

**NATIONAL REPORTS 2004 – 2005**

<b>Country:</b>	Switzerland (www.bolognareform.ch)
<b>Date:</b>	18 January 2005
<b>Responsible member of the BFUG (one name only):</b> <b>Official position:</b>	Silvia Studinger Scientific Advisor University Institutes
<b>Email address:</b>	Silvia.Studinger@sbf.admin.ch
<b>Contributors to the report:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– State Secretariat for Education and Research;</li> <li>– Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities;</li> <li>– Conference of the Universities of Applied Sciences;</li> <li>– Swiss Conference of Schools for Teacher Education;</li> <li>– Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance of the Swiss Universities</li> </ul>

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

Soon after the Bologna Declaration in 1999, Swiss higher education institutions (universities and universities of applied sciences) recognised the importance of this reform process and set up project organisations. The authorities of the universities of applied sciences passed legally binding "Directives" in 2002 and those of the universities in 2003. The directives for the two sectors were prepared by the rectors' conferences in close cooperation with each other in order to assure that the reforms are well interconnected and consistent across the entire tertiary education sector. The political authorities have conferred responsibility for coordinating the implementation of the reforms to the rectors' conferences.

The Confederation financially supports the Bologna reform process: for the period 2004-2007, the cantonal universities receive the amount corresponding to approximately €20 million. At the central level, the Confederation finances the Bologna coordination of the rectors' conference.

Across all sectors of the tertiary education system (universities, universities of applied sciences, teacher education), the new system is based on a first cycle (bachelor) comprising 180 ECTS credits and a second cycle comprising 90 to 120 ECTS credits.

Whereas the universities of applied sciences will commence their bachelor programmes in autumn 2005, the universities and universities of applied sciences for teacher education have already partly introduced the new tiered study programmes. As of the beginning of the academic year 2004/2005 a considerable number of study programmes have adhered to the bachelor/master system. As a consequence, a large percentage of first-year students is currently entering the new system. By 2010 all institutions and study programmes have to

and will be completely renewed.

The implementation of the Bologna process at Swiss institutions should be seen in the wider context of the far-reaching reforms currently under way for the entire higher education sector and that will be put into place by 2008. Their main goals are to improve the position of Swiss higher education in the international context, to simplify the highly complex mechanisms of cooperation between federal and cantonal authorities in steering the higher education system, as well as to enhance transparency and efficiency regarding institutional cooperation and allocation of resources.

## 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***

The strong federal tradition of Switzerland is reflected in its educational system. While primary and secondary education in Switzerland are essentially the responsibility of the cantonal and local authorities, responsibility for higher education is shared between the cantons and the Confederation. The Confederation regulates advanced vocational training and the universities of applied sciences and also has supervisory authority over the two federal institutes of technology. In addition, it promotes research and subsidises cantonal universities. The cantons have responsibility for cantonal universities and provide most of the financing for these and also for the universities of applied sciences.

In practice, a network of cantonal, federal or joint bodies runs the various universities as outlined below.

#### a) At the federal level

- The Swiss Science and Technology Council, the Federal Council's advisory board for all policy issues involving science, higher education, research and technology, formulates general concepts for submission to the Federal Council.
- The Federal Commission for universities of applied sciences advises the operational authorities on any issues involving universities of applied sciences.
- The State Secretariat for Education and Research (subsidiary to the Federal Department of Home Affairs) is the Confederation's designated authority for national and international issues involving education in general, university instruction and research. It also furthers cantonal university projects, research agencies and institutes as well as related scientific services. It maintains contact with foreign partners and develops international relations, particularly with the European Union.
- The ETH Board (subsidiary to the Federal Department of Home Affairs) is responsible for the two federal institutes of technology including strategic planning, appointment of teaching staff and allocation of resources.
- The Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (subsidiary to the Federal Department of Economic Affairs) implements federal government policy in the areas of vocational and advanced vocational training, universities of applied sciences, technology and innovation.

#### b) Bodies common to the Confederation and the cantons

- Within the Swiss University Conference (CUS), the Confederation and the cantons work

together on policies relating to the cantonal and federal universities. The CUS has real decision-making power in a number of areas that affect all Swiss universities such as the length of studies, recognition of previous studies, financial support for national projects, recognition of institutions and courses of study as well as the evaluation of teaching and research. In December 2003, for example, CUS passed "Bologna Directives", which are the legal basis for the reform within universities.

c) At the cantonal level

- The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education has the overall responsibility for education policies at the primary and secondary level, and, at the tertiary level, for those professions not regulated at federal level as well as for universities of applied sciences subject to cantonal authority.
- The Council for Universities of Applied Sciences is comprised of the ministers of education of the cantons responsible for universities of applied sciences including teacher education. Jointly with the Confederation, this intercantonal body performs development and coordination functions. It regularly holds joint sessions with the CUS. The Council for Universities of Applied Sciences has passed "Bologna Directives" analogous to those for the universities. These provide the legal basis for the reform and are binding for all universities of applied sciences and schools for teacher education.

d) Executive bodies in universities and universities of applied sciences

- The Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS) deals with all matters requiring mutual agreement or the adoption of joint positions across the universities. Primarily, these involve curricula, syllabi, examination rules, diploma requirements and the harmonisation of higher education admission requirements. CRUS is a private organisation that performs various duties on behalf of the CUS.
- The Swiss Conference of Universities of Applied Sciences is an independent body. Its objective is to harmonise the development of the universities of applied sciences at the operational level. It also works with the Confederation on technical matters.
- The Swiss Conference of Schools for Teacher Education (at the level of universities of applied sciences) represents teachers and schools for teacher education and reports to the political authorities and the general public. It promotes international cooperation, coordination and further development as well as the integration of the schools into the higher education system.

## ***2.2. Give a short description of the institutional structure***

Tertiary education is highly diverse and generally grouped into two broad categories: 1) advanced vocational training (ISCED level 5B) and 2) higher education institutions (ISCED level 5A comprising cantonal universities, federal institutes of technology, universities of applied sciences and schools for teacher education).

### 1) Advanced vocational training

Advanced vocational training is characterised by strong specialisation; its institutions differ in terms of type and level of training provision, entrance requirements, designated authorities and funding sources. Of more than 300 institutions with a total of approximately 44,000 students, about half are in the public sector. One third of the institutions is private but subsidised, while the remainder are private and unsubsidised.

### 2) Higher education institutions

Switzerland ranks among the countries having the highest university density in the world, with one university for every 614,000 inhabitants. In 2003, 109,333 students were enrolled in the ten cantonal universities and two Federal Institutes of Technology – a 78% rise from 1980. Although each cantonal university has its own individual characteristics, most have similar structures. They are divided into faculties including law, economics, social sciences, arts, natural and exact sciences and humanities. Some also have schools of medicine, theology and architecture. The federal institutes of technology focus on the exact sciences, technical sciences and architecture, specializing in particular in life sciences, nanotechnology and communications technology. At the academic level, the influence of the private sector has not as yet been of much importance. Its interest has been limited to a few graduate and postgraduate institutions. Granting permission for setting up a private university falls within the remit of the cantons.

In 1995, the Federal Council approved the creation of seven universities of applied sciences, each corresponding to a particular region and incorporating number of member schools (around 60 institutions); there were a total of 37,806 students in 2003. Courses of study are professionally oriented and include construction sciences, technical sciences, chemical engineering, agriculture, economics and administration, applied arts, social work and music.

In addition, Switzerland has 17 cantonal schools for teacher education which train primary and secondary school teachers at university level. Some of these schools are universities of applied sciences, some have mandates similar to UAS and some are incorporated into universities. In 2003, around 9500 students were enrolled.

### ***2.3. Give a brief description of the structure which oversees the implementation of the Bologna Process in your country***

Legal responsibility for the Bologna process lies with the CUS (for the cantonal universities and the federal institutes of technology) and the Council for Universities of Applied Sciences. Both bodies have already passed legally binding “Bologna Directives”. At the institutional level, the implementation of this legal framework is overseen by the three executive bodies (CRUS, Swiss Conference of Universities of Applied Sciences, Swiss Conference of Schools for Teacher Education), which collaborate closely and report to the political authorities. The three bodies have each set up a Bologna commission that bring together representatives of their member institutions as well as student representatives in order to ensure a coordinated implementation of the reforms. Their activities include the establishment of guidelines, recommendations and codes of best practice regarding general aspects of the reform as well as coordination and support of curricular reform, ECTS, admission regulations, mobility, QA and the social aspects including gender equality. They provide a platform for inter-institutional discussion of all Bologna-related issues.

## **3. Quality assurance**

### ***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 CUS, the cooperative body that includes representatives of the university cantons and the federal government, is responsible for coordinating university policy, including quality assurance (QA). It issues directives on the evaluation of education and research and, on recommendation of the national accreditation/ quality assurance organisation, makes the decisions on accreditation procedures. The OAQ (Center of Accreditation and Quality

Assurance of the Swiss Universities) is an independent body which performs the following tasks: it defines QA requirements and regularly checks compliance, prepares guidelines for the national accreditation procedures, and conducts accreditation procedures as well as other quality assessments (evaluations, audits) on behalf of CUS and the federal government. The OAQ works closely with CRUS.

The primary responsibility for QA lies with the institutions themselves. They are expected to establish QA systems that guarantee high quality in education and research. The political authorities have mandated the OAQ to check the universities and Federal institutes of technology every four years by dint of so-called “quality audits” to determine whether their QA systems are compatible with internationally accepted standards and whether they produce high quality products. Federal funding of the cantonal universities is partly linked to these quality audits.

The Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology is responsible for peer reviews of the universities of applied sciences which are linked to the recognition procedures of these higher education institutions. All study programmes were evaluated in 2001–2002 and accredited by the federal government in 2003.

For the universities of applied sciences for teacher education, the Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education defines minimal standards for admission requirements, length and structure of programmes, and the content of studies. Recognition is granted to these institutions on the basis of a dossier prepared by the institution and evaluation by external experts.

### ***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.***

A system of accreditation has been in place since 2002. It is a voluntary procedure open to academic institutions and their study programmes, both from the public and private sectors. It consists of a three-step procedure (self-evaluation, external evaluation, decision on accreditation). The accreditation is based on an assessment of compliance with predefined, internationally accepted quality standards. The accreditation decision is made by CUS. An unconditional positive decision is granted for seven years.

### ***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)?***

As a matter of principle, international peers participate in quality audits and evaluation procedures at institutional level for all types of institutions. The OAQ itself is active in various European QA networks such as the Joint Quality Initiative (JQI), the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA), the regional network D-A-CH and the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA, in the capacity of observer). The OAQ is also a member of several QA networks and organisations at the international level (INQAAHE, UNESCO/OECD forum, etc.).

OAQ procedures and quality standards are based on international good practice. The OAQ Scientific Council includes several international academics. This scientific council prepares the accreditation decisions on behalf of CUS. The expert groups set up for evaluations and accreditation procedures in Switzerland must include a majority of peers employed outside

Switzerland.

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

Quality assurance is considered as being of primary importance by all partners. There is a consensus that QA should remain the responsibility of autonomous higher education institutions. Evaluation of institutions' overall QA systems and mechanisms is preferable to the obligatory accreditation of all study programmes leading to bachelor's and master's degrees, which is considered to be too costly and to lead to too high an administrative burden for the entire staff. Nevertheless, institutions are free to have individual programmes accredited should they so wish.

#### **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.

Very early on, Swiss higher education institutions recognised that the Bologna process provided the opportunity for a comprehensive renewal of their teaching. This process was launched under the motto "coordination and competition": higher education institutions should be enabled to position themselves within the framework of a basic structure compatible across Europe while still allowing them to maintain a distinctive profile and to enable individual variations on the courses they offer.

The legal framework was put in place for the universities of applied sciences in 2002 and for the universities in 2003. The former will start their bachelor programmes in 2005 or 2006 in a coordinated manner. Master programmes are intended to begin three years later. According to the legislation pertaining to the universities they must have finished planning by 2005 and the implementation of the tiered study programmes must be complete by 2010. It is not possible to offer traditional and new programmes in parallel. Good progress is being made with the introduction of the two-cycle degree system: some universities have already completely changed all newly starting study programmes to the new system, others have partly done so or are about to offer their first bachelor and master programmes.

A number of important issues still need further clarification and agreement between the universities. These include aspects concerning the admission of bachelor diploma holders to master programmes. Also, the exact procedures for evaluation of the progress of institutions in introducing the reforms have yet to be decided upon.

#### **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.

Efforts are being made at the national level to ensure a coordinated implementation of ECTS and the diploma supplement and ensure that they become effective transparency tools – inside and outside higher education institutions. With particular reference to ECTS, activities to harmonise its use should continue and should be reinforced where necessary (e.g. with information, training, good practice). At present there is still a widespread feeling that the various "Bologna" tools add to the administrative burden of university staff rather than enhancing and facilitating recognition.

## 6. Doctoral studies and research

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

At all Swiss universities, access to doctoral studies is limited to students who have completed the master cycle. The structure and content of the third cycle (doctoral studies) are set independently by each university. There is, however, an increasing tendency among universities to structure doctoral studies and to provide taught courses. ECTS has not been applied to the third cycle so far.

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

Switzerland dedicates 2.7% of its GDP to research. Two of every three people (69%) active in research and development work in the private sector, one of every three (29%) in higher education institutions and 2% in federal administration. Publicly-funded research is thus mainly conducted within higher education institutions. Research, together with education, is in fact part of the mission of all three types of Swiss higher education institutions (cantonal universities, federal institutes of technology, universities of applied sciences including teacher education) as defined in either cantonal or federal laws.

Moreover a tight link between higher education and research is expected. The federal law on financial aid to universities considers the unity of teaching and research to be a condition for obtaining subsidies. The federal law on research, which regulates federal financing of research, also insists on the tight link between research and education.

## 7. Mobility of students and staff

### ***7.1. Describe the main factors influencing mobility of students from as well as to your country***

The Swiss universities and federal institutes of technology are among the most international institutions in Europe: a fifth of the total student body and 35% of all professors are foreigners. For many years Switzerland, its universities and its research institutes have been engaged in international exchange programmes for students and staff, as well as in international cooperation; Switzerland has taken an active part in multilateral projects and maintained numerous bilateral contacts. In 1991, it ratified the international University Convention of the Council of Europe and of UNESCO and, in 1998, the Lisbon Convention.

Although Switzerland is not a member of the EU, the Swiss parliament approved transitional measures to enable the indirect participation of Switzerland in the EU's educational, professional training and youth programmes. The bilateral agreements with the EU will, on the one hand, further enhance participation in EU education programmes and, on the other hand, facilitate taking up residence in Switzerland (e.g. obtaining residence permits, health insurance).

In the Swiss Confederation, the cantons enjoy autonomy regarding legislation, which affects the higher education sector both directly and indirectly. As a result, factors influencing mobility from and to Switzerland vary between the cantons, making mobility an often complex endeavour. Improvements will be necessary, for instance, regarding portability of regular student loans and grants (only allowed by some cantons) or alleviation of administrative problems (e.g. regarding health insurance).

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

Mobility from and to as well as within Switzerland is a strategic aim of both the political authorities and the universities. In their strategy for the period 2005–2015, CRUS postulates a ratio of 1:4 students holding a bachelor's degree from another university participating in every master programme offered by a Swiss university. Also, recommendations regarding mobility within the bachelor and master study programmes have been established. Various possibilities for obtaining grants exist; however, they are not deemed sufficient.

For Swiss students wishing to study abroad, state stipends based on bilateral agreements, university exchange grants and Erasmus grants are available. Various other public and private institutions offer grants as well. Regrettably, no special grants to enhance mobility within Switzerland exist.

For foreign students wishing to study in Switzerland, the federal commission for grants (ESKAS) provides postgraduate stipends for full-time studies for one academic year, which includes intensive assistance and support.

***7.3. Describe the main factors influencing mobility of teachers and staff from as well as to your country***

Traditionally, Switzerland has a high percentage of long-term foreign teaching staff. Conditions of employment are negotiated individually (tenure of appointment, pension schemes, etc.). Generally, work permits and social security do not pose a problem. However, more senior teachers coming to or back to Switzerland may have difficulties buying into pension funds and may be able to do so only at great expense. In case of temporary teaching assignments, teachers from developing countries, for example, may face severe financial and administrative difficulties.

***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***

Acting on a mandate issued by the Swiss federal government, the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) supports research and fosters young scientific talent through grants for periods of study abroad. The SNSF also promotes international research cooperation to make a positive contribution to scientific research in the relevant areas of the world and to foster research cooperation between these areas and Switzerland.

Universities grant professors sabbatical leave on a regular basis and contribute to travel costs to initiate research projects.

Doctoral students (research staff) from all disciplines enrolled at Swiss universities can apply for so-called “cotuelles-de-thèse” programmes with French and Italian universities. This includes financial aid to cover additional costs incurred.

As of January 2004, Switzerland has fully participated in the sixth framework programme of the European Commission for research including Marie Curie actions.

## **8. Higher education institutions and students**

***8.1. Describe aspects of autonomy of higher education institutions***

At the federal level, discussions are taking place on whether autonomy of higher education institutions is to be included in the federal constitution. At present, federal and cantonal



universities are granted various degrees of autonomy in the relevant federal and cantonal regulations. Overall, universities enjoy quite a large degree of autonomy with respect to internal organisation, recruitment, study programmes and financing. The universities of applied sciences, on the other hand, are to a much larger extent still dependent on state administration although there is a tendency to conclude overall performance agreements between the universities of applied sciences and the political authorities.

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

All partners play an active part in the implementation of the Bologna process. The rectors' conferences set up Bologna commissions involving all partners including students. These were in charge of preparing the legal frameworks for the universities and universities of applied sciences, and the legislation was then passed by the political authorities. The Bologna commissions also oversee the implementation of the reform at the institutions thus assuming their responsibility for ensuring national coherence and coordination of the reforms.

### ***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?***

The ways in which students can participate at the institutional level seem to differ considerably between the various higher education institutions. Therefore, members of the rectors' conference, government representatives and students have formulated recommendations asking for students' participation in all university governing bodies, academic councils, etc. These recommendations led to the initiation of a project financed by the government with the aim of providing an overview of the actual conditions of students' participation. A description of different models in place is intended to help institutions to implement the recommendations and harmonise their practices.

Students' organisations are now working on a second project to be financed by the government, which concerns their participation at the national level. Unfortunately, progress has been slow because the various existing students' organisations have experienced some difficulties in finding a common basis.

## **9. The social dimension of the Bologna Process**

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

The introduction of the two-cycle system at Swiss universities affects access to higher education and regulation of student grants. CRUS therefore organised a national conference in 2003 to discuss the social consequences of the implementation of the Bologna Declaration. Participants concluded that the grant system should be nationally harmonized and public grants be awarded on equal terms for both the bachelor and the master cycle. Mobility should be facilitated by increasing public grants. Initiatives for the reform of the grant systems are planned at both the federal and cantonal levels. They include the following changes: whereas federal authorities will continue to offer grants for foreign students, cantons will be in charge of their students. A constitutional amendment was passed by referendum in November 2004, which will empower federal authorities to set up minimal standards for student grants and harmonise cantonal regulations for tertiary education.

In General, efforts are required to reduce the heterogeneity of secondary education between cantons and raise overall student numbers. Also, public information about the Bologna process should become compulsory for schools and governmental offices.

## 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 has been established in all Swiss universities during the last decade. Continuing education programmes offered by universities of applied sciences ruled by federal law currently benefit from subsidies. In 2004, CRUS released recommendations for university diplomas in continuing education. Programmes must be structured according to four levels with minimal standards and requirements for each level (master of advanced studies: 60 ECTS, advanced studies diploma: 30 ECTS, certificate: 10 ECTS, short courses).

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

No national procedures for recognition of prior learning or flexible learning currently exist.

## 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***

Swiss university degrees are not awarded by the Confederation; there are therefore no major legal obstacles to the creation of joint degree programmes. Although drafting such programmes may need some revision of cantonal law the main requirements will be for time and expertise.

Since Swiss universities and their European partners are not free to fix their tuition fees, Swiss (outgoing) students, who are not paying the same tuition fees as EU students, are often discriminated against when participating in joint programmes. Another obstacle arises from the fact that cantonal law often does not allow portability of grants.

An additional factor that hampers the organisation of joint degree programmes including study periods at the partner institution is the late beginning and end of the academic year in Switzerland.

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

Interest in establishing joint study programmes has been steadily increasing over recent years, but the number of such programmes actually on offer is still limited although a few programmes are in the planning stage. Besides joint programmes with other European countries (so-called co-tutelles), a number of national joint study programmes also exist.

#### ***11.1.2. How have these programmes been organised?***

The main aspect of joint programmes is the mobility of students; generally, students attend at least some courses and often spend one or more semesters at the partner institution. In some cases common admission procedures have been established and joint exams organised. Some programmes also envisage teacher mobility.

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

All Swiss universities have established cooperation agreements with various universities (for instance within Socrates/Erasmus or so-called co-tutelle programmes offering common doctoral studies) or participate in university networks such as UNICA, IDEA League, UNITECH, AUF, EUCOR and CREPUQ.

**11.3. Describe how curriculum development reflects the European dimension**

Although efforts to promote the European dimension within curricula have been increasing during the last couple of years, some further development is desirable.

At the structural level, many universities or departments envisage “mobility windows”, i.e. at least one semester to be spent at another university, or, alternatively, a sufficient number of optional ECTS credits that could be obtained at a partner institution. With regard to foreign language policy, one university offers bilingual study programmes (French/German), whereas another institution explicitly promotes the use of other languages in addition to English.

At the programme level, measures include introducing courses or complete programmes in a foreign language, crediting competences earned in a modern European language, and allowing final theses to be undertaken in collaboration with European partners or with the industry. In addition, a number of programmes focus on European themes (e.g. management, law, European studies).

**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**

It could almost be argued that it would be paradoxical to promote the attractiveness of the EHEA in Switzerland. Swiss higher education institutions very much depend on Europe due to the country’s size and geographical position. In order to make up for the fact that the Confederation is not a member of the EU various measures are in place to ensure at least an indirect participation of Swiss institutions in EU higher education programmes.

Because the EHEA is of vital importance for Swiss institutions, particular attention is being paid to ensure that national Bologna regulations are internationally compatible.

**13. Concluding comments**

**13.1. Give a description of your national Bologna strategies**

The Bologna reform is considered to present an opportunity not only to enhance European compatibility and cooperation but, more importantly, it is firmly embedded in national legislative activities which will result in the restructuring of the entire educational sector to enable it to function more efficiently. It is also in line with long-term university strategies that focus on advancing the quality of teaching and learning and making Switzerland one of the outstanding educational areas of Europe. To this end, the universities have worked out a number of common rules for their renewal process. These are set out in their policy paper “*The Swiss University Landscape: strategy 2005–2015*”.

An important prerequisite for reaching these goals is higher education institutions’

autonomy. The right balance between national coherence and coordination on the one hand and requirements of individual institutions on the other has to be found. As a consequence, national regulations are kept to a minimum and institutions are relatively free to manage the reform process according to their specific situation and needs. At the same time, the rectors' conferences (universities and universities of applied sciences) accompany and oversee the national coordination across all types of institutions.

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

A distinctive feature of the Swiss higher education system is its variety of types of institutions and a corresponding division of responsibility between federal and cantonal bodies. National legal reforms are presently being undertaken in order to reduce this structural complexity and enhance coherence and efficiency across the entire tertiary education sector. In particular, it is intended to enable the Confederation to ensure national coherence on a sound constitutional basis. At the same time, however, such reforms must not lead to excessive centralisation and the strong regional ties of higher education institutions should not be loosened. Also, the diversity of types of institutions and of offers in higher education has to be maintained.

Financing of higher education will be another major challenge in the coming years. The Confederation and the cantons (both with and without universities) have to agree on a new mechanism and rules to fund universities. Moreover, if the goal of advancing the quality of teaching and learning is to be met, appropriate teacher-to-student ratios have to be ensured and adequate funding made available.