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1. Main achievements since Berlin**1.1. Give a brief description of important developments, including legislative reforms**

In the framework of the guidelines set by the texts essentially published in april 2002, France went on making its voluntarist effort to implement the so-called 'L.M.D.' reform ('Licence/Master/Doctorat'). For institutions under the competence of the ministry of National education, Higher education and Research (MENESR), thanks to the privileged tool which the contract policy between the State and universities is, the 3/4 of these latter ones adopted this scheme to-day and the whole of universities will have implemented this 'European model' in the academic year 2006 likely, and in 2007 at the latest.

Currently, France started an in-depth work to think over 3 fields which were given a top priority. It is about :

1°/ the reorganization of doctoral studies for which a decree (on January 6th 2005) changing the ways international co-supervision of theses ('*co-tutelles internationales de th ses*') work out ;

2°/ the redefinition of the methods to evaluate and/or accreditate the quality of institutions, study and research programmes and of teachers-researchers ('*enseignants-chercheurs*') and researchers, taking into account both the historic role of the State in this field in France and European developments ;

3°/ the clarification of our higher education system by getting actual universities, '*grandes  coles*' and research institutions closer to each other. Such a clarification is made necessary notably to ensure the international readability of the national system.

2. National organisation

2.1. Give a short description of the structure of public authorities responsible for higher education, the main agencies/bodies in higher education and their competencies (For example, do higher education institutions report to different ministries?)

In France, the responsibility for higher education, notably as far as the guarantee of the quality for training courses and degrees is concerned belongs to the State.

The ministry of national education, higher education and research (MENESR) takes care of nearly 80% of post-secondary education after the *baccalauréat* : universities, ‘*grandes écoles*’ and post-secondary courses in high schools.

Other ministries are responsible for some ‘*grandes écoles*’ : for example institutions for architecture and art (Culture), institutions for agronomists and vets (Agriculture), ‘*Ecoles des Mines*’ (Industry), ‘*Ecole Polytechnique*’ (Defence), institutions for medical careers (Health) ... Local authorities (‘*régions*’, ‘*départements*’, ‘*communes*’) bring some support to higher education, notably in terms of building and equipment. They can sign contracts with the State.

Chambers of commerce and industry bring a specific support to business and management schools.

Private higher education is free in France, which means that any private institution can be created without any previous licence but any private institution wanting its quality recognized has to be ready to have the quality of its functioning and of the training it provides assessed by evaluations asked by the State.

2.2. Give a short description of the institutional structure

(For example, number of public/private universities/other HE institutions or numbers/percentage of students in public/private sector. To what extent are private and State higher education institutions covered by the same regulations?)

The student distribution during the academic year 2003-2004 is defined in the following way:

	Min.of National Education	Other ministries	Private Instit.	Total
Universities	1 511 000	0	0	1 511 000=67%
‘Grandes Ecoles’	85 000	210 000	140 000	435 000=19.3%
Post-secondary courses	210 000	15 000	82 000	307 000=13.7%
Total	1 808 000	225 000	222 000	2 255 000
	80.2%	10%	9.8%	100%

What comes out of this description is the main part given to the ‘National Education’ and relatively the weak part of private higher education in France.

The State is responsible for financing public institutions to which it brings the essential resources in terms of jobs and money. It nevertheless contributes to finance the private institutions with a quality that proves to be so.

The State only is responsible for the quality of degrees. Such a guarantee is given after a regular national evaluation (every 4 or 6 years depending on types of degrees). This rule is applicable whatever legal status an institution has.

2.3. Give a brief description of the structure which oversees the implementation of the

Bologna Process in your country

(National Bologna group, thematic working groups, composition and activities, stakeholder involvement)

The implementation of the 'Bologna Process' is a choice made by the Government since 1999, which confirmed the commitment made in 1998 by the 'Sorbonne Declaration' ; and this choice was confirmed again after the 2002 elections.

Because of the organization of the French higher education system and of the State's role in this field, the management of the Process is made in an inter-ministerial framework, under the leading and coordinating authority of the MENESR.

The Process goes on gradually.

As early as 1999, it concerned university training courses (health excepted) and engineers' schools.

In 2001, it concerned management schools.

From 2002, it went on together with an in-depth remaking of the educational offer based on new training courses and learning paths leading to a '*licence*' (Bachelor), a 'master' and on the development of doctoral schools.

The creation of a Master degree (2002) concerned both universities and '*grandes écoles*', which thus contributes to bring these institutions closer to each other and to make the French system more readable from outside.

In 2003, the process was extended to political science institutes.

In 2004, the decision was made to make it applicable to architecture schools and health training institutions.

Therefore, gradually, it is made possible in France to involve the whole set of components of the higher education system into the European process.

If such an implementation is made within the national overall framework set by the State, it is based completely though on the initiatives of the institutions whose spaces for educational freedom were considerably expanded with the 'L-M-D' reform meant to enable institutions both to be better embedded in international standards and to have a strengthened autonomy.

The institutional projects are evaluated at the national level (see below) and presented in the higher education 'Parliament' so to say, the National Council for Higher education and Research ('*Conseil National de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche*') <CNESER>. This Council involves representatives from the whole current stakeholders : teachers, students, professionals ... On the basis of the advice given by such a Council, the State allows institutions – and this is a specific 'accrediting' decision which is called '*habilitation*' in French - to award degrees for a limited period (4 to 6 years) until the next national evaluation.

This procedure concerning each institution is completed by consultative bodies dealing with common issues : '*Licence*' Follow-Up Committee, '*Master*' Follow-Up Committee.

3. Quality assurance

The following questions have been included in the template at the request of the Working Group on Stocktaking.

3.1. National quality assurance systems should include a definition of the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved.

Please specify the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved.

As far as quality assurance is concerned, one has to distinguish from one another :

- ✓ the evaluation of institutions ;
- ✓ the evaluation of curricula and degrees and the evaluation of research programmes ;
- ✓ the evaluation of persons.

The **evaluation of institutions** is essentially done by the national evaluation council ('Conseil national d'évaluation') <CNE), an independent body which makes publicly available its institutional reports based on the analysis of on each institution's own strategy and results. Together with assessments made by controlling bodies ('*Inspection générale de l'administration de l'éducation nationale et de la recherche*' (IGAENR), '*Cour des Comptes*' ...), this evaluation is taken into account when making the 4-year contract to be approved by the State and the higher education institution.

The **evaluation of curricula and degrees** will be described in point 3.2 hereafter.

The **evaluation of research programmes** implemented by higher education institutions is ensured either by :

- ✓ research organizations (CNRS, INSERM, INRA ...) when the programme is under the authority of a joint research unit, which means this unit involves both a higher education institution and a research institution ;
- ✓ or a scientific, technical and educational Mission ('*Mission scientifique, technique et pédagogique*') <MSTP>, a mission set up at the national level in 2002, when the research unit is only under the authority of a higher education institution.

Such a system enables to avoid getting 2 separate evaluations.

The **evaluation of persons** (teachers-researchers <'enseignants-chercheurs'> and researchers) is vital for the improvement of the quality of any higher education and research scheme. In France, it is ensured by an independent body - the national Universities Council ('*Conseil national des Universités*') – for university teachers and by research institutions ' evaluation committees for researchers .

All things considered, the French higher education and research system has many quality assurance bodies which echo to the diversity of evaluations' scopes, types of institutions, education and research fields. In the framework of the current reflections about the making of a research law, what is being sought is a better organization of the overall scheme, easier and more adapted to the international context.

3.2. National quality assurance systems should include a system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures.

Describe the system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures, if any.

Historically, the French system is based on the '*habilitation*' concept, which means the *ex-*

ante licence given by the State to allow autonomous institutions to award degrees with a State-guaranteed value.

This notion of ‘national degree’ makes a consensus in France. It was therefore pointless to give it up. But, the Bologna process and so the L-M-D process (*licence – master – doctorat*) allowed an important evolution of the French conception about ‘*habilitation*’.

What mattered first was to reconcile ‘institutional autonomy’ with ‘State *habilitation*’ in a modern way.

From now on, in the L-M-D scheme, institutions’ proposals are freed from any constraint : there isn’t any degree definition at the national level anymore, which means a definition set as a norm (contents, duration ...).

Regulation is exclusively done by evaluation.

This evaluation is regular : every 4 year for university study programmes, every 6 year for engineering and management study programmes.

Evaluation in France is considered an assessment of the quality of the study programmes content : quality of study programmes in relation to objectives looked for, quality of training teams, quality of the student integration into the labour market, etc ...

Which means that the conception of evaluation in France is different from a conception strictly based on ‘quality control’ or ‘quality assurance’, where the guarantee is based on the ensurance that the process was controlled without any assessment though on the contents nor levels.

Therefore, in the framework of a regular evaluation, institutions design their plans for study programmes or degrees which may :

- ✓ either belong to an already agreed on experience with results to be presented,
- ✓ or be based on new projects which must be justified both on the grounds of their own interests and of the institutional capacity to implement them.

These projects are assessed by national bodies which may be different according to the training disciplines involved :

- ✓ MSTP (see point 3-1 above) for L-M-D curricula in universities and M-D curricula in ‘*grandes écoles*’ ;
- ✓ Commission for Engineer Degrees (*‘Commission des Titres d’Ingénieurs’*) for engineering curricula and degrees ;
- ✓ Commission for the evaluation of manangement training courses and degrees (*‘Commission d’évaluation des formations et des diplômés de gestion’*) for business and management schools ;
- ✓ other bodies for specific targeted training courses.

Each body defines its own ‘benchmarks and criteria’ fitted to purposes and specific features of the various education fields and levels.

On the basis of the national evaluation, the State makes the ‘*habilitation*’ decisions for a maximum period according to the regularity of the assessments to be done. This period may be shorter though if it seems necessary to implement recommendations from evaluations quickly.

In such a procedure – briefly described hereby -, it appears that in France, while

maintaining the ‘habilitation’ principle alive, it is indeed an evaluation methodology which is being implemented. From this point of view, what is essential to us is not the institutional system – (in France the State plays an important role) – but actually the inner meaning of the step and the evaluation criteria which are used.

3.3. National quality assurance systems should include international participation, co-operation and networking.

Are international peers included in the governing board(s) of the quality assurance agency(ies)?

The National Evaluation Committee (‘Comité national d’évaluation’) <CNE> and the ‘Inspection Générale de l’Administration de l’Education Nationale et de la Recherche’ (IGAENR) are members of the European network of quality assurance agencies ENQA the ‘Commission des Titres d’Ingénieurs’ (CTI) also wants to be a member of.

The peer review principle is more and more often implemented, in particular by assessments made on the spot by the CNE and the CTI that call on foreign experts regularly to be part of their experts’ teams. Exchanges of ‘best practice’ about methods are also made easier by specific missions of experts (for instance, concerning the CNE, between France and the United Kingdom, Italy, Belgium ...). On the contrary, the CNE and the CTI can examine demands by other countries about an assessment of their institutions and their own training systems.

For a year, and once its legal status was revised, among its 25 members from now on the CNE involves 3 foreign members who mainly fulfil teaching and research missions in a foreign higher education institution, proposed by the European University Association (EUA).

Please add any general comments, reflections and/or explanations to the material on quality assurance in the stocktaking report.

The efforts made by France within the framework of the Bologna Process aims to limit the drawbacks from the division into three parts we inherited from the past - universities / ‘grandes écoles’ / research institutions – in order to bring the French system closer to the main international references.

From this point of view, quality assurance is a powerful ‘pull factor’ for action as far as no institution can put aside a scheme which is based on a quality assessed by legitimate bodies and external to the institutions themselves.

If at the European level everybody agrees to consider evaluation as a key issue, a reflection though is only starting to get different conceptions closer :

- ✓ at what level is the evaluation made ? Is it institutions, training courses and curricula, degrees, teaching teams which are evaluated ?
- ✓ which is the part devoted to internal institutional evaluation ? Which is the other part for external evaluation ?
- ✓ who must evaluate ? What does ‘independence of bodies’ actually mean ? Independent but whom from ? Is the peer review always the best formula? How to involve professionals or students ?
- ✓ above all, how can each country set standards and methods with a quality to be recognized in the European area ?

✓ etc ...

It seems therefore urgent to define, at the European level, first of all the set of issues before giving answers or designing institutional processes (for example, a European register of quality assurance agencies) without having any core issue tackled.

4. The two-cycle degree system

The two-cycle degree system is covered by the stocktaking exercise. Please add any comments, reflections and/or explanations to the stocktaking report.

The L-M-D (*licence / master / doctorat*) reform made it possible to precise distinctive objectives of the L, the M and the D, considering that :

- ✓ a/ the 3 L-M-D levels were the 3 great qualification levels when getting out of higher education into the professional life ;
- ✓ b/ they did not forbid intermediate level degrees to be awarded, notably professionally-oriented degrees when specific needs existed ;
- ✓ c/ at each level, degrees might have a strong professional dimension.

The **L training courses** in France enable to meet the objective to make 50% of an age group access to higher education degrees.

Within a context where access to university is made without any selection, the university training courses of the *licence* aims, through differentiated learning paths, to ensure the best success of students. In that perspective, in 1999, in the wake of the Bologna Declaration, a new degree of a professionally-oriented *licence* was created. At the beginning of the academic year 2004, 1000 training courses of this type were set, involving universities, technological and vocational institutions and professions themselves.

Two points must be made :

- ✓ professional organizations are very much concerned with the maintenance of vocational degrees after 2 years of post-secondary education – which is called in France *Bac+2*, meaning 2 years after the *baccalauréat* : the *DUT* (*diplôme universitaire de technologie*) < university > and the *BTS* (*brevet de technicien supérieur*) < higher schools with post-secondary courses >. Such intermediate degrees are therefore maintained, even though the L-M-D led to develop ‘bridges’ enabling the ‘best students’ from these courses to go up to the *licence* level, even beyond that ;
- ✓ so far, the *licence* degree was an exclusive monopoly of universities in the strict sense of the word. There again, the L-M-D made a change possible. So for instance, it is planned that architecture schools organized in schools under the authority of the ministry of Culture, adopt the L-M-D scheme and award at the first level a degree recognized as belonging to the *licence* level of training.

If the *Licence* training course thus contributes in France to what it is agreed to call the democratization of higher education and what is from now on connected to the objective to build a ‘Knowledge economy and society’ defined in Lisbon, the **Master training courses** for its part must focus on the objective of excellence and attractiveness, while enhancing the added value of the strengths of European higher education institutions and

their centres of excellence.

This is why the *Master* was created in France with four main features :

- ✓ study programmes must aim to integration into the labour market (professionally-oriented *Master*) or into further doctoral training courses (research-oriented *Master*) ;
- ✓ in both cases, the high level of curricula must be guaranteed by teaching teams connected to the most recent developments of knowledge, which means by a strong link with research itself in all its dimensions ;
- ✓ on a given local spot, it is a must to gather scientific strengths between various higher education institutions and research institutions to rise the power, the quality and the attractiveness of *Masters*. It leads to widen the joint degrees procedure ('*co-habilitation*') ;
- ✓ the offer of *Masters* must have as much as possible a European and international dimension.

This '*Masters*' conception' is implemented for the whole of the French higher education system : universities and '*grandes écoles*'. For the first time in France, the *Master* degree is an 'object' commonly shared by universities and '*grandes écoles*', thus contributing to an important step of getting them closer with each other, which is made necessary by European and international stakes.

For the **Doctorate**, please see point 6 below.

As we saw, all the higher education institutions are already or will be soon involved in the L-M-D process. But while '*grandes écoles*' are mainly concerned with the new *Master* degree, even the Doctorate when their research strengths are enough, universities for their parts are the only ones to award degrees at the three levels L-M-D. Which, with each 'national curriculum framework' given up, led them to think over again, freely and utterly, their own offer of training courses and learning paths to be provided to students. In that sense, the Bologna Process did strengthen the higher education institutions' autonomy and capacity for action.

Of course, the whole process goes on with the generalization of the issue of the descriptive annex to the degree, the 'diploma supplement', and of the European credit transfer system ECTS that, beyond its vocation to make mobility easier, works like a major pull factor for the organization of more flexible learning paths taking into account the diversity of objectives students seek for and recognition of prior learning.

Eventually, an essential element must be put forward. For the first time, a higher education reform was not 'forced' on institutions but only 'proposed' to them, since institutions are allowed to keep the previous system. This original method obtained results beyond any hope, creating within the French higher education an unprecedented taste for the European process.

5. Recognition of degrees and periods of study

Recognition of degrees and periods of study is covered by the stocktaking exercise. Please add any comments, reflections and/or explanations to the stocktaking report.

The French way to consider lifelong learning is already embedded into the principles ruling the recognition of degrees and periods of study. This recognition is from now on made easier

in France by the reform of the recognition of previous learning made in 2002 in order to generalize the taking into account, in higher education training courses, the students' previous learning, whatever learning is considered, either studies made abroad in a public or private training institution or organization (decree of april 16th 2002), or learning from professional experience made in France or abroad (decree of april 14th 2002).

It is not a recognition of an automatic right to a degree, but the recognition of a right given to any individual person to have all one's life long one's experience and learning validated for the award of a degree. First of all, while the students' profiles are more and more differentiated in relation to their own learning and professional life paths, it was important to give universities means to enabling them to fully take into account mobility between student life and professional life, which is the emblem of a true lifelong learning. Secondly, the development of learning paths more and more made in various European institutions made it necessary to have an easier and more flexible system for taking into account and validation, as the French system for recognition and validation is meant to be. Eventually, beyond the gradual generalization of the issue of the descriptive annex ('diploma supplement'), mentioned in point 4 above, it is to be reminded that France ratified on october 4th 1999 the 'Lisbon Convention' about the recognition of higher education qualifications in the European region.

6. Doctoral studies and research

6.1. Give a short description of the organisation of third cycle studies

(For example, direct access from the bachelor level, balance between organised courses, independent study and thesis)

The doctorate is designed in France according to international standards. It recognizes a successful training through research, of an average duration of 3 to 4 years, which is concluded by a thesis defence. It is awarded by universities and some '*grandes écoles*' research activities are substantially developed. Doctoral studies are ruled by the decree of april 25th 2002 which modernized the system and fully integrated it into the L-M-D steps related to the process of European convergence.

Doctoral studies are organized in 'doctoral schools' based on a whole set of labs and research units whose quality is assessed at the national level every four year. They gather various disciplines within a specific scientific field, in order to favour the pluri-, even inter-disciplinary approach and to improve the doctoral students' scientific culture. The idea of 'school' is a core idea in the system. What mattered was to go from a tradition of a doctoral student embedded in a limited dialogue with his/her thesis director to a collective conception of the doctoral students' training in order to make exchanges easier and train specialists with a wider scientific culture and an opening up to the diversity of careers. That is why doctoral schools organize seminars and training courses which are common to all their doctoral students all their thesis preparation long.

A decree of january 6th 2005 – see the text enclosed as an annex to this report – adapted the system of international co-supervision of thesis which allows a French university to make an agreement with a foreign university in order to train a doctoral student.

This text – see the annex to this report – has two major innovations :

- ✓ it allows French universities to depart from the French regulation whenever applicable regulations in both countries are incompatible, which therefore fully trusts

the partner country's rules to guarantee the quality ;

- ✓ it embeds within the doctoral studies' regulation the possibility to award a joint degree, which therefore gives the choice, according to situations or to countries, between the joint degree formula or the double degree formula.

French institutions award 11 000 doctorate degrees a year, within 315 doctoral schools. 4 000 new doctoral students each year benefit from a 3-year research grant to prepare their thesis. This State-financed grant equals to a monthly wage of 1 200 euros.

6.2. What are the links between HE and research in your country?

(For example, what percentage of publicly-funded research is conducted within HE institutions?)

There is a very close link between higher education and research in France. Indeed, in all universities and in all higher education in each L-M-D cycle, training courses are taught by teachers-researchers (*'enseignants-chercheurs'*).

More specifically, the *Master* degree, whatever its nature, either professionally or research-oriented, is 'accredited' - (which means *'habilité'* in the French context) - only if it is run by teaching teams assessed on the basis of the scientific results of their members, members themselves to recognized research teams or labs.

Besides, doctoral programmes are developed within universities and linked to labs and teachers-researchers (*'enseignants-chercheurs'*) and researchers interfering into the teaching itself provided to doctoral students and taking an active part into the doctoral field under consideration.

In France, 60% of public research is made in universities, all the more so as the link between universities and research institutions is from now on made organic by the generalization of joint research units (*'unités mixtes de recherche' < UMR >*).

Eventually, the link research – higher education is also illustrated by the participation of doctoral graduates or doctoral students, based on specific contracts, to teaching provided in different cycles, mainly for the training to a *'Licence'*, but also a *'Master'*. Their participation rate is, according to situations, up to 64.96 or up to 192 hours per year.

7. Mobility of students and staff

7.1. Describe the main factors influencing mobility of students from as well as to your country *(For instance funds devoted to mobility schemes, portability of student loans and grants, visa problems)*

The main obstacle to student mobility is more structural than financial, even if difficulties from the extra cost of a study period abroad can be real for some students. The cultural and linguistic obstacle is by no means insignificant either for some students who are less willing to go abroad in Europe. Nevertheless, the creation of a National Council for the development of the student international mobility (*'Conseil national pour le développement de la mobilité internationale des étudiants'*) and its work going on in the framework of the plan for France's attractiveness set up by the Prime Minister did stir a sharp awareness of its difficulties and already trigger off a number of incentive measures aimed to remove these obstacles.

7.2. Describe any special measures taken in your country to improve mobility of students from as well as to your country

There is in France quite a number of incentive schemes for mobility. These schemes are implemented by grants and various individual support financed on public funds, whatever grants are concerned, either State-funded grants (notably 'Erasmus top-up grants' – 'compléments Erasmus' - or 'mobility grants' – 'bourses de mobilité' - of the MENESR which are provided to student grant-holders on the basis of social criteria, or grants financed by local authorities ('Conseils régionaux').

The cumulative logic for disadvantaged students which rules over the grant system resulting from various existing schemes enables to better favour the access to mobility of young people from modest backgrounds and thus contributes to make student mobility more democratic. The portability of these grants, as far as the French legislation is concerned, enables to increase the interest of a mobility abroad for a period of study among students.

7.3. Describe the main factors influencing mobility of teachers and staff from as well as to your country (For instance tenure of appointment, grant schemes, social security, visa problems)

The main factors which determine teaching staff mobility are less financial than related to status issues related to constraints linked to the fulfilment of their missions and to the weak concern in their careers for their international mobility periods which are hardly taken into account. To go and teach abroad even for quite a limited period also implies to find out available time to catch up with teaching courses, which often rises very concrete problems in an already busy timetable and equals to a 'break' in the current research works. Yet, within the framework of an agreement between universities or other higher education institutions, it is already possible to solve most of the problems on the basis of a mutual exchange.

7.4. Describe any special measures taken in your country to improve mobility of academic teachers and staff from as well as to your country

In order to make teacher mobility easier, possibilities provided to academic and administrative staff's statutes have recently been widened, notably in the field of temporary assignment abroad. The concern for enhancing the added value of mobility for teachers' careers led to set the principle of the added value (up to 1 year) of it for calculating the 'seniority' for teachers-researchers ('enseignants-chercheurs') and 'lecture masters' ('maîtres de conférences') who did a mobility in a higher education and research institution in a Member State of the European Community notably. What is at stake is to enable careers to speed up thanks to the international factor taken into account in the careers' management. Besides several higher education institutions chose, on their own budget for their running costs, to allow their administrative teams to take advantage from an exchange of practices at the international level, either in the framework of European community programmes or in the more general framework of their own institutional international policy through conventions they might have signed with their partner foreign institutions.

8. Higher education institutions and students

8.1. Describe aspects of autonomy of higher education institutions

Is autonomy determined/defined by law? To what extent can higher education institutions decide on internal organisation, staffing, new study programmes and financing?

Since 1968, universities are given an educational, scientific, administrative and financial autonomy. They are managed by an administrative Board and run by an elected Rector (*'Président d'université'*). These features are defined by law. It is planned that all actors involved in the institution's life participate.

In a mostly State-funded system, the State still has important powers : it creates institutions, it defines regulations to be implemented there, it gives jobs (teachers-researchers, administrative and technical staff and managers) and a very large part of financial resources.

Yet, as it was mentioned for the implementation of the L-M-D, institutions can see their margins for autonomy get wider and wider year after year. If from now on they benefit from a full freedom for action in teaching and research, if they can freely sign a contract with any French or foreign partner, if therefore out of their actions they can get any kind of resources for their own, what matters most, as soon as the social and political context will make it possible, is to have expected changes made real as fast as possible, in the fields of governance, organization and administrative and financial regulation.

In order to follow-up this movement in the future and to solve what at first sight appears to be a discrepancy between institutional autonomy and national higher education policy, for 15 years links between the State and institutions belong to 4-year contracts. The university or the institution freely defines its project, which means the strategic guidelines and priorities of its policy for 4 years in all the fields of its intervention : training courses and degrees, research, international policy, student life, management ... This project is analyzed by the State and a contract is negotiated between the State and the institution in order to set up the terms for the agreement made, define financial resources given by the State and labels (degrees, research) which the institution can benefit from for 4 years.

So the balance the French system reached generally speaking can be known :

- ✓ 1/ overall national framework
- ✓ 2/ autonomy of the project
- ✓ 3/ national assessment
- ✓ 4/ negotiation and contract
- ✓ 5/ financial resources and labels.

So more and more, the system is regulated by evaluation and contracts. This approach set up for the higher education will be considerably strengthened in the next years by an 'organic law' for financial laws (LOLF in French) which is going to make all the State administrations link the allowance of public funds to indicators based on results, that is to say, performance-related.

8.2. Describe actions taken to ensure active participation from all partners in the process

Making the actors from the university world take responsibilities and actively participate is ensured both internally and externally :

1° - internally, by the participation of the whole university community (teachers, researchers, administrative, technical staff and students) to deliberations concerning the academic life, notably through statutory bodies such as boards of teaching and research units (*'unités de formation et de recherche'* - UFR), and the training and university life board, the scientific body and the administration board of universities ;

2° - externally, incentives given to universities with contracts contribute to support the efforts

made by institutions to get in touch with local authorities, economic, industrial and social partners of their own geographical area.

The scattered effects of the university national map, which is currently being reorganized, will be softened by the seeking for genuine network policies (which means, policies encouraging partnerships and cooperations on a given site or for nearby sites for the sake of complementarity), policies without which French institutions will be in trouble with finding the critical mass enabling them to be visible and cooperate on equal terms with their partners at the European and international level.

8.3. How do students participate in and influence the organisation and content of education at universities and other higher education institutions and at the national level?

(For example, participation in University Governing Bodies, Academic Councils etc)

Since the 1968 law, which instituted the notion of ‘university users’, and even more, since the 1984 law (January 26th), students were recognized as actors of the university world just like teachers and researchers. The text precisely says that student representatives sit in a proportion from 20 up to 25% in the institutions’ governing boards, in a proportion from 7.5% to 12.5% in scientific committees (3rd cycle students only), and in a proportion equal to the teachers-researchers’ one in the training and university life committee. Many French universities did create a function of a student vice-rector (*‘vice-président étudiant’*) who is an integral part of the university governing team and helps the university rector when fulfilling his political choices and technical responsibilities.

The trade unions representing students (UNEF, UNEF-ID, FAGE, PDE, UNI ...) are regularly attending meetings of bodies such as the national higher education and research Council (*‘Conseil national de l’enseignement supérieur et de la recherche’* – CNESER -). Besides, even if trade unions elections generally speaking trigger off a relatively weak participation rate, it is to be noted that many associations liven up the institutional life in any structure universities are made of (departments, UFR, university) by solidarity actions, welcome of new students and foreign students, for counselling and spontaneous tutoring and for cultural and sports activities. Finally, the principle of associating students to the assessments of teaching courses and training programmes is gradually implemented and generalized.

9. The social dimension of the Bologna Process

9.1. Describe measures which promote equality of access to higher education

In France, any *‘baccalauréat’* holder has the right to the access to higher education with low tuition fees. This is why entrance into university is made without any selection, all the more so as, the *‘baccalauréat’*, a national degree awarded after secondary education, has always been and is still, up to the L-M-D reform, the first degree of the French higher education system. Yet, because of the duration of higher education training notably, the access of young people from modest social background would be difficult if measures for financial support were not made.

The scheme of grants awarded on social criteria is based on a financial support given to families according to their incomes. Students benefiting from such grants are furthermore exempted from tuition fees and from social security fees. Social grants are given in France for public training courses or private ones but allowed to welcome grant holders, and also for

training in a country which is a member to the Council of Europe as long as training courses are under the authority of a ministry in charge of higher education and as they end with the award of an official degree. They can be awarded to foreign students under specific conditions. In 2002, about 95% of the public grants provided were social grants and these grants with an amount between 1 296 and 3501 euros per year concerned 30% of French students

Since the academic year 2001, students who are social grant holders can also benefit from 'mobility grants' intended to make their access to training periods in Europe or at the international level easier. In 2003-2004, 5000 grants with an amount of 389 euros per month were attributed.

In order to meet the needs of students facing specific situations which make them unable to be awarded a grant in the framework of the 'common law', a scheme of study allowances enables to take into account situations of family breaking off, real family independence, and back-to-study situations after the age of 26.

Besides, grants are awarded on the basis of university criteria. These university criteria grants concern postgraduated students (Master level). In 2002, 12 600 students benefited from such grants with an amount from 3 456 euros to 4 077 euros per year.

Merit-based grants with a high amount make it possible to encourage brilliant 'baccalauréat'-holders (with a 'Very Good' award) from modest backgrounds to start higher education. Such grants with an amount of 6 102 euros were provided to 600 students in 2002.

For French students who don't fulfil conditions set to benefit from social criteria grants, interest free loans ('prêts d'honneur') which can be paid back at the latest ten years after the end of their higher education. In 2002, about 2 700 students benefited from such loans.

Besides, a university solidarity fund (FSU) makes it possible to cope quickly with urgency situations of the most disadvantaged students.

In 2002, over 1.3 billion euros was spent on grants in higher education, which is 27% more than in 1997.

In the framework of the preparation of the 2005 Bergen conference, France organized last January, on the 27th and 28th, a seminar focused on this issue of social dimension ; its conclusions – cf. Bologna-Bergen Web site : <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no> (item : 'previous seminars') – put forward the fact that the aim given to higher education to strengthen up social cohesion implies more than ever to build up a coherent, balanced, competitive European higher education and research area.

10. Developments in lifelong learning

10.1. What measures have been taken by your country to encourage higher education institutions in developing lifelong learning paths?

It is essential to understand that the implementation of the Bologna Process in France and the development of lifelong learning are designed and made real within the same approach.

The L-M-D scheme is set up to enable institutions to elaborate an offer of an integrated training which develops modular learning paths (ECTS), welcomes students in an unbroken

training as well as adults going back to higher education, both of them aiming to get higher education degrees.

This conception besides makes it possible to integrate ‘attendance learning’ (that is to say, with students physically attending in courses) and distance learning which calls on information and communication technologies.

The learning paths are optimized :

- according to qualification objectives sought after by adults ;
- in terms of time management, by taking into account and recognizing prior learning (cf. point 10.2)

10.2. Describe any procedures at the national level for recognition of prior learning/flexible learning paths

Recognition of prior vocational skills was instituted by the 1992 law (July 20th) in addition to other provisions specific to higher education and made by 1985 decrees. The social modernization 2002 law (January 17th) and the 2002 decree (April 24th) aim to institute a right for all, on the one hand, to ask for the recognition of one’s prior vocational skills and to widen this principle to all certificates and degrees, and on the other hand, to provide arrangements for some aspects of the procedure. Particularly, from now on, it makes it possible to award a degree fully with recognition of prior learning.

Recognition of prior learning is made by a particular jury, specific to each degree, from the analysis of a file made by the candidate and after an additional interview.

Candidates can benefit from, if they wish so, a tailored follow-up and counsel provided by university schemes for further training and adult education. It is a support given to persons in order to enable them :

- 1) – to better get acquainted with the approach,
- 2) – to determine more precisely the degree fitted to their own paths and vocational experiences, and
- 3) – to identify the strongest features of their experiences before the conversation with the jury that remains sovereign when validating.

The new law therefore is referring again to fundamental principles of the 1992 law (July 20th) but is definitely modifying some of its aspects. These changes give a new impetus to recognition of prior learning. They already have important consequences from different respects in national education, notably concerning :

- 1) – the setting up of new degrees, since this new way of awarding degrees must be fully integrated ;
- 2) – ways to make juries and ways to make them deliberate, since these can award a degree only from a candidate’s experience and without any examination test ;
- 3) the methodology itself of exams which makes it possible to take into account other experiences than strictly vocational ones in the recognition process ;
- 4) tools and supports which provide candidates the possibility to present their own experiences (works done, analytical files, etc) ;
- 5) the practical organization and the implementation of the procedure, in so far as

demand quickly has grown important.

Recognition of prior learning, understood this way, is a specific originality of France.

11. Contribution to the European dimension in higher education

11.1 Describe any legal obstacles identified by your country and any progress made in removing legal obstacles to the establishment and recognition of joint degrees and/or joint study programmes

As it was reminded in point 3-2, the French system is based on an '*habilitation*' given by the State to higher education institutions entitled to award degrees which are therefore recognized and guaranteed by the State.

This framework does not create any specific obstacle when the partnership between a French institution and a foreign institution in a joint study programme leads to award a double degree, the one awarded according to French rules, the other according to the legislation of the partner country.

On the contrary, the French system had to adapt to take into account the possibility of joint degrees. (cf. point 11-1-1).

An issue remains ahead though : the issue of tuition fees as far as European countries have very different systems. So far, the only possibility is to refer to the convention between partner institutions in order to solve this problem according to a shared agreement.

11.1.1. Describe the extent of integrated study programmes leading to joint degrees or double degrees

From now on, since the 2005 decree (January 6th), the possibility to award a joint doctorate degree is greatly made easier (cf. point 6-1). All the obstacles were removed.

For instance, in France, the thesis supervisor has to be part of the jury. In other countries, it is strictly forbidden. The possibility given to French universities to depart from the regulation removes this obstacle.

In some countries, the notion of joint degree doesn't exist. In these cases, French universities will be able to use the double degree. In other countries, 'the same work can only give any but a single degree', then the joint degree formula will be used.

A dialogue has just started in France in order to widen this approach to other levels : '*licence*' (L) and '*master*' (M).

The suggested principle is the following one :

- 1) when a French institution was entitled ('*habilité*') to award a degree at a given level and for a given field, this institution has the right to make a partnership with a foreign institution which in its country is considered able to award a degree at the same level and in the same field, in order to set up a joint study programme and award a joint degree, without any previous supplementary State licence ;
- 2) Because '*habilitations*' are made in France for a limited period, the regular assessment which will be following up the implementation a joint

programme will check the quality of the partnership and of the programme and will examine results in order to make the process go on.

This initiative was taken in January 2005 and results of this dialogue should be known by the Bergen conference. If such a system can then be set up, the 'joint degree' notion will have definitely found its right place in the French system, based on the trust given both to French institutions and foreign countries' institutions.

Of course, this system is only possible from the moment when the partners' agreed on convention recognizes, for the doctorate degree and for other degrees as well, the value of the joint degree in both countries.

11.1.2. How have these programmes been organised? (joint admissions, mobility of students, joint exams, etc.)

The example of the French-German University (UFA) is one of the best practices in the field of integrated programmes leading to double degrees so far. These integrated programmes 3 000 students are involved in to-day are implemented on the basis of some criteria, notably :

- ✓ the existence of complementary programmes implemented between partner institutions in relation to common rules for training and learning assessments ;
- ✓ the use of the ECTS system ;
- ✓ compulsory periods of study (from 2 to 5 semesters) to be shared equitably between France and Germany ;
- ✓ the award of 2 national university degrees of the same level, recognized in France and in Germany

The UFA is also willing to develop tri-national training courses : therefore, 10 partner institutions are responsible for making until the end of 2005 common rules which will make it possible for students to get complementary skills beyond their double degrees (which at best should be implemented by a degree co-accredited ('*co-habilité*') by the 3 partner institutions. Besides, the UFA is responsible for making a single French-German degree.

As far as engineering schools are concerned, training courses leading to double degrees (with a longer period of study) and joint degrees (without any longer period of studies and recognized in each of the countries involved) are developing as well and are being encouraged both in Europe and outside it (Brazil, Mexico, Vietnam ...).

11.2. Describe any transnational co-operation that contributes to the European dimension in higher education

The core idea is intended to favour the setting up, within the framework of integrated training courses, of periods of study with a significant duration in partner institutions while seeing to the validation of periods of study and degrees got in such a framework, and therefore, fully recognized on both sides. What is aimed at in particular is to make the award of double degrees easier, while it is not excluded to award, after joint study programmes, a joint degree under the seal of two institutions which both signed an agreement for cooperation, and

recognized fully and automatically in France like in the other partner country.

Other schemes, by other networks which don't make it necessary to have either existing intergovernmental agreements or legal '*ex nihilo*' creation (that is to say, starting from scratch) of an institution benefiting from an autonomous structure and a budget, are favoured by the principle of the call for proposals the quality of which is guaranteed by assessments.

Such are :

- 1) – the French-Greek programme of integrated training courses based on innovative subjects and leading to double or joint degrees (at the Master level and the Doctorate level with the formula of joint international supervision of thesis at first) ;
- 2) – and, in the framework of the French-Dutch network of cooperation in higher education, in which the Lille Nord/Pas-de-Calais European university Pole is involved, training courses with double degrees with, as priorities, training courses corresponding to the levels of '*Licence*' and '*Master*' qualifications.

11.3. Describe how curriculum development reflects the European dimension

(For instance foreign language courses, European themes, orientation towards the European labour market)

With the L-M-D reform, and in order to give an additional impulse to the building of the European higher education area, the making of the French educational offer in higher education was run by the following principles :

- 1) to give a wider place to foreign languages from now on considered essential transversal skills anyone must necessarily have ;
- 2) to favour multidisciplinary approaches notably made easier by the organization of learning paths into 'major' and 'minor' components ;
- 3) to encourage mobility and increase the French training's attractiveness abroad ;
- 4) and develop the adaptation of higher education to the labour market in relation with the economic and social circles.

The 2002 decree (April 8th) which in particular favours many comparative and multidisciplinary approaches integrating the opening up to Europe, the knowledge of Europe, of its history, of its institutions, of its cultural and linguistic diversity, officially made this choice embedded into legislation.

12. Promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area

12.1. Describe actions taken by your country to promote the attractiveness of the EHEA

The significant and multi-faceted development of international relations run for several years by French higher education institutions led the MENESR to implement an overall approach which is intended to rationalize interventions and to increase efficiency while making a coordinated policy of different components of the ministry and notably seeing to have it linked with actions led by the ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Seeking a greater coherence, stopping the scattering of efforts and resources, introducing a logic of investment in the medium term, these are the objectives which must be the reference for institutions when making their overall project of European policy. The overall

internationalization of institutions in the European framework implies therefore to:

1° - develop the European convergence :

- ✓ a/ recognition of prior learning and validation of study periods abroad ;
- ✓ b/ setting up of double degrees, integrated programmes, joint degrees ;
- ✓ c/ development and taking into account of training schemes and placements in enterprises abroad, setting up of European doctoral exchanges and development of joint supervisions of theses, organization of European summer university courses ;

2°- embed the international and notably European dimension of research :

- ✓ a/ make research teams with a critical mass comparable to the teams working in partner countries ;
- ✓ b/ regularly assess and 'entitle' (that is to say according to French '*habilitations*') these teams on the basis of their own scientific results – and notably their capacity to train doctoral students ;
- ✓ c/ favour the making of networks which make it possible to exchange information, results and to make teachers-researchers as well as doctoral students mobile ;

3° - develop the European dimension of doctoral studies :

- ✓ a/ a strategy for welcoming foreign doctoral students and post-doctoral students ;
- ✓ b/ to go on with the development of joint supervision of theses ;
- ✓ c/ to make European or international doctoral networks for the award of joint degrees

4° - ensure the international cooperation of research units linked to great research institutions :

- ✓ a/ cooperation like an international joint lab ;
- ✓ b/ the making of top-rate European or international training-research networks.

The EU framework program (FP) for research and development naturally provides a favourite European framework to strengthen research and development on which institutional projects can be based in order to favour the determined involvement of their research teams.

5° - strengthen the attractiveness of French institutions on the international and European stage.

Institutions can be able to play their role fully in the European competition. For that purpose they need a coherent policy of international relations which takes into account :

- ✓ a/ the richness and diversity of institutions themselves ;
- ✓ b/ the necessity to structure actions in relation to genuine priorities ;
- ✓ c/ the must to develop the international culture within each part of these institutions ;
- ✓ d/ the interest to develop trans-national partnerships implying training and research ;

- ✓ e/ the urgency to define network policies for each site or nearby sites intended to favour partnerships and to make institutional networks which make it possible to pool complementary skills and competences.

French institutions are firmly asked to present their international and notably European own policies in a 'policy statement' (*déclaration d'action*) which must put forward strategic guidelines they set, their partnership priorities and their objectives to be met in the framework of their contracts.

13. Concluding comments

13.1. Give a description of your national Bologna strategies

The great interest of the 'Bologna Process', beyond its intrinsic objectives at the European level, lies to our minds in the fact that, for the sake of the building of Europe, it makes it possible in each country to make necessary changes it is difficult to achieve in the single national framework. Therefore it gives a necessary impulse.

From this point of view, the French example is really significant. The Bologna principles initially made the French system both 'under tension' and shift towards a 'slight unbalance'. This situation had the advantage of triggering off a dynamic that gets regenerated with the willingness of actors themselves (institutions and students), which enables the process to grow wider and go further and more in-depth :

- to grow wider because it gradually involves new fields of the French higher education ;
- to go further and more in-depth because it is based on the reflection on the contents and the objectives of the three great levels (*Licence*, *Master*, *Doctorat* – L-M-D) and on the quality criteria.

The French strategy is based on willing actors to make the national debate go further while it is nourished, whenever it seems appropriate to do so, with proposals for action. This is what was done in 2001-2002 for the L and M levels. This is what has been launched with the D level.

Besides, the running process goes along together with the work of follow-up Committees (for the *Licence*, for the *Master*) which makes it possible to associate actors to the analysis of the reform being implemented. Therefore, likely difficulties can be solved, the process feeding itself up while overcoming difficulties.

13.2. Give an indication of the main challenges ahead for your country

The main challenges to overcome concern the following points :

- ✓ 1/ to go on implementing the L-M-D reform in the whole French higher education system. This objective should be reached in 2006 for universities and in 2010 for all other French institutions ;
- ✓ 2/ to implement, as a corollary, a network policy for a given site or nearby sites, which enables to better organize the French educational offer in its various locations and to better unite universities and *grandes écoles* ;
- ✓ 3/ to strengthen the educational offer's international dimension : mobility of

students, development of joint programmes ;

- ✓ 4/ to develop the doctoral studies' place in the building of the European higher education and research area ;
- ✓ 5/ to make it possible for the quality assurance system to shift towards international standards.

Currently, when this report is being written, the French government is involved in the making of a law about guiding principles and planning for research meant to set new objectives in order to unite scientific strengths of higher education institutions and research institutions and to define a new scheme for assessments.

From now on, it is made clear that it is not possible, unless we are together, to build the European higher education area and the European research area which are – from our point of view – consubstantial, undivided and complementary to each other.

This is why the Bergen conference must, to our opinions, adopt this recommendation and this objective in order to make it possible then to adopt measures which make it possible to better link higher education and research together, while keeping alive the method which so far proved to be successful and which was based on the mutual agreement of commonly shared objectives to governments, higher education and research institutions, teachers and researchers, and students.

ANNEX

Translation < DRIC B1/HL

DECREE of January 6th 2005

on the international joint supervision of doctoral thesis

The minister for National Education, Higher Education and Research,

Having regard to the Education Code, notably its Articles L. 123-7, L. 612-7, D. 123-12, D. 123-13 et D. 123-14 ;

Having regard to the Decree n° 2002-482 of April 8th 2002 implementing the creation of the European higher education area into the French higher education system, amended by the Decree n° 2004-703 of July 13th 2004 ;

Having regard to the Decree of September 25th 1985 on the conditions of submitting, reporting and printing out of theses or works defended for the doctorate ;

Having regard to the Decree of April 25th 2002 on doctoral studies ;

Having regard to the recommendation by the National Council for Higher Education and Research of November 15th 2004,

Decides :

Article 1 -

In order to strengthen the construction of the European higher education and research area and to develop international cooperation, a French higher education institution entitled to award a doctorate degree can sign, with one or several foreign higher education institutions enjoying the same prerogatives in their countries, an agreement aiming to set up an international joint supervision of doctoral thesis, according to the provisions set by the decree hereby.

Article 2 -

The international joint supervision of doctoral thesis aims to strengthen the international dimension of doctoral training, to promote doctoral students' mobility within different scientific and cultural areas and to develop the scientific cooperation between French and foreign research teams.

Article 3 -

The agreement mentioned in article 1 can be either a framework agreement together with an implementation agreement, or a specifically agreed on convention for each thesis.

These agreed on documents must detail the name of the contracting higher education institutions and, for each thesis, the name of the student concerned and the thesis' topic.

These documents bind the contracting institutions on the basis of a reciprocity principle.

Doctorates awarded within the framework of the provisions set by the decree hereby are fully and automatically recognized in France. Agreements must mention the forms of recognition in the other country or countries.

Article 4 -

Whenever some rules applicable to doctoral studies in the countries involved are incompatible with each other, French institutions are allowed to depart from the provisions of the aforementioned Decree of April 25th2002 on these particular aspects, in accordance with the provisions of the decree hereby and the conditions set by the agreement.

Article 5 -

Doctoral students carry out their works, in each country involved, under the supervision of a thesis tutor committed to fully fulfil his or her guidance functions in collaboration with the other thesis tutor or tutors. The thesis tutors and the doctoral student sign the agreement mentioned in article 3 for the thesis concerned.

Article 6 -

The carrying out of the thesis is made by alternate periods within the institutions involved according to a balance and arrangements set by the agreement.

Regarding periods of study carried out in France and the thesis defence, the aforementioned Decree of April 25th 2002 provides doctoral students with clauses provided for them.

Article 7 -

The principles governing the setting up of the jury and the appointment of its chair are mentioned in the agreement. The jury is set up on the basis of a balanced proportion of members from each institution and jointly appointed by the contracting institutions and it also includes personalities from outside. The number of the members to the jury cannot exceed 8.

Article 8 –

The language in which the thesis is written is set by the convention agreed on by the contracting institutions. When this language is not French, a substantial summary written in French should be added to the thesis itself.

Article 9 -

The thesis can only lead to a single thesis defence. The chair of the jury draws up a report on the thesis defense to be countersigned by the members to the jury.

Subsequently to the thesis defence, contracting institutions can award the student :

- either a jointly awarded doctorate degree ;
- or simultaneously a doctorate degree awarded by each of them.

In both cases :

- the doctoral degree or degrees are awarded by the academic authorities entitled to do so, in accordance with the recommendation by the jury, after the thesis defence ;
- on the diploma itself of doctoral degree(s), a mention about the field or the subject, the title of the thesis or the heading of the main works, the mention of the international joint supervision, the names and the titles of the members to the jury and the submission date are put forward.

The agreement provides for the modes of enforcement of the article hereby.

Article 10 -

The agreement also details :

- the enrolment conditions of doctoral students ;
- the conditions of payment for tuition fees according to the training provisions agreed on, without the doctoral student being possibly forced to pay for fees in several institutions simultaneously ;
- the conditions for the coverage by the Social Security as well as the accommodation conditions and the financial support available to the doctoral student to ensure his or her mobility.

Article 11 -

The arrangements for the protection of the thesis subject, for submitting, reporting and printing out of theses as well as those for the management of the research results which are common to the laboratories involved, of their publishing and commercial use, are set in accordance with the specific legislation of each country involved in the carrying out of the thesis and are detailed by the agreement.

Article 12 –

The Decree of January 18th 1994 on the creation of a mechanism for the joint supervision of doctoral thesis between French and foreign higher education institutions is abrogated.

Article 13 -

The director for higher education is responsible for the enforcement of the decree hereby which will be published in the Official Journal of the French Republic.

Done in Paris, on January 6th 2005.

On behalf and under the authority of the Minister :

The director for higher education,

J.-M. Monteil