



Bologna Secretariat 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.

April 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 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	Slovakia
Date	19 th December 2008
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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.

Since September 2007 the Higher Education Act declares Slovak higher education institutions as part of the EHEA and the ERDA and regulates awarding of joint diplomas after completing the joint study programmes.
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2. Partnership

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

The responsibility for practical implementation of the Bologna principles in higher education policy was taken over by the organization unit of the Section for Higher Education at the Ministry of Education the Director General of which is one of the representatives of the Slovak Republic in the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG). Another representative in BFUG is the Head of Office of the Ministry of Education of SR, which testifies to the importance attached to the Bologna Process by the Slovak Republic. Based on the activity of the European Commission the National Group of Bologna Experts was established from professors of higher education institutions and student delegate nominated by the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic in cooperation with the Slovak Rectors' Conference and the Higher Education Council. The members of the National Group of Bologna Promoters/Experts are national advisers for ECTS and Diploma Supplement, student mobility or in QA of HEIs. The National Group of Bologna Promoters/Experts is administered through the Office of Socrates/Erasmus. The Ministry of Education of SR substantially supports financially the activities of the National Group of Bologna Promoters.

a) Does your country have a national working group for Bologna follow-up ¹

Yes No

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

Ministry	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Rectors' conference	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Academic staff	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Students	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Staff trade unions	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
National Quality Assurance Agency	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Employers	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

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 <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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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

Rectors' conference	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Academic staff	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Students	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Staff trade unions	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
National Quality Assurance Agency	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Employers	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify) _____		

Please add any additional comments if necessary:

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.

Since academic year 2005/2006 each student begins study in Bachelor study programme (the first cycle), except for students of some disciplines (e.g., medicine, pharmacy and theology). The standard length of study for the Bachelor study programme as a study programme of the first cycle takes at least three years and at most four years. The graduates of the Bachelor study are awarded the academic degree of "bakalár", abbr. "Bc.". According to recommendation of the Bologna Declaration the Bachelor study programmes are oriented at acquisition of theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge based on the present state of science and art and on capacity to use them at performing their profession, as well as at continuing the Master's study. In contrast to the past, the emphasis is put on condition to propose the study content in such a way as to provide for the students of Bachelor's study full employment at the Slovak and international labour market and that their qualification is sufficient enough for performing the appropriate profession.

For the study programme of the second cycle (Master's, Engineer's or Doctor's study programmes) the standard length of study is at least one year and at most three years so that the total standard length of study according to Bachelor's study programme and the related study programme of the second cycle to follow in the same or relative study field is at least five years.

In specially justified cases, following the statement by the Accreditation Commission, the Ministry may permit combination of the first and second cycles into one unit with a view to the specificity of the study field. The standard length of study for the study programmes combining the first and second cycles of higher education is at least four years and at most six years and their graduates receive higher education of the second cycle (e.g., in medical and pharmaceutical fields of study). The graduates of the study programmes of the second cycle are awarded the academic degree of "magister", abbr. "Mgr.", in study programmes oriented at development of creativity in engineering works or processes, including economic ones, the academic degree of "inžinier", abbr. "Ing.".

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
about 185 000	about 162 300	87.8

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

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

In the numbers under b) only public HEIs are included. Students not enrolled in the two cycle degree system have begun studying before academic year 2005/2006 or in specific fields of study.

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)

The standard length for the doctoral study is at least three years and at most five years. The admission to the doctoral study programmes is primarily conditional on completing higher education of the second cycle; the admission to the doctoral study upon completing the Bachelor's study programme is not possible in the Slovak Republic and nor is it considered to be possible in the near future. The study according to the doctoral study programme takes place on the basis of individual study plan under the supervision of a tutor and it consists of the study part and research part.

The study part consists of lectures, seminars, and individual study of a professional literature, and the research part consists of individual or team research project of the student. A part of this study in full-time form is also a teaching activity or other professional activity connected with educational activity, and PhD student work at research projects of the professional training workplace. During the doctoral study the process of doctoral degree course is annually evaluated in yearly evaluation, a part of which is also control of achieved credits. Number of credits depends on concrete study programme and concrete higher education institution and its study rules.

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

During the doctoral study the PhD student must complete a dissertation examination, which is a final examination. The completion of the doctoral study consists in the defence of a dissertation.

Status of doctoral students is student status. Since 2008 doctoral scholarship is not taxable income.

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.

Research is one of core bussiness activities of higher education institutions in Slovakia. Improving research infrastrucure, increasing research outputs of higher education institutons and strengthening cooperation between academic research and bussiness needs are vital issues of current science and higher education policy in Slovakia.

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
 - from public funds
 - from private funds
- total annual national research expenditure (expressed in national currency)
 - from public funds
 - from private funds
- percentage of research carried out in higher education institutions (in terms of funding)
- details of the funding mechanisms for doctoral students in your country

Percentage of GDP spent on research in 2006: 0.49 %
Percentage of GDP spent on research from national budget in 2006: 0.27 %

Total annual national research expenditure in 2006: SKK 8 063 mil.
- from public funds: SKK 4 849 mil.

Higher education institutions are also funded by weighted number of students. Doctoral students have special weight in funding formula. The public higher education institution obtains subsidy for basic doctoral scholarship and special premium for each doctoral graduate from the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic. The Ministry determines number of new scholarships for each higher education institution by funding criteria. Higher education institution can admit more doctoral students if it has other sources for their scholarships. Minimum doctoral scholarship is detemined by the Act. The present aim is partly shift funding of doctoral scholarship under research funding schemes.

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

Yes

No

If Yes, please specify:

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 qualifications give access to the third cycle

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

- c) any measures planned to remove obstacles between cycles

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

In September 2008, 617 graduates of bachelor study and 2286 graduates of the second and third cycles have been in evidence of unemployment. 2790 graduates of all were in evidence for less than six months.

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:

Present number of graduates of the first cycle who do not continue in the second cycle study programmes is not relevant for labour market. Question of employability of bachelor graduates becomes more significant nowadays. Special policy is planned in 2009-2010 to improve cooperation between the higher education institutions and employers in preparation of bachelor study programmes for labour market.

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

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

Yes No

Comment

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

Yes No

Comment

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

Yes No

Comment

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

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

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

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 Necessary decisions about the process of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) creation in the Slovak Republic are already going on at the level of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic and at the level of institutions governed by the referred-to ministry. The creation of the NQF will be the core activity in the process of implementation of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) in Slovakia. NQF will be created by progressive incorporation of State Educational Programmes (primary and secondary schools) and Study Fields (HEI) into particular referential levels in terms of EQF descriptors. Intention is that sector-based Slovak NQF will be fully compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the European Higher Education Area, one of the aims of Bologna Process. All EQF levels will be handled as one task though.

Draft document about implementation of the EQF under the conditions of the SR will be submitted for the meeting of the Slovak Government in December 2008. On this basis, it will be able to approach to development of the National Qualification System on the part of the Ministry of Education of the SR and, to development of the National System of Occupations, on the part of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR. The National Qualification System will be realized and established through the national project co-financed from the European Social Fund by direct assigning to the contractor. Both systems will be incorporated into the National Qualifications Framework, which will be created in parallel.

With the active support of the Slovak Government, not only cooperation between ministries and labour market institutions will be enhanced, but also greater coherence among particular areas of the Lisbon process, and The Education and Training 2010 Programme will be created contributing to important synergic effect.

Incorporation of the State Educational Programmes, Study Fields and educational activities to the NQF will be performed on the basis of the expert outputs from the working group (chaired by the Section of LLL of Slovak Ministry of Education) and from the EQF descriptors. Definite linking to the corresponding NQF in its final phase will be the responsibility of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic. The Ministry will be also responsible for assessment of the final amount of NQF levels and will operate as a national coordination point.

This process should be carried-out in such a way as to enable inclusion of not only existing, but also newly originating qualifications and educational programmes into particular qualification levels. The purpose why to establish the National Qualification System is also examination of learning outcomes that are comparable to the level and type of qualification attained through such programmes for further education and training and applying attained capability in the training field. This will enable to include and recognize also qualifications attained in other countries and validate them irrespective of the place and manner where and how they have been attained. This validation refers to formal and non-formal education outcomes as well as informal learning, i.e. systematic education not categorized in the formal education system, e.g. corporate learning, experiences achieved by practice, occasional learning etc. The intention is that the framework will be based on learning outcomes.

The process will be also supported and supervised by the outputs from the over-branch working group (representatives of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Construction and Regional Development, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Culture). Representatives of the employers, labor unions and HEIs are fully invited to the consultation process and their proposals and comments will be fully taken in the consideration.

Slovakia estimates a time schedule of 3 years as a final deadline for harmonization of the Slovak NQF with the EQF. 4.5 years are estimated for all education certificates to be inclusive of the reference to corresponding EQF level.

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

i) Has the self-certification report been published?

Yes No

Comment

Please add any additional comments if necessary:

Comment

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 No Not yet, but such a review is planned
(Please specify time) 2009

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

In 2009, external evaluation of the Accreditation Commission is planned.

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

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:

- Other measures

Yes No

If Yes, please outline these measures

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

⁸ <http://www.enqa.net/files/BergenReport210205.pdf>

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

9.1. Internal quality assurance in higher education institutions

Describe the internal QA systems in place in your HEIs.

In 2006-2008, higher education institutions were evaluated by EUA methodology during special project funded by the Ministry of Education.

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

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

The Scientific Board of higher education institution makes yearly review of teaching and research activity. Students have a right to express their opinions on teachers and teaching activity in anonym questionnaires yearly.

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.

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

Additional information if necessary

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

System of external quality assurance system is based on activity of Accreditation Commission, the advisory body of the SR Government, consisting of 21 members from higher education institutions and the world of work, also from abroad.

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 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| - external review | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| - publication of results | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| - follow-up procedures | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

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 2009) 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.

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 (eg 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:*

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:

a member of INQAAHE (International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education) and its regional subnet CEENQAAHE (Central and Eastern Europe Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education).

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

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)

At present, in the Slovak Republic some higher education institutions issue upon graduates' request, the Diploma Supplement as a media to make the recognition of diploma abroad easier. According to Higher Education Act every graduate of higher education institution of the study programme in all three cycles will receive their Diploma Supplement free of cost together with his/her diploma. This rule does not refer to students of higher education institutions who started their higher education study in a study programme since academic year 2005/2006. The data to be contained in the Diploma Supplement has been set by the Ministry of Education of SR in a special rule. The Diploma Supplement corresponds to the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format. At the student's request it is also available in English. In academic year 2006/2007, about 67 % of graduates from higher education institution shall receive the Diploma Supplement automatically. The other students who started studying in academic year 2004/2005 and earlier, will receive the Diploma Supplement only upon their request. Since academic year 2008/2009, the Diploma Supplement will be obligatorily issued to all graduates from higher education institutions in the Slovak Republic.

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* EN
- 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

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

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:

The Slovak Republic ratified the Lisbon Convention on 13. 7. 1999. It came into operation as at 1. 9. 1999. The Convention is concerned only with the so-called recognition for academic purposes, that is, recognition for purposes of continuing studies in the SR. Slovak Republic considers the following conventions of the Council of Europe and UNESCO, which are related to the academic recognition:

1. European Convention on Recognition of Equivalence of Documents Giving Access to Higher Education Institutions (1953, ETS No. 15) and its protocol (1964, ETS No. 49);
2. European Convention on Equivalence of Partial Study in Higher Education

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)

Institution (1956, ETS No. 21);

3. European Convention on Academic Recognition of University Qualification (1959, ETS No. 32);

4. Convention on Recognition of Studies and Diplomas Concerning Higher Education in the Countries of European Region (1979)

5. European Convention on General Recognition of Higher Education Study (1990, ETS No. 138)

6. International Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab and European States bordering on the Mediterranean area (1979)

5 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)

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:

ii) Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees

Yes No

If Yes, please demonstrate how it is achieved:

The Higher Education Act gives the right to higher education institution to provide joint study programme and gives its graduates joint diplomas or separated diplomas.

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

Yes No

If Yes, please demonstrate how it is achieved:

Higher education institutions settled abroad (EU member states only) can provide higher education in Slovakia with special permission of the Ministry according to regulation of education in the state higher education institution settled.

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

On the basis of this Convention all applicants for recognition of their diplomas, in case of qualifications achieved at the secondary schools and higher education institutions recognized by the State, are entitled to fair assessment of the qualifications, namely in adequate time. No discrimination shall be made in this respect on any ground such as gender, race, colour, disability, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status or on the grounds of any other circumstances not related to the merits of qualifications for which the recognition is sought.

ii) recognition if no substantial differences can be proven

Yes No

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

While there are not demonstrated remarkable differences between general demands for admission abroad, where the qualification was received, in the Slovak Republic this qualification issued in another contracting State shall recognize for admission to higher education. If the qualification enables the access to only specific kinds of institutions or study programmes, the holders of such qualifications are offered the access to similar specific programmes at the recognized higher education institutions. If the certificate of secondary school-leaving examination from abroad enables an access to higher education only in combinations with other qualification examinations as an admission requirement, completion of the given exam is a condition or we offer an alternative in the form of completing vocational training. While no remarkable differences are identified between the periods of study completed abroad and the period of study programme completed in the SR, also the periods aimed at completing the study programme are recognized.

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

Yes No

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

Non-recognition of certificate is not regulated by any regulation of the SR, only the conditions of recognition are set out (point ii). All certificates on education that cannot be recognized under point ii) are not subject of recognition. However, prior

to recognition refusal there are various compensation mechanisms, the determination of which falls under the competence of educational establishment of equal or relative orientation. They include completion of differentiation examination, completion of final thesis, eventually, if the reason of the application rejection is the scope of study, completion of compensation study in the educational establishment.

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

Yes No

If Yes, please describe how it is done in practice

Ministry of Education of the SR provides adequate information and reviews on:

- various types of higher education institutions incorporated in the higher education system in the SR,
- the list of recognized higher education institutions (both the State and private) showing their right to provide for individual types of qualifications and demands for acquisition of access to every type of higher education institution and programme,
- description of programmes ongoing in these institutions,
- list of educational institutions located outside this territory and that we consider as a part of the Slovak education system.

All the information is updated and published.

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

In the Slovak Republic there is a completely functional national information centre - Centre for Recognition of Diplomas, the so-called ENIC/NARIC Centre. Its task is to make easier the access to reliable and readable information on the system of higher education and qualifications in the Slovak Republic and in contracting Parties, provision of advices or information on matters of recognition and estimation of qualifications in agreement with the valid regulations. It is to recognize documents from other contracting Parties for academic purposes and

issues decisions or standpoints that are of recommending character (in the light of the Act No. 131/2002 on Higher Education, as amended).

The Centre for Recognition of Diplomas also serves as an authority for recognition of professional qualifications according to general system of recognition of professional qualification, contact point for the Guideline 2005/36/EC and National Centre Europass.

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

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

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

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:

i) is it compatible with ECTS? Yes No

ii) what is the ratio between national and 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

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

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

Yes No

If Yes, please explain:

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

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: seminars, possibility of experts consultations (bologna promoters)

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:

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

Yes No

If Yes, please specify:

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:

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

Comprehensively Some A little None

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Please describe the current situation:

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.

There is no special legislative creating opportunity for flexible learning paths in higher education to encourage participation by under-represented groups. There are the same conditions for attendance to higher education and to finish higher education study. Higher education institutions provide study programmes in the different form and method so the student can usually choose the way of study which fits him best.

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

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

Each higher education institution sets up coordinator for handicapped 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

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

Most of study programmes are provided in different forms and using different methods, which usually differ in amount of contact classes. In previous years higher education institutions were funded in development e-learning courses.

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

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,

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

If No please explain what are the obstacles

ii) awarding joint degrees?

Yes No

If No please explain what are the obstacles

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

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.

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

economic science

e) Estimate the number of joint programmes in your country

five

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

Support of joint degrees is provided mainly by EU programmes (LLP).

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

Students of joint programmes study on equals terms as students of other programmes.

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?

Academic mobility is organized through international mobility programmes as well as on the basis of direct cooperation between the Slovak higher education institutions and foreign higher education institutions.

In 2006 - 2008, the Government of the Slovak Republic continued in funding "National Scholarship Programme for Support of Mobility Students, Doctorands, University Teachers and Research Workers".

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: Order and Law was harmonised with Council Directive 2004/114/EC of 13 December 2004 on conditions of admission of third-country nationals for the purposes of studies, pupil exchange, unremunerated training or voluntary service and Council Directive 2005/71/EC of 12 October 2005 on a specific procedure for admitting third-country nationals for the purposes of scientific research.

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

Yes No

Please add appropriate comments to describe the current situation: Financial support for mobile students and staff is aim of diferent programme in Slovakia (more information in previous report).

d) Are study periods taken abroad recognised?

Yes No

Please add appropriate comments to describe the current situation: In fact it depends on higher education institution.

e) Is there accommodation for mobile students and staff?

Yes No

Please add appropriate comments to describe the current situation: Generally yes.

f) Have any measures been taken to increase outward student and staff mobility?

Yes No

Please add appropriate comments to describe the current situation:

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. Portable grants are for example a part of the National Scholarship Programme.

b) Are portable loans available in your country?

Yes No

If No, describe any measures being taken to increase the portability of loans. Portable loans for staff are not planned nowadays. Loans from Student Loan Fund are limited only to the first study on higher education institution.

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"

Activities in the field of enhancing attractivness of EHEA are multidimensional in the Slovak Republic. These activities are oriented at development of cooperation

with the countries outside EHEA at the Government level and individual higher education institutions with the aim to support EHEA attractiveness in other parts of the world. at the Government level; it is first of all the preparation of agreements in the field of education, with a special view to higher education, with the selected countries, such as China or Ukraine. Co-operation of Slovak higher education institutions with the institutions outside EHEA has been continuously growing, particularly, in solution of joint projects practically in all parts of the world, with significant attractiveness of Chinese, Japanese and American universities.

b) What has your country done to:

i) improve information on the EHEA outside Europe?

Slovak Republic regularly publishes publications on current state of EHEA development and the SR position in the field of higher education; the publications are distributed practically all over the world through ENIC/NARIC in the SR.

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

Slovak Republic regularly issues publications promoting education in all types of schools in the SR including EHEA promotion and position of the SR within it. These publications are distributed to diplomatic corps of the SR all over the world as well as via Internet (www.studyin.sk)

iii) strengthen cooperation based on partnership in higher education?

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

Among the means of intensifying cooperation with the countries outside EHEA are dialogues at the highest level; prime minister and minister of education and other officials have repeatedly met recently with foreign partners (China, USA, South Africa) to assess possibilities of cooperation in higher education and science up to the level of international agreements.

v) improve recognition of qualifications with other world regions?

In the field of recognition of professional qualifications and certificates the Slovak Republic has applied binding procedures ensuing from EU regulations and international agreements, by which it is bound (e.g., Lisbon Convention). Within the framework of academic recognition of education the SR prepares international agreements with the countries outside EHEA, e.g. with China and Ukraine.

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.

Slovak Republic has continuously applied and updated the measures in the field of higher education quality assurance, accreditation and higher education

recognition in international scope. In the field of higher education quality assessment and assurance the external and internal quality evaluation is applied. Concerning the external quality evaluation all HEIs in the SR were assessed through EAU, which prepared a report on the state of individual HEIs and a summary report with recommendations in all areas of academic life. Concerning the internal evaluation, all HEIs' activities are assessed every six years under complex accreditation with special emphasis on quality of education and science. Based on results of complex accreditation the HEIs will be ranked into categories. The complex accreditation ongoing today will be terminated on 30th September 2009. In 2007, regulations on quality assurance in education and science and accreditation have been amended in such a way as to make the whole process more transparent, and to create equal conditions for all higher education institutions, including foreign ones operating at the territory of Slovak Republic. In the field of recognition of foreign qualifications and certificates on education the SR is governed by the respective EU regulations and international conventions whereby it is bound (e.g. Lisbon Convention). In the field of academic recognition it aims to conclude international agreements on recognition of education for academic purposes, including those with non-EHEA countries (the agreements with China and Ukraine are being prepared) to increase academic mobility.

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

If Yes please explain in what ways the guidelines are applied

In the SR all study programmes offered by HEIs are liable for accreditation. Specifically, the study programmes offered outside the Slovak territory must be accredited. In that case they must show the same quality of personnel and material provision as those on the soil of the parent university.

ii) incoming higher education provision?

Yes No

If Yes please explain in what ways the guidelines are applied

In the SR the amendment to the Higher Education Act has been issued in 2007 to set the duty of foreign HEIs to inform the SR on their activity at the Slovak

territory, namely, to show without needless administrative burden, their belonging to the State of origin and accreditation.

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 Slovak higher education is faced with the following main challenges beyond 2010:

In the field of higher education quality, the challenge for HEIs consists in development and active use of the tools for identification of shortcomings in provided higher education, for monitoring students' progress in educational process and innovation of methods and content of education in agreement with the changing needs of students and employers.

In the field of study, the challenge is to provide for by curriculum as well as by educational methods the preparedness of university graduates for the labour market and the transfer of the latest knowledge to the world of work. To secure that the graduates of the bachelor study programmes find their placement in labour market, and that the graduates of the second and third cycles of higher education are capable to provide to adequate measure the innovations in working methods and products of the employer and be primarily used by the latter to this end. Another challenge ahead for higher education institutions in this field is to adapt the study programmes offer to the expected changes in structure of applicants for the study courses brought about by demographic development and requirements of labour market. Further, to secure for the students a position of partners in the educational process and a position of client of a higher education institution within the framework of supportive activities.

The challenge in the field of personnel provision is to secure active personnel policy to gain the best university teachers according to readable criteria of choice, to regularly update curricula in agreement with the results achieved in research and development, and be actively involved in solution of research projects.

In economic field, the challenge is to increase the portion of gains of higher education institutions achieved through research projects to those from subsidies for provision of accredited study programmes and gradual decrease of the portion of funds achieved for institutional support to those achieved for special-purpose support.

The support of higher education development should be carried out on the basis of rules defined in advance, on the basis of regular discussing the long-term intention of the higher education institutions and its updating, evaluating its fulfilment, co-financing the development projects by the higher education institution from its own resources.

In the field of social support of students the challenge is aimed at provision of such a system that will enable every student to study in a higher education institution regardless of his/her economic background and will make it possible

for higher education institutions to create for students high-quality conditions for study.

(1) The successful fulfillment of tasks ensuing from the challenges will ensure:

- a) the higher education institutions considering the student needs (from the point of view of both the curricula and methods),
- b) partnerships of higher education institutions with employers and graduates,
- c) motivating the higher education environment (less administration, partner approach in education, client's approach to students),
- d) more open higher education institutions (publicising the information, enforcing public interest in activities of public higher education institutions),
- e) prestigious position of a university teacher (strengthening the competitiveness at filling posts of university teachers, motivating environment for employment at a higher education institution),
- f) more accessible higher education through more efficient system of social support,
- g) more stable environment for higher education institutions (funding lasting several years),
- h) regularly analyzed and prognosticated conditions of HEIs' functioning.

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?

Some ethnic groups are underrepresented in Slovak higher education system. Main obstacle is unfulfilled conditions for admission (secondary school education). Age structure of students does not correspond to age structure of population in Slovakia.

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).

In previous decade the main policy aim was to improve access to higher education by increasing number of admissions. Public higher education institutions were stimulated by funding formula, where number of students were quite relevant.

Students are supported by means-tested scholarships and merit based scholarships funded from state budget. The Student Loan Fund provides loans for students with

special terms and conditions in interest rate and repayment. Nowadays is demand for this loans more or less equal to their supply.

Higher education institutions provide subsided residences and meals.

Parents of student younger than 25 years can apply for family allowance and tax relief.

The first study in standard length of study programme is free of tutions in public higher education institutions.

Most of this support is limited only to students in full-time study.

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.

Support in part 2 is funded mainly from national budget or other public sources.

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?

Slovakia participated in the last round of Eurostudent project. A report on social situation of students of higher education institutions is annually prepared in the SR.

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?

Concrete goals will ensue from strategic document to be prepared since 2009.

(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).

Activities will be outlined in the prepared strategic document since 2009.

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

A specific budget for measures in the area considered will be proposed and planned in the prepared strategic document.

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

The time framework of strategic document for the area considered is not concretised.

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

The way of monitoring the course of process and its results will be proposed in the prepared strategic document.

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).

Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic
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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?