



Completed National Reports and National Strategies for the Social Dimension should be sent to the Bologna Secretariat by email (secr@bologna2009benelux.org) no later than

1 November 2008.

PART I

BOLOGNA PROCESS TEMPLATE FOR NATIONAL REPORTS: 2007-2009

Notes:

BFUG members are strongly encouraged to consult other stakeholders about the contents of their National Report.

Please complete your National Report in English using this template (shaded areas) and return it to the Secretariat by email. Where appropriate, please include precise web references to legislation or other documentation. Please add comments as appropriate under each question to describe the current situation. Please try to keep text brief, while aiming to answer all questions comprehensively.

National Reports will be posted on the Bologna website in their original form.

Information from National Reports will form the basis of the Stocktaking Report to be presented to Ministers when they meet in April 2009.

Details

Country	LATVIA
Date	01.Nov 2008
BFUG member (one name only) Position	Gita Revalde Head of Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education and Science
Email address	gita.revalde@izm.gov.lv

Contributors to the report	<p>Tatjana Volkova, President, Latvian rectors' Council</p> <p>Andrejs Rauhvargers, Secretary General, Rectors' Council,</p> <p>Baiba Ramina, Head, Latvian ENIC/NARIC</p> <p>Juris Dzelme, Head, Latvian Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre,</p> <p>All higher education institutions</p>
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1. Main developments since London 2007

Please describe the important developments relating to the Bologna Process, including legislative reforms and changes in institutional structures, since the London meeting in 2007.

<p>1. During the period of 2007-2009 a draft Law on Higher education (HE) has been prepared which provides legal background for several important changes in the implementation of the Bologna process action lines such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - establishing a national qualifications framework, - introducing a learning outcomes based approach and establishing internal quality assurance systems in higher education institutions which are using learning outcomes as a basis for quality improvements, - creation of a system for recognition of prior learning, takes up the main principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention into national legislation, - replacing the national credit system with ECTS which means a change of the volume of one credit- Latvian credit used to be 1,5 times bigger than an ECTS credit (i.e. the yearly workload of students was 40 Latvian credits). As well, according to the draft law, credits will be linked with learning outcomes. - allowing creation of joint programmes, establishing and recognition of joint degrees. <p>The law has been accepted by the Government and in the first reading also by the Parliament. This allows forecasting that the law could be adopted in the first half of 2009.</p> <p>2. Higher education institutions have further consolidated the three-cycle degree system.</p> <p>3. Date for the assessment of the Quality assurance Agency has been set and self-evaluation report has been submitted.</p> <p>4. A major project funded from EU Social fund has been planned for the implementation of all the Bologna action lines listed in point 1.</p>

2. Partnership

Please describe the structure which oversees the implementation of the Bologna Process in your country.

The implementation is overseen by the Ministry of Education and Science and the Rectors' Council. So far the Bologna promoters' group was also used as the national follow-up group, which was considered reasonable in a small country. Currently a separate follow-up group is being established.

a) Does your country have a national working group for Bologna follow-up¹ Yes

No

b) Does your national Bologna follow-up group include representatives of Ministry Yes

No

Rectors' conference Yes

No

Academic staff Yes

No

Students Yes

No

Staff trade unions Yes

No

National Quality Assurance Agency Yes

No

Employers Yes

No

Other (please specify) _____

c) Does your country have a Bologna promoters' group² Yes No

d) Does your national Bologna promoters' group include representatives of Ministry Yes

No

Rectors' conference Yes

No

Academic staff Yes

No

Students Yes

No

Staff trade unions Yes

No

National Quality Assurance Agency Yes

No

¹ A group that develops policy proposals for implementing the Bologna Process

² A group that supports/advises HEIs on implementation of the Bologna Process

Employers

Yes

No

Other (please specify) _____

Please add any additional comments if necessary:

The leadership of Bologna process in Latvia is shared by the Ministry of Education and Science and Latvian Rectors' Council. Bologna promoters have often acted also as implementers of the process. It is however foreseen to establish a Bologna working group for developments until and beyond 2010.

DEGREE SYSTEM

3. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle

a) Please describe the progress made towards introducing the first and second cycles.

First and second cycles have been introduced already before 1999 and shaped to the Bologna principles soon after changes in Latvian legislation adopted in 2000 to introduce Bologna reforms. According to national decisions, medicine has been left out of the Bologna structure. Apart from that, a limited number of programmes, especially in teacher training, remain as 4-5- year programmes without division in two cycles. As well, there is some number of post-bachelor programmes that prepare for profession and lead to graduate or postgraduate diplomas.

b) Please give the percentage of the total number of all³ students below doctoral level enrolled in the two cycle degree system in 2008/09.

Total number of all students below doctoral level	Number enrolled in the two cycle degree system in 2008/09 ⁴	% of all students enrolled in the two cycle degree system in 2008/09
104796	994485	90,2%

c) Please add comments which accurately describe the current situation regarding implementation of the two cycle system in your country:

The transition to a two-cycle system has been carried out in the whole higher education system already several years ago.

- 1) Besides master's programmes the law still allows professional post-bachelor programmes that lead to a professional postgraduate diploma rather than a master's degree (e.g. in engineering).
- 2) programmes in medicine and dentistry are not organized in two cycles but stay 6 or 5 year programmes respectively.

³ "All" = all students who could be involved in 2-cycle system i.e. NOT those in doctoral programmes and NOT those in short HE programmes. *NB Students of ALL study fields are taken into account*

⁴ If countries have more recent data available after November 1, they can provide an update but no later than January 15, 2009

3) Teacher training is organized either as a bachelor degree plus a post-bachelor graduate diploma or in some cases as one programme leading to a bachelor degree and professional diploma at the same time.

4. Stage of implementation of the third cycle

Please describe the progress made towards implementing doctoral studies as the third Bologna cycle.

Please include:

- the percentage of doctoral candidates following structured doctoral programmes including both taught courses and independent research
- the normal length of full-time doctoral studies
- other elements⁵ apart from independent research that are included in doctoral study programmes
- the supervisory and assessment procedures for doctoral studies
- information on whether doctoral studies are included in your country's qualifications framework and linked to learning outcomes
- information on whether interdisciplinary training and the development of transferable skills are integrated in doctoral studies
- information on whether credit points are used in measuring workload in doctoral studies.
- Information on the status of the doctoral students (students, early stage researchers, both)

- In Latvia all (100%) of those doctoral candidates who are enrolled in the status of students study in the doctoral programmes. However, it is still also possible to defend doctoral thesis on the basis of research done working at a research institution.
- Official full time duration of the doctoral programmes is 3 years but the actual time required to defend thesis is often prolonged to 4 years.
- Doctoral study programmes may have taught courses but the main emphasis is put on the research work. The taught courses may include high-level courses of the chosen subject, as well as courses in related subjects, in foreign language, in research methodology of the particular field of research, training in writing scientific publications and thesis.
- the supervisory and assessment procedures:
regular meetings with the supervisor of the doctoral studies,
annual (or more frequent) attestations of doctoral students where the progress in theoretical studies, research work and thesis writing is assessed
- The qualifications framework (QF) in Latvia has been developed and it includes a descriptor for the doctoral degrees. However, the QF has not been officially approved and therefore the doctoral studies are not yet linked with qualifications framework. According to the draft Law on

⁵ E.g. taught courses in the chosen discipline, other taught courses, teaching activities (if these are required as part of doctoral studies), etc.

HE doctoral programmes will be included in the national framework and will be linked to learning outcomes.

- Information on whether interdisciplinary training and the development of transferable skills are integrated in doctoral studies: This may vary from case to case between institutions or even faculties within one institution. In some of them interdisciplinary training is well developed and transferable skills are specifically taken care of, while in others the emphasis on the research component is so great that the training component is little and then usually no specific activities are taken to e.g. develop transferable skills.
- In doctoral programmes workload is measured in credits, including both the taught courses and the independent research component.
- The final introducing of learning outcomes and qualification framework is foreseen after approval of the new Law on Higher Education.
- Like other study programmes, doctoral programmes are licensed and accredited.
- Status of the doctoral students: those who enrol in doctoral studies at universities have the status of student. i.e. if they study in state – financed study places they may receive a scholarship. Doctoral students are not regarded as early stage researchers, i.e. they do not receive a salary (they may work at the department where they are studying but then they will have additional tasks to fulfil as employees). Doctoral students may receive also student loans.

5. Relationship between higher education and research

a) Please describe the main trends in the role of higher education institutions in research in your country.

Higher education institutions play a major role in research in Latvia. The integration process of the former research institutes of the Academy of Sciences into universities started already in 1990s and went on afterwards. In 2005-2006 particularly many research institutions were officially incorporated in the universities. 53% of researchers are employed by the universities and other higher education establishments.

b) Please outline any measures to improve co-operation between higher education institutions and other private and public institutions that undertake research. Please include:

- percentage of GDP spent on research in 2007 is 0.63 %;
 - from public funds 0.35%
 - from private funds 0.28%
- total annual national research expenditure (expressed in national currency) is 87.9 million LVL
 - from public funds 48.5 million LVL
 - from private funds 39.4 million LVL
- percentage of research carried out in higher education institutions (in terms of funding) - 43%
- details of the funding mechanisms for doctoral students in your country

State budget subsidies for state-funded doctoral study places are subject-dependent. They are calculated per 1 doctoral study place using a formula. The amount allocated is triple compared to the allocation for a bachelor study place in the same field. At the same time, fee-paying students can also be admitted on top of the state-funded study places. The fees paid by those students are set by the higher education institutions themselves and are usually close to the amount that state allocates for state-funded study places. .

Student loans are available also for doctoral students.

In the recent years Special support grants are available from European Social fund for the doctoral students and early stage researchers.

c) Is there any tracking system to follow the further career of doctoral graduates?

Yes No

If Yes, please specify:

6. Access⁶ and admission to the next cycle

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

6.1 Access and admission between the first and second cycles

Please indicate:

a) the percentage of first cycle qualifications that give access to the second cycle

100%

b) any first cycle qualifications that do not give access to the second cycle (please specify)

none

c) any special requirements for access to a second cycle programme in the same field of studies: *please tick whether graduates must.*

sit entrance exam	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	In some cases <input type="checkbox"/>
complete additional courses	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	In some cases <input type="checkbox"/>
have work experience	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	In some cases <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

If the answer to the last point is yes, please specify what type of work experience is required:

⁶ Access as defined in the Lisbon Recognition Convention: "Access: the right of qualified candidates to apply and be considered for admission to higher education."

Work experience may be required only for “executive” type programmes which are shortened due to the students’ prior experience

d) any further special requirements for access to a second cycle programme in the same field of studies

e) to which students the above special requirements apply (*please tick*):

all students Yes

No

holders of particular first cycle qualifications Yes

No

students of the same field coming from other HEIs Yes No

f) which of the requirements apply to students coming from other fields of studies (*please tick*):

entrance exam Yes No In some cases

additional courses Yes No In some cases

work experience Yes No In some cases

6.2 Access and admission between the second and third cycles

Please indicate:

a) the percentage of second cycle qualifications that give access to the third cycle

100% of second cycle end qualifications (~80% of all qualifications in 2nd cycle)

b) any second cycle qualifications that do not give access to the third cycle (please specify)

qualifications that are rather post-bachelor professional training (not leading to a master’s degree) and not 11nd cycle end qualifications (could be qualified as graduate diploma or postgraduate diploma in the Anglo-Saxon systems)

c) any measures planned to remove obstacles between cycles

transforming those of the above qualifications that require 2 years of studies into professional Master’s degrees

7. Employability of graduates/ cooperation with employers

a) What measures are being taken to enhance the employability of graduates with bachelor qualifications? Please include the most recent statistical data on the employment status of graduates of all cycles.

If your higher education institutions also provide professional bachelor programmes, please provide employability data for both types of bachelors separately

The main way how to enhance employability of graduates is through preparing the profession standards and aligning programmes with those standards. The above is required by the Regulations on Accreditation – any professional programme (including professional bachelor and master programmes) of studies is assessed against profession standard. profession standards should be worked out and written by the employers. in practice they are rather developed by educators in cooperation with employers because the educators are the ones who need that there is a profession standard in place at the time when a programme has to be accredited.

There are no statistical data for graduates of all cycles. However, the unemployment data of “fresh” graduates from higher education (measured by State Employment service in October of the year of graduation) in 2005-2007 has been 1,3-1,5% of all graduates. Such outcome seems quite satisfactory and this might be a reason why there have been little measures for improvement.

Among the graduates with bachelor degree the fields where the absolute numbers of unemployed were the greatest were: economics, business administration, law (where a bachelor degree is not sufficient for the regulated law professions), teacher training and computer sciences. However, these are also the fields with the greatest number of graduates. When the proportions out of the total number of graduates in the particular field are calculated, the highest level of unemployment is observed for psychologists (around 5%).

Employers’ surveys at least before the end of accreditation period but in some HEIs regularly on yearly basis, establishing career centres at HEIs, meetings of staff or students with employers, advertising possibilities for practical placements in HEIs’ websites, 26 week placements in professional programmes, long-term agreements with employers regarding work placements, placements organized both in Latvia and, where possible, abroad.

b) To what extent there is a dialogue in your country between higher education institutions and employers on:

- curriculum design, work placements and international experience
Significant Some A little None

- accreditation/quality assurance
Significant Some A little None
- university governance
Significant Some A little None

c) Are first cycle graduates able to pursue careers in the public service on an equal footing with other graduates?

Yes No In some cases

d) Have you aligned recruitment procedures and career structures in the public service to take account of the Bologna changes?

Yes No In some cases

If no, or in some cases only, please explain the current situation:

There has been no need to align recruitment procedures as it has been possible for 1st cycle graduates to work in civil service already before 1999

8. Implementation of national qualifications framework

Please answer the questions below. Please add comments which accurately describe the current situation in your country.

a) Has the national qualifications framework been prepared⁷?

Yes No

Comment The preparation of the National Qualifications Framework started already in 2004, the allocation of Latvian qualifications into Bologna cycles was clarified and cycle descriptors were prepared

b) Does the framework or proposed framework include generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences?

Yes No

Comment Yes, the descriptors are prepared in the form of competences

c) Does it include ECTS credit ranges for the first and second cycle?

Yes No

Comment Yes, the number of credits for each qualification was discussed and decided

d) Has the NQF been nationally discussed with all stakeholders?

Yes No

Comment Yes, the discussions with stakeholders took place in 2005 and the qualifications framework was

⁷ A national framework of qualifications compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA

If the answer to d) is No, please answer question e):

e) has a timetable been agreed for consultations with all stakeholders?

Yes

No

Comment As so much time has passed since the draft of the qualifications framework was prepared it is likely that there will be some additional discussions needed to reconfirm that the stakeholders still support the QF that was developed – or change it accordingly.

If the answer to d) is Yes, please answer the following questions:

f) Are all formal arrangements/decisions for implementing the framework in place and have the necessary formal decisions for establishing the framework been taken?

Yes

No

Comment Official approval needs changes in legislation. A new Law on Higher Education has been prepared over the period of 2006-2008 and is currently processed by the Parliament (has passed first reading of three readings)

g) How far has the implementation of the national qualifications framework progressed (**please tick one**)

- The framework is fully implemented. All qualifications have been added to the NQF through a QA procedure (e.g. accreditation)
- There is significant progress on implementing the framework
- The work of describing all qualifications in terms of learning outcomes and competencies has been completed
- There is a timetable for implementation and the work has started
- Work on implementing the framework has not yet started but a timetable for implementation has been agreed
- Work on implementing the framework has not yet started and there is no timetable for implementation

Comment It is impossible before appropriate legislation (Law on HE) is adopted

h) What is the stage of progress on the self-certification of compatibility with the EHEA framework ?

Completed

Started, but not yet completed

Not yet started

Comment It is impossible before appropriate legislation (Law on HE) is adopted

i) Has the self-certification report been published?

Yes

No

Comment It is impossible before appropriate legislation (Law on HE) is adopted

Please add any additional comments if necessary:

Comment Two issues are needed to finalize the work at QF:

1) legislation which specifically mentions QF, learning outcomes and other new terms, which means that the new Law on HE and some of the following Cabinet regulations must be adopted and also some of the A European Social fund project to be started in first half of 2009, planned to support creation internal QA systems, formulate learning outcomes, finalize QF, work out the system of RPL etc.

2) financial incentives are needed. A European Social fund project is planned which should start in the first half of 2009, planned to support creation internal QA systems, formulate learning outcomes, finalize QF, and work out the system of RPL etc.

NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE EHEA (ESG)⁸

9. Reviewing the QA system against the ESG⁹ and national support for implementation

a) Has your national QA system been reviewed against the ESG?

Yes such a review is planned

No

Not yet, but

(Please specify time)

b) If a review has been undertaken or is planned, please give further details of the review process.

The compliance with the ESG has been discussed at several seminars, including the one that approved the Latvian National Stocktaking report for the 2007 London ministerial conference. The general finding was that the external quality assurance system in Latvia is largely in conformity with the ESG.

The internal quality assurance systems exist in all HEIs do but to comply fully with the ESG they should be adapted to integrate the learning outcomes approach as a basis for quality assurance and continuous improvement of the study programmes.

c) If a review process has been undertaken, did it result in any of the following:

⁸ <http://www.bologna2009benelux.org/documents/Standards-and-Guidelines-for-QA.pdf>

⁹ ESG - Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

Stakeholder consultation on changes required to the national QA system?

Yes

No

The introduction of specific financial or other incentives aimed at improving the internal quality assurance processes in institutions?

Yes

No

If Yes, please give details of these incentives:

A project supported by the European Social fund is planned and should be launched in first half of 2009, which will support creation internal QA systems, formulate learning outcomes, finalize QF, and work out the system of RPL etc.

- Other measures

Yes

No

If Yes, please outline these measures. Legislation change is needed that should foresee establishing internal quality assurance systems, take up the learning outcomes approach as such etc. The necessary changes have been introduced in the draft Law on HE but the adoption of law has been constantly delayed and the law has only reached parliament in August 2008.

d) If incentives and/or other measures have been introduced with the aim of improving the internal quality assurance processes in institutions, has any evidence of the impact of these changes been gathered?

Yes

No

If Yes, please give details of how evidence of the impact of the changes was gathered, and of the main outcomes that it demonstrates
The incentives are planned and approved but are yet to come.

9.1. Internal quality assurance in higher education institutions

Describe the internal QA systems in place in your HEIs.

Two elements of internal quality assurance that are present in all HEIs in Latvia

1) assurance of the quality of the higher education staff - it is stipulated in the existing legislation and is working in practice. The quality of staff is assured through the requirements for each level of staff positions – professor, associate professor, etc. There is no tenure in Latvian HEIs and each staff member has to be elected anew in open elections after a 6-year period

2) there are systems for internal approval and periodic review of programmes by central authorities of the HEI

3) Many HEIs have programme committees for each programme which review the success of the programme after each year of studies in order to identify in which areas improvements are needed.

4) it is very common to organize student surveys after completion of either an individual course, a module, a semester or the whole programme. It is however not always clear how the results of those surveys are used as the results are not always publicly known.

5) Apart from the above, all HEIs have established units that are in charge of quality, internal audit and alike. Those units may have established various internal systems related to quality such as management audit, ISO methodologies, risk management, etc.

In such a way, there are many elements of the internal quality assurance in place at Latvia's HEIs. What is still missing from the point of view of ESG the link between the quality assurance of programmes and courses to learning outcomes.

Please comment in particular on the following aspects, giving references to relevant websites:

a) How many HEIs have published a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality?

All HEIs Most HEIs Some HEIs No HEIs

In fact, many HEIs have strategies for quality but far not all of them have published it

b) How many HEIs have arrangements in place for the internal approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards?

All HEIs Most HEIs Some HEIs No HEIs

Please describe what kind of arrangements are in place

Periodic internal "accreditation" procedures where self - assessment reports of programmes/departments are evaluated by e.g. a senate commission,
yearly submission of revised course descriptions of individual courses,
yearly submission of self-assessment reports after a programme has been accredited (a requirement in legislation)

c) How many HEIs have described their programmes in terms of learning outcomes?

All HEIs Most HEIs Some HEIs No HEIs

d) Are student assessments at HEIs designed to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes (based on published criteria) applied in a consistent way?

All HEIs Most HEIs Some HEIs No HEIs

Please describe how the above is achieved.

Formulation of the learning outcomes in the form of competences has just started. For this reason the student assessment criteria are rather traditionally oriented i.e designed to verify that the planned knowledge and

skills have been achieved, but not yet operating in categories of competences

e) How many HEIs publish up to date, impartial and objective information about the programmes and awards offered?

All HEIs Most HEIs Some HEIs No HEIs

In principle, yes, most HEIs publish up to date information about their programmes and awards. However, in conditions of national and international competition for students it is difficult to expect that the public information is in all cases fully objective and is not used

10. Stage of development of external quality assurance system

Describe the external quality assurance system operating in your country.

Please include:

a) the stage of implementation of your external quality assurance system

External quality assurance is fully operational since 1996. It covers the whole higher education system and contains self-assessment, external assessment, decision upon accreditation of both programmes and institutions and follow-up procedures for improvement according to the drawbacks indicated.

b) does your external quality assurance system operate at a national level; Yes

No

If No, please specify:

c) does your external quality assurance system cover all higher education¹⁰ Yes

No

If No, please specify which types of institutions or programmes are not covered by your external quality assurance system:

d) which of the following elements are included in your external quality assurance system:

- self-assessment report Yes No

- external review Yes

No

- publication of results Yes No

- follow-up procedures Yes No

¹⁰ Higher education: all types of courses of study or sets of courses of study, training or training for research at the post secondary level which are recognised by the relevant authorities as belonging to a country's higher education system.

e) has a peer review of the national agency(ies) according to the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA already taken place

Yes

No

If **No** is there a date set for the review? Yes (please specify date **30.October 2008 – self-assessment of the quality assurance received at Higher Education Council and the Council took decision to start the evaluation process**) No

11. Level of student participation

From the following, please indicate all aspects of quality assurance in which students are involved:

a) in governance of national agencies for QA.

Yes No In some cases

b) as full members in external review teams

Yes No In some cases

c) as observers in external review teams

Yes No In some cases

d) as part of the decision making process for external reviews

Yes No In some cases

e) in the consultation process during external reviews (e.g. arrangements for external reviewers to consult with students)

Yes No In some cases

f) in internal quality assurance (e.g. periodic review of programmes)

Yes No In some cases

g) in preparation of self-assessment reports.

Yes No In some cases

h) in follow-up procedures:

Yes No In some cases

*Please add any additional comments, especially if students are **not** involved in any of the aspects:*

<p>a) in governance bodies - students participate with no voting right b), c) students are ALWAYS participating in evaluation teams but mainly as observers, in some cases as full members, g) and h) student participation takes place through their participation in Senate (25%), senate approves the self-assessment reports</p>
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12. Level of international participation

In which of the following is there international participation in quality assurance

a) the governance of national agencies for quality assurance

Yes

No In some cases

b) the external evaluation of national quality assurance agencies

Yes

No In some cases

c) teams for external review of institutions or programmes, either as members or observers

Yes

No In some cases

d) membership of ENQA

Yes

No In some cases

e) membership of any other international network

Yes

No

If **Yes**, please specify:

INQAHE, Central and Eastern European network of national QA agencies, Eurasian network of national Quality agencies

Please add any additional comments, especially if there is no international involvement in any of the aspects:

a) the foreign members of the board of national QA agency have observer/advisory status without voting rights.
b) the external evaluation of QA agency is being planned and it is foreseen that foreign expert(s) will participate

RECOGNITION OF DEGREES AND STUDY PERIODS

13. Stage of implementation of Diploma Supplement

Describe the stage of implementation of the Diploma Supplement in your country. Please include the percentage of all students graduating in 2009 who will receive a Diploma Supplement (if less than 100%, please explain)

Diploma Supplement has been introduced since its interantional approval in 1998 and it is compulsory by law since 2002

a) Is the Diploma Supplement issued to students graduating from:

- 1st cycle programmes Yes No
- 2nd cycle programmes Yes No
- 3rd cycle programmes Yes No
- remaining "old type" programmes Yes
No Not applicable
- short higher education programmes Yes No
Not applicable

b) which of the following apply to Diploma Supplements issued in your country?

- issued in a widely spoken European language Yes No
 - please specify the language English

- issued free of charge for a fee
- issued automatically on request
- corresponds to the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format
- a national Diploma Supplement is used that is different from the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format

13.1. Use of Diploma Supplement for recognition of qualifications

Please describe the way in which the Diploma Supplement is used for the recognition of foreign qualifications (or studies). Please comment in particular on the following aspects, giving references to any relevant websites and documents:

a) The Diploma Supplement is used as the reference document when admitting holders of foreign qualifications to the second and third cycles.

Yes No

Comment

b) Holders of foreign qualifications who present a Diploma Supplement in a widely spoken language do not have to provide official translations of their qualifications.

Yes No

Comment

c) Holders of foreign qualifications who present a Diploma Supplement in a widely spoken language do not need to prove through other documents the validity of the qualifications in the awarding country (for further studies or employment in the non-regulated part of the labour market).

Yes No

Comment Diploma Supplements can also be issued by non-trustworthy institutions and still have the "right" format. In such a way, the issue of the status of institution is always checked independently from the documents submitted. If it is a recognized institution, the information available on Diploma Supplement is usually enough.

d) Specific action has been taken at a National and Institutional level to enhance the use of the Diploma Supplement as a communication tool towards the labour market

Yes No

Comment The DS has been introduced a long time ago in Latvia and it is well known to employers already

14. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention

Describe the stage of implementation of the main principles and later supplementary documents¹¹ of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

a) Does appropriate legislation comply with the Lisbon Convention?

Yes No

If Yes, please demonstrate how it is achieved:

A system of recognition of foreign qualifications has been developed in Latvia. It is regulated by two laws - Law on higher education establishments (1995) and Law on Education (1998).

Recognition of foreign qualifications or study periods is legislated for in Articles 84 and 85 of the Law on Higher education institutions and Article 11 of the Law on Education. The law does not contradict with any of the principles of the Convention but doesn't specifically mention them either. The principles are directly addressed in the Recognition Manual produced by the Latvian Academic Information Centre - the ENIC centre. It seems to be a suitable solution as, according to law, any foreign qualification is evaluated by the ENIC centre and a statement on recognition is issued. According to law, the above statements have to be taken into account by the HEIs when making recognition decisions. Thus, in practice the principles of the legal framework of the Convention are applied in Latvia. The draft Law on Higher Education will mention the Convention principles. The draft law has been submitted to Government for approval and further submission to Parliament for adoption.

b) Does appropriate legislation comply with the later Supplementary Documents:

i) Recommendation on the Criteria and Procedures for Recognition

Yes No

If Yes, please demonstrate how it is achieved:

The main principle of the Convention itself and the CoE/UNESCO Criteria and Procedures is that the foreign qualification is recognized if there are no substantial differences with the appropriate home qualification.

To follow the Criteria and procedures document

1) the principle of substantial differences is embedded into the Latvian Law on Education (1998)

2) The procedure of recognition in Latvia is described in Latvian Recommendation for the recognition procedure which is taking up all the main principles, procedures and criteria of the CoE/UNESCO document (cf. Latvian Recognition Manual published in 2000,

www.aic.lv/rec/LV/Expl_lv/br_sp_lv.doc

¹¹ Recommendation on the Criteria and Procedures for Recognition (2001); Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees (2004); Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education (2001)

The first step in the recognition procedure is an application by the holder of the foreign qualification, an education institution, a state institution, employer or a professional organisation.

The second step is examining of the foreign credential on the basis of the documents submitted, taking into account accreditation/quality assurance status, workload and content of the programme.

The third step is a statement by the Latvian ENIC/NATRC on the following:

- Which of the Latvian educational credentials the submitted foreign qualification is comparable to,
- The foreign credential is not comparable to the closest Latvian prototype; the observed substantial differences are stated.

The decision upon recognition is based on the Academic Information Centre (AIC) statement and is taken by:

- the higher education institution in question (if recognition has been requested for further studies),
- the particular employer (if recognition has been requested for the work in non-regulated profession)
- The competent authority for professional recognition (if recognition has been requested for the work in regulated profession).

ii) Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees

Yes

No

If Yes, please demonstrate how it is achieved:

As regards recognition of joint degrees from outside, Academic Information Centre is applying the Council of Europe/UNESCO recommendation and for recognising joint degrees in the following way:

There is no problem to recognise a foreign joint degree on condition that it is recognised in those countries whose HEIs have issued it.

AIC is recognizing foreign joint degrees if there is no substantial difference between the joint degree in question and the appropriate qualification within Latvian higher education system.

Another issue is the possibilities to award joint degrees in Latvia

So far Latvian legislation doesn't mention joint degrees. It creates problems to establish joint programmes and award joint degrees, but not to recognize joint degrees awarded outside Latvia that have been submitted for recognition. The draft Law on Higher Education introduces joint higher education programmes and joint degrees into Latvian legislation. Its adoption will make it possible to award nationally recognized joint degrees.

iii) Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education

Yes

No

If Yes, please demonstrate how it is achieved:

In assessment of transnational education Latvian ENIC/NARIC is following the UNESCO/ CoE Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education (2001) and Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997). The national legislation tackling transnational education issue is

the Law on Higher Education Establishments (1995, amended). Law (article 86) states that qualifications issued in Latvia by branches of foreign higher education institutions are recognised according to Law on Higher Education Establishments, regarding the Lisbon Convention and Council of Europe, European Union, and UNESCO documents concerning transnational education.

A Foreign HEI may open a branch or a representation in Latvia according to the following regulations: branch should be registered in the Register of educational institutions, it should obtain a licence to start a study programme and their programmes should be accredited in Latvia. In practice it means that a branch of a foreign HEI should operate as any other HEI in Latvia.

There however are problems with Transnational education in Latvia because most of the providers of transnational education do not cooperate in the way foreseen in the UNESCO/CoE Code: they are not transparent, do not provide information on their programmes but rather chose to operate without any legal permission. The transnational education inflow to Latvia is coming mainly from Russia, Germany, UK, USA and the Holy See. However, there is only one state recognised transnational education provider – from the Holy See which has provided all the necessary information and is state recognized by the Latvian authorities. The biggest transnational education inflow comes from Russia. Yet, the branches of the Russian higher education institutions operate in Latvia without any licenses or accreditation.

The current legislation does set rules for the transnational education provision. However the enforcement mechanism of these regulations is not strong enough and it does not effectively prevent the flow of non-registered/ not quality assessed transnational education at the moment. As a result, the holders of qualifications earned through such transnational arrangements face recognition problems.

c) which of the following principles are applied in practice?

i) applicants' right to fair assessment

Yes

No

If Yes, please describe how it is ensured at national and institutional level

The Latvian ENIC/NARIC centre has an obligation to assess the foreign qualifications submitted for recognition regardless country of origin and nationality of origin – thus the right for being assessed is fulfilled.

AIC procedures are designed according to the Lisbon Recognition Convention and should thus ensure the fairness of assessment.

In vast majority of cases HEIs follow the advice of the ENIC/NARIC centre. In addition, ENIC/NARIC centre organizes seminars for staff of HEIs in charge of recognition

ii) recognition if no substantial differences can be proven

Yes

No

If Yes, please describe how it is ensured at national and institutional level

If there is no substantial differences, diplomas are recognised and statement is issued to which of the Latvian educational credentials the submitted foreign qualification is comparable to.

In vast majority of cases HEIs follow the advice of the ENIC/NARIC centre. In addition, ENIC/NARIC centre organizes seminars for staff of HEIs in charge of recognition

lii) demonstration of substantial differences, where recognition is not granted

Yes

No

If Yes, please describe how it is ensured at national and institutional level

The Law on Education (1998) and Law on higher education establishments (1995) states that, if the foreign credential is not comparable to the closest Latvian prototype, the observed substantial differences are stated.

Substantial differences are described in the statement issued by AIC and credential is compared to the appropriate Latvian educational document.

In vast majority of cases HEIs follow the advice of the ENIC/NARIC centre. In addition, ENIC/NARIC centre organizes seminars for staff of HEIs in charge of recognition

iv) provision of information about your country's HE programmes and institutions

Yes

No

If Yes, please describe how it is done in practice

The information regarding the status of all the programmes and institutions is available at the website of the Latvian Higher Education Quality Evaluation centre. <http://www.aiknc.lv> in Latvian and English languages. It is possible to quickly check whether the HEI that has issued the qualification is institutionally accredited and whether the programme has been accredited.

In addition, the Latvian ENIC/NARIC centre is answering to individual questions about particular programmes or credentials.

v) do you have a fully operational ENIC?

Yes

No

If Yes, please describe the role of your ENIC in recognition and information provision a) nationally and b) internationally

a) Academic Information Centre (the Latvian ENIC/NARIC) functions in recognition have been set by the Law on Education (1998) and Law on Higher Education Establishments (1995, with various amendments in 2000 -2007). Law on education states that AIC institution established by Ministry of Education and Science which provides expertise of foreign educational documents and other activities dealing with recognition of diplomas and international information exchange.

Website of Academic information centre <http://www.aic.lv> provides information about both - academic and professional recognition, purposes of recognition, legislation, how to apply, how to appeal etc.

b) AIC is actively participating in ENIC/NARIC networks – and not only through provision which is being done through the ENIC/NARIC listserv, individually or at international meetings. Latvian ENIC/NARIC staff have participated in a number of European working groups which elaborated the Diploma Supplement and most of the subsidiary texts of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (Recommendations on the Criteria and Procedures, Code of Good practice in the provision of Transnational education, Recommendation on the recognition of Joint degrees and others). Latvian ENIC staff has also often acted in the Bureau of the ENIC network and bureau of the International Committee of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

d) As additional information, please describe any actions to implement fully the Convention and the later Supplementary Documents.

It is still necessary to work with the Higher education institutions to ensure the implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Convention at institutional level. AIC has organized and plans to continue to organize seminars for the recognition staff of the higher education institutions in order to further discuss and clarify the above principles and to convince higher education institutions to produce institution-wide procedures for recognition so that the qualifications should be treated similarly in different institutions.

15. Stage of implementation of ECTS¹²

Describe the implementation of ECTS in your country.

a) Please include the percentage of the total number of higher education programmes¹³ in which all programme components are linked with ECTS credits

¹² Please refer to definitions in the ECTS User's guide,
http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/socrates/ects/guide_en.html

¹³ Except doctoral studies

<50% 100% 75-99% 50-75%

Latvian credit system which is compatible with the ECTS has been introduced since 1998 and covers all programmes now.

b) Are ECTS credits linked with learning outcomes¹⁴ in your country? Please tick one:

No In some programmes In the majority of programmes
In all programmes

c) If you use credit system other than ECTS, please give details of your national credit system:

Latvian national credit system that was introduced since 1998 is a workload – based credit system based on the assumption that student’s full time workload corresponds to 40 Latvian credits. Such a system was chosen because it seemed to be rather simple interpret the value of one credit – it is approximately the full-time workload of one study week that sums up to 40 points in the 40 study weeks of a regular academic year (including the examination sessions).
A full transition from Latvian National credit system to ECTS is prepared in the draft law on higher education which, after long debates at various levels has reached Parliament and has undergone the first reading (of 3 readings) in October 2008. There is a chance that the law will be adopted in 2009.

i) is it compatible with ECTS? Yes No

ii) what is the ratio between national and ECTS credits?

Latvian credit point is 1,5 times bigger than ECTS credit (as in Latvian system 40credits are accumulated over a full-time study year compared to 60 per year in ECTS). Thus the number of Latvian credits should be multiplied by 1,5 to get the number of ECTS credits.

d) Are you taking any action to improve understanding of learning outcomes?

Yes No

If Yes, please explain:

1. Since 2006 there has been at least one international or national seminar to clarify the issue s of learning Outcomes and/or to provide practical examples.
2. Some HEIs take care of the issue of leering outcomes at institutional level.
3. Included in the programmes for HE staff training/upgrading which are compulsory for teaching staff once in the 6-year election period

e) Are you taking any actions to improve measurement and checking of student workload?

¹⁴ Clarification: Learning outcomes in the form of knowledge, skills and competences are formulated for all programme components and credits are awarded only when the stipulated learning outcomes are actually acquired

Yes No

If Yes, please explain:

f) Are you taking any actions to assist HE staff or other stakeholders in applying ECTS.

Yes No

If Yes, please explain:

LIFELONG LEARNING

16. Recognition of prior learning

Describe the measures in place to recognise prior learning (RPL), including non-formal and informal learning (for example learning gained in the workplace or in the community).

a) Do you have nationally established procedures in place to assess RPL as a basis for access to HE programmes?

Yes No

If Yes, please specify:

The current legislation does not foresee possibilities of RPL.

To improve the situation, the draft Law on HE foresees that methodology of RPL should be elaborated and a Cabinet Regulation on RPL should be adopted (within 6 months of the adoption of the Law itself)

b) Do you have nationally established RPL procedures in place to allocate credits towards a qualification?

Yes No

If Yes, please specify:

Some HEIs are preparing to the upcoming legislation – they are already considering what number of credits acquired in theory own upgrading/ further education activities could be counted towards higher education qualification when the legislation is adopted

c) Do you have nationally established RPL procedures in place to allocate credits for exemption from some programme requirements?

Yes No

If Yes, please specify:

See comments to b) above

d) To what extent are any such procedures applied in practice?

Comprehensively Some A little None

Please describe the current situation:

As the legislation does not foresee any RPL, HEIs would risk being punished if they applied RPL. For this reason RPL is practically not used for admission and credit allocation, if used at all, is been limited to reduction of the practice/ placement periods for those who have work experience in appropriate field.

Another possible route is that HEIs may allocate credits for further education courses that they themselves have carried out in case holders of certificates of such courses enrol for studies in the HEI in question.

As regards admissions, some HEIs admit handicapped people with school-leaving certificates but not holding the certificates for the centralised state examinations in individual subjects.

17. Flexible learning paths

Describe legislative and other measures taken by your country to create opportunities for flexible learning paths in higher education, to encourage participation by under-represented groups.

The current Law of Higher Education Establishments does not even mention flexible learning paths and generally does not regulate the ways of reaching the final qualification. Flexible learning paths should be introduced when the new Law on Higher Education will be adopted.

a) Are there specific measures in place to promote flexible learning paths within the national qualifications framework?

Yes No

Please add appropriate comments to describe the current situation

The national qualifications framework is not yet approved.

As indicated above, the establishment of flexible learning paths will be foreseen by the coming Law on higher education, at least the draft law mentions flexible learning paths several times.

b) Are there any measures to support HE staff in establishing flexible learning paths?

Yes No

Please add appropriate comments to describe the current situation

The assistance so far is limited with just some aspects such as :

assistance in creating e-courses, e-platforms, training of staff in these areas, improving electronic communication between staff and students

c) Is there flexibility in entry requirements aimed at widening participation?

Yes No

Please add comments to describe the current situation and, where appropriate, differences between the three Bologna cycles

Some flexibility for handicapped people such as not requiring certificates of centralised state school-leaving exams but school leaving certificate only.

d) Are there any flexible delivery methods to meet the needs of diverse groups of learners

Yes No

Please add comments to describe the current situation and, where appropriate, differences between different Bologna cycle
HE institutions mention the following approaches:
- flexible learning time – courses in evenings or weekends for students that are studying in parallel with work,
- establishing means ensuring permanent possibilities of student – teacher communication without eye contact,
- organizing local branches in other cities to improve accessibility,
- e-learning or simply widening access to teaching materials through internet
- adaptation of teaching methods according t the age of students

e) Are there modular structures of programmes to facilitate greater participation?

Yes No

Please add comments to describe the current situation and, where appropriate, differences between different Bologna cycle
In some HEIs all programmes have modular structures, in some others there are some programmes with modular structures, some others state that they are planning to introduce modular structure, but in a number of others there are no modular structures yet.
Here is evidence that there are more modular structures in master studies than in the first cycle.
One HEI in arts field considers modular structures not useful.

f) If possible, please provide any statistics on the results of measures taken to create opportunities for flexible learning paths in higher education, to encourage participation by under-represented groups,

Most HEIs cannot provide any statistical data, for those who have provided the statistical data vary considerably – starting of around 8000 students following flexible learning paths in Technical university to some tens of examples in some others.

JOINT DEGREES

18. Establishment and recognition of joint degrees¹⁵

a) Describe the legislative position on joint degrees in your country.

Are joint degrees specifically mentioned in legislation?

Yes No

Does the legislation fully allow:

i) establishing joint programmes?

Yes No

¹⁵ A *joint degree* is a single degree certificate awarded by two or more institutions, where the single degree certificate is valid without being supplemented by any additional national degree certificate.

If No please explain what are the obstacles

Joint programmes are not mentioned in the legislation, so the HEIs are free to decide to organize joint programmes inside the country or with foreign partners. The real problems are to award a joint degree

ii) awarding joint degrees?

Yes No

If No please explain what are the obstacles

No mention of joint degrees in the legislation actually means that such degrees can not be awarded – because there are regulations of how a degree should be awarded and the document certifying the degree issued. These regulations have been adopted in the past and without consideration of joint degrees therefore in practice they do not allow to award a degree jointly with another HEI – be it inside Latvia or abroad.

Again a reference to the upcoming Law on HE the draft foresees possibilities to organize joint programmes and award joint degrees.

b) Please give an estimate of the percentage of institutions in your country which are involved in

i) joint degrees

75-100% 50-75% 25-50% 1-25% 0%

ii) joint programmes

75-100% 50-75% 25-50% 1-25% 0%

c) What is the level of joint degree/ programme cooperation in your country

In the first cycle? None Little Widespread

In the second cycle? None Little Widespread

In the third cycle? None Little Widespread

d) In which subject areas/disciplines is joint degree/programme co-operation most widespread (please list if possible)?

Forestry, Food science, Career consulting, Social work, Theology, Pedagogy

e) Estimate the number of joint programmes in your country

20 (out of total 660)

f) Describe any actions being taken to encourage or allow joint programmes.

The interest to establish joint programmes is big and the main obstacle is the legislation.

Thus, the main way how to solve the issue is adopting the new the legislation. The frequently mentioned draft law on HE which is in Parliament for adoption will explicitly allow and encourage joint programmes and set regulations on how to award degrees jointly with other HEIs

g) Are there any specific support systems for students to encourage joint degree cooperation?

no

MOBILITY

19. Removing obstacles to student and staff mobility

a) What measures have been taken by your country both at governmental and institutional level to enhance student and staff mobility and overcome main obstacles?

There are amendments in the new Law of Higher Education that incorporates the respective directives from EU. The working group of the removing formal obstacles in the Law of immigration and the respective rules is created.

b) Have arrangements for visas, residence and work permits been amended to enhance student and staff mobility?

Yes No

Please add appropriate comments to describe the current situation:

There are problems of receiving Latvian visas in several countries because of the lack of embassies. There are strict restrictions and rules for so called risk countries in receiving the residence permissions. Proposals for amendments in the rules of Minister Cabinet are being prepared

c) Is there financial support for national and foreign mobile students and staff?

Yes No

Please add appropriate comments to describe the current situation:

There are different EU programmes supporting the staff and student mobility. There is also some co-financing for national funds, private funds or HEIs themselves

d) Are study periods taken abroad recognised?

Yes No

Please add appropriate comments to describe the current situation:

There is still the problem that the study periods taken abroad may be recognized "in general" and counted as the free course options but the credits are not used to replace main courses of the programme.

The draft Law on HE foresees that at least in those cases where there has been a learning agreement signed before the mobility period the recognition of courses studied abroad should be recognized automatically.

e) Is there accommodation for mobile students and staff?

Yes No

Please add appropriate comments to describe the current situation:

The quality of accommodation needs further improvements.

- f) Have any measures been taken to increase outward student and staff mobility?
Yes No

Please add appropriate comments to describe the current situation: The level of student and staff mobility is taken into account by study program accreditation

20. Portability of loans and grants

- a) Are portable grants available in your country?
Yes No

If No, describe any measures being taken to increase the portability of grants.

- b) Are portable loans available in your country?
Yes No

If No, describe any measures being taken to increase the portability of loans.

THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE EHEA AND COOPERATION WITH OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

21. Implementation of strategy

- a) Describe any measures being taken by your country to implement the strategy "European Higher Education in a Global Setting"

The new Law on Higher Education is under approval in Parliament. This law incorporates many possibilities of collaboration with foreign countries (joint programs, joint degrees, possibilities to use foreign languages in the case of international agreements, introducing of EU directives). Many bilateral agreements with third countries have been signed.

b) What has your country done to:

- i) improve information on the EHEA outside Europe?

in the period after London Conference

1) Latvia has participated in the EU-organized education exhibitions and fairs in a number of Asian countries (China, India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand etc.)

2) Leaders of Latvian higher education institutions have participated in higher education events in countries outside the EHEA, especially countries that are former soviet republics such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan and explained the principles of the Bologna process and cooperation possibilities to them.

3) A representative of Latvia (in the capacity of the president of the International Committee of the Lisbon Recognition) has given thorough presentations in Canadian events organized at federal level in Canada (for Canadian admissions officers in Montreal and later for rectors/vice-rectors of Canadian universities in Quebec City) and is invited to give the next presentation in Edmonton, Canada in March 2009 to explain developments in Europe in the period between London and Leuven ministerial conferences in the capacity of the chair of BFUG Stocktaking group.

4) A representative of Latvia has given presentations in USA in 2007 in Chicago and in 2008 in Washington, DC on the developments of joint degrees in Europe

5) A representative of Latvia is invited to give a presentation on Bologna issues at an EU-US workshop on cooperation in natural sciences and engineering to be held in Atlanta in November, 2008,

6) A representative of Latvia has participated as a delegate from European side in the discussions on recognition policies between Europe and North America, organized by the Council of Europe in December 2007.

ii) promote European higher education, enhance its world-wide attractiveness and competitiveness?

Latvia regularly participates in international education fairs and exhibitions

iii) strengthen cooperation based on partnership in higher education?

A number of bilateral cooperation agreements in education and research have been concluded with countries from various world regions.

iv) intensify policy dialogue with partners from other world regions?

Representatives from the Ministry of Education and research regularly participate in the EU activities in this field. In addition, both the Ministry representatives and high-ranking representatives of HEIs often participate in bilateral or multilateral meetings with policy makers from other world regions

v) improve recognition of qualifications with other world regions?

The qualifications from other world regions are treated applying the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

c) What measures have been taken in your country to implement the *OECD/UNESCO Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education*? Please describe.

The principles of the Code of Good practice in the provision of Transnational education, (which is a predecessor of the OECD/UNESCO Guidelines) were integrated in the existing legislation already in 2000. So the legal background is in place.

d) Are the OECD/UNESCO Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education applied to

i) cross-border provision of your education programmes?

Yes No

There is practically no cross-border provision from Latvian side

ii) incoming higher education provision?

Yes No

If Yes please explain in what ways the guidelines are applied

The principles of the Code of Good practice in the provision of Transnational education, (which is a predecessor of the OECD/UNESCO Guidelines) were integrated in the existing legislation already in 2000. So the legal background is in place.

The real implementation however is difficult because the transnational education providers operating in Latvia operate illegally without seeking licenses or accreditation from the Latvian officials and are usually masking their provision claiming that it is distance education and are often backed by the mother institutions and even the sending countries.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

22. Main challenges for higher education

Give an indication of the main challenges ahead for higher education and the Bologna Process in your country in the short and long term.

The most important problem hindering the developments in the Bologna process in Latvia is the delay in adopting legislation which should take on board those issues which have been developed within Bologna. The delays so far have been so long that, in case the adoption of law is further delayed, the remaining enthusiasm of HEI staff can disappear and then the momentum may be lost.

If the law will be adopted without further delays, there is some danger that those changes that are related to learning outcomes, internal quality systems and some others may be introduced without sufficient amount of discussion and consideration and, if that is the cases, the changes may be formal and not leading to the higher quality of the higher education.

PART II

TEMPLATE for NATIONAL STRATEGIES on THE SOCIAL DIMENSION of THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

Practical instruction

The answers to this questionnaire will be included in the general national report on the implementation of the Bologna Process and reach the Bologna Secretariat (e-mail: secr@bologna2009benelux.org) by November 1, 2008. **Please do not exceed the length of 10 pages for the national strategy on social dimension.**

The questions in Annex C are not included in the questionnaire itself but are to be considered as reference material which could facilitate the drafting of the information on the national strategy.

I. Definition of the Social Dimension in the London Communiqué

“We strive for the societal goal that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education should reflect the diversity of our populations. We therefore pledge to take action to widen participation at all levels on the basis of equal opportunity.”

II. AS IS SITUATION (Current state of affairs)

1. Which groups in society are still underrepresented in your national higher education system? What are the main obstacles to participative equity in terms of access and successful completion of studies?

Statistical data show that the participation in the higher education is large in Latvia (552 students on 10 000 inhabitants – the third place after Canada and Finland). The representation of students from different regions of Latvia is proportional to the number of inhabitants (there are 60 higher education institutions in Latvia distributed over all regions). This indirectly indicates that there is no large underrepresentation of students from families with low income since some of the regions are considered as deprived. The tendency can be observed that the students from deprived regions choose to study in the colleges and universities having mainly budget places.

There is a gender gap or disproportion between graduates (28% men, 72% women). About 30% students are in age 18-23. There is insufficient number of students in age group between 25 and 34 involved in formal and non-formal education.

The study environment in many HEI still is not well suited for persons with motion disabilities.

2. Please describe what measures your Government is taking to increase the representation of the groups identified in the question above. Please refer to the possible actions listed in the Bologna Working Group report on the Social Dimension and Mobility (see Annexes A and B to this document).

The Government has taken different measures to increase the student access:

- There are budget financed study places available in all cycles (bachelor, master and doctor programmes), especially in the priority fields (natural sciences, engineering, environment, medial studies, agriculture, IT etc.) and also in other fields for the best students; the loans are available without reference to age;
- There are state warranted loans for every student available. The Study centre under Ministry of Education and Science manage the loan providing system. The loans are of two types: to cover the study fee and to cover the living expenses. For orphans the loans are fully state warranted. The local municipalities warranty often the study loans for people with low income.
- Study grants are available for certain percentage of the students studying in the state budget financed places. The universities allocate these study grants with priority to the best students and to the students from families with low income.
- HEIs in collaboration with local municipalities provide subsidised residences and transport, as well as study grants and scholarships in some cases.
- The project of the Law on Higher Education, submitted to the Parliament in 2008, contains reference to recognize prior learning, and knowledge and skills obtained outside of formal education. The state has adopted the Strategy and Programme for development of lifelong learning (LLL) what is incentive to the higher education institutions to broader their strategies.
- The Plan for the National development includes references to broader involvement of the higher education institutions in Lifelong learning activities with improvement of quality of study programs and teaching staff.
- European Structural funds are widely used to perform the study and research environment in the universities and other HEI. Many establishments were renovated in the planning period 2004-2006. Also in the period 2007-2013, the activities are planned to renovate the HEIs infrastructure and to make them accessible for the disabled persons.
- European Social fund was used in 2004-2006 for supporting PhD students in the priority fields. This action allowed not working in the side-jobs while studying. In the period 2007-2013, the grants will be allocated both, for master and PhD students.

3. Describe what measures are being taken by the Government to help students complete their studies without obstacles related to their social or economic background. Again, please refer to the possible actions listed in the Bologna Working Group report on the Social Dimension and Mobility (see Annexes A and B to this document). Please indicate whether the measures apply to all students or only to certain levels or types of higher education institutions.

To help the students complete their studies, the Government provide study loans for all groups. Study loans are quenched for several professions, like teachers, scientists, civil servants etc. HEI, in providing the study grants, take into account the income level of the students giving priority for those with low level of income. One of the main obstacles for students to complete their studies is the fact that many start to work during the studies. Some years ago there were rules introduced that those students who do not work receive study grants (these rules were cancelled as

ineffective). Special attention is paid to support students studying in the priority fields. In the period 2004-2006 special support grants from European Social fund for PhD students were introduced. This praxis will be continued in the period 2007-2013 for master students in priority fields and PhD students in all fields. There are many different activities from European Social fund to increase the inclusion in the education and in the same time also in HE. Such activities are connected with the further development of distance learning at universities and colleges; enlarging number of programmes geared to different groups of students, expanding of consulting and guidance services, performing libraries and study programmes etc. The system of centralised examinations is a warranty of clear and transparent admission system. The new Law on Higher Education foresees to increase the transparency of qualifications, to create the system of recognition of prior learning, creation of career guidance and tutoring centres at the universities, modification of programmes towards learning outcomes defined approach etc.). Student participation in the governance and organisation of higher education, as well of quality assurance system is already present and will be continued in the future.

4. Does your country have statistical and/or other research evidence at disposal to underpin the identification of underrepresented groups and the main obstacles to participative equity (see Q 1) ? If yes, please specify. Or are regular student survey organised with the aim to provide data concerning the social dimension?

Latvia (Ministry of Education and Science) collects regular statistics on the number of students in dependence on fields, on HEI, study form, study programmes, districts, age, and gender etc.

(<http://izm.izm.gov.lv/registri-statistika/statistika-augstaka.html>)

The statistics is also collected by the National Statistical agency (<http://www.csb.lv/>)

III. PROCESS TOWARDS A MORE INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM (strategy for the future)

5. How do you plan to tackle the challenges identified under Q 1 in the near future (2008-2010)?

(a) Which concrete goals do you want to achieve?

Challenges in Latvia are mainly connected with the fact that approximately 75% students pay certain study fee for their studies (only about 25% of students receive budget places). The number of budget students receiving the study grants is too low; now the study grants are distributed according the level of the success mainly. The main goal should be increase the number of students receiving budget places; study grants should be distributed to the students from families with low income level – the goal is to reach the situation when students do not need to work (especially in jobs not connected with the chosen speciality) during studies.

The goal is also to improve infrastructure of HEIs and study programmes making them suitable for persons with motion disabilities, as well as providing broader access to the higher education (also in the context of LLL), for example, to develop distance learning programs.

(b) What actions are planned for the different target group identified above to overcome the obstacles in access, participation and completion of studies by students? Please refer to Annex B and to the suggested approach outlined in the 2007 report from the Bologna Process Working Group on the Social Dimension and Mobility (Annex C to this document).

Until 2010 the concept paper for the new system of distributing the study grants in dependence on income of the family has to be elaborated. Ministry of Education and Science plans to create a working group to work out this strategy and to identify possible solutions to improve the socioeconomic situation of students in Latvia. The state and HEI are planning to continue to keep in contact with students' union in order to study students' needs with aim to find appropriate measures to help them to complete studies.

Until 2013 about 30 HEI will be modernised to to improve infrastructure also making it accessible for disabled persons.

The Ministry of Education and Science has elaborated the Concept Paper on inclusive education and development of the support system for youth with the risk of social marginalization. A corresponding projects are prepared for submitting to ESF. They include establishment of support centres in regions, deeper involvement of HEIs in support activities. The end date for the realization of these projects is 2013.

(c) is there a specific budget for these measures for underrepresented groups ? If yes, please provide details

There are large financial means planned from EU Social fund in the period 2007-2013 for different activities, like for support the master students in priority fields and PhD students in all fields. Also other activities are possible, like introducing of Bologna principles, LLL programme, activity for performance of study programmes (e-learning, modern study methods, new tools etc.)

There is also financial support from European Structural Development fund, where Higher education institutions have a possibility to apply to perform the study and research infrastructure.

d) is there a timeline for action? If yes, please provide details.

Until 2010 the new system of distributing the study grants will be created. Study grants for master and PhD students will be started in 1st part of 2009. Infrastructure and other ESF and ESDF have to be finalised until 2015.

6. What arrangements are planned for monitoring progress towards more equitable access, participation and success?

The progress of different activities under ESF and ESDF will be strongly monitored according the respective European and national normative rules. Progress in results will be monitored through range of statistical information.

IV. INFORMATION ON THE NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PREPARATION, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE NATIONAL STRATEGIES

Please indicate which authority or other actor is responsible for the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the national strategy and describe the way in which the various stakeholders are involved. Did your country designate (a) contact point(s) for the national strategy? If so, please add the coordinates of the national contact point(s).

The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) in Latvia is responsible for HE policy, as well for widening access and LLL. In respect to socioeconomic questions also Ministry of Welfare is responsible. The MoES works together with the Council of Higher Education (legal body with representatives from universities, employers, student union etc;), the National Student union, the Latvian College Association, the Latvian Rector's Council.

ANNEX A

Actions mentioned by the Bologna countries in the 2007 national reports

Financial

- scholarships - means tested
- scholarships - merit based
- research grants
- grants for studying abroad
- grants or loans for (nearly) every student
- unspecified social support system
- free education (at least 1st cycle)
- reimbursement of tuition fees for certain groups
- financial assistance for certain groups/areas
- improved funding systems

Structural

- new /expanded routes of access
- broader teaching or learning strategies
- information and preparation at secondary schools
- increase student places
- indirect aid schemes (tax relief, family allowance)
- subsidised residences/meals/transport/books
- provision of student welfare services (health care, day care centres)
- counselling/guidance services

Certain groups

- measures for ethnic minorities (not financial)
- measures for disabled (not financial)
- measures for disadvantaged groups (not financial)
- allocation of study places to certain groups
- promote access from all national areas

Policy and practice

- explicit widening access policy (devoted funds/units/laws)
- carry out surveys (study & work, disabled students,...)
- evaluations/research of policies and practices
- monitoring access (and retention) by students

ANNEX B

Possible actions and tools identified by the 2007 Bologna Working Group on the Social Dimension and Mobility

Measures to promote equal opportunities for access, participation and completion

- Anti-discrimination legislation covering higher education
- Admission rules that are simple, fair and transparent

Measures to widen access to and participation in higher education

- Outreach programs for underrepresented groups as defined nationally
- Flexible delivery of higher education
- Flexible learning paths into and within higher education
- Transparency of qualifications and recognition of prior learning
- Incentives for higher education institutions to take action to widen access and participation

Study environment that enhances the quality of the student experience

A, Provision of academic services

- Guidance (academic and careers) and tutoring
- Retention measures (modification of curricula, flexibility of delivery, tracking academic success etc.)
- Working tools and environment (well functioning libraries, lecture halls and seminar rooms, internet access, access to scientific data bases etc.)

B, Provision of social services

- Counselling
- Targeted support for students with special needs and students with children
- Appropriate housing conditions for all students
- Provision of healthcare
- Provision of transportation, student canteens etc.

Student participation in the governance and organisation of higher education

- Legislation or other measures to ensure student participation in higher education governance
- Provisions for the existence of and exercise of influence by student organisations
- Student evaluations of courses, programmes and institutions, including action plans and follow-up of actions taken

Finances in order to start and complete studies

- Financial and legal advice for students
- Appropriate and coordinated national financial support systems that are transparent
- Targeted support for disadvantaged groups as defined nationally
- Support measures for students with children

ANNEX C

Suggested approach of the work on national strategies on the social dimension

In time for the next ministerial meeting in 2009 the Working Group suggests that the countries should report to the BFUG on their national strategies for the social dimension, including action plans and measures to show their impact. All stakeholders concerned should actively participate in and support this work at the national level.

The development of a strategy should be followed by a national action plan that includes monitoring mechanisms. Ideally, the strategy and action plan will be based on a national debate on the social dimension and the future priorities of that country depending on the current situation. In order to facilitate a national debate on the social dimension the Working Group proposes the following structure and topics for such a debate:

- Measures to promote equal opportunities

What obstacles are there to equal opportunities within higher education? What protection is there if a student is discriminated when applying for, being admitted to or carrying out studies? Is there a framework for appeal? What action would be the most effective to achieve equal opportunities in higher education?

- Measures to widen access to and participation in higher education for underrepresented groups (gender, ethnic origin, immigration, socio-economic status and background, disability, geography etc.)

What groups are under represented in your national higher education system today? Is there data to show access to higher education by gender, socio-economic background, disabilities, prior immigration, region etc? What obstacles to widened access and participation are there within your higher education system? At other education levels? What actions would be appropriate for the different groups to achieve widened access? Are targeted outreach activities needed?

- Study environment that enhances the quality of the student experience

A, Provision of academic services

B, Provision of social services

What kind of academic or career guidance is provided for the students in your country? What is the student – staff ratio? Are there retention measures adapted to different groups or individuals with different needs? Is the academic success of student tracked? What would be/has proven to be the most efficient retention measures? What kind of study environment is there at the higher education institutions? Do student have access to information, electronically or by other means? What is the condition of libraries, lecture halls and seminar rooms? How do students in your country live? Is housing available, of acceptable standard and affordable? Is targeted support provided or needed for specific student groups? Is counselling available if students run in to personal difficulties?

- Measures to increase formal and actual student influence on and participation in higher education governance and other higher education issues

Are there formal provisions for student influence and participation at all governance levels, in consultative as well as decision-making bodies? Are there formal provisions for student evaluation of the education? Are the formal regulations followed-up with actual practices? Are there informal ways of student influence and participation as well? Do students have an influence on all issues related to higher education? Are students aware of their rights? Do students have organisations that

can organise elections to fill elective posts? Is it possible to find enough candidates to fill the posts available? If not – how could this be improved?

- Finances in order to start and complete studies

What kind of information and guidance is provided for students regarding financial issues? How does the average student make his or her living during studies? What kind of state support is provided? Is it appropriate for all groups and individuals? Do certain groups run the risk of being excluded from, or not able to finish their studies, due to financial reasons? Which are these groups or individuals? What could be done to help them? Are students informed about possible employment possibilities after finishing their studies? How is the labour-market relevance of the studies secured? Are former graduates tracked to follow-up their employment rates?

- Monitoring: The participating countries should establish national measures to monitor and evaluate the impact of the national strategy and action plan.

What monitoring mechanisms would be the most appropriate? How could success in strengthening the social dimension be measured short-term and long-term? What quantitative and qualitative data are needed? How is the responsibility for monitoring and evaluation allocated and divided? Are there student surveys carried out to measure the impact of a social dimension strategy? How can student surveys be used in this work?

- Stakeholder involvement

Which stakeholders should be involved in the development of a strategy and an action plan? What should be the responsibility of the different stakeholders when carrying out the agreed strategy and plan?