industries, the European Social Fund (ESF) supports the country through 2007 to 2013. Interviews confirmed that this financial help is gratefully received and will assist in the creation of new opportunities for existing workers through training and lifelong learning, as well as bringing excluded groups into employment, and educating the young to meet the needs of the evolving economy.

Estonia has developed seven priorities for the ESF funding. The emphasis is firmly on improving educational standards and intends to cover the following priorities:

- Flexible learning opportunities will be designed to meet adult needs and reduce dropout rates for life-long learning increase.
- Developing human resources for research and design to fulfil the Lisbon objectives of more jobs and growth and achieve international success. Development of key technologies (such as materials, biotech and ICT) is stressed as well as vital areas like energy, health and welfare, and environmental technologies.
- Good quality and long working life to reduce unemployment and inactivity by bringing people back into the labour market by creating more jobs.
- Knowledge and skills for innovative entrepreneurship.
- Enhancing administrative capacity to contribute to design and implementation of public sector policies.
- Horizontal technical assistance (external and internal experts) aims to underpin the effective and efficient implementation of the Operational Programme.
- Technical assistance to support Operational Programme evaluations, publicity and the monitoring of committee meetings.

#### *3.1.4.1 Degree structure before joining the Bologna Process*

Before the Bologna Process, Estonia did not have a two/three-cycle structure but a Soviet degree structure that offered a credit-point system based on student workload. According to the Institute for Higher Education Policy's 'Country Status 2007', Estonia moved to 3+2 degrees in 2002–2003. Yet it is important to document that the education reforms that worked towards the new structure can be traced back to initiatives commencing around 1988 (OECD Reviews of National Policies for Education – Estonia 2001:22).

#### *3.1.4.2 Was Estonia part of Erasmus before the Bologna Process?*

Estonia commenced participation in the Erasmus/Socrates programme in 1999–2000 (OECD Reviews of Tertiary Education – Estonia, 2007:35).

#### *3.1.4.3 Major quality assessment scheme before joining the Bologna Process*

Since a June 1995 decree of the government of Estonia, the accreditation of universities and applied higher education institutions and their study programmes was granted by the Higher Education Quality Assessment Council (HEQAC), which was established by the Government of the Republic and operated under the administrative jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. (OECD Reviews of National Policies for Education – Estonia 2001:168).

The assessment system from 1996 to 2009 consisted of both institutional accreditation and study programme accreditation. The following problems were found to exist:

- No legal link between Assessment council and the Accreditation Centre.
- Council was not fully independent from the Ministry.
- Government and not HEQAC approved accreditation procedures.

These problems led to the formulation of the Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency (EKKA). Further details of this development are discussed in section 3.2.5.3.

#### 3.1.4.4 *Major policies for equity and equality of participation before joining the Bologna Process*

Adamson et al. (2009) document that in 1960, 40% of those possessing a secondary education diploma proceeded to higher education. This figure rose to 43% in 1970 and by the early 1980s, when the transition to universal secondary education was fully achieved, a certificate of completion of secondary education was no longer sufficient to gain entry to higher education. Entrance to institutions of higher education was restricted and depended on where the young people had received their secondary education. Further studies also depended on whether the secondary school had been within a larger city or a smaller provincial town.

More recently, the 2001 OECD Review supported the changed national strategies at this time and offered advice on furthering issues of access, equity, and quality (amongst other things) to assist with the decentralizing of management and financing responsibilities. However, data giving insight into equity and student retention and progress issues were still missing in the 2007 OECD Review of Tertiary Education – Estonia (2007:38).

## 3.2 Estonia as a high performance case

Education reform in Estonia is best understood in terms of phases, beginning in the late 1980s. Within the 1990-1992 period, Estonia re-established independence and the initial legal framework for education. The Laws on Education first enacted in 1991–1992, were either replaced or amended significantly to reflect an increased maturity in the education reforms. Development of new national curricula and assessment policy was witnessed within this period as was the drawing on expertise of foreign advisors, and reflecting of best practice from many Western countries (OECD 2001:15).

### 3.2.1 *Major hurdles for the reforms*

The funding for Universities is one-third from the state and the latest effects of the global recession are leading to a 7% reduction in this section of income. The recession was mentioned in all interviews as a possible obstacle for reform. The recession may also affect mobility as parents may not be able to pay for study abroad and on a national level, students may have to choose institutions that are closer to their home to cut costs.

A further hurdle was mentioned by Kalm (2005:8), who examined reforms in Estonian higher Education between 1989 and 2004 and identified lessons learnt: ‘obviously the “copy-paste” method in reforming Estonian higher education does not work.’

Separately, two interviewees discussed the emotional difficulties of some of the older generation of teaching professors in managing the many past and present educational reforms. One commented on the reforms: ‘Too much extra work and heavy work load creates bad feelings in the teachers’. From another interview, we understood such difficulties to exist: ‘Not only because of the educational changes but also because of the substantial political and cultural changes experienced in the country over the last 15 years’.

At national level, interviewees understood the challenges at the institutional level and discussed the Parliamentary support that makes for an easier move for educational reforms to become law. However, some laws are held back to allow institutional actors



time to 'make sense of' and subsequently 'action' the change, before yet another change of law is released.

### 3.2.2 *Main policies implemented*

#### 3.2.2.1 *Degree reform*

Estonia introduced a two cycle-structure as a result of the Bologna discussions (Tauch 2004). The extensive reform specifically of curricula, and the transition to a new system of cycles of studies, commenced in Estonian universities in the academic year 2002–2003, i.e. after the amendments to the Universities Act and related acts as passed by the Parliament in June 2002.

The academic branch of the new system of higher education had two stages, following the Anglo-Saxon Bachelor-Master model. In some specialties Bachelor and Master's stages were integrated. Master's programmes can (now) be established in universities of applied sciences if certain requirements are met (there are currently six of such institutions that offer second cycle studies). In the system that existed before the higher education reform, Master's studies were possible only in universities because they included extensive research work of up to 50% of the volume of curricula. In most cases, a Master's degree was a research degree (Estonian Working Group Report, 2003). Yet the OECD report of 2007 found that whilst degree structures have been changed regularly in the past decade, a number of different qualifications structures coexist formally (OECD Thematic Review of Tertiary Education, 2007:6). Professional studies such as medicine, veterinary medicine and architecture still followed the integrated, one-cycle model of five to six years (300 to 360 credits). In some professional areas, such as civil engineering and primary school teacher training, new one-tier programmes were introduced in 2002-03. The length of Doctoral studies revised from the fixed, four-year programme to three to four years in length (Clark, 2003). In practice, Doctoral studies take four years.

The reforms of the degree structure, along with other reforms relating to higher education, were all achieved via the initial creation of a Working Group under the guidance of the Minister of Education. This group included representatives from academic circles, employers and students. The necessary amendments were included within the higher education reform plan that was adopted by the Government of the Republic in the summer of 2001. In the years 2001–2003, the amendments that followed all substantial legislation governing higher education, such as the Universities Act, the Institutions of Applied Higher Education Act, and the framework documenting the Standard of Higher Education which establishes general requirements for studies, curricula and academic staff, was approved on the level of the Government of the Republic (Estonian Working Group Report, 2003).

#### 3.2.2.2 *Mobility*

The Estonian Working Group Report of 2003 stated that the changes taking place in Estonia in the course of the Bologna Process have primarily been directed to the system of qualifications and towards supporting mobility. The OECD Review of 2007 found that the main channels for international relationships in Estonia related specifically to student and teacher mobility and to Estonia's participation in the construction of the European Higher Education Area.

Since 1998, the working group explained, Estonia participated in the European Union's Erasmus co-operation programme. To encourage mobility, Estonian Erasmus students are awarded state benefits in addition to the EU grant. Furthermore, approximately 6% of the students admitted to Doctoral studies are sent to foreign universities, to promote self-development of the academic staff and support the mobility of students in post-graduate training. Therefore, a number of state schemes for financing short-term mobility of students and members of the academic staff were launched around 2003 (Estonian Working Group, 2003:7). The OECD Review of 2007 found that there was an interest in and enthusiasm for internationalisation. Additionally, the 2007 OECD review documented:

Several mobility initiatives have been launched. Some date from the beginning of the 1990s (the kindred peoples programme for students from Finno-Ugric ethnic backgrounds coming to Estonia, research mobility through the Estonian Academy of Science), but most of these were established from 2002 on.

The mobility pattern appears to be different for academic staff. In the starting years the incoming numbers were almost equal or higher than the outgoing numbers, but in 2004/05 the pattern was reversed (243 outgoing versus 158 incoming).

Two Estonian universities participate in three Erasmus Mundus consortia: 'Economy, State and Society', 'Security and Mobile Computing' (both University of Tartu), and 'Digital Library Learning' (Tallinn University). At the individual higher education institution there are additional initiatives to foster mobility' (OECD 2007:35).

#### 3.2.2.3 *Quality assurance co-operation*

The system of quality assessment in Estonian higher education constitutes a continuous process consisting of four parts – self-analysis of universities (faculties or departments), a foreign expert appraisal, an autonomous body called the Higher Education Quality Assessment Council that makes decisions regarding curricula and the institutional accreditation of educational institutions, and self-improvement of universities. Assessment of each institution is performed by the Higher Education Quality Assessment Council (HEQAC). The Government of the Republic founded the HEQAC in 1995 and its main activities include the accreditation of universities and other educational institutions that provide higher education as well as accreditation of curricula (Estonia Working Group 2003:6).

The accreditation scheme is voluntary but essential both for having the right to issue officially recognised higher education credentials and to have access to state funding. HEQAC was established in 1995 and is composed of twelve members, appointed by the government on the recommendation of the Ministry of Education and Research (which takes into account the proposal of higher education institutions, academic unions and employers). HEQAC determines the quality standards, organises external reviews and makes a recommendation to the Ministry regarding universities, professionally or vocationally-oriented higher education institutions and their operation. The accreditation decision belongs to the Ministry, which normally approves the recommendation of the HEQAC; however, it can reject it, in which case a new review must be carried out (OECD Reviews of Tertiary Education 2007:24).

In 2007, the OECD Reviewers of Estonia found that the consultative nature of policy-making in Estonia is eased by the size of the system and that this element allows the government to think through its objectives, to discuss crucial issues with stakeholders and

to adjust policy strategies. Where needed, the government and institutions relied upon international experts, particularly when it came to quality assurance.

Kalm (2005:9) found one area of problems in the accreditation system: it faced a capacity problem in assessing a great number of new programmes, and the issue of capacity was now addressed to changing to the accrediting of institutions.

#### 3.2.2.4 Social dimension

The social dimension was first mentioned as part of the Bologna Process in 2001. Yet in the 2003 Estonian Working Group document there is no reference to this dimension, although in the Life Long Learning section of the working group document it states:

Estonia lacks a uniform system of registering previous studies and work experience but the matter has become topical and essential on both the levels of legislation and the activities of institutions of higher education.

The OECD 2007 document (p. 35) mentions that there is little emphasis on the equity dimension in the Estonian Higher Education Strategy 2006-2015 and that there are no clear goals within this area with only one of the articulated six objectives for the Estonian higher education sector ('To promote the social dimension of higher education') mentioning equity in very general terms as: 'The system of social guarantees for students must afford fair access to higher education and devotion to studying.'

Additionally, only one of the four lines of action vaguely mentions the need to account for the socio-economic situation of students in ensuring equal access to tertiary education (Activity 10 under Line of Action 4). Yet encouraging adults into higher education improves the social dimension of higher education and promotes the inclusion of previously under-represented groups, improving the skill levels of the workforce and is an important part of the social dimension of the Bologna Process (Bologna Process Stocktaking Report 2009).

#### 3.2.2.5 Financial support to students

In Estonia 26.3% of higher education students receive direct financial support from national or regional governments (e.g. study grants or scholarships), the median amount of direct financial support from state to higher education students being 51.1 Euros. The percentage of total public expenditure on tertiary education for students is 8.2 % (EURO Stat 2005).

The monthly average student income spent in payment to the higher education institution is 29.7% (Source: EUROStudent III). The percentage of public expenditure on tertiary education as a share of GDP rose from 0.9% to 1.1% in recent years (Table 3-1).

Table 3-1 Public expenditure on higher education as share of GDP, by year

2005	2006	2007	2008
0.9%	0.8%	1.1%	1.1% (estimate)

Source of information: OECD Statistics 2005, Estonian Ministry of Education and Research

Student grants are not portable for study in other countries, yet student loans are portable, with limitations applying only to those institutions where degrees are not

recognised as higher education degrees by the competent authority of the respective country (source of information: Act on Student Allowances and Loans).

### 3.2.3 *Involvement of higher education institutions and stakeholders*

In 2001, the OECD team recommended that the Ministry of Education in its strategy-building would 'provide for a balance between the need for nation-wide leadership and coherence, and the need for deep and widespread engagement at the school, community and regional levels of all stakeholders in the renewal process. Following the pattern of recent years, the strategy should emphasise multiple networks, extensive use of information technology, and a high level of involvement of NGOs and other sponsors' (OECD 2001, 102). In 2007, the next OECD review team followed this advice up with the recommendation of 'formalising the necessary linkages to society in the governance arrangements. In particular, public authorities should seek to widen participation of external stakeholders in the ... institutions' councils' (OECD 2007:72).

Interviews uniformly underlined Estonia's substantial efforts to include a rich variety of stakeholders in both policy-setting and implementation processes. The Ministry of Education and Research consults all Rectors' Conferences (separate ones for the diverse sub-sectors) on legislative matters and other strategic decisions regarding higher education policies. Also the Federation of Estonian Student Union is consulted, whilst the Estonian Employers' Confederation and the Estonian Chamber of Commerce participate in main working groups for the preparation of policy documents.

### 3.2.4 *Contextual factors*

The political changes have contributed positively and yet in some ways have hindered the process. On the positive side, interviews showed that government support is working towards the successful implementation of many elements of the Bologna Process. Yet the many changes occurring at all levels in the country over the past two decades have contributed to a hindering that would not have been felt in a country that had been politically and economically stable for many years. Interviews suggested that economically, the European Social Fund is assisting the country greatly and that the factor precluding greater speed of development is the lack of human resources.

Employment in Estonia is steadily rising, reaching 68.1% in 2006. However, the recession might prove to be an obstacle in Estonia's growth. Estonia already meets the EU employment targets for women and elderly people. However, as Estonia moves more towards a technology- and knowledge-based economy, the gap between employers' needs and the skills of the workforce could become an obstacle to achieving this. Already the country faces structural employment problems, with higher unemployment rates among risk groups (people with disabilities, young people, long-term unemployed, non-ethnic Estonians), coupled with the lack of a skilled labour force. The longer-term threat is that structural unemployment will grow, even though jobs are available. In that sense, the situation concerning the social dimension of the Bologna Process was described in an interview as presently being a 'major drawback' to progress within the process.

Rummo (2009) argued that Estonia is a country with an ageing population, adults and elderly people should study there otherwise there will be many vacant jobs due to the shortage of skilled workers but Valk (2008) asserts:

One of the major problems for [Estonian] adults in obtaining education is lack of money. Currently only half of all the students studying in Estonian universities and other higher education institutions are state financed.

Rummo further asserts that the Adult Education Survey conducted in 2007 shows results of the number of students aged 25–64 in formal education in Estonia as 5% at this time, yet within the Eurostat documents, the percentage of the adult population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training in 2007 is recorded as 7%.<sup>1</sup>

### 3.2.5 *Achievements*

#### 3.2.5.1 *Degree reform*

The legislation for adopting the two-cycle system has been in place since 2002/03 when the new model was introduced. Additionally, a final decision has now been made regarding the quality of programmes and institutional accreditation made by the independent Agency, providing a basis for joint programmes and degrees (Template for National Reports: 2007-2009:3).

Currently, of the students enrolled in two-cycle programmes, 22,918 are enrolled in professional higher education programmes that are according to the law and considered first cycle programmes; 27,696 students are enrolled in Bachelor or first cycle programmes in universities; and 9,542 students are enrolled in Master level or second cycle programmes. Most students who are not studying in the two-cycle system are enrolled in 'integrated programmes' (such as medicine, veterinary medicine, pharmacy, dentistry, architecture, civil engineering, class teachers teaching). These programmes' nominal durations vary between 5–6 years, or 300–360 ECTS. The number of students in 2007/08 was 3,853 or approximately 5.9%. The rest of students below Doctoral level are students enrolled in 'old degree programmes', where there is no admission since 2002/03. Their number was 1,778 or 2.7% (Template for National Reports: 2007-2009:7).

With regard to the stage of implementation of the third cycle, Doctoral study is recognised as the highest level of higher education, during which a student acquires the knowledge and skills necessary for independent research, development or professional creative activity and consisting of doctorate studies and extensive research, development or professional creative activity. The pre-condition for the commencement of Doctoral study is a Master's level degree or equivalent and the duration of Doctoral study is three to four years and the study load determined in the curriculum shall be between 180 and 240 credits. Usually, PhD studies take longer than the nominal period of studies. Only 10-17% defend their degrees within 3–4 years. On average, for 40% of PhD students it takes 8 years to complete their studies. 50% of PhD students who have defended their degrees have spent 10–15 years on them. Third cycle students in Estonia have student status, although many of them may have parallel status as employees (Template for National Reports: 2007-2009:8).

In interviews on the student side, it was confirmed that the transition of degree reform was at its best 'in place' and working well, but actual transformation was described as 'messy' with the two parallel systems of degree overlapping for a time. This sense of

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<sup>1</sup> <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tsiem080&tableSelection=1&plugin=0>. Different figures might be owing to insufficient or incomplete data regarding the social dimension.

confusion fits with interviews with professorial staff who described the ‘old programmes’ operating whilst the new ones were being introduced in parallel, causing much extra work for no additional remuneration. Therefore, staff were unclear as to the advantage of the change, and e.g. in the humanities some found new-style programmes gave insufficient time to read and to produce publications.

To assist with widening academic networks, 30 professors from abroad are joining Estonian institutions in the academic year 2009–2010. This internationalisation tool is hoped to effectuate the broadening of perspectives of both students and lecturers.

### 3.2.5.2 Mobility

The major action lines taken recently with regard to mobility include (Template for National Reports: 2007-2009, p. 37):

- Development of a legislative framework for visas and living permits for researchers from third countries.
- Provision of financial support for mobility purposes.
- Improvement of recognition practices.

Additionally, the enforcement of European Union Council’s directives for admitting third country nationals for the purposes of conducting scientific research has been achieved (approved by the Parliament in 2007).

Scholarship schemes are available for mobile students from Estonian higher education institutions, with different schemes giving support up to 21 days, 5 months or 1 year. The amount of the support depends on living cost levels in the country of destination. For staff, there is support provided via the Estonian Academy of Science. The last two years have also seen special scholarships provided for PhD students going outside Estonia. Two schemes are offered: one for full degree mobility and one for short-period studies up to 10 months. Finally, for the period 2007–2013 an additional support programme will be available for students in second and third cycle programmes. This is a programme supported by the European Social Fund. The aim is to integrate mobility opportunities of at least 5 months to all PhD programmes by 2015 and give opportunity for international networking to a considerable number of second-cycle students (Template for National Reports: 2007-2009:37).

Despite the high profile of mobility issues in the Bologna Ministerial meetings, and the sustained growth of European programmes promoting and funding different forms of mobility – including exchange programmes and work placements through Erasmus, and mobility in joint degree programmes in Erasmus Mundus – still little information is collated on mobility in the EHEA (Eurydice 2009). Nevertheless, the Estonian database on higher education shows that the number of incoming students from all 46 EHEA countries has increased in recent years (see Table 3-2).

Table 3-2 Number and percentage of incoming students from EHEA, by years

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
773	807	924	938	1022
(1.1% of all students)	(1.2%)	(1.4%)	(1.4%)	(1.5%)

Source: National database on education (EHIS)

### 3.2.5.3 *Quality assurance co-operation*

The national qualifications framework has been designed and includes ECTS credit ranges for the first and second cycles and generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences. There is significant progress on the implementation of the framework. The international co-operation in quality assurance focuses on international members in teams for external review of institutions or programmes (either as members or observers) and they are present in all cases (Country Expert Report, 2009).

The percentage of higher education institutions with regular internal quality management is 40-60% (Trends V report), whilst all higher education institutions underwent external review at least once since introduction of national quality assurance schemes (National reports for Bologna Process 2007-2009).

However, the Estonian national quality assurance system has not yet been reviewed against the ESG. The formal requirement for a higher education institution is to have internal quality assurance systems for institutional performance but this has only been introduced since autumn 2008. The current practice for internal quality assurance systems is diverse. Often these quality assurance efforts are related to the accreditation process for study programmes, as higher education institutions have to carry out self-evaluation and meet other requirements prescribed by accreditation regulations. There is also a special Quality Committee under the auspices of Estonian Rectors' Conference with a mandate to monitor the quality-related aspects in public and private universities.

In connection with the new requirement for institutional accreditation, the centrally coordinated support for training higher education institutions' personnel will continue in coming years, funded by a development programme called PRIMUS (Template for National Reports: 2007-2009:19). PRIMUS is a government-supported programme running between 2008 and 2015, operating within the 'National Strategic Reference Framework of 2007-2013' and the 'Operational Programme for Human Resource Development'; it is implemented by the Archimedes Foundation. The programme has been created to assist in the implementation of quality in tertiary education and human resource development measurements. The aim is to improve professional competitiveness of graduates and to encourage free movement of persons, both in order to study and to work. Activities of the programme will include:

- Improving teaching and supervising skills of teaching staff (2008-2015).
- Development of high quality education based on learning outcomes (2008-2011).
- Development of recognition of prior learning and work experience (2008-2013).
- Support of strategic management capacity building in institutions of higher education (2008-2013).
- Support for learner's coping (2008-2013).
- Surveys and analyses to monitor the programme (2008-2015).

One of the reasons for implementing the activities as a programme is the need for more co-ordinated and systematic communication work; the communications will be made via a web portal.

#### 3.2.5.4 *Estonian Higher Education Quality Agency (EKKA)*

Independent from the Ministry of Education and Research, this agency consists of the Bureau of EKKA and the EKKA Quality Assessment Council. Responsibilities include:

- Development of principles and procedures.
- Assessment of quality of study programme and institutional accreditation.
- Training and counselling.
- Publications.
- International co-operation.

The new quality assurance system was established in January 2009 (some licenses will be issued at the end of 2009 and some accreditations and study evaluations may have to be postponed until 2011 owing to lack of resources). Differences to past systems of quality assurance include:

- Institutional accreditation becomes compulsory.
- Study programme accreditation is going to be replaced by evaluation of whole study programme groups.
- The aim of accreditation is feedback.
- More emphasis will be placed on assessment of internal quality assurance.
- Assessment and accreditation decisions made by EKKA.
- All institutions must request an educational license from the Government to obtain the right to conduct studies.

#### 3.2.5.5 *Social dimension*

The Template for National Reports: 2007-2009 (p. 43) offers comments that confirm that until now there is rather little priority for the social dimension in the higher education strategy for 2006-2015. Plans have been developed:

In order to make higher education more accessible and to include non-traditional learners in the higher education system, measures will be developed which will enable the combination of studies, work and family life, and the taking into account of previous studies and work experience, as a significant part of completing the study programme. The system of recognition of previous learning and working experience (RPL) is applied on all levels in all fields of studies.

But the report continues with: 'However, it must be stated that there have been little changes for the social dimension since the last stocktaking report from 2007.' Owing to the financial situation of 2008–2009, all plans for extending the support for students have been put on hold, and the Minister of Education and Research, Tõnis Lukas, has stated that the new principles of funding students' support structures will become available after 2011.

The 2009 Estonian Bologna Stocktaking Report states that all national approaches to the social dimension are not yet successfully integrated with other action lines (qualifications



frameworks; strategies for lifelong learning; recognition of prior learning; flexible learning paths' and support for mobility). And there is not yet sufficient data about the social dimension in general.

Estonia did have a Lifelong learning strategy approved by Regulation of the Government of the Republic of Estonia in November 2005, a new strategy document was passed by the Cabinet of Ministers in September 2009.

Representatives from the Estonian Federation of Students' Unions were keen to discuss the social dimension element of the Bologna Process as in their view Estonia presently offers only half funding for students and these funds have to be won by merit. Loans are available but not all students are eligible, therefore the large majority has to take on full-time jobs to fund their already committed full-time undergraduate and/or Master's studies. These interviewees were concerned that such a dual role would negatively affect educational outcomes. This concern was also voiced in an interview with an influential university leader.

The Estonian Federation of Students' Unions also would like to see a national strategy regarding the social dimension, as it reflects educational quality and mobility. For instance, a means-tested approach to student support was suggested instead of the present merit basis. It was also mentioned that the European Students' Union regards the social dimension as a priority in the Bologna Process (European Students Union, 2009:8).

Estonia does not yet have nationally established procedures in place to use recognition of prior learning as a basis for access to higher education programmes, nor does the country have flexible entry requirements aimed at widening participation. Yet Estonia does have nationally established RPL procedures in place to allocate credits towards qualifications (Country Expert Report, 2009). Estonia does not have a policy to evaluate opportunities for flexible learning (Country Expert Report, 2009). However, there is a widely applied system-wide policy for educational guidance and counselling targeted at higher education students and the Ministry of Education and Research covers support services for 30–35 disabled students studying at higher education level each year (National Report, 2008). It is agreed that the psychological counselling services for higher education students are presently inadequate, but counselling services for career guidance and employment are widely available to students (Country Expert Report, 2009).

The 2009 edition of the key indicators on the social dimension and mobility gathered from Eurostat states that over 30% of the Estonian student population are part-time, the share of students with non-traditional access routes is 11%, and higher-education entrants are less than 54% of qualifying secondary-education graduates (Eurostat 2009).

Further statistics on the social dimension show that the ratio of students' mothers with up to lower secondary education is 0.37 (source: Euro student III); ratio of students' fathers with up to lower secondary education 0.42 and the ratio between the share of students' mothers and fathers' with blue collar status among all students' parents is 0.74 and 0.63 respectively (ibid). Figures below 1.0 point at underrepresentation of the groups mentioned.

#### *3.2.5.6 Major elements to be put into place*

As there is little data from before the latter few years to quantify many of the developments since joining the Bologna Process, the following is a summary of the evidence found from both documents and interviews:

**Degree structure was set in place by 2002 with the Doctoral schools launched in 2006. However (source: interview, higher education institution):**

It is ... still too early to talk about success in degree reform. There are many places where the education process is mechanically cut at some point to separate the two lower cycles, instead of having broader BAs and specialised MAs as it has been intended. Universities fight for MA students and try to create mechanisms that would keep good BAs at home.'

**From another interview with a higher education institution:**

The reforms are making university more school-like, filling BA curricula with lecture courses where hundreds of students are simultaneously in class, while university-type teaching (seminars etc.) are left for the MA level, to which the majority of students does not continue. This reflects negatively on the quality of education.

This indicates that further curriculum reform may be needed to achieve attractive and high-quality new-style study programmes.

**Third cycle (PhD) Doctoral schools were launched in 2006 with the support of the EU structural funds; therefore the process is still underway. The doctoral schools aim to strengthen the training of top specialists in selected fields of study. Important issues in financing have been resolved, as well as:**

- Opportunities have been found to pay doctoral candidates partial salaries.
- Better working conditions have been created.
- The primary costs incurred in acquiring work accessories and materials have been covered.
- The costs of summer, winter and other schools and conferences (including foreign) have been covered.
- Foreign tutors and lecturers have been paid for their work.
- Budget is up to 1,28 million EUR per Doctoral school for 10-11 Doctoral schools in the period 2007-2015.

**Quality assurance has been changed in 2008 and it is hoped to be completed by 2015. The Ministerial aim is to have the basis of all higher education in Estonia the same high quality and transparent via the PRIMAS programme.**

**Qualification frameworks – Interviews confirmed that ECTS is in place fully from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2009; however interviews also disclosed that further recognition was required with China, India and third world countries.**

**Lifelong learning still needs to be addressed further and links closely to the social dimension issues, as will be summarised below.**

**Social Dimension is the element in most need of development, and all interviewees confirmed this.**

**Recognition has general procedures that are still evolving but protocols are set in place for the evaluation of foreign higher education qualifications and qualifications that give access to higher education with adjustments for national needs.**

**Mobility** is developing and whilst being encouraged by government funding still needs to be developed further for both staff and student mobility to be realised in full. Presently, there are unbalanced mobility flows and institutions need to work on strategic basis (source: interview).

Incoming mobility of students is strongly dependent, among other things, on the language of instruction. While Estonia tries to emulate West European countries that have English-language instruction on the MA and PhD level, but require university-level proficiency in the national language from BA level students, one interviewee from a higher education institution proposed: 'In order to counteract the negative mobility balance, the universities should, in my mind, increase the number of modules taught in English on all levels.' Interviews confirmed that both students and younger staff who master a second language (English, mostly) are keen to be involved in mobility initiatives but for them the financial element is the most common obstacle.

### *3.2.5.7 New challenges and unanticipated consequences*

**Competition** in an era of globalisation was the new challenge most discussed in interviews. Estonia was seen according to some interviews as a small country geographically situated 'on the edge' of Europe and this, along with a demographic situation in Estonia of even fewer young people than in many other Bologna Process countries, leads to a difficult challenge. This led to the second challenge, namely the loss of those educated in Estonia to other countries, or **brain drain**.

Yet, officials from the Ministry stated that the biggest fear of the Bologna Process was that Estonia has such limited resources to implement all the action lines and within the suggested timeframe. Even if they were able to do so, this small country is presently not able to be as competitive, or is able to compete, with many others within the process.

Interviews offered the view that some elements of the Bologna Process had been challenging to implement and Estonia is still attempting to fulfil all the action lines, yet their development has been substantial and their determination great. Past examples of unanticipated consequences are witnessed within the emotional and difficult challenge at the institutional level implementation especially when sitting alongside the recent years of political and economic change. The relative autonomy of the universities also made it a struggle to let the implementation have a national and uniformed approach; this had not been anticipated at institutional level. The associated challenge found through interviews was the 'too quick' response of the Ministry to implement reforms and the problem institutions are having in taking action on these changes.

Finally, **data collection**, both past and present, is a challenge as little is known and human resources are short to commence the process efficiently.

## **3.3 Lessons learned and conclusion**

Student interviews showed that they are well suited to change and they are impatient to move faster. The lesson learnt was that not all stakeholders are able to move at the same speed and patience is needed to achieve goals, especially within the elements of the social dimension.

The Ministry also had learned that much time is needed for change. Mental acceptance at the institutional level is necessary to move action lines forward and sense-making needs

to progress from being 'directed' to 'understanding', and having the desire to achieve. Interviews showed awareness of the ease of top-down instruction but the challenge of bottom-up agreement, even when support of the institutional leaders was ensured. Interviews also showed that change went easier if Parliament was supporting the initiatives, but it was also much easier with the financial support of Europe.

Working groups have assisted greatly in the implementation of change process and the experts' opinions have assisted greatly in reform. Good co-operation and networking have been key elements to succeed and evidence from interviews shows that this has been achieved well. Interviews on the institutional side confirmed that collaboration with external stakeholders (such as employers and business people) could support the change process.

From an institutional interview we should mention that within Estonia diversity is agreed to be important, and the interviewee hoped that the Bologna Process would recognise diversity more in the future.

Finally, institutions learnt that the internationalisation tool of 'Mobility' is vital to open up the country to others and is the only way Estonia can be really part of the European community. Additionally, this process allows Estonia to compare itself with others, which is important for the higher education institutions. Internationalisation is a concern and was described by a member of the Ministry as a 'possible risk to the country' as they may lose their bright students and staff. However, it was understood that competition can be economically important and the good quality of life in the country was seen as an asset.

Estonia is keen to achieve the Bologna deadlines but a main concern was the 20% of student/graduate mobility guideline. A number of interviewees said that the implementation of this element would not be possible for this small country, certainly not at undergraduate level and especially as access to higher education remains a general problem, especially for candidates from rural areas.

In conclusion, the implementation of the Bologna Process has progressed well and is still ongoing. Stakeholders in Estonia are aware that changes are still occurring and interviews showed their collaboration to be a strength in meeting these challenges. Overall, the emotional impact of change has had its effects and as one interviewee put it:

On the whole one can say that Estonia has moved toward the established goals with considerable speed, but that there should have been more deliberation in establishing these goals, and that their content and impact has not been brought to the attention of the society efficiently enough - maybe precisely because the speed has been so considerable.

The architecture to successfully implement the Bologna Process is being put in place and with time, internal and external expert support, and additional human resources, Estonia will have the tools to match its determination to succeed.

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## 4 Georgia

### 4.1 Introduction

#### 4.1.1 *Georgia's higher education system and its governance*

There are two types of higher education institutions in Georgia, universities and institutes. Universities are multidisciplinary institutions awarding Bachelor, Masters and Doctoral Degrees. The Institutes provide education in one or several disciplines and award only Bachelor and Masters Degrees (Machabeli, 2004). Presently, there are 61 accredited higher education institutions in Georgia. Of the accredited higher education institutions, 21 are public and 40 are private. Before institutional accreditation, the number of higher education institutions was around 290. The process of accreditation resulted in a significant reduction of the accredited higher education institutions. The majority of accredited higher education institutions (70%) are based in Tbilisi. Private institutions are concentrated in the capital city whereas state institutions are distributed more equally among different regions and the capital city (Machabeli, 2004).

The National Report for the 2009 Stocktaking identified that the number of students who are enrolled in the study programmes below Doctoral level was 82,313 (Maisuradze, 2008). According to the data provided by the Department of Statistics, the total number of students was 112,100. This number also includes students who are enrolled in non-accredited higher education institutions (IIEPPM, 2008).

Georgia, as other post-soviet countries, inherited a centralised higher education system where the main decisions were taken by the government. Attempts to increase the autonomy of the higher education institutions have been taking place in line with the other higher education reforms. The Law on Higher Education, adopted in 2004, provided the basis for the academic and governance autonomy of higher education institutions (Machabeli, 2004).

#### 4.1.2 *The Bologna Process and before*

Georgia gained independence in 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Since then the higher education system has experienced a rapid growth in private higher education institutions. A number of them do not meet the basic accreditation criteria and because of this the quality of education has decreased. In addition, the absence of strong centralised governance, a lack of experience in higher education governance, combined with the decrease in funding for higher education have resulted in Georgia in a malfunctioning of the system and a decrease in quality of education. The Georgian higher education system has witnessed an increase in corruption and nepotism (Zedginidze, 2008). Due to a combination of these factors, the main stakeholders in the country have identified the need to reform the higher education. The implementation of the Bologna Process action lines coincided with the need to undertake the reforms in higher education.

Georgia joined the Bologna Process in 2005 and is classified as one of the 'late-coming' countries. However, Georgia has implemented a number of important reforms within the

higher education system in line with the Bologna Process. The implementation of the Bologna Process is at the centre of the higher education reforms. The Trends V report stresses that the implementation of the Bologna Process action lines are targeting the inefficiencies of the national higher education system. The Bologna Process is at the centre of the new vision, which is transforming the higher education system after the 'rose revolution' in November 2003 (Crosier, Purser & Smidt, 2007). Moreover, the implementation of the Bologna Process action lines is seen in the wider context of European integration in Georgia. It is important to take into account that Georgia is one of the countries with less time than others to implement the reforms. In addition, it joined the process in a comparatively difficult initial situation. The necessary reforms are large in scale and require much engagement and commitment from stakeholders.

The legislative initiative, to undertake the reforms in line with the Bologna Process action lines, started before Georgia joined the process in 2005. The first steps for the implementation of the legislative reforms were undertaken in 2001, when the Parliament initiated a project to determine the main directions of higher education development in Georgia (Machabeli, 2004). After consultations with experts, students and higher education representatives, in 2002 the Georgian parliament adopted the decree *Main Directions of Higher Education Development in Georgia*. Following the adoption of this document, an expert group including various stakeholders was established. Its work led to the adoption of the Law on Higher Education in 2004 (Machabeli, 2004).

#### 4.1.2.1 Degree structure.

The Law on Higher Education, implemented in 2004, introduced the three-cycle degree structure. Prior to this there was a two-cycle degree structure in Georgia since 1992 (Machabeli, 2004).

#### 4.1.2.2 Quality assurance.

The interviews identified that there was no quality assurance system in Georgian higher education before the higher education reforms in line with the Bologna Process. However, one of the main priorities within these reforms was to ensure the quality of higher education and the introduction of the quality assurance system.

#### 4.1.2.3 Equity and equality.

Legally, everyone has a right to free education in any public higher education institution. However, the corruption within the higher education system is one of the main obstacles for equal access to higher education. To combat this corruption the Unified National Entrance Exams were introduced in the academic year 2005–2006. All potential students who completed secondary education have the right to take these exams. The results of the exams determine the entrance into higher education and the level of financial support available to the individual.

#### 4.1.3 Aim of the case study

This case study looks at the higher education reforms in Georgia and their impact on achieving the Bologna Process goals. This assessment identified that Georgia shows a relatively good performance in the application of some measures in line with the Bologna Process, which we identified as means indicators in this study. These include the implementation of the diploma supplement and the introduction of the ECTS. In addition, literature identified that Georgia is one of the post-soviet countries that has successfully

reformed higher education (Zedginidze, 2008). Therefore, we are going to look at the measures undertaken and the reforms implemented in Georgia, related to the implementation of the Bologna Process action lines.

The rationale for the inclusion of Georgia among the case studies is based on the need to look at the implementation of the Bologna Process in the 'late-coming' countries. The positive performance of Georgia in implementing these reforms might serve to other 'late-coming' countries as a good practice example. This case study is used to analyse what progress Georgia has made and what issues Georgia faced in implementing higher education reforms.

#### *4.1.4 Quantitative data used in the case study*

Prior the analysis of the data, it is important to note that the quantitative data used in this case study is based on the information source presented in the footnotes. However, in most cases there are alternative information sources that provide different data. This might be due to different methodologies used or different time frames for data collection. Another reason for the different data available is that during the process of institutional accreditation the number of accredited institutions was significantly reduced, which has had an impact on the data. In this case study we aim to provide the most recent data available on the accredited higher education institutions. However, in some cases it was impossible to identify on which basis the data was collected.

## **4.2 Implementation of higher education reforms in Georgia**

### *4.2.1 National priorities of implementation of the Bologna Process*

The interviews identified that the main goal of implementing Bologna Process in Georgia was linked to the integration of the Georgian higher education system to the European education system. Modernisation of higher education and ensuring the competitiveness of the higher education system have been identified as the main goals of the higher education reforms. The interviews identified the following specific aims of the higher education reforms within implementation of the Bologna Process:

- Introduction of the quality assurance system;
- introduction of the degree structure reform;
- introduction of the ECTS credits and diploma supplement.

The largest reform and one of the major challenges for the implementation of the higher education reforms in line with the Bologna Process was the establishment of a quality assurance system. Degree structure reforms are a high priority among the national higher education reforms. Interviews identified that the social dimension received the least attention in the implementation of the higher education reforms.

### *4.2.2 Implementation of the legislative measures in line with Bologna Process*

A number of interviewees mentioned that the implementation of legislative measures in line with the Bologna Process is one of the success factors of the Bologna Process in



Georgia. The Law on Higher Education adopted in 2004 and its subsequent amendments provided a basis for the Bologna Process reforms in Georgia as it is in line with the key Bologna Process action lines. The law has introduced the three-cycle degree structure and provides the basis for higher education institutions' autonomy. The law stipulates the introduction of modular programmes, tools for degree recognition such as the diploma supplement and ECTS, Unified National Admission Exams, quality assurance system, evaluation and accreditation (Machabeli, 2004). The amendments introduced later concern the decentralisation of the Centre for Academic Recognition and Mobility (Georgian ENIC) and the introduction of professional higher education (ISCED 5b; Maisuradze, 2006).

The latest National Stocktaking Report identified the further amendments of the Law on Higher Education. This law saw the National Education Accreditation Centre becoming the authority responsible for defining equivalence and authenticity of educational credentials. The law also introduced the Higher Education Qualifications Framework, which covers academic and professional higher education qualifications and the introduction of joint degrees (Maisuradze, 2008). The further development of the legislative basis is mainly focused on the identification of the gaps and its alignment towards the Bologna Process action lines.

#### 4.2.3 *Implementation of the Bologna Process action lines*

After the introduction of the legislation in 2004, the main focus, once Georgia had joined the Bologna Process, was the implementation of necessary measures. This section presents the implementation of the Bologna Process action areas grouped along the four main dimensions identified in this study: degree structure, quality assurance, mobility and social dimension.

##### 4.2.3.1 *Degree structure*

The implementation of the degree structure, in line with the Bologna Process, was identified during our interviews as a priority of Georgian higher education reforms. The Law on Higher Education had introduced a three-cycle degree structure, the tools for recognition of the degrees like diploma supplement and ECTS and the introduction of the modular programmes.

A survey of the higher education institutions identified that all accredited higher education institutions have three-cycle programmes in place. Some 14 higher education institutions still have single-level programmes but it has been estimated that they are going to be replaced by 2010. The only exception to the three-cycle system is for medicine studies, which are provided for through long single-cycle studies (IIEPPM, 2008). In addition, professional higher education degrees have been introduced. 93% of the total number of students below Doctoral level are enrolled into the two-cycle system. The vast majority of students in the country, in other words, pursue their studies in a programme in line with the Bologna Process degree structure. Interviewees identified that the implementation of the three-cycle degrees was successful and they saw it as one of the strengths of the Bologna Process in Georgia. This was also stressed in the case study on Georgia in the *Trends V* report.

Professional education programmes were introduced in 2007. They correspond to short cycle degrees and are linked to the first cycle of higher education. These programmes lead to the degree of 'Certified Specialist'. In such programmes 4,604 students enrolled in

2008–2009, which constitutes 5% of all students.<sup>1</sup> Most higher education institutions provide short cycle programmes. However, funding available for further development of professional education programmes is limited.

The Law states that the Bachelor degree includes 240 credits and Masters' degree includes 120 credits. The ECTS has been introduced in higher education institutions in 2005–2006. The use of ECTS was one of the requirements for institutional accreditation and is now obligatory. Although all accredited higher education institutions introduced ECTS, the interviews identified that the use of ECTS could be improved. The information received through the national research identified that professors prefer to evaluate their students' progress and achievements according to their class work and attendance. They prefer to have as many contact hours as possible as the reduction of the contact hours is seen as a threat to their careers. This indicates that professors tend to define the ECTS in terms of the work undertaken during the class, rather than in terms of the learning outcomes. Therefore, there is a need to provide training for the professors on the use of the ECTS and the use of the learning outcomes in defining the ECTS and possibly additional policy measures to allow them to relinquish their focus on class hours.

The survey of higher education institutions also asks how well professors and students understand the use of credits in the ECTS. Some professors identified that they did not understand the role of the credit system clearly (the survey data does not provide more specific information on what exactly is meant by this). The survey mentions that sometimes credits are only formally assigned (IIEPPM, 2008). Interviews identified that the definition of the ECTS using learning outcomes is being developed and presently ECTS credits are often allocated to individual courses without basing them on the learning outcomes, workload or the other criteria.

With regard to the national qualifications framework (NQF), interviews identified that a draft project for the NQF has been prepared and is being discussed with stakeholders. The NQF includes generic descriptors for each cycle, based on learning outcomes and competencies. Work on the implementation of the NQF has started but as of yet it has not been implemented.

All higher education institutions provide the Diploma Supplement free of charge. It is issued in two languages, Georgian and English. There is no data available on the number of graduates who received Diploma Supplements and the institutional practices in this respect.

Modularisation of programmes is the other element of the reform that is being developed in Georgia. The EU's Tempus Programme, via the Tuning project, is providing support to curriculum development. Interviews identified that in the framework of this programme curricula are being prepared in ten subject areas: physics, chemistry, earth science, history, European studies, education sciences, nursery, civil engineering and business administration. It is expected that the results of this project will be an important step towards programme modularisation.

Overall, the degree structure reform has been at the centre of the higher education reforms. The implementation of the three-cycle system and the introduction of the relevant measures are seen as the most successful part of the reforms. Conversely, the

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<sup>1</sup> Based on information kindly provided by the national expert.

interviews identified that there is a lack of knowledge among the key stakeholders especially within higher education institutions on how the reforms should be implemented. Individual higher education institutions would benefit from more guidance and training. The support from international programmes such as Tempus and the help of (Tuning) experts from other countries, helps to address this problem.

#### 4.2.3.2 *Quality assurance*

As previously mentioned, ensuring the quality of higher education is one of the main priorities of the higher education reforms in Georgia. Interviews identified that there was not a quality assurance system in place before the Law on Higher Education in 2004. The quality assurance system was established according to the framework of the Bologna Process reforms. The following reforms have been introduced in Georgia with regard to quality assurance: establishment of an external quality assurance system and establishment of quality assurance services within higher education institutions.

The creation of the National Education Accreditation (NEAC) in 2006 is one of the major reforms in the field of quality assurance in Georgia. The NEAC initiated institutional accreditation of the higher education institutions, which was undertaken in two phases in 2006 and 2007 (IIEPPM, 2008). Out of 250 institutions, 61 were accredited. The main implications related to the institutional accreditation are the following (Zedginidze, 2008):

- Only accredited higher education institutions get state funding per student annually.
- The state only recognises diplomas issued by accredited higher education institutions.
- Students can transfer from one accredited higher education institution to another.
- Students of accredited higher education institutions are exempt from mandatory army service until they graduate (Law on Higher Ed. 2003).
- Diplomas recognised by the state are also recognised across Bologna participant countries.

However, the higher education institutions that do not receive accreditation are not obliged to stop their activities. These institutions may continue to operate and have students. However, as mentioned above they do not receive state funding and the diploma is not recognised by the state.

Presently, attention is focused on redefining the criteria of the institutional accreditation and preparatory work is taking place to prepare for programme evaluation. Interviews stated that programme accreditation would start in 2011, after the implementation of the project 'Capacity Enhancement for Implementing the Bologna Action Lines in Georgia (CEIBAL)', which started in June 2009.

The NEAC operates in compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG). With regard to the international co-operation, the self-assessment report for the membership to ENQA has been prepared. Georgia became a governmental member of the EQAR in 2008 (Maisuradze, 2008). The interviewees recognised that the preparation for membership in ENQA and EQAR is one of the priorities for the project 'Capacity Enhancement for Implementing the Bologna Action Lines in Georgia (CEIBAL)'. The assessment of NEAC will be undertaken in the course of this project.

In addition to the above, the NEAC has carried out the following tasks (IIEPPM, 2008):

- Accreditation of professional higher education programmes.
- Analysis of annual self-assessment reports of accredited higher education institutions.
- Development of new criteria for institutional accreditation.

Students are involved in the external quality assurance system, as one of the committee members of the NEAC is a student representative. Formally the student representative has the same responsibilities as the other committee members and is involved in the external evaluation groups (IIEPPM, 2008). We lack of information on the actual role of the students' representative within the activities of the committee.

The information above shows that several reforms have been implemented in the external quality assurance system. The interviewees stated that the implementation of the institutional accreditation was one of the most significant reforms in higher education system. The interviews identified that even though a number of reforms have been implemented with regard to the establishment of the external quality assurance system, its further development is of key importance for the higher education reforms. One of the next challenges for NEAC is to prepare for the programme accreditation and to undertake preparatory work leading towards membership in ENQA and listing on EQAR.

According to the Law on Higher Education, all state higher education institutions are obliged to set up internal quality assurance services. Private higher education institutions are not obliged to have internal quality assurance services; however, it was acknowledged that all the accredited private higher education institutions have quality assurance systems in place (IIEPPM, 2008). One of the reasons for this is that the establishment of the internal quality assurance system was a requirement in the framework of the institutional accreditation.

The main functions undertaken by the quality assurance services in higher education institutions are the following (Maisuradze, 2008):

- Regulation of curriculum and syllabus design.
- Elaboration of unified forms for conducting students surveys.
- Credit recognition and mobility procedures.
- Self-assessment procedures for academic staff.
- Ensuring favourable study environment.

However, the national research identified that these services are relatively weak and lack the necessary resources for effective implementation of their functions. Most institutions have one person responsible for quality assurance services. This is because most institutions cannot afford more extended quality assurance services. The description of the CEIBAL project found that services set up by the individual institutions lack training or guidance (Delegation of the European Commission to Georgia, 2008). Only a few large institutions have stronger quality assurance services. Also there is a lack of co-operation among the higher education institutions in relation to quality assurance and sharing of good practices among the institutions.

Overall, a number of quality assurance reforms have been implemented in Georgia, which have been identified as a success and as a main challenge by the stakeholders interviewed. One of the factors that strongly influenced the implementation of the reforms is the lack of qualified staff in the higher education institutions and other stakeholders. The interviews showed that there have been initiatives to provide training and to increase the skills but further attention should be given to this.

#### 4.2.3.3 Mobility

Increasing mobility is one of the challenges for higher education in Georgia. Some attention has been given to promoting student mobility but it remains a challenge. Moreover, there is a lack of data on mobile students and different information sources provide different data. The data from higher education institutions survey on student mobility is presented in table 4-1.

Table 4-1 Incoming and outgoing students in Georgia

Academic year	No. of incoming students	No. of outgoing students
2007–2008	41	9
2008–2009	8	27

Source: IIEPPM, 2008.

The table shows that the number of mobile students is rather limited. However interviews suggested much higher numbers of mobile students.

Table 4-2 Incoming and outgoing students in Georgia

Year	No. of incoming students	No. of outgoing students
2005	149	(Data not available)
2006	270	64
2007	409	121
2008	259	320

Source: data gathered by the national expert in the framework of this study

The data on students coming to study to Georgia from Asia, Oceania, North and South America is presented in the table 4-2. The data presented in the table 4-2 includes students in BA, MA and PhD studies who have been enrolled in Georgian higher education without passing through the United National Admission Exam. There have also been around 200 students enrolled through the United National Admission Exam, mostly from Azerbaijan, some from Russia and Ukraine. Table 4-2 showed that the number of incoming students decreased in 2008 and the number of the outgoing students has been increasing. The survey report identified that student and staff mobility is higher in the fields of medicine, pharmacy, natural and humanitarian sciences, law and business, environmental studies (IIEPPM, 2008). The data indicate that no students were enrolled

in higher education through the United National Admission Exam from EU countries. There has been an increase of students coming from Asia, especially for medicine studies. There has also been an increase in students from Azerbaijan, mostly ethnic Georgians.

The national expert identified that the number of mobile students must be larger than indicated in table 4-2. For example, it does not include data from students paying for their studies themselves or receiving grants from foreign donor organisations such as the US Embassy, the Open Society Foundation or the British Council. Unfortunately, more detailed data is unavailable.

#### 4.2.3.4 *Financial support for mobility*

One of the reasons for the low mobility rates is the limited financial support available. The National Stocktaking Report highlights the following financial measures to support mobility (Maisuradze, 2008):

- Graduate students support scheme administered by Development and Reforms Fund, which supports MA studies abroad; the scheme was launched in 2005.
- A subsidised graduate students' loan programme to study abroad has been launched in 2008. It was initiated by the government of Georgia, the Ministry of Education and Science in partnership with five private local banks. Students aiming to continue studies at MA level abroad are the beneficiaries of this scheme.

Although there is some financial support provided to encourage mobility, the higher education institutions survey identified that the most common financial sources are self-financing, or funding is provided by foreign donor organisations (IIEPPM, 2008). The interviews and the literature showed that there are measures in place for the portability of grants among the universities within Georgia. However, there are no measures in place for the portability of grants internationally.

#### 4.2.3.5 *Recognition of studies abroad*

Georgia ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) in 1999. Higher education institutions are obliged to follow the recognition procedures as defined therein. Higher education institutions hold autonomy with regard to the recognition of the study periods abroad after the authenticity of educational credentials has been attested by the Georgian National Education Accreditation Centre, which is also the Georgian ENIC. The national report identified that leading higher education institutions have already elaborated their internal procedures (Maisuradze, 2008). However, there is limited information available about the actual practices of higher education institutions concerning the recognition of study periods abroad.

#### 4.2.3.6 *Language*

The interviews identified that English is taught as a foreign language in all Georgian higher education institutions. In addition some institutions also provide study programmes in English. There are around 5 or 6 higher education institutions providing study programmes in English in Georgia.

#### 4.2.3.7 *Social dimension*

Interviews suggested that the social dimension is given least attention in the framework of the implementation of the Bologna Process reforms. However, there are some important elements that have been introduced concerning the social dimension. As shown in the

national strategy, the main priority on the social dimension is to ensure equal access to quality education. To achieve this goal the following priorities have been identified (Maisuradze , 2008):

- Increase participation and civic integration of ethnic minorities.
- Increase access to higher education for socially disadvantaged people.
- Widen access to MA programmes abroad.

Some important initiatives have been undertaken to ensure equal access to higher education. The United National Admission Exam was introduced in 2005. The main goal of this examination was to eliminate the corruption in higher education, which as the national report shows, was one of the main obstacles to access higher education. Data from the interviews illustrated that the implementation of this admission exam is among the most successful reforms.

Social grants for students were introduced in 2005. This grant covers the whole or part of the tuition fee and is allocated to the following categories of students (Maisuradze , 2008):

- Students from high mountainous regions and regions of ecological migration.
- Students from conflict regions.
- Students representing ethnic minorities (Azeris, Armenians).
- Children of the persons who died or were lost in the war for territorial integrity.
- Descendents of persons deported from Samtskhe-Javakheti region by communist regime.
- Orphans and children from large families (with four or more children).
- Students from families with socially unprotected status.

Data collected by the national expert show that around 35% of students receive direct financial support from the state. The average amount of the state grant is between 1,000 and 2,250 GEL.<sup>2</sup> Student grants are portable within the country, i.e. students keep their grants when moving from one higher education institution to another.

Interviews identified that most universities do not offer an appropriate study environment for students with disabilities. The interviews mentioned that accommodation of people with disabilities is legally required but it is not implemented in higher education institutions. This is mainly due to the fact that most of the higher education institutions, especially big state institutions, are located in buildings that do not have the facilities to accommodate people with disabilities. There is also a lack of financial resources available to introduce appropriate adjustments.

Increased attention to students support is given at the national level. A special unit responsible for administering student social assistance, within the ministry of Education

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<sup>2</sup> According to the exchange rate on 31/07/2009 (2.36 GEL = € 1), 1,000 GEL equals € 423.

and Science, was established in 2008. However, the evidence shows that within higher education institutions there is limited provision of student services. For example, educational guidance and counselling, career guidance and psychological counselling services are provided only in Ilia Chavchavadze University. And in this institution these services have been introduced only recently.

Evidence points at a lack of student accommodation in Georgia. The national expert identified that there are some student hostels in Tbilisi which originate from Soviet times, however these are not properly maintained and lack appropriate facilities. Most students coming to Tbilisi from different regions prefer to stay with their relatives or rent a flat. In some cases several students share one private flat.

#### 4.2.4 *Lessons learned*

The introduction of the legislation, based on consultation with the main stakeholders in society, was identified as one of the strengths of the reforms. It forms the basis for the implementation of the higher education reforms.

The implementation of the reforms was driven by a strong political commitment from the government and other key stakeholders. The Trends V report identified that the main stakeholders, including students and academia, identified the need for the reforms. The main stakeholders supported the initiatives that have been implemented. In addition the Ministry of Education and Science managed to build a good working relationship with the higher education institutions; this supported the implementation of the reforms (Crosier, Purser & Smidt, 2007). The interviews identified that wider society supports higher education reforms that are in line with the Bologna Process, and shows strong interest in it. On the one hand, this supports the process. On the other hand there is a danger of not fulfilling high expectations of society, which may lead to dissatisfaction.

Efforts have been made to make the European documents accessible to everyone. It is identified in the Trends V report that a number of European documents have been translated into the Georgian language, which makes them more accessible for the key stakeholders in the country (Crosier, Purser & Smidt, 2007). This is an important factor in the implementation of the reforms.

The interviews identified that the academic society supports the reforms and the implementation of the Bologna Process. However, there is a lack of information and understanding on how the measures should be implemented. The interviews showed that there have been information seminars undertaken in order to disseminate information on the Bologna Process reforms, however more activities are needed in this field.

Some of the other difficulties identified within the implementation of the Bologna Process in Georgia are:

- Lack of financial resources.
- The short time frame for the implementation of the reforms.
- Lack of co-operation among the universities in Georgia.

Overall Georgia has implemented a number of significant reforms concerning the implementation of the Bologna Process. The Bologna Process was placed at the centre of



the higher education reforms and it is one of the main ways to address the inefficiencies of the national higher education system. However, the higher education reforms and the development of the Bologna Process action lines needs to be further implemented.

### 4.3 Further development of the Bologna Process in Georgia

The further implementation of the higher education reforms in line with the Bologna Process action lines is at the core of the higher education policies. Ensuring the quality of higher education is still an important issue in Georgia and further activities remain necessary. Another issue identified as a priority for further activities is the training of staff in the higher education institutions. Raising awareness in wider society should be part of the framework for the further implementation of higher education reforms.

In order to address the goals identified above and to proceed with the implementation of the national reforms in line with the Bologna Process, Georgia is implementing the Twinning project 'Capacity Enhancement for Implementing the Bologna Action Lines in Georgia (CEIBAL)'. The project was launched in July 2009 and will last for two years. The expected outcomes of this project are (Delegation of the European Commission to Georgia, 2008):

- Revised institutional set-up of NEAC on the basis of best practice examples in the EHEA and appropriate coordination and networking capacity of the Ministry of Education and Science.
- The legal and normative framework is reviewed and concrete recommendations are endorsed by stakeholders.
- The NQF for higher education is self-certified.
- Study programmes in five disciplines for regulated professions have undergone internal and external evaluation. Stakeholders agree on future mechanisms and procedures for programme evaluation and accreditation in Georgia.
- Recognition practice in Georgia is in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and subsidiary texts (LRC).
- The capacity of representatives of key institutions to implement and maintain Bologna reforms (administrative staff, academic staff, students) is enhanced.

The project is being implemented in cooperation with experts from Germany and France. Interviews showed that this project is a priority of the Ministry of Education and Science with regard to the implementation of the Bologna Process. The successful completion of the project will be an important step in the further development of the Bologna Process reforms. A communication strategy is being set up as a follow-up to this project. It is being prepared in order to raise awareness on the reforms for employers, parents and other stakeholders.

### 4.4 Conclusions

The implementation of the Bologna Process in Georgia is seen within the context of the European education system. It is also seen as a tool for addressing national inefficiencies

in its higher education system. There is a strong political will, supported by social pressure, for the reforms and the key stakeholders are committed to their implementation.

Georgia joined the Bologna Process in a relatively difficult situation and therefore it needed to implement some large-scale reforms. A number of major reforms have been implemented in line with the Bologna Process action lines. For example, the implementation of the quality assurance system and degree structure reforms. However, there are some difficulties ensuring the quality of the higher education and it needs further attention. The other challenges are related to the lack of information within the academic society and other important stakeholders concerning the Bologna action lines and their implementation.

The further implementation of the Bologna Process action lines is at the core of Georgian higher education policy. One of the main measures planned is the implementation of the project 'Capacity Enhancement for Implementing the Bologna Action Lines in Georgia (CEIBAL).' Successful implementation of this project would be a significant step towards implementation of the Bologna Process action areas in Georgia.

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## 5 Serbia

### 5.1 Higher education in Serbia

The system of higher education in Serbia is binary: with universities and a rapidly changing profession-oriented non-university sector. Higher education institutions can also be classified as public or private. During the academic year 2005–2006 there were 198 faculties (86 state faculties within 7 public universities and 112 private faculties, which are mostly organised into private universities) and 90 post-secondary schools (49 public and 41 private) (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2006; Centre for Educational Policy, 2008). With around 90,000 students (2007–2008) the University of Belgrade is the largest Serbian university.

In 2007, vocational post-secondary schools underwent accreditation and 48 of them were accredited (giving the right to be called 'schools of applied studies' in higher education); 27 were rejected. A number of vocational post-secondary schools had not even applied for accreditation. Initially, 18 schools were issued a warning of which 15 later were accredited (they are among the 48 accredited schools). Accredited vocational post-secondary schools are an integral part of higher education system, offering three-year professional Bachelor studies.

Serbia without Kosovo has approximately 7,365,000 inhabitants (2008 estimate). According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, during the academic year 2005/06 there were 229,355 students in Serbia, 56% of whom were women, while 110,520 students (48%) were financed from the state budget. Other students paid tuition fees. Data from 2005 indicate that 77% of the students were enrolled in ISCED 5A type of programmes and 23% in ISCED 5B programmes. The same source also shows that the private higher education sector, while large in the number of private higher education institutions, is rather small when it comes to the number of students (only 7% of all students in the country) (Ivošević & Miklavic, 2009).

There were 7,737 teachers (almost 85% full-time) and 4,729 teaching associates (90% full-time). This means that the student-teacher ratio was 18:1 if all teaching staff is included and 29:1 if only academic staff with PhD is taken into account. With regard to graduates, in 2004, 22,047 students graduated, of whom 13,344 (60%) were women (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2006).

Using Trow's (1997) classification of higher education systems, higher education in Serbia can be categorised as a mass higher education system that is shifting towards universal higher education. The gross enrolment ratio for the entire higher education sector was 43% in 2002, but the part that refers to university education was 27% (Vukasovic, 2007). Historically, the massification of higher education has been most intensive in the 1960s, as a result of rapid industrialisation and communist modernisation ideology (Mandić, 1992). However, in the 1970s and 1980s enrolments stagnated. As in many other communist countries, massification of higher education re-intensified after the fall of communism. The number of students has steadily increased and it almost doubled between 1990/91 and 2004/05 (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2006). The most rapid expansion of higher education system in Serbia happened after 2000. The increase of student numbers was largely accommodated through privatisation of public higher

education institutions (introduction of tuition fees for almost half of study places) and through the development of a private higher education sector (Ivošević & Miklavič, 2009). The increase in student numbers was not accompanied with an equal increase in the numbers of staff. On the contrary, in the same period the number of staff dropped (Centre for Education Policy, 2008).

### 5.1.1 Governance

Higher education is primarily regulated by the Law on Higher Education (LoHE), which was adopted by the Assembly of Serbia in August 2005. Unlike the previous legal regulation, the LoHE regulates both universities and vocational higher education institutions, i.e. the non-university sector. Except for the process of studies itself, which is precisely regulated, all other aspects of the organisation and work of higher education institutions are regulated to a lesser extent than in the previous regulation. As its main principles, from 2005 the LoHE incorporates higher education autonomy and academic freedom, which is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia. The Ministry of Education is the main governmental authority in charge of Serbian higher education. For the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina the competences of the Government are transferred to the provincial authorities. The provincial authorities however only have executive autonomy and cannot adopt legislation on higher education. The 2005 Law on Higher Education also introduced changes in the governance system. The law limits the Ministry's authority and transfers several responsibilities to the following buffer bodies, which consist predominantly of senior academics coming from diverse disciplinary fields:

- The National Council for Higher Education, which proposes the higher education policy, defines the list of titles, sets quality standards and monitors quality assessment. Members of the Council are elected by the Assembly of Serbia;
- The Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assessment (CAQA), which carries out accreditation. Members of the Commission are elected by the National Council for Higher Education.

#### 5.1.1.1 The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE)

*The National Council for Higher Education (NCHE)* is a 16-member body elected by the Parliament of the Republic of Serbia based on the proposal of: 1) The conference of Universities in Serbia, 2) The conference of non-university sector institutions, 3) the Government. The final list of candidates is formed based on the results of the open call for the individual candidates willing to be members of the NCHE. The mandate of the NCHE members lasts for four years and members can be re-elected once.

The NCHE has broad competences. It is to (1) follow the development of the higher education in Serbia and propose policies which would bring Serbian higher education in line with European and international developments, (2) to decide and/or give recommendations about various issues including names of the degrees and professional titles, criteria for appointment of academic staff, enrolment and access policy for higher education, and (3) to play a crucial role in accreditation. Within the third point, NCHE is in charge of (a) appointing CAQA's members and (b) decisions about standards of internal institutional evaluation and quality assessment, standards for external quality assessment, standards for accreditation of higher education institutions and standards for accreditation of study programmes and, standards for the approval of the right of

existence to higher education institutions (permit to operate). NCHE also acts as the appeals forum in case of complaints against accreditation decisions (LoHE, 2005).

The organisation and competences of NCHE have some common features with higher education buffer bodies in other European countries (for example Nordic countries, Ireland, and the UK). There are, however, two significant characteristics of the NCHE in this comparison. First, NCHE does not distribute funds for higher education and/or research. In fact, NCHE competences have almost nothing to do with funding higher education. Second, NCHE is in comparison almost an exclusively academic body based on voluntary work (almost all members are active or former professors), while other buffer bodies in Europe may balance academic presence with professionals in the fields of management, public policy and administration and economics.

From the outside, the role and work of NCHE is not seen as exceptionally effective and efficient, although the NCHE seem to be satisfied with its achievements and the current governance setting (source: interviews). Most interviewees however criticised it for being composed of renowned old professors, who are respected personally and academically, but not seen as really competent and efficient in developing new policies or influencing higher education. Moreover, most of the national actors who were involved in the initial political decision leading to the 2005 legislation, indicated that the main rationale for the establishment of NCHE was to safeguard the autonomy of higher education from the frequent changes in the Ministry of Education with possible rapid successions of ministers with sometimes diametrically opposite political orientations, as experienced in the period after 2000 (source: interviews).

#### 5.1.1.2 *The Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assessment (CAQA)*

*The Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assessment* is another buffer body established by the 2005 Law on Higher Education. It is not an independent agency. It consists of 15 members (3 from each of five disciplinary areas), who are all full-time professors, forbidden to hold any other elected public office (in the state, political party, NGOs dealing with education or as a dean or rector). The competences and composition of the Commission are defined by the Law. The Law mandates NCHE to appoint the Commission's members and the Commission reports to the NCHE. Similar to the procedure for the election of NCHE, the Conference of Universities, forms the final list of candidates. Based on the results of an open call for individual candidates, CAQA members have a four-year mandate, renewable once.

CAQA's activities/responsibilities include:

- 1) Proposing standards for institutional and programme accreditation, external quality assessment and institutional quality assurance to the NCHE
- 2) Conducting the accreditation process of all higher education institutions and study programmes
- 3) Helping institutions in the process of quality improvement
- 4) Giving opinions in the process of approval of higher education institutions (LoHE, 2005)

### 5.1.2 Funding

It is estimated that Serbia spends about 0.9% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on higher education (this refers only to public spending) and 0.32% of its GDP on research (Ivošević & Miklavic, 2009). From the available statistics it is not possible to calculate the amount of private expenditure on higher education. However, it is likely to be significant and increasing mostly because of tuition fees, which differ from one faculty to another. The financing of educational activities of state institutions (funds provided from the budget) is regulated by the Governmental Regulation on Financing of Higher Education and defined exclusively on the basis of input and process parameters, such as the number of enrolled students, cost of individual study programmes, basic salary for teachers etc. (Babin & Lažetić, 2009). The State decides how the money will be spent and spending is strictly divided into two macro budget lines, one for the salaries of academic staff and the other for operational costs of the institution (heating, electricity, maintenance, etc.). State universities may also acquire other income, such as tuition fees, various administrative fees, renting of space, services to third parties, projects etc. Research activities are financed separately and through special funds. According to the current regulation, private higher education institutions cannot claim any funds from the state and are mostly 'for profit'. In public universities, faculties have autonomy to manage their own income (i.e. income from fees and third party funding). This has led to significant differences in financial management and overall financial capacity among faculties within the same university.

## 5.2 Serbia and the Bologna Process

### 5.2.1 Rationales and goals

Having joined the Bologna Process in 2003, Serbia is a 'late-comer'. Joining the Process was seen as the crucial part of the country's general reform. The implementation of the Bologna Process principles was seen as an integral part of Serbia's general European integration agenda, necessary to recover from the political and economic isolation of the 1990s. Higher education reforms and the Bologna Process were mainly justified as pivotal in opening possibilities for Serbian students and academic staff to be mobile in the future and making Serbian higher education degrees and programmes understood in the wider European context.

The Bologna Process served as the main reform platform for many changes in Serbian higher education, which cannot always be clearly linked with the Bologna Process action lines (e.g. measures to increase the efficiency of higher education). Interviewed parties for this case study agreed that the system of higher education required the reform regardless of the Bologna Process context in order to address new developments such as the massification of higher education, the emergence of the private higher education institutions, decrease in quality of education and research etc. Besides the Bologna Process goals, one of the main rationales for reforming the study structure was the inefficiency of the previous system. Some research on inclusiveness and efficiency of higher education showed that in 2004–2005 it took students 1.45 years on average to enroll in the next year of studies, and about 37% needed more than 1.45 years to enroll the next study year (Vukasovic, 2007). The dropout rate in higher education in the previous system was estimated to be around 45% of students (*Ibid.*).

The reform strategy was initiated already in 2002 (before Serbia joined the Bologna Process) with negotiations over the new higher education legislation. At that time, the Ministry's general governance reform strategy aimed at strengthening the role of the central university offices and abolishing individual faculties' independent legal positions. Resistance to these elements of proposed reforms and the change of Government in 2004 postponed the adaptation of the Higher Education Law incorporating the Bologna Process elements; eventually it was adopted in the second half of 2005.

## 5.2.2 *Policies and initiatives*

### 5.2.2.1 *Degree reform*

The pre-Bologna university degree structure was already a three-cycle structure with the first degree lasting typically 4 or 5 years, with medical degrees having an official duration of 6 years. The second degree, *magistar nauka* (Master of sciences), had an official duration of two years. Finally the third cycle lasted typically four years and led to a Doctoral degree. The system of studies was formally changed according to the Serbian understanding of the Bologna Process by the Law on Higher Education in 2005. In practice the reform abolished the old type of second cycle degree (*magistar nauka*) and reformed the contents and structures of the first-degree studies. The institutions were left to decide on 3+2 or 4+1 formula. Universities and faculties were allowed to organise Bachelor, Master and Doctoral level programmes, both academic and professional types.

The non-university sector experienced even more sweeping changes in comparison to the university sector. Previously, the non-university sector had consisted of post-secondary education institutions (*viša škola*). With the 2005 reforms these institutions were incorporated into the higher education system with the request that they reform into professional higher education institutions offering 3 or 4 year long ISCED 5B type of Bachelor programmes.

In the academic year 2008–2009 around 90% of all students were enrolled into programmes based on the new study structure (Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia, 2008). With the process of accreditation of higher education institutions and programmes in Serbia completed (2009), all existing study programmes will be organised according to the concept outlined in the 2005 higher education legislation.

The reform of study structure was not focused only on the types of degrees and programmes, but also included the reform of the system of studies, which the new legislation regulated in detail. The new system of studies introduced one semester courses and continuous assessment of students. Previously, courses lasted usually two semesters (and some even four or five with a single exam at the end). Long study duration and high drop out rates were often considered a consequence the old system.

### 5.2.2.2 *Mobility and recognition*

Student and staff mobility in Serbia is rather limited, especially when it comes to short-term student exchanges. The percentage of incoming and outgoing students is rather low as Serbia does not take part in the Erasmus programme and student mobility in Tempus projects is rare. The number of Serbian citizens studying in other European countries for a degree is significant, at around 5% of the students registered in Serbia. It is however difficult to assess how many of these students are actually free movers going from Serbia to other European countries for the purposes of education and how many of them are

students with Serbian citizenship originating from Serbian emigrants living permanently in other European countries. A similar problem occurs when it comes to the registered foreign students in Serbia. The majority of them are citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro and they are treated in practice and by law as domestic students.

Table 5-1 shows the number of Serbian students registered in top ten destination countries based on data from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics.

Table 5-1 Serbian Students Studying Abroad (2005)

Destination country	No. of students	% of all students abroad
Germany	2769	29.2%
Austria	1150	12.1%
Hungary	1132	11.9%
Italy	752	7.9%
Switzerland	670	7.1%
France	487	5.1%
USA	445	4.7%
United Kingdom	347	3.7%
Bulgaria	312	3.3%
Croatia	249	2.6%
Total students in top 5 destination countries	6473	68.3%
Total students in top 10 destination countries	8313	87.7%
Total population of students abroad	9482	100.0%

Notes: Figures in red are estimates. Figures also include Montenegro. Source for all statistics: Unesco Institute for Statistics.

Beyond participation in the Tempus, Erasmus Mundus and CEEPUS programmes, there are very few specific policy measures designed to promote either staff or student mobility. Loans and grants are currently not portable, although the government reports that their introduction is currently under consideration.

Certain policies from the spectrum of the Bologna Process recognition and transparency instruments are demanded by the legislation adopted in 2005. The spirit of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), ratified by Serbia in 2003, was reflected in the 2005 Law on Higher Education, which speaks about recognition procedures and no longer about equivalence and 'nostrification' procedures. However the current recognition practice in Serbia is aimed at establishing equivalence between foreign degrees and existing Serbian degrees (cf. section 5.2.5.2). In addition, the Law demands that all higher education



institutions issue a Diploma Supplement to all graduates automatically in Serbian and one widely spoken European language. ECTS is introduced primarily as a system for accumulation of credits and as a useful tool for curriculum redesign and secondarily as a tool that can facilitate intra-institutional and international student mobility.

#### 5.2.2.3 *Quality assurance*

In addition to the degree structure reform, the development of the quality assurance system in higher education is the main result of the Bologna Process in Serbia and it was introduced by the 2005 Law on Higher Education. The general description of the composition and the legal mandate of CAQA were presented above. Some of the main characteristics of the accreditation scheme in Serbia will be outlined here and the rationales for its development will be discussed.

The scheme of higher education quality assessment in Serbia is an accreditation scheme focused on threshold standards (with 'yes' or 'no' outcomes). From our interviews it appeared that, generally speaking, there is a lack of awareness about European developments in quality assessment practices, which can be explained by the relatively isolated position of Serbia in the European context.

National actors in charge of accreditation and some institutional actors from the public higher education sector perceive accreditation as a part of the Bologna Process. They refer to it as 'European standard' and 'fulfilment of the European commitments', and do not think that accreditation would have emerged in Serbia from the problems and logic of the Serbian higher education system (source: interviews). In general, they do not perceive the problem of quality in the private higher education sector as a big issue that could not have been solved with other traditional measures (inspection, denial of approval for establishment etc.). Yet some interviewed actors claimed that the decision to introduce the accreditation scheme was initiated as a form of identification of 'black sheep' in higher education (cf. Teichler, 2007). Accreditation was originally considered as the right solution to the problem of the emerging private higher education institutions. In the period after 2000 the Ministry received a significant number of applications for permissions to open higher education institutions. As an *ad hoc* solution the Ministry established an internal commission for reviewing these applications, which later also proposed the first model for the accreditation standards for higher education institutions and study programmes (*Komisija za akreditaciju visokog obrazovanja*, 2004). The work of this commission was stopped due to the change of Government in 2003, and the establishment of the current model of accreditation based on the Law from 2005 is a separate development. In sum, at least part of the rationales for establishment of CAQA come from the desire to regulate the expansion of the private higher education sector; the Bologna Process became an overriding driver afterwards.

#### 5.2.2.4 *Social dimension*

The emphasis on the social dimension of education and widening and broadening participation in higher education occurred at later stages of the Bologna Process. For reasons of timing, then, current levels of participation in higher education cannot be attributed to the Bologna Process effects. The gross enrolment rate (GER) increased significantly since 2000. However, some studies show that increased participation was not necessarily followed by widening participation and inclusion of less-privileged groups in society, but rather expressed the continuation of the social reproduction patterns (Vukasovic, 2006). The shortening of the average duration of studies can be seen as one of

the potential factors for decreased dropout and increased completion of studies. However until now there is little empirical evidence to support this claim.

The provision of student services improved in quality since 2000 (student housing and food in student restaurants), but that was rather a result of the overall consolidation of the public services after the disastrous period of 1990s. The main policies with regard to the provision of student services and the organisation of the system did not change.

The system of student support is almost entirely merit based, thus not targeting vulnerable student groups unless they are excellent students. For instance, student accommodation places in dormitories are distributed almost fully according to average grades and on the successful completion of study programme blocks. Family income accounts for at most 2% of the total points (Vukasovic & Petkovska, 2008). However, food in student restaurants is heavily subsidised by the state and it is available to all students (all meals for students living in student dorms and only lunch available to all students). Health insurance covers all student population up to the age of 26.

The state provides a general loan and grant scheme for students with both grants and loans averaging around € 70 per month. This amount covers accommodation in student dorms and the cost of the food vouchers in student restaurants plus a small percentage intended to cover other minor expenses. A bank administers the grants and loans programme, and loans can be transferred into grants if students complete their studies within the official duration of the study programme and with a certain grade average. The grant allocation is fully automatic and dependent only on students' excellent grade average (average grade needed is 9, the grading scale in Serbian higher education is between 5 and 10, 5 being the failing grade). There are no student grants and loans targeting any particular student group, nor are they distributed in proportion to the student population at different higher education institutions.

### 5.2.3 *Involvement of stakeholders*

The involvement of internal stakeholders (especially universities and students) was one of the crucial factors for the successful implementation of the Bologna reforms. Stakeholder participation in higher education decision making is organised informally rather than being institutionalised. The representatives of higher education institutions and student unions are considered to be the main stakeholders involved, while many interviewed parties stressed the lack of participation of trade unions and employers in the discussions about higher education reforms including the Bologna Process implementation. An attempt to create a national Bologna Follow Up Group failed in 2003 due to government change. After that period, involvement of stakeholders occurred in different working groups on drafting the new legislation as well as in different occasions (meetings, projects etc.). This is particularly true in the case of students, and the promotion of student participation within the Bologna Process at the European level contributed to the increased involvement of student unions in higher education policy making in Serbia. However, some stakeholders resisted changes which were justified as part of the Bologna Process. This concerns especially the negotiation process on the new Law on Higher Education, which went through different stages between 2003 and 2005. The representatives of the University of Belgrade were the most prominent opponents of initiatives to change higher education governance. The resistance to this issue as well as the frequent personnel changes in the Ministry of Education during the period 2003–2005

postponed the adaptation of legislation, which would also create the legal framework for the implementation of the Bologna action lines.

#### 5.2.4 *Contextual factors*

Contextual factors can be divided into drivers for change and factors inhibiting the implementation of the Bologna Process action lines. Most prominent among the drives of change, the widely noticed and discussed problems of Serbian higher education, with the low efficiency and effectiveness of the higher education system (duration of studies, completion rates, drop-out) opened a policy window for reforms of higher education including introduction of the Bologna Process action lines.

Strong involvement could be noted of foreign donors and agencies, which promoted the Bologna reforms and which supported some of the actions. In this relation one could mention Tempus projects, the Council of Europe mission between 2006–2009, World University Service (WUS) Austria, the Open Society Fund Belgrade, other foundations, the German Rectors' Conference and other foundations operating in Serbian higher education.

On the side of inhibiting factors, one contextual factor mentioned a number of times, was the lack of policy continuity, even if we only focus on the post-2000 period. Ministers for education changed frequently, each having very different approaches to policy making and assessment of the situation in higher education. A very reformist government was in power until 2003, which was followed by conservative governments between 2003 and 2008, with series of different education ministers. Political and personal factors both contributed to the lack of continuity.

Besides, there was no additional governmental funding for reforms to facilitate the introduction of reforms related to the Bologna Process.

### 5.3 Results

#### 5.3.1 *Degree reform*

In academic year 2009/10 all newly enrolled students are enrolled in the new study structure (three cycle structure); over 90% of all students at that time already studied according to the new system of degree and studies.

The curriculum reforms mainly meant: more elective courses, one-semester courses instead of long multi-semester courses, introduction of obligatory presence at all courses, introduction of continuous assessment with many small exams and tests instead of summative final exams. The extent of implementation of these reforms is different across study programmes. Dropout rates decreased and completion rates increased; the completion rate is nowadays estimated to be around 80%, however the system is often criticised for its decrease in quality and lowering of educational standards. Sometimes it is referred as 'school-like' studies.

The main problem of the curriculum reforms is that the average student workload in many student programmes is not properly estimated, leading to students having difficulties to obtain 60 credits every academic year. Only with 60 credits obtained in the previous academic year, are students entitled to register for the next academic year

without having to pay a tuition fee (i.e. they obtain the status of the budget-financed students). This caused major student protests in September 2008; the 60 credits-problem is perceived as an element of the Bologna Process, although it is in reality a part of the funding system.

Another problem occurs at some study programmes where there are insufficient study places at the Master level while the new three-year Bachelor degrees in these disciplines offer few employment prospects (psychology, architecture).

The system of higher education financing has not changed in parallel with the reform of the degree system. According to the old funding regulations, faculties received funding for the old type of first degree which last 4, 4.5 and 5 years. Faculties that changed their degree structure from 4 to 3+2 scheme are left without funding for Master degrees, leading to the majority of Master students having to pay tuition fees.

### 5.3.2 *Mobility and recognition*

Results in attracting foreign students to study in Serbia are minimal. This is mostly attributable to the lack of financial resources and Serbia's absence from major European exchange programmes such as Erasmus. The present incoming student mobility is usually based on bilateral agreements between Serbian and foreign higher education institutions or as part of programmes sponsored by foreign governments (for example around 200 students from Libya receive scholarships to study in Serbia, mostly engineering). Outgoing student mobility is significant and increasing (according to figures from Eurostat). These students mostly are considered free movers. Scholarship programmes for studies abroad and the system of recognition periods of studies and foreign degrees are still based on the old 'nostrification' and equivalence schemes.

The ENIC-NARIC centre resides within the Ministry of Education and Sports and it is made up of one staff member. Hence, it cannot be said that Serbia has an ENIC-NARIC on a par with those in many other countries. The competent recognition authorities are higher education institutions. They collect all applications for recognition and usually send them to particular departments for equivalence assessment. It is difficult to assess the overall level of student mobility, although student organisations report that both outward and inward mobility have 'slightly' increased since Serbia joined the Bologna Process. However, student organisations also report that the level of funding available for mobility is entirely unsatisfactory, that institutional support for mobility is patchy, and that many students have problems with visa and residence formalities.

### 5.3.3 *Quality assurance*

In the second half of 2006, CAQA proposed and NCHE adopted the followings sets of standards and connected regulations:

- Standards and Regulations for Self-evaluation and Internal Quality Assessment of Higher Education Institutions;
- Standards and Regulations for External Quality Assessment of Higher Education Institutions;

- **Standards and Regulations for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes** (separate standard sets for first two cycles of studies and for Doctoral studies).

Probably due to the time constraints set by the Law, CAQA decided not to implement the Standards and Regulations for External Quality Assurance, which would include external quality assessment of higher education institutions with peer review panels making site visits, a procedure that is an integral part of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG). This decision was crucial for the subsequent development and it shaped the quality assessment scheme in Serbia. Without the visiting peer group, the remaining quality assessment procedures defined in other sets of CAQA standards and regulations have low potential for quality improvement, because they focus solely on institutions' production and collection of various documents and questionnaires to be analysed by CAQA members and anonymous reviewers hired to assess study programmes.

The Standards and Regulations for Self-evaluation and Internal Quality Assessment of Higher Education Institutions are formally in power and it is left to higher education institutions to act upon them. The functioning of internal quality assurance is practically not checked for lack of external quality assessment based on site visits, nor are the internal quality assurance system and its functioning checked during accreditation. The only requirement concerning the internal quality assurance system that is checked during the accreditation process is the existence of institutional regulations about self-evaluation and regular quality assessment. CAQA checks if the institution has submitted that document; it does not go into the actual implementation of the internal quality assessment regulations.

Although the presence and functioning of internal quality assurance mechanisms at Serbian institutions varies, the impact of CAQA's standards and accreditation on the development of internal quality assurance mechanisms at higher education institutions is minimal. A number of interviewees who were actually involved in the preparation of documentation for accreditation of their institutions admitted that many documents required by accreditation were written for the sole purpose of accreditation. The only standards actually being implemented in practice are the third set of Standards and Regulations for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes.

#### *5.3.4 Social dimension*

The last decade in the Serbian higher education was characterised by reform attempts and normalisation of the political situation. That trend is also visible in the domain of higher education participation and student services. Although the participation rates increased in general and the provision of student services improved highly in quality compared with the 1990s (grants and loans, student accommodation, health services and counselling as well as provision of subsidised food in the student restaurants), this improvement is neither a result of a special policy nor of the Bologna Process. The reasons for this improvement are to be found in Serbia's general political and economic stabilisation, which allowed for renewed investments in student services whilst neither changing existing institutions nor reforming the principles according to which student support is distributed. The most recent attempt to reform the system of student support is the proposal of a new Law on Pupil and Student Welfare proposed by the Ministry in 2009.

It can be concluded that significant reforms were conducted in the domains of degree structure, curriculum reforms and introduction of accreditation schemes. The main challenges for the next years include the reform of the recognition procedures (abolishment of equivalence practices), a more realistic estimation of student workload, as well as proper assessment of the employability of the new Bachelor degrees. The system of funding needs to be brought into line with the reforms within higher education.

Institutional and programme capacities for supporting potentially more incoming students have to be increased and/or developed.

In order to widen and not only increase student participation in higher education, the social dimension requires more attention. In particular, the balance between merit and need orientations in the systems of student support (esp. loans and grants, dormitories) need reconsideration.

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## 6 Turkey

### 6.1 Introduction

#### 6.1.1 *Size of the higher education system*

At the end of 2009, there were 152 higher education institutions in the Turkish higher education system: 94 public universities (including High Tech Institutes), 45 non-profit foundation universities and 13 other higher education institutions. The number of higher education institutions increases rapidly; a year before, there were 139 institutions. The number of students rose rapidly as well. Between 1999 and 2007, the number of students rose with a million, or 67%, in Turkey.<sup>1</sup>

#### 6.1.2 *Governance of higher education*

The establishment of higher education institutions is decided by law. Both public and private institutes are governed by the same higher education law. The higher education system has a unitary structure organised on the basis of departments and faculties.

The administrative structure of the higher education system could be categorised into three groups: superordinate bodies (Council of Higher Education, Inter-University Board and Ministry of National Education), universities and subordinate bodies (institutes, faculties, and departments).

The Council of Higher Education (CoHE, or YÖK in Turkish) is the organisation responsible for the higher education institutions according to the Higher Education Law. The CoHE is responsible for the coordination and co-operation of higher education institutions, the determination of the appointment and dismissal of academic staff, the criteria for the selection and number of students, the student contribution fees and the supervision of the budgets prepared by the universities.

The Ministry of National Education is the parliamentary representative of higher education. The Interuniversity Board works as an academic organ that coordinates the activities of universities, prepares regulations concerning education research activities

The main financial source of the state universities is the state budget. Foundation universities are privately financed through tuition fees. In addition to this, they can demand financial support from the state up to 45% of their expenditures and have state subsidies and financial benefits that state universities have.

In conclusion, higher education in Turkey is an example of a centralised tradition. In line with this tradition, universities are considered as service providers to society and hence strictly controlled by the central authorities with respect to their administrative and financial functioning.

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<sup>1</sup> In absolute numbers, the growth in student numbers was from 1.46 million in 1999 to 2.45 million in 2007 (Eurostat data).

### 6.1.3 *When did Turkey join the Bologna Process?*

Turkey has become one of the signatory countries of the Bologna Process, in the Prague meeting, 2001. The CoHE and the Interuniversity Council are the main responsible bodies at the national level for the Bologna Process (National Report 2007-2009, p. 4). The national Bologna experts' team is the key unit in transmitting the Bologna reforms to the institutional level.

### 6.1.4 *Turkey's major aims in joining the Bologna Process*

Turkey's participation in the Bologna Process has motivation factors beyond higher education. Integration with the western world has always been a determining goal in Turkey's policy-making processes.

Concerning higher education, modernisation and internationalisation ideas construct the basis of the reforms and explain the desire to take part in the Bologna Process. The existing need for reform in the higher education system and the trust in the suggested reforms of the Bologna Process to improve the higher education system has been motivating for the participation in the process. Furthermore, being a signatory of the Bologna Process is considered important in improving the international reputation of Turkish universities, and making them more competitive at the international market.

### 6.1.5 *Aim of the case study*

The case study aims at the analysis of the Bologna Process reforms on degree structure, mobility, quality assurance and social dimension. The case study provides an overview of the policy making and implementation processes in Turkey.

Turkey is selected as one of the latecomer signatories of the Bologna Process that has implemented many of the structural reforms. While the structural reforms are introduced smoothly and quickly, goal achievement is not yet observable for all action areas in Turkey. In this sense, the case study aims at analysing the dynamics and reasons of different degrees of goal achievements concerning different action lines of the Bologna Process in the context of higher education system in Turkey.

## 6.2 *Before the Bologna Process*

### 6.2.1 *Degree structure before*

Since 1982, the degree structure has been based on a three-cycle system: Bachelor, Master and doctorate. The exceptions are dentistry, medicine, pharmacy and veterinary medicine faculties with long single-cycle programmes. Each cycle gives access to the other cycle. Yet, applicants are required to pass additional exams, which are held, at the national and institutional level. The pre-bachelor Associate Degree in the first cycle is intended to lead to a job, but it does not lead to the second cycle.



### 6.2.2 *Mobility (Erasmus) before*

Turkey was not part of the Erasmus Programme before the Bologna Process. The programme was initiated in 2003–2004. Until then, international mobility was realised through bilateral agreements between higher education institutions.

### 6.2.3 *Quality assurance before*

In Turkey, the CoHE and the Interuniversity Board are the institutions responsible for quality assurance at the national level. The Higher Education Auditing Council, under the CoHE, controls the appropriateness of teaching, education and other activities to the aims and principles of higher education to the higher education law. The functioning principles of the Auditing Council are determined by the CoHE. The Interuniversity Board acts as an academic assessment unit. It prepares regulations concerning education, research and publications, and evaluates Doctoral studies. The control mechanism functions in a hierarchical way.

At the institutional level, the rector is responsible for the control and supervision of activities to ensure their appropriateness with the state development plans, principles and aims.

Nonetheless, these units did not constitute a functioning national quality assurance system. Concerns for quality assessment have accelerated with the Bologna Process in Turkey.

### 6.2.4 *Social dimension before*

Increasing access opportunities of Turkey's young population to higher education has been a policy priority already for long time; however, without much concern on promoting participative equity for all social groups of the population. Admission to higher education is regulated by a sub-unit of the CoHE centrally. There are two main determinants in admission: high school grades and the university entrance examination results. Every high school graduate is eligible to take the examination, irrespective of candidates' race, gender or (dis-)ability.

## 6.3 *Developments in the Bologna Process*

### 6.3.1 *Reforms and outcomes in degree structure*

Turkey did not need to change its degree structure system. According to 2007 data, 97% of students are enrolled in two-cycle degrees (National Report 2007-2009). Yet, legislative changes were made concerning the ECTS and Diploma Supplement. Since 2006, the use of ECTS and the provision of the Diploma Supplement became obligatory in all higher education institutions. All graduates of the Associate Degrees, first and second cycles receive the Diploma Supplement upon their request in English, German or French and the first copy is free of charge.

A credit system similar to North American universities is widely applied in Turkey. The credits are based on the lecture hours and half of the weekly laboratory or practicum hours. The existing credit system has not been replaced by the ECTS. The ECTS is used

in parallel with the national credit systems only for mobility programmes. At the moment, the national credit system is not fully compatible with the ECTS, because it does not include definition of credits according to student workload and learning outcomes. The Bologna experts' team gives workshops and training programmes to academic and administrative staff in order to increase the knowledge about ECTS and hence the compatibility of credit practices in Turkish higher education.

National initiatives for curriculum reform or modularisation of courses have been streamlined in the frame of the Bologna Process. For example, curriculum reforms for the short cycle have been almost completed after the works done in a project called IKMEP (Development of Human Resources through Vocational Education), in coordination with the Ministry of Education, supported by the EC. The Bologna experts' team saw curriculum reform nevertheless as a priority issue for their work in 2008-2009 (Council of Higher Education, Bologna Process website 2009).

### *6.3.2 Reforms and outcomes in mobility*

The Turkish National Agency has the responsibility to promote participation in the EU education and culture programmes. The Erasmus Programme was initiated in 2003-2004 as a pilot project. In absolute numbers, incoming Erasmus mobility increased much, especially after the Erasmus programme came out of its pilot stage, from 299 in 2003-2004 to 1321 in 2006–2007.<sup>2</sup> Yet in combination with the colossal growth of the total student population, Eurostat calculated on 2006 data compared with 1999 that the percentage of incoming students from other EHEA countries had decreased by 0.1% and outgoing students had decreased by 0.8%.

The figures indicate that mobility is a challenging action area for Turkey. In order to increase mobility, international offices are being established in universities specifically dealing with the promotion of the Erasmus Programme and tutoring of the incoming students. In addition, the number of courses in English has been increased (National Reports for Bologna Process).

For the outgoing students one of the main obstacles is related to lack of financial support. Only student loans are portable for studying abroad. However, the amount ca. € 84 per month is not sufficient to meet all expenses abroad. Therefore, the main sources of funding are Erasmus funding and private support.

The level of foreign language skills is another obstacle for outgoing students. According to Euro-Student data, only 38% of the students evaluated their language skills as 'good' in English, 2% in German and 1% in French (Orr et al. 2008, p. 143).

Visa regulations are also stated as an obstacle to mobility in various national reports for students and academic staff mobility.

The Lisbon Recognition Convention was signed in 2004 and came into force in 2007. The relevant legislation (the Regulation of Foreign Higher Education Qualifications) has been modified in line with the Convention and its supplementary documents (National Report for Bologna Process 2007-2009).

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<sup>2</sup> And up to 1982 in 2007–2008 (information YÖK).

### 6.3.3 *Reforms and outcomes in quality assurance*

Establishment of a national quality assurance system did not have priority on the national policy-making agenda before the Bologna Process. The initial step was taken with issuing the regulation on 'Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in Higher Education Institutions' in 2005 by the CoHE. The regulation sets the principles of evaluation and improvement of quality in teaching and research activities, and administrative services, of student involvement and of external assessment in line with the ESG. With this regulation, the Commission for Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement in Higher Education (*YÖDEK – Yükseköğretim Kurumları Akademik Değerlendirme ve Kalite Gelistirme Komisyonu*) was established by the CoHE.

YÖDEK determines the procedure for assessment and improvement of academic and administrative services of higher education institutions within the framework of the strategies and aims defined by the CoHE. The YÖDEK is also responsible for coordination and distribution of information at the national level and defining the eligibility criteria for external assessment institutions (Council of Higher Education 2005a).

In addition to annual internal assessment, external evaluation is recommended, but it is not mandatory. Universities could choose an independent, national or international institution among the ones certified by the YÖDEK. The national reports and interviews indicate that at the moment less than 25% of the higher education institutions are going through regular internal quality assurance and about the same amount are engaged in external review. Although some Turkish institutions made use of external review before or outside of the YÖDEK procedures, e.g. the Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) of the EUA, it is not yet a widespread phenomenon. Within higher education institutions, Boards of Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement (ADEK) are the responsible bodies for internal assessment and improvement of academic and administrative services of their respective higher education institutions. They are also in charge of the preparations of external assessments.

There is not a countrywide accreditation system, and official recognition is carried out by the CoHE. Engineering departments are pioneering the development of a national accreditation system. Four universities are co-operating with the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) from the USA for their quality assurance. Further in this line, deans of all engineering faculties established the Engineering Accreditation Council (*Mühendislik Akreditasyon Kurulu – MÜDEK*) in 2002. Since 2007 MÜDEK has a licence for external assessment of engineering programmes and acquired accredited status as an independent external quality assurance agency. MÜDEK was a partner in the EU-sponsored project EUR-ACE (European Accreditation Programme for Engineering) of FEANI (European Federation of National Engineering Associations) and is depicted as a successful example in meeting the Bologna Process requirements (Bologna Process National Report 2007-2009).

The YÖDEK regulation promotes the involvement of students in internal and external quality assurance processes, ensuring transparency of the assessment results. The YÖDEK regulation aims at meeting the requirements of the Bologna Process by emphasising performance-based evaluations and improvement of quality. Despite affirming power and responsibility of the universities in quality assurance processes, the system maintains the decisive position of the CoHE (Council of Higher Education 2005a) and can therefore not be seen as decisive step towards promoting university autonomy.

Concerning the development of the national qualifications framework (NQF), the Commission for the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education was established in May 2006 on the basis of the Dublin Descriptors. The commission prepared a draft for the national qualifications in line with European Qualifications Framework based on levels of knowledge and understanding, applied knowledge and competences that shall be gained in the end of each cycle. The commission made a plan and pilot work for implementation of the qualifications framework (Bologna Process National Report 2007-2009). The qualifications framework is a priority issue on the national Bologna agenda and the work on it continues.<sup>3</sup>

#### 6.3.4 *Reforms and outcomes in social dimension*

Since 2001, the gross enrolment rate<sup>4</sup> has increased from 23 to 37 percent in 2007 (UNESCO UIS 2007). Increasing participation rates to meet high demand for higher education has always been a policy concern in Turkey. For example, during the last two years, the current government established 40 new state universities to ensure that each province has a university. Even if these newly established universities raise concerns on the quality of education they can offer given the shortages in academic staff and insufficient infrastructure; yet they are welcomed by the system for increasing access opportunities to higher education and supporting the social and economic development of the provinces. Besides, distance education and evening classes are being developed to increase the outreach of higher education to distant regions and to working, part-time learners (National report 2007-2009).

Initiatives to increase participation in higher education have indeed led to a large increase of the percentage of people participating in higher education. However, awareness is lacking about social biases inherent in 'merit' and policies have not been formulated to address any concern to reflect the diversity existing in the society in the student body. This was confirmed not only by the statement: 'each student has [an] equal chance[,] however they are evaluated on merit basis. That is why there is no specific underrepresented group in terms of access, participation and completion of studies' in the National Report 2007-2009 (p. 54), but surfaced also during our interviews.

According to OECD 2006 data, the ratio between the percentage of female students and the percentage of female population is 0.87, which means a slight underrepresentation of female students, unlike most of the EHEA systems. The gender dimension of access to higher education has improved in recent years. The increase of enrolment from 2001 to 2009 for male persons was 73%, but even 94% for females (source: CoHE). Despite this slight underrepresentation during higher education studies, the number of female science graduates per 100,000 25–34 years olds in employment, is higher than the number of male science graduates (OECD 2009). Higher representation of females in science fields and related employment is rare in the EHEA countries.

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<sup>3</sup> In January 2010, the Council of Higher Education updated the NQF, i.a. adding the associate level descriptors (5<sup>th</sup> level) and changing the name of the NQF to Turkish Qualifications Framework for Higher Education.

<sup>4</sup> Gross enrolment ratio: Total enrolment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the five-year age group following on from secondary school leaving.

The socio-economic background of students is indicated by their parents' occupational status and educational attainment. While students whose fathers are blue-collar workers participated in higher education 0.71 times their percentage in the whole population, the same ratio by mothers is 0.30. Both measures indicate that students from lower occupational backgrounds are underrepresented in Turkey (Orr et al. 2008, p. 60). A similar conclusion can be drawn from fathers' educational attainment. While the percentage of higher education students' fathers with higher education is 2.53 times the percentage of men aged 40–60 with higher education, the ratio is 0.55 for fathers with up to lower secondary school education (Orr et al. 2008, p. 63). The situation is similar with respect to mothers. It can be concluded that parents' occupational status and educational attainment strongly correlate with participation in higher education, which results in clear underrepresentation of learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds in Turkey.

#### *6.3.4.1 Admission*

The central student selection mechanism is purely merit-based and is portrayed by the CoHE as ensuring equality in access since students are entitled to take the examination regardless of their ethnic, social and economic background. Nonetheless, the fierce competition among applicants, due to the high demand to access higher education, resulted in the development of complementary alternatives for the examination preparation, such as private education and training institutions, as well as one-to-one tutoring. Many families cannot afford the vast amounts of money required to go through that alternative process, which reduces chances of children of poorer families to become students in higher education.

Furthermore, the system is closed to people with non-formal and informal prior learning. The legal framework in Turkey recognises only formal prior learning as a basis of access to higher education.

#### *6.3.4.2 Student services*

The Republic of Turkey's General Directorate of Higher Education Credit and Hostels Institution is the main responsible body for provision of accommodation, health care services and financial aid for students. Accommodation service provides places for almost all students; yet 70% of students prefer other alternatives, such as a private shared apartment or staying with relatives. Food and health services are also available in dormitories. Higher education institutions also offer student housing and health care for their students.

The Institution also provides financial support for university students who are Turkish citizens. Loans and grants are available to both undergraduate and graduate students and are distributed on the basis of need and merit. Students can get study loans to support their daily expenditures and contribution loans to pay tuition fees. The repayment instalments for these loans start two years after graduation.

Both successful and poor students have the possibility to get scholarships of the institution. There are also foundations and non-governmental organisations that award scholarships.

According to the EuroStudent data (Orr et al. 2008, p. 101), state financial aid is available for 95% of the students and 70% of this support is in the form of repayable loans. However, the median amount of the monthly support is € 84.70, which makes up 29% of

the students' average income. Two-thirds of support for students comes from their families.

#### 6.3.4.3 *Data collection*

Turkey participates in the EuroStudent Survey, which provides internationally comparable data on the students' socio-economic conditions and mobility based on a sample. At the national level, the CoHE gathers census data on higher education students but the focus has not been the socio-economic conditions of student so far.

### 6.4 *Involvement of higher education institutions and stakeholders*

Reforms in relation to the Bologna Process are introduced, with accompanying legislative changes, to universities by the CoHE. The relevant groups taking part in the development of such policies are generally the units supervised by the CoHE. The stakeholders are consulted in some cases. In the translation of reforms from legislation to implementation, the National Bologna Experts Team has a major role. Since the beginning of the process, the expert team works on dissemination of the main rationales and policy objectives of the Bologna Process, as well as on the legislative changes to higher education institutions through series of presentations and workshops at the institutional, regional and national levels. Some of our interviewees, however, questioned the effectiveness of experts to support internalisation of the reforms.

In 2008, the CoHE initiated the Bologna Coordination Commissions. Each higher education institution shall set up a commission headed by the university rector and including representatives of relevant units as well as students, to coordinate and assess implementation of Bologna reforms at the institutional level. The aim to set up Bologna Coordination Committees is to increase the efficiency of the coordination in Bologna action lines within each higher education institution and also to make data collection processes more accurate and reliable. In this way, the CoHE aims to develop a self-assessment mechanism that would increase motivation and interactivity in the implementation process.

There are also initiatives to develop a larger group of trainers to support the Bologna experts' work in dissemination of information and provision of support in the implementation processes. The group is planned to consist of former Bologna experts and academics.

#### 6.4.1.1 *Students*

Promotion of student participation in the governance of higher education is introduced as a Bologna Process reform. The CoHE enacted the 'Regulation on Student Councils of Higher Education Institutions and the National Student Council of Higher Education Institutions in Turkey' in 2005. The regulation establishes student councils at the institutional and the national level. The president of the student council participates in the university's and the CoHE's administrative and academic boards meetings on the issues related to students and upon invitation (Council of Higher Education 2005b).

The relevant regulation includes student representatives as consultative members for providing information on students' problems and national student council's having coordination function. Students are not full participants of the relevant institutional or national boards with right to vote.

Inclusion of students in policy-making processes is a new practice in Turkey. At the moment students are not actively participating in the policymaking and implementation processes. More effort is needed both from students' side and administrative units to develop a smooth communication in between. There are problems in the process due to lack of interest and awareness of students and at the same time lack of recognition of students' word by the 'older' board members (source: Interviews).

## 6.5 Success and setback factors

### 6.5.1.1 *Centralised higher education system*

Turkey has a hierarchical public administration system. Therefore, in general, policy-making processes follow a top-down line. The centralised structure has advantages in introduction of the structural reforms, because legislative processes proceed rather quickly, are applicable at once and cover the whole education system. The usual disadvantages of hierarchy are in the implementation phase, where buy-in of stakeholders and internalisation of the goals behind reforms are less developed than in more consensually-operating systems (see the sections on e.g. Ireland and the Netherlands).

### 6.5.1.2 *Idea of integration with Europe*

Integration with Europe is generally perceived in relation to higher quality and better development of the higher education system. In addition, the possibilities for student and staff mobility are attractive points for students and staff. From this perspective, implementation of the reforms is supported by many of the relevant actors at the institutional level.

This motivation for integration with Europe is not without a counterpart. In some cases, the Bologna Process is identified with the European Union and meets with the same support but also opposition, both sides sing with similar arguments for and against the EU and the Bologna Process. Such type of opposition may also be due to lack of information.

### 6.5.1.3 *Reform and resistance*

There is agreement on the need for improving the higher education system. The requirements of the Bologna Process, especially the ones addressing problematic issues of the national agenda, are providing feasible solutions to these issues, such as improvement of quality and increasing mobility. Therefore, the goals of the Bologna Process are easily accepted and supported by the majority of the students, academic staff and policy-making actors.

As became apparent during some of our interviews, some of the academic staff perceive the Bologna Process reforms as a challenge. Even if the reforms are considered positive and needed, some individuals may not want to take responsibility to change and to learn about the process.

### 6.5.1.4 *Lack of financial support*

Lack of financial incentives is another reason for unwillingness to change and thus a setback factor. At the institutional level, implementation of the reforms implies additional workload for the administrative and academic staff. However, all activities are expected to be performed at the voluntary basis. This situation is especially difficult for those

academic staff who already complain about an excessive workload. The CoHE is working on development of a mechanism that would take into account such kind of activities of the academic staff as performance criteria.

#### *6.5.1.5 Lack of information on the essence of reforms at central and institutional levels*

The goal achievement for the reforms is largely dependent on the level of knowledge on the reforms at the grassroots level. During interviews, lack of information was repeatedly identified as a setback factor.

The National Bologna Experts are active all over the country and for all levels of academic and administrative staff of the universities and students. Despite these efforts, the reforms are known and understood better by heads of institutions than by academics, administrative staff or students. The CoHE is trying to develop more interactive forms of training. In this context, when the reforms are taken up well by institutional leadership, i.e. university rectors get effective buy-in within their institution, better goal achievement can be observed. For instance, the personal role of the university rector is a major factor in the development of the institutional quality assurance system in the Sakarya University successfully.

#### *6.5.1.6 Risk of form-filling exercise*

Within a higher education system where reforms are developed at the higher levels and there is little buy-in at the grassroots level, an accompanying risk is form-filling exercises rather than aiming at genuine implementation. Therefore, it seems crucial to ensure comprehension at the grassroots level of what reforms entail beyond legislation.

## 6.6 The outlook for the Bologna Process

The Bologna Process has a high priority in the higher education policy-making agenda in Turkey. The national Bologna experts' team has defined as its priority areas: quality assurance, degree reform, recognition and the establishment of Bologna Coordination Commissions for its 2008–09 term, and lifelong learning, recognition of prior learning, qualification frameworks and employability for 2009–2011.

Concerning the degree structure, Turkey considered itself in an advantageous position, already having a three-cycle degree structure. For the coming period, further work will be undertaken on curriculum reform and on development of the national qualifications framework, as well as increasing internalisation of reforms on ECTS and Diploma Supplement into the programmes and processes in higher education institutions.

Regarding mobility and recognition issues, Turkey has met many of the necessary requirements by taking necessary legislative actions. However, the challenges mentioned above (finance, language, visa) remain present in achieving this goal.

When it comes to the quality assurance system, the provision of relevant regulations and establishment of responsible bodies meet the structural requirements and provided a framework to work in (source also: interviews). However, at the moment, the reform is not very well understood at the institutional level and maybe runs the risk of becoming merely a form-filling exercise. The challenges lie in developing the awareness and necessary knowledge as well as establishing a quality and participation culture.



Providing data on the socio-economic conditions of students through the EuroStudent Survey and the establishment of student councils have been initial steps in raising awareness on the social dimension issues. Data collection and promotion of student participation in decision-making processes are continuing actions. However, beyond these, ensuring participative equity is not a major policy concern, which concentrates on increasing the number of study places in higher education institutions without much attention to identifying underrepresented groups and addressing obstacles they may face in their wish to participate in higher education.

### 6.7 Summary of main findings

Most of the Bologna reforms are new phenomena to higher education system in Turkey. In this sense, many of the reforms have been made at the regulative, national level (e.g. development of national quality assurance system, successful implementation of recognition tools for mobility, student participation in decision making processes). They need time to become established and to become internalised as permanent practices within the higher education institutions. However, the social dimension continues to be largely a neglected policy making area in the national Bologna agenda of Turkey.

In order to meet the Bologna Process requirements, Turkey has mainly followed a top-down policy-making process. In particular, the necessary legislative changes are made by the CoHE. The way of communicating these changes to the higher education institutions was experienced in the institutions rather as teaching the new applications. This approach with little opportunity for feedback from the grassroots level may have hindered the process of understanding and accepting the reforms and hence achievement of the goals of the reforms. However, at the moment, this obstacle has been recognised and more interactive ways of communication are being developed.

Like in many other Bologna systems, the policy makers preferred to provide necessary structural context in order to implement the reforms, considering the goal achievement as the responsibility of the higher education institutions. At the moment, structural reforms are mostly completed and future work is focusing on the improvement of the implementation with more stress on the role of the higher education institutions.

There is a high level support for the need for Bologna reforms and for the implementation of the Bologna Process by the CoHE as the main policy making body among academic society and students. This support can be related to the general motivation for integration with Europe and the need for the reform of the higher education system in general. The foundations have been laid that would contribute to Turkey's efforts in better goal achievement in the Bologna Process.

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## 7 Readable and comparable degrees

### 7.1 Rationale for the case

The adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees across Europe is a cornerstone of the Bologna Process. ‘Readable and comparable degrees’ means national qualifications can be understood (i.e. easily read and compared with other qualifications) across Europe. This should improve transparency and flexibility and lead to greater graduate employability and international competitiveness of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The goal of achieving readable and comparable degrees is founded on the 1997 Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), which stipulates, *inter alia*, that (Article IV.1):

each party ‘shall recognize the qualifications issued by other Parties meeting the general requirements for access to higher education in those Parties for the purpose of access to programmes belonging to its higher education system, unless a substantial difference can be shown between the general requirements for access in the Party in which the qualification was obtained and in the Party in which recognition of the qualification is sought.

In Berlin (2003), the higher education ministers of the Bologna Process countries reiterated the importance of the Lisbon Recognition Convention for the achievement of readability and comparability of degrees. Readable and comparable degrees imply first and foremost a common degree structure across different countries (the three-cycle structure including Bachelor, Master, and Doctorate). Yet, the implementation of structural reforms calls for a common understanding of several related issues such as a qualification’s intrinsic value (e.g. in terms of workload). The Diploma Supplement (DS) and the European Credit and Transfer System (ECTS) are the key tools to attain readability and comparability of degrees. Joint Degrees (JD), too, are seen as a success indicator (cf. official Bologna Process Website 2007–2010). Hence, this case study will use principally these three elements to assess the extent to which readability and comparability of degrees have been achieved over the past decade. International student mobility is also often deemed an indicator of readability and comparability and, therefore, will be addressed in this document.

Naturally, certain countries are in a more advanced stage than others in degree readability and comparability. The documentary analysis gives the reader an overall impression of recent developments. In addition, three countries (Italy, Romania, and Poland), which differ in the size of their higher education system, their history and the means adopted to make their degrees readable and comparable, have been selected to provide readers with more detailed examples.

Italy is the primary case for this study. It was chosen as the primary country for several reasons, including the nature and size of its higher education (comparatively large and mostly public) and the fact that it early on adopted a two-phase legislative reform (see below), which was also meant to ensure academic support (a primary concern especially in the beginning of the process). Italy was therefore a pioneer in the way it implemented the Bologna reforms with regard to ‘readable and comparable degrees’, even if it lags behind other countries when it comes to certain specific policies such as the Diploma Supplement (see later).

In addition to being an initial signatory of the Bologna agreements (together with Romania, Poland), over the years it has instituted important systemic changes and has witnessed unprecedented massification (700% increase in student participation between the end of the War and the late nineties). The Italian constitution (articles 33 and 34) protects academic autonomy and the fundamental right to higher education. The system went through a first reform in 1989, when a separate ministry of university and scientific and technological research (*Ministero dell'Università e della Ricerca Scientifica e Tecnologica* or 'MURST'<sup>1</sup>) was created to (*inter alia*) define and coordinate general policy for university education and promote and plan research (MIUR, 2009a). The system comprises 88 universities, 61 of which are public and 27 are non-state legally recognised university institutes. The system includes also six 'other university institutions', targeting only graduates, and dozens of institutes for higher artistic and musical education (*Ibid.*). In 2008 over 1,750,000 students were enrolled at Italian institutions of higher learning (MIUR, 2009b). The main advisory bodies for university education are the National University Council (CUN), the University Student National Council (CNSU) in which the representatives of the various categories of university staff and students participate, and the Conference of Italian University Rectors (CRUI) (The European Education Directory, 2009). All institutions receive a mix of funds from the government (largest share), student fees, and other endowments (e.g. private donations).

The Polish higher education system is similar in size to Italy's but has a stronger private component. As of 2009, of about 450 higher education institutions over 300 are private (Central Statistical Office, 2009). This group of institutions proliferated as a result of the 1990 Higher Education Act, which overhauled the former Communist legal framework. This act is also known as the 'law on university autonomy' because it grants autonomy to institutions, faculties and the General Council for Higher Education, thus limiting the ministry's authority (Sorensen, 1997, quoted in Duczmal, 2006, pp. 214-215). Poland has at present the most extensive system of private higher education in Europe (Duczmal, 2006, p. 24). At almost 60% of contribution, public spending remains the primary source of income for Polish higher education. However, there is a striking difference between public and private higher education institutions. Public institutions depend for over 70% on the state; private ones receive 0.1% from the state and 97% from tuition fees (University of Warsaw, International relations office, 2009). Just like Italy and Romania (see below) Poland has witnessed an impressive growth in student numbers, particularly after the end of the former rule. If in 1990 there were around 404,000 students enrolled in Polish institutions, this number grew to almost 2,000,000 in 2008, a surge of 380% in less than two decades (Central Statistical Office, 1997 and 2009). In 2009 there was a first (slight) decrease, however (*Ibid.*)

Finally, Romania's higher education system is smaller than Italy's and Poland's. It consists of 76 institutions, including universities, academies, polytechnic universities and institutes. Universities combine teaching and research while the other types of institutions focus solely on certain (more or less specialised) forms of teaching. Romania also witnessed massification of higher education, although absolute student participant (650,000 in 2005) and the relative increase (295% between 1975 and 2005) are lower than in Italy and Poland. Like Poland, Romania was under Communist rule until 1989, during which time education was centrally organised by the state. After 1989 major reforms were

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<sup>1</sup> Today called Ministry of University Education and Research (*Ministero dell'Istruzione Universitaria e della Ricerca* or 'MIUR').

initiated by higher education institutions themselves. Today, higher education institutions are coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Research, under whose authority several agencies play important roles. Autonomy is guaranteed by the Romanian Constitution (art. 32) and Law no.84/1995. Like in Italy, also in Romania, the greater component of university budgets (65-80%) is provided by the state according to set criteria (e.g. the number of students). Fees, research contracts, etc. are further sources of income. If accredited, private universities also receive funds from the state (Romanian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006).

## 7.2 Implementing readable and comparable degrees

### 7.2.1 *Level of achievement: General view and country-specific*

According to respondents of all three countries, a common understanding of degrees has matured over the last decade. In other words, there has been significant progress towards readability and comparability of degrees. The convergence of ‘educational architectures’ (i.e. the three-cycle structure), which should allow degrees to be transferred in and across countries and improve graduate employability on the international labour market, marks this success. The three-cycle is implemented in the three countries chosen for this case as well as in the most other Bologna parties. It is the ‘showcase’ of readability and comparability. Policies such as DS, JD or ECTS<sup>2</sup> are meant to ensure what is sometimes referred to as ‘the full and proper implementation’ of the Bologna goals (Leuven Communiqué, 2009), assessed according to criteria such as mobility (international, horizontal, vertical), employability, and the mode of implementation of the ‘Bologna goals’ (see also Figure 7-1). One could interpret this thinking of readability as a necessary but not sufficient condition for comparability. Let us look at these policies and criteria in some more detail.

### 7.2.2 *Key policies*

As mentioned above, key policies for the achievement of readability and comparability of degrees include cycle reform (‘architecture’), the introduction of ECTS, the DS and JD<sup>3</sup>. Respondents were asked to give an opinion about their country’s level of achievement in each of these areas.

A cross-country analysis of interview data shows that the ECTS is today implemented extensively as a matter of policy. It is the most widely known ‘Bologna policy’, its benefits are (according to most) the plainest (e.g. in mobility) and it is the most accepted part of the reform. To use one Italian interviewee’s words, as far as ECTS (and the Bachelor/Master cycle system in general) goes, ‘we are at the point of no return’ [author’s translation]. At different times and with varying degrees of detail, all three countries surveyed issued laws introducing the ECTS. All respondents mentioned this as one of the cornerstones to achieve degree readability and comparability. ECTS is unanimously acknowledged as an essential tool to foster international mobility (together with other

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<sup>2</sup> Set out in more detail in section 7.2.2 below.

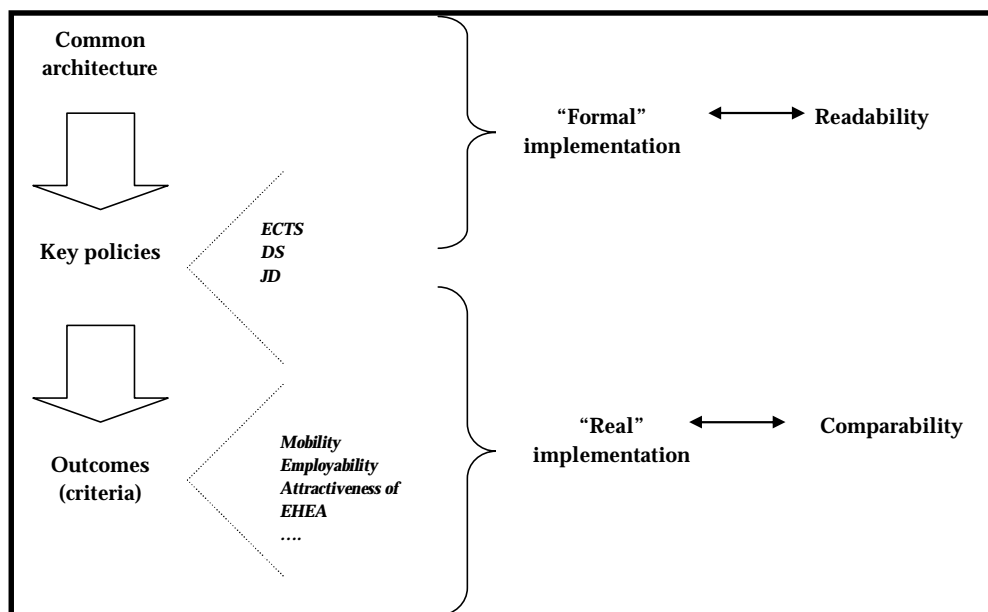
<sup>3</sup> The NQF and QA frameworks were also mentioned, usually as weak points in the progress.

factors, see next section) because the use of credits drastically reduces recognition problems.<sup>4</sup>

On the other side, the key problem mentioned by respondents was the missed connection of credits to the actual workload and learning outcomes. In other words, the *de facto* and *de jure* situations do not match as they should. For example, different workloads associated to the same number of credits cause problems for mobile students (e.g. foreign

Figure 7-1 – Achieving Readable and Comparable Degrees

(L. Cremonini)



students coming to Italy usually find the workload excessive compared to their home institutions, yet they are recognised a set number of credits upon return). The absence of an unambiguous link between credits and learning outcomes/competences also causes employers to wonder what graduates can do based on the credits. Thus, the credit system does not boost employability as much as it should. This could be interpreted by saying that degrees can be more easily read than compared.

A second major action is the issuance to every student of a DS, automatically and free of charge and issued in a widely spoken European language (Berlin Communiqué, 2003). A DS is a document attached to a higher education diploma aiming at improving international 'transparency' and at facilitating the academic and professional recognition of qualifications (diplomas, degrees, certificates etc.) Of the three countries considered in this case, only in Romania the DS is provided automatically to all graduates. In Italy it is only given upon request. In Poland (as of January 1, 2007) all higher education institutions must provide a DS in Polish as part of the diploma, but graduates need to

<sup>4</sup> The fact that the United Kingdom maintains a different credit system was mentioned as problematic.

submit an explicit request for its translation into a foreign language.<sup>5</sup> Both in Poland and Italy administrative costs are incurred.<sup>6</sup>

Respondents appear to have widely divergent opinions about their countries' position when it comes to DS. These differences in perceptions seem more than proportional to the real legal differences and appear, rather, to be related to the importance respondents attach to the DS as an instrument for degree readability and comparability. For example, Italian respondents were the most self-critical on this point. There was general agreement that Italy is definitively 'lagging behind' on DS. The fact that graduates 'simply don't ask for it', nicely sums up the sense that in Italy the DS policy is still far from its target. In Romania the issue is less prominent because it is given automatically. Though this is considered by many as an indicator of success, some maintain that many professors remain adverse to a practice that is new and of which they don't see the real added value. Polish respondents were the most positive about the DS, even stating that Poland is 'definitively strong in the DS [because] it is common practice'.

The role of the DS must be well understood to assess whether it is a success or not. While all countries have some provision for issuing it, its worth is not always agreed upon. An Italian respondent explains: 'The importance of the Diploma Supplement has been over-emphasised. It was supposed to (a) ease international mobility (it is thus requested by who goes abroad) and (b) it should be used for the labour market, but the average graduate does not see the use of asking it. There are [job] interviews and the employers ask for diplomas' [author's translation].

JDs are encouraged by the Bologna reforms since they are also meant to improve employability in the EHEA. The institution of JDs needs explicit policies and assumes that degrees are readable and comparable. Laws have to be passed to allow JDs to exist.<sup>7</sup> Interviews in the three countries suggest that JDs are increasingly common albeit strongly dependent on cross-institution relationships and national legislations that transcend the Bologna reforms.

JDs are considered the strongest point in Italy's developments towards readability and comparability of degrees. JDs were possible here already before 1999. By 2006 there were over 300. Over the years, the ministry has supported the establishment of JDs politically and financially. In Romania it is also considered easy to establish JDs because there are no legal hurdles (nor were there before Bologna). However, the financial incentives are slim (compared, e.g., to Italy where the ministry supported hundreds of JD initiatives over the years). It was stressed that there are financial setbacks when establishing a JD with a foreign university because the financing is usually lower in Romania than in Western countries (which limits the interest others might have to join up with Romanian institutions). Joint Doctoral programmes are easier to set up because 'joining laboratories' is simpler than creating joint curricula (also mentioned in Italy). Although in Poland, too, there are no legal hindrances to the establishment of JDs, they are still largely based on

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<sup>5</sup> It used to be part B of the diploma. According to the new regulation (in force since February 10, 2009) this is no longer the case (it is issued together with the diploma).

<sup>6</sup> It was stressed, however, that (in Italy) the problem is not the cost (even if this is being legally challenged). Rather, the ease to receive the DS itself is the main issue. The cost is marginal, and is the same for the diploma itself.

<sup>7</sup> For example, in the Netherlands parliament has only recently discussed the possibility of Joint Degrees.

individual inter-university agreements (e.g. there are JDs with the UK for a long time already) and there is little or no government (financial) support.

In general, the policies mentioned so far have had an impact on international co-operation (especially mobility projects), but opinions diverge sharply between those (primarily policy makers and ENIC-Naric representatives) who are overtly enthusiastic ('[ECTS helped] incredibly much [mobility]') and those (mainly institutional leaders) who beg to differ, maintaining that the effects of these policies are less significant ('mobility is a sign of the times'). The DS was generally deemed less important. It seems to have an effect neither on international mobility (because the ENIC-Naric offices already address the need for recognition) nor on employability (because employers still privilege in-depth job interviews and are not always aware of the reforms as a whole, see also later).

Apparently, a tool such as ECTS is successful and well accepted because of the general perception that it can have a concrete impact on the real world (unlike, e.g., the DS). At the same time, it was mentioned more than once that there has been substantial progress in the *formal* introduction of readable and comparable degrees. Policies have been made but have often been enforced in a formal way that does not yield automatically the intended changes. For example, even with regards the ECTS, the ambiguity of the relation between credits and workload suggests that 'readability' (the formal aspect) is more advanced than 'comparability' (implementation). Readability and comparability of degrees should not plunge into a purely scholarly debate. To be successful in their reform efforts, policy makers should strive for measures that yield visible results for all stakeholders. While much can be written on it, ultimately it means we can all understand what a degree is, independently from our country of origin or field of work.

### 7.2.3 *Key evidence of success (mobility and employability)*

In this section we take a cross-country look at two of the most visible outcomes of readability and comparability of degrees, namely mobility and employability.

#### 7.2.3.1 *Mobility*

The promotion of widespread student mobility is a key goal of the Bologna Process. Readability and comparability of degrees is generally assumed to be instrumental to achieving this objective. Respondents from all three countries acknowledge that student mobility has become 'easier' or 'far easier'. In Poland, for instance, there was a great deal of optimism about this matter. It was stressed that the use of European Credits prevents students returning to Poland from facing significant problems. Yet, several points must be kept into account.

First, there is no definite causal link between degree readability and comparability and international mobility. For example, in one case it was mentioned that this is 'a sign of the times' and 'should not be ascribed solely to readability and comparability of degrees'. Another interviewee stated a non-committal 'these measures help'.

Second, vertical mobility (i.e. from one cycle to the next) is said to have increased substantially. This often happens because students and employers alike consider the new second cycle Master as the 'real degree' (i.e. the equivalent of the prior long degrees). Interestingly, these answers suggest that most people are not yet fully aware of the value of a first cycle qualification. Hence, the increase in vertical mobility is not necessarily a success factor but rather an indication that the readability of first-cycle degrees is not



fully achieved. As will be mentioned below, first cycle graduates may have more problems entering meaningful employment also because the first degree is not yet fully understood.

Moreover, more ease in international mobility does not mean by necessity an increase in numbers. In fact, the three-cycle reform initially led to less short-term mobility because of the reduced length of degrees, although full degree (self-initiated) international mobility was said to have increased

Finally, international mobility still faces problems. Some issues (e.g. different purchasing powers across nations) are 'practical' and as such have little ado (directly) with Bologna. Other problems, however, relate directly to the institutional implementation of internationally agreed principles, such as the ECTS. The latter issue is important and was raised several times.

In general, cross-country opinions on mobility, even given the lack of consistent hard data<sup>8</sup> suggest that readability and comparability of degrees appears still somewhat superficial. On the one hand students and employers (and to some extent academics too) seldom 'read' the first cycle degree as a full and employable qualification. On the other hand, comparability across countries remains controvertible because of the different institutional implementations of ECTS. In other words, although there are transparent and agreed international guiding principles on how credits measure the necessary workload to reach certain learning outcomes (the ECTS Guide, approved by the BFUG mentions clearly the number of hours per credit), problems remain as to the how institutions assess the necessary number of hours to reach certain outcomes (for example, it is interesting to note that in Italy there are indications that activities undertaken in periods abroad are relatively less likely to be recognised upon return the longer the period itself). Despite the international agreement on what credits should measure quantitatively (workload) and describe qualitatively (learning outcomes), as yet there are no guarantees that the credits will be used correctly in different courses. This problem could be addressed through the implementation (at a European level) of monitoring mechanisms within the quality assurance system to ensure the correspondence between credits and workloads. Moreover, although the learning outcomes should be clearly explained in the module descriptions, they are not always presented as competence-based (often they still simply cover the contents of the course). These problems are related to the lack of so-called 'real implementation' (in accordance with the wording of the Leuven Communiqué).

#### 7.2.3.2 *Employability*

A key Bologna objective is that first cycle degrees should allow entry into the labour market. This implies that employers are aware of the value of the new degrees (i.e. they can 'read' them and 'compare' them both in and across countries). Employability figures are therefore considered important success indicators of degree readability. The Bologna Declaration itself states (European Commission, 2000): 'Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, also through the implementation of the Diploma Supplement, in order to promote European citizens employability'.

Information gathered in the three countries differs. The general feel among Italian respondents is that, despite little comparative data, first-cycle graduates' employability

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<sup>8</sup> At least as far as full degree mobility is concerned since Erasmus mobility figures are available.

has increased over the years. Data from organisations such as AlmaLaurea<sup>9</sup> and Consorzio Stella<sup>10</sup> (not directly from the Ministry) show that most 1<sup>st</sup>-cycle graduates who look for a job (about 70% according to one respondent) are employed within a year (this figure would be about 60% for 2<sup>nd</sup>-cycle graduates). Before 1999 about 60% of (pre-Bologna) graduates had entered the labour market within a year. However, one must also keep into account that only a minority of 1<sup>st</sup>-cycle graduates seek employment and that the general feel is, as one respondent put it, that ‘universities are not vocational studies’ (so one should *not really expect* these 1<sup>st</sup> cycle degrees to be employable).

In Romania and Poland the feeling that Bachelor degrees are not yet fully employable is stronger. Interestingly, in Italy (unlike the other two countries), it seems that the world of work has been faster to accept 1<sup>st</sup>-cycle degrees as ‘employable’ qualifications. In other words, a mentality change seems to have been stronger among employers than academics. It was said that, compared to a decade ago, today employers can understand better what a graduate can do (or is supposed to be able to do), based for example on the DS and the European Credits (which should be (but in fact are not yet, see above) competence-based).

Finally, all information was related to the national labour markets, but it was not possible to get further elucidations on whether 1<sup>st</sup>-cycle degrees are universally accepted as employable qualifications across the EHEA (the general feel being that they are not yet).

Hence, looking at information on employability in the three countries, it is hard to conclude whether readability and comparability of degrees has indeed improved. Although there seems to be evidence that employers are increasingly aware of what graduates should be able to do, they still prefer second-cycle graduates. This suggests that readability of 1<sup>st</sup>-cycle degrees is lower than that of higher degrees, generally deemed equivalent to pre-Bologna qualifications. Moreover, academics (especially older ones) also still seem somewhat reluctant to admit employability of first degrees and students themselves prefer to go on to the second level<sup>11</sup>. Employers seem to prefer the new Master graduates who are expected to be as competent as the prior long-degree graduates. Students also typically go on to the Master level (partly because of potential employers’ expectation).

#### 7.2.4 Key players

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of this document is to assess progress towards readability and comparability of degrees and recommend what further action should be taken. So far we have looked into the main policies to achieve the Bologna goal of

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<sup>9</sup> AlmaLaurea is a service making CVs of Italian graduates’ available and being a contact between graduates, universities and firms. As of 2009, 1,250,000 CVs of graduates from 53 universities have been uploaded. AlmaLaurea was initiated in 1994 at the initiative of Bologna University’s statistics observatory and today is managed by a consortium of Italian universities and supported by the Ministry ([www.almalaurea.it](http://www.almalaurea.it)).

<sup>10</sup> Similar to AlmaLaurea, Consorzio STELLA (Statistica in Tema di Laureati e Lavoro) is an inter-university initiative to create a database on student and graduate preferences and graduate employability. STELLA was initiated in 2002 ([http://stella.cilea.it/opencms/opencms/stella/Progetto\\_STELLA/](http://stella.cilea.it/opencms/opencms/stella/Progetto_STELLA/)).

<sup>11</sup> One must note that the countries considered here do not include binary systems such as the Netherlands or Germany, where universities co-exist with universities of applied sciences (professional tertiary education), which also provide ‘Bachelor degrees’. In these cases graduates enter the labour market far more often than continuing their education.

'readable and comparable degrees' and their success hitherto. This goal is part of the greater endeavour to create an EHEA through extensive reforms of national higher education systems (European Commission Website – Education and Training, 2009). A higher education system is co-ordinated by many players with different levels of influence. Because the support or resistance of different actors can make the difference between a reform's success and its failure, it is necessary to consider closely not only the policies and their consequences (or want thereof), but also the responses of key actors in the system towards the Bologna reforms (and the 'readable and comparable degrees' in particular). This is a crucial point because the Bologna reforms are supposed to embrace dozens of countries, and the support of different actors is a critical success factor (see also later).

In his classical 'triangle of coordination', Clark (1983) identified three forces in higher education systems (the market, the state, and academia) that translate into different patterns of authority depending on where the main leverage lies. Different systems lean towards different ends of the triangle (e.g. at the time Clark developed this model, he placed the U.S. closest to the market end, and the U.S.S.R. towards the state). Such a framework (with the addition of the crucial stakeholders 'students') can help us evaluate the stance different players take in different systems towards reforms as encompassing as the ones under scrutiny in this report.

In all three countries, the ministries of education have taken the lead role. It is they who adopted the legal frameworks to initiate change (even if change was at times said to be superficial). For example, this is the case in Italy, where the reform followed two consecutive paths. Law 509/99, split programmes into Bachelor-Master (in a somewhat rigid way), and five years later law 270/04 required all universities to re-examine their study programmes by academic year 2007–2008. According to Italian respondents, this procedure has already proven highly successful. The general sense is that 'Italy is leading in the *method of reform* because we took the long way even if many countries had specific tools such as the DS long before Italy' [author's translation, italics added]. The (more time-consuming) 'two-phase approach' is considered a success factor because by the time the second phase began academics were already very aware of Bologna, which in turn means that a full understanding of each cycle (e.g. in terms of credits and workloads) is within reach. Today, teachers are using more flexibility than ever before (better results will be available soon since the second phase started with academic year 2007-2008). In other words, in Italy the Ministry's leading role also yielded support and understanding from academia through a lengthy and thorough legislative amendment. The long but strict way taken by the Ministry also tried to overcome the limitation of 'academic corporatism', which is considered a typical feature of Italian higher education. As one respondent put it, 'if Italy had not chosen this path each institution might have gone its own way. Today Italy would be far behind [the rest] and [would still] not have reached any agreement' [author's translation].

In Romania, the role of government is very much felt and generally well accepted. Here, the reform was made possible by Law 288/04, which led to the national framework. As one respondent put it 'there is high autonomy [of universities], but linked to the Ministry and established by the government's decision'. A council, composed also by representatives of business, led the process in defining the new qualifications' framework. The Ministry is said to be the start-up force also in Poland, where a new regulation was necessary (it was the ministry since it is 'responsible' for Law on Higher Education of 1990 which gave the possibility to offer two-cycle studies and the law of 2005 which made the split into two cycles obligatory in almost all fields of studies; In 2006 the ministry issued a regulation on

the educational standards for each field and level of study. The study programme is presented in terms of workload (hours), ECTS and learning outcomes).

However, the 'full and proper implementation' of the reforms (see the Leuven Communiqué, 2009) is in universities' hands, which is why it is so important to gain their support. It is promising that, despite a predictable degree of inertia, academics seem to accept (at worst) or overtly support (at best) the reforms. True, it was often mentioned (particularly in Romania and Poland) that '[academics] had to accept because there is the law', but respondents remained inclined to the belief that even this inertia is not such an insurmountable obstacle as one might at first assume. Indeed, in Romania it was emphasised that 'it is universities in their autonomy that made the reforms'. Statements such as 'one witnesses [inertia] in all countries when major changes take place', 'resistance is mainly from older academics who will eventually exit the system' etc. were made several times in all three countries. Instead, it emerged (unsurprisingly) that the strongest grievances from the academic community (even reform supporters) are about the increase in bureaucracy and paper work to implement reforms such as the qualification framework.

Employers (the market) are also key players. The *raison d'être* of the Bologna reforms is, in fact, to raise new generations who are internationally employable and competitive on the European and world stages. If employers (in Europe and in each country) fail to value the new graduates (i.e. do not manage to *read and compare* the new degrees in a meaningful way), the Bologna Process may become an empty shell. Interview data suggests that employers' awareness is still needed in all three countries. If truly employable first cycle graduates are a measure of readability and comparability of degrees, then overall the picture is gloomy. There are however, differences across countries, some of which can be explained by the policies taken and their timing. Of the three countries surveyed, Poland was the most negative. Respondents here mentioned (a) that employers generally prefer Master graduates, and particularly for 'prestigious' positions and (b) that student behaviour itself suggests difficulties entering the labour market with only a first cycle qualification since most graduates choose to continue to the Master level even if they have prior (relevant) work experience (conducted part- of full-time during their initial post-secondary studies).

Romanian respondents were slightly more positive, but the country is in a state of transition. While employers are not opposed to the 'new graduates' *ipso facto*, they are ill equipped to make clear-cut decisions for several reasons. First, they may receive applicants with different degrees (i.e. old and new) for similar positions and are, thus, likely to favour 'old' graduates because they can offer similar starting salaries to whom is expected to be a more qualified graduate. Second, this situation reinforces the confusion on the labour market and frustrates the sense of employability of first degrees (so that students themselves, like elsewhere, prefer to invest in the second cycle with more hope of being employable afterwards). In addition, students hope to become more employable by building up work experience during their studies, with the result that, in addition to what was mentioned above, Bachelor graduates are even less likely to get into meaningful employment if they have not invested heavily in work earlier (a similar situation as in Poland). In general, in Romania employers simply seem to prefer Master graduates over Bachelor graduates. This means that as yet the objective of employable first degrees is off target.

Italy displays the most optimistic attitude when it comes to employers' appreciation of the new architecture and its related measure of employability of first degrees. In Italy, Law 509/99 (art. 11) requires institutions to plan their programmes in consultation with local employers' organisations in order to make graduates more employable. Consultation is, thus, a legal obligation (even if the outcomes of the talks are not binding). In fact, a look at Italy's progress shows that employers have become more willing to recruit first cycle graduates. Respondents were more positive than in the other two countries examined for this case. However, the picture is still not fully satisfactory because, while employers' *organisations* support the reforms (and must be consulted in programme planning), individual employers (i.e. firms) remain often unaware of the new degrees and the competencies attached to European credits. Often, employers prefer in-depth job interviews, recommendation letters, applicants' CVs etc. as means to assess candidates. Moreover, they are also more comfortable with old idea of the long degree ('Laurea'). This can be understood if one keeps in mind local realities. The Italian economy, for example, is largely founded on micro and small enterprises where the personal interview is naturally weighed more than information that might be given in a DS, or the number of European credits gained.

Other key players are students. They are directly affected by the whole set of Bologna reforms and, overall, they appear to be supportive. However, readability and comparability of degrees means an understanding of the new architecture. Interviewees mentioned that students, though supportive, express some reservations. For example, in Poland it was mentioned that some students still think in terms of long degrees and are not really well informed about the 3+2 system (i.e. they do not see a Bachelor as a 'real' degree, see also above<sup>12</sup>). In Italy it was mentioned that '[students] got somewhat caught in the middle of it' [author's translation]. At any rate, interviews reveal a promising picture in all the three countries when it comes to student perceptions of the reforms. Students are generally happy with the new system because it eases mobility, allows for more flexibility, for example in changing path after first-cycle graduation or in seeking employment for who does not wish to go on studying.

Crucial roles are also played by the ENIC-Naric offices and by the public opinion at large, which was mentioned in one case as being uninformed. Of course public awareness is important to build up social expectations on the value of different degrees.

Figure 7-2 shows the level of involvement and support (low, medium, high) of different actors in the three countries covered here. Naturally, this is not a precise mapping based on a statistical exercise nor should it be interpreted as such. This picture simply wishes to convey the diversity that emerged from the interviews when discussing the role of different stakeholders in the reforms towards readable and comparable degrees in different countries. For example, the ministerial drive seems to have been crucial in all countries, whereas the support from the world of work appeared more varied.

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<sup>12</sup> Even if students are aware about the 3+2 structure, most of them do not consider ending their educating at Bachelor level.

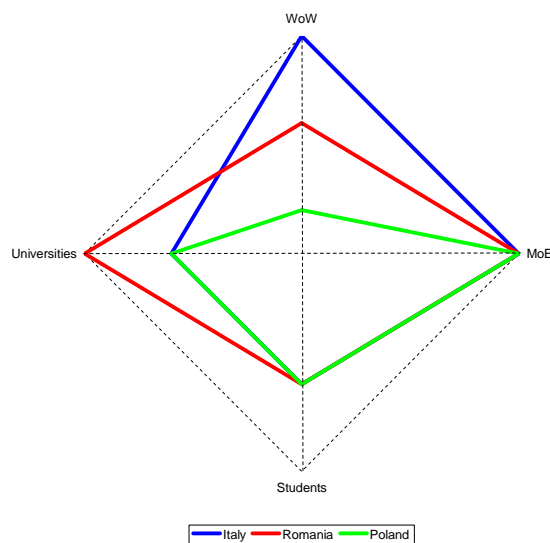


Figure 7-2 –Possible level of involvement of four key players (first impressions)

In addition to the ‘key players’, there is evidence that different policies have been accepted to different extents (see also above). This is not surprising, but highlighting the differences might be of value none the less. As was mentioned above, certain policies on readability and comparability of degrees are, to use an Italian respondent’s expressions mentioned above, ‘at the point of no return’ [author’s translation]. This is generally true across the board for, e.g., the ECTS and the three-cycle system (even if academics everywhere seek, with varying degrees of success, exceptions for their particular field). The DS appears to be the most controversial action. It seems to be taken more seriously in Romania, where in fact it is a very sophisticated and informative document, vs. Italy (in particular). The main problems with the DS, which emerged in all countries (thus including Romania and Poland, where respondents were more positive about this tool) remains, as was said above, the lack of clarity as to its real added value for job-seekers and prospective employers.

On the whole, the interviews and documentary support suggest that a high degree of formal progress has been achieved (e.g. through laws passed by the ministries) but that a mentality change that goes beyond passive acceptance is still necessary. In other words, reform so far has been mainly top-down, but a bottom-up approach is necessary to sustain the reforms, support mobility and ensure true employability of new degrees. Universities, in their autonomy, have played a crucial role so far in the strategic implementation, but will have to be ever more active to ensure the ‘full and proper implementation’ of the reforms.

### 7.3 Conclusion: Critical success factors and recommendations

So far the report has described the progress towards readable and comparable degrees in the three countries chosen for this case. It has highlighted cross-national differences and possible explanatory factors for those differences. This conclusion provides the reader with a compendium of the factors that are believed to have led to success or that should be

considered in the pursuit of success. From these factors, it is possible to extract recommendations for good practice.

First, a 'central national push' from the ministry is necessary to set off a large-scale reform such as a full degree reform. The *modus operandi* may vary, but the Italian case suggests that strictness coupled with time is beneficial. For example the Italian two-phase reform, which first imposed the formal 'split' of degrees and then prescribed the full re-examination of study programmes based on learning outcomes, workloads etc., may be more successful than either a one-time strong law or a *laissez-faire* approach in ensuring that (a) things get done and (b) are better understood and accepted by the stakeholders concerned. In addition, a thrust at the European level is also crucial. One respondent mentioned that *acquis communautaire* in education would be beneficial for curriculum redesign because currently implementation efforts may often fail as people retort 'it is not mandatory'.

Second (and closely related to the above points), the intrinsic value of the reform towards readability and comparability of degrees must be clear and must guide the actions. On the one hand this means that raising awareness of the concrete benefits of the reform should take high priority. On the other hand, the order of the actions must be instrumental to the goal achievement rather than merely formalistic. As one Romanian respondent put it:

[There is a] need to understand in a right manner the value of the Bologna Process. What do autonomy, mobility, qualifications mean? For example, after establishing the portfolio of competences [you] have to redesign the curriculum in conformity with qualifications. Today, the process is the other way around, i.e. conforming to the design we are trying to establish the competences. It is necessary to know what is mandatory to know and do for graduates and then come back in the curriculum development.

Third, to be successful any large-scale reform needs the involvement of all key players, who should be extensively consulted. A purely top-down approach is insufficient (especially given academic autonomy) because it may only guarantee a formalistic application of the reforms rather than a real implementation. For example, it was mentioned that 'academics usually support what is good for students'. But, if students remain in the dark on what is going on, they are also likely to look upon the reform with suspicion, which in turn might limit academics' support overall and jeopardise the reform's success. Moreover, the importance of academic management support was reiterated several times. Not only do academics need to support, but need to be able to implement and influence legislative decision-making. To sum up with one interviewee's words: 'you will not achieve anything if you don't prepare the academic management to implement and if you don't have enough power to change legislation'.

Fourth, in far-reaching international reforms such as the one examined here, a common (micro-)timing is crucial to assess success and to proceed with a common goal. It was mentioned that 'it is hard to make [international] comparisons because the different countries are at different stages in implementing [the reforms]', and started off at different times. A practical recommendation for the future might be to ensure extensive multi-lateral communication on where each (national) actor stands and will stand in the near future (e.g. what laws are expected when). This might fall in the realm of the first point (necessary (cross-) government lead).

Finally, if benefits must be made visible, potential disadvantages must be minimised. For example, mobility is high on the European agenda, and the Bologna Process aims at

propelling it further. However, countries like Romania fear the potential loss of students to foreign universities resulting from better readability and comparability of degrees will remain unmatched by incoming students (brain-drain). Thus, reforms to ensure readable and comparable degrees should not, in virtue of the same policies, put countries at a disadvantage. Incentives (e.g. financial) could be envisaged to ensure all countries remain at least to some extent attractive to foreign students thus supporting real brain circulation.

It is clear then that, overall, the success of the reforms can be understood differently in the different countries. For instance, in Italy, the '2-phase approach' was stressed to be a success factor for the acceptance building (particularly by academics) and the reforms as a whole; JDs are considered an Italian 'success story' also because of the sufficient financial incentives. The ECTS was the policy most enthusiastically adopted in Poland, mainly because of the high number of Polish students studying abroad who in earlier days had harder times in seeing their efforts recognised upon return. The DS was fully successful in Romania because of its clarity and comprehensiveness as well as the general acceptance by the community. It was stressed that the automatic release of DS to all graduates was positive.

In summary, the factors and recommendations above can be summarised as in the following points:

- Europe should continue supporting the process of change
- National governments must take the lead with strictly enforced (but not unreasonably hasty) policies. Parties must have time to adapt to and adopt change
- Benefits must be made clear in advance to all stakeholders and potential problems should be buffered against (e.g. with financial incentives)
- Timing must be coordinated not only internally, but also internationally. This allows cross-country comparisons and simultaneous readability and comparability, which means a truly open and fair education (and labour -for graduates) market across Europe

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## 8 Implementation of recognition instruments

### 8.1 Aim of the case study

Several tools and policy means have been incorporated into the Bologna Process till 2009, which are aimed at making recognition procedures easier and higher education systems and programmes more transparent. These recognition policies are:

- Implementation of the academic recognition procedures according to the Lisbon Recognition Convention from 1997 and its supplementary documents.
- Introduction of ECTS and learning outcomes as transparency tools and instruments for easier recognition of periods of studies abroad.
- Issuing of the Diploma Supplement to all graduates automatically and free of charge in one of the widely spoken European languages.

This case study assesses the implementation of these policy means in Norway, Estonia and Denmark and tries to link them with overall policies or internationalisation of higher education and mobility of students in these countries. The three countries were selected for being exceptionally successful in practical implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and its supplementary documents, as well as efficient implementation of various transparency instruments, which are part of the Bologna Process.

### 8.2 General information and highlights of mobility policies

All three countries have high higher education participation rates in the international comparison. In 2007 Norway had 30% of 20–29 olds enrolled in higher education, Estonia 27% and Denmark 38%. The OECD average for 2007 is 26% (OECD, 2009, p. 302).<sup>1</sup>

With regard to the number and type of higher education institutions, total number of students and the percentage of mobile and foreign students the most recent available data are found in Table 8-1.

When it comes to the main policy setting with regard to internationalisation of higher education, student mobility and recognition procedures, situations are diverse in the three countries. For the purposes of comparison and basic understanding of the context, highlights will be presented of each country.

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<sup>1</sup> The figures represent percentages of 20-29 year olds enrolled in public and private institutions and part-time and full-time student as a percentage of the total population aged 20 to 29.

Table 8-1 Short characterisations of the three higher education systems

	Norway	Estonia	Denmark
Type and number of Higher Education Institutions	7 universities; 9 specialised university institutions; 35 university colleges (5 private); 24 additional private HEIs with recognised study programmes	6 public universities; 4 private universities; 10 public professional higher education institutions 9 private professional higher education institutions	8 universities; 13 specialised university level institutions in arts, architecture, music etc.; 19 colleges offering professional higher education
Total Number of Students	206,151	68,287	228,893
International students as a percentage of all tertiary enrolment (OECD, 2009; year of reference 2006)	2.2%	1.4%	5.5%
Foreign students as a percentage of all tertiary enrolment (OECD, 2009; year of reference 2006).	7.3%	3.2%	9%

### 8.2.1 Norway

According to the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research the country already reached more than the Bologna Process goal that 20% of graduates have spent a certain period of studies abroad: in Norway that percentage is around 30% of graduates.

There is a general policy for support of outward mobility with a portable and transferable student national loans and grants system, which covers cost of living abroad as well as tuition fees (from 2005 only for Master studies, or only as a loan in the case of tuition fees for Bachelor programmes).

Foreign students studying in Norway mostly come from Europe (43%), from Asia (16%) and from Africa (10%) (OECD, 2009). Norway designed a special scholarship programme, the Norwegian Quota Programme for attraction of mostly non-European students from developing countries to study in Norway. The scholarship is counted as a grant (otherwise it is a loan) only if students return to their country of origin upon graduation.

There is increasing study offer in courses and whole programmes taught in English language especially at Master programme level. Now more than 200 Master programmes are taught in English (Rasmussen, 2009). Many foreign students coming to Norway also study Nordic languages and literature.

Exchange mobility within the Erasmus and NORDPLUS programmes increased in the last decade; however it stagnated in the last years (SIU, 2009).

Higher education institutions in Norway are supported financially for the added administrative work related to student mobility (€ 700 per foreign student). The system of higher education funding based output expressed in number of credit points achieved by students stimulates higher education institutions to foster foreign students to complete as many courses as possible in order to receive more funding.

There is increasing demand for academic and professional recognition procedures due to the growing outward and inward student mobility and the large number of immigrants coming to Norway (10% of inhabitants of Norway are immigrants, 25% of citizens of Oslo have an immigrant background; Rasmussen, 2009).

Internationalisation of higher education was one of the main goals of the so-called Quality Reform implemented in 2003. The new policy is outlined in the report on internationalisation of education submitted to the Norwegian Parliament (Ministry of Education and Research, 2009). The report covers the entire education system and stresses that international perspectives, foreign language knowledge and cultural awareness are increasingly important competences for people seeking employment. In addition to continued support for mobility, Norway strongly emphasises 'internationalisation at home' and that education provided in Norway is international in character and in quality. The report also proposes concrete measures, e.g. improvement of the statistical basis in the area of non-university tertiary education; setting up the National Qualifications Framework adapted to the QF-EHEA; initiation of more joint degrees and study programmes; 'Tuning-like projects' with foreign partners; a pilot project for internationalisation in short professional degree studies; promotion of student involvement in research before they finish their Master degree; promotion of research on effects and best practices in internationalisation of higher education etc. ( Rasmussen, 2009).

Mobility in the non-university sector appears to be the main challenge. Currently it is mostly organised as an obligatory period of practice or internship abroad. The university colleges offering professional higher education degrees offer in general far fewer opportunities for student mobility compared to universities.

### 8.2.2 *Estonia*

Both outward and inward student mobility increased in comparison with mid 1990s till 2003/04. After that the number of foreign students remained at approximately the same level (source: Eurostat). Most foreign students come from other European countries (85% of foreign students). However Estonia is also increasingly attracting students from Asia (13%) (OECD, 2009).

Until the last decade there were no special policy measures (other than offering extensive information over internet). There are some scholarship programmes offering support for excellent foreign students for studying in Estonia. The Ministry of Education and the Estonian ENIC-NARIC mentioned that they were working on establishment of marketing plans for promotion of Estonian higher education abroad.

There is a trend of increased mobility within exchange programmes especially within Erasmus. Outward and inward mobility within these programmes is increasingly balanced (European Commission, 2009).

There are some study programmes offered in English. They are mostly Master programmes and some joint Bachelor programmes.

Some of the interviewed international officer at Estonian higher education institutions indicated a tendency to stop joint programmes due to the lack of interest and complicated organisation. There is increased interest of students for degree mobility, i.e. to continue with Master studies abroad.

There are an increased number of applications for recognition of qualifications to ENIC-NARIC centre for the purpose of continuation of studies in Estonia or seeking employment in non-regulated professions. At the beginning of the Bologna Process there were 100-200 cases per year and now there are up to 700 applications per year.

### 8.2.3 Denmark

Around 9% of students in Denmark carry foreign citizenship (2006/07), out of whom approximately half can be considered mobile students; most others are students with refugee and immigrant background studying in Denmark.

Most foreign students come from other European countries (73%). Other foreign students come mostly from Asian countries (13%) and North America (5%) (OECD, 2009).

Compared with the year 2000/01, the number of incoming Erasmus students in 2006/07 increased almost 85%. On the other hand, the number of outgoing Erasmus students from Denmark decreased 10% in the same period (European Commission, 2009).

The traditional no tuition fees policy in Denmark was changed in 2006 and fees were introduced for students from outside EU. The costs of this fee is approximately € 230 per credits, corresponding to approximately € 6,850 per semester. The introduction of fees combined with the relatively high living expenses in Denmark have had a negative impact on the number of non-EU students studying in Denmark.

The internationalisation and mobility policy in Denmark has a strong global economical competitiveness rationale, which goes back to general economic strategies of the country. A committee chaired by the Prime Minister published a strategy for Denmark in the global economy in 2006, which also addressed higher education and in particular its internationalisation, global perspective and a need for higher participation rates and more outward student mobility. The strategy *Process, Innovation and Cohesion* indicated among other issues that all educational programmes in Denmark should have a global perspective; higher education stipends for going abroad shall be introduced and that higher education institutions shall be committed to formulate goals for internationalisation of their educational programmes (The Danish Government, 2006).

Attraction of foreign students to come and study to Denmark in the recent years has been aimed at increasing the number of foreign PhD students in Denmark; e.g. the Danish Council for Research Policy recently proposed that the number of foreign PhD students in Denmark should be raised from the present 7% to 20% in a planned process of increasing the total number of PhD students in Denmark considerably (Carlsson et al., 2009).

### 8.3 Academic recognition of degrees

This section outlines the organisation, procedures and problems with regard to the recognition of degrees and periods of study for continuation of studies in the three countries. The general point of reference here is the Lisbon Recognition Convention from 1997.

#### 8.3.1 Norway

Norway ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) in 1999. The country is also a signatory of the Nordic Declaration on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education (the 'Reykjavik Declaration') from 2004.

In practice the division of functions and roles in the process of recognition of foreign degrees for the academic purposes of for employment within non-regulated professions is not clearly made and certain duplication of work as well as some misunderstandings are evident, especially between the ENIC-NARIC centre and some universities e.g. the University of Oslo.

The ENIC-NARIC centre is located in NOKUT, the national quality assurance agency.<sup>2</sup> The ENIC-NARIC Centre in NOKUT has 7 employees who deal with general academic recognition procedures issuing recognition decisions, based mostly on the comparison of levels of qualification indicating only a broad subject area. The recognition decision is based on the Lisbon Recognition Convention and it serves the purpose of employment in non-regulated professions. Holders of a foreign qualification can also apply for recognition to NOKUT without stating particular purpose for recognition (except in the case of regulated professions). The ENIC-NARIC centre co-operates with higher education institutions for the assessment of the qualifications of refugees, if they do not have documents or certificates.

Universities and university colleges are the competent authorities for recognition of qualification in the case of applications for their study programmes. The Law also allows them to carry out the old type of recognition procedure based on equivalence principles. The procedure implies detailed assessment of the foreign study programme course by course in order to establish equivalence with a specific Norwegian study programme and degree. Interviews with the administrators for recognition from different faculties from the University of Oslo indicated that approaches to equivalence assessment at different faculties of the University of Oslo are different and vary in strictness. This old-fashioned recognition procedure based on equivalence is carried out in the cases of degrees leading to professions, which are not regulated by the state, but in which employers tend to require a certificate from the university that certain foreign degree is an equivalent of a specific Norwegian degree e.g. certain engineering degrees.

The co-operation between some universities and NOKUT on the matters of recognition shows certain tensions. One administrator for recognition indicated that they consult NOKUT only in rarely, e.g. in the cases where they need language expertise of NOKUT

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<sup>2</sup> NOKUT, the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, is a professionally independent government agency with the mandate of conducting external quality assurance of higher education and tertiary vocational education, and generally of contributing towards the enhancement of educational quality. NOKUT also recognises foreign higher education qualifications in response to applications by individuals.

employees (e.g. for Mandarin). In most cases they get informed about foreign higher education systems and degrees through the internet or through their own contacts and information databases. There was an evident conflict between NOKUT and higher education institution about establishment of a centralised database of all applications for recognition. Higher education institutions indicated that such a centralised registry would prevent applicants from applying to different authorities, 'fishing' for the best recognition. On the other side, NOKUT representatives argued that the number of double application was not high enough to justify the additional administrative burden. In addition it was argued that a centralised registry would invite people to recognise only based on previous recognition decisions in similar cases, which would be unfair to applicants. Each recognition assessment should be treated as an individual and unique case, which should be decided on informed judgement.

The role of the non-university sector institution in recognition is somewhat different. University colleges, especially nursing colleges, help professional regulation authorities with the content assessment of foreign qualifications before these authorities decide about recognition. With regard to the recognition linked to transfer between universities and university colleges, all interviewed stakeholders indicated there are no problems with this type transfer in Norway and that the recognition of qualifications in this case is automatic.

Finding information about other higher education systems and degrees seems to be easy for some countries and the foreign information web sites especially within ENIC-NARIC network are assessed to be sufficiently informative. The only problem occurs if some of the ENIC-NARIC centres charge fees for information e.g. the UK's ENIC-NARIC centre. In Norway the recognition procedure at NOKUT and at universities is offered free of charge except in the cases of recognition of PhD degrees, which requires a special academic commission which would read the Doctoral thesis.

In general the financial and human resources for the recognition authorities in Norway can be assessed as sufficient and the Government seems to support them generously. There is also a special information unit planned, which would direct recognition seekers to the right recognition authority.

### 8.3.2 Estonia

Estonia signed and ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) in 1998. In addition, Estonia is a signatory of the agreement among Governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania on the academic recognition of access and higher education qualifications in the Baltic Educational Space, which is signed in 2000. The principles of the LRC are closely followed in national legislation on academic recognition procedures. Classical equivalence procedures do not exist anymore in Estonia.

According to the governmental regulations the competent recognition authorities are higher education institutions and employers depending on the purpose of recognition. In addition the competent assessment authority is the Estonian ENIC-NARIC, located in the Archimedes foundation, the governmental agency coordinating all EU education and research programmes in Estonia. There are currently 4 full-time employees in the Centre. The Centre is mandated to *assess* foreign qualification but not to *recognise* them. It can issue only a recommendation document about foreign degrees, while the university or employers as the legal recognition authorities can accept or refuse this recommendation.

Interviews with representatives of Estonian higher education institutions indicated that these recommendations are however almost always followed. The universities assess foreign qualifications in the case of applicants for study programmes and in the case of employment at the university. They usually assess and recognise credentials on their own in the case of qualifications from neighbouring countries and the majority of the European countries. In the case of qualifications from outside Europe they usually forward application to ENIC-NARIC centre for assessment and for recommendation.

The Estonian ENIC-NARIC centre reported an increase in the number of application for recognition and especially an increase in general inquiries about Bologna reforms, foreign qualifications and systems of higher education. It is an interesting example of good practice that every year the Estonian ENIC-NARIC organises training courses on assessment and recognition of qualifications. The Estonian ENIC-NARIC staff members have individual contacts and meetings with higher education institutions.

### 8.3.3 Denmark

Denmark ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention relatively late, in March 2003. The *de facto* implementation of the LRC, however, was already in place with the establishment of the Danish Centre for Assessment of Foreign Qualifications (now called CIRIUS, an authority connected with the Danish Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation with the mandate to the internationalisation of education and training in Denmark) and with the adoption of the Act No. 344 of 16 May 2001 on the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications. The Act was based on the text and principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. These recognition principles and criteria are also incorporated in later legislation. The country is also a signatory of the Nordic Declaration on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education (the 'Reykjavik Declaration') from 2004.

A specific characteristic of CIRIUS is its mandate to promote recognition of foreign qualifications, not just in the field of higher education, which is the field of application for the Lisbon Convention. CIRIUS services all levels of education and it is a competent recognition authority in charge for both assessment and recognition of foreign qualifications. CIRIUS bases its assessments on the principles and criteria laid down in the Lisbon Convention and the Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications. In principle the assessments are done by comparing the learning outcome of the foreign degree with the learning outcome of a similar Danish degree. This means that foreign degrees can be fully recognised although they to a large extent do not contain the subject courses as in a similar Danish programme. This also means that if the applicant has been conferred e.g. a Bachelor degree and in his/her home country has been given credit for other studies or prior learning, recognition in Denmark is done through looking at the final learning outcome meaning that CIRIUS does not question credit transfer decisions of a publicly recognized or accredited foreign institution.

CIRIUS lays down guidelines for the assessment of foreign qualifications for entry to higher education, including with regard to conversion of subject levels and grades. This is done in co-operation with the Ministry of Education's upper secondary school department and, to the widest possible extent, in co-operation with the institutions. The individual educational institution decides on admission of applicants with foreign qualifications based on CIRIUS's assessments. This means that the application for admission must be treated on an equal footing with applications from applicants with Danish qualifications at the same level of education.



The individual educational institution also decides on credit transfer of foreign qualifications to replace parts of a Danish educational programme. The educational institution may use an assessment from CIRIUS as a guide in its decision on credit transfer.

Holders of foreign qualifications may complain about educational institutions' credit transfer decisions to a special complaints board: The Qualifications Board. A decision made by the Qualifications Board will be the final and conclusive administrative decision. The establishment of the Qualification Board can serve as a good practice example for other countries.

The number of applications for recognition to CIRIUS decreased from 2005. This can be explained by the fact that CIRIUS in 2005 was given the powers to establish standards and criteria for general admission to higher education programmes in Denmark and to provide guiding information on specific requirements of admission, such as grade conversion and establishing levels of subjects of upper secondary programmes. This has been done by publishing a website with clear and transparent information on general admission requirements for applicants with upper secondary exams and guidelines for specific requirements for admission at the same site. Criteria for admission for holders of diplomas from more than 120 countries have been published and the list is continuously developed, checked and monitored. This means that decisions on admission, previously dealt with as specific, individual, written assessments, are now to a large extent assessed by consulting the website, which may also serve as an example of good practice.

#### 8.4 Diploma supplement

The Diploma Supplement is one of the key recognition instruments promoted by the Bologna Process with the goal that Diploma supplements are issued to all graduates in one widely spoken European language, automatically and free of charge.

The Diploma Supplement is issued free of charge, in English and automatically to all graduates of Norwegian higher education institutions regardless of their study programme.

In Estonia, Diploma Supplement is issued automatically and in English to each graduate of professional higher education, Master's-level and Doctoral-level programmes. However it is issued only in Estonian for Bachelor graduates. It can be however issued in English upon the graduate's request. The Diploma Supplement is issued free of charge.

Since 2002 it has been obligatory for all Danish higher education Institutions under the Ministry of Education and The Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation to issue a Diploma Supplement in English to all graduates. The Diploma Supplement is issued free of charge.

## 8.5 ECTS and learning outcomes

### 8.5.1 *Norway*

All study courses in Norway are expressed in ECTS-type credits. The ECTS system was introduced with the 2003 quality reforms and it replaced the national credit system, which was also linked with estimated student workload.

ECTS credit points are explicitly linked with learning outcomes only in some study programmes. Learning outcomes are implemented with different precision and quality from programme to programme. In general student workload and learning outcomes are rarely assessed together in the process of allocation of credits. The credits are allocated on the basis of estimated student workload. The full implementation of learning outcomes as one of the systemic features of higher education in Norway is to be implemented as a part of the national qualification framework for higher education, which is developing phases. Nevertheless, the Norwegian Ministry of Education states that the higher education institutions have been encouraged to start preparations, and that many of them are well advanced in the process, in terms of planning, and/or in terms of updating curricula to include learning outcomes.

Interviews indicated that there are some functional problems with ECTS. One of the problems is related to outgoing Norwegian Erasmus students, because the institutions that hosted them do not implement ECTS correctly (often examples were given from Germany and Spain). There is also other evidence for very different implementation practice with regard to ECTS in different European countries. An especially frequent problem mentioned in the interviews by representatives of Norwegian higher education institutions was the request from UK institutions to recognise their one-year Master courses as equivalent to 90 credits.

### 8.5.2 *Estonia*

Estonia undertook in the recent past extensive changes for implementing the ECTS system and linking learning outcomes with credits. Based on the legislative amendments from 19 November 2006 to the University Act, the transfer from the national credit system to ECTS is supposed to be completed by the 2009–2010 academic year. In reality from the academic year 2009/10 indeed only ECTS credits are used. The previous national credit system was also workload based (1 credit = 40 working hours) and therefore compatible with ECTS.

The rearrangement of study programmes using the learning outcomes approach was the responsibility of higher education institutions and took place from 2006 to 2009. The reform of study programmes is supported and guided at the national level by the national working group was established by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research. According to our interviews, introducing the ECTS points was not a matter of simple recalculation. The change was based on new assessments of typical student workload. Learning outcomes are well defined at the national level (within standards for higher education based on the EQF), and on the programme level. This reform was done with expert help provided to institutions in a project financed through the European Social Fund (financed workshops, education of special counsellors, which worked with study programme coordinators). However interviewees indicated that more efforts need to be invested at the individual course level. Also, interviewees indicated that there are some

continuing problems with the functionality of the ECTS for the purposes of mobility facilitation. They frequently mentioned problems with some institutions in Germany, Spain and Greece, which did not recognise courses completed in Estonia by exchange students, although they had learning agreements and used ECTS.

### 8.5.3 Denmark

Since 2001 the use of ECTS has been obligatory for all Danish higher education institutions under the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, and the Danish Ministry of Culture, except programmes of the Danish National School of Theatre and the Danish Academies of fine arts.

ECTS is used both as a credit transfer and as an accumulation system, e.g. all courses of a degree programme must be allocated ECTS points. However the implementation in the institutions varies and national authorities admit that continued focus on improving the quality and correct use of the ECTS-system (implementation, calculation, description of learning outcome etc.) remains necessary.

## 8.6 Summary

The cases from Norway, Estonia and Denmark showed examples of relatively well-organised academic recognition procedures and systemic implementation of the recognition instruments and tools such as Diploma Supplement, ECTS and learning outcomes. However positive these examples might be, it appears essential that more efforts be invested in the full institutional implementation of all mentioned measures, especially learning outcomes.

On the other hand the problems and complaints indicate that all these recognition instruments and tool will become fully functional only if all European countries and their higher education institutions use the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, ECTS, Diploma Supplement, learning outcomes and other transparency tools. Only if the proper implementation becomes widespread across the EHEA, can the goals of the Bologna Process such as increased mobility and easier recognition be achieved.

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## 9 Achievement of increased mobility

### 9.1 Introduction

Increased student mobility is one of the main goals of the Bologna Process. It was already mentioned in the Sorbonne declaration in 1998 and further reaffirmed in the Bologna Declaration. A number of measures have been implemented with regard to increased mobility, such as financial support from EU programmes, the recognition of the studies abroad through the ECTS and Diploma Supplement. A number of Bologna seminars have been devoted to increased mobility and the Bologna coordination group was established after the Ministerial conference in London (2007). Moreover, the Leuven communiqué (2009) introduced the target specifying that 20% of students graduating in the EHEA should be mobile by 2020.

Whilst progress has been made to increase the number of mobile students, there are still a number of obstacles to mobility, i.e. recognition of study periods, issues related to migration, insufficient financial resources and inflexible pension arrangements (London communiqué, 2007). This case study aims to look at success factors and barriers for achieving increased mobility in three countries, namely the UK, France and the Czech Republic.

Three aspects of mobility will be taken into account:

- Increase of the inward mobility from within the EHEA;
- Increase of the inward mobility from outside of the EHEA;
- Increase of the outward mobility within the EHEA.

The countries selected for the case study achieved different levels of mobility with regard to the different aspects mentioned above. The UK has a long tradition of attracting high numbers of international students both from within and from outside the EHEA but achieves relatively low numbers for outgoing mobility. France has high numbers of incoming mobility especially from its former colonies outside the EHEA and increasingly from China. The Czech Republic has had a relatively large increase in outward mobility and relatively high numbers of incoming students from the EHEA, mainly Slovakia. However, it has very low numbers of incoming students from outside the EHEA.

#### 9.1.1 *The United Kingdom*

The UK has two distinct higher education systems, one for England, Northern Ireland and Wales and one for Scotland. Higher education institutions are highly autonomous, self-governing institutions in both systems. They are autonomous not only in terms of governance but also in terms of financing, as they have to self-fund most of their activities.

##### 9.1.1.1 *England, Wales and Northern Ireland*

Higher education institutions include universities, higher education colleges and a small number of university colleges. Higher education institutions are diverse, ranging widely in size, mission and history. The number of students below Doctoral level in the academic

year 2006–2007 was around 2.4 million. The undergraduate degree in England, Wales and Northern Ireland lasts for three years but also can be longer. The graduate degree takes a minimum of one year to complete.

#### 9.1.1.2 *Scotland*

Higher Education in Scotland is available at 20 higher education institutions including Universities (14), Colleges of Higher Education, Colleges of Further Education and the Open University in Scotland. Universities offer degree courses and, sometimes, Higher National Diplomas (HND). Further Education Colleges rarely offer degree level study but make a significant contribution to further education, catering for over 25% of those in higher education. According to the national stocktaking report the number of students below Doctoral level was 173,010 in 2008–2009. Unlike in the rest of the UK, the undergraduate degree in Scotland lasts four years. Masters degrees take at least a year.

#### 9.1.2 *France*

The French higher education system is based on two major sub-sectors, universities and *Grandes Ecoles*, and several other types of higher education institutions. There were around 2.2 million students in higher education in the academic year 2008-2009 (Ministry of Higher Education and Research of France, 2008). The French Ministry counted 83 universities, 224 engineering schools, 220 business, management and accounting schools and 3,000 other institutions with some role in higher education (see for more information on France section 2 of case study 11, below).

#### 9.1.3 *The Czech Republic*

Czech higher education is not a binary system that distinguishes between professionally and academically oriented higher education institutions as in some other European countries. There were 73 higher education institutions in 2007/08 including 26 public, 2 state (University of Defence and the Police Academy) and 45 private higher education institutions. Private higher education institutions are relatively new as the possibility to establish them was introduced in 1998. Universities provide Bachelor, Master and Doctoral level studies and non-university institutions mainly provide Bachelor level studies. The higher education institutions are relatively autonomous institutions as the funding for the public higher education institutions is provided from the state and at the same time it is expected that institutions would diversify their financial sources and would gain some alternative funding. Higher education institutions are responsible for establishing the degree programmes (which are subject for accreditation), determining their research priorities and recruiting their staff. In the academic year 2007/08 there were almost 350,000 students and most of them study in public higher education institutions (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2009).

#### 9.1.4 *Definitions*

In this case study we are using the UOE definition of mobile students. 'International mobile students' are students who have crossed borders expressly with the intention to study (Eurostat & Eurostudent, 2009). For the purpose of measuring mobility the criterion of citizenship is used most often. This criterion is not always reliable as sometimes non-citizens can be living their whole life in the country of their studies and therefore they are not actually mobile students. However, as there is a lack of accurate

data available both at national and international level with regard to the mobile students in this case study, we will look at the international data available mainly based on foreign students.

There are two main types of student mobility (see also chapter 7 in Volume 1):

- Horizontal, non-degree, or credit mobility refers to the short-term mobility periods when students complete only some of the courses but not for the period of the whole degree;
- Vertical or degree mobility refers to studying abroad for the whole degree.

## 9.2 Achievement of increased mobility: quantitative data analysis

The data on the student mobility below is presented in relation to the three types of mobility: inward mobility from within EHEA, inward mobility from outside EHEA and outward mobility to other EHEA countries.

### 9.2.1 Inward mobility from within EHEA

This section presents the data on the incoming students from the EHEA in the UK, France and the Czech Republic. The data is based on the nationality of the students and therefore as mentioned above does not reflect the accurate information on the mobile students. The changes of number of students from the EHEA between 1999 and 2007 are presented in Table 9-1.

Table 9-1 Development of incoming students from EHEA in the UK, France and the Czech Republic (1999 – 2007)

Country	1999	2007	Growth
UK	5.9%	6.9%	17.7%
France	2%	2.5%	25.6%
Czech Republic	1.2%	5.8%	404.9%

Source: UNESCO Database

The table shows that the proportion of foreign students compared to all students in the country is largest in the UK. Moreover, the comparison of the relative data with the other EU countries shows that UK is among the countries with the biggest share of the foreign students from the Bologna area in 2007. The largest increase of the incoming students from within EHEA was in the Czech Republic. The majority of incoming students in the Czech Republic are from Slovakia, which explains the high number of incoming students from the EHEA. In France the percentage of the incoming students from the EHEA is the lowest of the three countries included in the case study.

The statistics with regard to the incoming students through the Erasmus programme is presented in Table 9-2 below.

Table 9-2 Number of incoming Erasmus students in 2000/01 and 2006/07 in the UK, France and the Czech Republic.

Country	No. of students in 2000/01	No. of students in 2006/07	Increase/decrease in %
UK	19,339	16,508	-14.6
France	17,642	20,673	17.2
Czech Republic	552	3,059	454.2

Source: EC, Erasmus statistics

The number of incoming Erasmus students varied across the countries included in the case study. In the UK even though there are high numbers of the incoming students from within the EHEA, the number of Erasmus students decreased between 2000/01 and 2006/07. However, in France it increased by 17.2%. The highest increase in percentages of the incoming Erasmus students has been in the Czech Republic. However, this is due to the relatively low numbers of the Erasmus students in 2000/01. The increase in the number of incoming Erasmus students was similar to France.

### 9.2.2 Inward mobility from outside of the EHEA

The data on foreign students in the UK, France and the Czech Republic coming from outside the EHEA is presented in Table 9-3 below.

Table 9-3 Development of incoming students from outside EHEA in the UK, France and the Czech Republic (1999 – 2007)

Country	1999	2007	Growth
UK	5.3%	12.5%	137.1%
France	4.5%	8.8%	95.4%
Czech Republic	0.8%	0.9%	10.5%

Source: UNESCO Database

The table shows that the number of foreign students in the UK between 1999 and 2007 more than doubled; it is the highest among the countries included in the case study. This places the UK at the top within the EHEA countries in attracting foreign students from outside the EHEA. France is the other country that attracts many students from outside the Bologna countries, especially from former African colonies and, increasingly, China. The Czech Republic is the country attracting the least of the students from outside the EHEA.

### 9.2.3 Outward mobility within EHEA

This section presents the data on the development of the outgoing students between 1999 and 2007. Table 9-4 below presents the data for the three countries included in this case study.



Table 9-4 Development of outgoing students within EHEA in the UK, France and the Czech Republic (1999 – 2007)

Country	1999	2007	Growth
UK	0.7%	0.5%	-24.4%
France	1.9%	1.8%	-4.1%
Czech Republic	1.3%	1.7%	32.6%

Source: UNESCO Database

The table shows that the overall number of students studying in other European countries is low and has been decreasing in two out of three countries included in this case study. This is especially relevant to the UK. In France the number of outgoing students is the highest among the three countries, but the data shows that there was a slight decrease in the outgoing students as well. The Czech Republic is the only country in the case study where the number of outgoing students has been increasing.

The data on outgoing Erasmus students is presented in Table 9-5. In the Czech Republic and France the number of outgoing Erasmus students increased between 2000/01 and 2006/07. The highest increase in numbers of students was seen in France. France's participation in the Erasmus programme as a student host nation is 1.25 times the average, while as a student-sending nation its participation is 1.4 times the average (European Students Union and Education International, 2009). The Czech Republic has seen the highest increase of outgoing Erasmus students in percentages due to relatively lower initial situation. In the UK the number of outgoing students has decreased by almost 20% in the same time frame.

Table 9-5 Number of outgoing Erasmus students in 2000/01 and 2006/07 in the UK, France and the Czech Republic.

Country	No. of students in 2000/01	No. of students in 2006/07	Increase/decrease in %
UK	9,020	7,235	-19.8
France	17,161	22,981	33.9
Czech Republic	2,001	5,079	153.8

Source: EC, Erasmus statistics

### 9.3 Incoming students from within and outside EHEA

This section presents the information gathered during interviews and a literature review on the factors facilitating and hampering student mobility. First, we will look at the policy initiatives with regard to promoting incoming student mobility. Then we will look at the higher education institutions and their engagement as well as financial support for international students, student services, role of the language knowledge and other factors influencing incoming student mobility.

### 9.3.1 *Policy context*

Attracting international students is one of the priorities of higher education policies in all the three countries included in this case study.

In the UK, attracting international students is clearly identified as a priority not only within higher education institutions but also within the wider policy context. The main strategic document stating the priorities for the promotion of the UK higher education is the Prime Minister's Initiative for International Education (PMI2). Launched in April 2006, it is a five years strategy to strengthen the UK position in international education. This is the second phase of the strategy as it is based on the experience of the Prime Minister's Initiative implemented during 1999 and 2005. PMI2 recognised that the increase of international students helps foster international relations and brings long-term political and economic benefits to the UK.

The PMI2 is established on the political understanding that international education allows increasing mutual understanding among the countries, fostering the relationships as well as facilitates the opportunities for trade, investment and political influence. It helps to attract the intellectual capital that facilitates UK capacity for research, technological growth and innovation. The activity strands of the PMI2 are (British Council, 2008):

- Marketing and communication strategies: under an umbrella Education UK brand, to position the UK as a leader in international education.
- Diversification of markets in order to reduce dependence on a small number of countries currently sending high numbers of students to the UK.
- Ensuring the quality of the student experience, from the application and visa processes, through to the end of their studies.
- Developing strategic partnerships, including supporting more UK universities and colleges to engage in collaborative partnerships with their overseas counterparts.

The funding for the implementation of the PMI2 equals around 7 million pounds per year. It sets to achieve some specific targets, such as increase the number of incoming students by 70,000 in UK higher education institutions, increase the number of partnerships etc.

In addition, there are some bilateral or multilateral co-operation initiatives at the ministerial level in the field of education. They aim among the other things to facilitate the increase of the international students from outside the EHEA. One example is the strategic partnership with China called 'Sino-UK Partners in Education'. Another example of bilateral co-operation is the UK-India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI). Similarly, the British Council funded BRIDGE project helps universities in the UK and Russia to develop dual-award programmes for mutually recognised qualifications (UK Higher Education International Unit and Europe Unit, 2009).

The British Council plays an important role in promoting the higher education institutions of the UK to international students. It implements the government policy with regard to the promotion of the British higher education abroad and supports higher education institutions in their international activities.

In France, attracting the best international students who may become future decision makers is one of the major policy goals with regard to student mobility. In addition, increased mobility was one of the priorities of the French presidencies of the European Union in 2000 and 2008.

The main three priorities of French policy in the field of the internationalisation of the education are:

- Training best young students abroad and in France;
- Establishing of scientific networks and partnerships;
- Focus on the problems specific to the South, against the background of sustainable development issues.

These policy goals are supported through different activities of several ministries (for Higher Education and Research, for Foreign and European Affairs), in particular:

- An active policy to promote higher education and facilitate entry, carried out by CampusFrance, in connection with diplomatic posts and academic establishments;
- Creation of Centres pour les Etudes en France (CEF), a system designed to help France's higher learning institutions in deciding whether to accept early registration from foreign students, facilitate visa delivery procedures and improve orientation for foreign students wishing to study in France;
- Implementation, since the beginning of academic year 2006, of a Quality Charter for Admissions and Orientation for French Government Fellowship Recipients which is intended as a guide for diplomatic offices;
- Financial support for the international students;
- Training for top young students in their home countries thanks to the creation of over 200 French-language degree programmes, primarily in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in Asia, the Near East and in Africa;
- Stimulating higher education institutions to participate in the European networks in order to promote the harmonisation of degrees, mobility for teachers and students in the European area.

In order to increase the attractiveness of the French higher education, the agency CampusFrance was established in 2007, which has for its aim to promote the French higher education abroad. CampusFrance established a network of offices abroad and in France that are organising promotional events (participation in the international education fairs, thematic university tours), participation in the activities supported by the European Union, and promotion of Doctoral training programmes (CampusFrance, 2009). It was established to unite the activities undertaken by several agencies in the field of promoting French higher education and accommodating international students.

Attracting international students in the Czech Republic is one of the priorities in the *Long-Term Plan for Educational, Scientific, Research, Development, Artistic and Other Creative Activities of Higher Education Institutions for 2006-2010*. This Long-Term Plan is a strategy document where the main aims and priorities for developing the higher education system are formulated. It includes the target to increase the number of

incoming students to 10% of all students in the country by 2010 (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2009). The long-term plan is financed through Development Programmes that are prepared annually. Institutions can apply for funding. The higher education institutions are supported in their efforts to attract international students, especially at Masters and Doctoral level and in setting up scholarship schemes. The activities undertaken by the National Agency for European Educational Programmes and the higher education institutions related to the promotion of Czech higher education abroad is increasingly developing, however it is not at the highest international level.

### 9.3.2 *Higher education institutions' engagement*

The UK higher education institutions are strongly engaged in attracting international students. The engagement of the higher education institutions to attract international students could be explained by (UK Higher Education International Unit and Europe Unit, 2009):

- The autonomy of the higher education institutions allows them to pursue international students recruitment in the ways that meet their own needs;
- The need for alternative financial sources;
- International students from outside of EU countries pay full tuition fees which is important financial source for number of the higher education institutions;
- UK higher education institutions can use funding council funds to finance the activities that might benefit international students, e.g., English language centres in the UK. However, these activities should not take place outside the UK and therefore the UK higher education institutions have to attract enough income to be able to develop international activities.

It is important to distinguish here between recruitment of international students and credit mobility. Traditionally higher education institutions in the UK have strong financial incentives to recruit international students for full degree mobility. However, it is important to maintain the balance among international students and students from the UK as well as to maintain the quality of studies offered. Interviews identified that some higher education institutions aim to balance the number of incoming and outgoing students through increasing the number of incoming students and some institutions by limiting the number of outgoing students.

In France, higher education institutions receive their funding mainly from the state and the financial aspect of attracting international students is not of key importance. Moreover, the fee rates paid by international students in France are significantly lower than in the UK. They are similar to the ones that are paid by students in France. Therefore, institutional reasons for attracting international students in the UK and in France are different. The French higher education institutions do not compete with each other for international students. More emphasis is given to collaborative approaches towards internationalisation. As noted during interviews, the main challenge for French higher education institutions is to attract high quality international students.

Interviews identified that in the Czech Republic higher education institutions aim to promote incoming student mobility as it increases internationalisation of their academic environment. It also helps to promote institutions in Europe and outside Europe, and to

get feedback on their academic activities. In addition, there is a financial incentive for higher education institutions to recruit international students from outside EHEA as the institution is allowed to collect fees for courses taught in foreign languages. This is especially relevant to the public higher education institutions, as they are not allowed to collect tuition fees for teaching in the Czech language.

### 9.3.3 *Financial support*

There is some financial support available for foreign students coming to study in the UK. Some of the scholarships for the international students are available at the postgraduate level. Some of the main scholarship schemes are presented in box 9-1 below (British Council, s.a.).

#### Box 9-1 Major scholarship schemes for incoming students in the UK

Additionally, there are some scholarship schemes for nationals of specific countries. However, the financial support available to international students coming to study in the UK is limited.

The financial support of the international students coming to study in France is one of the important elements of the policy aiming to increase incoming students. There is a higher availability of the scholarships in France than in the UK. There are several major financial support mechanisms for the foreign students, provided through the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. They are presented in box 9-2 below.

#### Box 9-2 Major scholarship schemes for incoming students in France

The French government provided over 18,000 scholarships to international students in 2007 (Ministry of International and European Affairs, 2009a). The financial support for international students is mainly available for students at Masters and Doctoral level.

In the Czech Republic there is some evidence related to the possibility for the higher education institutions to provide financial support for the talented students from developing countries and financial support for Czech language courses; however interviews identified that actually funding is limited and it is hardly ever implemented in practice even in public higher education institutions. In general it is difficult for higher education institutions to allocate funding to incoming international students.

### 9.3.4 *Student services for the international students*

The interviews identified that the international students receive high quality student support services during their studies in the UK. Higher education institutions are aware of the international students' experience and try to accommodate their needs. This is partly related to the fact that international students pay high tuition fees and therefore expect high quality services in return. Moreover, students after graduation participate in extensive surveys and for universities it is very important to receive good feedback from the surveys. This had strong impact on their trying to increase the quality of the student experience. Interviewees also identified that the relationship between students and universities is changing towards a provider–customer relationship and students become more demanding on the universities.

The development of the quality of the students' services is one of the priorities of the policy for the attracting the best international students in France. There are some

measures introduced with regard to the increasing of the quality of the international students experience:

- Creation of *Centres pour les Etudes en France (CEF)* in French diplomatic offices abroad. The aim of the centres is to provide information and guidance to potential students on studying in France and to support their applications to higher education institutions.
- A Quality Charter for French Government Foreign Scholars was established in 2006, which includes requirements for services provided to international students receiving French governmental scholarships. It covers a wide range of student services, from the preparation for the studies to the services provided during the studies in France. It sets quality standards for student services for the grant recipients. This might be further developed for all student services for all international students. However, it is difficult for French higher education institutions to do additional spending on accommodation of international students due to the fact that all students pay similar tuition fees. (Although for additional services, additional payment may be asked.)
- Within the framework of the implementation of the Quality Charter, the initiative to provide a quality label (*Espaces labellisés CampusFrance, ELCF*) for international student services which correspond to the quality standards.

In the Czech Republic, student services provided differ in public and private higher education institutions. For example, public institutions have dormitories at their disposal and they can provide accommodation to international students, they have student services provided in the institution, use 'buddy' systems, and provide introductory programmes. Universities can get financial support through development programmes for internationalisation and they can use it for improving student services. Private higher education institutions do not have dormitories, but they can help students to find private housing. They also provide some student services. According to interviewees, student support services have improved in recent years mainly due to the increased number of incoming students. The importance that faculties ascribe to international student services increases with their receiving more international students.

In sum, in France and the Czech Republic attention for the development of the students' support services is increasing. However, unlike in the UK universities in France and the Czech Republic do not compete with each other to provide the best quality of student support services.

### 9.3.5 Language

The UK has a language advantage for attracting international students. Increasingly, higher education institutions outside the UK provide programmes taught in English. In France this is less the case than in other European countries and mostly the higher education institutions provide studies in French. In the Czech Republic there are a number of accredited degree programmes in foreign languages. For example most faculties of medicine and arts and some faculties of engineering provide entire programmes and individual courses in two languages, mainly Czech and English. In medicine faculties this is mainly due to the fact that the level of tuition in English is of high quality. Also some 10 years ago some medicine faculties have obtained accreditation from the US, which made it possible for students in the US to use study loans for studies

in the Czech Republic. However, a number of accredited programmes in foreign languages actually do not receive students (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2009). Interviewees suggested that this might be caused by low language competencies among academic and administrative staff, low interest in teaching in foreign languages, low capacities of the faculties and the perception that the faculty has sufficient numbers of Czech and Slovak students.

### 9.3.6 *Other factors important for attracting international students*

Interviewees identified the following factors influencing the high numbers of incoming students to the UK:

- High reputation of the studies and degrees provided;
- Attractive teaching modes;
- Relatively short studies;
- Effective quality assurance.

Historical and social factors are important towards the recruiting of the international students. For example France recruits high numbers of students from its former colonies. The Czech Republic on the other hand recruits a high number of Slovak students, who form the majority of the international students.

Some of the success factors in achieving increased mobility in the Czech Republic are related to the state's higher education policy which has set increased student mobility as one of the priorities for many years. It is also complemented by financial support from EU and state resources. Higher education institutions recognise that internationalisation of their academic environment is very important for increasing their and their graduates' international competitiveness.

One of the limiting factors to attract students from the EU countries in the UK is that there are limits for the numbers of students that universities can recruit from the UK and EU. Therefore, institutions are not allowed to recruit as many students as they want. On the other hand this might increase incentives to recruit international students from outside the EU.

The student immigration regimes are among the barriers for incoming student mobility. In the UK a new points-based visa system has been introduced in March 2009 (UK Higher Education International Unit and Europe Unit, 2009) making it more difficult for international students to obtain visa. In France, the law of 24<sup>th</sup> July 2006 introduced measures to facilitate international students' immigration. However, in a comparative study on student mobility, visa regulations have been classified as strict in both France and the UK (UK Higher Education International Unit and Europe Unit, 2009). The difficulties regarding visa are identified among the barriers in the Czech Republic as well.

In the Czech Republic it was identified that low motivation of students coming to study in the UK is among the barriers for increased student mobility. The organisational institutions capacity to accommodate international students and full implementation of ECTS has been mentioned among the barriers as well. The quality of tuition in English is

not very high compared to some other EU countries, with some exceptions (e.g. the field of medicine was mentioned).

## 9.4 Outgoing mobility

Statistics show that the UK has low numbers of students who decide to undertake mobility periods abroad. France is one of the countries with relatively high numbers of mobile students. Similarly, the Czech Republic has relatively high numbers of the mobile students as well. This part of the case study looks at the factors that influence outgoing student mobility.

### 9.4.1 *Policy context*

In the framework of encouraging students to undertake mobility periods abroad the efforts are made by some key stakeholders in the UK to promote participation in the Erasmus programme. For example, the UK's Higher Education Funding Councils provide financial support to compensate higher education institutions for missed the fee revenues of students participating in Erasmus (National Report E/W/NI, 2008). The Scottish government provides some financial support for projects promoting outgoing student mobility, in partnership with student organisations and higher education institutions representatives. One of the projects includes funding a Development Officer within National Union of Students Scotland (NUS) to promote student participation in Erasmus and European issues more generally. The Scottish Government announced (October 2008) further funding for NUS Scotland for a three-year project to widen and deepen the promotion of mobility to students and staff across Scottish colleges and universities (National Report Scotland, 2008).

Promoting outgoing student mobility is one of the priorities within the broader higher education policies in France. Interviewees identified that in France the policy goal is to ensure that at least once during the course of the studies every student should undertake mobility abroad.

In the Czech Republic the Long-Term Plan for Educational, Scientific, Research, Development, Artistic and Other Creative Activities of Higher Education Institutions for 2006-2010 includes the goal to enable all students who express interests and who have the necessary competences to spend a period of studies abroad (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, 2009).

### 9.4.2 *Higher education institutions' engagement*

In the UK's higher education institutions there are far fewer incentives to encourage students to undertake mobility periods abroad than for them to recruit international students. However, interviews identified that there have been some changes in this respect in some higher education institutions. More attention is being given to UK students' opportunities to have international experience. Attention is given to promotion of the opportunities for studies abroad, or developing institutional partnerships within and outside Europe. This helps developing long-term relationships that are not only subject-based but also focus on the multi-dimensional co-operation.



It is important for higher education institutions to maintain a balance of incoming and outgoing students, especially regarding Erasmus students. Due to the fact that traditionally students in the UK do not tend to undertake credit mobility during the studies, higher education institutions either tend to reduce the number of the incoming students or to increase the number of the outgoing students.

In France, partly due to the different rationales related to the activities of student mobility and in general a more co-operative approach, more attention is given to encouraging student mobility. Some higher education institutions incorporate mobility periods within their curricula. This was identified during some interviews as one of the success factors for outgoing mobility.

In the Czech Republic the rationale for higher education institution to promote outgoing student mobility is linked to increased competitiveness of students and of the institution itself. This rationale for higher education institutions is similar to their reasons for increasing incoming student mobility, which we typified as linked to internationalisation and increased competitiveness.

#### 9.4.3 *Financial support for students*

The financial constraints are among the main obstacles for outgoing student mobility in all three countries included in the case study. This is addressed both at the European level through the Erasmus programme. In addition financial support is provided at national level to enable students to undertake mobility periods abroad.

In the UK, students who participate in the Erasmus programme have the right to retain their grant or loan. In addition students who participate in the Erasmus programme for a year are entitled to get the tuition fees in their home institutions waived. In some cases higher education institutions themselves provide additional financial support to outgoing Erasmus students. However, there is no financial support for students who undertake degree mobility (National report E/W/NL, 2008).

In France, there are some financial support schemes available to mobile students. First, students can receive grants for studying based on their social situation. This grant is portable abroad. Second, students receive financial support of € 400 per month for study periods abroad if they are enrolled in French higher education institutions (National report France, 2008). Local authorities also provide substantial financial support in order to enable students to undertake mobility periods abroad.

In the Czech Republic international activities are co-funded from the state budget through Development Programmes (strategic documents defining the policy priorities for the year). This includes co-funding from national sources of the Erasmus programme. There is no national financial support to finance degree mobility from the Czech Republic. Interviews identified that in terms of financial support for student mobility one of the measures which still needs to be implemented is portability of grants and loans.

#### 9.4.4 *Language*

The lack of foreign language skills is a barrier in all three countries included in the case study. In the UK there is a strong parallel between the decline of students studying European languages and the reduced number of mobile students (Europe Unit, 2008).

Besides, UK students tend to choose to undertake degree mobility in English speaking countries outside of the EHEA.

In the Czech Republic language issues are addressed mainly through the Ministry of Education's development programmes (financial support of internationalisation for public higher education institutions).

#### 9.4.5 *Other factors influencing student mobility*

The latest data available indicate that there is some increase of UK students undertaking study periods abroad. Some success factors for this are linked to developments in the Lifelong Learning Programme, including new types of mobility in the Erasmus programme, e.g. accepting work placements as study mobility.

Interviews and the literature review identified additional factors impacting on the low numbers of the mobile students in the UK:

- UK degrees are shorter than in most other countries especially in Europe and it is difficult to incorporate mobility periods in the course of the short studies;
- A substantial part of the credits would not be recognised;
- Lack of information available on the benefits of student mobility;
- Most students in the UK are working part-time during their studies and are worried about losing their jobs while participating in mobility.

One of the factors mentioned during the interviews with the representatives in France is that mobility periods should be integrated in the curricula of study programmes. This was mentioned as one of the priorities for the further development of the mobility in the Czech Republic as well.

Among the success factors for supporting outgoing student mobility in higher education in the Czech Republic is that it is linked to the competitiveness of the institution. Institutions get very important benefits from supporting increased student mobility. State financial support and prioritising increased mobility while setting policy goals are among success factors as well. One of the challenges for the development of mobility in the Czech Republic mentioned during interviews was internationalisation of the higher education institutions. This is not only relevant for outgoing but also for incoming mobility. Interviews identified that there is a lack of interest from students especially those who are working, have families or low language skills. In some institutions it is difficult to get their degrees recognised.

## 9.5 *Conclusions: Bologna Process and mobility*

The Bologna Process has put mobility at the top of the higher education policy agenda and it serves as a further catalyst for increasing mobility. It was recognised that the countries that implement the Bologna Process action lines are well placed to attract higher numbers of international students (UK Higher Education International Unit and Europe Unit, 2009). A number of tools for mobility have been introduced in the framework of promoting mobility i.e. joint degrees, the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the Diploma Supplement.

The attention to mobility, especially in the UK, does not come solely from the Bologna Process reforms, however they provide more eminence and visibility to development of student mobility. The Bologna Process contributed to increased clarity and better understanding among higher education institutions in different EHEA countries and different national systems, which makes student mobility easier. The establishment of the three-cycle degree structure and of qualifications frameworks was mentioned as having positive impact on mobility. However, some difficulties remain related to the recognition and difficulties regarding the use of the ECTS. More progress is needed in this area.

In France the implementation of the Bologna Process action lines correlated with the increased student mobility. However, as mentioned before, there is no definite causal link between implementation of Bologna Process reforms and increased mobility. Still, the Trends V survey revealed that about 40% of institutions experienced a 'significant' increase in both incoming and outgoing student mobility, with another 37% experiencing a 'slight' increase in the two areas.

The Czech Republic is actively participating in the European mobility programmes and provides national co-funding for the Erasmus programme. Higher education institutions see the implementation of the Bologna Process action lines as part of the attempts for internationalisation i.e. implementing ECTS and providing Diploma Supplement, introducing joint degrees and double degrees, participation in the European programmes supporting mobility, transparency of the degree structure.

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## 10 Adaptation of quality assurance schemes

### 10.1 Rationale

To study the impact of the quality assurance action line of the Bologna Process on signatory countries' higher education policies, we contrast countries' reactions to the Bologna Process. Some are making their quality assessment system 'heavier' to comply with the perceived needs of the EHEA, while other countries opt for a light-touch external quality assurance model: does the choice of either path make a difference for their position in the Bologna Process?

Spain is an example of a country where quality assurance seems to be strongly developing to a more encompassing approach in reaction to the Bologna Process. Sweden seems to be a good contrasting case maintaining an organic, incrementally changing relation with its long tradition in quality assurance. Are these two alternative routes to achieving the EHEA, or is one evidently more successful than the other? Under which circumstances is the previous answer valid? To check influences of alternative circumstances, the contrast with Hungary can be illustrative, with its previous tradition of major changes in higher education in the transition period in the 1990s, which then already included a strongly-developed quality assurance system, against the backdrop of strong but very different traditions from e.g. Sweden with regard to involvement of students and stakeholders.

Hungary (ca. 10 million inhabitants) and Sweden (over 9 million) can be regarded as medium to small countries in a European context. Spain (with 46 million inhabitants) belongs to the large countries. All three were signatory countries of the Bologna Declaration in 1999.

### 10.2 Quality assurance of higher education in Hungary

Higher education in Hungary was in a state of flux after the fall of communism in 1989–1990. The first new higher education act was dated 1993, showing not the fastest legal change in the region (e.g. Czech and Polish higher education laws were passed in the parliaments already in 1990), but reform was taken very seriously, and already before the passing of the new law the Hungarian Accreditation Board (HAC), became operative late in 1992 (Csizmadia, 2006). It became the major body for governance on quality in Hungarian higher education, although the final say on most matters of higher education remained fairly strongly in the hands of the Ministry of Education.

Types of higher education institutions were 'colleges' and 'universities'. In the 1990s both sectors contained mostly specialised institutions, such as medical and technical institutions, with a few comprehensive institutions, in the sense of covering all major disciplinary fields (Rozsnyai, 2004). Degree programmes at that time were organised as long, single-cycle degrees of up to four year in colleges, leading to a degree equated with the Bachelor, and up to five or sometimes six years in universities, leading to a Master degree (Rozsnyai, 2004, p. 208).

### 10.2.1 *Quality assurance in Hungarian higher education*

The HAC was given a major role in the transformation of higher education, in particular in the re-integration of research and education: its first major task was to accredit Doctoral programmes in universities. Under the communist regime, research had been concentrated in academy institutes outside the universities. Giving universities the right to award Doctoral degrees would reverse that separation and simultaneously would be a way to give universities a 'bonus' and get them accept accreditation at the same time (but not taking away existing rights). Also in contrast to the more than forty years before, the HAC put heavy emphasis on independent academic decision-making. Its governance structure, accreditation committees and visiting teams were made so as to guarantee academic autonomy.

After the Doctoral programmes, the HAC accredited higher education institutions—on an eight-year rolling scheme—and new study programmes (Csizmadia, 2006; Rozsnyai, 2004). Its tasks were changed over the years by changes in the higher education law, but those changes were marginal and the main tasks remained (Devínsky, et al., 2008).

The next major reform in the structure of Hungarian higher education took place around the turn of the century (Csizmadia, 2006). It concerned the national policy to merge the many, often small, specialised higher education institutions into smaller numbers of large, multi-disciplinary higher education institutions.

In this environment, the Bologna Declaration was the occasion for another round of major reforms, though the policy follow-up started only slowly: e.g. the HAC began developing frameworks for first-cycle ('Bachelor') programmes near the end of 2002 (Alesi, Rozsnyai, & Szántó, 2007, p. 397). And although a few pilots were started in 2004, not until 2005 were the new-style study programmes introduced through the 2005 Higher Education Act, which came into force in March 2006. But then they were introduced at high speed: all students entering Hungarian higher education had to enrol in new-style programmes from 2006–2007 (Alesi, et al., 2007; interview). 'New style' means that university study programmes had to be split into a Bachelor cycle and a Master phase (except between ten and fifteen areas where single-cycle programmes were kept, e.g. medicine, law and some arts). It also meant that all new study programmes were *ex ante* accredited (i.e. 'licensed') by the HAC. Between 2005 and 2007, the HAC experienced 'an enormous burden' (Bazsa, 2009) as it had to take around 1,900 accreditation/licensing decisions on study programmes (Devínsky, et al., 2008, p. 16).

### 10.2.2 *Recent changes*

Attention in the higher education institutions in the years following the new higher education law was focused on the Bachelor-level programmes; although some Master programmes started in 2006 and 2007, the bulk of first enrolments in Master-level programmes took place in 2009–2010, as the first full cohort of students graduated from new-style Bachelor programmes in 2009.

The new study programmes had to be designed according to the latest developments of the Bologna Process, i.e. including the Dublin Descriptors and the QF-EHEA. Accordingly, the Minister of Education issued Education and Outcome Requirements (abbreviated in Hungarian to 'KKK'), sets of learning outcome-based programme specifications. The minister does not need government approval for KKK (Alesi, et al., 2007), but clearly

keeps a strong voice in the higher education offer. A new development was that the same KKK were applicable across the binary line, for both colleges and universities (Alesi, et al., 2007, p. 397). This should stimulate students' transitions from one sector to the other (Alesi, et al., 2007, p. 402). The new programme length and new requirements meant that in the universities, Bachelor programmes had to practically be designed completely anew; in the colleges existing programmes could be adapted more easily (Alesi, et al., 2007, p. 403).

Applying a learning outcomes-based approach to curriculum design and programme accreditation requires much change in the application of criteria both in the higher education institutions and in the HAC. From the HAC review (Devínsky, et al., 2008, p. 21) and from our interviews it did not seem that this turnaround had already been fully made. As a result of lacking in-depth reform, the HAC president confessed he was 'afraid that the future graduates will not have received sufficient preparation to be positively received in the labor market' (Bazsa, 2009, section 1 b).

Other aspects of HAC's processes and procedures were hardly affected by the Bologna Process or by the introduction of the ESG. In particular, the views on quality and the set of reviewers and of members of the HAC's committees remained, as before strongly focused on academic autonomy and academic views on quality. Reviewers of the HAC had already commented on the lack of stakeholders' perspectives in the first international review in 2000, and in 2007 the comments and recommendations were repeated in the review against the ESG part 3 (Devínsky, et al., 2008). The HAC in 2008 proposed to study widening the quality criteria and widening its range of members (HAC, 2008). It has been remarked, though, that at least until 2007 'students and employers have not shown very much interest in the reforms' (Alesi, et al., 2007, p. 401).

### 10.2.3 Internationalisation of quality assurance in Hungary

In 2000, the HAC was among the initiators of the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEE Network, a sub-network of the world-wide INQAAHE), which in its spirit of international co-operation was connected with the Bologna Process, according to HAC's Annual Report of 2001 (HAC, s.a. [2002], p. 9).

Through its international contacts, the HAC also was involved from the beginning in the development of the ESG: only in this framework did the split between *institutional* and *programme* accreditation become articulated (Devínsky, et al., 2008, p. 7).

Another remark of the international review of the HAC in 2007 concerned the low level of international involvement in the actual evaluations. While this may be an issue for almost any language area outside English, the review panel (almost completely non-English speaking) recommended using English more often to enable more international co-operation (Devínsky, et al., 2008).

The HAC was probably the first European national quality assurance agency that applied quality assurance to itself. It had itself voluntarily reviewed by the CRE (now EUA) in 2000 ([www.mab.hu/english/doc/extevalhac.pdf](http://www.mab.hu/english/doc/extevalhac.pdf), accessed 2009-06-29), and then again by a different team from EUA circles under the ESG for full ENQA membership in 2008 (Devínsky, et al., 2008).

### 10.3 Quality assurance of higher education in Sweden

Higher education is provided at universities (*universitet*) and university colleges (*högskolor*). Most of higher education and research (about 95%) is carried out at the 14 universities including the Karolinska Institute and Royal Institute of Technology, 7 independent Colleges of fine, applied or performing arts and 15 university colleges including the Stockholm University College of Physical Education and Sports and the Swedish National Defence College. Altogether there are 36 government-funded higher education institutions. Chalmers University of Technology, the Stockholm School of Economics, the University College of Jönköping and some ten smaller colleges are semi-private higher education institutions (Bologna Process national report 2005-07, Högskoleverket, 2008).

Discussions on quality in higher education started in 1993. They were inspired by international developments in this area and with the introduction of a funding system based on the number of students and degrees awarded (source: Interview). The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (*Högskoleverket*) was established in 1995 by the Government to review the quality of higher education and for related issues like monitoring developments and trends, providing information, but also to ensure that higher education institutions comply with relevant regulations and it became the agency for recognizing qualifications from abroad. Finally it operated a scheme of validation (approval) of academic professional programmes and degrees, which had been introduced in 1992 (Wahlén 2004).

#### 10.3.1 Cycles of the national quality assurance system

Until 2009 the quality assessment system ran in evaluation cycles focusing on audits, programme and subject evaluations and assessments of entitlement to award degrees. The quality assessment system developed according to national needs. When it became a dimension of the Bologna Process Sweden joined the process and became member of the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) (report on the Swedish follow-up of the Bologna Declaration from 2000).

The first cycle of quality assessment in Sweden started in 1995. It focused on comprehensive periodical quality audits, covering universities and university colleges as well as programmes and subject areas (Ibid.). Already in 2000 the Higher Education Act and the Higher Education Ordinance made clear that students have influence on higher education activities and that at higher education institutions achieving quality is a common concern of staff and students (Ibid.).

The second six-years cycle of the Swedish evaluation system in the period 2001-06 changed its focus from institutional to programme level and comprised three main elements (Bologna Process national Report for Sweden 2005-2007):

- Accreditation of Master's degrees awarded by university colleges and of professional degrees awarded by all higher education institution.
- Assessment of all subjects and programmes leading to a Bachelor's degree and higher degrees including PhD.
- Thematic evaluations of aspects of quality of higher education.



The general opinion of the National Agency was that the system of quality assessment in this period worked well (Högskoleverket, 2008:4 R). Evaluations of subject and programmes and assessments of entitlement to award degrees assured fundamental quality and provided a good national picture of quality. Programmes that did not meet standards were identified and warned of the possible withdrawal of their entitlement to award degrees. All programmes received recommendations and proposed measures to enhance their quality. Three years later the follow up showed that the recommendations were taken into account and that the quality of provision had improved (Ibid.).

The thematic evaluations focused on describing various aspects and highlighting good examples of successful quality procedures. These evaluations provided knowledge and source of inspirations for development of quality assessment in important areas (Ibid.)

The third evaluation cycle was supposed to take place in the period 2007-2012. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education prepared a comprehensive system on the basis of the experiences in the previous six-year cycle of quality assessment and on international developments. According to this plan the system was made of five different components:

- Audits of quality procedures at the higher education institutions;
- Programme evaluations;
- Appraisal of entitlement to award degrees;
- Thematic evaluations and thematic studies;
- Distinction to centres of excellent quality in higher education.

### 10.3.2 *Recent changes*

The national quality assessment system for the period 2007-2012 was abandoned in spring 2008. The government decided to focus quality assessment activity on the programmes and fields of study in the coming period. The appraisal of degree-awarding powers for new programmes (accreditation) will stay in the quality assessment system, but not the institutional audits, the awards for Centres of Excellence and the thematic evaluations and studies. As of 2009, 23 of 49 institutions had been included in the audits of quality procedures of the previous system, and some study programmes in the area of humanities. These evaluations would not be followed up.

The reasons for termination of the quality assessment system for the period 2007-2012 included strongly expressed dissatisfactions and serious criticism coming from universities (vice-chancellors) in 2007 as well as from the *Högskoleverket* itself (source: interviews). From the universities' point of view the national quality assessment system was not sufficiently aligned with the Bologna Process (learning outcomes) and demanded too much information, some of which was very difficult to obtain and in the end the National Agency apparently could not use it (source: interviews).

These criticisms led the government to commission the National Agency to design a new quality assessment scheme, to be implemented in 2010. The government wants the new system to focus on *results* of study programmes i.e. proof of learning outcomes. In the previous cycles of subject and programme evaluations the effort was put on the conditions

and process rather than on the output/outcome. The new evaluation round should be shorter, 4 years long, whereas in the previous system all programmes were evaluated within a 6 year long cycle. The programmes will be graded on a three-point scale (excellent, good and unacceptable quality).<sup>1</sup> The programme evaluation process will be composed of self-evaluation, followed by peer review. The summary report of the Agency will inform the Government, which may allocate additional resources to programmes with the highest grade.

Programmes with unacceptable quality will be put in the procedure of the Review of degree-awarding powers. The follow-up of evaluation and a new assessment will take place most probably after one year. At the end of the process the decision will be taken and the programme will be either retained if quality improved, or degree-awarding powers will be withdrawn if the programme did not improve.

It is important to mention the shift of the programme evaluation from teachers' activities to students' activities and from the beginning of the course to the end of the course. This means that programmes need to ensure that students attain the objectives laid down in the Higher Education Ordinance Qualification Descriptors. The three possible quality indicators in this respect will be:

- Intended Learning Outcomes and examinations.
- Achieved Learning Outcomes.
- Student experiences.

Each indicator will comprise one or more assessment areas and is to be appraised on the basis of known evaluation criteria and result in an overall evaluation of the entire programme.

Learning outcomes are very much linked to the European (Dublin Descriptors/QF-EHEA) and Swedish national descriptors. Student experiences will be measured through questionnaires about academic challenge, collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction and educational experiences.

The new evaluation approach will require more, different, and more exact data. The previous model was based on quality assurance of prerequisites, processes and results. Prerequisites, such as teacher qualifications and staff–student ratio, are now seen as the responsibility of institutions and should be covered by the internal quality assessment systems of the individual institutions, whereas results, in terms of e.g. learning outcomes will be the focus of external assessment.

As mentioned, the accreditation or appraisal of entitlement to award degrees will remain an important component of the new quality assessment system. Universities are free to offer Bachelor's, Master's and PhD programmes, but they must get accreditation of new professional programmes (i.e. law, teaching) from the National Agency for Higher Education. University colleges have to be accredited for two-year Master's degrees. As from 2010, university colleges will also be able to apply for accreditation of PhD

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<sup>1</sup> The description of the proposed quality assessment system is based on a presentation by the National Agency (Hgskoleverket, 24.06.2009), kindly updated for the purpose of this study by Lena Adamson on Sept. 2, 2009.

programmes. It is crucial that programmes meet sufficient quality criteria and in case this is not happening the National Agency or University Vice-Chancellor can decide to terminate the study programme.

### 10.3.3 *Major drivers in the quality assessment reform*

Different stakeholders are involved in the change of quality assessment in Sweden. Legally the National Agency is responsible for reviewing quality of higher education and has autonomy to decide how to implement and carry out quality assessment within the frame of the goals. The government funds the National Agency, appoints the Vice-Chancellor, set goals and directions of quality assessment and other tasks. The Agency is politically independent and autonomous in carrying out external evaluations, preparing reports, stating conclusions and assessments as well as setting up its own organisation (Wahlén, 2004).

Higher education institutions themselves are responsible for internal quality assurance. Most have a rather long tradition in the area, e.g. Uppsala University started quality assurance in 1993 already and established a rather coherent internal quality assessment system (source: interview).

Students are important stakeholders with large influence on the quality assessment system by being represented on the Board of the National Agency as well as in the quality assurance systems within higher education institutions (National report for Sweden 2005-2007).

Recently, employers became more prominent as graduates' employability is becoming a relevant issue in Sweden and European discussions. They were also invited into discussions of the latest changes of the quality assessment system.

The National Agency builds the new system on the basis of consensus and agreement with stakeholders. For this reason it assembled a reference group composed of representatives from higher education institutions, the National Student Union, National Agency and the Association of Swedish Higher Education. Besides, the National Agency made sure that everyone could be informed about the process by putting all the documents on its website.

The above gives the outlines of the proposed system that is under discussion at the moment of writing. A white paper will be presented in early 2010. So far the government has signalled to the Agency that the changes from the original proposal will concern the first quality indicator *Intended learning outcomes and examination* and that alumni experiences will be included but not student experiences in the third quality indicator. Although the Swedish quality assessment system is developing on the basis of national needs and experiences, it has always been open to the development in the Bologna Process and took an active part in it.

### 10.3.4 *Internationalisation of the Swedish quality assessment system*

In 2006 an external expert team found that the Swedish national Agency for Higher Education complied fully with the requirements of the Standards and Guidelines for quality assessment in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). On the basis of this evaluation the Agency was reconfirmed as a full member of ENQA (Bologna Process National Report 2007-2009), though its participation in ENQA had already started at the

very beginning of the Bologna Process (National report from 2000). Participation in ENQA contributed to mutual understanding and to partial adaptation to the methodology from other countries (Wahlén, 2004). The National Agency for Higher Education includes European members in its evaluation teams, but because of language reasons they mostly chose experts from Nordic Countries (Wahlén, 2004).

The Nordic Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education (NOQA) connected agencies from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden since 1992. The organisation convened annually to exchange experiences and discuss recent developments in evaluation and quality assurance of higher education. The co-operation has been intensified since the network started to co-operate on common yearly projects since 2001. In 2007 a report was published on different approaches to evaluating learning outcomes in the Nordic countries. The latest project focuses on Nordic joint Masters programmes.

Sweden has also discussed the GATS agreements but it is not yet clear what the consequences will be for Swedish higher education and accreditation (Wahlén, 2004).

#### 10.4 Quality assurance and higher education in Spain

Spain is chosen as a case because its quality assurance scheme seems to be strongly developing in reaction to the Bologna Process. In 2002 the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA) was established, charged with the evaluation, certification and accreditation functions in conjunction with quality assurance agencies in some of Spain's autonomous communities. In 2007, ANECA was among the first agencies formally approved for full membership ENQA. For these reasons it is worthwhile to present the current system, its achievements and its route towards the EHEA. Finally, some perspectives of the quality assurance scheme in Spain will be indicated.

In order to understand the present system, two specific features of the Spanish higher education system are important. First, until recently Spanish universities were subject to national laws with uniform and detailed rules and norms for curricula, funding, staff, etc. The state regulation determined most educational processes, from the financial issues to the number of teaching hours of a course. The state retained control over a large proportion of the curriculum of each official degree (the so-called 'catalogue') to ensure national diplomas. The control was exclusively *ex ante*, and criteria and standards were predetermined with hardly any incentives for quality or penalties for poor performance. In such an environment it is difficult to develop quality assurance as understood today. It was seen as an important challenge to move towards a modern system of accountability and quality assessment supported by universities themselves. Subsequent modifications in the law (Organic Law on Universities, LOU) allowed more freedom to universities to create and propose the teaching and titles they offer, and they abolished the obligatory 'catalogue'. The most recent amendment (2008/09) in the law seeks to strengthen the autonomy of Spanish universities along with a more prominent role for quality assurance systems.

Second, the autonomous regional communities have extensive legislative and budgetary powers. Regarding education the autonomous communities can develop their own

complementary legislation and regulate the non-basic elements of the education system.<sup>2</sup> For example, new Master programmes need authorisation from the autonomous community, which may require prior external assessment. Most autonomous communities have created their own quality assurance agency.

The following sections focus on the university sector because the existing quality assurance agencies in higher education limit the scope of their activities to universities only: Institutions of higher vocational education have a separate regime and are required to apply to an external certification using the ISO 9000-series standards. The usefulness of the separated regimes has been questioned, arguing that the existing practice for universities should be extended to the vocational sector as well.

#### 10.4.1 *Development of quality assurance in Spain*

Quality assurance in Spain developed in a number of stages that laid the foundations for the present system, starting in 1992 with the 'Experimental Programme to Evaluate the Quality of the University System'. This programme aimed to explore institutional assessment methods as a tool towards quality improvement and to extend the culture of assessment in Spanish universities.

The next stage was the *Plan Nacional de Evaluación de la Calidad de las Universidades – (PNECU)*, the National Plan for the Assessment of the Quality of Universities, in 1995. Under the auspices of the Council of Universities, a national organisation composed of representatives from regional and national governments and the rectors of all universities, this plan formally institutionalised quality assessment in Spanish universities as an extended and continuous process for the entire university system,. One of the objectives of the PNECU was to provide universities with methodological tools for quality assessment that would be both homogeneous throughout the country and similar to processes used elsewhere in Europe. It also laid the foundations for a system of national quality assurance mechanisms coordinated in collaboration with regional agencies.

The PNECU was in 2001 followed by the second *Plan de Calidad de las Universidades (PCU)*. From our point of view the PCU's aims of special relevance were on the one hand encouraging the creation of more regional quality assessment agencies and their coordination within a national framework, and on the other hand establishing a system for the accreditation of degrees at all levels to guarantee that they meet European and international quality standards. These developments culminated in the establishment of ANECA in 2002. A significant part of the objectives and activities of the PCU were transferred to ANECA in conjunction with regional quality agencies. For accreditation, ANECA is responsible for all aspects of the Law on Universities (LOU) that must be fulfilled by all official degrees as well as for re-accrediting these degrees after a six-year period. The general procedures and the respective roles of the actors such as the Council of Universities (*Consejo de Universidades* – this is a Ministerial body) and regional governments are well defined. In the first phases of quality assessment there was much resistance from universities against allowing an external agency to evaluate their

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<sup>2</sup> The Ministry's role regarding funding of universities also is limited, since the autonomous communities hold this responsibility (with a few exceptions such as the national system of student scholarships).

programmes. Gradually the role of ANECA—as the overarching agency of quality assessment—has been accepted and consolidated.

On the basis of the previous initiatives on quality assurance, ANECA developed a solid basis for the evaluations of institutions, programmes, services and ‘accreditation’ of academic staff. The current law defines evaluation mainly in programmatic terms. Accreditation takes place in three stages: verification of the design, follow up procedures (for six years after approval), and re-accreditation. Re-accreditation is seen as an important tool to improve the university system. Since 2007 ANECA has undertaken evaluation procedures for Bachelor and Master degrees separately. Apart from criteria in the sphere of content and teaching of the different modules, assessment procedures evaluate the extent to which these are appropriate to achieve the expected learning outcomes.

ANECA has no authoritative powers regarding accreditation decisions and can submit only proposals for approval. However, the government cannot change negative proposals by ANECA to positive decisions, whereas reversely positive decisions may be changed to negative ones. The latter are to the discretion of regional governments, for example in view of macro-efficiency.<sup>3</sup>

Regarding the composition of review committees, at least one international expert is required (in addition to gender and regional balances). This is not always possible, due to the language barrier. Reversely, Spanish experts have worked in foreign committees, so they are expected to bring their international experiences back to the Spanish context.

In addition to programme accreditation, there is a possibility to assess the internal quality assurance systems of institutions. The Royal Decree stipulates that each official degree course must have its internal mechanisms to guarantee quality. Institutional audits occur mainly voluntarily and are not intended to replace the programmatic evaluation. Some traditional functions of the ‘catalogue’ tend to persist as institutions continue to ask for some regulation. Nevertheless, ANECA and some regional agencies are promoting an audit programme that provides guidance to institutions in designing internal quality systems by integrating all activities with regard to the quality assurance of degree programmes. Generally, the current debate in Spain is shifting in the direction of institutional audits and the readiness to focus on the evaluation of internal quality assurance systems inside universities. This development can be seen in the policy context of strengthening the autonomy of Spanish universities as expressed in the amendment (2008/9) of the LOU.

According to ANECA much progress has been made in the last few years towards creating a culture of quality within Spanish universities. To achieve this ANECA has benefited much from experience gained in the preceding stages of quality assessment, especially the development of information systems on quantitative data and performance indicators as

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<sup>3</sup> Staffing is part of the accreditation process. Whereas in many European countries staffing has been decentralised to the universities, ANECA has a major task in applying uniform rules for selection and assessments of individual teachers before a university can hire them, according to fixed criteria, and it sets procedures for the accreditation of contracted staff. The evaluation of the teaching performance and the assessment of individual teachers in view of their ‘accreditation’ or their assessment for appointment, promotion, extra bonuses, and tenured positions belong also to the competency of ANECA. The teacher evaluation is seen mainly as a temporary activity until universities are fully autonomous to regulate their own staffing matters.

applied by all universities throughout the country. Also collection and publication of reliable data that are relevant to students in making their study choices is relevant. ANECA supports the shifting emphasis from course content and other detailed prescriptions towards evaluation in terms of learning outcomes. Over the years ANECA has organised several forums with experts and university representatives on quality assessment and Bologna, Master degrees and employability of graduates as the basis for designing new curricula (see ANECA, 2007/8/9).

#### 10.4.2 *Internationalisation*

The accreditation process has strongly been influenced by the European developments and it is of great importance to ANECA to bring the Spanish university system in line with the European higher education area. On the European level ANECA was among the first agencies formally approved for full ENQA membership after an external review based on Part 3 of the ESG. The external panel's report found ANECA's procedures for designing and developing evaluation programmes commendable. Some regional agencies, such as AQU in Catalonia, also acquired full membership of ENQA.

On the programme level ANECA, in collaboration with regional agencies, has initiated programmes for the evaluation of courses and university departments and for 'European convergence' by means of information and guidance of universities in their efforts to adapt to the European Higher Education Area.

#### 10.4.3 *Relationship between national and regional quality agencies*

The quality assessment agencies in the autonomous communities in Spain do not all enjoy the same level of development. From the 17 autonomous communities, eleven have established their own quality assurance agencies, mostly between 2001 and 2005. Most are autonomous bodies advising the regional authority in charge of higher education, or consist of a consortium linking regional government and universities. Those of Catalonia (AQU) and Andalusia are the oldest ones, dating from 1996 and 1998 respectively, and are more autonomous in their operations. With many regional agencies, ANECA operates on a joint basis. Some are far ahead, whereas others are in an early development phase and have very little experience to date.

For the regions that have no quality assessment agency, ANECA itself undertakes evaluations. All regional agencies together with ANECA belong to the national network of quality assessment agencies (REACU) as a body instrumental to the activities of the General Conference on University Policy (CGPU), which coordinates national and regional policies in higher education.

As far as the outcomes of quality assessment are concerned, the regional governments and universities may negotiate. The regional government authorises the degree after which it is accredited as an official degree course. This degree will be monitored by ANECA jointly with the regional agencies until renewal of the accreditation is due.

The OECD review of tertiary education in Spain critically stated that there should be an explicit sharing of tasks between the national and the regional quality assessment agencies. The OECD urged that the role of ANECA and of the various regional agencies be better delineated, and that there should be a set of quality standards for the approval of regional agencies (OECD, 2008; 113). For the OECD a major concern is the involvement of

regional agencies in the ex ante evaluation of new postgraduate (Masters) programmes, which now may be evaluated applying local rather than European standards and using regional rather than national and international evaluators. At the ANECA forum a number of problems and risks were identified around Master degrees, which could jeopardise the future competitiveness of Spanish higher education in Europe and Latin America (cf. Haug 2008). Along the same lines, the OECD review argued that the ex ante evaluation should be organised in a more systematic way, both 'to avoid widely diverging regional approaches and to prevent it from becoming a premature near-accreditation that could deprive universities from their new freedom in curricular design' (Ibid. p. 115).

Incidentally, some comments from our interviews can be brought forward on these issues. One observation is that, due to the different levels of development of the regional agencies, it is difficult to distribute tasks across the whole system similarly. The more advanced and credible agencies do evaluations themselves. In these cases ANECA is just functioning as a 'door' through which the quality assurance is taking place. But in principle these agencies undertake evaluation projects following procedures and criteria as set by ANECA. This assures homogenous work. Also through the REACU consistent use of criteria and procedures is advocated, thereby enhancing the mutual acceptance of assessments. ANECA has achieved much in assuring that criteria are applied consistently.

In addition, recent amendments in the law have extended ANECA's responsibilities. For example, ANECA has been charged to carry out the prior accreditation of academic staff applying for tenured positions as well as the ex ante licensing and the ex post accreditation of all new degree courses. ANECA is increasingly involved in the Master's verification process and the award of a quality label to Doctoral programmes belongs to the exclusive responsibility of ANECA. These new regulations may well contribute to more consistency across regions.

According to ANECA, its international orientation and compliance with international standards are even more important than coping with regional issues. There is much support among the Spanish universities to comply with this international orientation. Rectors of various universities expressed their support for ANECA at public forums, and they are eager to take part in this development towards the EHEA. ANECA is viewed in this context as an important partner and a vehicle in developing a European approach in quality assessment of Spanish higher education. It is not merely seen as a national agency that functions above or alongside regional ones, but as an agency that provides a common frame of reference within Spain and internationally. Overall ANECA functions as a common point of reference for a variety of quality agencies. Its strategy is not to impose a single national seal of quality in the sense of pressing regional bodies into a firm straightjacket. Given such an approach, its supervising powers have become increasingly uncontested in what is otherwise a very decentralised system.

#### *10.4.4 Spanish perspectives on the EHEA*

In the short period of its existence, ANECA has been fulfilling a strong role in giving information and guidance to universities in their efforts to adapt to the European Higher Education Area. An important component of quality assessment in Spain is the adaptation to the EHEA framework and the aim to guide universities along the change process to achieve convergence with the Bologna guidelines. These are important steps to



strengthen the international credibility of the Spanish higher education system as a whole. The following issues and challenges are high on the policy agenda:

- The development of a more comprehensive quality assessment programme at national level. The national network of quality assessment agencies (REACU) initiated by ANECA and the regional agencies could be an important vehicle for further harmonisation of criteria and the mutual acceptance of regional agencies' judgements
- The recognition of degrees still belongs to the Ministry and ANECA has no authority to recognise them. ANECA only provides a 'letter of intent'. Ministerial recognition still occurs in the traditional way, matching programmes to each other. This is a rather slow and bureaucratic process; instead, ANECA would advocate complying with ENQA procedures in the mutual recognition of degrees built on trust between universities and external quality assessment agencies. This would entail a shift from detailed prescription towards a quality culture based on autonomous and effective universities. The audit programme launched by ANECA is expected to secure the quality culture inside the higher education institutions
- The incorporation of the European dimension can be stimulated by the implementation of the European Qualification Framework. This will enhance national and international mobility as well as the development of joint degrees
- A specific feature of Spanish higher education is the low level of mobility of staff across higher education institutions. There is international mobility, but when returning to their home country, staff members predominantly go back to their own alma mater. ANECA advocates designing mechanisms to break out of the traditional high level of endogamy, and explores ways through the 'accreditation' of academic staff
- There is a tendency to move quality assessment towards a focus on achieved learning outcomes and required competences. In this context ANECA advocates more involvement of external stakeholders in the process of quality assessment
- Higher vocational education is increasingly coordinated between regional authorities. It is suggested (also by OECD) to include this sector in the scope of the quality assessment agencies (including ANECA), thereby joining international developments with respect to this segment of higher education

### 10.5 Summary of main findings

Hungary and Spain, the quality assurance scheme has changed rather explicitly in response to the Bologna Process. Changes in Hungary have been not so far-reaching until now. They started on a large scale rather late (only after the 2005 higher education law) and their in-depth implementation still has to begin, especially the realisation of the implications of a learning outcomes-based curriculum. It may seem that the HAC has acted as a buffer, absorbing change impulses and making higher education institutions move only small steps until now. In Sweden, quality assurance had been rather advanced for a long time so that the changes towards the Bologna requirements only surfaced largely with the adaptations to the ESG. And even then, the national debates soon regained priority over the European questions though giving directions to the national debate: the main element of the new quality assessment arrangement is oriented towards learning outcomes. Yet the outcome of the debate could have been different. Other quality

assessment arrangements might have fitted the ESG needs and the choice among these alternatives depended on national considerations.

The Hungarian case shows the persistence of previous policy patterns: the quality assurance framework had been designed in the post-communist transformation period, had been institutionalised into laws, by-laws, standard operating procedures and embodied by a certain community (from public higher education). While the higher education law itself was changed in 2005, the other elements of the institution of quality assurance were not so much targeted for change and/or proved more impervious to change. The Hungarian case also shows that change of regulations is easier than in-depth change of standard operation procedures or attitudes when it comes to curriculum design based on learning outcomes.

Viewed from a European perspective, the coexistence in Spain of ANECA as the national agency and the regional quality agencies raises important questions:

- Is there is a guarantee that rules and procedures apply consistently across communities?
- Does the variety of regional agencies weaken the readability and credibility of the Spanish quality assurance system as a whole?

Remarkable about Sweden may be that it had developed sophisticated quality assurance schemes relatively early on, compared with the other two and that in the recent discussion, the national needs and developments seem much more influential than the Bologna Process argumentations. The existence of the Bologna Process and compatibility with the demands of 'substantial compliance' with the ESG may have played a role in the decision to stop the current developments and re-discuss the next generation of the quality assurance scheme, but these arguments did come to the forefront as much as in the other two cases. Many reforms discussed in 2009 went beyond expectations from the ESG or other elements of the Bologna Process. There seemed to be little doubt in Sweden about compatibility with other quality assurance systems in the EHEA, while the influence of national debates and histories (lessons learned from previous generations of quality assurance, reactions against undesired consequences, etc.) seemed to provide the overriding type of arguments.

Overall, then, the impact of the Bologna Process and in more recent times of the ESG is not uniform across the case study countries. Much as quality assurance itself seems to do, the Bologna Process and the ESG seem to provide an impetus for change, but only up to a certain level. Above the minimum, change derives from other reasons, mainly from the national path of development of the quality assurance schemes. The major question that needs to be researched once the ESG-directed reforms will have taken place, is whether they ensure compatibility of European higher education sufficiently to enable a transparent higher education space across all of the EHEA.

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## 11 Policies to widen participation in higher education

### 11.1 Introduction

Widening access to higher education for people who are traditionally underrepresented in higher education is at the core of the social dimension of the Bologna Process. One of the ways to widen participation in higher education is the recognition of prior learning (RPL). It is used to provide access to higher education when people do not meet the mainstream entry requirements, to waive part of the courses and/or to award full degrees. It is mainly used by adults in the framework of continuous education and lifelong learning. One of the dilemmas of using RPL for widening participation is the risk that RPL is mainly used by people who already have high qualifications levels.

Widening access to higher education is not only achieved through to the recognition of prior learning. There are other measures devoted to widening participation and providing support for the graduation of the higher education studies, for example the provision of short cycle degrees, active support for students in high schools to enable them to make informed choices about entering higher education, and support for students in higher education. However, the main focus of this case study is on widening participation through recognition of prior learning.

The case study aims to look at the implementation of RPL in three countries, France, Portugal and Slovenia, and the links between development of RPL and implementation of Bologna Process action lines. The main aim of this case study is to look at the RPL introduced in three countries and their implementation in higher education institutions. This will allow us to compare and contrast the different approaches applied. The level of development of the RPL measures varies across countries (i.e. France has a highly developed RPL system, in Portugal some measures have been implemented in legislation and in higher education institutions and in Slovenia RPL is at an early stage of development). Also, this case study looks at the influence of the Bologna Process on the development of the recognition of prior learning.

#### 11.1.1 *RPL and the Bologna Process*

After having been mentioned in the Sorbonne Declaration (1998), recognition of prior learning appeared in the Bologna Process in the Berlin communiqué (2003) in the framework of developing lifelong learning policies. The Ministers announced that they were 'taking steps to align their national policies to realise this goal and urge Higher Education Institutions and all concerned to enhance the possibilities for lifelong learning at higher education level including the recognition of prior learning.' The importance of RPL in making higher education accessible and flexible was re-emphasised in the Bergen communiqué (2005) with a focus on the links between the development of qualifications frameworks and lifelong learning. Since then the recognition of prior learning has become the part of the Bologna Process.

As just mentioned, in the Bergen communiqué (2005) the overarching framework of qualifications of the European Higher Education Area was adopted. In addition to serving as a tool for comparability and transparency within EHEA, development of qualifications frameworks should help higher education institutions to develop modules and study

programmes based on learning outcomes and credits, and improve the recognition of qualifications as well as all forms of prior learning. This emphasised the importance of the development of national qualifications frameworks for the recognition of prior learning. Moreover, the London communiqué (2007) re-emphasised that the recognition of prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, were essential components of the European Higher Education Area. However, the Ministers in London recognised that progress in developing recognition of prior learning within higher education had been slow and few countries had well developed RPL. The Ministers therefore invited the BFUG in co-operation with ENIC-NARIC to develop proposals for improving RPL.

A literature review also shows that the implementation of RPL in higher education institutions is slow (Valk, 2009). This was equally emphasised in the Trends V report, which mentioned that the implementation of the RPL measures in higher education institutions was at an early stage of development (Crosier, Purser & Smidt, 2007). Based on Valk (2009) we identified some main obstacles for the development of RPL measures:

- Higher education provision in some European countries is mainly input- and process-based, giving less attention to learning outcomes and job market orientation. In addition, most European universities are still struggling to get their courses, modules and curricula described in terms of learning outcomes, which make the recognition of prior learning difficult.
- There is a negative attitude towards the recognition of the prior learning within academia.
- Many reforms are currently taking place in the European universities, all with short time scales. Other topics such a curriculum reform, quality, mobility and ECTS attract more attention and the development of RPL is not among the top priorities.
- In some countries the development of RPL increased the workload in higher education institutions, necessitating additional financial resources. Higher education institutions also often lack the human resources and the expertise needed for the development of the recognition of prior learning.

Some of the obstacles mentioned above are of key importance in the framework of the Bologna Process. First, the implementation of the other Bologna Process action lines takes priority in most of the countries and higher education institutions. Second, the development of RPL depends on successful implementation of some other Bologna Process action lines, e.g. development of qualifications frameworks and use of learning outcomes in curriculum design.

As mentioned above we have selected three countries that are at different stages of development in their RPL measures. This enables us to reflect different practices applied and to assess issues of the implementation which countries and, more specifically, higher education institutions face. France has a long tradition of applying RPL measures in higher education institutions. RPL in France was introduced long before the Bologna Process started and has been developing significantly since the beginning of the Bologna Process. In Portugal, the relevant legislation has been introduced almost simultaneously with the other legislation related to the Bologna Process reforms. It is mainly used to provide access to higher education and even though its implementation is very recent the number of beneficiaries of these measures is relatively high. In Slovenia, RPL initiatives

are a recent development. This selection of countries allows us to look at the influence of implementing the Bologna Process action areas on developing RPL measures.

### 11.1.2 Definitions of recognition of prior learning

A number of terms are used in the literature with regard to the recognition of prior learning i.e. Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL), Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL), Work-Based Learning (WBL) and validation of non-formal and informal learning. In this case study we use the approach adopted in the report from the official Bologna Process seminar *New Challenges in Recognition: the Recognition of Prior Learning*. It mentions that recognition of prior learning encompasses the recognition of formal, non-formal and informal learning (Stephen, 2007). This case study will focus on the issues related to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, as the recognition of formal learning is covered in the case study on the policies of recognition and mobility.

We use the CEDEFOP (2007) definition for non-formal and informal learning presented below:

- *Non-formal learning* is not provided by an education or training institution and typically it does not lead to certification. However, it is structured, in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support. Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's point of view.
- *Informal learning* results from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time and/or learning support). Typically, it does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases, it is non-intentional (or incidental/random).

This case study mainly uses the term 'recognition' to define the process of identifying whether knowledge, skills and competences claimed by an individual compare favourably with predefined standards in a programme of studies or against the entry level for a particular course (Nuffic, 2008). However, different understandings and terminologies might be used within different national contexts. For example in France the term validation is used and it refers to the legally defined system of the validation of learning from experience (Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience (VAE)). Therefore, while describing French system we will use the term validation.

## 11.2 Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience (VAE) in France

### 11.2.1 Background information on higher education in France

Higher education in France is mainly provided in two types of institutions with different structures and conditions for admission. They are universities, *établissements publics à caractère scientifique, culturel et professionnel*, under supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education and Research and *instituts ou écoles supérieures*, public or private, under supervision of different ministries, some of which are known as *grandes écoles*. The latter include for example political studies institutes, schools of commerce and management, engineering schools and teacher training colleges (*écoles normales supérieures*). Some high schools comprise preparatory classes for these *grandes écoles* (*classes préparatoires aux*

*grandes écoles* – CPGE). In addition, a two-year short cycle (i.e. 120 credits within the first Bologna cycle) is provided to students:

- In post-secondary classes (within high schools) called *sections de techniciens supérieurs (STS)*. These two-year courses lead to an advanced technical diploma called *Brevet de Technicien Supérieur (BTS)*;
- In universities with colleges of technology, called *instituts universitaires de technologie (IUT)* where the tertiary technical diploma *diplôme universitaire de technologie (DUT)* is awarded to successful students.

BTS and DUT are designed for a direct integration into the labour market but students may also choose to continue studying towards a bachelor degree.

The Law of 10<sup>th</sup> August 2007 on freedoms and responsibilities of Universities (no. 2007-1199) aimed to increase the autonomy of higher education institutions. *Grandes écoles* enjoy more autonomy than universities in the sense that universities may not apply entrance examinations and all student holding *baccalauréat* (i.e. the secondary school leaving examination) have the right to enrol in university studies.<sup>1</sup> *Grandes écoles*, however, hold competitive entrance examinations and most candidates take preparatory classes after secondary school before undertaking the entrance examination.

There were around 2.2 million students enrolled in various higher education institutions in the academic year 2008–2009 (Ministry of Higher Education and Research of France, 2008). There are 83 universities, 224 engineering schools, 220 business, management and accounting schools and 3,000 other institutions, mainly high schools, which offer *sections de techniciens supérieurs* (STS) or preparatory classes (CPGE).

The first steps towards RPL were introduced in 1930s, but the mainstream development of the validation of previous experience in higher education has been taking place for over 20 years. This long tradition is the main reason for the inclusion of France into this case study as our primary country of study.

### 11.2.2 Historical and legislative context

The following developments were important in France with regard to the introduction of policies for validation of prior learning:

- A decree of 1985 created an opportunity to enrol in higher education at all levels through recognition of prior learning for those who do not meet mainstream requirements for accessing higher education. With this reform the concept of *Validation des Acquis Professionnels* (VAP) was established. It targeted people over the age of 20 who have been out of initial education for more than two years (Corradi, Evans & Valk, 2006). This legislation opened the opportunity to access higher education and to get exemption from some course requirements.

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<sup>1</sup> Specific admission requirements apply, however, to medicine, dentistry, and pharmaceutical studies.



- In 1992, legislation introduced the possibility to use VAP for the allocation of credits for qualifications awarded by Ministries of Education and Agriculture (Souto Otero, Hawley & Nevala 2007). It allowed people with five years of work experience to use VAP to gain credits, adding up to the qualifications. Since this legislation was implemented, the existent tools proved insufficient for the assessment of persons' experiences, skills and qualifications. The methods used previously had been mostly descriptive and did not provide an analytical perspective on the skills and competencies received. In response to this a national working group was created which included representatives from education institutions and representatives from the employers in order to come up with the tool for validation of the experience that would meet the needs of the education institutions, the labour market organisations and people. This working group prepared the basis for the *dossier* (portfolio) that is now widely used for the recognition of previous experience
- In 2002 the *Social Modernisation Act* was introduced, which broadened the concept of validation of previous experience. It included the main types of qualifications used in France and allowed to award the full qualification through validation of previous experience. This was called *Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience* (VAE) (Souto Otero, Hawley & Nevala 2007). The introduction of the VAE was based on the previous experience of the VAP. The interviews for this case study identified that the experience with regard to the previous reforms showed that it is possible to award modules or credits towards the qualification, which showed important steps in the development of the recognition of prior learning

The establishment of VAE in France introduced a number of important changes in the validation of prior learning. The following measures have been introduced in the *Social Modernisation Act* with regard to VAE:

- All types of qualifications could be received through VAE, i.e. diplomas, professional certificates.
- Not only professional, but also personal experience and experience received in undertaking voluntary activities could be taken into account, if it is acquired over at least three years and if it is relevant to achieving objectives related to the qualifications.
- It became possible to receive qualifications without passing through formal learning. Therefore, a new mode for receiving qualifications was created.
- The jury examining the *dossier* was given a relatively new role to provide the guidance for applicants as to what they need to do to receive a qualification if the full qualification could not be granted. The jury could propose undertaking courses within formal education, personal assignments, or gaining more experience (Feutrie, 2006).

The *Social Modernisation Act* included the measures on the establishment of the national vocational certification directory (RNCP). The RNCP would register all nationally recognised qualifications. All the qualifications included in the RNCP could be awarded through validation of previous experience. Moreover, one of the requirements for the qualifications to be included in RNCP is that they should specify the requirements for the qualifications to be received through VAE. The RNCP is overseen by a national Commission (*Commission Nationale de la Certification Professionnelle - CNCP*), which is the National Agency in charge of the qualifications framework.

### 11.2.3 Main features of VAE

The legislation has created the right for individuals to have their personal and professional experience recognised regardless of how these competences and skills have been acquired. Individuals have the right to undergo validation of previous experience in the institution of their choice. The experience is recognised on the basis of a portfolio (*dossier*) prepared by the candidate and presented to the jury. The jury's decision is based on the portfolio, an interview with the candidate and its own observations. The process that should be followed is presented below. Individuals apply to the higher education institutions stating which qualification they are aiming to receive.

The process of validation of the experience has six main steps (Charraud, 2007; Souto Otero, Hawley & Nevala, 2007):

- Information about the process of VAE and advice about the relevance of VAE to the candidate's career plan.
- Decision on the validity of the application (looks at formal issues, such as whether the duration of the relevant experience has been achieved).
- Development of a detailed portfolio by the candidate describing his or her experience. This might include observation of the candidate in his/her work situation or in a simulated situation and other evidence.
- An interview with the jury is held.
- Decision of the jury.
- Post-assessment follow-up if the applicant only receives a partial validation.

The qualification received through VAE is treated in the exactly same way as a qualification received through formal learning. The diploma does not mention that it has been attained through VAE.

The candidate may be mentored. In addition, the interviews conducted for this case suggest that when the candidate receives high quality support in preparation of the *dossier* it increases their chances to get their experience recognised and it becomes easier for the jury to make the decision on the candidate's qualifications. Universities demand a fee for guidance and preparation of the portfolio. However, funding can be made available for employed beneficiaries to cover the cost out of the funding allocated for continuous training through the training plan of their company or the individual training leave (CIF – *congé individuel de formation*).

Some of the success factors identified during the interviews regarding the implementation of the VAE are the following:

- The VAE has been established by law and therefore institutions must apply it. The individuals have the right to undertake the process.
- The integration of VAE in the general policies for employment and continuous training at national or regional level.
- The learning outcomes-based approach is required both by the implementation of the Bologna process and by the VAE.

- The implementation of the VAE is linked to all relevant administration levels.
  - National level: different Ministries are responsible for the VAE.
  - Regional level: regional administrations are responsible for the provision of the initial information on the VAE and first point of guidance.
- The creation of the RNCP and the requirement to ensure that all the qualifications in the RNCP could be achieved through VAE.

#### 11.2.4 Implementation of VAE in higher education institutions

The VAE was established by the government through the introduction of appropriate legislation. In addition, the Ministry set targets at the national level with regard to the implementation of lifelong learning within the higher education. One of the indicators was the number of beneficiaries of the VAE in the universities and National Conservatory of Arts and Crafts (*Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers*, CNAM). The target for 2009 was 5,100 beneficiaries, of whom 2,400 of those who received a full degree. In 2008 the number of beneficiaries was 4,600 of whom 2,300 get the full degree recognised. This shows that the target level has increased. Actual numbers of beneficiaries will be looked at below (La direction du Budget, 2009).

The implementation of VAE rests with the higher education institutions. The administration of each institution is responsible for defining internal rules and procedures, especially those related to the composition of the jury. The president or director of the higher education institution appoints the president and members of the jury. The jury must include mainly academics and at least one representative from a company or external employer, excluding the applicant's own (Souto Otero, Hawley & Nevala, 2007).

As the measures for the validation of professional and personal experience in higher education institutions began after the VAP legislation in 1985, a number of institutions already had the system in place before the 2002 law. The structures of implementation of VAE have been facilitated through co-operation in the framework of national network, the *Conférence des directeurs de services universitaires de formation continue*. This ensured common approaches across higher education institutions. Universities also exchanged their experiences, which facilitated the implementation of VAE structures.

The main financial support for the institutions implementing VAE came from the European Social Fund (ESF). The funding of €1.5 million per year was used to help universities establish the necessary structures to deliver VAE (Benhamou, 2005) and to work together on projects dealing with different aspects of the VAE, such as guidance, translation of qualifications in terms of learning outcomes and accessibility of the process through ICT. Around 10 universities would be selected to receive support from ESF each year to implement their projects. Institutions that did not receive ESF support had to implement appropriate changes from the regular state funding.

The interviews showed that the implementation of the VAE in higher education institutions lies with the continuing education services. These have the relevant experience, have strong links with labour market representatives and understand the issues faced by potential candidates. This is one of the factors that resulted in successful implementation of the VAE. Interviewees further pointed out that the recognition of

experience is generally well accepted in the higher education system and in wider society. However, some concerns were identified regarding the workload for staff involved in the implementation VAE, specific skills required and adequate financial support. This sometimes makes it difficult to attract representatives from academia and more so from private companies to the juries.

The legislation introduced in 2002 with regard to the VAE and the introduction of the measures, has had an important impact on the French higher education institutions. The diploma is no longer provided solely through passing the traditional 'classroom' education, but can also be awarded through validating past experience. Moreover, an individualised approach has been introduced, with the individual at the centre, making decisions on what to present and how to present her/his experience in order to get it validated.

#### 11.2.5 *Data on VAE in higher education*

The Master degree is very common to be awarded through VAE: among the beneficiaries in 2007 (the most recent year for which data were available), almost 35% have been awarded full or part of a master degree, 30% full or part of a professional bachelor degree, 17% full or part of a bachelor degree and 8% a Diploma of technology (DUT). Besides, beyond 4,200 validations (fully or partially) awarded by universities and engineers' schools, the advanced technical diploma BTS is commonly awarded through VAE, with 4,500 full validations and 1,900 partially awarded validations (data from Ministry of Higher Education and Research of France).

From 2002 to 2007, the proportion of VAE beneficiaries in employment was around 80%. The unemployed beneficiaries for most of these years were just below 20%. The inactive beneficiaries formed 1% during most of the years except in year 2002 when they were almost 6%. The overall employment rate in France for the population of age 15–64 was 64.6% in 2007 (INSEE, 2008a). The overall unemployment rate was 8% in France in 2007 (INSEE, 2008). These data show that the proportion of the employed beneficiaries of VAE was somewhat higher than their share in the total population, and the proportion of unemployed who benefited from the VAE was more than double compared to their share in overall population.

The most popular subject area for the VAE was economics and management (37%), followed by fundamental applied sciences (26%) and social sciences (20%). Literature was the area for 9% of beneficiaries, law for 6% and physical education for the remaining 2% (Ministry of Higher Education and Research of France, 2009).

The VAE was mostly used by persons over typical higher education student age: people aged 30–40 represented 41% of those who benefited from VAE, while people aged 40–45 made up 38%. People younger than 30 years old—the main age group for higher education graduation—represented 7% of beneficiaries of VAE (Ministry of Higher Education and Research of France, 2009).

The data presented above shows that VAE is more often used in the framework of BTS recognition rather than in other higher education degrees. VAE provided access to higher education qualifications for about half of beneficiaries. The other half of the beneficiaries were provided access to higher education depending on the jury decision on further steps towards receiving full qualification. Although VAE was used mainly by employed people,

the number of the unemployed beneficiaries was twice as high as their share in the population.

The literature review identified that VAE benefited people who already had relatively high education attainment levels and who were not among the underrepresented groups of society (Pons-Desoutter, 2007). However, our interviews indicated that this also depends on the regions and their profiles. For example, in some regions there were many technicians who did not have a higher education diploma, but did possess sufficient work experience to become engineers. Many beneficiaries would be people who did not have higher education before, but this might be different in other sectors and regions.

Overall, the VAE increased access to higher education and higher education credentials mainly for employed adults. There was a little evidence confirming that it provided access to underrepresented groups, which suggests that VAE was a tool for increasing rather than widening participation in higher education.

#### 11.2.6 Further development of VAE

Interviewees identified that the future development of VAE focuses on developing stronger links with employers. The future development of VAE should focus on it becoming one of the essential parts of career development in employment. The focus is on working together with the human resource services within enterprises to incorporate VAE into career development, especially during promotion to senior positions.

#### 11.2.7 In conclusion

Recognition of prior learning in France has been developing as a national instrument and was introduced before the Bologna Process started. However, some of the key developments of RPL in France have been taking place parallel to the Bologna Process, i.e. the VAE was introduced in 2002 to provide the opportunity not only to access higher education but also to receive full qualifications. There are some common points regarding the development of the VAE and the Bologna process and they are complementing each other through:

- Promotion of flexible education paths
- Stress on learning outcomes. The VAE facilitates the use of the learning outcomes in describing study programmes.
- Development of lifelong learning.
- Readability and comparability of degrees.

Besides VAE, every year, 20,000 validations are awarded through the earlier developed procedure of VAP (*Validation des Acquis Professionnels*)—commonly referred to as ‘VAP 85’ in France—which is meant to exempt students from admission requirements (degrees) and to allow them to gain access to higher education.

Internationally, the French system is often regarded as a good practice example for other countries to highlight the benefits of recognition of prior learning.

## 11.3 Recognition of prior learning in Portugal

### 11.3.1 *Background information on higher education in Portugal*

The higher education system in Portugal is characterised by two types of institutions, universities and polytechnics, which can be either public or private. The current system of higher education according to an OECD report consists of a complex network of institutions, integrating 14 public universities and one university institute and 15 public polytechnics, and a network of 117 private institutions. The number of students in higher education has increased from 30,000 in the 1960s to 400,000 in 2001. This increase began in the 1970s, when access to higher education was opened to students from all social classes (OECD Thematic Review of Tertiary Education, 2006). Recently, higher education institutions faced a decline in the number of students entering higher education, which created the need to compete for students and to look for alternative ways to attract more students to higher education. The governance of the higher education institutions is characterised by autonomous higher education institutions.

Portugal was one of the original signatory countries of the Bologna Declaration in 1999. The legislative basis of the degree structure reforms was only introduced in 2006. The national qualifications framework is currently being developed, but it has not yet been completed (Veiga & Amaral, 2007). Initiatives for the recognition of prior learning in Portugal were introduced in 2006 almost simultaneously with the other Bologna Process legislation. RPL is used to provide access to higher education and it is possible to grant credits. Unlike in France it is not possible to get one's whole degree recognised through RPL. The actual implementation of RPL is very recent in Portugal. This allows us to look at the influence of the Bologna Process on the establishment and implementation of this initiative, especially taken into account that, unlike France, it was introduced after the Bologna Process has started.

### 11.3.2 *Legislation*

The decreasing number of students applying to higher education institutions influences the need to look at the new populations of potential students and provide alternative ways to enter higher education in Portugal (source: interviews). One of the ways to do it is to provide access opportunities for people who do not meet mainstream entry requirements to access higher education. Interviewees identified that there have been relatively high dropout rates at secondary education level, which caused high proportions of the adult population not having mainstream access rights to higher education. In this context, alternative entry routes to access higher education and measures for the recognition of prior learning were introduced. RPL was meant to provide an opportunity to enter higher education to adults who did not meet the mainstream entry requirements but who had significant work experience.

The legislation related to the Bologna Process action lines was introduced during 2006. The Decree-Law of 21<sup>st</sup> March 2006 (no.64/2006) approved a new path to higher education for people older than 23 years of age, who did not hold the upper secondary education diploma that is needed to enter higher education. The basic elements of the recruitment of students through this path as defined in the legislation were evaluation of the professional and educational curriculum vitae, including the candidate's motivation and a written examination. The legislation not only allowed experienced people to enter higher

education, but it also exempts them from some of the programme requirements. The actual implementation of the legislation and specific requirements are defined by higher education institutions themselves. The national stocktaking report for 2009 identified that higher education institutions may recognise the professional experience and post-secondary training while granting the credits for students who are already enrolled in their study programmes (National Report Portugal, 2008).

Another Decree was introduced on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2006 (no. 74/2006). This introduced the three-cycle degree system, adopting the Bologna generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competencies. It also approved rules on recognition of prior learning, including non-formal and informal learning.

### 11.3.3 *Implementation in higher education institutions*

The main focus of this section is on the implementation of the legislation providing the opportunity for adults to get access to higher education when they do not meet mainstream entry requirements (The Decree-Law of 21<sup>st</sup> March 2006 (no.64/2006)).

The structures introduced in higher education institutions regarding the above mentioned legislation varies from institution to institution. Some introduced a decentralised approach in which each faculty defines its own processes while other institutions introduced a centralised approach with a specific office responsible for the selection process for all the faculties. In this case study we use the example of the University of Lisbon, which is one of the large public Universities (in 2007/08 it had over 22,000 students) and which introduced a centralised approach.

Since the introduction of the relevant legislation, the University of Lisbon has established an Office for Support for the Assessment and Accreditation of Qualifications to implement the legislation of 21<sup>st</sup> March 2006 (no.64/2006). In the University of Lisbon the recruitment process is organised centrally for all faculties along three stages:

- Theoretical examination, which includes one question common to all applicants and two questions specific to each faculty. Only candidates who pass the examination are invited to further participate in the selection process.
- Analysis of the curriculum vitae.
- Interview.

Each faculty has quotas for the number of students who may be accepted through this path. Therefore, the applicants receiving the highest scores during the selection process fill the places available. This means that not all applicants who pass the selection process can enter the higher education institution.

Interviewees identified that the centralised approach towards ensuring access for adults who are over 23 years old is implemented successfully. It ensures consistency of the processes across different faculties and the use of the same evaluation criteria. There is the office for the support of the access and accreditation of qualifications, scientific committee which consist of the professors from all faculties (this ensures the support for the process from the faculty) and the office for vocational counselling in the University. There is also strong support from the rector and the management of the University for the implementation of the relevant procedures.

Some challenges for the provision of access for potential beneficiaries is linked to the fact that some faculties find it difficult to open up the vacancies for students entering through this path.

The next step in the institution is to introduce a system for exemption of some course requirements through allocation of credits through RPL.

Provision of access to non-traditional students evokes the need to accommodate them during the studies. These students are older and have different needs and motivations than the 'standard' students. The higher education institutions need to change their pedagogical and organisational practices, to establish procedures allowing non-traditional students to participate in higher education. This was identified as a challenge for the majority of higher education institutions (Oliveira Pires, 2009).

#### 11.3.4 Data analysis

The number of students who have accessed higher education through the path described above is presented in Table 11-1 below.

Table 11-1 Number of students who have accessed higher education through the path targeting persons over 23 years old who do not meet mainstream requirements in Portugal

Academic year	Total no. of students	Students enrolled through the >23 years old path	% of students entering through the >23 years old path of all students
2006-2007	73,484	10,856	14.8%
2007-2008	83,139	11,773	14.2%
2008-2009	81,900	10,489	12.8%

Source: GPEARI (Gabinete de Planeamento, Estratégia, Avaliação e Relações Internacionais)  
<http://www.gpeari.mctes.pt/?idc=21&idi=400373>

The table shows that around 14% of students over 23 years of age have entered higher education using their path. Therefore, there are many students who get access to higher education through this path. However, the table shows that this number has been decreasing a little. It should be realised, though, that the number of applicants who were successful in the recognition process was higher than the number of students who entered higher education institutions through this path. This is because, as explained, all faculties in public higher education institutions have quotas.

The national data shows that there are more students entering higher education through RPL in private institutions than in public ones, and more students enter polytechnics than universities (see Table 11-2).

We collected information on social and demographic data about the RPL applicants for the University of Lisbon in 2009. There were equal numbers women and men applying. 72% of applicants were employed; 3% in executive positions; 11% self employed; 1% working in family business; and 13% unemployed. Most applicants were medium level technicians (34%), worked in services and sales (18%) or were administrative staff (17%). The highest part of applications in the University of Lisbon was received at the faculty of Law (38%), followed by Psychology (15%) and Letters (15%).



Overall, a relatively high number of students obtained access to higher education through RPL. Similar to France, the majority of RPL beneficiaries were employed individuals. The data available shows that the RPL in Portugal helped increase participation in higher education. However, there is limited data available on whether it provides access to higher education for underrepresented groups.

Table 11-2 Number of students who accessed higher education through the path targeting persons over 23 years old by type of higher education institution

Type of higher education institution	2006-2007		2007-2008		2008-2009	
	No. of students	%*	No. of students	%*	No. of students	%*
Public higher education institutions	4,257	8.3%	6,039	10.2%	5,373	8.9%
Universities	1,271	4.3%	2,083	6.4%	1,887	5.6%
Polytechnics	2,986	13.9%	3,956	14.9%	3,486	13%
Private higher education institutions	6,599	29.6%	5,734	24.1%	5,116	23.7%
Universities	4,820	32.1%	3,723	23.3%	3,421	22.3%
Polytechnics	1,779	24.6%	2,011	25.7%	1,695	26.9%

Note: \* Share of students who entered higher education through <23 years old path out of all students in the relevant higher education institutions

Source: GPEARl (Gabinete de Planeamento, Estratégia, Avaliação e Relações Internacionais) <http://www.gpearl.mctes.pt/?idc=21&idi=400373>.

### 11.3.5 Links between RPL and the Bologna Process action lines

The legislation on RPL and the other Bologna Process action lines were introduced almost simultaneously. Interviewees identified that international pressures have been important for introducing RPL in higher education in Portugal, including the implementation of the lifelong learning charter and the development of national qualifications frameworks. The introduction of the legislation, related to the recognition of prior learning, is linked to the Bologna Process reforms in the framework of the lifelong learning policies and wider higher education reforms.

## 11.4 Recognition of prior learning in Slovenia

### 11.4.1 Background information on higher education in Slovenia

The Slovenian higher education system is smaller than the other systems included in this case study. Slovenia has 4 universities with 37 faculties, 3 art academies or professional colleges, and 10 private higher education institutions (*Samostojni visokošolski zavodi*). Higher education institutions are autonomous in managing their internal organisation

and operations (regarding their statutes and the legal requirements), selecting and electing the faculty, electing the internal bodies: rectors, senates, administrative boards and student councils, deans and academic assemblies (The European Education Directory, 2009). The largest university in Slovenia is the University of Ljubljana, which enrolls around 60% of all students. Together with the University of Maribor, which enrolls around 30% of all students, these two universities enrol the vast majority of the students.

Slovenia, like the other countries in this case study, is one of the signatory countries of the Bologna Declaration in 1999. Slovenia adopted a gradual reform approach towards the implementation of the Bologna Process. The first study programmes corresponding to the Bologna Process degree structure were established in 2005–2006. However, before the academic year 2009–2010 it was not mandatory to provide programmes in line with the degree structure of the Bologna Process.

The rationale for including Slovenia as a secondary country in this case study is to look at the developments of the recognition of prior learning in a smaller country and to look at the influence of the Bologna Process reforms for its development. The recognition of prior learning in Slovenian higher education is at the starting stages of its development. There is a possibility for recognition of non-formal and informal learning for access to higher education and for exemption from some of the programme requirements.

#### 11.4.2 *Legislation*

The national legislative document regulating recognition of prior learning is the Higher Education Act. The following articles of this Act are relevant to RPL (this and following information mainly from: Kovač et al., 2008):

- Article 35, mentions that higher education institutions must define in their accredited study programmes the criteria for recognition of knowledge and skills gained before enrolment into the study programme. The knowledge, skills and competencies gained through formal, non-formal or informal learning can be taken into account. The accredited study programmes should also define the conditions for progressing into the next year of study and the transition between study programmes.
- Article 49, defines that the Higher Education Council (i.e. the national accreditation body) has to specify the criteria for accreditation of knowledge and skills acquired before the enrolment into a first-cycle higher education programme

In 2004 the Higher Education Council adopted criteria for the Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes. These state that higher education institutions are responsible for the validation of previously acquired formal, non-formal and informal learning that corresponds to the content of the study programme. The legislative measures presented above provide the basis for RPL. However, the legislation is very broad and does not provide much detail on the implementation of those measures. The following gaps have been identified (Vrecko, 2006):

- The current legislation does not give much clarity on criteria and standards for validation and recognition. Also, there is little information on how to carry out the recognition procedure; who should be in charge, and what competencies people involved in the recognition procedure should have. Nothing is proposed about the possible structure and shape of formal applications for recognition or about how to inform possible candidates about this type of recognition and how to support them.

- **Criteria for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Study Programmes** define that higher education institutions are responsible for the validation and recognition procedures. However, this can be done at different levels, for example at the level of a particular study programme, including teachers and professors teaching in it, at the level of individual faculties or groups of particular academic disciplines, or experts at the university level, or at the system level (i.e. expert groups, interuniversity groups or commissions).
- **Recognition and validation procedures** require specific skills and therefore appropriate training of staff involved into these procedures. The current higher education legislation in Slovenia does not give any direction for this type of training or instruction on who should be responsible for it.

The legislation on RPL is not very detailed. However the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology tried to guide the higher education institutions by a project, mentioned in the next section.

#### 11.4.3 *Implementation of RPL measures in higher education institutions*

The Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology financed the project *Implementation of the system of recognition of non-formal and informal education in Slovenian Higher Education* in 2006. This was an important step towards the development of the recognition of prior learning in higher education.

The conclusions of the project were, briefly (Kovač et al., 2008):

- Higher education institutions should define a standardised procedure for the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal knowledge that students obtained before enrolment into higher education institution.
- The validation and recognition procedure should start with an introductory interview with the candidate and the creation of an individual portfolio containing all documents attesting to the knowledge and skills that the candidate gained prior to the enrolment in a study programme. Candidates should get expert support at the higher education institution, but it is their personal responsibility to collect all necessary documents.
- The next step should be the validation of the knowledge. At this stage, the knowledge and skills obtained by the candidate should be evaluated. The higher education institution should draw up criteria for the recognition of non-formal education and experiential learning regarding the content and goals of a particular higher education study programme. On this basis the recognition commission could evaluate the previous knowledge of the candidate and find out how comparable it is with parts of the study programme (e.g. modules, courses). The composition of the commission can be decided by each faculty. In the Faculty of Management in Koper the commission included three higher education teachers.
- The last step is the recognition of the prior learning and skills. They may be recognised as qualification for enrolment into a study programme or as fulfilment of a particular study obligation of a study programme. The student has a right to appeal the decision of the recognition commission.

- It has been recommended that higher education institutions co-operate during this process and prepare the criteria for recognition of non-formal and informal learning together. Similar criteria and standard of recognition would contribute to the quality of the process and would reduce the risk of lowering standards of the recognition process.

The universities and individual faculties introduced rules and procedures for the recognition of prior learning. In the University of Ljubljana it is possible to get 3 European Credits recognised per year (source: interviews). One of the examples identified is the recognition of the foreign language skills after the presentation of a relevant certificate. If no certification is presented it is also possible to undertake a special examination to get skills recognised.

However, one of the first institutions that introduced RPL procedures is the Faculty of Management in Koper, of the University of Primorska. Below we present a more detailed outline of the implementation of RPL in this faculty (Kovač et al., 2008).

The Faculty of Management in Koper introduced in the academic year 2005-2006 special rules to regulate the procedure for examining, validating and recognizing non-formally and informally obtained knowledge. It also prepared a Manual for the applicants on the preparation of their portfolio. Experience could be recognised either before enrolling in the programme or during the course of studies. Candidates applying for recognition can receive training on the preparation of the documents and additional advice if necessary.

It is possible to recognise up to 30 credits based on the documents provided to the commission. However, if the applicant provides evidence of experience that clearly leads to more than 30 credits, the Commission for the Recognition of Knowledge and Skills can arrange an examination whereby this experience can be recognised.

During the first two academic years since 2005–2006, the Commission for the Recognition of Knowledge and Skills handled 67 applications at undergraduate and graduate level. 31 Men and 36 women applied for recognition of experience. The majority of applicants were between 31–40 years old and were enrolled in Bachelor programmes. The recognition of prior learning is used by experienced students who are already in higher education to reduce some study requirements rather than widen participation for underrepresented groups.

The majority of applicants were employed in the public sector, for example administration and public administration professionals (25%); 17% worked as office management staff; 11% as service workers, 11% as client relations officers, 8% worked as technicians, 8% as small company directors and managers. Most candidates were awarded 10 credits counting towards a formal qualification.

Similar procedures for the validation of experience have been introduced in the International School for Social and Business Studies during academic year 2007–2008.

There is limited information available on the implementation of RPL in other faculties or institutions. The stocktaking report 2009 mentioned that RPL was mainly applied in Slovenia by faculties that accepted relatively large numbers of part-time students with significant work experience (Rauhvargers, Deane & Pauwels, 2009). Similarly, our interviewees identified that in the Faculty of Education of the University of Ljubljana the recognition of prior learning is used mainly by students in part-time study and for students to access post-graduate studies. The experience that is most likely to be

recognised was related to participation in national or international projects (e.g. Comenius projects), participation in workshops, or preparation of publications.

The regulations of the Faculty of Education stated that a commission for the recognition of prior learning should be established. The commission is not permanent and is formed for each individual case, depending on the subject area applied for. The commission would like to see as many written documents as possible for the examination of experience. There is little evidence of detailed regulations on how many credits can be recognised or what type of experience could be recognised. It is mainly the commission's responsibility to define these areas. The interviews identified that often the experience is recognised to exempt the individual from certain course requirements, rather than to award credits for the whole course. The commission often recommends the candidate to take a differential examination before credit allocation. The content and the form of the differential exam are defined by the individual professor.

Overall, some steps have been made towards the implementation of RPL measures in Slovenian higher education. However, with some exceptions mentioned above, it is rarely used by higher education institutions. Some of the barriers include:

- Fears concerning the abuse of RPL by learners.
- Implementation of RPL would considerably increase the administrative workload.
- The national qualifications framework has not yet been developed.

Overall, the faculties have much freedom in the implementation of RPL. This allows them to implement the rules and procedures meeting their individual needs. Interviews identified that it might be beneficial to develop clearer guidance on the implementation of RPL.

#### 11.4.4 *Links between RPL and the Bologna Process action lines*

As mentioned above, the implementation of RPL in the higher education institutions began recently and is undertaken by a limited number of faculties. A national qualifications framework has not yet been developed and its further development might be an important step in Slovenia for the system-wide implementation of the recognition of prior learning. The interviews did not identify other strong links between the implementation of RPL and the implementation of the Bologna Process action lines. However, some stakeholders mentioned that, at the moment, the implementation of RPL is not yet a priority in the framework of the higher education reforms.

### 11.5 *Comparison and conclusions*

This triple case study presented the development of RPL and its links to the Bologna Process in France, Portugal and Slovenia. France has a long tradition of implementing RPL and it is possible to receive a full degree through RPL. Higher education institutions have structures in place with regard to RPL and it is being used by individuals. In Portugal RPL has been introduced and is mainly used for access to higher education. The exemption from some course requirements remains a challenge. In Slovenia RPL is at its initial stage of development and is only used by some faculties either to facilitate access or to exempt from some course requirements. The RPL policies in these countries were

introduced relatively recently; they show that in the early years of development of RPL an innovation has to ensue in the way of looking at students and at the role of higher education. Whether the somewhat hesitant steps in Portugal and especially Slovenia will be followed by mainstreaming of RPL, and will lead to widening participation in higher education substantially, remains to be seen.

Some of the success factors identified during the interviews regarding the implementation of RPL are presented below:

- The interviews in France indicated that one of the success factors for RPL was that the law introduced the right for the individuals to have their skills and competences recognised. It created an obligation for higher education institutions to introduce the appropriate adjustments to ensure that individuals can execute their right.
- The introduction of RPL in France was followed by appropriate adjustments, policies and funding at national level ensuring the use of RPL. For example, the responsibilities for the implementation of RPL are shared between institutions in national authorities as well as regional authorities; establishment of the RNCP and the requirement that all qualifications in the RNCP should be made accessible through VAE proved to be successful.
- The allocation of responsibilities for the implementation of RPL at the appropriate level within the higher education institutions i.e. in France the services responsible for continuous education are responsible for the implementation of RPL, which proved to be successful. In Portugal the centralised approach introduced in the University of Lisbon with the involvement of the appropriate University departments proved to be a successful arrangement.

As the summaries above show, there is some progress in the development of recognition of prior learning in the countries included in this case study. However, the countries are at very different stages of development of RPL and often the progress is rather slow. Often other Bologna Process reforms seem to take priority over implementation of RPL in higher education institutions. The dependence of RPL on the development of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) was mentioned in all cases. Some other common points have been identified between recognition of prior learning and the implementation of the Bologna Process action lines in France:

- Promotion of flexible education paths.
- Stress on learning outcomes.
- Development of lifelong learning.
- Readability and comparability of degrees.

In Portugal, RPL was introduced almost simultaneously to the other reforms regarding the Bologna Process. Moreover, the interviews identified that there are links between developing RPL and implementing lifelong learning policies, as well as wider higher education reforms. This suggests that implementation of the Bologna Process action lines in Portugal had the most significant impact on the development of RPL of the countries included in the case study. Moreover, the measures introduced are widely used within the higher education institutions and wider society especially with regard to access to higher

education. However, the further development of RPL in Portugal, especially the exemption of some course requirements remains a challenge.

In Slovenia the implementation of the other Bologna Process action lines takes the priority within the higher education institutions and development of the RPL does not seem to be among the priorities in most of the higher education institutions.

The beneficiaries of RPL in all countries included in the case study are mainly employed adults who either did not meet mainstream entry requirements and/or who aim to validate their experience acquired outside educational settings. RPL opens up access to higher education or higher education credentials. However, there is limited evidence available indicating the extent to which it widens access to higher education for underrepresented groups of society.

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## 12 Increasing equity of participation

### 12.1 Introduction

#### 12.1.1 *Participative equity in the Bologna Process*

Participative equity is defined as a major goal of the social dimension action line. This goal is most clearly stated in the London Communiqué (2007) as ‘the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations’. The participative equity aims at inclusion of all social groups, especially the underrepresented ones, in higher education. The underrepresented groups are commonly referred to as people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, immigrant backgrounds and people with disabilities. This goal can be analysed with respect to essential rationales, policies and practices that would ensure good representation of all social groups. Nonetheless, measuring the effect of the Bologna Process reforms on increasing the participative equity is difficult for the social dimension action line. The social dimension has been developed as an overarching and balancing action line with unclear goals for long time and its means have only recently started to develop, such as demanding national strategy reports on the social dimension and improvement of data gathering on the socio-economic status of students.

#### 12.1.2 *Aim of the case study*

The case study aims to analyse the policy rationales and conditions, as well as actual implementation processes in Finland, Scotland and Germany concerning equality of participation in higher education across social groups.

The countries are selected to illustrate good and/or struggling practices in including all social groups of their societies in their higher education systems. To this end, targeted measures on education, finance, admission and other fields to increase participation are analysed. Furthermore, the provision of wide and high quality student services is analysed in the case study due to its potential effects on encouraging various groups to participate in higher education. Finland is selected as the prime country to study due to its successful practices in including all social groups of its population in higher education. Scotland has been chosen due to its good practices in including various groups in higher education, yet through different policies. Germany is selected due to its good practices in provision of student services while having certain structural setbacks in inclusion of diverse groups in higher education. In all selected countries, increasing participation of disadvantaged groups is a policy concern and hence has certain obstacles.

#### 12.1.3 *Higher education systems in Finland, Germany and Scotland*

Finland has a binary education system composed of 20 universities and 26 polytechnics, which are steered by the Ministry of Education. Both universities and polytechnics have full autonomy in determining their curricula, admitting students and internal administration.

The steering is based on mutually negotiated performance agreements between the higher education institutions and the ministry. While all universities are state-owned public institutions, the polytechnics are maintained mainly by municipalities and 10 of them are owned by non-profit foundations.

In general, the matriculation examination gives the required eligibility for higher education admission. There is a 'numerus clausus' restriction for all programmes and applicants are required to take entrance exams administered by the higher education institutions.

Both student unions of Finland, the National Union of Students in Finland (SYL) and the National Union of Students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (SAMOK), take part in decision-making bodies at the faculty and institutional level, as well as the ministerial working groups. While all university students are required to become members of the local student union, membership for SAMOK local branches is on a voluntary basis.

Germany has a binary higher education system composed of 109 universities, 199 universities of applied sciences and 55 colleges of art and music. All higher education institutions are either state or state recognised institutions. There are 88 private higher education institutions, which enrol around 4% of the students.

In the German federal context,<sup>1</sup> the main responsibility for higher education rests at the Länder level. The federal government is responsible for providing general guidelines for access and degree issues. Higher education institutions are funded by the respective Länder budgets and have autonomy in their internal administration.

In general, holders of the required higher education entrance qualification are admitted to the programme of their choice. In cases where the number of applicants exceeds the number of available places there is a selection procedure. According to the Higher Education Admission Reform, 2004, 1/5 of the study places are allocated to the best graduates of the upper secondary schools (*Abitur* holders), 1/5 is allocated according to the waiting list and 3/5 is allocated by the higher education institutions (Federal Ministry of Education and Research, 2009b).

The National Association of Student Bodies (*Freier Zusammenschluss von studentInnen-schaften*) is an umbrella organisation for around a quarter of the student organisations and represents around half of the students in German higher education institutions.

In Germany, the Student Services (*Studentenwerke*) provide student services to higher education students in their locality. Different from other countries, the Student Services carry the main responsibility for the social and economic wellbeing of students, and provide almost the total amount of services to them, e.g. housing, food services and psychological assistance and administer the government funds for students (*BAföG*). At the national level, 58 local branches come together under the German National Association for Student Services (*Deutsches Studentenwerk*).

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<sup>1</sup> The case study is based on general, national level policies and implementations. Accordingly, the two-level governance structure of German higher education, major responsibility laying at the Länder level, has put certain limitations to analysis of the report.

Scotland has 20 publicly funded higher education institutions including universities and colleges. Furthermore, about one fifth of the higher education provision at sub-degree level within the first cycle is delivered in Scotland's 43 Further Education Colleges.

Scotland has its own system of higher education independent of the rest of the United Kingdom. The Scottish Government, as the devolved government, makes the decisions on funding for teaching and research for Scottish higher education institutions. All higher education institutions are publicly funded and there is no private sector higher education provision in Scotland. The Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council, known for short as the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), is responsible for allocating public funding to colleges and universities (SFC 2009, p. 6). Both higher education institutions and further education colleges are autonomous in defining their institutional strategy, curriculum and internal administration. Higher education institutions decide their admission criteria themselves. In general, applicants are required to have formal school qualifications for admission. In some cases, higher education institutions have additional admission criteria such as aptitude tests, portfolio submissions and interviews.

The National Union of Students in Scotland (NUS Scotland) is the main student representative body. It is affiliated to the National Union of Students at the UK level, which is an umbrella organisation for 85% of the local student organisations. NUS Scotland contributes to decision-making processes at local and national levels (NUS website 2009). Students are also represented on governing bodies and the Senate or Academic Council (National Report 2005-2007).

## 12.2 Increasing participation in higher education

As noted above, it is difficult to evaluate social dimension policies with concrete Bologna Process measures. Therefore, analyses of the current situation concerning inclusion of different social groups in higher education shall be read as outcomes of the policies undertaken in the selected countries within and beyond the Bologna Process.

### 12.2.1 Overview of the inclusion of various groups in higher education

The major goal of the social dimension is reflection of the diversity in society to the student body; therefore, this section looks at the participation rates of different social groups in higher education. The groups are defined based on the commonly referred underrepresented groups in the selected countries and thus illustrate the situation by looking at the general participation rates and participation by gender, socio-economic background, ethnic background, disability and educational route to higher education.

#### 12.2.1.1 Entry rates

According to the OECD 2006 data, entry rates<sup>2</sup> in Finland and Germany were respectively 73% and 36% for ISCED 5A type of studies. In Germany in addition to the ISCED 5A, the

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<sup>2</sup> Entry rates is defined as the proportion of people of a synthetic age-cohort who enter the tertiary level of education, irrespective of changes in the population sizes and of differences between OECD countries in the typical starting age of tertiary education. The net entry rate of a specific age is obtained by dividing the number of first-time entrants to each type of tertiary education of that age by the total population in the corresponding age group (multiplied by 100). The sum of net entry rates is calculated by adding the net entry rates for each single year of age (OECD 2008)

entry rate for ISCED 5B is 13%. The latter category is not applicable in Finland (OECD 2008).

Comparable data for Scotland is gathered by the Scottish Government. The data show the number of Scots aged under 21 who enter a full-time higher education course for the first time in that year as a percentage of the population of 17 year olds at 31 December in the same year. In 2007-2008, this was 43.2% (Scottish Government 2009; p. 34).<sup>3</sup>

While in Finland and Germany the entry rates have increased by 5% from 2000 to 2006, Scotland has had a decrease of approximately 10%. This decrease in Scotland has been explained with the decrease in the initial participation rates as well as the increase in 17 years-old population in the last years (Ibid:6)

#### 12.2.1.2 Gender

According to the OECD 2006 data, in Finland, the ratio between the percentage of female students in higher education and the percentage of females in the whole population is 1.10. This figure means a slight overrepresentation of female students in higher education, like in the majority of European higher education systems. In Germany, the percentage is 1.01 showing a balanced representation. During the interviews lower representation of female students at the advanced levels of studies and uneven distribution according to the disciplines (i.e. more male students in engineering and natural sciences and more female students in humanities and social sciences) are identified as problematic areas of gender representation.

Comparable data could not always be gathered for Scotland. Nevertheless, according to the enrolment indicator of the Scottish government, in 2007-08, there was an overrepresentation of female students. While a small unbalance in favour of female students is common in many European countries, Scotland's 13% gap is regarded as an important problem (Scottish Government 2009, p. 34).

#### 12.2.1.3 Socio-economic background

In the analysis of the socio-economic background, parents' educational attainment and occupational status are taken as indicators.

The ratios in Table 12-1 are calculated on a comparison between the educational attainment of learners' <sup>4</sup> mothers or fathers with all parents, and with educational attainment of 40–60 years olds in the whole population (Orr et al. 2008: 58). Ratios below 1 indicate underrepresentation and above 1 overrepresentation. In other words, the closer the ratio is to 1, the more equal is the representation.

Table 12-1 shows that children from higher educational backgrounds are generally overrepresented in higher education. While in Finland and Scotland, people from lower educational backgrounds have levels of participation above 0.9, the situation is quite unbalanced in Germany (around 0.4).

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<sup>3</sup> In order to show the data available only for Scotland instead of the whole UK, in some cases different sources of statistics had to be used.

<sup>4</sup> For this indicator, only ISCED 5A level students are included.

Table 12-1 Representation of students with different parents' education levels in higher education

	Mothers with higher education (ISCED 5&6)	Mothers up to lower secondary education (ISCED 0-2)	Fathers with higher education (ISCED 5&6)	Fathers up to lower secondary education (ISCED 0-2)
Finland	1.25	0.90	1.43	0.96
Germany	1.92	0.44	2.03	0.40
Scotland	1.14	0.94	1.21	0.91

Source: Orr et al. 2008, EURO Student III 2005-2008, Synopsis of indicators

The following table, 12-2, shows ratios calculated in a similar way for occupational status. It compares the occupational status of students' mothers/fathers with occupational status of 40–60 year old women/men in the working population.

Table 12-2 Representation of students with low occupational status parents in higher education

	Blue collar status mothers	Blue collar status fathers
Finland	0.97	0.92
Germany	0.55	0.58
Scotland	0.72	0.72

Source: EURO Student III 2005-2008 Synopsis of indicators

As the table shows, in Finland children of blue-collar worker families are almost as well represented in the student population as in the whole population. The figures for Scotland and Germany illustrate a stronger dependence on the parents' occupation in access to higher education.

#### 12.2.1.4 Immigrant and ethnic minority

People from immigrant backgrounds or from minority groups have obstacles in participation in higher education in the selected systems. This situation, whether high in the agenda or not, is commonly stated (National Reports 2007-2009). However, it is not always possible to reach complete and comparable data on the issue. For instance in Finland, registration of information on ethnicity is not allowed by law. Despite the lack of available data, during the interviews with different policy actors, people from immigrant backgrounds are stated as the main underrepresented group in Finland and this situation as a policy concern. It shall also be noted that this group does not include linguistic minorities (Sami speaking people) and ethnic minorities (i.e. Russians, Estonians) who are mostly assimilated to Finnish society and do not have participation problems. Another ethnic minority is Roma people. Unlike Russians and Estonians, they are not very much assimilated and generally do not continue their education after completing compulsory education (source: interview).

In Germany it is possible to gain complete data on the issue. According to the social dimension national strategy report, while 20% of the whole population has immigrant background, they make up only 8% of the student body (National Report 2007-2009).

People from immigrant backgrounds are considered one of the main underrepresented groups in higher education.

Data concerning immigrants and minority groups are not extensive in Scotland. According to the 2001 Census, 3% of the population is non-white and the Scottish domiciled non-white students made up 4.4% of the student body in 2007-08 (SFC 2009, p.24). Although it is not possible to draw a conclusion for all minority or immigrant groups by looking at these figures, they still indicate an overall good representation of the non-white minority group in Scotland's higher education institutions in relation to their proportion in the population. During the interviews, respondents also stated that representation by ethnicity is not an urgent problem in the Scottish context. The underrepresentation problem is mainly identified with deprivation.

#### *12.2.1.5 Disabilities*

There is some data available for Finland and Germany on the percentage of disabled students based on self-evaluation. However, it is not complete and there is no data on the percentage of disabled people in the whole population. Hence, it is not possible to make a sound comparison. Nonetheless, students with disabilities were referred to as an underrepresented group during the interviews and there is an increasing trend in students reporting themselves as disabled.

According to the Scottish Household Survey, 18% of the population reported a disability and a long-term illness in 2005. In 2004-2005, the percentage of disabled students was 6. It shall be noted that this percentage may not be accurate since there is no information available on the disability status of around 10% of the student body (Scottish Government 2006, p. 29). Yet, it is possible to conclude that in Scotland, like in other countries, people with disabilities are underrepresented in higher education.

#### *12.2.1.6 Non-traditional educational routes*

Participation of people from non-traditional educational backgrounds is problematic as well. The group is narrowly defined as students who accessed higher education through validation of prior learning and work experience – with or without a higher education entrance examination (Orr 2008; p. 41). This definition differs from how countries themselves define this group. However, it is adopted here for the sake of comparability. Since this issue is mostly identified with lifelong learning, and covered in another case study on the recognition of prior learning, this report will mention it briefly.

According to the EURO Student III survey results,<sup>5</sup> the shares of students from non-traditional routes in all students in Scotland, Finland and Germany are respectively 11%, 3% and 1%.

#### *12.2.2 Reasons for underrepresentation*

Many countries have evaluated underrepresentation with factors related to lower socio-economic background, immigrant background, disability and gender in their national reports for the Bologna Process. Students with children are also referred to as an underrepresented group; however, their obstacles are more related to the unavailability of services addressing their special needs for successful continuation of studies rather than

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<sup>5</sup> EuroStudent surveys cover only ISCED 5A level students.

inequality of opportunities in access to higher education. Therefore, they will be addressed only with regard to the provision of sufficient student services.

The main reasons for/challenges of underrepresentation vary in countries, yet some major points can be concluded for Finland, Germany and Scotland. These obstacles are mostly related to language skills, parents' attitude towards education, and structure of the education system, admission requirements, physical conditions and information on higher education.

#### 12.2.2.1 *Insufficient language skills*

Lack of sufficient Finnish or Swedish language knowledge is defined as a reason for underrepresentation of students from immigrant backgrounds in Finland. The lack of language skills is stated as a problem also for foreign/international students (who earned entrance qualifications abroad) in Finland and Germany. Language is not observable as an obstacle in Scotland.

#### 12.2.2.2 *Family background*

Family attitudes and guidance influence children's educational future. This role of families is influenced in its turn by their educational and occupational level. In lower socio-economic and immigrant backgrounds, parents generally do not recognise as much the value of higher education in increasing life standards of their children and are less able to support their children to this end. Therefore, children of those families are less likely to apply for higher education. This obstacle was stated in interviews and in the National Reports 2007-2009 of all selected systems.

#### 12.2.2.3 *Structural conditions*

Structural conditions can be understood in relation to the whole education system of the country. Even if the education system does not directly cause underrepresentation, it may reinforce existing imbalances in participation by bearing the inequalities of the pre-higher education level. It may cause exclusion of certain groups or enhancement of the above two factors due to the determinant role of school attainment in access to and choices about higher education is influential on the future education life.

The structural conditions are often deemed even more determining in highly stratified schooling systems, like Germany's. After four years of common primary schooling pupils continue to the lower secondary education, which is already stratified. The type of lower secondary school is decided by the school, parents or school supervision authorities based on pupils' attainments and abilities and parents' consultation. The type of lower secondary school influences the choice of upper secondary school, which is stratified in a similar way. In such a structure, a very determining decision on the future educational life is made at a very early age, which might not always be accurate. Moreover, the decisions are criticised at times as socially biased.

In Scotland, different types of schools (state and independent) can result in exclusion of certain groups. The state schools offer publicly financed free education. The independent schools are fee-paid and children from higher socio-economical level attend those schools. In 2007-08, 80% of independent school graduates went to higher education, 5% to further education and 3% to employment. Respective figures for public school graduates are 31%, 25% and 25% (SFC 2009; p. 30). This differentiation in the schooling system based on

financial capacities strengthens the obstacle for children of lower income families to participate in higher education.

Low level of school attainment is a reason for boys' underrepresentation in Scotland. Men show lower levels of participation in higher education. This situation is explained with boys' lower school attainment compared to girls (SFC 2005; p. 16). There is no reason related to admission requirements or education methods for such an outcome (source: interview).

Finland has advantages with its flexible and long comprehensive schooling system. In Finland, at the end of comprehensive schooling, students can continue the upper secondary level either in general or in vocational education. Traditionally, there is the tendency of deciding the type of upper secondary education based on the grades of the lower level: the pupils with higher grades go to general education, those with lower grades go to vocational education. There is no further determination in this selection process. In many cases pupils from immigrant backgrounds who have low school attainments choose the vocational sector and might prefer not to continue in higher education (source: interview). Nevertheless, in the last five years, this pattern has begun to change due to increasing popularity of the vocational education (source: interview). In this sense, the educational system in Finland does not have a major exclusionary effect.

#### 12.2.2.4 Admission requirements

Even though admission requirements are set to select the most suitable students for a relevant study field based on a principle of equality, there are certain representation problems coming along with them.

The entrance exams aim at the evaluation of applicants' academic knowledge and capacities. In Finland, university applicants outnumber the ones matriculated in that year. There is a fierce competition in the entrance exams to some programmes. This situation resulted in the development of private institutions training students for the entrance exams. These courses are especially popular for certain fields, such as law, medicine and business administration. The high cost of courses (in some cases up to € 6,000) hampers participative equity, which seeks for academic capacities only, rather than the financial ones (source: interviews).

Another problem concerning admission requirements is the overemphasis on the formal requirements. Basing decisions for selection only on formal qualifications can be insufficient in judging the suitability of applicants. In Scotland, the determinant position of formal qualifications in student selection is criticised in some cases due to this reason. Higher education institutions may underestimate the potential of people from public schools, who have the necessary skills and characteristics for certain fields, with limited formal education (SFC 2005, p. 13).

The overemphasis on formal qualifications creates problems for applicants from non-traditional learning paths. In Finland and Germany, the existence of certain obstacles concerning the access of applicants from non-traditional backgrounds was stated. Obstacles are generally related to the recognition of prior learning as a basis for access and finding financial aid during studies, especially for mature students (National Reports 2007–2009). In Scotland, such an obstacle does not exist thanks to the help of the Scottish Qualification and Credit Framework.



#### 12.2.2.5 *Physical environment*

This obstacle specifically concerns students with disabilities. Physical conditions of higher education institutions are not always designed for easier access of students with disabilities. The lack of physical accessibility is often discouraging for disabled people. In some cases they do not even apply or cannot complete their education (source: Interviews).

#### 12.2.2.6 *Lack of information and guidance*

Lack of information about access requirements and financial costs and benefits of higher education, as well as guidance for study fields and career opportunities create another obstacle. The guidance and counselling activities are especially important for people with disabilities, people from non-formal educational routes, international applicants and people from immigrant backgrounds (SFC 2005; 32; National Reports 2005–2007 and 2007–2009; interviews).

### 12.3 Programmes and initiatives targeting underrepresented groups

The effect of the above-mentioned factors varies in different systems. These factors, together with internal dynamics and priorities of each country, can give a general explanation for underrepresentation of different groups in different countries. Despite policies aim at increasing participation of all disadvantaged groups, certain main target groups can be identified for each country, i.e. in Finland, people from immigrant backgrounds, in Germany people with non-formal and informal prior learning and in Scotland people from lower socio-economic backgrounds. This section introduces some of the programmes and initiatives developed by the selected countries to increase participation and are grouped as schemes related to education, admission, finance, counselling and student services.

It shall also be noted that in all selected systems relevant legislation protects the right to education for everyone by prohibiting any discrimination due to race, disability, gender or any other socio-economic factor.

#### 12.3.1 *Educational schemes*

In Finland, different educational programmes have been introduced to address the obstacles of people from immigrant backgrounds. One of them is the special training year in the polytechnic sector. The training year aims at supporting applicants from immigrant backgrounds to gain sufficient skills for studying in polytechnic higher education institutions successfully. This training focuses on provision of knowledge on language and study life in Finland. The pilot training has started with an initiation of the polytechnics and will result in an amendment in the Polytechnic Act to become a permanent practice. Similar kinds of trainings have been implemented already in primary and secondary education for long time (Interview).

Furthermore, the polytechnic sector has an advantage in overcoming the language factor in access. The majority of English tuition programmes at the Bachelor's level are offered in the polytechnic sector. English tuition programmes in universities are mostly available at the Master's and Doctorate level (Interview).

The Finnish government also introduced a Migration Policy Programme in 2006 to promote the development of multiculturalism and non-discrimination in Finnish society.

The programme also supports the provision of Finnish and Swedish language education for immigrants (National Report 2007-2009).

The Scottish Government has developed the Curriculum for Excellence programme to ensure that certain knowledge and skills for work, educational and personal life are gained at schools (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2009). The Curriculum for Excellence education reform programme is designed to establish a coherent, flexible and enriched curriculum from age 3 to 18 to help schools develop greater links with higher education, colleges and employers (National Report 2007-2009). 16+ Learning Choices is another scheme of the Scottish Government to encourage all young people to stay in education after the age of 16. It aims at offering an appropriate and attractive learning opportunity to everyone to continue their education (Scottish Government website, 2008a).

Scotland has increased the provision of part-time education. The programmes address the needs of people who are unemployed or with low incomes. Part of this expansion has benefited students from more deprived areas or students with disabilities – there has been a four-fold increase in the number of students supported by SHEFC's part-time fee waiver scheme since it was introduced in 1998-99 (SFC 2005; 20).

In Scotland, the existence of further education colleges has a special importance in increasing access to higher education in that they offer courses at the higher education level for students from various backgrounds. For instance in 2007-08, 44% of students at further education colleges were 25 or older and 45% had no formal entry qualifications. Colleges are also more successful than the higher education institutions in attracting applicants from deprived areas (Gallacher, 2009). Further education colleges provide an alternative route to higher education by offering sub-degrees. Students could start a sub-degree in their locality and could continue in a higher education institution after studying one or two years if they want to get a first cycle degree (Interview). At the moment, there are around 2000 articulation routes between further education colleges and higher education institutions. In 2002-03, about 10% of the entrants in degree programmes in higher education institutions came through those routes. The development of more effective articulation routes is financially supported by the SFC through the Further education/ Higher education Articulation Grant and other funding tools (SFC 2005, p. 20).

Furthermore, in 2008 articulation hubs were established to improve articulation links between higher education institutions and colleges. There are 6 hub universities to encourage collaboration of further education colleges and higher education institutions to enhance articulation links, and improve the opportunities for successful transition of sub-degree students into degree programmes. These hubs foster joint course and programme planning, as well as providing guidance for students (Gallacher 2009, Interview).

In Germany, schools and higher education institutions are co-operating through various projects such as Girls' days, Come on, do MINT to increase the percentage of female students in mathematics, computer science, natural sciences and technology. In addition to this, the importance of participation at earlier levels of education is made clear by Länder prime ministries and the federal government. Accordingly, there are initiatives to foster language education of immigrant children and their parents already at the pre-school and school levels (Die Regierungschefs der Länder, 2008).

In all selected countries, higher education institutions offer various flexible study modes, such as part time education, distance learning, e-learning, blended learning, open learning evening/weekend learning, community/outreach learning and 'franchised'

learning in order to increase the opportunities of people from various backgrounds to reach higher education (National Reports 2007-2009).

### 12.3.2 Admission policies

In all selected countries admission requirements and procedures are under the responsibility of the higher education institutions and the governments are supportive of actions that would simplify admission processes to make higher education more accessible.

In Finland, access to higher education is possible from both general and vocational secondary schools. Furthermore, higher education institutions are allowed to recognise non-formal prior qualifications (National Report 2007-2009). However, more work is needed concerning the actual implementation at the institutional level. A ministerial working group is tackling the issue to guide higher education institutions better. Furthermore, provision of more transparent and clearer information for applicants is a recognised need by the Ministry.

The bottleneck in entrance exams due to the excess demand for certain fields and accompanying inequality due to the high cost of private training institutions for entrance exams are also in the Finnish Ministry of Education's policy agenda. Introducing a national level mechanism that would take into account only the results of the matriculation exam is considered a possible solution. Such a solution is expected to minimise the space for private institutions. There is not a finalised solution to the problem yet.

Flexibility in admission is possible to meet the educational needs of minority language groups (i.e. Sami speaking people). The Finnish University Act allows exceptions in admission requirements for minority language groups (National Report 2007-2009).

The Ministry also tries to address the difficulties of immigrant applicants in entrance exams due to insufficient language skills. A working group is analysing the issue of making some exceptions for those applicants. However, thinking of the equality principle the issue is problematic. The Ministry encourages higher education institutions to develop student admission requirements that would enable recruitment of non-Finnish and immigrant students. This can be through utilisation of the internationally accepted language tests and development of selection mechanisms and services for foreign-language students (The Finnish Ministry of Education n.d; p. 24).

Scotland focuses on developing more flexible admission requirements targeted at widening participation of pupils from low-participation neighbourhoods. Recognition of prior learning in access to higher education is a priority as well. Non-traditional applicants are supported with additional courses (i.e. 'bridging' courses, summer schools) before entering into higher education (National Report 2007-2009). It is also recognised that to base the admission only on one's prior formal educational attainment can lead to underestimation of some potential groups. Therefore, admission mechanisms shall become more sophisticated (SFC 2005; 13).

In Germany, a policy focus has been the inclusion of people with non-formal and informal prior learning. Most Länder have included legal rules for opening the universities to people who did not acquire the regular admission to universities (*Abitur*) and skills of advanced technicians (Die Regierungschefs der Länder 2008; p. 11). Furthermore, prior

learning can be recognised on the condition that content and levels match the studies they are replacing (BMBF, 2009). The credits from the prior learning can replace up to 50% of the credits for higher education programmes. Yet, the need for further and more transparent procedures for recognition is noted. There is an ongoing work on better crediting vocational qualifications (National Report, 2007-2009).

### 12.3.3 *Financial schemes*

#### 12.3.3.1 *Students from lower socio-economic background*

The major financial incentive ensuring participative equity to higher education is stated as free education. In Finland all levels of education are free of charge for Finnish citizens.

In Germany, since 2005, 6 Länder out of 16 charge tuition fees around € 500 per semester. The Scottish Government abolished tuition fees in 2002 and the Graduate Endowment Fee in 2008.<sup>6</sup> After the abolishment of tuition fees, there has been an increase in the percentage of students coming from deprived areas (SFC 2009; p. 5).

In Finland, students receive financial aid independent of their socio-economic background, on the equity basis. There is also additional student financial aid for full time students intending to support financially needy students whose parents are not under obligation to finance their studies and who are not eligible for aid under some other provisions.

In Germany, the general student financial aid is calculated according to the detailed information on students' socio-economic backgrounds. Therefore, there is not a separate financial scheme in Germany (see § 12.3.6.4 for further information on financial aid schemes for students).

The Scottish government introduced new measures to ensure that financial aid is received by the most needy students, new grants for part-time learners to decrease their dependence on loans (National Report 2007-2009).

Furthermore, as of 2004 the Educational Maintenance Allowance is provided for school students aged 16 to 18. The aim of this financial aid is to support young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds in participation to higher education. Individual Learning Accounts offers financial support to people over 16 whose income is below a certain level (National Report 2007-2009).

The Student Awards Agency for Scotland provides a number of bursaries to students from the most vulnerable groups. These include the Young Students Bursary for those from low-income backgrounds and other grants such as Disabled Students Allowance, Lone Parents Grant and the Dependent's Grant.

#### 12.3.3.2 *Students from immigrant backgrounds*

Foreigners coming to Finland to study are not entitled to student financial aid. However, foreigners with a habitual residence permit and in the country for purposes other than studying can get financial aid. According to the recent amendment to the Student Financial Aid Act, citizens of a third country who have resided in another Member State

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<sup>6</sup> This fee was introduced after abolishment of the tuition fees in 2001-02. According to it, graduates were asked to pay a fee after the completion of studies. The amount, depending on the programme, was determined at the beginning of studies.

for a long time and move to Finland and have granted a continuous residence permit are entitled to student financial aid. Another recent amendment, made in connection with the implementation of the Free Movement Directive, provides that citizens of another Member State who have resided in Finland continuously for at least five years and their family members are eligible for the same entitlements as Finnish citizens (National Report 2007-2009).

In Germany, the last amendment of the Federal Education and Training Assistance Act (BAföG) in 2008 gave easier access to students with migration backgrounds to BAföG support. The entitlement to support depends on applicants' possibility to stay in Germany as a long-term residence. Private foundations are increasingly providing funding for young people with migration backgrounds (National Report 2007-09).

In Scotland, there is no specific policy targeting immigrant/foreign students. Yet, students from EU-countries are entitled to tuition free education (Interview).

#### *12.3.3.3 Disabled students*

In Finland, disabled or chronically ill persons aged 16 years or over are entitled to disability allowance to meet their need for assistance and/or additional expenses. In addition to the common benefits disabled people get from the Social Insurance Institution of Finland, there is also a special allowance for disabled people to study (KELA, 2009).

In Germany, there is a special allowance for disabled students to meet their extra costs for studying, as well as living expenses, medical costs, studying abroad and for special care and assistance. Enshrinement of this allowance is considered (German National Association for Student Services, 2005).

In Scotland, disabled people may be entitled to certain welfare benefits, for example, the Disabled Living Allowance. Furthermore, the government reviewed the Disabled Students Allowance that supports disabled students, and the Disabled Students Premium that supports higher education institutions in provision of services to disabled students (National Report 2007-2009).

In Scotland, all institutions are bound by the Disability Discrimination Act. SFC has provided financial support to higher education institutions and further education colleges to improve accessibility of the physical environment for disabled people (SFC 2005; 23). This has also included new build and refurbishment programmes, both of which require institutions to comply with new building legislation that includes ensuring consideration of disabled users (Interview).

#### *12.3.4 Information and guidance*

The Finnish Ministry of Education considers better counselling activities during secondary and primary education as one of the main ways to increase participation of the children from immigrant backgrounds and supports actions taken for such an aim. Furthermore, the ministry internationalisation strategy requires higher education institutions to ensure available resources for study counselling services for students with non-Finnish and immigrant backgrounds. The counselling and support for studies as well as free time activities will be provided by the collaboration of student organisations and the higher education institutions (The Finnish Ministry of Education n.d.; p. 20).

One setback in addressing the need for better guidance and counselling at the pre-higher education level is due to a structural reason. This level of education is a municipal level responsibility. Hence, it is difficult to develop a national level action for it (Interview).

In Germany, increasing participation of students from immigrant and lower socio-economic backgrounds is seen as an issue of better counselling and guidance especially at pre-higher education levels. The measures taken include provision of information on study opportunities and various student aid schemes to parents and pupils, as well as to applicants from vocational backgrounds about the linkage between vocational and academic education. Furthermore, special counselling and support services are offered to international students to ensure provision of better information and their integration (National Reports 2007-09).

In Scotland, a national programme of information, advice and guidance is provided for pupils in those schools that have the lowest progression rates to higher education. This programme is coordinated at a regional level through 4 Wider Access Regional Forums (SWARF). SWARF was funded by the SFC composed of four regional forums in 1998. The four regional forums include South East, Fife and Tayside, the West of Scotland and the North of Scotland. As a network, SWARF communicates with the regional forums and disseminates information and knowledge to support activities on wider access and participation newsletters, conferences and seminars. Each forum works locally to deliver a programme of activity that is based on a consistent national approach to increase awareness of higher education at target schools, to engage with deprived communities, and to support community transitions (Interview). As part of SWARF activities, colleges and universities collaborate to provide guidance and counselling services. On the schools with the lowest progression rates to higher education and on those communities classified as deprived by the Scottish Multiple Index of Deprivation are work prioritised. The Guidance and counselling is provided to the young people in those schools to increase their aspirations, to help them to gain better understanding of the advantages of higher education and to guide them through the transition to higher education. There are also summer schools, mentoring projects between students and pupils, and guidance for parents (Interview).

In 2008, the SFC established in Scotland the Access and Inclusion Committee to advice on access and inclusion matters. The Committee also oversees and aligns actions by other partners in national action to widen participation. This structure aims to achieve better national co-ordination and coherence of activities to widen participation. Since 2002 Universities Scotland has had a social inclusion policy and research officer working to increase awareness on inclusion in higher education issues at the policy making level (National Report 2007-09). There are also counselling and research activities to address the gender gap between boys and girls participating in higher education. Furthermore, almost all higher education institutions offer programmes to support students coming from non-traditional and socially disadvantaged backgrounds to improve their academic skills and to increase graduation rates (National Report 2005-2007).

#### *12.3.5 Further schemes for students with disabilities*

In all selected countries higher education institutions take action and are encouraged to ensure equal access opportunities and support for disabled students

In Finland, the Inclusive Higher Education project (ESOK – *Esteetön opiskelu korkeasteen oppolaitoksissa*) emphasises the removal of physical, psychological and social obstacles in participation to higher education. The main target groups of the project are students with disabilities and learning difficulties. Within ESOK guidelines for higher education institutions will be on issues such as accessibility in entrance exams, diversity of needs in education, staff training, etc. (ESOK ,2009).

In Germany, according to the higher education acts at the federal and Länder level, special needs of disabled students shall be taken into consideration in exam regulations. In January 2008, a similar criterion was introduced for accreditation of higher education programmes. Furthermore, six Länder have introduced legislative changes for appointment of commissioners to deal with the needs of disabled students. ‘Studies and Handicaps Information and Counselling Centre’ (*Informations- und Beratungsstelle Studium und Behinderung*; IBS) provides information and guidance at the national level for students with disabilities and/or chronic diseases. IBS, among other experts, has the further function of voicing the interests of disabled students at the policy-making platforms (National Report 2007-09). The IBS works under the German National Association for Student Services and funded by the BMBF.

In Scotland, a similar project was initiated by the SFC Access and Inclusion Committee in 2008. The project aims to understand the obstacles to participation better and to raise the profile of widening participation. Furthermore, the government, through its ‘Partnership Matters’ policy framework, provides guidance to various organisations on supporting students with additional needs in colleges and universities (National Report 2007-2009 and Interview).

Institutional disability co-ordinators provide guidance and in some cases do needs assessments for disabled students, many institutions also have specialist assistive technology staff to support the disability services. The Disabled Students Stakeholder Group was established in 2004 to bring together government departments and stakeholders to consider and address issues relating to the support available to disabled students. In 2005, the Disabled Students Stakeholder Group developed the Toolkit of Quality Indicators Pilot to assess universities’ and colleges’ ability to conduct in-house needs. The results of this assessment are influential in receiving the Disabled Students’ Allowance (National Report 2007-2009). The toolkit aims to reduce the waiting times between acknowledging that the student should be assessed for support via the DSA and receiving the support. It will also increase the capacity of the sector to assess students on an equitable basis. Following the successful evaluation of the pilot, the Toolkit will be mainstreamed as of January 2010 (Interview).

### 12.3.6 Provision of student services

Availability of sufficient and widespread student services is another factor encouraging students from disadvantaged backgrounds and hence contributing to the reflection of diversity in the student body population. This part introduces services available to higher education students in general, in addition to the above-mentioned ones targeting underrepresented groups.

#### 12.3.6.1 Counselling and guidance services

All selected countries provide guidance and counselling for students in various forms, mostly through special units of the higher education institutions or through student

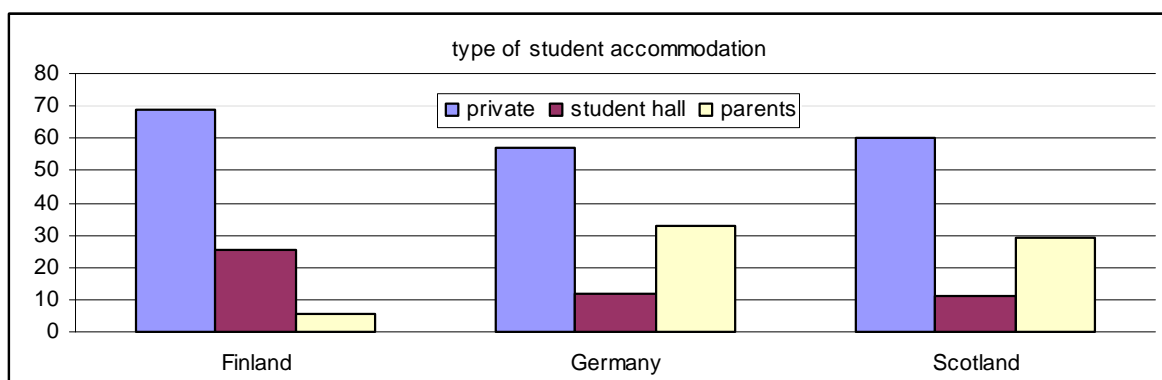
organisations. The guidance and counselling services are available for educational matters, and future career and employment opportunities. Psychological counselling is included in general health care services.

### 12.3.6.2 Student services for daily life

#### *Housing, food and transportation support*

In Finland, affordable student accommodation is provided by independent foundations. Students living in rented or right-of-occupancy accommodation can get a housing supplement, which covers 80% of the rent (KELA, 2009). In Germany, the Student Services provide affordable housing to students. In Scotland, the SFC supports higher education institutions to provide housing for their students living away from their hometowns (see figure 12-1).

Figure 12-1 Student accommodation



Source: Orr et al. 2008, EURO Student III 2005-2008, Synopsis of indicators.

According to the EURO Student III results in all selected countries main form of student accommodation among Bachelor's level students is private accommodation rather than student halls or parents'/relatives' places. This situation is not related to the insufficiency or low quality of services for the case study countries. This situation is rather related to other factors such as the affordable rent prices and the size of the city, and students available financial resources (Orr et al. 2008; 71).

In all selected countries students are provided with subsidies for food and transportation.

#### *Health care*

In Finland, Finnish Students Health Service (FSHS) provides special health care service, including mental health care, for university students. FSHS covers 16 cities and in towns where universities have ancillary branches, the services of FSHS are purchased from local providers. Provision of health services for polytechnic students is under the responsibility of municipalities.

In Germany, students are included in parents' health insurance coverage until the age of 25. Afterwards, they are required to get their own health insurance with special rates for students. There is not a different institutional setting for the health care system of higher education students.



In Scotland, main health service provision for everyone is through the National Health Service of the UK. This service is for everyone and there may be certain subsidies for students. Some of the higher education institutions provide further health services to their students (Interview).

It shall be noted that health care systems are well developed in all of the selected countries and every citizen, whether student or not, is entitled to almost the same health care.

#### 12.3.6.3 *Services for students with children*

As mentioned above, students with children are included in this section, rather than in the previous sections as an underrepresented group. Their difficulties are not related to their inherent features but to the inflexibility of study modes and the lack of services addressing their special needs.

In Finland problems of students with children concerning lack of financial aid and day care centres are raised by the student unions. There are different financial aids, i.e. Maternity Grant, Paternal Allowance and Child Benefit, available for everyone. However, students point out the insufficiency of financial support. At the moment, there is a working group in the Ministry focusing on measures, such as increasing the amount of aid for students with children and providing additional services from municipalities or higher education institutions for day care centres to improve the situation (Interview).

In Germany, students with children are provided with certain flexibilities. In case of pregnancy and maternity leave, students can take leave of absence and can get an extension of time for completion of their examinations. Several institutions, including higher education institutions, student associations, authorities for youth affairs, student government organisations and commissioners for equality, offer guidance and support for students with children. For instance, student associations offer day-care facilities and university service offices offer support for university staff and guest scientists and academics. The next section describes the additional funding for students with children (National Report 2007-09).

Furthermore, since 2002, there is an audit of 'Family-friendly University' that reviews measures of support for people to balance work and family life in the institutions. A number of higher education institutions have earned the audit seal. The Federal Government's report on families follows the situation of students with children with regular reports (National Report 2007-09).

In Germany, there is also additional financial aid for students with children. The BAföG aid recipients with children younger than 10 are eligible for child support allowance. There are also further projects to foster higher education institutions to become more family friendly, such as the 'Family at Universities' (*Familie in der Hochschule*) competition. The competition will provide up to € 100,000, for two years to each of eight higher education institutions (National Report 2007-09).

Students in Scotland studying a course of higher education at college or university can access the institution's Higher Education Discretionary Fund for assistance with formal registered childcare costs. In addition, lone parents studying a course of higher education can apply to the Student Awards Agency for Scotland for the Lone Parent Grant and the Lone Parent Childcare grant. Support for students with children is also provided through UK tax credits and childcare vouchers (Interview).

#### 12.3.6.4 Financial aid for students

The financial aid system for students has a key function in ensuring participation to and successful completion of higher education studies without obstacles related to socio-economic backgrounds students. In all selected countries, there is a public financial aid system supporting higher education students to cover their costs for studying and living expenses.

The following table shows the percentage of students that could receive direct financial aid from the public resources and the median amount of the direct financial aid for higher education students. It shall be noted that this table illustrates the aid received only for being a student, apart from additional financial assistance, i.e. disability allowance, and children money.

Table 12-3 Amount and reach of state financial support

	Finland	Germany	Scotland
State assistance quota (%)	83.80	25.80	83.0
State assistance median amount (€)	422	377	491.4

Source: Orr et al. 2008, EURO Student III 2005-2008, Synopsis of indicators.

In Finland, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland distributes student financial aid. The aid is allocated independent of parents' income, on an equity basis. The student financial aid has three components: grant, loan and housing supplement. 88% of this financial aid is non-repayable. The state guarantees the student loan and the terms and conditions of the loan are agreed between the bank and the student. However, many students prefer to take the grant and housing supplement but not the loan. Instead, they work to earn additional income (43.7% of the students work during their studies).

In Germany, student loans and grants are regulated by the Federal Training Assistance Act (*BAföG - Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz*). Funding for them is provided by the federal and Länder governments. The BAföG aid is allocated to students under the age of 30 depending on the parents' income level and students' own socio-economic status. Students can receive higher BAföG support if they are not living with their parents. Only half of the amount must be paid back several years after graduation. Students can apply for parental and child benefits and housing allowances along with BAföG-based support. Furthermore, there are several foundations offering scholarship opportunities to higher education students. Apart from the financial support 64.8% of the students work during the term for their living expenses (Orr et al, 2008). For Germany, it shall be highlighted that a high share of support for students is indirect which is allocated to students' parents in the form of child money and tax reductions.

In Scotland, the Students Awards Agency distributes the student support funding which is mainly available in the form of loans for full-time higher education students. 73% of direct financial aid is loans and 27% are non-repayable grants (Orr et al. 2008). Students can get loans for their living expenses, depending on their household income and for the payment of their tuition fees. Students are required to start repaying their loans upon graduation. 64% of students work during their studies. The non-repayable student aid

schemes are ‘Young Students’ Bursary’ for students younger than 25, ‘Students’ Outside Scotland Bursary’ for students studying elsewhere in the UK and supplementary grants in cases of dependent spouse, dependent children and for additional child care costs, disability, care leavers’ grant and travel expenses. The eligibility for the bursaries depends on the household income. There are further financial aid opportunities provided by the higher education institutions (SAAS, 2009).

## 12.4 Critical factors in implementation of the policies

### 12.4.1 Policy making rationales of the countries

#### 12.4.1.1 Equality principle

In Finland, the principle of equality has a decisive role in higher education policies and legislation, like in other legal and social institutions of the country. Higher education policies are developed to ensure equal opportunities for everyone to participate in high quality education. The equality principle is regarded also in the distribution of financial and other social benefits ensuring successful completion of studies (Finnish Ministry of Education, 2008:15).

Nevertheless, the equality principle may have controversial consequences. On the one hand, it functions to ensure that everyone has equal opportunities and rights to education, independent of their socio-economic background. On the other hand, it tends to treat everyone as if they struggle with the same obstacles under the same conditions. This rationale in a way delays the development of policies addressing needs of disadvantaged groups such as minorities, foreigners or people with special needs. Yet, currently, the ministry has started to develop the policy measures targeting students with immigrant background and research careers of women.

The right to education is protected in Germany, as well. Traditionally, concerns on equality of opportunity in participation to higher education have been an essential component in policy development; however, the equality principle cannot be stated as a cornerstone in development of the recent higher education policies. This rationale has changed with a new focus on the belief that people’s socio-economic background should not determine their future. Therefore, more and earlier educational opportunities shall be provided to children, in other words ‘Better education from the beginning’. The declaration of the prime ministers of all Länder and the federal government in Dresden is a clear sign of this change, even though it is too early to see the outcomes of it (Die Regierungschefs der Länder 2008).

Social justice and inclusion have always had a major place in Scottish Governments. Scottish policy actors have also clearly stated that ensuring equal participation opportunities to higher education is a must for the socio-economic development of the country, as well as a just society. To this aim, they clearly identified the groups having difficulties in access to higher education and started to produce policies targeting at higher participation of those groups (Interview; SFC 2005, p. 25).

#### 12.4.1.2 Economic rationale: Increasing participation as a common policy objective

Increasing entry rates to higher education is an important policy concern for all selected countries. The relevant policies have economic targets, as well as the social ones. In other

words, the policies aim at ensuring availability of a highly qualified work force as well as ensuring everyone's right to education and social and cultural development of the society.

For instance, in Finland the Ministry of Education set an aim to increase the participation rate of newly matriculated students to higher education, in addition to the aim of increasing the employment rate to 75%. These targets can be considered in relation to Finland's aging population, which increases the need for more people to work for a longer time. The policy makers are trying to foster students to get in faster, study faster, graduate faster and start to work younger and to work longer (Interview).

The weight of economic rationales in increasing the participation to higher education can be seen in the goals of Germany's 'Higher Education Pact 2020'. In 2007, the Federal Government and the Länder agreed on the Higher Education Pact in order to increase the entry rate to higher education and hence the number of highly qualified professionals demanded by the labour market. The Pact is planned to continue until 2020 and provides financial support for higher education institutions to increase available study places. The project also has a special emphasis on supporting East German Länder to balance the demographic changes. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research considers positive the impact of the Pact in stopping the downward trend in the number of new university entrants (Federal Ministry of Education and Research, 2009).

In Scotland, the economic agenda is quite influential in higher education policy aims for increasing participation as well as ensuring employability of graduates (source: Interview). The Scottish Government's economic strategy (2008b) considers higher education institutions vital for sustainable economic growth and provides financial support accordingly.

#### 12.4.2 *Contextual factors*

The policy rationales of the governments are highly shaped by the national conditions and traditions. In this sense, the contextual factors affect not only underrepresented groups but everyone, such as free education traditions of the countries and demographic conditions.

##### 12.4.2.1 *Free education*

During the interviews free education was stated as main enabling mechanism for participative equity. In Finland, all levels of education are free of charge. This system ensures continuity of equal opportunities through levels of education. This is an important success factor, considering the effect of school attainment on participation to higher education and the tendency to blame inequalities at the previous levels. The principle is highly supported by student unions, academic staff, ministry, and all political parties. Accordingly, the development of private higher education institutions is not supported by public policies in Finland.

The new Universities Act allows higher education institutions to charge tuition fees to non-EU/EEA students at the Master's level studies. The application will start in 2009 on the trial basis until 2014. The reform is criticised as being market oriented and creating inequality in access of international students. According to the Ministry of Education, introduction of tuition fees is necessary to support universities in their international and mobility programmes, such as Erasmus Mundus. A further criticism against the reform concerns the principle of equity and free education. Introducing tuition fees even for a

limited group, means demolishing of the equity principle and carries the risk of paving the way out for the introduction of tuition fees for Finns (Interview).

In Germany, education is free at schools. Since 2005 Länder are allowed to charge tuition fees for higher education. At the moment, only in 6 Länder students are asked to pay tuition fees up to €500. Even though it is early to measure the actual impact of tuition fees on the participative equity, the introduction of tuition fees' possible negative effect on applicants from lower economic backgrounds is criticised by many opponents (Interview).

The Scottish Government is also strongly committed to the free higher education principle. According to the Scottish Government, participation into higher education shall depend on academic capacities rather than the financial ones. However, as mentioned above, fee-paid secondary education creates inequalities in access to higher education at an earlier stage.

#### *12.4.2.2 Demographic conditions of the countries*

Finland has a small population size (ca. 5,300,000) in a relatively big land. Therefore, the network of higher education institutions is developed to enable everyone's access to higher education. A geographically widespread higher education network is especially important where the population density is very low to enable access to higher education from all geographical areas. The development of the higher education system from the beginning in such a way is another illustration of the key principle of equal participation (Interview). A balanced distribution of higher education institutions was a policy concern in Germany during expansion in the 1960s-70s.

In Finland, the geographically wide spread higher education network makes up a big higher education sector offering many study places. It is considered as an influential factor in high participation rates in higher education in Finland (Interview).

As it is identified in the interviews, being a small sized country places a special emphasis on the belief in education to improve the society. Historically, education has always been seen as a tool of social mobility, a tool for development of the country as a whole. In order to make a small country competitive, ensuring that all citizens are well educated is considered a must (Interviews).

The highly homogeneous society of Finland has also been influential in the achievement of participative equity. The ethnic population has been fairly similar with Swedish speaking Finns, Sami people, Roma people and Russians most of whom are highly assimilated in Finland (source: Interview). While this feature has been an advantage in including all groups to higher education through equity principle, it is problematic concerning the inclusion of people from immigrant backgrounds who have different conditions and needs than the majority. The big immigrant groups started to come only in 1990s. The situation is new and there are difficulties with integrating immigrant groups into Finnish society. Hence, the changing ethnic composition of the country is putting new challenges to the policies which, have as yet worked well.

Like Finland, Scotland also has a small population (5,168,000) and composed of similar ethnic groups, English, Irish and Welsh. Migration is difficult to measure specifically for Scotland since people can move in the UK, as well. However, Scotland has a small percentage of immigrants.

Germany has population size of ca. 82 million people and around 20% of it has an immigrant background. Germany has a large immigrant population, especially since the 1960s. However, the integration of immigrants into German society has not been a smooth process, especially for the first and second generations. The reasons for this result are beyond the higher education policies and hence the scope of this report.

#### *12.4.3 Involvement of different actors*

Inclusion of different actors in the policy making processes and ensuring effective communication among these actors is a key success factor in policy implementation.

Finland has a well established tradition of including all relevant groups in policy development processes through open consultations, working groups and development of guidelines for implementation as a joint work. The tradition of consensus is well established in determination of the agenda and the action plan. Such processes increase the awareness among relevant groups, such as administrative units, academics, and students, beyond top-level policy makers and smoothens the implementation processes.

In Germany, higher education policy development is responsibility of the Länder and policy-making practices vary accordingly. Yet, as a result of interviews and the national experts' views it is possible to conclude that relevant actors are consulted in policy development processes in a more hierarchical structure.

In Scotland, the Roundtable Forum is an example of the consultation practices in policy development processes. Since 2006, all key stakeholders of further education and higher education meet quarterly. The forum aims at engaging key stakeholders on important policy developments and improving communication.

##### *12.4.3.1 Role of student unions*

Participative equity in higher education and availability of better conditions of study environment are the issues directly influencing students. Therefore, the student unions'/organisations' role in policymaking and implementation processes is vital.

In Finland, student unions have a long history and accordingly an advanced level of development. Both student unions are actively participating in the ministerial meetings and consider themselves as responsible bodies in policy development and implementation. Through their local branches, they effectively disseminate information and raise awareness on the reforms. As stated in the interviews with the representatives of student unions, this decreases the risk of student protests due to misunderstanding the reforms.

NUS Scotland is recognised as the key student representative body by the Scottish Government. NUS Scotland works together with government and other civic organisations in raising student issues. Furthermore, student representatives participate in decision making at the institutional level. Recently, the Student Learning, Engagement and Enhancement Committee has been launched. The committee consists of university representatives from all over Scotland and mainly works on quality enhancement (NUS website 2009). During the interviews, students' active participation in decision making processes was stated as important for bringing in the demands of students and making them clearly heard.

In Germany, development of the student unions depends on the Länder regulations. Yet, commonly, they do not have a highly organised national level structure. They have consultative functions and relative limited role in policy-making processes.

Financial support of the state is identified as an important means for the development of student unions and the promotion of student involvement in policy-making processes. During interviews with Finnish student unions, generous state support is identified. In Scotland and Germany student unions get financial support from the state as well. This support is relatively limited because it is only in the form of project-based funding. During the interviews, the lack of financial support was identified as a problem for German student organisations.

In all selected countries student unions are included in the national Bologna Follow-up groups and are members of European Student Union. In addition to this, they all actively work on and support the promotion of participative equity through increasing opportunities for disadvantaged groups, measures against discrimination and the improvement of financial support for students in their respective countries; and campaign against the application of tuition fees.

#### 12.4.4 *Efficient follow-up instruments*

In Finland, the student unions' 'Student Research Foundation' (OTUS) collects data on a variety of socio-economic indicators concerning the well being of higher education students on a continuous basis. With the information they provide the student unions shape policy-making processes.

In Germany, the German National Association for Student Services carries out surveys on the socio-economic situation of students, i.e. the social surveys (*Sozialerhebungen*) carried out at three year intervals and have been continuing over 50 years.

In Scotland, widening participation to higher education, especially from deprived areas, has been a policy concern for a long time. In order to measure the progress achieved through different projects the SFC has developed 'success measures' which are compiled annually in the Learning for All report. The report functions as an overall strategy report for further policy development and as a guide for running projects.

Such monitoring means are vital for successful policy development and implementation process by providing continuous information and regular evaluation reports of the situation already for long term.

### 12.5 *Summary of main findings*

Increasing and widening participation to higher education from all social groups of society is defined as a major goal of the social dimension. This group of case studies has focused on the increasing participation part of this strategic goal. Therefore, dynamics, obstacles and policies discussed in this case study mainly aim at analysing representation of disadvantaged groups in higher education in Finland, Germany and Scotland.

As it has been illustrated above, the underrepresented groups as well as priority in addressing the causes vary per country. Based on this dependency of underrepresentation to the national contexts, it is generally argued that elaborate measures to reduce

underrepresentation cannot be defined at a European level in a one-size-fits-all way. Initially, like all action lines of the Bologna Process, the aim is to carry the issue higher in the agenda rather than obliging the countries to adopt and follow strictly defined policy tools. Secondly, while the underlying reasons can vary, the case studies show that the underrepresented groups are commonly defined as the ones from lower socio-economic and immigrant backgrounds. In this sense, it shall be possible to develop common policy tools to encourage higher participation of these groups. In the selected countries three actions come forward in addressing the obstacles of these groups:

- Clear identification of underrepresented groups and development of tailor-made measures (i.e. educational programmes) targeting these groups.
- Tackling underrepresentation already at the pre-higher education levels through provision of additional guidance and counselling in the transition to higher education both for pupils and their parents.
- Provision of financial support for higher education students in encouraging participating in higher education and ensuring successful completion of studies.

Promotion of equality as an underlying policy incentive is a contextual factor in increasing participative equity. Especially in Finland and Scotland, ensuring participative equity has traditionally been and still is a cornerstone in development of higher education policies.

In addition to the importance given by the national governments, the role of other relevant actors in policy development processes is also vital. Considering direct and substantial effect of the social dimension issues on students, involvement of student organisations is especially essential in raising the burning issues and developing the solution ways. Finnish student unions are good examples in this case. Traditionally, they are involved in policy-making and implementation processes actively and effectively.

It shall also be noted that national governments' support in increasing participation in higher education is not only a social concern, i.e. to ensure social justice and support personal development of every citizen, but also an economic concern, to ensure sufficient supply of a highly educated workforce for the employment market, especially in aging societies.

The case studies also revealed that the policies to increase participation of disadvantaged groups have been developed beyond the Bologna Process context in all selected countries. Yet, all countries state the importance of the social dimension action for improvement.

## 12.6 Impacts on increasing participation and recommendations

All selected countries agree on the positive impact of the inclusion of the social dimension in the Bologna Process while acknowledging the national level as the main policy making platform.

Inclusion of the social dimension action line in the Bologna Process is deemed important because it highlights participation issues in the policy-making agenda thus providing a working framework. Such a framework can enable the development of policies more systematically and provide better opportunities of improvement (Interviews).



In order to monitor any progress, gathering comparable data on the socio-economic status of students is needed. While it is accepted that the measures to improve participative equity would change depending on the national context, it shall be possible to develop common indicators that would give the opportunity to evaluate and compare the national applications in the European context. As the case studies show, it is also possible to pinpoint certain common problems such as better inclusion of people from immigrant and lower socio-economic backgrounds. Concerning the common obstacles, the social dimension action line provides the opportunity for the Bologna systems to learn from one another.

Furthermore, as was stated during the interviews with the Finnish Ministry representatives, if the aim is the creation of a common European Higher Education Area, it is necessary to ensure improvement of the socio-economic situation of all students of this area. The balanced and good situation of students in all countries would enable a sustainable and healthy functioning common area.

Dependency of the social dimension action line to national contexts is stated as a challenge to the development of policy measures applicable to all Bologna signatories. Countries have very different starting points, as well as own conditions and priorities shaping their social dimension policies. To meet this challenge, the social dimension action line shall be given more importance both at the national and the Bologna Process context. It is possible to give greater weight to these issues in the policy agenda and develop a set of core principles across Europe while taking into account historical and social contexts.

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## Abbreviations

BFUG	Bologna Follow-Up Group
CRE	<i>Conférence des Recteurs Européens</i> , later changed to Association of European Universities; one of the precursor organisations of EUA (q.v.)
DS	Diploma Supplement
E4	Name used for the collective of ENQA, ESU, EUA and EURASHE (q.v.)
EC	European Credits
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENIC-NARIC	European Network of Information Centres – National Academic Recognition Information Centres
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ESIB	<i>European Student Information Bureau</i> ; name until 1993 and abbreviation until 2007 of The National Unions of Students in Europe, later renamed into ESU (q.v.)
ESU	European Students' Unions; name since 2007 of what previously was ESIB
EU	European Union
EUA	European University Association; EUA is the result of a merger between the CRE (q.v.) and the Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences, 2001
EURASHE	European Association of Institutions in Higher Education
JQI	Joint Quality Initiative
LLL	Lifelong learning
LRC	Lisbon Recognition Convention
NQF	National qualifications framework
QF-EHEA	Qualifications Framework for the EHEA
RPL	Recognition of prior learning



## Appendices



## Appendix 1 International Expert Panel

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Prof.Dr. Marijk VAN DER WENDE (Convenor)	the Netherlands	Amsterdam University College
Clifford ADELMAN	U.S.A.	Institute for Higher Education Policy, Washington, D.C.
Prof.Dr. David DILL	U.S.A.	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (NC)
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Prof. Simon MARGINSON	Australia	Melbourne University
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Prof. Mala SINGH	South Africa / United Kingdom	Open University, London
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## Appendix 2 National contact persons

Country	National expert	Institution
Albania	Dhimiter DOKA	Universiteti i Tiranës
Andorra	Jordi LLOMBART I PUBILL	Government of Andorra
Armenia	Arayik NAVOYAN	French University in Armenia, Department of External Relations
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Country	National expert	Institution
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United Kingdom	Paul TEMPLE	Institute of Education, University of London

## Appendix 3 Additional tables chapter 2

Table Annex 2-1: Duration of the most commonly adopted first-cycle programme

EC volume	Countries	Number of countries
180 EC	Andorra, Austria, Belgium-Fr, Belgium-NL, Croatia, Denmark, Germany*, Finland, France, Holy See, Iceland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Poland*, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia***, Sweden, Switzerland, UK-E/W/NI****.	21
180-240 EC	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, the Netherlands, Romania, Serbia, 'the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia'.	15
240 EC	Armenia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece, Lithuania, Russia, Spain, Turkey, UK-Scotland.	10

**Notes: Data for Azerbaijan and Ukraine n.a. \*Germany and Poland: Higher education law allows for 180-240 years. \*\*Slovenia: Data reflects situation in 2009/10. \*\*\*UK-EWNI: The model is not legally prescribed; there are programmes of 240 EC.**

**Source: Eurydice (2009); checked by national experts.**

Table Annex 2-2: Duration of the most common Master programme

Number of years	Countries	Number of countries
60 EC	Bulgaria, Serbia	2
60-120 EC	Albania, Belgium-FI, Belgium-Fr, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Romania, Spain, Switzerland (90-120 EC), The Netherlands, UK-E/W/NI, UK-Scotland (90 EC), 'the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia'.	17
120 EC	Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia*, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany**, Holy See, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Moldova, Norway, Poland**, Portugal**, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia****, Sweden, Turkey.	26
Other	Czech Republic (60-180 EC)	1

**Data on Azerbaijan and Ukraine n.a. \*Estonia: The few Masters degrees in universities of applied science encompass 60-90 EC. \*\*Germany and Portugal: Higher education law allows for 60-120 EC. \*\*\*Poland: Higher education law allows for 90-120 EC. \*\*\*\*Slovenia: Data refers to 2009/10.**

**Source: Eurydice (2009); checked by national experts.**

Table Annex 2-3: Study fields excluded from the two-cycle structure and percentage of students enrolled in these fields, by country

Countries	Fields excluded	% of students in these fields
Albania	Medicine, deontology, pharmacy, veterinary science	2%
Austria	Medicine, dentistry, veterinary science	3%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Primarily medicine, dental medicine, veterinary studies and pharmacy	13%
Bulgaria	Law, architecture and building, veterinary science	2%
Croatia	Medicine and surgery, veterinary, dental studies, Education, crafts, religion and theology, law, physical science and chemistry, mechanics, dental studies, pharmacy	n.a.
Czech Republic	Medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, primary teacher training*	15%
Estonia	Medicine, veterinary medicine, pharmacy, dentistry, architecture, civil engineering, class teacher teaching	6% (2007)
Finland	Medicine, dentistry	3%
France	Courses leading to medical, pharmaceutical and deontological professions	25%
Georgia	Medical Education	9% (2008/09)
Germany	law, medicine, dentistry, veterinary science, teaching degrees (in transition in some <i>Länder</i> ), theology	ca. 25%
Greece	Medicine, arts, agriculture, engineering	n.a.
Holy See	Theology**	n.a.
Hungary	Medicine, dental studies, pharmacy, veterinary science, architecture and building, law, crafts, design, performing arts, film	6%
Iceland	Medicine, old 'candidatus' degrees	n.a.
Ireland	Medicine***	3%
Italy	Medicine, surgery, veterinary medicine, architecture, pharmacy, dentistry (one cycle of 5-6 years), law, pedagogical studies	n.a.
Latvia	Medicine, dentistry, veterinary science, pharmacy	ca. 10%
Lithuania	Medicine, pharmacy, dental studies, veterinary studies	5%
Luxembourg	secondary teacher training	
Malta	Medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, architecture, accountancy, (all 5 years, in Architecture reform is ongoing)	n.a.
Moldova	Medicine, dentistry, public health, paediatrics, pharmacy, veterinary studies, architecture	n.a.
Montenegro	Medicine, dentistry, pharmacy	n.a.

Countries	Fields excluded	% of students in these fields
Norway	Medicine, dental studies, veterinary science, psychology, pharmacy, fish sciences, architecture	3% (2008)
Poland	Medicine, dentistry, veterinary science, law, actors courses, pharmacy**, psychology	12% (2007)
Romania	Medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, pharmacy, paramedical studies, architecture	8%
Russia	Medicine, specialist programmes	n.a.
Slovakia	Medicine, dentistry, theology, veterinary science, some engineering programmes, pharmacy	n.a.
Slovenia	Medicine, dentistry, veterinary studies, pharmacy, architecture, theology	n.a.
Serbia	Medicine, dentistry, veterinary science	7%
Spain	Medicine, deontology, veterinary medicine, pharmacy, architecture	<10%
Turkey	Medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine and pharmacy	<3%
'the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia'	Medicine, dental studies, veterinary studies, pharmacy	n.a.
UK-E/W/NI	Medicine, dental studies, veterinary studies	2%
UK-Scotland	Medicine, dental studies, veterinary studies	14%
Ukraine	Medicine, veterinary science	3%

**Notes: Portugal: In 'integrated Masters programmes' a first-cycle degree may be awarded upon request.**

**\*Czech Republic: In arts, architecture, psychology, law, and secondary teacher training, both patterns can be found. The percentage also includes students completing 'long Masters degrees'.**

**\*\*Holy See: Catholic theology follows a 5+2 structure, with the first long cycle seen as Masters-level by many. Whether this is in line with Bologna-type two-cycle structures is a matter of interpretation.**

**\*\*\*Ireland: Architecture, law, veterinary science, dentistry all follow a two-cycle structure, although the Bachelor programmes in architecture and dentistry are longer than many other Bachelor degrees. In Medicine, students formally complete their Bachelor degree after 300-360 EC and may then progress to a Masters programme.**

**Sources: Fields excluded: from Eurydice (2007), checked by national experts; enrolment in these fields: input from national experts.**

## Appendix 4 Additional table chapter 7

### Data for developments in diploma mobility<sup>1</sup>

	Total incoming mobility (% of total student population)			Total incoming mobility from EHEA countries (% of total student population)			Total incoming mobility from non EHEA countries (% of total student population)			Total outgoing mobility to other EHEA countries (% of total student population)		
	1999	2007	Increase	1999	2007	Increase	1999	2007	Increase	1999	2007	Increase
AL	2.0%	0.9%	-54.7%	1.0%	0.5%	-54.7%	1.0%	0.5%	-54.7%	8.9%	24.7%	177.7%
AM	2.2%	3.5%	59.6%	1.5%	2.4%	60.1%	0.7%	1.2%	58.6%	0.8%	3.2%	275.0%
AT <sup>2</sup>	11.8%	16.7%	41.6%	9.6%	14.7%	52.0%	2.2%	2.0%	-5.1%	4.1%	3.5%	-14.9%
AZ	1.5%	3.2%	106.0%	1.3%	2.5%	93.9%	0.3%	0.7%	163.1%	2.0%	3.2%	56.4%
BE	10.3%	10.5%	2.3%	6.1%	5.6%	-8.6%	4.2%	4.9%	18.1%	2.4%	2.3%	-2.0%
BG	3.1%	3.5%	12.9%	2.8%	3.2%	16.2%	0.3%	0.3%	-15.2%	2.7%	7.9%	198.1%
HR	0.5%	2.5%	422.8%	0.4%	2.4%	542.7%	0.1%	0.1%	-34.4%	7.6%	3.4%	-55.2%
CY	17.2%	25.1%	46.6%	6.3%	4.5%	-28.8%	10.9%	20.7%	90.1%	40.4%	98.5%	143.6%
CZ	2.0%	6.7%	240.0%	1.2%	5.8%	404.9%	0.8%	0.9%	10.5%	1.3%	1.7%	32.6%
DK	6.5%	9.0%	38.4%	3.0%	6.6%	122.8%	3.5%	2.4%	-32.3%	2.7%	1.6%	-41.5%
FI	1.8%	3.3%	76.6%	0.9%	1.6%	71.1%	0.9%	1.7%	82.2%	3.4%	1.6%	-52.1%
FR	6.5%	11.3%	73.9%	2.0%	2.5%	25.6%	4.5%	8.8%	95.4%	1.9%	1.8%	-4.1%
GA	0.3%	0.3%	15.6%	0.2%	0.3%	33.2%	0.0%	0.0%	-58.9%	1.1%	5.5%	381.6%
DE <sup>3</sup>	8.5%	11.3%	32.9%	5.5%	5.7%	3.6%	3.0%	5.7%	85.5%	2.0%	2.8%	39.9%
GR <sup>4</sup>	1.8%	3.5%	94.8%	1.3%	3.1%	132.0%	0.5%	0.4%	-11.2%	16.4%	4.9%	-70.1%
HU	3.2%	3.5%	10.3%	1.9%	2.9%	50.1%	1.3%	0.6%	-50.8%	1.9%	1.4%	-24.2%
IS	2.4%	4.9%	102.3%	2.0%	3.9%	95.7%	0.4%	1.0%	132.7%	22.3%	12.3%	-44.8%
IE	4.8%	8.8%	85.2%	2.3%	3.1%	34.8%	2.5%	5.7%	132.2%	11.9%	9.4%	-21.1%
IT	1.3%	2.8%	115.4%	0.9%	1.7%	89.1%	0.4%	1.1%	177.7%	2.2%	1.3%	-41.1%
LV	2.3%	1.1%	-50.8%	0.7%	0.9%	34.5%	1.6%	0.2%	-85.9%	1.2%	2.5%	109.5%
LI <sup>4</sup>	60.7%	86.5%	42.5%	48.5%	70.0%	44.4%	12.2%	16.5%	35.0%	104.7%	130.3%	24.5%
LT	0.4%	1.0%	114.2%	0.1%	0.5%	321.0%	0.3%	0.4%	35.9%	1.6%	3.0%	83.1%
LU <sup>8</sup>	24.0%	50.7%	111.1%	21.3%	42.4%	98.5%	2.6%	8.3%	212.4%	196.2%	157.1%	-19.9%
MT	5.2%	6.2%	18.2%	3.0%	3.6%	17.9%	2.2%	2.6%	18.5%	8.8%	9.9%	12.6%
NL	2.9%	6.4%	119.9%	1.7%	3.4%	94.9%	1.2%	3.0%	157.4%	2.3%	1.4%	-39.6%
NO	4.8%	7.3%	51.1%	2.1%	3.1%	47.9%	2.7%	4.1%	53.6%	5.1%	4.1%	-21.0%

	Total incoming mobility (% of total student population)			Total incoming mobility from EHEA countries (% of total student population)			Total incoming mobility from non EHEA countries (% of total student population)			Total outgoing mobility to other EHEA countries (% of total student population)		
	1999	2007	Increase	1999	2007	Increase	1999	2007	Increase	1999	2007	Increase
PL	0.4%	0.6%	49.0%	0.2%	0.3%	54.6%	0.2%	0.3%	42.8%	1.0%	1.4%	40.0%
PT <sup>5</sup>	3.1%	4.9%	56.2%	0.7%	0.8%	17.9%	2.4%	4.1%	67.1%	2.8%	2.7%	-3.3%
MD	1.6%	1.3%	-22.5%	1.0%	0.8%	-15.5%	0.6%	0.4%	-33.7%	4.8%	6.5%	34.3%
RO	3.3%	1.0%	-69.0%	2.5%	0.7%	-73.6%	0.7%	0.3%	-53.4%	1.7%	2.0%	13.7%
RU <sup>6</sup>	0.7%	0.6%	-1.3%	0.3%	0.2%	-28.1%	0.4%	0.5%	15.7%	0.2%	0.3%	70.8%
SK <sup>7</sup>	1.2%	0.9%	-20.2%	0.8%	0.7%	-11.4%	0.4%	0.2%	-39.1%	3.2%	10.7%	230.5%
SI	0.8%	1.0%	24.7%	0.8%	1.0%	29.6%	0.1%	0.0%	-40.7%	1.9%	1.7%	-12.4%
ES	1.8%	3.4%	82.5%	1.1%	1.4%	22.0%	0.7%	2.0%	174.8%	1.2%	1.1%	-11.7%
SE	7.3%	10.3%	41.9%	4.4%	4.2%	-5.4%	2.9%	6.2%	114.1%	2.6%	2.3%	-14.1%
CH	16.2%	19.3%	19.3%	12.5%	12.4%	-1.0%	3.6%	6.9%	89.3%	4.2%	3.9%	-4.9%
MK	0.8%	1.5%	91.3%	0.7%	1.5%	103.2%	0.1%	0.0%	-71.4%	4.3%	10.1%	136.7%
TU	1.3%	0.8%	-37.3%	0.7%	0.3%	-58.6%	0.5%	0.5%	-9.6%	2.5%	0.9%	-63.8%
UA	1.1%	1.1%	-0.4%	0.3%	0.2%	-29.2%	0.7%	0.8%	11.9%	0.3%	0.9%	154.4%
UK	11.2%	19.5%	74.2%	5.9%	6.9%	17.7%	5.3%	12.5%	137.1%	0.7%	0.5%	-24.4%

## Notes

1 For collecting the data, the following hierarchy was applied:

*A UNESCO Data on the basis of citizenship.*

If available, Unesco reports data after 2003 also on the basis of prior education or residency. We have used the citizenship criterion consistently where possible. This is not the best measure for mobility but the only measure through which we can compare the pre Bologna situation with 1999 and the only measure through which we can compare the growth between countries.

In some cases, the subdivision for EHEA/non-EHEA was not available for the figures based on the citizenship criterion; here we have used the same ratio as was reported by UNESCO for the residency/prior education criterion

*B Data reported by the National Experts, supported by national data sources*

*C Data reported by National Experts*

*D National Data Sources, if available in English*

If one of the data points (or adjacent years' data points) could not be found in these sources, the country was omitted from the mobility analysis

2 Data from Statistical Yearbook of Armenia (Available at [www.armstat.am](http://www.armstat.am)).

3 Total number of students based on OECD data.

4 Number of Non-EHEA students 1999 based on [www.statistics.gr](http://www.statistics.gr) data for 2001; Total number of students 1999 n.a.; Data for 2001 used instead.

5 Total number of foreign students for 1999, based on *Statistisches Jahrbuch*. Ratio between EHEA and non-EHEA not available, therefore the same ratio was used as for 2007–2008 (80:20); Total number of students for 2000; based on Eurostat.

6 Data for 1999 not available. Data for 2000 was used instead, based on Eurostat.

7 Total number of students; based on OECD data.

8 Data for 1999 not available. Data for 2000 used instead.

9 Data for 2007, based on data for University of Luxembourg ([http://www.wen.uni.lu/content/download/20133/250349/file/rapport\\_uni\\_version\\_web.pdf](http://www.wen.uni.lu/content/download/20133/250349/file/rapport_uni_version_web.pdf) page 94).

## Colophon

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- 12 Increasing equity of participation – Yasemin Yağcı

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