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Ministry of Education and Science
Stockholm, Sweden

**The Stockholm Conclusions -
Conclusions and recommendations of the Seminar on
Joint Degrees within the framework of the Bologna
Process**

The Bologna objectives

Joint degrees are important instruments for implementing the objectives set out in the Bologna Declaration and the Prague Communiqué: promoting student and teacher mobility, employability, quality, the European dimension and the attractiveness and competitiveness of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Joint study programmes could provide an instrument for giving students the chance to gain academic and cultural experience abroad and institutions of higher education an opportunity to co-operate. Such co-operation could exploit wider competences and resources than those available at any single institution.

These conclusions concern joint degrees in a system of higher education essentially based on two main cycles.

Framework

The basis for joint degrees in the EHEA is established in the Bologna Declaration and the Prague Communiqué, which stress the importance of transparency and compatibility.

A common framework for joint degrees must be flexible in order to allow for and reflect national differences, but it must also include a definition of a joint degree, which will serve as a basis for a legal framework at the national level. The national, legal base must be clear on the conditions for awarding a joint degree and must not limit co-operation between institutions.

The national authorities should also be reminded of the contents of the Lisbon Convention.

In most countries a jointly awarded degree would require amendments to the national higher education legislation. In various countries higher education institutions are increasingly developing bilateral or multilateral degrees (Dutch-Flemish Hogeschool, French-German University, Italian-French University,

Danish-Swedish Öresund University, for example). There is, however, reluctance towards and no legal foundation for establishing joint degrees at the supranational level.

General and professional degrees

Most countries consider joint degrees possible in both general and professional degree fields but expect difficulties in establishing joint degrees in regulated professions. Attempts should, however, be made and the density of regulations should be reduced.

Quality assurance

Documented quality assurance is necessary to guarantee the international acceptance and competitiveness of joint degrees on the world education and employment markets. On the basis of mutual trust and general acceptance of national assurance systems, principles and general standards for quality assurance and accreditation should be developed. Joint study programmes which adhere to these principles and standards could use an EHEA label, which could be established within the framework of the Bologna Process and supervised by the national authorities.

It is essential that the national quality assurance agencies co-operate within the European Network of Quality Assurance (ENQA), in accordance with the Prague Communiqué.

Structure

It should be possible to award joint degrees in each cycle, including doctoral studies.

Criteria

The following criteria could be useful common denominators for European joint degrees:

- Two or more participating institutions in two or more countries.
- The duration of study outside the home institution should be substantial and continuous, e.g. 1 year at bachelor level.
- Joint degrees should require a joint study programme settled on by co-operation, confirmed in a written agreement, between institutions.
- Joint degrees should be based on bilateral or multilateral agreements on jointly arranged and approved programmes, with no restrictions concerning study fields or subjects.
- Full use should be made of the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS in order to ensure comparability of qualifications.
- A joint degree should preferably be documented in a single document issued by the participating institutions in accordance with national regulations.
- Joint degrees and study programmes should require student and staff/teacher mobility.
- Linguistic diversity in a European perspective should be ensured.

- Joint study programmes should have a European dimension, whether physical mobility or intercultural competence in the curriculum.

Students

Students have a role as one of the main actors in higher education institutions and will use their power to choose courses of their own preference.

The social dimension should be taken into account by the member states and the students' social conditions should be guaranteed. Foreign students should have the same benefits as regular, national students.

Funding

Additional funding is needed to develop joint study programmes. Member states are encouraged to ensure that students following a joint study programme in a foreign country can transfer their national study allowances abroad.

The ERASMUS programme should be drawn upon.

Labour market

Education is an important factor for mobility on the labour market. Consultation with the social partners could be considered when establishing joint degrees.

Monitoring of the system of joint degrees should be included in the course of the Bologna-Prague-Berlin process up to 2003.

In order to facilitate an exchange of information and experience on the development of joint degrees the member states are kindly invited to report to the Bologna Follow-up Group at regular intervals on the joint degrees their higher education institutions are taking part in.