



NATIONAL REPORT

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NATIONAL REPORT

1. - Introduction

The monitoring, development and coordination of activities in Spain related to the Bologna Process are carried out by the State Secretary for Education and Universities and the Department of Education, Culture and Sports through the General Directorate of Universities, which has set up a committee in which experts and representatives of the bodies and institutions involved in the process participate, as well as those ministers responsible for university policies.

For more detailed information on the regulatory documents and texts on which this report is based, please consult the web page of the General Directorate of Universities (www.univ.mecd.es).

Two sources of inspiration can be found in Spain for the implementation of the commitments and policies derived from or inspired by the Bologna Process, which has achieved a high level of agreement among governmental, regional and university authorities. On the one hand are the agreements, statements and commitments directly derived from the Bologna Process, as an intergovernmental meeting point. And on the other, the guidelines set out by the Organic Law on Universities of 2001, which constitutes perhaps one of the clearest exponents of Spain's commitment to the creation of a European Higher Education Area.

Section XIII of the Law, the so-called "European Higher Education Area", constitutes the framework which channels national university policy towards full integration in the European sphere. In its preamble, the Organic Law on Universities establishes:

- The competitive integration of the Spanish university system, together with the finest centres for higher education in the new European Higher Education Area.
- The promotion of student, professor and researcher mobility within the national and European systems.
- State financing of those programs aimed at promoting the integration of Universities in the European Higher Education Area.

More specifically, this section of the Law establishes the following guidelines:

- The adoption, on behalf of the State, Autonomous Regions and Universities, of the necessary measures for the full integration of the Spanish system within the European Higher Education Area.
- The inclusion of the European supplement in official degrees issued by Universities.
- The adoption of the European credit system.
- The promotion of student mobility within the European Higher Education Area through scholarship programs, financial aid and study credits.
- The authorization of professors from EU Member State Universities to be hired to work in Spanish Universities.

Based on the initial commitments of the Bologna Process and of the legal obligations established by the Organic Law on Universities, a Framework Document was drawn up in February 2003 regarding the Integration of the Spanish University System within the European Higher Education Area. Said document includes a catalogue of specific measures to be introduced for the development and implementation of the Bologna Process in Spain, a timetable for the most important proceedings, as well as those aspects requiring more in-depth consideration on behalf of all agents involved.

The Framework Document provides for four special fields of action (European credit system, degree structure, European degree supplement and quality assurance), which are analysed more in depth further on in this report, as well as two main principles which, in the opinion of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports, as well as of all other institutions involved, should preside all proceedings:

- Institutional co-responsibility, which implies both the Government and the Autonomous Regions, to Universities and to society as a whole during the two primary phases of the process (promotion and incentives; and an effective and widespread implementation).
- A simple and flexible transition towards the new system, during which time both new and current degrees will be valid.

The Royal Decree regarding the implementation of the European degree supplement has already been approved, and the ratification of the Royal Decree regarding the European credit system is foreseen for September. The processing of the remaining regulations is in an advanced stage.

2. - Degree recognition (European degree supplement)

In accordance with the projections contained in the Organic Law on Universities, two stages were set out in the Framework Document: a) a transitional phase towards the implementation of the new structured degrees within the ECTS, in which a supplement to current degrees is issued; and b) a definitive phase once the new degrees have been implemented.

The Royal Decree establishing the European degree supplement has been approved by the Government, as well as the procedure for its issue by Universities, and may be put into practice beginning in the 2003/2004 academic year.

The regulatory text provides for:

- The issue of the supplement to valid official degrees throughout national territory (with the exception of diplomas or degrees issued by the Universities themselves or in collaboration with non-university institutions).
- A definition of the European degree supplement as the document which accompanies each of the officially recognised and valid degrees throughout national territory, with unified, personalised information for each university degree holder regarding studies completed, results obtained, professional knowledge acquired and the degree level within the national higher education system.
- The content of the European degree supplement (student data, degree information, information regarding degree level, content and results obtained, the purpose of each degree, additional information, certification of the supplement, and information regarding the national system of higher education).
- A unique supplement for joint syllabi and double degrees.

3. - Adoption of a system based on two primary cycles

In accordance with the structure contained in the Framework Document, the Department of Education, Culture and Sports has drawn up drafts of the Royal Decrees regarding the structure of university teaching and official level studies, as well as on official post-graduate university studies and the issue of official Master's and Doctorate degrees. Both drafts are in an advanced stage of processing, concretely, in the report drawn up by the University Coordination Board to be released midway through September.

The structure of university studies in cycles, provided for in the Organic Law on Universities, is developed in the first of the aforementioned drafts, and is based both on a first cycle or level, which should lead to an undergraduate degree, and a second, graduate level, which should lead to a Master's or Doctorate degree.

In following with the Framework Document, the undergraduate degree should be professionally oriented, and therefore should provide university training which brings together basic general knowledge, transversal abilities related to the integral training of the student, and knowledge specific to professional orientation which allows degree holders to more easily access the labour market.

The draft of the Royal Decree contemplates, among other important issues:

- The inclusion of new undergraduate degrees within the Catalogue of Official University degrees, following their approval by the Government (Autonomous Regions, Universities and the University Coordination Board participate in this process). In the event that new degrees are included, the former related degree or degrees shall be removed from the Catalogue.
- The general establishment of between 180 and 240 credits in order to obtain an undergraduate degree, with the possibility of a higher number of credits when required in order to comply with European Union programmes.
- The establishment of at least 70% of credits for each degree through general, government-approved guidelines.
- Generalised undergraduate degrees.

- The establishment of the academic and professional purposes of each degree within the general guidelines.

As regards graduate studies, the regulatory draft is integrated by a second and third cycle (Master's and Doctorate degrees, respectively). The first of these consists of in-depth and specialised studies in the material, or of preparation for research activities.

The third or Doctorate cycle is regulated by a specific draft, currently in the processing phase, in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Framework Document. In these drafts, graduate studies are again defined as the second level of the cyclical structure of university studies, which once satisfactorily completed, should lead to the obtaining of official Master's and Doctorate degrees.

The objective of this second cycle is academic, professional and research specialisation in a specific field of scientific, technical, humanistic or artistic knowledge, organised in official graduate programs which will be approved by each University (provisionally, one program per field of scientific or professional knowledge per University). The annual publication of a catalogue of graduate programs for all Universities is also expected.

The organisation of graduate studies, as well as the cultivation of interuniversity, interdisciplinary and interdepartmental programs may lead to the universities' creation of Graduate Schools at each University, or interuniversity, which will act as coordinating bodies for said programmes.

Access to the second cycle requires previous obtaining of an undergraduate degree or the equivalent. At the same time, access rights to any graduate program are established, whether or not the programme is related to the university background of the student in question.

As regards official Master's degree studies, the draft proposal contemplates the following points, among others:

- A length of between 60 and 120 credits, a part of which shall consist of advanced academic training and another, of an introduction to research or professional specialisation. Each of these phases may not consist of less than 30 credits.
- The possibility of incorporating specialities.

- Master's studies may be concluded by defending a thesis before a Board, which will provide an overall evaluation.
- Inclusion of the European degree supplement.
- The Master's degree will have full academic effects and may authorise its holder for the exercise of specific professional functions.

The corresponding doctorate studies in Spain within the framework of the Bologna Process are inspired by two central principles: increased value and an improvement of excellence.

Doctorate programs will be included in the Official Graduate Programmes of each University, and may be pursued by those students who have obtained a minimum of 90 credits in graduate programs, or who hold a Master's degree, and who have completed a minimum of 300 credits between undergraduate and graduate studies.

Doctoral students must prepare a doctoral thesis or original research project under the guidance of a thesis supervisor, which must be defended before the Board.

The draft of the Royal Decree establishes several additional points regarding Doctorate degrees, among which we should highlight:

- The true evaluation carried out by the National Quality Evaluation and Certification Agency for Official Graduate Programme curricula.
- The possibility of including European mention within the doctorate degree, provided the following criteria are met:
 - Minimum attendance of four months during the training stage at an institution of higher education in another country of the European Union, carrying out studies or projects recognised in the corresponding programme.
 - Drafting and presentation of part of the thesis, at least a summary and conclusions, in a European language other than Spanish.

- Reports on the thesis have been received by a minimum of two experts, citizens of other Member Status of the EU and of different nationalities, in addition to the thesis supervisor,
- At least one foreign expert holding a Doctorate degree, different from those mentioned in the previous paragraph, has sat on the Board.

4. - Establishment of a credit system comparable to the European system

One of the objectives of the Organic Law on Universities is the adoption of the European credit system by Spanish Universities. In accordance with this regulatory proposal, the Framework Document envisaged the development of the corresponding regulation for study and evaluation by the University Coordination Council and its subsequent approval by the Government. The corresponding Royal Decree is currently being processed, and has received favourable reports from the University Coordination Council and the State Council, and will receive Government approval during the first week of September.

The credit system was introduced in Spain following the university reform of 1983; credits were determined primarily by the number of teaching hours, including both theory and practice. The Bologna Process, on the other hand, establishes the concept of credits according to unit of student work.

Additionally, and given the relationship between the ECTS and student mobility programmes, in particular Erasmus, and the important participation of Spanish Universities in this programme, the concept of credits is well known, as well as their usefulness and value for the automatic recognition of scholars in terms of level, quality and relevance.

The Framework Document establishes the definition of the European credit as the unit of assessment of academic activity, including theoretical and practical teaching, as well as other supervised academic activities and the volume of work the student must carry out in order to reach these educational objectives.

Adopting this definition involves a fundamental change in university studies in that the centre of gravity of the system is shifted to student learning, which should also lead to the recognition of education not only in terms of teaching hours in the strict sense, but also those dedicated to organisation, orientation and supervision of student work.

Taking into account these precedents, the Department of Education, Culture and Sports has drawn up a draft of the Royal Decree which re-establishes the European credit system and an official grading system for university degrees valid throughout national territory, the most characteristic points of which are as follows:

- 60 credits per academic course.
- Allocation of credits based on a reference of a minimum of 36 and a maximum of 40 work weeks for students (full time) per academic year.
- A minimum of 25 hours and a maximum of 30 per credit.
- Establishment by the Government, following a report from the University Coordination Council, of the minimum number of credits assigned to each subject in the curricula of studies leading to official degrees recognised throughout national territory.

The Royal Decree also establishes the grading system, as well as those conditions required in order to obtain the highest distinction, magna cum laude (a maximum of 5% of enrolled students per academic year for each degree).

5. - Promoting Mobility

As with other aspects of the Bologna Process, the mobility of professors, researchers and students is included as a legal obligation in the Organic Law on Universities, with the State undertaking to finance the corresponding programmes.

Undertakings to promote mobility are present in the participation in European Programs, in particular Erasmus, as well as in national mobility programs for professors and students, which are complemented by those carried out by the different autonomous regions and the Universities themselves.

In the Erasmus program, which to a great extent falls within the origin of the Bologna Process, we can highlight the growing participation of Spanish universities as institutions receiving students (18,824 students during the 2001-2002 academic year), situating Spain at the head of all European countries

accommodating Erasmus students. With the aim of providing an incentive for Spanish students to participate in this programme (17,403 students during the 2001-2003 academic year, situating Spain as the second country sending Erasmus students abroad), the State supplements the scholarships with funds from the national budget for education.

It is also important to point out the legislative modifications introduced by the Organic Law on Universities, in particular those presented in article 89, which authorises public university professors from other European countries to be hired by Spanish universities.

The Law also envisages the participation of European university professors in Commissions to authorise university staff, as well as in Commissions designed to assess applications to fill vacancies within the university teaching staff, in accordance with University Statutes.

Lastly, the Law expressly establishes the commitment of the Government, the Autonomous Regions and Universities to promote the mobility of professors within the European Higher Education Area through specific programmes and agreements, as well as through European Union programmes.

Despite the importance of those activities carried out in this field, we should nevertheless recognise that currently available evidence does not adequately measure the true magnitude of exchange which is currently taking place among European institutions of higher education.

6. - Promoting European cooperation in quality certification.

The Organic Law on Universities of 2001 dedicates Section V to evaluation and certification, establishing as its primary objectives the measurement of public service achievement in university education, the justification to society of university actions, transparency, comparison, cooperation and competitiveness of universities in both the domestic and international spheres, the improvement of teaching and research activities and of university management, the availability of information to Public Administrations for decision making, and availability of information to the general public in order to promote excellence and the mobility of students and teachers.

In order to carry out these objectives, the means for evaluating, certifying and authorising university teaching, staff and other activities of higher education centres and institutions have been established.

With the purpose of carrying out the above-mentioned activities, considered as an essential foundation for the integration of the university system and the means of comparability, the Law provided for the creation of ANECA, the National Evaluation, Certification and Authorisation Agency, as an independent organisation, while at the same time recognising similar regional organs or agencies.

ANECA began its activities at the end of 2002 with an ambitious plan of action centred on international cooperation, the European integration process, cooperation with similar regional agencies (in particular their participation in the European Authorisation Consortium and in the Latin American Network for the Authorisation of Higher Education), activities centred on improving the quality of the university system, and the recognition and endorsement of university staff.

7.- Promoting the European dimension in Higher Education

The activities related to this objective are carried out primarily by the universities themselves either through bilateral or multilateral agreements, or within the framework of more comprehensive programs, such as the EUA Joint Master's Project.

As occurs with the promotion of mobility, it is important to note that, at least from a national perspective, the available evidence does not adequately reflect the degree to which this objective has been achieved.

8. - Lifelong learning

During the year 2002, the Department of Education, Culture and Sports requested that an analysis of opinions and impressions regarding lifelong learning be carried out by a team of authorities in the field. This report afforded three basic conclusions:

- The establishment of means of cooperation between States in order to promote initiatives and assign resources for the development of LLL initiatives.
- The creation of a European Observatory for LLL, with the participation of authorities, and relevant activities to be carried out by each country in this field, which would be responsible for monitoring and carrying out a periodical diagnosis of the changes executed in this field.
- The creation of a European network of LLL agencies as a fundamental instrument for making the project of constructing a European LLL area a reality.

9. - Promoting the European Higher Education Area

The insertion of a national university system in the Bologna Process is clearly an attractive element of Spanish centres in all programmes, Doctorate degrees in particular.

Thus, within the perspective of the Erasmus Mundus programme, the overseas promotion of the Spanish university system within the framework of the European Higher education Area will, over the next few years, be considered a field for special pursuits in national policies on university cooperation with third countries. Here we can point out the intensified university relations within the framework of the UEALC (European Union - Latin America - Caribbean Programme).

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