

# BOLOGNA PROCESS - NATIONAL REPORTS: 2005-2007

## A. Background information on your Higher Education system

### Details

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|-----------------------------|--|
| Country                     | Norway   |
| Date                        | 15 December 2006   |
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| Contributors to the report  | The national Bologna Group, cf. section 4, and the relevant departments of the Ministry of Education and Research. |

### Main achievements since Bergen

**1. Describe the important developments relating to the Bologna Process, including legislative reforms, since Bergen.**

On 1 April 2005, the Storting (the Norwegian parliament) passed a new Act relating to Universities and University Colleges (the Higher Education Act<sup>1</sup>).

The Act outlines a common framework for both state and private higher education institutions regarding:

- their authority to establish and close down study programmes,
- quality assurance of institutions and programmes,
- the rights and obligations of the students,
- the continuance of today's organisation of the state institutions with a large degree of organisational and financial autonomy,
- two models for the internal leadership structure, including the strengthening of the position of the Rector as head.

Model 1) The Rector is elected by academic staff (counting for 51–71 % of the votes), technical and administrative staff (5–25 % of the votes) and students (15–30 % of the votes). The Rector is the chairman of the Board.

Model 2) The Rector is appointed by the Board. The Rector is the administrative as well as the academic head of the institution.

- tuition fees. State higher education institutions do not charge tuition fees.

This forms part of the Quality Reform, the "Norwegian Bologna Process". The Quality Reform was implemented in all higher education institutions in Norway from the autumn of 2003. At present, the Quality Reform is being evaluated by two independent research centres, which will present their final report in January 2007. Based on the recommendations of the report, the Ministry of Education and Research will introduce a white paper to the *Storting* later in the same year.

### National organisation

**2. Describe any changes since Bergen in the structure of public authorities responsible for higher education, the main agencies/bodies in higher education and their roles.**

<sup>1</sup>[http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/Norway/050401\\_Higher\\_Education\\_Act\\_Norway.pdf](http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/Norway/050401_Higher_Education_Act_Norway.pdf).

Please include:

- whether higher education institutions (HEIs) report to /are overseen by different ministries
- how funds are allocated to HEIs
- areas for which HEIs are autonomous and self governing.

HEIs report to the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research. There are no major changes since Bergen. Cf. section 2.1 in the Norwegian National Report 2004-2005.

Through the Ministry of Education and Research, the government proposes to the Storting (national assembly) budgets that determine the annual funding level for each institution.

The allocation from the Ministry is provided as a block grant which the institutions may decide how to spend. The block grant has three elements. The “core funding” (on average 60 % of the grant) takes account of student numbers and the need for institutions, particularly the universities, to invest in infrastructure for research. In addition there is an output-based element, both for teaching (on average 25 %) and research (on average 15 %). In addition to the research funds forming part of the block grants from the Ministry, the Research Council of Norway allocates research funding on a competitive basis.

Allocations by the Ministry to state and private higher education institutions are based on the same system, but with different levels of grants.

There are no major changes in the areas in which HEIs are autonomous and self governing. Cf. section 8.1 in the Norwegian National Report 2004-2005.

### **3. Describe any changes since Bergen to the institutional structure.**

Please include:

- the number of public/private HEIs
- are there different types of institutions delivering higher education (i.e. academic/professional, university/non-university etc.)
- the number/percentage of students admitted in academic session 2006-2007 to each type of institution
- the extent to which different types institutions are covered by the same regulations.

There are no major changes in the institutional structure since Bergen, or in the number of public/private HEIs.

The Higher Education Act of 1 April 2005 was implemented on 1 August 2005. As of that day, both public and private HEIs are governed by the same law.

Most applications to undergraduate studies at state institutions and some private institutions of higher education in Norway are processed by a centralised application processing centre called Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS – “Samordna opptak”), which acts as a “clearing house” for the institutions. However, the assessment of the application and decision on admission is made at the institution.

The final report on admissions this year will be published in December 2006. However, a report published by UCAS on 1 August shows that a total of 64 352 applicants have been offered admission through UCAS for the academic year 2006-2007. This is approximately

the same as for the academic year 2005-2006. 28 200 applicants (43.8 %) at the universities, 939 applicants (1.5 %) at (four of the six) specialised university institutions, 2 464 applicants (3.8 %) in accredited programmes at private colleges and 32 649 applicants (50.7 %) at state university colleges.

## Partnership

4. Describe the structure which oversees the implementation of the Bologna Process in your country.

Please include:

- the membership and role of any national Bologna group (for example policy committee, promoters' group)
- the membership and role of students, staff trade unions, business and social partners in any national Bologna Group.

### **The national Bologna Group**

The national Bologna Group, consisting of the Ministry of Education and Research and representatives from all the major stakeholders: UHR (the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions), NPH (the Norwegian Network for Private Higher Education Institutions), NSU (the National Union of Students in Norway), StL (the Norwegian Association of Students), NOKUT (the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education), SIU (the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education), Forskerforbundet (the Norwegian Association of Researchers) and UNIO (The Confederation of Unions for Professionals, Norway), meets approximately five times a year. The group is a forum where important developments and documents in the Bologna Process are discussed, as well as for exchange of information between the stakeholders and the Ministry in relation to the Bologna Process.

### **Bologna Promoters**

A group of Bologna promoters was established in Norway in July 2005. The project will run until December 2006. SIU (the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education) coordinates the activities of the group. As the structural elements of the Bologna Process were implemented with the Quality Reform in 2003, the task of the group has consisted mainly in increasing the awareness and understanding of the Bologna Process within Norwegian HEIs. A key aim for the group has been to encourage, through counselling, Norwegian HEIs to adopt a strategy of European cooperation and participation in exchange programmes. Participation in the Erasmus programme has increased steadily from 2000/2001.

5. Describe the arrangements for involving students and staff trade union/representative bodies in the governance of HEIs.

Please include:

- precise references (preferably with web links) to any legislation (or equivalent) in place to ensure students and staff are represented on HEI governing bodies
- the role of students in the governance of HEIs
- the role of staff trade union/representative bodies in the governance of HEIs.

According to the Higher Education Act of 1 April 2005, student representatives should constitute at least 20 % of the total number of representatives in all executive bodies

(except the Board, see below) of both state and private institutions<sup>2</sup>.

The Board of public HEIs normally consists of 11 members, of which two members are elected from among the students, three members from among academic staff and one from among the technical and administrative staff. The Board of private HEIs shall have representatives from the students and the staff<sup>3</sup>.

Members of the boards that are elected from and among the staff are not elected as representatives of trade unions.

**6. Describe the measures in place to ensure the co-operation of business and social partners within the Bologna Process.**

Cf. section 4. In addition the Ministry runs a discussion forum related to EU education and research policies, with participation from social partners, where Bologna issues are also discussed.

## **B. Main stocktaking questions, including scorecard elements**

### **Degree system**

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle

**7. Describe the progress made towards introducing the first and second cycle.**

Please include:

- the percentage of the total number of students below doctoral level enrolled in the two cycle degree system in 2006/07.

The two-cycle degree system has been introduced throughout. In a few fields such as medicine and odontology the studies consist of integrated programmes leading directly to a second-cycle degree. Norway has also kept the degree “Høgskolekandidat” for short-cycle programmes within the first cycle.

Approximately 90 % of the students below doctoral level are enrolled in the two-cycle degree system in 2006/07.

(Eurydice )

Stage of implementation of the third cycle

**8. Describe the progress made towards implementing doctoral studies as the third Bologna cycle.**

Please include:

- the percentage of 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle students following structured doctoral programmes

<sup>2</sup> Cf.: [http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/Norway/050401\\_Higher\\_Education\\_Act\\_Norway.pdf](http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/Norway/050401_Higher_Education_Act_Norway.pdf), section 4-4.

<sup>3</sup> Cf.: the Higher Education Act, section 8-1, 9-2 and 9-3.

- the normal length of full-time doctoral studies
- the elements that are included in doctoral study programmes, e.g. do they include taught courses or independent research only
- the supervisory and assessment procedures for doctoral studies
- are doctoral studies included in your country's qualifications framework and are they linked to learning outcomes
- are interdisciplinary training and the development of transferable skills integrated in doctoral studies
- are credit points used in measuring workload in doctoral studies?

- 88 % of those who accomplished a doctoral degree in 2004 had followed a structured doctoral programme.
- The length of full-time doctoral studies is three years (i.e. three man-year equivalents). The majority of those who follow a structured programme are employed full-time for four years, but perform other duties for the institution (give lectures etc.) for ¼ of the time (i.e. one man-year equivalent).
- The time that is spent on taught courses differs from institution to institution, but as a general rule amounts to one term (30 ECTS).
- Usually the university appoints a single senior researcher as supervisor, but there can be more than one supervisor. A committee of at least three senior academics evaluates the thesis, of these at least one must come from outside the institution, and if possible one from abroad. Then the doctoral student gives one or more lectures and defends his thesis in public, where members of the reviewing committee are institutional opponents.
- The doctoral level is included in the proposal for a national qualifications framework for higher education which will be formally submitted in January 2007, cf. section 10.
- Interdisciplinary training and transferable skills have been integrated in some programmes. In the last few years interdisciplinary graduate schools have been established connected to centres of excellence. Usually transferable skills are not integrated, but skills in disseminating knowledge and communication technology are integrated in some programmes.
- Credit points are only used in measuring the workload of mandatory course work, cf. above.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Access to the next cycle

**9.** Describe the arrangements for access between the first and second cycles and second and third cycles.

Please include:

- the percentage of first cycle qualifications that give access to the second cycle
- if appropriate, the percentage of first cycle qualifications that give access to the third cycle
- the percentage of first cycle qualifications that give access to both the second and third cycles
- the percentage of second cycle qualifications that give access to the third cycle
- specify any first cycle qualifications that do not give access to the second cycle
- specify any second cycle qualifications that do not give access to the third cycle.
- specify any examples where bridging courses are necessary to transfer between

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| <p>cycles in the same subject area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>any measures planned to remove obstacles between cycles.</li> </ul>   |
| <p>First cycle qualifications do not give access to the third cycle.</p> <p>All first cycle qualifications give access to the second cycle, and all second cycle qualifications give access to the third cycle.</p> <p>Bridging courses are not necessary to transfer between cycles in the same subject area.</p>  |
| <p>Implementation of national qualifications framework</p> <p><b>10.</b> Describe the stage of implementation of the national qualifications framework to align with the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA.</p> <p>Please include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the stage of development of your national qualifications framework (for example: has your national QF been included in legislation or agreed between all relevant stakeholders; has a working group been established; have national outcomes-based descriptors of the main types of qualifications been prepared; has a timetable for implementation been agreed?)</li> <li>the extent to which your national qualifications framework is in line with the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA</li> <li>the role of stakeholders in the development of your national qualifications framework.</li> </ul>   |
| <p>The Act relating to universities and colleges (2005) contains a provision mandating the establishment of a national qualifications framework for higher education.</p> <p>The Ministry of Education and Research appointed a working group in 2005 to prepare the framework. The group includes representatives of higher education institutions, students and the Norwegian Agency for Quality in Education (NOKUT). A reference group with participation of all relevant stakeholders, including business and industry and trade unions, gives input to the work. In addition an open national conference has been held. Outcomes-based cycle descriptors have been developed. The proposal for a qualifications framework will be formally submitted to the Ministry in January 2007 and will then be subject to national consultation. The national framework has been developed on the basis of, and is designed to be in line with, the EHEA framework.</p> <p>The universities and university colleges are active partners in this work. The Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions organised a seminar on qualifications frameworks and learning outcomes already in March 2005, and learning outcomes-based programme descriptions are gradually being developed at the institutions.</p> |
| <p><b>11.</b> What measures are being taken to increase the employability of graduates with bachelor qualifications?</p> <p>Please include where possible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the percentage of first cycle graduates who found employment after graduating in 2005/06</li> <li>the percentage of first cycle graduates who continued into the second or third</li> </ul>   |

cycles in 2005/06

- the extent to which this is expected to change in 2006/2007.

The Quality Reform was implemented at all higher education institutions in Norway from the autumn of 2003. Thus, the first bachelor candidates following the new structure graduated in the spring of 2006. There are therefore no statistics yet on the fate of graduates with the new qualifications. At present, these questions are being evaluated as part of the evaluation of the reform.

However, since the degree structure was based on two cycles even before the reform and there is a long history of employment of candidates with first-cycle qualifications, this is not expected to be an issue.

## Quality assurance

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

National implementation of the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA

**12.** To what extent is your national system of QA already in line with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA?

Please include:

- the stage of implementation of the national quality assurance system in line with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA
- any action that has been taken to ensure that the national quality assurance system is in line with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA
- any deadlines set for taking action to ensure that the national quality assurance system is in line with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA
- any action planned to ensure that the national quality assurance system is in line with the standards and guidelines for QA in the EHEA.

After the adoption of the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA, the Ministry has consulted with the Norwegian Agency for Quality in Education (NOKUT) to make sure that the national quality assurance system is in line with the Standards and Guidelines. All the main elements except the peer review of the national QA agency had already been implemented in Norway before the Standards and Guidelines were adopted by the Ministers in Bergen, cf. sections 13-15 below.

- SG Part 1: Since 2004 all institutions of higher education are required by law to have internal quality assurance systems that meet criteria set by the Norwegian Agency of Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT). The criteria are considered to cover the European standard.
- SG Part 2: NOKUT's cyclic quality audits cover all institutions and are evaluations of the institutions' QA systems and the quality work and documentation that these systems generate. The first cycle of evaluations will be concluded by the end of 2007. NOKUT's external evaluations are considered to be in line with SG Part 2 on all counts, with some doubts remaining over 2.6 (Follow-up procedures). In the Norwegian system, NOKUT is not legally empowered to enforce follow-up measures or back reporting, as long as evaluations have an overall positive result. (Negative results have direct

consequences.) However, institutions are requested to report back to NOKUT on how they implement recommendations for improvement. Also, documented weaknesses that are revealed in the evaluations will be addressed in the next cycle.

System-wide analyses (2.8) have not been carried out yet but are planned for 2007.

- SG Part 3: NOKUT's formal position and practice are judged to be in line with the European standard, including the demand that the agency has an internal QA system in place. The first peer review (external evaluation) of NOKUT will be carried out in 2007. The mandate will be set by the Ministry and will include an examination in relation to the standards and guidelines for QA in the EHEA.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Stage of development of external quality assurance system

**13.** Describe the quality assurance system operating in your country.

Please include:

- the stage of implementation of your external quality assurance system
- the scope of your external quality assurance system: does it operate at a national level; does it cover all higher education
- which of the following elements are included in your external quality assurance system:
  - internal assessment
  - external review
  - publication of results
- whether procedures have been established for the peer review of the national agency(ies) according to the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA.

The primary responsibility for quality assurance rests with the higher education institutions themselves. The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, NOKUT is an independent government body, established by law with the aim of monitoring and developing the quality of higher education in Norway through evaluation, accreditation and recognition of quality assurance systems, institutions and study programmes. The Norwegian system operates with a close link between internal and external quality assurance. *Internal quality assurance* in the institutions must adhere to nationally set standards and will be externally evaluated by NOKUT. These *institutional audits* must take place at any institution with maximum 6-year intervals. The external quality assurance system covers all higher education and operates at national level.

This division of responsibilities between the Ministry and NOKUT is defined in the Higher Education Act. NOKUT has the following responsibilities:

- To assess the quality assurance systems of the higher education institutions based on the requirements laid down in the Ministry of Education's Regulations governing NOKUT and the supplementary criteria stipulated by NOKUT itself. NOKUT shall through quality audits, carried out in regular cycles, evaluate and pass judgement on all the accredited institutions' internal quality assurance systems. In addition to acting as a control mechanism, the audits are to be conducted in a manner beneficiary to quality development.
- To accredit private higher education institutions.
- To accredit state higher education institutions applying for a change of status.

- To accredit new study programmes at institutions which do not have the right to establish such programmes.
- To review accreditations already given. Any institution can have accreditations revoked or suspended, for the entire institution as such or for individual programmes, following a negative assessment in this type of evaluation. The evaluations are conducted by experts appointed by NOKUT.
- To recognise foreign education/diplomas. NOKUT includes the Norwegian ENIC/NARIC unit, the Lisbon Recognition Convention information unit.

All reports from external quality reviews are published.

Higher education must be accredited. *Institutional accreditation* empowers the institution to provide programmes at certain levels, depending on institutional category. Programmes at a level that is not covered by the institutional accreditation must have *programme accreditation*. All accreditations are carried out by NOKUT.

Accreditations are not given for a defined period. They are valid until revoked. Accreditation (both institutional and programme) can be revoked through a process of *accreditation revision* as described above. Revisions are conducted on indication of weak quality, usually detected in the audits. Or they may be conducted as random tests. All the state institutions were considered as accredited at the time of the establishment of NOKUT (Cf. section 3.2 in the Norwegian National Report 2004-2005).

In 2005 it was decided that not only accredited institutions, but all institutions that provide at least one accredited programme of higher education, must have internal quality assurance systems according to the given standard. These systems will be periodically evaluated through institutional audits carried out by NOKUT. The first cycle of audits is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2008.

NOKUT makes its decisions independently of the Ministry of Education and Research. However, the Ministry may instruct NOKUT to undertake individual evaluations with the purpose of investigating, assessing and developing the quality of Norwegian higher education, for example thematic reviews. .

The first peer review of NOKUT will be carried out in 2007 in accordance with the standards and guidelines for QA in the EHEA.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Level of student participation

**14.** Describe the level of student participation in your national quality assurance system.

Please include:

- whether students are included in the following aspects of quality assurance:
  - the governance of national agencies for QA
  - as full members or observers in external review teams
  - as part of the decision making process for external reviews
  - in the consultation process during external reviews (eg arrangements for external reviewers to consult with students)
  - in internal evaluations.

Regarding student participation in NOKUT, the Higher Education Act says:

*“The board shall be appointed by the King and shall consist of eight members. One member shall be a student. The board’s term of office shall be four years. Student members are appointed for two years.”*

The Board of NOKUT has one student member out of a total of eight. A deputy student member has full rights to take part in and speak at any meeting. In that way there will be two student members present at the Board meetings.

Whether NOKUT appoints students as members of review teams will depend on the purpose of the review in question. There will be one student member (out of four members in total) in review teams for evaluation of institutional quality assurance systems (auditing). There will also be one student member in expert panels for institutional accreditation (five members in total) and in panels for reaccreditation (four members in total).

As the Board of NOKUT is the decision maker in appointing review teams, there will always be a student member in the decision making process.

The student members are full members of the teams and participate in the process on the same basis as other experts.

Students take part in internal evaluations through regular student evaluations, and student representatives take part in the development of internal QA procedures. Students are interviewed by review teams as part of institutional and programme evaluations.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Level of international participation

**15.** Describe the level of international participation in your national quality assurance system.

Please include:

- whether there is international participation in the following aspects of quality assurance
  - the governance of national agencies for quality assurance
  - the external evaluation of national quality assurance agencies
  - teams for external review, either as members or observers
  - membership of ENQA
  - membership of any other international network.

One out of eight Board members has to be from abroad. The Board will, however, communicate in a Scandinavian language (Norwegian, Danish or Swedish). At present, one of NOKUT’s Board members is a Pro-Rector from Denmark.

The peer review of NOKUT in 2007 will be conducted by an international panel.

Whenever NOKUT appoints teams for external reviews, there will be only full members and no observers. As full members the teams for audits, institutional accreditation and re-

accreditation will have at least one non-Norwegian member.

NOKUT has been a full member of ENQA since it was established in 2003. NOKUT has previously been represented as member of the Board of ENQA and as a member of ENQA's Board of appeals. NOKUT has arranged and participated in ENQA workshops and projects.

NOKUT is a member of

- the Nordic Quality Assurance Network in Higher Education (NOQA) since 2003
- the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA) since 2003
- the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) since 2003/2004
- ENIC/NARIC

In addition, NOKUT has signed bilateral agreements with the Spanish Quality Assurance Agency (ANECA) in 2003 and the South African quality assurance agency, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), in 2005.

### Recognition of degrees and study periods

(Scorecard and Eurydice )

Stage of implementation of Diploma Supplement

**16.** Describe the stage of implementation of the Diploma Supplement in your country.

Please include:

- the percentage of students graduating in 2007 who will receive a Diploma Supplement
- which of the following apply to Diploma Supplements issued in your country:
  - issued in a widely spoken European language
  - free of charge
  - automatically
  - correspond to the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format.

It has been compulsory for state owned HEIs to issue the Diploma Supplement since January 2003 and for private HEIs since August 2005. Every graduating student receives a Diploma Supplement automatically and free of charge, corresponding to the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format, in English.

(Scorecard)

National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention

**17.** Describe the stage of implementation of the main principles and later supplementary documents of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

Please include:

- whether your country has ratified the convention (including depositing ratification instrument at either CoE or UNESCO)

- whether all appropriate legislation complies with the legal framework of the Convention and the later Supplementary Documents
- which of the following principles are applied in practice
  - applicants' right to fair assessment
  - recognition if no substantial differences can be proven
  - demonstration of substantial differences, where recognition is not granted
  - provision of information about your country's HE programmes and institutions
- whether you have a fully operational ENIC
- any action being taken to ratify or fully implement the Convention and the later Supplementary Documents.

Norway ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention in 1999. Our legislation fully complies with the Convention and the later Supplementary Documents. The Norwegian ENIC-NARIC office is fully operational and situated in NOKUT.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Stage of implementation of ECTS

**18.** Describe the credit and accumulation system operating in your country.

Please include:

- the stage of implementation of ECTS in academic year 2006/2007
- the percentage of first and second cycle programmes using ECTS in academic year 2006/2007
- how any other credit or accumulation system in use relates to ECTS: is it compatible with ECTS; what is the ratio between national and ECTS credits.

The national credit system is based on the ECTS system, since the Quality reform in 2003. Thus, all study programmes use ECTS in the academic year 2006/2007.

**19.** Has your country produced a national plan to improve the quality of the process associated with the recognition of foreign qualifications? If so, give a brief description of the plan and attach a copy.

A national plan has been developed and is submitted together with this report. A survey conducted among the Norwegian HEIs shows that the awareness of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention with its supplementary texts as well as the degree of implementation is reasonably high, but varies with the size of the institution. One proposal is therefore to include criteria related to recognition procedures in the requirements for approval of institutional quality assurance systems, cf. sections 12-13.

## Lifelong Learning

(Scorecard)

Recognition of prior learning

**20.** Describe the measures in place to recognise prior learning, including non-formal and informal learning.

Please include:

- the stage of development of any procedures or national guidelines to recognise prior learning
- a description of any procedures or national guidelines for assessing prior learning as a basis for access to HE
- a description of any procedures or national guidelines for allocating credits as a basis of exemption from some programme requirements.

Rights assuring educational opportunities:

Procedures for recognition of prior learning are in operation both at the upper secondary level and in higher education.

- Adults with a right to complete education at secondary level can have their non-formal and informal learning assessed. This assessment can give access to secondary schools or can, in some cases, allow the applicant to shorten the study period.
- Applicants aged 23 or above who have at least five years of relevant work experience, or a mixture of education and work experience, and who possess competences in six key subjects, fulfil the general (minimum) requirements for admission to higher education.
- Adults aged 25 and above can have their non-formal and informal learning assessed in order to allow them to study a specific subject (opposed to fulfilling “general admission requirements”). In addition, exemption from programme requirements can be granted so as to shorten the period of study. In either case the assessment is done by the institution in which the applicant wants to enrol. Students admitted on the basis of recognition of prior learning who have completed one year of higher education, are considered to fulfil the general admission requirements and may apply to other programmes on this basis.

**21.** Describe legislative and other measures taken by your country to create opportunities for flexible learning paths in higher education.

Please include:

- any flexibility in entry requirements
- any flexible delivery methods
- any modular structures of programmes.

There are no major changes since Bergen, but two features of the Competence Reform of relevance to higher education do not appear clearly in the Norwegian National Report 2004-2005.

One is the introduction of statutory study leave; another is the possibility for higher education institutions, on the basis of individual assessment and application, to award credits towards specific study programmes for informal and non-formal qualifications, cf. section 20.

Another feature of Norwegian higher education of relevance which was not mentioned in the 2005 report is that since 1981, there is mandatory recognition of study programmes across institutions and institutional categories in higher education, thus facilitating inter-institutional student mobility. In general the Norwegian higher education system is well integrated, with easy transfer between institutions. After the Quality Reform, study programmes at all levels are largely modular.

For flexibility in entry requirements, see section 20 above.

It might also be worth mentioning that in 2006 the Ministry of Education and Research has established a Team for Lifelong Learning with members from all its departments. The team has been given a mandate to follow and coordinate policy making in a few specific areas, and to prepare a report on LLL in Norway, to be presented by the end of 2006. This report will describe the status of development, analyse more fully the challenges, and propose directions for future work concerning LLL in Norway.

Building on the reforms of the educational system from the past decades, and incorporating the continuing work in the wake of these reforms, the report will formulate a Norwegian “comprehensive and coherent strategy for LLL”.

Distance education emerged in traditional universities and colleges around 1990. Throughout the first part of the 1990s the activity was characterised by enthusiastic individual academics with a strong belief in the importance of making higher education accessible to other groups than traditional students.

Today, most higher education institutions in Norway offer distance education, and the activity is increasing. There are almost 18 000 distance learners in higher education. The volume of off-campus activity is still marginal compared to on-campus teaching, but the activity is now more firmly grounded in institutional strategies and expressed in central policy documents and plans. To stimulate and coordinate the activities within the field of lifelong and flexible ICT-supported learning in higher education, the government established the Norwegian Agency for Flexible Learning in Higher Education (SOFF) in 1990. In 2004 the agency was merged with the Norwegian University Network for Lifelong Learning into a new organisation, *Norway Opening Universities – NOU*. The main tasks of Norway Opening Universities are:

- Stimulating the development of lifelong and flexible learning in Norwegian higher education.
- Generating and sharing knowledge.
- Being a policy advisor for the Ministry in this field.

The Ministry has proposed new and more flexible admission requirements to specially designed programmes in engineering from the autumn of 2007, i.e. on the basis of completed relevant vocational training from upper secondary school without the academic supplement. The final decision will be made after a formal consultation (January 2007). At the same time it has been proposed to extend the arrangement to other fields of study on a trial basis.

## Joint degrees

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Establishment and recognition of joint degrees

**22.** Describe the legislative position on joint degrees in your country.

Please include:

- the stage of implementation of any legislation to establish joint programmes

- whether joint degrees are allowed and encouraged in legislation
- whether joint degrees are allowed and encouraged in all three cycles
- an indication of the percentage of HEIs that have established joint programmes and are awarding nationally recognised degrees jointly with HEIs of other countries
- any action being taken to encourage or allow joint programmes.

According to the Higher Education Act from 2005 and subsequent administrative regulations, Norwegian HEIs are free to issue joint, double and multiple degrees in cooperation with other HEIs both in Norway and abroad. Joint degrees are allowed in all three cycles.

Standards laid down by the Ministry make up the framework of NOKUT's criteria for accreditation of both national and international joint degrees. All HEIs have to report their joint degrees to NOKUT.

## C. Current issues in Higher Education

### Higher education and research

**23.** Describe the relationship between higher education and research in your country - what percentage of research is carried out in HEIs; are any steps being taken to improve the synergy between HE and other research sectors.

Higher education and research are well integrated. In 2003 the higher education institutions, in terms of resources spent, carried out 49 % of all basic research, 36 % of all applied research and 15 % of all development work in the country, i.e. 27.5 % of all R&D.

Policy steps are being taken to further improve the cooperation between higher education institutions and the business sector; among these are programmes of the Research Council of Norway. Another policy step, which both provides funding and promotes collaboration, is a scheme where donations from enterprises to research of at least NOK 5 million (approximately €625 000) will be matched with a state contribution at 25 per cent of the donation.

The government's White Paper No. 20 to the Storting (2004-2005) outlines key issues concerning the synergy between HE and other research sectors. Among other things the report focuses on the increased importance of commercialisation and communication of research results, cooperation between different types of research institutions and the role of the private sector and company-based research.

Measures taken in this respect include legal changes that enable the research institutions to hold the legal rights to ideas or concepts (or intellectual property) produced by researchers at their institutions (Proposition No. 67 to the Odelsting<sup>4</sup> 2001-2002). Furthermore, Technology Transfer Offices (TTO) have been established at all universities and major research institutions to help researchers and their ideas/research results in the commercialisation process, and to select the most viable projects. One important source of funding for the TTOs and other commercialisation projects is the FORNY programme, administered by the Research Council of Norway in cooperation with Innovation Norway. This programme's main objective is to stimulate increased wealth creation in Norway

<sup>4</sup> One of the two chambers of the Storting (the Norwegian legislative assembly).

through commercialising research-based business ideas.

The business sector plays a vital role in R&D, both through research that takes place within the sector and through cooperation with for instance HEIs and the research institute sector. To encourage involvement in R&D from this sector the government has established Skattefunn, a tax credit scheme, which was launched in 2002. The Research Council of Norway administers the scheme, but Innovation Norway and the tax authorities are also important players. The scheme generated tax subsidies for research and development expenditures in Norwegian companies amounting to NOK 1.2 billion in 2005 (approx. € 146 million). Another measure taken to increase the cooperation between the HE and business sectors is the industrial doctorate scheme, which was also proposed in White Paper no. 20 to the Storting (2004-2005). The Ministry is currently considering a proposal for such a scheme developed by the Research Council of Norway in cooperation with the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions. This is mainly a system of subsidies for industrial candidates to take a Ph.D. within the ordinary Ph.D. programme at the universities.

Another important actor in R&D is the research institute sector, which traditionally has had a stronger focus on user-initiated research and cooperation with the private sector. As the HEIs also move towards more professional commercialisation of research output, cooperation between these sectors increases. The White Paper mentioned above calls for a new funding system for the institute sector including, among other things, incentives for cooperation with the HE sector. Recently some smaller private research institutes have been taken over and are now owned by HEIs.

**24.** What percentage of doctoral candidates take up research careers; are any measures being taken to increase the number of doctoral candidates taking up research careers?

The number of doctoral candidates taking up research careers varies widely between different fields. Of those who received their doctoral degree between 1998 and 2002, 58 % had taken up a post in the higher education sector or in a research institute in 2003. Data on the number of doctoral candidates going to a research career in business and industry are not available. Between one and six years after receiving their doctoral degree, 40 % of those studying technology had taken up a post in higher education or at a research institute, while the figures for other fields were 50 % in medicine, 60 % in mathematics/natural sciences, 72 % in the humanities and 77 % in the social sciences.

### **The social dimension**

**25.** Describe any measures being taken in your country to widen access to quality higher education.

Please include:

- any financial or other measures to widen access in higher education amongst socially disadvantaged groups
- any measures in place to monitor the impact of policies to widen access to higher education, including results if possible
- any further measures planned, following evaluation of the widening access measures already in place.

The normal requirement for access to higher education is completion of a 3-year study

programme in general education at the upper secondary level. The upper secondary vocational track offers two paths into tertiary education: by completing an upper secondary vocational programme and then doing a supplementary one-year course of general education; or by transfer from a vocational programme to a general education track part way through upper secondary schooling.

From 2001 onwards, the universities and the university colleges have the right to admit students without formal entrance qualifications on the basis of age (25 years or more) and a combination of formal, informal and non-formal learning. The institution decides if the applicant is qualified for the study programme concerned. (Cf. section 10.2. in the Norwegian Bologna report 2004 - 2005 and section 20 above).

Admission to higher education is based on a system of points calculated on the basis of grades from upper secondary school. Additional points may be earned through, *inter alia*, examinations in other subjects at universities and university colleges and completed military service. In addition there are age points. However, a quota of places, normally 40 %, is set aside for candidates directly from upper secondary school. For certain groups, assessment for admission is possible by other criteria than the points system. All students must fulfil the requirements for admission, but disabled students may be assessed by different criteria suited to their situation.

The Higher Education Act emphasises the improvement of the student's learning environment and especially mentions disabled students' prospects of completing their studies.

To promote equality of access to higher education, the student welfare organisations offer housing, canteens, day care centres, medical care etc. These services are financed with state support as well as by a mandatory fee for all students. The students may hold the majority on the board of the welfare organisations.

The State Educational Loan Fund was established in 1947 in order to widen the social recruitment to higher education. Scholarships and student loans make up about 33 % of the total public expenditure on higher education (according to the OECD Thematic Review of Tertiary Education, Norway country note, p. 49 (September 2006)). Grants and loans are means-tested to the student's or spouse's income. The loans are interest-free during the study period, and students are entitled to financial aid for a maximum of eight years. After completion of the studies, a maximum of 40 % of the loan is converted into a grant. Student financial aid is regulated in the annual state budget. In 2006, the maximum combined loan and grant per person was about 81 400 NOK (approx. €9 900) .

For students who have to move to be able to study and are aged below 26, a so-called travel grant is given. This sum is distance-dependent and is supposed to cover two round trips between the student's permanent place of residence and the education institution. The maximum grant is about 900 Euro per year.

State higher education institutions do not charge tuition fees, but loans are available to cover all, or part, of the tuition fee at private higher education institutions. In 2005 Statistics Norway carried out a survey among Norwegian students in order to gather knowledge of their living conditions, social networks, health, and the extent to which they work alongside their studies. The results were published in the summer of 2006. State-owned HEIs are required to have plans for widening access through recruiting immigrants.

The plans, and the results of the plans, must be reported regularly back to the Ministry.

**26.** Describe any measures to help students complete their studies without obstacles related to their social or economic background.

Please include:

- any guidance or counselling services and any other measures to improve retention
- any measures in place to monitor the impact of policies to improve retention, including results if possible
- any further measures planned, following evaluation of the retention measures already in place.

Following the Quality Reform in 2003, study programmes are more structured. There is regular guidance and monitoring of each student. An individual Study Plan containing both the student's and the institution's mutual commitments, is signed by both parties. This is to secure that the students receive adequate guidance, and to improve retention.

The student welfare organisations also offer a wide range of services helping students to complete their studies, cf. section 25. See also the description of the study finance system in the same section.

## **Mobility**

**27.** Describe any measures being taken to remove obstacles to student mobility and promote the full use of mobility programmes.

Please include:

- any measures to increase inward student mobility
- any measures to increase outward student mobility.

The students are entitled to bring their loans and grants (cf. section 25) abroad on all study programmes; both as "free movers" and on exchange programmes and full degree programmes at both undergraduate and graduate level, provided that the study programmes and the education institution are officially recognised by the relevant authority in the country in question. In addition, students may get travel support and tuition support for studies abroad.

Exchange programmes like Erasmus, Leonardo and the Nordic Nordplus programme are crucial tools for promoting and influencing student mobility both for incoming and outgoing students. The aim is to get more students to take a period of study abroad as an integrated part of their Norwegian degree in order to obtain a balance with the proportionately higher number of Norwegian students taking a full degree abroad. For incoming students the Norwegian government has established fellowship programmes for developing countries. Many of the incoming students are on these schemes.

One example is the Quota Programme for students from developing countries and countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. At present, 1100 students can get financial support through this programme for the period it takes to obtain a degree in Norway. (As a main rule, the maximum period is four years.) The financial assistance (loan) which these students have received does not have to be repaid if they return to their

home country and take up residence there.

The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education (SIU) was established as an administrative body under the Ministry of Education and Research in 2004. Its assignments comprise the administration of Norwegian participation in mobility programmes in Europe and on a global scale, the promotion of Norway as a country of research and education, and the counselling of HEIs and the government in matters regarding internationalisation.

The Norwegian government has decided that as a general rule, each student enrolled at a higher education institution is entitled to a period of study abroad as an integrated part of their Norwegian degree programme. The home institutions are responsible for organising these stays abroad.

Student mobility is one of the indicators for the result-based component of the financing system. The new funding formula for higher education institutions incorporates measures designed to promote internationalisation. In 2006, the institutions receive NOK 5 600 (approx. €680) per incoming and outgoing exchange student. The aim is increased, as well as more balanced, mobility and exchange.

In 2001, the “quarantine clause” of the Immigration regulations was abolished. There used to be a quarantine of five years after graduation before foreign citizens graduating from Norwegian higher education institutions could apply for a residence and work permit in Norway. This is no longer the case.

**28.** Are portable loans and grants available in your country? If not, describe any measures being taken to increase the portability of grants and loans.

Norwegian loans and grants are portable.

**29.** Describe any measures being taken to remove obstacles to staff mobility and promote the full use of mobility programmes.

Please include:

- any measures to increase inward staff mobility
- any measures to increase outward staff mobility.

There are no major changes since Bergen. Cf. sections 7.2 and 7.3 in the Norwegian National report 2004-2005.

### **The attractiveness of the EHEA and cooperation with other parts of the world**

**30.** Describe any measures being taken in your country to promote the attractiveness of the EHEA.

The Bologna ministers stated in the Bergen communiqué in 2005 that the European Higher Education Area should be open and attractive to other parts of the world. In order to share experience with non-European countries within a satisfactory framework, they asked the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG) to develop **a strategy on the external dimension of the Bologna Process**. A working group chaired by Director General Toril Johansson of the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research has coordinated the work to develop the strategy, now called “The Bologna Process in a global setting”. 11 countries and 8

organisations have been working together to present a document for adoption by the ministers in London.

To provide significant input for this work, three official Bologna seminars have been held. The third seminar was hosted by the Nordic countries in cooperation with the Nordic Council of Ministers in Oslo on 28 - 29 September 2006.

## Future challenges

### 31. Give an indication of the main challenges ahead for your country.

#### **The Bologna Process in a global setting**

Norway is working for a balanced strategy when it comes to competitiveness, attractiveness, cooperation and capacity building. The strategy must be flexible in relation to which area of the world Europe is approaching. The development of a strategy for the Bologna Process in a global setting ought to be seen in connection with the OECD/UNESCO guidelines for quality provision of Cross-Border Higher Education.

Given a positive decision by the Ministers in London, Norway will contribute to giving concrete content to the strategy and also be an active partner in the implementation process.

#### **Mobility**

A main challenge for Norway is to make students and researchers exploit the opportunities offered by the European Higher Education Area more extensively. Increased participation in the Erasmus programme is a goal, as well as increased mobility through other channels.

#### **Time for research**

The evaluations of the Quality Reform in Norway have so far shown that academic staff claim that there has been less time to do research after implementation of the reform. It is a major challenge for Norway to increase research in both the public and especially the private sector.

#### **Co-operation with business**

The OECD points out that Norwegian HEIs should give higher priority to the contribution they make to the economy.

*With the prospect of immense changes in the economic environment in particular, it is critically important that tertiary education gives higher priority to the contribution it makes to the economy. That depends on initiative and enterprise within universities and a willingness to co-operate with business. We think there is more to be achieved here.<sup>5</sup>*

The scope of cooperation with business and industry varies between the HEIs. However, they take this challenge seriously and have placed it high on the agenda for development. There are already very good examples of universities as major partners for regional development.

<sup>5</sup> OECD Thematic Review of Tertiary Education, Norway country note, p. 38 (September 2006)