

bologna process

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1. Main achievements since Berlin

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

The following important Governmental and Ministerial decrees (hereinafter – GD or MD) have been adopted in the recent years:

- Regulations on the structure of study field guidelines (11.12.2003, MD);
- Guidelines for six study fields (2004, MDs);
- Regulations on study programmes' accreditation (revised version 2004 12 02, MD);
- Procedures of study period recognition (12.11.2003, MD; see points 5 and 10.2);
- Changes on GD "Regulations on Higher Education and Scientific Degrees Awarded in the Republic of Lithuania" (24.03.2004) has introduced Diploma Supplement legally on national level and accordingly graduates as from 2005 free of charge will receive Diploma Supplement on request and as from 2006 automatically.

The new requirements are targeted at the shortening of the duration of studies, practical training of students and involving prospective employers into the study process.

The most important developments have been made in regulating second and third cycle studies. The draft on General Requirements for Master Study Programmes was prepared in 2004 and now it is being discussed within Higher Education Institutions (HEI). The draft foresees the new qualitative requirements for Master degree study programmes as well as introduces two types/profiles of such programmes stressing either deepening or expanding of knowledge. Regulations on the residency studies in medicine, odontology and veterinarian medicine, as the third cycle of studies, have also been finished in 2004.

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 main public authority responsible for higher education is the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter - the Ministry). The Ministry develops and implements state policy on higher education and research, coordinates the activities of Lithuanian research and HEI, organises state support for intellectual creativity as well as

supports and promotes international cooperation in the fields of research and studies. Accordingly the Ministry took the initiative to: develop drafts of by-law, co-ordinate and implement international programmes, submit proposals for establishment, re-organization and/or liquidation of higher education and research institutions, submit proposals for the student support policy etc. Also the Ministry is responsible for the development and implementation of the financing policy for universities and research institutions. It develops state budget assignation projects for higher education where funds are foreseen for each university.

The Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania (further The Seimas) distributes the state budget allocations to the universities and the research institutions with reference to the draft prepared by the Ministry in accordance with the funding methodology approved by the Government.

Other responsible authorities are: the Higher Education Council of Lithuania, which is an expert body of the Ministry on strategic issues on higher education development; The Science Council of Lithuania, which is an expert body of both the Seimas and the Government on the organisation of research and study activities as well as on financial issues; the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (see item 3); the Lithuanian State Science and Studies Foundation; and public bodies - the Rectors' Conference of Lithuanian Universities, the Directors' Conference of Lithuanian Colleges, 2 national students' organisations,

The universities are accountable to the Ministry of Finance for the expenditure of budget funds. The colleges for the budget funds expenditure report to the Ministry. According to the Law on Higher Education the Ministry, if needed, may initiate an audit of economic and financial activities of the HEI.

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?)

Following the Law on Higher Education of 2000, Lithuania has introduced a binary system of higher education based on two types of HEI: universities and colleges (non-university type HEI). The HEI are state and non-state. At present 48 HEI have the right to provide higher education and issue valid higher education certificates (diplomas), 15 of them are state universities, 6 non-state universities, 16 state colleges and 11 non-state colleges. In the academic year 2003/2004 there were 130 thousand students in the universities (126400 in public sector and 3600 in private sector) and over 40 thousand students in colleges (about 32000 in public sector and 8300 in private sector). The total number of 170 thousand students makes up 5 per cent of the total population. Both state and non-state institutions are covered by the same legal regulations and have to meet the same quality standards. However, some of the requirements for establishing and licensing the institutions as well as requirements and procedures for admission to HEI differ depending on their status. State budget funds are allocated only for state HEI. In particular cases there is a possibility for a private one to receive state funding according to the legislation.

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 in Lithuania has been overseeing by the National

Bologna Follow-up group. The group was set up in July 2004 and consists of the representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science, the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, the Rectors' Conference of Lithuanian Universities, the Directors' Conference of Lithuanian Colleges, students, the BFUG member and the National ECTS/DS coordinator and counsellor. Since its establishment the group has met regularly to discuss Bologna related issues, to share the information and views on its development and current documents. The group coordinates dissemination in Lithuania of the information on the Bologna Process.

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 national quality assurance system is seen as the responsibility of the two main actors which work alongside in order to assure the quality of educational activities - the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereinafter – the Centre) and the HEI themselves. Ministry prepares and elaborates the respective legal acts (in co-operation with the Centre and HEI) and adopts decrees on study programmes accreditation considering suggestions of the Centre. The Centre carries out external evaluation and its main responsibilities are to:

- co-ordinate the regular self-assessment process of HEI;
- arrange and carry out external evaluation of the activities of HEI (study programmes are regularly evaluated by the study field whether their quality corresponds to the general requirements for study programmes in Lithuania);
- carry out evaluation of new developed study programmes in HEI.
- evaluate requests for establishing new higher education or research institutions.

As from 2004 the Centre started to carry out the institutional evaluation of the colleges and it is expected this kind of evaluation will be extended to the universities and research institutions.

Reports on the evaluation of study programmes and higher education institutions are announced publicly.

The higher education institutions are responsible for internal quality assurance that is to:

- design, deliver and review academic programmes,
- assure that the new proposed or already running study programme is to be supported by necessary learning resources and facilities,
- guarantee that the study programmes are being updated and improved,
- involve students to quality assessment, e. g. by institutional self-evaluation procedures, student questionnaires etc.

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 evaluation and licensing procedures for establishing new higher education and research institution are being comparable to the accreditation as such. The new founded institution is given a constant status only if after 4 years of it's activity the re-evaluation is positive.

The accreditation of study programmes rests on the Ministry. The Ministry's decision on the accreditation of study programme is based on the suggestion of the Centre corresponding to

the evaluation results. Evaluation/accreditation process contains in 2 cycles. The first one is the self-evaluation part have to be done by the higher institution itself. The institutional report on it has to be submitted to the Centre. The Centre forms the experts' panel to analyse the institutional report, to arrange a visit to the institution reported and to provide the final report to the Experts' Council for Quality in Higher Education (hereinafter –Experts' Council). (The point of experts' panel is that particularly for the study programmes in the problematic study field the international experts are in the majority of the panel. Usually the ratio is 1 national expert to 3-5 foreign peers.)

After consideration on the report the Experts' Council or Council for Assessment of Research and Higher Education Institutions provides the final suggestions for the Ministry concerning the decision on the study programme/institution accreditation.

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 Centre has been commissioned to execute the functions of the Lithuanian ENIC/NARIC, therefore it participates in the ENIC/NARIC network. Since 2000 the Centre has also been an associated member of the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). Also the Centre is a member of INQAAHE and CEE Network. International experts are included in the activities of the Centre (see point 3.2) but not in the Boards.

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

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 Law on Higher Education of 2000, fully embedded the reforms and changes in the system of higher education, which had been taking place since 1993. Binary system of higher education consisting of universities and colleges (non-university type HEI) and three cycle studies of university type were introduced and fully implemented. The colleges issue a diploma of higher education and award professional qualification after three or four years of studies, but do not award an academic degree as their study programmes are mostly practically oriented.

The university studies are organised in three cycles:

- First cycle (undergraduate: Bachelor programmes);
- Second cycle (graduate: Master, specialised professional programmes);
- Third cycle (doctoral studies; residency and post-graduate art studies).

For a Bachelor programme the normal duration of studies is 4 years and it amounts to 160 national (240 ECTS) credits. However, the Law on Higher Education allows the first cycle programmes to vary from 140 national (210 ECTS) to 180 national (270 ECTS) credits.

The Master programme's normal duration varies from 1,5 years - 60 national (90 ECTS) credits to 2 years – 80 national (120 ECTS) credits.

Some study fields still retain integrated type of studies insofar as they do not contain the separate first and second cycles and lead directly to either Master degree and/or professional

qualification (Pharmacy, Medicine, Odontology, Veterinary Medicine, particular Law study programmes).

For the third cycle see point 6 - Doctoral studies and research.

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.

Lithuania has joined three international conventions covering academic qualifications recognition:

- UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees Concerning Higher Education to the European Region, 1979 (Came into effect in Lithuania in 1997).
- European Council Convention on the Equivalence of Diplomas Leading to Admission to Universities, No. 15, 1953 (Came into effect in Lithuania in 1997).
- Council of Europe / UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualification Concerning Higher Education in the European Region, Lisbon, 1997 (Came into effect in Lithuania in 1999).

The Centre (see point 3.1) is appointed as Lithuanian representative in European Network of National Information Centres and carry out functions as National Academic Recognition Information Centre (Lithuanian ENIC/NARIC). It is responsible for: assessing secondary and higher education qualifications acquired abroad; providing information, consultations and recommendations on the issues of education acquired abroad; exchange information with ENIC/NARIC and any of world over institution in charge of diploma recognition. The decision on recognition of education acquired abroad rests on the Ministry and is based on the Centre conclusions drawn.

Study periods are recognised by the HEI institutions themselves. MD "Procedures of Study Period Recognition" (see points 1.1 and 10.2) sets the provisions of the institutions' rights and obligations in recognising of study periods. Both procedures for a degree and a study period recognition foresee appeal possibilities and procedures.

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)

Only the graduates from the second cycle or integrated study programmes (see point 4) may pursue their studies at the third cycle by enrolling in doctoral, post-graduate art or residency studies at the universities.

Doctoral programmes include studies, research and preparation a Doctoral thesis. The standard duration for studies is 4 years. Upon completion of a doctoral programme and public viva voce defence of the thesis, a Doctor's degree is awarded. The first semesters of a doctoral programme are devoted to an in-depth study of the chosen branch of science. Not less than 20 national (30 ECTS) credits have to be earned by the doctoral students during this stage. The rest of the time is allotted to the groundwork, the research part of which start at the very beginning of the studies, and writing of the Doctoral thesis. Some of the universities allocate credits to the whole doctoral programmes (160 national; 240 ECTS) encompassing both study and research part. In addition, doctoral students have to deliver lectures and conduct seminars in order to acquire lecturing skill at a university.

A post-graduate art studies (2 year duration) are aimed to train teachers for HEI in arts and to provide in-depth professional skills for specialised creative activities. Upon completion of studies the degree of the Licentiate of Art is awarded.

Those pursuing medical education may continue their studies in the residency. The duration of residency study programmes is 2-6 years. This specific third cycle for medical, odontology and veterinary doctors is intended for preparing individuals for the practice. Graduates are awarded a professional qualification depending on the study programme completed.

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?)

Lithuania retains the system of research is being carried out at the universities and research institutes. After the reform in 2002-2003 some of the institutes have been linked up with universities. At the moment there are 18 University Research Institutes and 17 State Research Institutes. The cooperation between universities and state research institutes is carried through common university-institute research projects and papers, joint doctoral studies, scientists delivering lectures to the students etc. Another important precondition to increase research activities at the universities is that budget allocation for each university directly depends on the results of evaluation on the research activities at the university concerned.

The total public research funding is 246,5 mln Lt (71,4 mln EUR) and 156,4 mln Lt (45,3 mln EUR) of the sum goes to the research at the universities.

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 numbers of the mobile students from and to Lithuania have been growing constantly over the past years. The organized mobility is implemented mainly through Leonardo da Vinci and Socrates programmes as well as funds allocated for this purpose by the Ministry. All these programmes support only the short-term study abroad mobility. Starting with the year 2002 the annual national budgeted allocation for Socrates/Erasmus programme has been 9,1 mln.litas (2,63 mln. EUR). 6,2 mln. litas (1,79 mln. EUR) go directly to mobile student grants. All these exchange students are also eligible for extra support through the Lithuanian State Science and Studies Foundation as well as bank loans on the individual basis. The Ministry also offer grants for incoming and outgoing students under international agreements and treaties with various countries. The annual budget allocated for these purposes is 1 mln. litas (0,3 EUR). It could be noted that an applicant from any country in the world is assured a grant if he/she applies for Lithuanian language studies.

Formal obstacles for student migration inside the EU decreased considerably after joining the EU. However, acute visa and temporary residence permit problems remain for students mobile to and from the countries outside the EU.

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

There is a strong competition among the Lithuanian students for Erasmus grants. Even with the national budget contribution the HEI are not able to give Erasmus grants to at least half of

the applicants.

On the other hand, Lithuania and its HEI still need a lot of advertising abroad aimed to attract more foreign students in order to balance the incoming and outgoing students mobility schemes. The Ministry supports the initiatives that might enhance country's higher education visibility. It is an active annual participant at EAIE fairs and manages to involve into all HEI. The Ministry also produces and disseminates information targeted at the mobile students, that hold the data on the whole Lithuanian higher education system, higher education institutions, courses and programmes in foreign languages available.

Out of 9.1 mln. litas of the budget funds for the Erasmus programme, 1.4 mln. litas (0.5 mln. EUR) are allocated for developing courses in foreign languages and ensuring their quality. This is not the basic but extra money on top of what the universities already invest. As a result more courses and programmes in foreign languages are being offered for the international students.

Foreign citizens may enter both state-financed and non-state-financed places. The state-financed places are open for foreigners who have a permanent residence permit, are the EU countries' citizens or citizens of the states that do not charge fees to Lithuanian citizens. Foreigners admitted to state-financed places are entitled to receive student support - scholarships and loans - under the same conditions as Lithuanian citizens.

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)

Staff mobility is seen, primarily, as the responsibility of each HEI. As a general rule, the HEI strongly support staff mobility and encourage its staff go abroad to work at other institutions, perform research, deliver lectures etc. A senior academic staff member is allowed to take a sabbatical every five years and, increasingly, this time is being used for the stay at an institution abroad. The grants they receive usually are from international agencies and foundations. Socrates/Erasmus programme plays an important role in the whole scheme of the teaching staff mobility. The HEI receive 0,4 mln. litas (0.1 mln. EUR) of extra funding for Erasmus teaching staff mobility. However, this mobility scheme, having strict rules for courses' or lectures' integration into regular curricula, make the mobility arrangements quite difficult from the academic point of view.

There are no obstacles for the staff coming to Lithuania for the short duration stay. However, long term stay is restricted by the two factors: the HEI do not advertise open positions internationally and so far the rules of migration do not facilitate this kind of mobility.

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

Any special measures taken to improve teachers and staff mobility in general are related to the social policy and social guarantees while the staff member is abroad. This is the following task for near future, which needs the integrated efforts in co-operation with other competent authorities. Definitely, special measures have to be taken and incentives offered for having a high quality international staff.

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?

The autonomy of HEI is legitimated in the Constitution of the country and defined by the Law on Higher Education. The autonomy encompass academic and administration freedom, as well as freedom of economic and financial activities that are based on the principle of self-governing. The HEI have the right to: organise their internal structure (found faculties and departments, appoint teachers and other staff); enrol students in accordance with the national system; develop new study programmes and manage finances and property etc.

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

The drafts of all regulations, by-laws and ministerial decrees are sent and openly discussed at the institutions concerned. The papers are given approval only when these ones give their feedbacks and agree on them in principle. Besides, all important or relevant documents dealing with higher education are being prepared in the Ministry by the working groups that usually involve representatives from the universities, colleges, students, the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, other Ministries and possible stakeholders concerned with the issue. It could be noted that legislation foresees compulsory inclusion of social partners and stakeholders as well as students in the bodies (the Senate and the Council) of the universities.

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)

By the Law on Higher Education a minimum 10% of all the representatives in the self-governing body of a public HEI (in the Senate of the university or in the Academic Council of the college) should be student representatives. Student representatives also are members of the supervising and advisory body – the Council of a HEI. Particular HEI has an organization of Student Representation. The principles of scholarships allocation for students are set taking into account the opinion of this body. It is also responsible for student certificates, mentor system for international students etc. Besides, each university has a Commission for Contentions to dissolve various disagreements between students and administration of the university. All measures mentioned in the point 8.2 also promote the participation and the influence of the students. Furthermore, the national higher education quality assurance system also includes the students into both internal and external evaluation procedures.

9. The social dimension of the Bologna Process

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

Admission to HEI is based on an applicant's maturity examinations results at National Examination Centre (NEC), supervised by the Ministry, and conducted by a HEI under the admittance regulations approved by the Ministry. The system ensures the equality of access to HEI for all applicants. The HEI are allowed to set special examinations only in the study fields that require specific preliminary knowledge or skills, such as music, arts, architecture etc.

State Constitution guarantees free education for “good “ students. Approximately 50 percent of full-time students receive state grants and are exempted from tuition fees. Receiving a state grant does not depend on nationality, age, residency or a type of a course. The system of promotion and support for students has been introduced. First and second cycle full-time students at the state universities may receive scholarships. All third cycle students receive

scholarships. Both state and non-state HEI students can take loans from a special State Fund. Loans are provided for living costs, for paying tuition fees and for short-term studies abroad. Currently, all students paying tuition fees have a possibility to get loans sufficient to cover tuition fees. The Government is constantly increasing allocations for student loan programme. The Fund for loans has increased as from 2,47 million (0.7 mln. EUR) since 1999 to 2005 to 20 million Lt (5,79 mln. EUR). Other support including student accommodation, accessibility for disabled students and welfare aid is also available.

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?

In March 2004 the Ministers of Education and Science and Social Security and Labour approved the Lifelong Learning Strategy. One of the objectives set up by the Strategy is to ensure interrelation among general education, special education, vocational training and higher education to make entire system of education coherent and effective. Higher education institutions play an important role in continuing training. Quite a number of students attend evening and distance learning or non-formal courses organised by HEI. Obviously, that orientation towards the development of knowledge-based society will increase the need for continuing studies in HEI.

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

At the moment the recognition of prior learning is regulated by MD "On the Procedures of Study Period Recognition" (see points 1.1 and 5). It sets out the basic principles and procedures on study period recognition in HEI for individuals, who pursue to continue their studies after a study period at home HEI or abroad. Adults mostly participate in professional part-time continuing education or retraining studies. Higher education including distance/part-time studies for adults is partly financed from the state budget, partly by the part-time students who pay study fees. Some programmes of non-formal adult education are financed from the state and municipal budgets. The private sector is involved in adult education by the funding of adult education via input into the Employment Fund, funding the private education institutions, supporting professional continuous education and employees training. From the year 2002 the Ministry announces the competition for non-formal adult education projects and programmes financed from the state budget. Different institutions have a right to participate in.

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

The issue is under open current discussions and amendment to the Law on Higher Education concerning the joint-degrees will be submitted before long.

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

See point 11.1.

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

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

Transnational co-operation is seen as one of the priority areas of the HEI that have possibilities to participate in many projects, programmes and initiatives now that Lithuania is a member of the EU. The last initiative - the participation in Erasmus - Mundus programme.

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

HEI actively participate in the EU educational programmes that make positive influence on curriculum development through students and teachers mobility. The active participation in the European Networks definitely impacts on curriculum development as well. Almost all universities offer courses in foreign language for incoming students and various study programmes include courses with European themes. Separate study programmes dealing with European issues and foreign languages are on the offer for home students. The majority of such courses and programmes are in the field of humanities and social sciences. All Lithuanian students must be competent in national and one foreign language, therefore, the foreign one is a compulsory part of a degree programme.

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

Student mobility using ECTS as a tool for study period recognition, the Diploma Supplement already introduced on the national level, and other Europass documents (MobiliPass, Certificate Supplements, European CV, European Language Portfolio), that are being used in the country, promote the Bologna ideas and by adding transparency promote EHEA insofar as giving greater visibility for the European initiatives outside the Bologna area (HEI initiatives and Ministerial international agreements and treaties - additionally see point 7.1).

13. Concluding comments

13.1. Give a description of your national Bologna strategies

The main strategy used in strengthening Bologna process in Lithuania is to involve all possible participants in its implementation. The success may be reached if all groups of actors participating in higher education (HEI, Ministries, Rectors' Conference, Rectors, teachers, researchers, administrators and students) will perceive and understand Bologna goals in the same way and act in co-operation. Some of the ways to reach this target are briefly pointed out in the clause 8.

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

At the moment the main following challenges ahead for the country are to:
- adjust national legal acts in order to foster Bologna developments (joint degrees, ECTS

credits, etc);

- make Bologna ideas and action lines more known to HEI, teachers and students;
- internationalise HEI through curricula, course content as well as students and teachers mobility;
- develop closer links between higher education and research;
- develop closer links between HEI and external stakeholders;
- elaborate on possible principles for interaction between university and non-university sectors;
- enhance the quality of higher education;
- enhance the international co-operation in different areas and activities of higher education.