

bologna process

NATIONAL REPORTS 2004 – 2005

Country:	Holy See
Date:	January 2005
Responsible member of the BFUG (one name only): Official position:	Angelo Vincenzo ZANI Under Secretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education
Email address:	univ@cec.va
Contributors to the report:	Friedrich BECHINA fso, Franco IMODA sj

1. Main achievements since Berlin

1.1. Give a brief description of important developments, including legislative reforms

An announcement was sent to all the institutions concerned about the adherence to the Bologna process, providing the necessary information on the general implications of the process. A Commission was established for discussion and reflection on what is necessary for the implementation of the requirements. Concise information was given to all institutions providing for the administrative procedures regarding the diploma supplement (DS) and the credit system (ECTS). The basic structure of studies is organized in two cycles by the legislative document "Sapientia christiana" of 1979. Legislative steps have been initiated for the adaptation of the first cycle from two to at least three years for the disciplines concerned.

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?)

The Congregation for Catholic Education is the Holy See's authority in higher education. Its competencies are outlined in the fundamental laws promulgated in "Pastor bonus" and "Sapientia christiana". Acting mostly as a transnational provider of higher education, the Holy See's Congregation for Catholic Education is supported by national boards such as bishops' conferences that exercise responsibility particularly regarding the accreditation of new institutions of higher education or the drafting of overarching frameworks to adapt programmes of study to local needs and customs. Some general qualifications required for certain professions are determined on the national level following the guidelines of the global overarching framework. The national frameworks need recognition by the higher authority. Finally, the institutions of higher education report to the Congregation for Catholic Education through local authorities of the Catholic Church such as bishops and heads of religious orders.

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 nature and institutional structure of the institutions of higher education of the Holy See are understood more easily considering that the Holy See, as a member of the Bologna process, functions as a national authority and provider in the process and also as a transnational provider in nearly all of the European higher education area, with institutions of higher education present in most European countries and outside of Europe as well. The total number of institutions of higher education in the European higher education area, following the global criteria of the Holy See and conferring academic degrees of the same type and under the authority and quality assurance of the Holy See (including the first two cycles and the research doctorate), is 187. Of these, 55 are united in 9 ecclesiastical universities, 37 operate within Catholic universities and 33 in civil or state universities; the remaining 62 function on an autonomous basis. Full ecclesiastical faculties inside or outside of universities may engage, upon agreement with the Congregation for Catholic Education, in cooperating with smaller academic institutions conferring the bachelor (technically called "affiliation"), bachelor and licentiate ("aggregation") or licentiate and doctorate ("incorporation"). At present there exist 164 affiliations, 18 aggregations, and 11 incorporations within the European higher education area. Distinguishing "private" institutions from "public" institutions on the basis of their funding, two pontifical universities in Rome are public. All institutions are regulated by the same legislative norms.

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 structure to oversee the implementation of the "national Bologna group" consists of two bodies: the Universities Department within the Congregation for Catholic Education and a special commission composed of 10 members (from five European countries) having both administrative and academic competence, experience and knowledge. Representatives of the interested parties, such as the Holy See's Secretariat of State, the academic institutions themselves, Church and religious institutions like bishops' conferences, individual dioceses or religious orders, are involved at various points.

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.

The individual institutions (universities and faculties) are responsible for providing internal evaluation. At the national and local levels, Church authorities, such as bishops' conferences, individual dioceses or religious orders, exercise an important role in quality assurance in collaboration with the Congregation for Catholic Education. The Congregation is strongly involved at the establishment of a new institution and receives triennial reports from the institutions according to a scheme of key criteria, the so-called "norms for the triennial report" (cf. 3.2. below).

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.

The institutions undergo thorough screening prior their initial approval and establishment by the Congregation for Catholic Education according to the standards set forth in the fundamental legislation "Sapientia christiana" on universities and faculties (arts. 60 and 61). After the initial foundation, the status of an institution is evaluated every three years by means of a detailed report drafted by local church authority. The key criteria the report must respond to are: the academic and scientific activity (authorities; professors, teachers; their scientific publications; academic officers; main events such as congresses and symposia; publications; celebrations), teaching activity, students, didactic means and structures, economic situation, affiliated bodies or institutions, general conditions and major issues for the future. Affiliated (and analogously aggregated and incorporated) institutions report annually to the affiliating faculties with detailed reports according to precise public norms. The duties of the affiliating faculty in the vigilance of the affiliated institutions concern teaching and other staff, curricula, students, exams and facilities (especially the libraries). After a period of usually five years, the approval of the mutual convention on affiliation (aggregation, incorporation) between the affiliating faculty and the affiliated institute is subject to re-examination.

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)?

Because of the international character of the Holy See, the agencies involved at various levels, both institutional and administrative, are international in character. The Congregation for Catholic Education itself has personnel from 11 countries. Special consulting personnel is drawn from different countries both European and other parts of the world. With regard to mutual recognition of degrees and diplomas as a part of the quality assurance system, the Holy See is part of the ENIC/NARIC network.

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

Currently there are two types of qualification frameworks already existing and corresponding to the principle requirements of the Bologna process, one primarily emphasizing the structure of institutions of higher education and their studies, the other emphasizing the profiles of specific professions important to the Holy See. Both of them are now being adapted to a common terminology and methodological approach aimed at improving international recognition and understanding between educational systems. Discussions are underway to better highlight quality aspects such as transparency of course-work organization, clear orientation of teaching towards the professional skills envisaged.

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 basic structure of the studies, as foreseen by the Holy See's fundamental university legislation "Sapientia christiana", is a two-cycle degree system for all areas of study. In fact, art. 40 establishes: "In each faculty the curriculum of studies is to be suitably organized in

steps or cycles, adapted to the material. These are usually as follows: a) first [cycle], a general instruction is imparted, covering a coordinated presentation of all the disciplines, along with an introduction into scientific methodology; b) next [i.e. second cycle], one section of the disciplines is studied more profoundly, at the same time that the students practice scientific research more fully" (the same article also provides for the third cycle or doctorate).

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.

Recognition of degrees and periods of study are provided for by the fundamental legislation on higher education "Sapientia christiana" (art. 45): "The statutes are to determine what value is to be given for studies taken elsewhere, especially in regard to being dispensed from some disciplines or examinations or even in regard to reducing the curriculum, always, however, respecting the prescriptions of the Congregation for Catholic Education". Since currently there are no specific prescriptions of the Congregation regarding the recognition of degrees and periods of study, recognition is regulated through the statutes of each individual institution approved by the Congregation. A more concise framework for these rules is envisaged and is part of the discussion on assuring the quality of studies.

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 nature and goal of the third cycle leading up to the doctoral degree is outlined in part c) of art. 40 of the Holy See's fundamental university legislation "Sapientia christiana": "Finally, there is a progress toward scientific maturity, especially through a written work which truly makes a contribution to the advance of the science". The doctoral program requires the completion of the previous second-cycle degree (licentiate). Depending on the statutes of the single institution, admission to the doctoral degree program includes various further requirements and is not automatic. The legislation of "Sapientia christiana" provides the general framework for the doctorate in art. 49: "1. Nobody can obtain an academic degree unless properly enrolled in a faculty, completing the course of studies prescribed by the statutes, and successfully passing the examinations or tests. 2. Nobody can be admitted to the doctorate unless first having obtained the licentiate [i.e. degree concluding the second cycle]. 3. A requisite for obtaining a doctorate, furthermore, is a doctoral dissertation that makes a real contribution to the progress of science, written under the direction of a teacher, publicly defended and collegially approved; the principal part, at least, must be published". The "norms of application" for "Sapientia christiana" foresee in art. 32 § 3 that in the examinations for the giving of degrees, especially the doctorate, it is also useful to invite examiners from outside the faculty.

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 no direct public-funding for research conducted within higher education institutions of the Holy See. All funding is either private or by civil social institutions as well as local

Church authorities such as dioceses, bishops' conferences or religious orders. Each professor at a Holy See higher education institution is expected both to teach and to do research. In fact, the legislation "Sapientia christiana" (art. 25 § 1, 3-4) holds as criteria for hiring a professor that he shows documentary proof of suitability for doing scientific research, especially by a published dissertation, and that he demonstrates teaching ability. According to art. 29 of the same legislation, promotion to the next higher academic rank is linked to the accomplishment in both areas, i.e. to teaching skill, to research accomplished, and to the publication of scientific works, as well as to the spirit of cooperation in teaching and in research. Each professor must also be capable of following and directing a student's second or third cycle research (cf. Art. 49 § 3 of "Sapientia christiana").

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)

Many profession-centred qualification frameworks at the national and local level require that a student spend one year of external studies in another country or at least at another institution within the same. Students have the opportunity to apply for scholarships and grants from both civil and Church-related agencies. Many institutions have long standing experience in training students from both European nations and from overseas. This applies in particular to the faculties in France, Belgium, Germany, Austria and Rome. Among the main factors of attractiveness of an institution is the renown and popularity of individual professors and hence of the faculty as a whole. Specialization is another factor which facilitates mobility of students. Certain institutions offer highly specialized studies necessary for particular professions needed for the Holy See. For historical reasons, Rome is a privileged place of highly specialized studies in various forms. The institutions of higher education of the Holy See in Rome attract every year thousands of students from all over the world as a consequence of the specializations offered, the long developed tradition of teaching and research, and well-prepared facilities for the students.

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

Because the institutions for higher education of the Holy See (except for the two pontifical universities in Rome) operate on the territory of another nation as a private institution (partly also as a public institution depending on national legislation and/or on a bilateral international agreement with the Holy See), the concept of "mobility of students from as well as to your country" does not apply in the way it does for a nation with its academic institutions on national territory. However, special measures such as mutual agreements between single institutions are allowed. These agreements are intended to improve the mobility of students between European nations and into the European space of higher education from overseas. Between many institutions such recognition follows facilitated standards due to art. 45 of the Holy See's legislation on higher education "Sapientia christiana" (cf. 5. above).

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 influencing mobility of teachers and staff are subject to the particular situation of the Holy See's institutions as is the mobility of students (cf. 7.2. above). However, the standards for enrollment and promotion of teachers follow the same rules set forth in the Holy See's legislation on higher education in "Sapientia christiana" (cf. 6.2. above), which therefore facilitates recognition and transfer between institutions. The individual must have a sufficient mastery of the local language. However, existing tenure policies in certain countries could be an obstacle to mobility of teachers and "Sapientia christiana" allows for the adaptation of local standards as regards enrollment and promotion (cf. art. 23: "taking into account the university practice of the local area"). This difficulty may be reduced or removed by new policies regarding tenure of appointment resulting from the adoption of the principles of the Bologna process by individual nations. The Holy See's legislation on higher education already allows for this flexibility.

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

See 7.2. and 7.3. above.

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?

Institutions are autonomous within the framework of the legislation of "Sapientia christiana" and their statutes. The basic aspects that characterize the nature and the identity of university institutions of the Holy See are common to all the institutions, whereas all aspects peculiar to the single institution need to be determined by the institution itself. This is provided for by "Sapientia christiana", especially with regard to local or traditional standards. For example see 8.3. below. After establishment, final approval is required from the Congregation only for those changes and adaptations that touch the institution's fundamental nature and identity.

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

Individual institutions have sent their information on their local situations and are involved through working group discussion in the preparation of policy changes.

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)

Individual institutions define the ways in which students participate in governing bodies such as senate, faculty councils, etc. in their statutes. "Sapientia christiana" provides the general setting (art. 34): "The statutes [i.e. of each institution] should define how the students, either individually or collectively, take part in the university community life in those aspects which can contribute to the common good of the faculty or university".

9. The social dimension of the Bologna Process

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

For professions important to the Holy See, individuals who are qualified according to their

professional profile and who fulfill the standard requirements for entering the higher education programme, are eligible to receive the means necessary to access higher education. This principle is sustained by a worldwide system of financial support. Scholarships and grants are provided by individual institutions in order to facilitate equality of access regardless of the financial means available. In addition, equality of access is promoted through information and counseling for the students, to inform them about the services of other agencies.

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?

Lifelong learning is encouraged for the professions important to the Holy See and is therefore foreseen in "Sapientia christiana" as basic element of any institution of higher education of the Holy See. Art. 3, § 2, states that the purpose of such an institution is "to train the students to a level of high qualification in their own disciplines", "to prepare them properly to face their tasks", and finally "to promote [...] continuing permanent education". It is left to the individual institution to draw up the relative programme of studies which is to be outlined in the statutes.

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

With respect to lifelong learning paths, considerations have been initiated to define the criteria for norms that will guide recognition of prior learning and flexible learning paths.

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

At the moment we have not identified any legal obstacles to the establishment and recognition of joint degrees and/or joint study programs. The Holy See's legislation for higher education allows for the collaboration of institutions with regard to the establishment and recognition of joint degrees and study programmes. Art. 64 states: "Cooperation between faculties, whether of the same region or of a wider territorial area, is to be diligently striven for. For this cooperation is of great help to the scientific research of the teachers and to the better formation of the students".

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

The joint degree would be recognized by the contracting partner-institution on the basis of a mutual agreement. It would not lead to a "double degree". There are two particular types of integrated study programmes leading to academic degrees. One consists in full sections of an institution of higher education outside the head-institution in different nations, even overseas, where the sections offer the complete programme of the central institution. Another is constituted by the academic cooperation of "affiliation" and/or "aggregation" (cf. above in 2.2. and 3.2.) between a fully recognized faculty and an institution that offers at least the academic minimum necessary to fulfill the requirements leading up the the degree. Both

institutions must engage in a mutual agreement that needs approval by the Holy See's Congregation for Catholic Education and is reviewed periodically (usually every five years). In the mutual convention signed by the two institutions, the commitment of the affiliating (aggregating) faculty is to oversee and guarantee qualification and teaching of professors as well as to provide for the final exams of the students. The degree is conferred by the affiliating (aggregating) faculty. The two institutions linked together in this way should be in the same cultural region, but can also bridge national borders. They may even exist between a faculty situated in Europe and one on another continent.

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

The programmes are organized autonomously on the level of individual institutions by means of mutual agreements of academic and scientific cooperation. They may include and regulate joint admission, mobility of students, joint exams etc. In the particular case of "affiliation" and/or "aggregation" (cf. above in 2.2. and 3.2.), the programme in the linked institution is to resemble the programme the linking faculties programme that would also grant its degree in the end.

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

There are individual agreements between institutions. Because the institutions of the Holy See operate in the territories of other nations either as private or as public institutions (depending on national legislation and in the case of bilateral agreements between a specific nation and the Holy See, - cf. above 7.2.), most cooperation between academic institutions of the Holy See is transnational from the beginning and thereby contributes to the European dimension in higher education.

11.3. Describe how curriculum development reflects the European dimension (For instance foreign language courses, European themes, orientation towards the European labour market)

Because the academic institutions of the Holy See are present in numerous European nations (cf. above 7.2.), teaching and research usually takes place in the specific language of the country. It is necessary to include the promotion of foreign languages not only to facilitate for the mobility of students and staff but also for understanding the results of research published in the various languages. In the Roman universities (13) the teaching is primarily in Italian, but also in several other European languages (English, French, Spanish, German and Portuguese). In several faculties the study of classical languages such as Latin and Greek is required for scientific purposes. Some institutions have specific programmes and institutes for European studies, such as the University of Salamanca, Spain. For the Holy See, the history and culture of Europe are topics of great interest. Special programmes of research at Holy See's institutions of higher education are dedicated to European themes.

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

Financial support - both scholarships and grants - is provided by special agencies in order to enable students from developing countries to do their studies in a European institution of the Holy See. The presence of students and professors from outside Europe, and especially from

overseas has always been a characteristic not only of the Roman pontifical universities, but also of those in Salamanca (Spain), Louvain (Belgium), Innsbruck (Austria), Paris (France), München (Germany) and many other institutions.

13. Concluding comments

13.1. Give a description of your national Bologna strategies

The Commission (see above 1.1. and 2.3.) is assisting in the preparation of the policy guidelines for the implementation of the Bologna objectives (credit system and recognition issues, qualification framework, quality assurance) and its members are attending the "Bologna Follow-up Group" seminars and are planning the organization of a seminar.

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

To define the criteria to allow for an enhanced quality assurance policy and the preparation of a more detailed outline of the studies of fundamental sciences, stressing the purpose of scientific research and academic teaching, and applied sciences, stressing the acquisition of professional skills immediately useful on the labour market. A major concern of the Holy See in the Bologna process is to make other members aware of the nature and identity of the Holy See's institutions of higher education in their countries. Since the Holy See is a transnational provider of higher education, its institutions should be recognized in other national frameworks in a process of fair recognition. The Holy See, by means of bilateral agreements, pays special attention to the institutions of higher education which operate not only under its own legislation but are also integrated into the recognition frameworks of other countries. Another major concern of the Holy See, from a global point of view, is to keep the doors of the European higher education area open to institutions of higher education outside of Europe.