Creating a higher education area: Policy, tools, practice

Gerard Madill, Higher Education Policy Unit, European University Association

EAHEP Round Table, Brussels 1-3 July 2009

Overview of presentation

- **Intention for workshops is to share practice and experience, to learn from each other**

- **Aim of this presentation – to give a flavour of what we've done through the Bologna Process in the areas covered by the workshops:**
  - recognition & mobility
  - quality assurance
  - qualifications frameworks

- **Conclusion: policies and tools for EHEA now in place, the most challenging of our 3 aspects is the practice**

Bologna Declaration - 31 countries, June 1999

- System of easily readable and comparable degrees, to promote employability of citizens and competitiveness of European HE

- System based on 2 main cycles. Access to 2nd cycle requiring successful completion of first cycle studies (min 3 years). 1st cycle degrees to be relevant to labour market. 2nd cycle should lead to master and/or doctorate degree

- Establishment of a system of credits (such as ECTS) – promoting mobility and recognition of learning from non-HE contexts

- Promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to free movement for students and staff

- Promotion of cooperation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria & methodologies

- Promotion of European dimension in HE

  (these objectives to be achieved by 2010)

Particular characteristics of Bologna

- Not harmonisation but high-level convergence
- Voluntary process, but with agreed goals
- Led by Ministries, but with key roles for stakeholders
- Values diversity and respects national contexts
- Covers 46 countries
- Seeks to increase university autonomy while ensuring accountability
- International dimension

Recognition of degrees & periods of learning

- Lisbon Recognition Convention – countries to sign, ratify, implement
- European Network of Information Centres/National Academic Recognition Information Centres (ENICs/NARICs)
- 3-cycle system
- European Credit Transfer and Accumulation Scheme (ECTS)
- Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area and national qualifications frameworks

Recognition of degrees & periods of learning

Legislation: in most countries +/- OK **but:**

- Fair & coherent recognition in EHEA is not yet there

- Need to improve procedures is not always understood

Tools for improvement:

- More consistent practices/terminology across EHEA;

- Common understanding of 'substantial differences'

- Checking quality of recognition procedures at quality assessments

Quality Assurance

- European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance, in 3 parts:
  - Part 1: internal quality assurance
  - Part 2: external quality assurance
  - Part 3: quality assurance of QA agencies
- European Quality Assurance Register

Quality Assurance

External quality assurance

- Largely in place across the EHEA

- International experts & students involved, but some gaps

- Evaluation of QA Agencies – in 16 countries

Internal quality assurance

- more or less in place: assuring staff quality, internal approval of programmes, QA strategies

- Difficult aspects include linking programmes and methods of assessment and quality procedures to learning outcomes

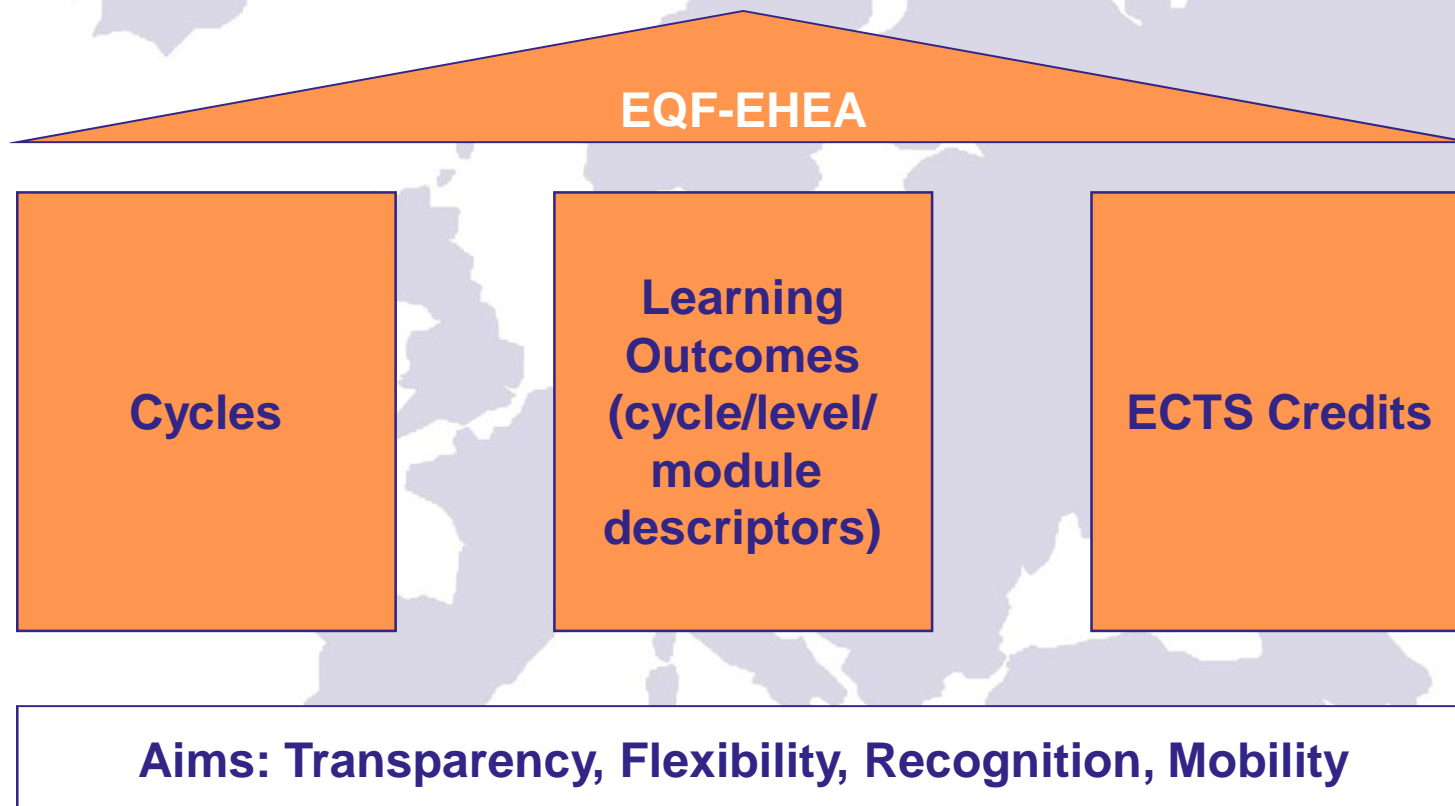EQAR- Now in place - 9 Agencies/organisations

Qualifications Frameworks

- Relatively recent addition to Bologna (2005), but one of most far-reaching and demanding of EHEA reforms
- Qualifications Framework for EHEA & NQFs – different but complementary scope and functions
- Focus on learning outcomes, rather than inputs
- Self-certification/verification process, *must* include international experts, *must* publish results
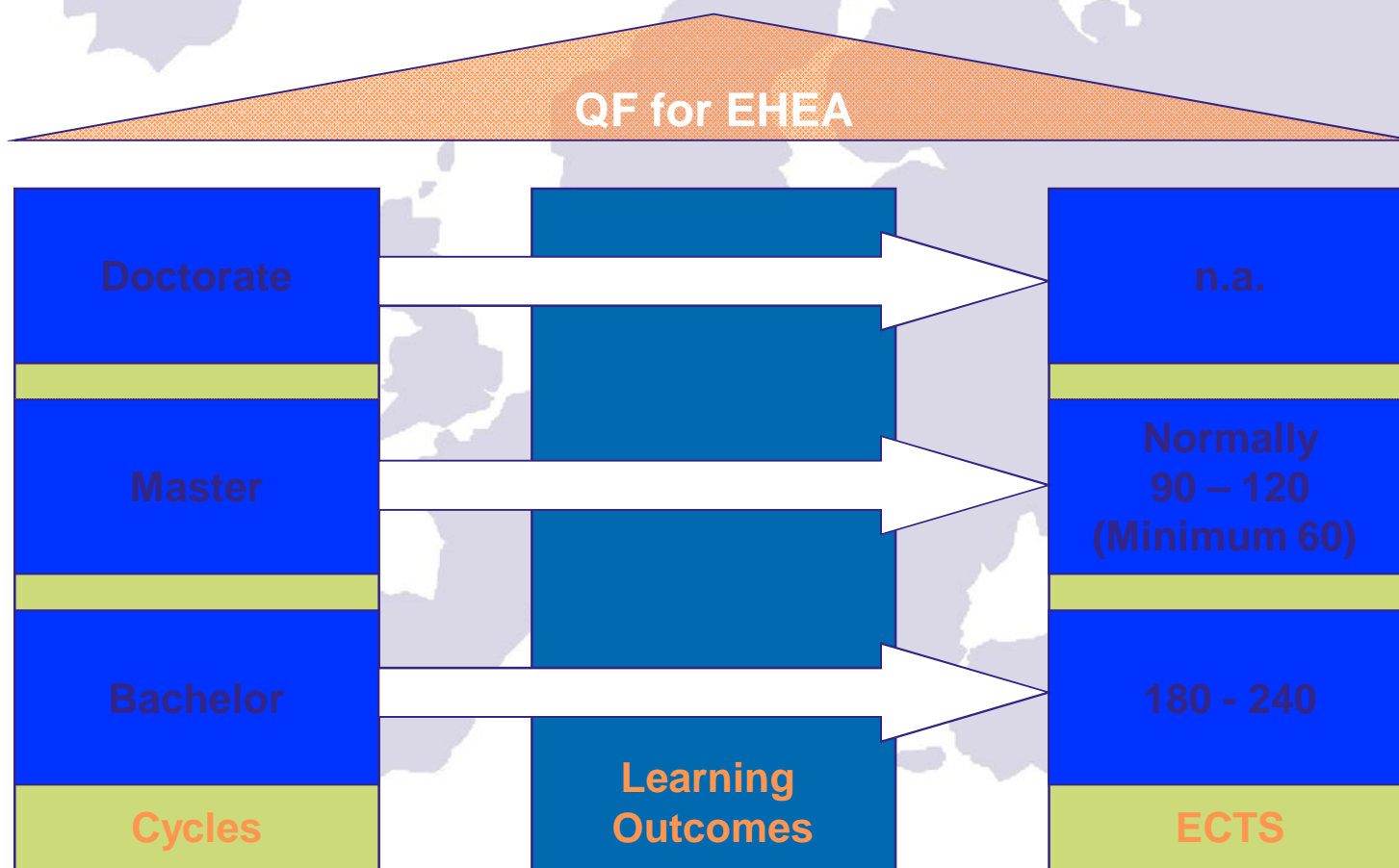
Further information available on Council of Europe's website on qualifications frameworks:

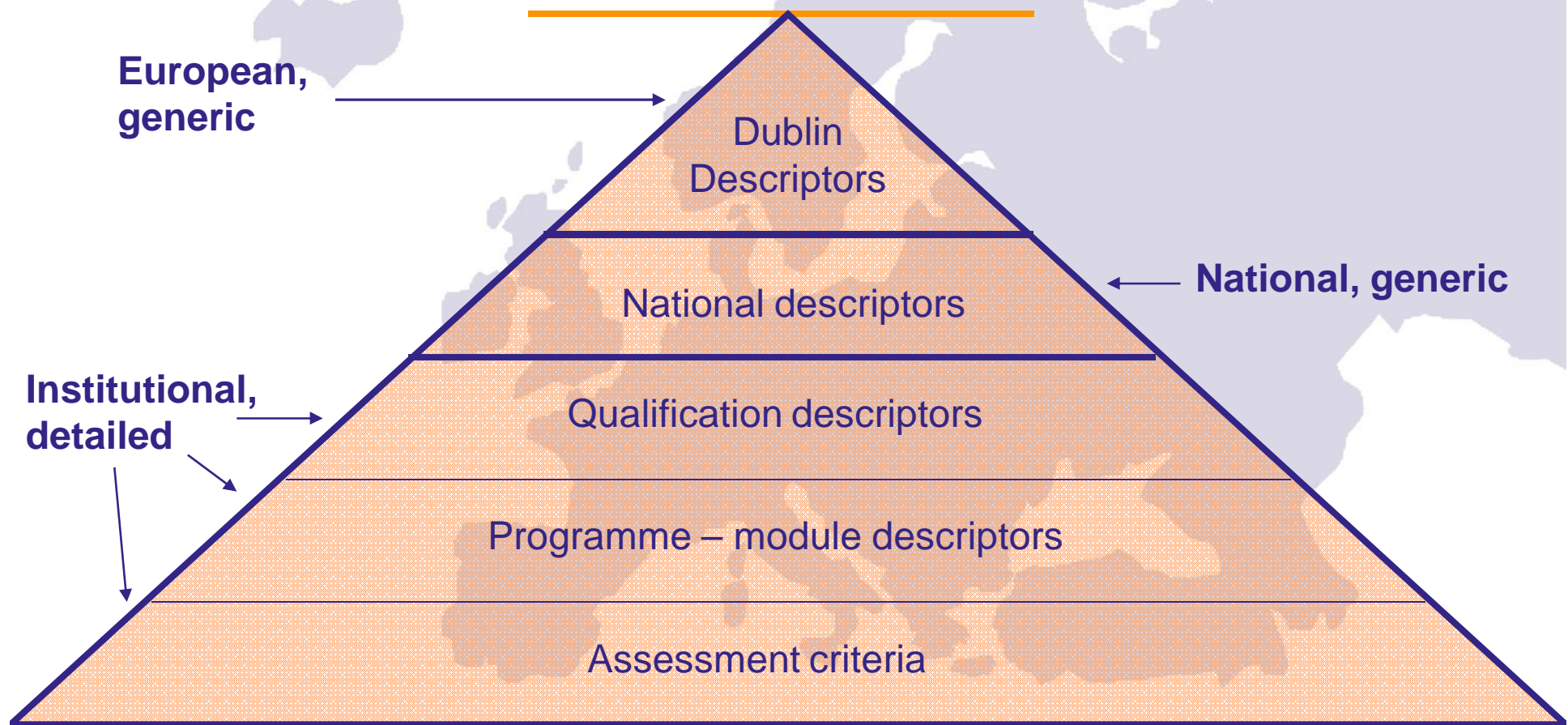http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/qf/qf.asp

Credit Ranges per Cycle

Cycles	Learning Outcomes	ECTS
Doctorate		n.a.
Master		Normally 90 – 120 (Minimum 60)
Bachelor		180 - 240

QF for EHEA

Different types of learning outcomes

European, generic → Dublin Descriptors

National descriptors ← **National, generic**

Institutional, detailed → Qualification descriptors

Programme – module descriptors

Assessment criteria

NQFs - Progress so far

- much effort in 2007-2009

- NQF proposal **approved** - 19 countries

- 6 NQFs **self-certified** with the EHEA framework – further 6 close to completion

- few countries have made an explicit link between flexible learning and their NQF

- not enough integration between the NQF, learning outcomes and ECTS,

- Risks of superficial implementation, starting *self-certification* too early – implementation takes time!

Bologna With Student Eyes '09

Areas of progress

- Student participation
- Quality Assurance
- Use of ECTS

Areas of particular concern

- General lack of progress – progress 'on paper' not reflected 'on the ground'
- 'A la carte' approach – particularly on aspects such as student participation, social dimension, mobility
- Commitments on mobility not matched in practice
- Genuine student participation key to achieving and safeguarding reforms 'on the ground'

Bologna successes - View of NRCs

'greatest successes' of Bologna implementation at national level:

- 3-cycle structure & clearer nomenclature of degrees (30%)
- developments in quality assurance (22%)
- making national reforms easier/giving a European context for national reforms (20%)
- greater focus on the learner (17%)

Bologna Priorities for future: NRCs

- Implementation of the 3-cycle system (34%)
- Situating national reforms and frameworks within European context (15%)
- Quality Assurance (15%)
- Learning Outcomes (12%)

Overall achievements

- Most of 'architecture' now in place (see also earlier slide from Bologna Declaration)
- 3-cycle structure
- Quality Assurance
- Significant, if slow, progress on NQFs
- Process has expanded – objectives and countries
- Strong (but not complete) consensus remains
- International interest and impact
- Cooperation an established means of working
- Diversity remains – national context is respected within European context

Lessons learned?

- Hugely ambitious agenda & timescales
- Full stakeholder engagement is important
- Clarity and shared understanding of purpose & goals
- Be careful about linking explicitly to other processes
- The greater the ownership, the greater the impact
- Changes are interdependent – impact of individual aspects is limited. EHEA greater than sum of parts
- Danger of unintended consequences!!
- Move from policy to creating tools is challenging
- Implementation phase is even more challenging

Workshops

1. Recognition and Mobility: From intra-regional to inter-regional
   - Europe - Erasmus mobility
   - Developments in Asia – towards an Asian Erasmus?

2. New Frontiers in Quality Assurance: Bridging national and regional frameworks
   - ASEAN University Network - Quality Assurance (AUN-QA)
   - European Dimension of Quality Assurance in Bologna

3. Degree structures and qualifications frameworks
   - History and evolution of qualifications frameworks in Europe
   - Case study: Malaysian Qualifications Framework

Thank you!

European University Association (EUA)
Gerard Madill
Rue d'Egmont 13
1000 Brussels
Belgium
Gerard.Madill@eua.be
+32 2 233 54 13
http://www.eua.be