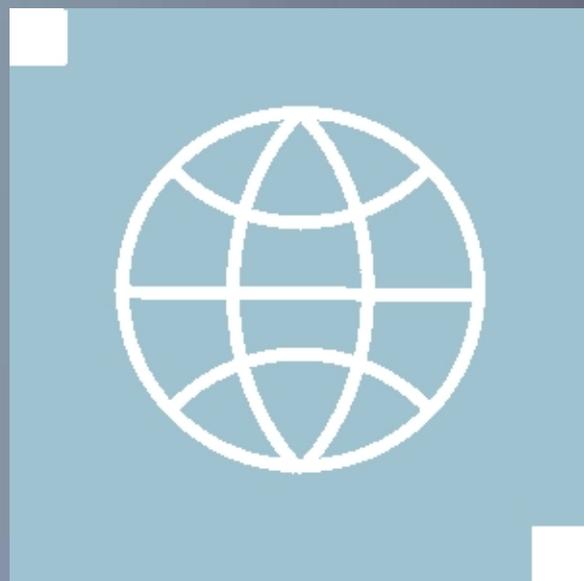


EUA Trends and learning structures in higher education reports series

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Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education (I)



by Guy Haug and Jette Kirstein

1999



Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education

by Guy Haug and Jette Kirstein

7 June 1999

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The report is the result of the studies undertaken and expresses the points of view of the authors and not those of the European Commission, the Confederation and the CRE.

Introduction

The report on the project, *Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education*, is hereby presented as a background paper for the Bologna Forum on 18-19 June 1999. The report comprises information on and analyses of current trends in higher education structures in the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area. The objective of the project has been to provide an *outline and overview of learning structures in higher education and a comparative analysis of the different systems embodying these structures*, thereby offering a tool to identify possible divergences and convergences in the national and institutional policies.

Background

At the Sorbonne Forum on 25 May 1998, the (then) Italian Minister, Prof. BERLINGUER, extended an invitation to fellow Ministers in charge of higher education in other countries to attend a follow-up meeting in Bologna in 1999. The Sorbonne Forum was organised in connection with the celebrations of the 800th anniversary of the University of Paris-Sorbonne, with the assistance of the French Conference of University Presidents (CPU). At this meeting the *Sorbonne Declaration* was adopted, and a "Joint Declaration on Harmonisation of the Architecture of the European Higher Education System" was signed by the four Ministers of France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom. Invitations to the Bologna Forum have been forwarded from the Italian Minister, Mr. Ortensio ZECCHINO, to Minister colleagues and from the Rettore F. ROVERSI-MONACO of the University of Bologna to higher education institutions and other stakeholders in higher education throughout Europe.

As part of the preparations for the planned Bologna Forum, the Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences undertook, in co-operation with the Association of European Universities (CRE), a project for the European Commission (DG XXII), on *Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education*.

The Project

The aim of the *Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education* project has been to provide an overview of structures throughout the European Union and the European Economic Area and an outline of areas of divergence and convergence within these learning structures.

The project has been composed of three major strands: *data collection, comparative analysis and validation of results and revision of report*. The project has been under constant time constraint and this has implied a limitation of the countries studied, to the EU and EEA countries. Another result of the time constraints has been that the two parts of the report, the structural overview and the comparative analysis, have not been combined into one single paper. As part of the follow-up to the project after the Bologna Forum, comments from the different stakeholders will be included and a second phase of the project will involve other European countries, notably countries seeking accession to the European Union.

The preparations for the Bologna Forum were discussed at an informal meeting of the EU Ministers of Education and at a meeting of Directors-General of Higher Education and Presidents of Rectors' Conferences of the Member States of the European Union, in October 1998 during the Austrian Presidency. A Steering Committee was established to assist in the preparations of the Bologna Forum, consisting of Directors-General of Higher Education of the following countries: Austria (Chair), Germany, Finland, and Italy, with representation from the French Ministry of Education and Rectors' Conference (CPU) and from the UK. The Steering Committee has also functioned as a sounding board for the project and has provided validation of preliminary project results. The role of the Steering Committee in the follow-up process of the project is of vital importance. The Confederation and the Association of European Universities have participated in Steering Committee meetings, as have the two experts, appointed by the two organizations to undertake the data collection and comparative analyses and syntheses.

As coordinator of the project, the Confederation would like to thank the two experts, Ms. Jette KIRSTEIN and Dr. Guy HAUG for their invaluable and untiring efforts, the results of which are now available. The Confederation would also like to thank the Steering Committee members who have con-

tributed with helpful validation and criticism. A special word of thanks is due to the organizations from whom important input has been obtained, in particular the national rectors' conference secretariats, the EURYDICE Office and the ACA Secretariat in Brussels, ESIB (the National Unions of Students in Europe) and the NARICs throughout the EU and EEA countries. The project would not have been possible without the financial support provided by the European Commission, and the Confederation would like to thank the European Commission for its financial contribution as well as for contributions to the project in the form of publications, documentation material and helpful comments.

Part I TRENDS AND ISSUES IN LEARNING STRUCTURES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE

(G.Haug)

The main purpose of this paper is to provide information and observations on the current structure, recent trends and possible avenues for change in the architecture of higher education systems in Europe. It should be seen both as a follow up document to the Sorbonne Declaration of May 1998 and an input to the Bologna meeting of ministers/governments and higher education representatives in June 1999.

A survey and discussion of the architecture of higher education systems covers by definition all the various types of higher education, even though some of the topics may be more specifically relevant for the sub-system of university education. While the focus is on member countries of the European Union (EU) and European Economic Area (EEA) the overall perspective within which trends and issues emerge in higher education is in many respects that of Europe as a whole.

Given the scope and complexity of the spectrum of issues to be covered, this report will not deal with the following items, even though they are an important and integral part of the overall architecture of higher education in Europe:

- European directives setting out specific rules for the preparation of, and access to, certain professions;
- structure of the curricula leading to these professions in the European Union.

Within the framework as set out above, this paper will try

- to map main areas of convergence and divergence in the structure of the various systems and sub-systems of higher education in Europe,
- to identify significant trends in Europe and the global environment which may have an effect on these structures,
- and to indicate possible ways towards greater convergence and effectiveness in the future.

HIGHER EDUCATION STRUCTURES: HOW CONVERGENT ARE THEY ?

Even more systems than countries in Europe

One of the key conclusions coming out of the survey carried out by Jette Kirstein (cf Part II of this document) as well as of other sources is that the overall picture of studies, curricula and degrees is indeed extremely complex and varied, as a consequence of major differences in such key factors as:

- type, breadth and duration of secondary education, with obvious consequences concerning age and preparation for further studies;
- the existence or not of sub-systems of higher education, their respective role and size and the relationship between them, in particular possibilities to transfer from one to the other;
- access into higher education (from open choice to various forms of selection and *numerus clausus* in all or some sectors);
- study fees (from gratuity to differential or generalised systems of tuition fee);
- huge differences in the organisation of studies in terms of calendar (from annual courses to block modules), choice (varying from set curricula to nearly free choice), frequency and type of examinations (continuous examinations, final exams per credit, or only block examination after several semesters of study);
- and of course, the structure, duration, number and type of degrees that can be earned.

A major conclusion is that comparisons between degrees and degree structure made within such an environment can only be meaningful within certain limits. They become irrelevant if the various factors shaping their existence in a given national system are ignored. In the pages that follow, many comparisons will nonetheless be made, always with this fundamental remark in mind, even though it will not be repeated.

Whether officially unitary or binary, the architecture of national systems can be extremely complex, with up to 100 different academic qualifications and very many different curricula linked by a variety of “bridges”. It is important to point out in this respect that a potential European framework of qualifications cannot be less complicated than the most complicated of the national systems.

No convergence around a strict “3-5-8” model

The Sorbonne Declaration recommends that studies should be organised in an undergraduate cycle leading to a first qualification and a graduate cycle leading to a master or doctoral degree, but it does not provide an indication on the duration of these cycles. An extensive debate has nonetheless taken place about this issue, based on the assertion in the Attali report to the French government about the existence (or emergence) of a (single) European model of higher education based on a sequence of studies and degrees of 3-5-8 years. A model strictly following this pattern does not exist.

There is little convergence around a first degree after 3 years.

No one country in Europe has such a system across the board in all sectors of higher education or all disciplines.

In the UK, while most bachelor degrees indeed take 3 years to complete, there are many which take longer (typically 4 years), especially (but not only) courses involving a period of work-based learning (sandwich model) or integrated study abroad (e.g. in modern languages). Nearly all degrees are now “Honours” (as opposed to “ordinary”) degrees; the difference is neither in duration nor in a significantly different profile of the curriculum; honours degrees include a thesis and can only be achieved with certain grades (as opposed to a simple pass/fail system). In some fields such as engineering, curricula lead straight to a master degree (M.Eng) with no intermediary bachelor. In Scotland, the first degree normally takes 4 years to complete and is usually called a bachelor degree (but in some cases, a master degree).

In Denmark and Finland, bachelor courses last are 3 years but do not exist in all fields. In other countries with bachelor degrees, their duration also varies between 3 and 4 years, e.g. in Ireland, Malta, Iceland, as well as in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Where bachelor studies are based on a credit system, students may influence the duration of their studies and finish in slightly less time than the normal duration of the curriculum, or extend their studies part time over a much longer period. The actual length of the programme is then best not expressed in terms of years or semesters, but in the number of credits that need to be acquired. With the development of part-time studies and life-long learning, this is bound to become more prominent in the debate about the structure of qualifications at national and European level.

As can be seen from the tables prepared by Jette Kirstein there are numerous study programmes, both at universities and at other institutions of higher education leading to a first degree after 4 years. This is also the case in many countries not included in the tables, e.g. for most Licences in Switzerland.

A very obvious phenomenon is that the duration of first degree studies (whether leading to a bachelor or not) varies significantly in many countries depending on the discipline (not mentioning medical studies which are longer everywhere), e.g. in Sweden, the Netherlands or Germany. Engineering, law or teacher training studies tend to be different from other disciplines. Even in systems where bachelor degrees have been introduced in other topics, certain curricula in engineering and technology lead straight to the master level (e.g. in Denmark, Finland, UK).

Moreover, it should be remembered that in most countries (e.g. Austria, Denmark, Germany, Italy, France, Greece and many others), there are huge differences between the official and the real duration of studies, with many students taking up to 7 years to complete a 4 or 5-year curriculum; comparisons based on the official duration of degrees and a possible alignment of systems on this basis would be meaningless if they were not combined with measures aimed at reducing the real duration to the theoretical duration of studies.

A final but very important observation about the first step in the 3-5-8 model is that it fails to pay attention to the large number of higher education students enrolled in short, sub-degrees studies of 1 or 2 years in various types of institutions, e.g. IUTs at French universities, Técnico Superior in Spain or HND courses at British Colleges of Further Education. The relationship between these studies and bachelor/master courses should be seen as an

integral part of the overall structure of higher education, especially in the perspective of the growing role for higher education in lifelong learning.

Many master level courses in Europe last about 5 years

Where master programmes are separated from undergraduate studies, their length varies from one to two years. In the UK many taught master programmes last only one year, while more research-based ones tend to be longer; yet, there is no direct link between the nature of the programme (taught, research, or often a combination of both) and its duration. Many other countries have longer, 2-year programmes, both for “professional” and “research” master degrees.

Nonetheless, and even bearing in mind the above observations concerning credit systems and the different lengths of studies depending on the discipline, there is a significant level of convergence in Europe around master level degrees achieved in a total of about 5 years, either in long curricula with no intermediate point of exit, or in a sequence organised in different ways: 4 years + 1, or 3 + 2, or sometimes 2 + 3 (at French *Grandes Ecoles*).

There are of course exceptions, some of them very specific (e.g. graduates of Oxford or Cambridge are awarded a master degree after a set period of time, without any additional study or examination) and others of a more general nature: the French *Maîtrise* can be completed in 4 years (the view is often held that the first “real” qualification in France is the *Maîtrise*, not the Licence) and, depending on their choices, British students can possibly add a one-year master programme to a 3-year bachelor course.

Long one-tier curricula of officially 5 years or slightly less or more are traditional in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy and until recently also prevailed in Sweden and Finland. In nearly all these countries, significant drop-out rates and the extension of studies well beyond the official duration have been observed, as will be noted later on.

There is no 8-year standard duration for doctoral studies

The comparison and recognition of doctoral studies and titles are not a problem area, at least not from the academic point of view. But there is no evidence that a Doctorate or Ph.D. normally takes 8 years: this is an area of high volatility, with actual duration varying more according to discipline than to national degree systems. A small number of countries have intermediate doctoral titles (with potentially misleading names such as *Lisencijaatti* in Finland or *M.Phil* in the UK) or have – especially in Central and Eastern Europe - a “higher doctorate” (or a “*habilitation*”) as the highest degree for an academic career.

There is, therefore, not much ground to conclude that European higher education systems should converge on a system where the 3 main levels of qualifications are earned after 3, 5 and 8 years of study. However, are there any external reasons for a move in this direction ?

Is there an “Anglo-Saxon” or US model ?

Among the fears heard in the debate about the value of a 3-5-8 model was the possibility that Europe might just import a foreign, “Anglo-Saxon” (and mainly American) model.

What the British and the US system, as well as those of the numerous countries which took inspiration from them (in the Commonwealth, all over Latin America and Asia and more recently in former communist countries) all share in common is a basic structure differentiating undergraduate and graduate studies. Their definition, organisation, content, respective role and size may be very different according to country and subject; the line of divide between them may be blurred and their articulation may be shifting. But the broad distinction between an undergraduate and a (post)graduate level is so widespread around the world that not also having it would make continental Europe an ever more isolated island of relative incompatibility. The Sorbonne Declaration was more than justified to promote a move in this direction.

Yet, a single “model” for the structure of courses and degrees does not exist and there is no established or generalised international standard. The growing diversity of British bachelor degrees and master courses has already been mentioned. What may be less well known is that the US system also features a great variety of curricula, degrees and lengths behind a seemingly standardised system.

A first important comment is that years or even semesters are not a helpful way to express the length of studies in the US. All courses are based on credits, and students can accelerate their studies in several ways (“advanced placement” while they are still in secondary education, extra courses per semester, summer studies). Contrary to Europe, tuition fees are based on the number of credits taken and are not calculated on a semester or annual basis.

Nearly one half of all US students do not study towards a bachelor degree but an “associate degree” in Arts, Science or Applied Science. They are enrolled at 2-year “community colleges” which are mainly vocational in orientation but open access to further studies at universities for a minority of their students, usually on the basis of a convention with a local university in the same state. Community colleges are an essential part of the US higher education system, and omitting them in transatlantic comparisons leads to gross misrepresentations.

There is a great variety of bachelor degrees in the US. Most are much less “professionalised” than their European counterparts and some of the most prestigious ones are those completed at independent Colleges of Liberal Arts which offer a 4-year general education curriculum in humanities and sciences. Degree holders can nonetheless enter the labour market (given better employment opportunities and different recruitment habits). The most prestigious universities would not recruit master students mainly from their own undergraduate programmes but preferably from Colleges or other universities. Professional studies in e.g. Law or Medicine start only after the bachelor level and lead to specific degrees. Master programmes last 2 years, and in some areas (e.g. management) the most prestigious ones are only accessible after an extended period of successful professional experience.

The US system is also changing. The problems inherent in the very flexible, “boneless” or “cafeteria” model have been recognised and most universities now offer more structured degrees based on a series of core courses and a more limited choice of electives; comprehensive essays or examinations have been re-introduced in many curricula. The value of broadly-based, long curricula is being acknowledged in areas such as engineering, where leading universities have designed “co-terminal” programmes leading after 5 years to the simultaneous award of a master and bachelor degree. Another major difference to (continental) Europe is that professional titles such as architect or engineer are usually conferred on graduates in relevant areas by professional bodies and only after a period of 3 to 5 years in professional life.

The main conclusion of these observations is that the US system has its own structure, logic, history and also its own weaknesses and difficulties. It exercises an influence on other systems in the world, including Europe, and is also influenced by features in the European system. Attempts to replicate parts of the system in Europe in isolation from their underlying educational and broader social infrastructure would be doomed. Europe needs to develop its own system(s) to suit its own needs - but of course not in isolation from world developments as was pointed out above.

MAIN TRENDS AFFECTING THE ARCHITECTURE OF EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS

Trend towards shorter studies

A major trend that can be noticed in many countries is towards the reduction of the real duration of studies. Denmark and Austria seem to disagree about who has the “slowest” students on earth, graduating after some 7-8 years from courses that last officially 5 years. A similar problem has long been reported from Germany, Italy or the Netherlands, and only about one third of students completing a French *Maîtrise* do so in just the planned 4 years.

Possible explanations suggested for this drift include:

- encyclopedic programmes
- graduate unemployment
- free education often combined with low motivation resulting from default choices for studies without any selection process at the entry
- part time work (an argument not very convincing in itself in the light of comparisons with the UK, the US or Ireland where most students finish on time).

Amongst the negative consequences of this phenomenon are :

- high drop-out rates, especially in the first years, as shown in surveys carried out by the OECD;
- late entry on the labour market (at the age of 28 or even 30 years), which is increasingly seen as a competitive disadvantage in the labour market when graduates from other systems start their career at the age of 22 or 23, when obsolescence of knowledge is quicker than ever and when employers see time management as an indicator of future performance;
- lack of attractiveness for foreign students;
- unnecessarily high costs for students/families and public resources;
- undemocratic aspects of systems where the sheer length of studies may discourage students from less favoured social backgrounds and constitutes a formidable obstacle for lifelong learners;
- additional difficulties to attract students to such areas as science and technology, where enrolments fell in many countries, resulting in foreseeable skill shortages in key economic sectors.

Governments in many countries have tackled this issue for more than a decade, but with increased determination in recent years. Their first efforts seem to have gone into bringing actual duration more in line with official duration, mainly through financial measures such as the limitation of the duration of grants (e.g. Germany, Netherlands, Denmark), their transformation into loans if the normal duration is exceeded by more than a year (Netherlands, Denmark), the exclusion of "late" students from the count on which state grants to institutions is based (Finland) or differential tuition fees for undergraduate and postgraduate studies (Ireland, or UK in a different way).

The attention paid by many governments in Europe to the development of a strong, competitive but shorter non-university sector, as well as the increasing shift of student enrolments towards this type of higher education, also point in the direction of shorter studies.

More recently, governments have articulated plans to reduce the theoretical duration of studies, and the attractiveness of models featuring shorter first qualifications followed by postgraduate studies for a smaller number of students has grown. The move towards bachelor and master degrees in countries where they are not traditional can also be explained in these terms.

A growing wave of new bachelor/master courses

Even though the phenomenon is far from generalised, there is currently an accelerating move in favour of the introduction of bachelor degrees in systems that hitherto had mainly, or only, long curricula with no exit point before the master level.

In addition to the UK and Ireland, two other countries introduced bachelor degrees in most subject areas a few years ago: Denmark in 1988, and Finland in stages after 1994. Both countries report that the reform was not really successful, with the vast majority of students continuing for the master degree and employers showing little interest in holders of a bachelor degree. In Denmark it was however observed that the reform led to a redistribution of students after the bachelor according to the areas of specialisation offered by universities other than their own.

In Germany an amendment to the federal law on higher education in 1998 allowed universities and *Fachhochschulen* located in interested *Länder* to set up new bachelor and master degrees. Bachelor courses may last from 6 to 8 semesters, and master courses from 2 to 4 semesters; when offered as consecutive steps in a long curriculum their aggregate duration cannot exceed a total of 10 semesters. New courses may replace traditional ones or run in parallel, but no additional public money is provided. Institutions are expected to arrange for students to finish on time. The law also provides for the introduction of a credit accumulation and transfer system. The system will be evaluated after 5 years.

A survey of the approximately 80 bachelor and master courses that were started in the autumn of 1998 shows that :

- most courses are in science and technology (while none in law and hardly any in humanities or social science, except management);
- most use English only or in various combinations with German;
- few explicitly refer to ECTS credits;

- whether offered as separate programmes or as consecutive steps of a long programme, most bachelors are in 6, and most masters in 4 semesters, with various possibilities to earn a German *Diplom* on top of the bachelor or master degree, often after an additional period of study;
- there is one rather non typical programme leading in 8 semesters to a *Fachhochschule* degree and simultaneously an American MBA.

The profiling of these new courses, the relationship they establish between the traditional German *Diplom* or *Magister* and bachelor and master degrees, the response from students enrolled in new and traditional programmes, and the attitude of employers should soon provide very interesting information on the future of two-tier courses in Germany.

The Austrian government has just finalised a draft amendment to the law on higher education which proposes a move along similar lines as in Germany: introduction of bachelor courses on a voluntary basis in replacement of existing curricula, bachelors in 3-4 years, but masters in 1 year except at universities of Arts, no extra funding.

In Italy, a major reform is in progress and includes the following measures:

- across-the-board introduction of a “short” *laurea* after 3 years and a new “specialised *laurea*” after 2 more years;
- introduction of a generalised system of credits;
- creation of evaluation agencies in 5 broad disciplinary fields to assess the teaching performance of universities, with financial consequences on the amount of the state grant to institutions.

In France, the bachelor and master levels should be “underlined” in the existing multilayer system of national *diplômes*, but without a quality review and a revamp of the underlying curricula - except that a “*professional licence*” aimed at providing an more effective access to the labour market after theoretically only 3 years should be introduced.

Several countries in Central/Eastern Europe have also introduced bachelor and master degrees as part of the reform of their higher education systems.

In many other countries, the possibility for institutions to create bachelors and/or masters exists and has been used to various extents. In Norway, international curricula taught in English exist as a separate educational line. In Sweden, national degrees are translated into English and presented as appropriate as a bachelor or a master degree.

After the introduction of the various reforms described above, only a few countries in the EU/EEA area seem not to have, or not to be experimenting with two-tier curricula (Greece, Netherlands).

Blurring of boundaries between university and non-university sectors

In several countries with a binary system of higher education, the boundaries between the university and non-university sub-systems are more and more blurred as a result of a whole series of changes in the higher education landscape:

- in several countries (e.g. Belgium (Fl), the Netherlands or Denmark) students enrolled at universities are now in the minority, and in many others growth in the non-university sector is stronger;
- new laws covering the whole of higher education were passed to submit all institutions to the same rules (as in Sweden, or the new Polish law), or to create common bodies for such purposes as evaluation (e.g. Portugal) or comprehensive qualification frameworks (Scotland);
- German *Fachhochschulen* and Dutch *Hogescholen* have been officially authorised to call themselves University of Applied Science/of Professional Studies in their international publications and dealings;
- through international cooperation agreements, many institutions opened for their students study possibilities that were not easily accessible at home because of regulatory limitations (e.g. where a *Fachhochschule* student earns a British master degree which can then be used to gain access to doctoral studies at a German university);

- the possibilities have increased in most countries to transfer credits or otherwise get recognition from universities for studies completed in the non-university sector (in particular direct access to master or doctoral studies);
- non-university institutions have been authorised to offer full degrees (e.g. *licençados* at Portuguese *Politecnicos*), masters (as planned in the Netherlands) or Ph.D. programmes (Sweden, Norway);
- in several countries, small specialised colleges have been merged into more comprehensive, bigger institutions, more able to gain visibility and compete regionally or internationally.

While some countries have confirmed their interest in keeping a binary system (e.g. Ireland), the question of its eventual transformation into a unitary system comprising different types of institutions of equal status is being debated in several others. Growing competition for students, status and money is likely to increase pressures in this direction, with obvious consequences for the overall architecture of higher education systems and qualification frameworks.

Credit systems gain ground around ECTS

A growing number of countries and institutions have adopted or are adopting (Germany, Italy, Swiss universities) credit systems for the transfer and, to a lesser extent, for the accumulation of academic credits. Over two thirds of all EU/EEA countries apply credit systems, either introduced by national law or by agreement between the institutions themselves. Notable exceptions are France, Austria, Belgium (Fr) and Greece.

All existing systems are seen as compatible with ECTS, although with some reservations in the case of Spain and Portugal where credits are based on contact hours rather than student work load as in ECTS. The new Italian system should be per cent in line with ECTS and should also favour the development of credit-rated lifelong learning activities. In all systems the transfer of credits remains the responsibility of the institution to which the student applies.

As could be expected, the move towards credits goes together with a move towards a system of 2 semesters as the main organisation of the academic year. With the exception of Spain, all EU/EEA countries use semesters as their main or only system, although not always in the same way (as evidenced by e.g. the Italian “compact semesters” which correspond to an annual course condensed in one semester) or not always in a format compatible with international standards.

Efforts are being developed in several countries, notably in the UK (CATS, SCOTCATS) to work out credit accumulation and transfer systems covering academic as well as vocational institutions.

More autonomy, more evaluation

In many cases, there is a marked movement towards a greater autonomy of universities, and in some cases of other institutions of higher education as well. Recent laws in Austria, Italy, Finland or Poland all go in this direction, even though university autonomy still means very different things in different countries, for instance with respect to rules concerning the utilisation of state grants, staff management, the possibility or not to select students, raise tuition fees or award degrees, etc.

At the same time, this movement has been accompanied by the inception of new, more stringent or more detailed procedures for quality assurance and evaluation. In some cases, a single system of evaluation covers all sectors of higher education (e.g. in Portugal or the UK). The new Italian agency is planned to cover both research (as before) and teaching (new) and will be assisted by 5 more specialised bodies for each of the broad fields of disciplines that have been identified. The new agency arranged in Germany at the KMK will accredit the new bachelor/master courses in cooperation with regional and specialised (subject-based) agencies. The Netherlands is also planning a new, independent accreditation agency.

Results of evaluation of the teaching performance of institutions tend to be more and more taken into account for the calculation of the amount of state grants to institutions.

Mounting challenges from overseas

Higher education in Europe is confronted with a new environment marked by globalisation, new communication technologies, English as a *lingua franca*, increased competition and growing commercialisation.

The most visible consequence of these trends is the rapid emergence of a whole new educational sector alongside the traditional, national, state-regulated and often free higher education in European countries:

- foreign/overseas universities increasingly recruit paying students in Europe; it has not been sufficiently noticed that in the early 1990s for the first time, the number of Europeans studying in the USA exceeded the number of American students in Europe, a trend which has been accentuated in the meantime and may well continue, as American universities increase their marketing efforts in Europe as a response to the Asian and Latin American crises;
- foreign universities open branch campuses in European countries, either under the direct control of the home university, or via a franchising agreement with a local institution in Europe; students may sometimes earn the foreign degree without leaving their country, or they must move abroad to finish their studies and earn the degree;
- the offer of distance education originating overseas increases rapidly; some is produced by established open universities, some by commercial providers (like the University of Phoenix, which is in the process of opening a series of delivery points in major European cities), this kind of transnational education may well be booming in the years ahead, with the development of lifelong learning delivered in modules through small, private institutions in many countries in Europe.

The recent and potential growth of this new educational sector has been largely ignored by universities and governments alike in Europe. Yet there must be reasons for its expansion, over and beyond the fact that transnational education is usually in English. Transnational education is often based on professional marketing of a type unknown to the vast majority of (continental) European universities, and on educational packages combined with good quality services for accommodation and computer equipment. But at a deeper level, there are may well be more unpleasant explanations, such as the unflattering opinion which many foreign students seem to have of service and attention to student needs in Europe, or the willingness of European students to pay abroad for something they feel they do not get at home.

Transnational education has become an important export commodity. The estimated contribution of foreign students to the US economy is US\$ 7.5 billion in 1998. This represents a formidable and growing challenge to Europe, from two different perspectives:

- most universities and governments in Europe are very poorly prepared to compete in this new world market and most do not compete at all; a growing awareness of these developments and of the diminishing attractiveness of Europe as a destination for students and scholars from the world is an important motive underpinning the Sorbonne Declaration and reforms in countries like Germany; the development of new curricula, understandable credit systems and framework qualifications may contribute to improving the situation;
- transnational education raises a whole series of issues related to quality control and recognition issues, both for education originating from within Europe and from non-European providers. These issues are still absent from political agendas.

POSSIBLE WAYS INTO THE FUTURE

The purpose of this section is to identify areas for action and priorities which may foster the desired convergence and transperance in the structure of qualifications in Europe.

Conditions for meaningful bachelor degrees

- The introduction of bachelor degrees should not be a simple re-labelling or re-packaging of existing programmes, but correspond to the development of new curricula or of the qualitative improvement of existing courses.
- They should open real possibilities on the European labour market, and for this purpose be broadly based, prepare students to a way of reasoning and learning, whether their main emphasis is scientific, professional or technological.

- Bachelor degrees with such differentiated profiles could be offered by universities as well as other higher education institutions.
- Higher education institutions should be interested in the successful completion of bachelor programmes within the allowed period of time. Low dropout and failure rates should be considered as important performance indicators.
- All bachelors should open the possibility to access to postgraduate studies, but not all applicants should be automatically accepted.
- Postgraduate studies which are in a different subject, a different institution, or a different country and language as those of the bachelor studies, should be specifically encouraged – especially for students who spend a substantial period in professional life before starting studies towards a master degree; this would contribute to diversifying profiles and would facilitate cross-fertilisation between students from different backgrounds;
- New bachelor and master degrees should be accredited, both nationally and also, where possible, by independent, disciplined-based bodies at a European level (cf infra, section on evaluation in subject areas). In most cases, new bachelors and masters will co-exist with traditional degrees and diplomas which have been known and accredited for a long time, and their development would no doubt be impeded in case they were not accredited.
- Students should be properly informed of what is expected or required of them.
- Employers should be encouraged to hire bachelors and should therefore be properly informed and associated to the development and evaluation process.

If the above conditions were encouraged by authorities, it should be possible to limit the main risks associated with the introduction of new degrees, which could be summarised as follows:

- new names without qualitative change/improvement, leading to situations where new bachelor degrees would be seen nothing more than an intermediary step in traditional, long studies;
- even longer studies, in case bachelor degrees do not open real employment possibilities or are seen as a second-best choice by those who cannot gain admission to postgraduate studies;
- more confusion and complexity resulting from the addition of new degrees to an already long and complex list of qualifications, especially if the two sets of qualifications are not clearly separated or co-exist too long.

A common, but flexible frame of reference for qualifications

A rigid, uniform model (like the 3-5-8model) is neither desirable nor feasible in the European higher education environment.

A survey of existing systems in Europe and elsewhere seems to point instead to an architecture based on 4 steps corresponding to various entry levels into professional life or to progress steps in studies: (the lengths indicated should be understood as corresponding to the normal duration needed to accumulate the necessary number of academic credits to reach the corresponding level):

- sub-degree level: about 2 years
- degree level (bachelor): no less than 3, no more than 4 years
- master level: about 5 years in higher education
- doctoral level: about 8 years in higher education.

Such a frame of reference, which allows for flexibility and can accommodate the needs of particular disciplines or countries, would be nonetheless in line with the common goals and similar format of reforms in progress. It would offer the following positive features:

- inclusion of sub-degree studies into the overall frame, with enhanced possibilities of transfer of relevant credits towards further study in a global lifelong system;
- possibility to organise bachelors in 3 or 4 years; 4-year courses are common in many countries in Europe, more compatible with national regulations which reserve access to certain positions to holders of an academic degree, and allow for more diversified curricula in legal, scientific or technological fields that need to start with the

acquisition of a broad theoretical basis. Time for practical work, research projects or a language component could in certain cases be added to basic 3-year bachelor degrees.

- In a small number of disciplines or at a small number of institutions, curricula leading straight to the master level could be accommodated;
- the average duration of bachelors may change with time, as a response to factors pushing in opposite directions; tradition, tuition-free systems, recruitment habits may for temporarily point towards 4-year courses, while the pressure to reduce public spending, the development of lifelong learning or the competition for students may point towards 3-year bachelors.

Another interesting aspect is that such a frame would be in line with the proposal put forward in the Dearing report for the UK, which distinguishes the following levels and corresponding ECTS credits:

Sub-degree:	Certificate	(60 ECTS credits)
	Diploma	(120 ECTS credits)
Degree level:	Bachelor	(180 ECTS credits)
	Honours	(240 ECTS credits)
Postgraduate:	Master	(300 ECTS credits)
	Ph.D.	(--).

The re-separation of degree studies into (ordinary) bachelor and honours levels in this model provides an easy correspondence to the 3 or 4 year courses mentioned earlier on.

With such a template for degrees/qualifications, institutions or countries could locate their own degrees at the appropriate level, thus fully respecting the authority of governments and the autonomy of institutions while at the same time using common references.

A certain alignment in vocabulary would be desirable in order to avoid obvious discrepancies (e.g. *licence* in 3 years in France and 4 years in Belgium and Switzerland) and designations that may be misleading (e.g. *licence* designating a level other than a first degree). More subtle differences (e.g. between a M.Sc. in Engineering and a M.Eng) could also be addressed in due time. The work of the British QAA aiming at a clearer definition of postgraduate studies and qualifications could be used as a starting point for such an exercise.

ECTS also as a credit accumulation system

The current version of ECTS is mainly a credit transfer system which has been developed in the wake of the EU programmes for cooperation and mobility in higher education. Its additional use for the purpose of credit accumulation at higher education institutions could help to mobilise the potential in Europe for more flexibility, diversity and efficiency. It would also ease increased mobility and make European higher education more understandable to students (and employers) from elsewhere (most credit accumulation systems currently in use in the world have been adopted or adapted from the US credit system, a fact which has in no small measure contributed to the massive enrolments of students from these countries in the US).

Over time, the widespread use of ECTS as a European credit accumulation and transfer system could lead to the emergence of a system that:

- would be applicable to all sectors of higher education (along the British CATS model which increasingly also covers further education);
- would cover all forms of learning: full or part-time as well as lifelong learning, coursework as well as independent essays, internships or previously acquired knowledge;
- would allow transfers across the whole of Europe, with recognition given for equivalent (rather than identical) learning abroad;
- would accommodate a diversity of highly structured as well as more free-choice curricula;
- would ease responsiveness to various student needs and changing employment profiles;
- would be compatible with a European framework of qualifications as outlined above;
- and would fully respects the autonomy of institutions (no obligation to recognise, except within the framework of freely entered exchange agreements).

Although credits are based on theoretical study times, credit systems can contribute to reducing the real duration of studies as well as the failure rate.

ECTS is able to handle the variety of grading systems in use in Europe. These should be kept and a simple pass/fail system (i.e. a system not recognising different levels of performance) should be avoided.

Given the still limited experience of most higher education teachers and administrators with credit systems in general and with ECTS in particular, the arrangement of short information and training seminars would be useful in order to dissipate misconceptions as well as fears and avoid distortions in the development of the system .

The European dimension of quality assurance and evaluation in subject areas

The introduction of new curricula and a frame of reference for qualifications will increase the need for quality assurance without boundaries and comparative evaluation of curricula and learning in Europe.

European dimension in quality assurance

In recent years, more and more countries have introduced quality assurance agencies, either governmental or independent, either covering the whole spectrum of higher education or only part of it. The debate about what a degree should mean and what guarantees it should provide to learners and stakeholders (“graduateness”) has been first launched in Britain and has spread to other countries. It reflects the shift in focus from inputs (programmes, teaching) to outputs (knowledge and competencies, learning). While it is essential to maintain and even stimulate diversity of learning possibilities in terms of goals, profile, content and methods, there is also a need for convergence in quality assurance standards and procedures as well as for information and data sharing across Europe. The appointment of experts from other European countries to the commissions of national quality assurance agencies, as well as to peer review teams visiting universities, would be easy to implement and provide information of a qualitatively different type. Independent quality assurance agencies should be increasingly encouraged to work in as European networks.

Subject-based evaluation at European level

Over and above this, there a pressing need to develop another type of evaluation based not on national systems or institutions but on subjects areas, disciplines or professions. A missing element in Europe is that institutions do not have independent European bodies to which they could turn for evaluation of their curricula non biased by national stakes.

There is a need in Europe to filling this vacuum and to create a number of agencies which:

- would include representatives from relevant higher education institutions and networks;
- would be independent from national as well as European authorities;
- would set minimal (or “threshold”) standards for a discipline or range of disciplines; quality is easier to measure, and quality improvement is easier initiated, at the level of subjects than at whole institutions;
- would award quality labels based on European standards, and not distorted by national league tables; this would correspond to a type of independent “accreditation” with no binding consequences for authorities;
- would publish the list of courses or degrees who satisfied the requirements;
- would inform unsuccessful applicants of the deficiencies explaining their rejection,
- would not establish rankings or league tables.

New bodies of this type could draw on the work of existing or future European-wide disciplinary networks, from where they could also draw part of their experts. Such European networks have an important role to play and should be supported by institutions and authorities in their efforts:

- to compare existing curricula and learning paths; meaningful comparison and mapping of curricula are only possible at the level of a discipline; comparative surveys of curricula would sometimes show that what is deemed impossible in one country already exists in another;
- to disseminate information on study possibilities in Europe in each field of specialisation;
- and to help determine the core knowledge and competencies which learners should acquire for entry and success in the European labour market (the debate about “graduateness” has shown that this is significantly easier and more productive on a discipline than on an institutional basis).

An example of how subject-based evaluation can be developed on a European scale is given the EQUIS initiative in the area of business and management studies. EQUIS was developed independently and on a fully volun-

tary basis by a network of higher education institutions working in cooperation with industry. It has the following objectives:

- to provide an instrument for comparison and benchmarking;
- promote a shared vision of quality standards in full respect of diversity;
- accelerate quality improvement throughout Europe;
- provide market information;
- establish an accreditation process through the award of a European Quality Label. A number of leading management schools have already gone through the process and won EQUIS accreditation; other applicants have been informed of the improvements they would need to make in order to qualify.

EQUIS could be seen as an example of what could constitute the second, still under-developed pillar of evaluation and accreditation in Europe. Next to national systems dealing mainly with institutional evaluation and accreditation, European-wide, independent subject-based evaluation should emerge as an essential constituent part of the European higher education landscape.

The much needed move in this direction at the European level would only benefit from the development of similar independent, subject based accreditation agencies in the countries of Europe. There are encouraging initiatives in this direction in Italy (where specialised agencies are planned in 5 broad subject areas) and Germany (where the new accreditation agency for bachelors/masters will approve independent regional agencies for programmes in one or several *Länder* as well as specialised agencies e.g. for engineering programmes). The Netherlands also has plans for an independent accreditation agency.

New learning opportunities in Europe

Credit systems, an understandable framework of qualifications, increased quality assurance with a stronger European dimension, and an increasingly more European labour market would provide a whole range of new and more flexible learning opportunities benefiting all students, whether fulltime, part time or lifelong learner, whether mobile or studying at home, whether for study, an internship or employment for graduates. Mobility would be structurally eased and should become more rewarding from a qualitative point of view.

Student mobility programmes should nonetheless be further developed to stimulate and guide access to these new learning opportunities, and access to grants should be made simpler for students. The flexibility allowed by credit systems should allow a greater variety of study abroad profiles, especially for students not participating in exchange programmes during their initial studies who could nonetheless keep their credits for the purpose of resuming studies in a different country at a later stage.

New forms of mobility for teachers and administrative staff at higher education institutions should be encouraged and receive support, especially for the development of the European dimension (including the European labour market dimension) of new curricula as they are developed, and for the collaborative work within the framework of subject-based networks.

A role for short master courses

As mentioned earlier, European institutions should consider the setting up of short (1 year worth of credits) master degrees (taught in English where appropriate, possibly by teams of teachers from different countries); students who received their bachelor degree from an institution in one country should be specifically encouraged to do their master studies at another institution in another country. This type of sequential (or vertical) mobility - as opposed to the integrated or horizontal mobility promoted by existing programmes - could make a decisive contribution towards such important goals as:

- the consolidation of the new bachelor/master sequence;
- the provision of a good basis for credit accumulation and transfer;
- the diversification of the profile of students arriving on the labour market;
- the emergence of a new type of graduates fit for the European labour market with degrees from two countries and extensive first-hand experience in another country;
- quality improvement through comparison and internationalisation.
- making study in Europe more attractive to overseas students that currently enrol predominantly at US (though also British or Australian) universities; being internationally competitive on the postgraduate sector is particularly important, as the demand is high (the proportion of foreign students at US universities is 3 times higher for postgraduate than undergraduate studies) and future leaders – whom it would be important to attract to European universities in higher numbers- are to be found mostly at this level.

An increased role for NARICs/ENICs

The role of the network of centres for the recognition of foreign degrees and studies (NARIC/ENIC network) will become even more important than before; their cooperation in sharing data, comparing methods and procedures and disseminating information should be encouraged and supported. Active support should also be given to the issuing and use of the Diploma Supplement, which provides - in a standardised way - information on the content, character and level of a particular qualification. The application of the Lisbon convention on the recognition of foreign qualifications should also help bring about new impetus for mobility.

Counselling with a European dimension

The survey of the first years of “tertiary education” carried out by the OECD, as well as a impressive number of national enquiries and reports, have shown the essential role of information and counselling, and the severe consequences when students enter study courses which they have not chosen or are confronted with requirements they did not expect or cannot meet. It has also been shown that insufficient information and family support – when it is not counterbalanced by some kind of psychological encouragement from professional advisors – is a major obstacle for students (both fulltime and lifelong learners) from less privileged social backgrounds.

A recent survey carried out by ESIB and its member student unions has shown that the majority of students do not think that the studies they are pursuing in their country prepare them for employability on a European labour market. This represents a challenge both for educators and for counsellors.

Additional efforts should be made both at European, national and institutional level to raise the level of information to students and ensure a better fit between expectations of the institutions and their students. The same applies concerning employment or internship opportunities in other countries.

The development of this essential dimension of a European space for higher education – and employment - would need to be treated as a strategic priority. This would involve in particular:

- an effort to produce and disseminate information and databases that can be directly used by counsellors and students;
- a concerted plan to train counsellors and career advisers to the European dimension in education and training (far beyond the dissemination of information on existing programmes like ERASMUS).

WHAT KIND OF EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION SPACE ?

The European space for higher education which should be built up in the years ahead should be characterised by key attributes which could serve as guideline principles. The key words should be:

- quality: reforms concerning credit systems or degree structures cannot substitute efforts to improve and guarantee quality in curricula, teaching and learning;
- mobility: the most powerful engine for change and improvement in higher education in Europe has come and will come from growing awareness of alternative approaches and best practice in other countries;
- diversity: measures not respecting the fundamental cultural, linguistic and educational diversity in Europe could jeopardise not only the progress already made, but the perspective of continuing convergence in the future;
- openness: higher education must be developed within a European framework but at the same time in a world-wide perspective based on competition and cooperation with other regions in the world.

Guy HAUG
7 June 1999

An analysis of the Sorbonne Declaration of 25 May 1998 (What it says, what it doesn't) is provided as an annex to this report.

An executive summary and a list of references (documents, interviews) and persons who were kind enough to contribute information, opinions or comments for this report will be added before the Bologna meeting of 18 June.

PART II Information on Learning Structures in Higher Education in the EU/EEA Countries

(J.Kirstein)

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References

This study has been based primarily on information from written sources such as the "Guide to higher education systems and qualifications in the EU and EEA countries", web page information from Eurydice and the individual countries as well as on information collected from national rectors' conferences, national NARIC offices and other sources in the spring of 1999. The interpretation of the information and its presentation are, however, solely the responsibility of the author. Unfortunately, generalisations and simplifications seem unavoidable when explaining national higher education systems in a condensed way while at the same time allowing for comparisons. I should be happy to receive remarks, corrections and supplementary information on the presentation for an improved final version.

Copenhagen, 7 June 1999

Jette Kirstein (e-mail: jk@rks.dk)

Information on learning structures in higher education in the EU/EEA countries

1. Introduction

This study merely intends to give a fairly condensed and concentrated outline of some of the main trends of the higher education systems in the EU/EEA countries, illustrating the present institutional structures as well as national frameworks of higher education qualifications. Information will also be provided on other aspects of importance for discussions on mobility, transparency and convertibility such as credit and recognition systems, quality assurance, tuition fees and some of the more practical arrangements such as the organisational framework of the academic year and international student and career guidance possibilities. The study shows not only diversification of the systems, in many ways rooted in the national traditions of a specific country, but also some major common tendencies. Furthermore, major efforts seem to be used to, on the one hand, preserve the cultural diversity of a specific educational system and, on the other hand, promote international co-operation, mobility and European/international employability of students and the international competitiveness of European higher education institutions.

Summing up, comprehensive information on all these extensive and diversified developments can only give a glimpse of what is emerging in higher education in Europe. Furthermore, it should be noted that any comparison of higher education systems and identification of common trends can only be considered as fairly simplifying generalisations. Thus, further information has to be sought in more extensive descriptions and comparative analyses and publications on the various education systems; special reference is made to the European Commission publication "A guide to higher education systems and qualifications in the EU and EEA countries and Eurydice publications", cf. references.

2. National frameworks for higher education institutions and qualifications

2.1. Diversification of institutions

Looking world-wide into the institutional structures of the various higher education systems, one sees a highly diversified system. But two different tendencies prevail:

- 1) A so-called *unitary* or comprehensive system where most higher education is catered for by universities or university-like institutions, offering both general academic degrees and more professionally oriented programmes of various length and level.
- 2) A so-called binary or dual system with a *traditional university sector* based more or less on the Humboldt university concept and a separate and distinct *non-university higher education sector*.

The developments towards a more comprehensive university system as well as the development of a strong non-university higher education sector have introduced a broader definition of the concept of a university distinct from the traditional continental European definition of a

university as an institution with intensive co-operation and co-ordination between teaching and learning and self-contained academic progression in studies, leaving a high degree of learning to individual studies.

In *the unitary system*, the study programmes offered are often much more diversified in level, character and academic and theoretical orientation than in traditional universities in a binary system. Many programmes are fairly professionally oriented with periods of practice. This system has so far been dominant in Anglo-American countries like the UK and USA and in a few other countries which have adopted similar higher education systems, e.g. Sweden. However, characteristics of unitary systems can also be found in a few other countries with different educational traditions as e.g. Spain and Italy.

The binary systems of some countries have so far entailed a fairly clear difference between universities offering the theoretically and research-based programmes and the non-university institutions offering high level professionally oriented programmes. However, in many countries the differences are becoming less obvious due to on the one hand a growing academic development in the non-university sector, also in the postgraduate and applied science field, and on the other hand universities' growing involvement in covering more professionally oriented activities.

The major objectives behind the establishment of professionally oriented higher education institutions parallel to the university sector seem to be very similar in most countries, viz.

- to offer more professionally oriented and vocationally/economically relevant types of education in order to meet a labour market demand for such candidates
- to cater for a growing number of higher education applicants without substantially increasing governmental expenditure for higher education
- to cater for non-traditional groups of students in a more innovative manner
- to offer primarily teaching oriented programmes with some use of applied research
- to upgrade existing vocationally oriented post-secondary education.

Germany was one of the first countries to introduce a distinct higher education sector with its own goals and mission alongside the universities - the *Fachhochschulen* - already in the 70-ies. Austria, Belgium, Finland and the Netherlands are some of the countries that have followed.

The UK, on the other hand, had a binary system until 1991 where it was partly given up and polytechnics were given the status of universities. This process was due to various developments in society and in both sectors which made the differences between universities and polytechnics more and more unclear and indistinguishable

The present trend seems to be that most countries (e.g. Austria, B (NL), B (Fr), Finland, Germany and Ireland) which have or are developing a distinct binary system want to keep it, but with a clear intention to build on the specific qualities and characteristics of each sector as well as to establish more flexibility, interlinkages and co-operation between the sectors. In a few other countries there seems to be a tendency to an even closer cooperation and integration of the two sectors. (e.g. Norway).

An OECD report on redefining tertiary education makes the same observations about a growing diversity in European higher education systems and states that it is less important whether

countries have a unitary or a binary structure than that learners be provided with a diversity of learning structures, pathways and programmes sufficiently interrelated to permit ready movement between them. Furthermore, the report recommends that credit transfer systems as well as the articulation of programmes and institutions be strengthened. The latter seems to be very important allowing for fair assessment of a degree regardless of its origin from a university or a non-university institution. One of the major obstacles to recognition today is that nationally as well as internationally non-university degrees sometimes have difficulties in being recognised or getting credits if recognition is sought in relation to a university degree.

Annex I and tables 1 and 2 describe in more detail the present higher education structures in the EU/EEA countries with indication of some major developments.

2.2. Non-official and/or international/transnational higher education

Another observation concerning diversification relates to the development of more and more non-official, private or international institutions and/or qualifications.

The various types and forms of private and international qualifications are growing, and lack of information on the official status of an institution or qualification in the country of “origin” often makes it difficult to recognise or place them in the context of national qualifications. It seems important when discussing a common framework of qualifications to find ways to incorporate these types of qualifications. There seems to be a tendency to doubt automatically the quality of a non-official/transnational qualification because of the existence of a number of not very serious institutions. This creates difficulties and it seems important to find ways to make a differentiation and to establish quality control mechanisms.

There are few data on the number and different types of non-official educational offers in different countries as by nature they do not belong to a national system and consequently are not registered in the same way as national qualifications. The European countries have very different types of legislation concerning the establishment and recognition procedures of these institutions. However, several national as well as international initiatives seem to be under way to cope with this development and to find ways to establish some kind of international regulations or quality control.

In 1998 a study was carried out by Panthion University of Social and Political Sciences, Greece, on non-official education in Europe. The report deals with the growing evidence throughout the European Union, and southern European countries in particular, of the increasing non-formal educational provision at tertiary level and with the lack of adequate mechanisms of regulation and transparency in quality assurance and quality control as well as lack of criteria for establishing parity of the titles awarded with those of the formal higher education system in each country.

Within the framework of the Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES two different working parties have been established to investigate various aspects of transnational qualifications: One working party has prepared recommendations on international access qualifications, and another has been set up to deal with the issues of quality and assessment of non-official and transnational education and to propose guidelines for the recognition of qualifications granted by these types of institutions.

In the UK, which is one of the major European providers of transnational qualifications, a code of good practice and quality control procedures has been agreed upon by the higher education institutions and the national Quality Assurance Agency.

2.3. National higher education qualification frameworks and structures

Along with the growing diversification of the institutional structures of higher education a parallel development is taking place concerning diversification of the types of degrees and qualifications offered by the various educational establishments.

The traditional differentiation between the “continental European” degree structure with fairly long, academically integrated university studies (one-tier) and the “Anglo-American” degree structure with shorter first degrees and many post-graduate possibilities often based on a more module-based system (two-tier) is being blurred.

In the university sector there is a push - most clearly from the political side - for the establishment of short and medium cycle university qualifications (first degree/bachelor level).

In some countries the shorter degree types have been/are being established in/integrated into the national degree structure (as e.g. in Denmark, Finland, Italy and Portugal). In other countries a system is being/has been established alongside the traditional degree structure (as e.g. in Germany and the Netherlands).

Also in the non-university sector, continuous diversification of the qualifications offered is taking place. Many new undergraduate programmes are being established to meet new labour market needs in specific professional fields, and at the same time a great variety of postgraduate courses are being developed either as part of ordinary programmes or as programmes aimed at recurrent education activities. These may lead to national or joint and double degrees. Non-university institutions which do not have the right to offer master’s programmes in their own right may enter into co-operation with foreign institutions which have this opportunity, thus being able to offer their students international master’s programmes.

So far non-university higher education institutions do not seem to be offering doctoral degrees in their own right, but this does not always exclude non-university candidates from passing on to a doctoral programme. In some countries non-university candidates may gain access to a doctoral (PhD) programme at a university either direct (e.g. Norway and the Netherlands) or through a kind of bridging course (e.g. Austria and Germany). In Norway, a few non-university institutions are seeking the right to offer research training and to award doctoral degrees.

In general, the growing diversification is considered an asset for higher education systems both in a national and in an international context. However, a price to be paid for the increased diversification has to some extent been a lack of transparency of the qualification structure of a given country and difficulties in the mutual recognition of qualifications, due to the growing number of different levels and variations in the contents of qualifications. Therefore the increasing diversification calls for other instruments which can further understanding of and information on qualifications, e.g. credit systems such as the ECTS and the Diploma Supplement to make diplomas more transparent. Cf. section 4.

Annex I and table 2 illustrate, tentatively, the degree framework and major qualifications of the EU/EEA countries according to length and types of institutions/institutional affiliations (university/non-university). It should be noted that neither the length of qualifications nor the type of institution/institutional affiliation say much about the level of the qualification, its contents and the learning outcomes. Degree titles also vary considerably and often they do not by themselves give an explicit indication of the type and character of a specific qualification. Thus they need to be put into the national framework of qualifications to be understood. Ideally comparison of qualifications should therefore not be done according to years of study but according to learning outcomes, predefined standards of learning and acquired competencies.

3. Access and admission requirements

By and large *access* to higher education (*access* meaning general eligibility for higher education programmes) is in all countries subject to the completion of twelve to thirteen years of prior schooling. In a few countries there are slight differences in the required length of secondary education programmes giving access to respectively university and to non-university programmes (e.g. in Germany and the Netherlands). Furthermore, there are major differences in the actual requirements for being *admitted* to a programme (obtaining a study place). In some countries (e.g. Austria, Belgium, France and Germany) applicants with final secondary school qualifications have free access most university programmes, in other countries admission is fairly or highly competitive depending on, e.g., a special combination of the secondary school leaving examination subjects and whether other requirements are also being met, e.g. as to the level of the subjects studied and the grades obtained. Still, others admit students according to special national (Greece) or institutional (Finland) entrance examinations. In most countries, there is a difference in admission requirements between different types of institutions or different institutions, e.g. in France where the Grandes Ecoles are very selective, whereas there is nearly free access to university studies. Admission to the IUTs is also limited in numbers. In other countries or in specific fields in some countries special entrance examinations are needed.

Some countries have special procedures for *adult* learners wanting to be admitted to a full programme, others do not differentiate.

Countries have different procedures for admitting foreign students. EU regulations are, however, clear on this issue, stating that EU citizens should be admitted on the same conditions as national students.

Another important international instrument which most European countries have agreed upon is the Lisbon Convention from 1997 on recognition of higher education qualifications. It states that parties to the convention shall mutually recognise qualifications giving general access to higher education in the home country unless substantial differences can be shown between the general access requirements in the countries in question.

Cf. table 3 for more information on admission systems for higher education.

4. Quality assurance and accreditation/recognition procedures

Procedures for recognising higher education institutions and degrees differ to a large extent from country to country. In all countries higher education institutions are autonomous, but the degree to which the State regulates and controls the institutions and the academic activities varies. This also relates to whether there are national standards for the various qualifications and degrees awarded by higher education institutions. At one end of the spectrum one finds e.g. the UK and Flanders where there are no national regulations concerning the contents of study programmes; at the other end Spain where about one third of the subjects of each degree programme are prescribed by the State. In between one finds a number of countries where each degree may be defined by some overall standards and/or subject areas which have to be met.

A very liberal approach to the regulation of degree programmes can be considered an asset as it allows for institutional and national variations and diversity, but such differences may also create uncertainty about the actual contents and the standards of a specific qualification, even if it has a recognisable title on the paper, e.g. bachelor.

There seems to be a European-wide general trend towards giving higher education institutions more and more institutional autonomy also in matters related to the organisation of studies and the contents of the programmes. State control seems to be transferred from input-oriented regulation to a more output-oriented control based on different types of quality control procedures and other mechanisms, e.g. in a number of countries funding has become partly dependent on the number of students that succeed instead of the number of student enrolled. In others quality assessment results play a more direct role in allocation of the state funding (e.g. in the UK).

At the same time the increase in the diversification of institutions and qualifications and growing international competition also in relation to higher education seem to further a need at the level of the individual institution to improve information and documentation on the quality and standards of the institution and its qualifications both for the sake of the stakeholders, be they employers, governments or the general public, for the sake of the individual students moving from one country to another in order to study or work and having to decide on which programmes to follow and finally for the sake of international competitiveness.

These tendencies have resulted in the establishment of various external quality assurance procedures and arrangements. Apart from the quality assurance mechanisms which are in force or are developing at the institutional level, more and more countries establish external evaluation or quality assurance bodies or agencies. A study prepared by the Danish Centre for Quality Assurance and Evaluation of Higher Education and the French Comité National d'Évaluation in 1998 notes that evaluation procedures have been established at the national level in eleven EU member countries. The level and scope of the evaluation procedures vary from country to country. In a few countries the evaluation procedures include both the university and the non-university sector, others have set up separate procedures for each sector. Three countries are in the process of establishing some procedures and according to the report only the French-speaking community of Belgium, Greece and Luxembourg seems not to have introduced systematic national evaluation procedures.

In countries where there have been no national standards for qualifications so far, e.g. the UK, a national framework of qualifications is being discussed. The Dearing Report recommended that higher education institutions and the Quality Assurance Agency work together to produce a national framework for higher education qualifications in which all higher educational

awards would have a consistent terminology. The academic community should develop benchmarks standards in each subject for the achievements expected at various levels of award.

Other countries, which have a well developed framework for recognition and standard control of their traditional national degrees, have had some concern in relation to the standards of international degrees (bachelor/master) awarded by their home institutions, as for instance Norway and Germany.

Norwegian universities have had the right to award master's degrees since 1991 alongside the national degrees. In 1999 the same right was given to the state colleges. New programmes must be approved by the Ministry of Education. Prerequisites for university master programmes include that they are in English, that they are part of the institution's internationalisation strategy and that the access requirement is a bachelor-level qualification. Last year the Norwegian University Council published a report in which it was noted that due to lack of national regulations concerning the contents and organisation of master studies a number of quite different qualifications had emerged - some of which have been difficult to place in the national degree structure. The University Council recommends that national standards and national co-ordination be established both in relation to quality and to quantity.

In Germany a general possibility of awarding bachelor and master degrees was introduced by the University Act in 1998, and it has also been decided to introduce an accreditation system for bachelor and master programmes and to set up an accreditation council closely linked to the German Hochschulrektorenkonferenz in order to ensure common standards for these programmes which, so far, have not been subject to the same procedures for recognition as the traditional national degrees.

5. International credit transfer and recognition systems

Table 4 shows that a national or institutional credit system is in use in many countries, and that the ECTS system is emerging as an instrument for international credit transfer either in its own right or parallel to a national system. However, there are major differences in the actual implementation of credit systems. Not all countries use national credit systems (e.g. Austria, Denmark, Germany, Greece). In most countries with credit systems they are relatively easily used as a means of credit transfer from one programme to another or from one institution to another and/or they be used as well-developed credit accumulation system (e.g. Scotland, Sweden and also many institutions in the UK).

Relatively large national differences are also to be found in relation to recognition of prior learning and exemption from studies when changing from one institution to another. Especially, there seems to be problems in some countries to obtain any credit transfer (or only very little) when transferring from a non-university programme to a university programme. This is the case in e.g. Denmark and Greece, the reasoning of universities in both countries being that the contents, methodology and academic progression in university programmes are different from non-university programmes. In February 1999 the Danish Minister of Education proposed the introduction of a national credit system and recommended procedures which can ease the passing from one sector to the other, e.g. through bridging courses. Bridging courses are already in use in some countries, e.g. in the French-speaking community in Belgium

(*Passerelles*) and in Flanders (e.g. for holders of an engineering degree from a Hogeschool to engineering studies at a university)

ECTS has facilitated international credit transfer considerably and a further development of its application is to be expected. However, there are still major problems to be overcome, e.g. differences between systems made up of modules compared to systems where studies are organised according to a philosophy of integrated studies and continuous academic progression in subsequent, obligatory courses which have to be followed over more than one semester.

Another instrument which has been developed internationally to ease transparency and international recognition of final qualifications is the *Diploma Supplement*. The purpose of the supplement is to provide sufficient independent data to improve the international transparency and fair academic and professional recognition of qualifications. It is designed to provide a description of the nature, level, context, contents and status of the studies pursued, preferably by giving information on the learning outcomes. It should be free from any value judgement and equivalence statement but provide objective information to allow the recipient to make his or her own judgement.

A third important instrument for international academic recognition and mobility is the national information centres which have been established in the contexts of the EU (the NARICs) and the Council of Europe/UNESCO (the ENICs) which can provide official information on higher education systems, the status of institutions and studies, and recognition procedures. Some of the centres also have as an obligation to provide credential assessments or recognition of foreign qualifications.

Finally, *the Lisbon convention on recognition of higher education qualifications* (1997) should also be mentioned as it establishes a new and more comprehensive legal framework and obligations for states and higher education institutions for furthering fair academic recognition and transparency of qualifications.

6. Organisation of the academic year

The organisation of the academic year is often fundamentally rooted in national, social and cultural traditions. Earlier studies have shown that these differences may to some extent create an obstacle to smooth and easy student mobility. In 1993 the former Liaison Committee (now: the Confederation) undertook a study on the organisation of the academic year in order to examine the feasibility of harmonising the academic years. The study showed a wide diversity both in relation to the start of the academic year and the organisation of studies in semesters, terms or even more modulised structures. In the majority of countries the academic year begins during the first two weeks of October, in the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands the academic year begins much earlier. In Italy, the academic year does not start until early November (in some institutions). Examination periods and vacation periods also differ considerably. The Liaison Committee found it difficult to establish a common system due to the diversity of the existing situation and limited its recommendations to the start of the aca-

demical year: the first semester is recommended to start no later than the second week of October and the second semester should not start before 1st of February.

7. Tuition fee systems

The system of tuition fees varies, and it may have consequences for the further development of a European higher education space as it may be financially more attractive to some students to go to countries with no tuition fees than to countries with high fees. Such fees are usually not a problem for exchange students because exchanges normally include agreements on fee waivers, whereas tuition fees become a problem for regular students who decide to take a full study programme in another country. So far, there are ten countries where no tuition fees are charged for regular studies. They are Austria, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg and the Scandinavian countries. The countries with the highest tuition fees seem to be the Netherlands and the UK. However, both in the case of these countries and countries with lower tuition fees, the means are tested and may either be reduced or the student may get full or partial support for meeting the fee requirements. Cf. table 6.

8. Student support systems

A study by the Deutsches Studentenwerk from 1997 on current developments in the educational assistance systems in Western Europe shows considerable differences between national student support systems and criteria for eligibility and capacity. The survey also shows that comparisons between the different systems are fairly complicated as it is necessary to include analyses of the actual grant systems as well as of their interaction with family burden equalisation systems and taxation systems. When comparisons are made only of the actual amount of direct student grants, the study shows that the highest levels for support are to be found in the Scandinavian countries, Austria, Germany and the Netherlands. In all countries the support is means tested in relation to the students' own income and for relatively many countries also in relation to parental income, at least up to a certain age.

Looking at parental maintenance obligations, two distinct groups of countries can be identified: 1) Countries where parents do not have any statutory maintenance obligation for their children during higher education (e.g. the Scandinavian countries, Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom). Student support in these countries is relatively high, but is for some of the countries (Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK) either partly or fully dependent on parental income. 2) Countries in which there is a statutory maintenance obligation during a child's education including higher education (e.g. Austria, Belgium, France, Germany and Italy). In these countries parents with children in higher education are granted an economic relief by the state, e.g. taxation relief and/or child benefits. Apart from the economic relief in relation to parents, students also have some possibilities of applying for means tested grants and/or loans.

Substantial national differences are also to be found when comparing possibilities for obtaining national student grants for study abroad. Table 6 gives a brief indication of possibilities of **national** support (not EU support) both for study periods abroad and for full degree courses. There seems to be a development towards extending the possibilities for using national grants for studies abroad, either for study periods or for full degree programmes. The Scandinavian countries, Austria, Greece and the Netherlands have introduced or are introducing educational

assistance systems for national students going abroad for full degree programmes. In Flanders it is possible to receive national support for full programmes offered by recognised institutions of higher education in the Netherlands and for studies not offered at Flemish institutions. In countries where support is partly based on parental support or student support in the form of e.g. board and lodging, the same opportunities do not always exist.

9. International student and career guidance systems

Students as well as universities and employers' organisations seem to attach more and more importance to European employability of higher education candidates. National and international career guidance systems with increased focus on international career possibilities and conditions seem to be under development. The EU initiative with the EURES system (the **EUR**opean **E**mployment **S**ervices), the establishment of which was formally decided upon in 1993, seems to be the most developed system so far. The EURES is a co-operation network which bring together Public Employment Services of the countries belonging to the European Economic Area as well as other regional, national and international bodies concerned with employment issues. The main tasks of the system is to facilitate access to information and guidance on job opportunities as well as job and living conditions in other countries. The driving force behind the system are the euroadvisers. They are located in employment services of EU/EEA countries to provide information, advice and guidance for job-seekers and employers interested in the international job market. A pilot project has investigated the possibilities of extending the euroadviser system to universities, but so far this has not been possible and the pilot project has ended.

ANNEX I

Country profiles on higher education systems

1. Introduction

Tables 1 and 2 intends to give a condensed overview of the present structures of higher education systems and qualifications offered. However, in schematic overviews it is only possible to show main tendencies, whereas details, varieties and exceptions cannot be exposed. Thus the tables should be read with some caution and only considered as a somewhat simplified generalisation of present degree structures. Furthermore it should be noted that an overview according to years cannot show the differences in contents, level and learning outcome of the various qualifications, but can merely give a structural impression of existing possibilities. For further information, please refer to the accompanying brief country profiles on the present structures of higher education of each country and some of the main developments expected.

Terminology used:

Unitary higher education system: A higher education system with one main type of higher education institutions encompassing all types of study programmes leading to a variety of qualifications at different levels - e.g. diploma qualifications, undergraduate and post graduate degrees. Some may be research oriented, others more professionally oriented or of a rather general academic nature.

Binary higher education system: The binary or dual system consists of two different types of higher education institutions: Type A which is the classical university education combining higher education and research and type B presenting more professionally oriented higher education with or without a more applied research profile.

One-tier degree structure: It is a degree system which consists of only one integrated cycle of higher education leading to a degree that gives access to the doctorate. One-tier degree structures can be found both in unitary and in binary higher education systems.

Two-tier degree structure: It is a degree structure which consists of at least two stages of higher education. Each stage ends with a final award which may be used either for a professional career or for further studies. The second stage gives, in any case, access to the doctorate. This structure may be found both in unitary and binary higher education systems.

One-tier doctorate structure: A doctoral degree structure with one level of doctoral degrees. (international PhD level).

Two-tier doctorate structure: A doctoral degree structure with two different levels of doctoral degrees (an international PhD level and a higher doctorate). Access to the second doctorate is not always dependent on having the first doctorate.

2. Country profiles

Austria: Currently, higher education in Austria follows the model of a *binary one-tier system* for studies up to doctoral level. A new non-university Fachhochschulsystem began with the establishment of 10 new Fachhochschule programmes (*Fachhochschul-Studiengänge*) in 1994. By now (spring 1999), fifty programmes have been established. So far no private universities have been admitted in Austria, but a new law is in preparation which will change the situation.

The university sector: The first final degree at Austrian universities is the *Magister or Diplom-Ingenieur* which is normally awarded after at least four to five years of study, but often much more. The studies are divided into two (three) successive phases each ending with an examination (*Diplomprüfung*), and the second phase also includes the writing of a thesis (*Diplomarbeit*).

The doctoral programme requires at least two years of further study, the writing and defence of a thesis (Dissertation), and the pass of a final examination (*Rigorosum*). The Habilitation, i.e. the right to teach in a certain scientific discipline, is not an academic degree, but an additional academic qualification for which a specific procedure has to be undergone which by far exceeds the requirements for an ordinary doctoral degree.

Some universities offer a MAS (*Master of Advanced Studies*) or a MBA (*Master of Business Administration*) on the basis of courses given in German and/or English. Both programmes are at post-graduate level aiming at professional specialisation. Since 1997 the introduction of a bachelor level degree in the official degree structure has been discussed. The reasoning is to internationalise, i.e. to make Austrian degrees more compatible to other countries' degree systems and to ease mobility. A new law is in preparation which will give the universities the opportunity to introduce a two-tier degree.

Fachhochschulen: The minimum duration of a Fachhochschule programme including practical periods in enterprises and preparation for a final paper is four years. The title is the same as for university qualifications but a "(FH)" has to be added to the title. FH graduates may continue for a doctoral programme at a university provided that a number of additional exams are passed within two bridging semesters.

Belgium (Fr): Higher education up to doctoral level follows a *binary one-tier model*. Doctoral studies: A one-tier model.

The university sector: The first intermediate university degree is the *Candidat(e)* after two (in some fields three) years of study. It comprises a number of general subjects in the chosen main field of study. The *Candidat(e)* is a prerequisite for continuing in the second cycle. The second cycle takes two, three or four years. Depending on the study programme followed, students are awarded, upon completion of the second cycle, the academic degree of *Licencié, Maître* (in computer science, economic sciences and applied economic sciences), *Ingénieur* or a professionally oriented title. The study programmes of the second cycle are more specialised than the first cycle. Most studies include writing of a thesis. The postgraduate training programmes comprises e.g. a one-year programme *Diplôme d'Etudes Complémentaires (DEC)* and the *Diplôme d'Etudes Supérieures (DES)*. No specific preparatory doctorate training programme is required, but a decree from 1994 provided the possibility for the universities to organise a training programme of at least one year called *Diplôme d'Etudes Approfondies (DEA)*. Some faculties are preparing such programmes. The doctorate is formally awarded after writing of a thesis and a public defence, usually after at least four years of independent studies and research.

Hautes Ecoles: Non-university qualifications are divided into the following types: a) Short one-cycle studies of three years' duration (e.g. *Gradué*) and b) longer two-cycle programmes - each of normally two years' duration (*Licencie, Ingenieur*). According to the law, the long-cycle non-university studies are also called *university-level* studies. Graduates from non-university studies may under certain conditions follow doctoral programmes at universities. There is also a two-year postgraduate possibility from the Hautes Ecoles the *Diplôme d'Etudes Supérieures Spécialisées (DESS)* encompassing applied research studies.

Belgium (NL): Higher education prior to doctoral level follows a *binary, primarily one-tier model* but with an intermediate degree after two years. Doctoral studies: A one-tier model.

The university sector: The first *intermediate* university degree is the *Kandidaat* after two or in some fields three years of study or in a few cases the *Baccalaureus*. It comprises a number of introductory courses in the chosen subject field, methodological subjects and others.

The most common final university degree is the *Licentiaat* after two to three years of study after the *Kandidaat*. The *Licentiaat* is a more specialised degree than the *Kandidaat*. The aims of the programmes are to prepare for independent practise of science or the application of scientific knowledge. Most programmes include a final thesis. Other final degrees are in civil engineering, dentistry, pharmacy, veterinary science and medicine.

Third-cycle studies comprise a doctoral programme which includes the writing of a thesis and a public defence. The studies may either be organised without any fixed study programme or according to a more structured research training programme. Some universities require participation in additional doctoral training for admission to the public defence of the doctoral thesis. A certificate is issued at the end of the training.

Hogescholen: Non-university qualifications are offered by the *hogescholen*. They are divided into two types: a) Short one-cycle studies of three years' duration (*e.g. Gegradueerde in ...*) which prepare students for specific professional skills in *e.g.* industry, commerce, agriculture, health and rehabilitation social work. b) The two-cycle programmes where each cycle is normally of two years' duration. After the first cycle, the title *Kandidaat in ...* is awarded. After the second cycle, the title *Licentiaat in ...* is awarded. Studies cover more or less the same sectors as one-cycle higher education. The programmes include lectures as well as practical exercises and also applied research.

Germany: Higher education follows a *binary one-tier structure* up to the doctoral level and a one-tier doctoral level model.

The university sector: Degrees from universities are the *Diplom, Magister or Staatsexamen* of four to six years' study including a thesis with a duration of a half to one year. *Diplom* studies are characterised by concentration on the broad range of the main subjects aiming at a specific professional field. *Magister* studies concentrate on two or three subjects, primarily in the arts. *Staatsexamens* relate to fields of regulated professions.

Until recently, doctoral degrees have primarily been awarded after independent research under the supervision of a lecturer and the defence of a thesis. The time stipulated for this award is two to four years. The organisation of the doctoral studies in graduate schools is an alternative way which is becoming more and more common. (In 1998 around 300 graduate schools – *Graduiertenkollegien* – were established). One university has introduced a PhD programme as a pilot project. As a rule, the *Habilitation* (post-doctoral lecturing qualification) is necessary in order to qualify for a professorship. The *Habilitation* gives proof of the candidate's teaching qualification, but does not constitute an academic degree as such. In a number of *Länder* (Federal States), the *Habilitation* entitles academic research staff to supplement doctoral titles with "*Habilitatus*" (*e.g. Dr. Med. Habil.*). Since two to three years the *Habilitation* as a prerequisite for a professorship is under discussion.

Fachhochschulen (universities of applied sciences), offer primarily professionally oriented courses in engineering, economics, social professions, administration and design. The standard study period is four years including one or two practical semesters and a *Diplom* thesis of three to six months' duration. Students are granted the title *Diplom (FH)*. Graduates from *Fachhochschulen* may, under certain conditions and eventually after extra exams, be admitted to doctoral studies.

There is a number of bachelor's/master's programmes offered in Germany by foreign institutions. The formal regulations for such arrangements have not yet been fully developed. The amended University Act of 1998 provides for the national introduction of first and second degrees leading to Bachelor's degrees (three to four years) and a following Master's degrees (one to two years) as well as an accreditation system at universities and at the *Fachhochschulen*. These degrees may be offered alongside the regular above-mentioned traditional degrees. Some institutions have already started to offer bachelor and master programmes (at present more than 190 programmes). Their introduction on a broad scale is, however, still under development.

Denmark: Higher education in Denmark is structured according to a *binary two-tier model* for studies up to doctoral level. Doctoral degrees are awarded at two levels.

The university sector: At university level the degree structure follows a so-called 3+2+3 model: The first degree in most academic fields is the *Bachelor* degree (three to three and a half years), the second degree *Candidatus(a)* after two to two and a half years of further studies. Study programmes in medicine, pharmacy and veterinary science are exceptions from the bachelor structure, as they comprise integrated studies of five to six and a half years' duration. The PhD degree is awarded after three years of study/research after the *Candidatus*. Already at bachelor level the studies are fairly specialised in one to two subjects or a subject field and the specialisation continues at *Candidatus* level. The *Candidatus* programme includes a thesis of a half to one year's duration.

Alongside the ordinary national qualifications, more and more universities also offer Master programmes and Master degrees - some taught in Danish some in English. Some are regulated by a Ministry of Education decree, others are offered within the autonomy of the institutions. Some institutions also offer joint or double degrees in co-operation with foreign institutions. The *PhD* requirements are three years' work on a thesis, including some coursework, teaching and research co-operation. More and more research schools are being established. The Doctor degree is a higher doctorate awarded to mature researchers after major, independent and original research and a dissertation.

The non-university sector in Denmark is very diversified with many fairly small institutions offering only one or a few study programmes of two to four years' duration aiming at one professional field as e.g. teacher training, social work, nursing etc. Students receive a Diploma in the specific professional field and with the professional title "nurse", "physiotherapist".

Non-university higher education institutions are not allowed to award Danish bachelor degrees, but some of the institutions enter into co-operation with foreign higher education institutions and offer foreign bachelor or master degrees. Some of the institutions offer various post graduate diploma courses.

Proposals have been put forward by the Government to change the institutional structure, especially in the non-university sector, e.g. by merging some of the small institutions and intensifying co-operation between the non-university and the university sector. Another proposal concerns the introduction of a professional bachelor degree at the non-university level.

Spain: Higher education up to doctoral level is structured *primarily* according to a *unitary one-tier system*. There is one doctorate level. Reforms in the university system during the 70s and 80s have integrated more and more former non-university studies in the universities, and many new universities have been established to cater for a growing demand. Higher education outside universities is limited to art and music. Universities are structured in *Escuelas Univer-*

sitarias (ES), Escuelas Tecnicas Superiores (EST) and Facultades (F). There are two types of first degrees: The *Diplomado, Ingeniero or Arquitecto Técnicos* awarded after normally two to three years in primarily professional fields of study. The *Licenciatura* is awarded usually after a consecutive two-cycle programme of normally four to five years of study. The first cycle is not a final one; it forms a basic, generalised curricular module in which the basic subjects are taught. Only the *facultades* of a university have the right to award *Licenciatura* degrees. Universities in Spain are characterised by very course-intensive programmes and many compulsory subjects. Around one third of the subjects are defined by the government and they are the same for all universities. Recent reforms include a higher degree of choice and more individual student work. The *Pasarela* systems makes it in many cases possible to pass from a first cycle qualification to a second cycle of different studies. Universities may also organise studies outside the officially regulated system - the so called *titulos propios*. These degrees do not have official status. Doctoral studies for the *Doctorado* requires three to four years.

Greece: Higher education follows a *binary one-tier* higher education system for studies up to doctoral level and a one-tier doctoral structure.

The university sector award the *Diploma* (engineering and architecture) or the *Ptychio* after studies of normally four to five years' duration. The curriculum consists of a number of compulsory and elective subjects. In some departments a final project thesis is required. In the academic year 1997-98 a project with 30 optional study programmes was launched. The programmes are characterised by greater flexibility and the possibility of attendance at individual courses or a combination of courses. The programmes are developed in order to better meet the constantly changing needs of the labour market.

The diploma *Metaptychiakon Spoudon Exidikefsis* is a postgraduate intermediate specialisation of minimum one to two years' duration, including research and a thesis. It is required in certain subject fields before access to the doctoral programme. The *Didaktoriko* is the doctoral degree after a minimum of three years' studies, research and public defence of a thesis.

Technologika Ekpaideftika Idrymata (TEI) - the non-university higher education institutions also award qualifications called the *Ptychio* after studies of three and a half to four years' duration in specific professionally oriented fields. The possibilities of transfer from a non-university to a university course with credits are fairly limited. In co-operation with foreign universities the *TEI* may establish joint postgraduate programmes leading to master degrees.

France: Higher education before the doctoral level follows primarily a *binary two-tier system*. However, the system of higher education is characterised by the coexistence of a large number of different types of higher education institutions, each with its own admission requirements and offering a wide range of degrees.

The university sector consists of *traditional universities* and various more specialised affiliated institutions, e.g. *Instituts Universitaires de Technologie (IUT), Instituts Universitaires Professionalisés (IUP)* and others.

The general degree structure at universities encompasses a first intermediate degree of two years, the *DEUG*, and a first final degree the *Licence* after one extra year and the *Maitrise* after still another year. The *DESS* is a one-year postgraduate specialisation after the *Maitrise*. The *DEA* (*the Diplôme d'Etudes Approfondies*) is a one year programme after the *Maitrise*. It is considered as a starting point for doctoral research. The programmes include, research

activities, a written final exam. and public defence of a short thesis. The establishment of graduate schools is developing.

The degrees at the *IUT* comprise a two-year final degree, the *DUT* (university diploma in technology). Admission to the *IUT* is selective as opposed to the universities. The Ministry of Education has proposed the introduction of a *professional three year Licence* allowing students to leave university after three years and find jobs at intermediate level. Within the third year of a *professional Licence*, students should have a compulsory placement. The Ministry also proposes a *master level qualification* (the *Mastaire*) after two extra years. The new degrees should not suppress but exist alongside the existing degree structure.

Other types of higher education institutions: There are various other types of institutions of higher education, such as the *grandes écoles* of management and engineering institutions. Admission to these institutions is selective and highly competitive. They offer specific types of qualifications. Most *grandes écoles* are public institutions, but there are also a number of private institutions with state recognition.

The non-university sector includes, among others, the *Sections de Techniciens Supérieurs* offering two-year advanced technical training programmes leading to the *BTS /Brevet de Technicien Supérieur*. The non-university sector also includes various institutions for health training.

Finland: Higher education follows a *binary (dual) model*.

The university sector: Between 1994 and 1996 a new *two-tier degree structure* was adopted in most university disciplines. The aims were to allow students to complete the first degree the *Kandidaatti* in three years and the *Maisteri* after two years' extra studies and that at least 75 per cent of the students should continue to do a *Maisteri* programme after the *Kandidat* degree. The purpose of the degree reform was to establish an internationally compatible degree structure providing students with the opportunity to combine studies across disciplinary and institutional boundaries, and the reform has given room for more flexibility in the choosing of subjects and study fields. In medicine, dentistry and veterinary science the degrees take six years of full-time study to complete. The degree is called *Lisensiaatti*. Doctoral awards are offered both in the form of an intermediate doctoral degree (in some subject fields) after two years of study or the final doctoral degree after three to four years of study and defence of a thesis. Doctoral studies are to a large extent now being organised in graduate schools.

Ammattikorkeakoulu (polytechnics): The non-university sector in Finland has undergone a major reform in the 1990s. So-called *ammattikorkeakoulu* are being formed by upgrading the specialised institutions which previously offered vocational higher education and by merging them to form new multidisciplinary institutions. The aim is to raise standards of education, to make vocational education more attractive and to improve the international compatibility of vocational education. Degree programmes are of three to four years' duration. The aim of studies is to provide and may include different specialisation lines.

Italy: Higher education is organised after a *primarily binary one-tier model* with a fairly extensive and developed university sector which to some extent resembles e.g. the Spanish structure.

The university sector: University degrees are offered at three levels according to length of study each conferring final degrees. The short degree (the *Diploma Universitario (DU)*) aims at a variety of professions such as skilled technicians. Studies integrate theory and practical training. The longer degree is the *Corsi di Laurea* (four to six years) which aims at a high academic level also including research activities. The programme also requires a thesis work

of six months' to two years' duration. Holding the *Laurea* gives the right to use the title *Dottoressa/Dottore*.

Access to third level studies - the doctoral studies - is a *Laurea* or a similar degree.

There are two types of third level studies, either a specialisation (*Scuola de Specializzazione*) or the more general doctoral degree programme (*Dottorato di Ricerca*). The title is awarded after supervised research activities and defence of a thesis.

Universities may also offer *Master degree programmes*. However, even though they are adapted to the Italian educational context and needs, they are considered unofficial study opportunities and the degrees have no legal validity.

Non-university education comprises, according to the Italian terminology, all kinds of artistic education and a number of vocational education and training programmes, e.g. regional programmes and higher technical education and training programmes. A third category, physical education and sport, is being transformed from non-university to university level studies.

New university legislation is preparing a reform of the overall framework of university education and curricula. According to the proposal, the future degree structure will be as follows: Three-year first degree, and a second degree, after two more years of study, and the third level after no less than 3 years, the *Doctorate* level. Degree courses are to be unified in homogeneous disciplinary areas, indicating the educational aims and courses. The courses shall be expressed in work load credits.

Ireland: The higher education system follows a *binary two-tier system* and a one-tier doctoral level. The Minister for Education and Science has given strong policy signals which favour maintaining the binary system, considering it to be of vital interest to Ireland to have institutions to cater specifically for sub-degree studies.

The university sector: The first degree at universities is the Bachelor or primary degree which provide basic knowledge in a particular subject or field of study. The duration of primary degree courses varies according to faculty. At the National University of Ireland, the Bachelor degree may be awarded at honours or at general level. The Bachelor of Arts (BA) requires three or four years of study, while primary degrees in medicine and dentistry take six years. The degree of Master can be obtained through course work and examinations or through research or through a combination of the two methods. The normal duration of study is from one to three years following the Bachelor degree. PhD studies may follow directly after a good Bachelor degree or a Master programme. The duration is usually three to four years, and the studies include course and thesis work.

Institutes of Technology: In March 1999 new legislation concerning the granting of further and higher education awards was published, entitled the Qualification Bill. The legislation will establish a national qualification framework which intends to promote quality and assist students in their choice of courses and institutions. The principal objective is to develop a framework for the structured development of institutions in the technological sector.

The former Regional Technical Colleges have been redesignated Institutes of Technology, but they have not been given degree-awarding powers. Their courses are of one to three years' duration (one- or two-year *certificate* or three-year *national diploma*).

Iceland: The higher education structure follows a *binary two-tier system*.

The university sector: The university level institutions offer the following first degree programmes of three to four years' duration: the *BA*, *BS* or the *BEd*. The courses may be purely academic or more professionally oriented. All degrees require a final thesis or project work.

The University of Iceland also awards higher degrees such as the *Kandídatspróf* which is an integrated four- to six-year study in certain disciplines and the Master degrees programme of two-three years after a *BA/BS*. The University of Iceland also has the right to award doctoral degrees, both the PhD degree and the higher doctor degree.

Non-university courses are taught at a number of different educational institutions and have a prescribed duration of two to four years.

Luxembourg: Higher education in Luxembourg is basically limited to:

- a first year intermediate university course at the *Centre Universitaire de Luxembourg*;
- non-university courses of two to three years' duration at various non-university institutions in different professional fields, e.g. technology, commerce and education;
- postgraduate training at the *Institut Universitaire International de Luxembourg* as well as postgraduate courses for secondary school teachers.

Liechtenstein: Higher education courses in Liechtenstein are offered by one university-type private state-recognised institution (*Internationale Akademie für Philosophie*) and are Fachhochschule (*Fachhochschule Liechtenstein*).

The IAP offers three-cycle degree programmes in Philosophy consisting of a two-year *baccalaureate*, a two-year *Master* programme including thesis work and a *doctoral* programme of at least three years' duration.

The Fachhochschule programmes comprise four-year programmes in architecture, engineering and informatics and a few postgraduate programmes of one and a half year's duration).

The Netherlands: Higher education up to the doctorate follows a *binary one-tier model* at universities and *hogescholen*. Doctoral training also follows a one-tier model.

The university sector: The first degree at universities is the *Doctoraal* accompanied by the title *Doctorandus*, *Meester* or *Ingenieur*. The degree is awarded after usually four to five years of study in a doctoraal programme. Programmes in medicine, veterinarian science, pharmacy and others last longer. The first year of study includes a number of courses necessary for the chosen subject area; it is concluded by a *Propedeuse* examination. Programmes integrate research and training and they also require writing of a thesis (*Scriptie*) of at least 60 pages. Universities also offer some postgraduate qualifications, e.g. a one-year teacher training programme for upper-level secondary education and HBO. All universities provide the four year research training programme leading to the *doctorate* (Dr.) award.

Since 1998 universities can also award the *Kandidaats* degree after 3 years full time study. It is to be considered as a first degree on top of which the *Doctoraal* may be awarded after one to two years of further studies. No information have been available on how many programmes of this type are being developed. The first graduates to obtain a *Kandidaats* are expected in year 2001/2002.

Hogescholen (universities of professional education) offer professionally oriented programmes (*HBO*) in all fields and award the title *Ingenieur* or *Baccalaureus (bc)* after 4 years of study. Access requirements are theoretically one year less than the requirements for universities.

According to the Higher Education and Research Act, a HBO graduate has access to research programmes leading to a PhD degree.

Many Dutch institutions, both universities and *hogescholen*, offer international degrees, especially Masters. There are no legal obstacles to do so as the Master title is a non-protected title in the Netherlands. Since 1996 the independent Dutch Validation Council validates master programmes offered at *hogescholen*. Many institutions also co-operate with British universities in offering a British recognised Master degree. Graduates with a *Doctorandus* are also allowed to use the title *Master*, and graduates from the *hogescholen* may use the title *Bachelor*.

According to the four-year plan of the Ministry of Education (HOOP2000) some of the topics related to internationalisation are more flexibility, the degree structure (bachelor/master), the Sorbonne declaration, tuition fees and quality control.

Norway: Higher education follows a *primarily binary two-tier model* before the doctorate and a *one-tier doctorate model*. The present structure was introduced in 1994 with the merger of 98 public colleges into 26 *statslige høyskoler* (state colleges) and in January 1996 with a new common act regulating both universities and colleges. The differences between the universities and the non-university sector are not as clear as in other countries which have a binary system, e.g.

- state colleges have been given the formal right to award doctor's degrees depending on individual recognition by the Ministry of Education,
- some of the degrees awarded by universities and the state colleges are similar, e.g. the *Cand. Mag.* degree. State colleges may also be given the right to award higher degrees.
- credit transfer from non-university to university programmes is fairly easy.

The university sector: The usual first degree from a university is the *Cand. Mag.* after normally four years of study (three and a half years in Maths and Natural Sciences). Studies are usually concentrated on two to three subjects including a major of at least three semesters. The programme starts with half-a-year *Philosophicum*. The second degree is the *Candidatus* degree after normally two years of further studies in one of the subjects of the *Cand. Mag.* The writing of a thesis based on independent research activities (normally of one year's duration) is a requirement for the degree. Professional university degrees in e.g. medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, psychology, theology and law require six to seven years of consecutive studies. The university colleges normally offer special professional programmes of four to six years' duration, e.g. in architecture, veterinary science, agriculture, business administration, music and physical education and sports.

There are two different doctoral pathways: A totally independent programme with no special study programme except for the thesis and the public defence (the *Dr. Philos.* degree) and a more structured research training programme over a three to four year period also including the writing of a thesis and public defence (*Dr. Art.*, *Dr. Scient* etc). The two doctoral degrees have the same academic level.

Parallel to the official degree system, Norwegian universities have for the last ten years been offering master degree studies in English. State colleges have recently been granted permission to develop Master programmes in the Norwegian or English language.

A state commission has been established to make an analysis of various aspects of the higher education sector, including the degree system and make proposals for possible changes. There seems to be some interest from the side of the Ministry of Education to adapt the present system to a more an Anglo-American model.

Statslige høyskoler: (The state colleges). The majority of the shorter, non-university courses consist of an integral study period and aim at a particular profession: Candidates get a *diploma with the professional title*. Most of these programmes are of three to four years' duration. It is also possible to follow programmes which correspond to university programmes, i.e.

in arts, social science, maths, natural sciences and leading to the *Cand. Mag.* degree. The *Philosophicum* is not required for the *Cand. Mag.* degree from the state colleges. *Høgskolekandidat* (studies of two to three years' duration) is a lower academic qualification - not obtainable from universities.

Portugal: Higher education follows a *primarily binary two-tier system* up to the doctoral level, and a one-tier doctoral system. Some universities are beginning to integrate non-university type institutions and qualifications.

The university sector: So far the most common first degree at universities follows after a study programme of four to six years' duration. The *Licenciatura* gives access both to post-graduate programmes and, on certain conditions, to a doctoral programme. The *Mestrado* study programme usually lasts two years and requires, apart from course-work, the writing and public defence of a thesis. The *Mestrado* gives exemption from all examinations except presentation and defence of a thesis for the degree of *Doutor* in the same specialisation. Since 1997 universities have also been allowed to offer three-year study programmes for a *Bacharelato*, and consequently more and more two-tier *Licenciatura* programmes are being recognised by the Ministry of Education both at universities and in the non-university sector.

There are no specialised courses leading to the award of the *Doutor*, but some examinations are required apart from the preparation and defence of a thesis.

Instituto Politécnico: Non-university higher education institutions in the form of polytechnics started to become introduced already in 1973. The programmes are professionally oriented. They are offered at special schools in the areas aiming at e.g. business, engineering, tourism, nursing, the paramedical field, teacher training. Courses are often related to the professional needs of the region in which they are located. The *Bacharelato* degree is awarded after a study programme of usually three years' duration. The polytechnics may also award the *Licenciatura*.

Sweden: Higher education follows a *unitary two-tier model* up to the doctoral level. There are two different doctoral degree levels.

Higher education is organised according to a modular credit basis allowing students to build up their degree or other qualifications by selecting self-contained modules. The appropriate degree is awarded after accumulation of the required number of credits in appropriate combinations and after the student has passed the required exams for each module. There is normally not one final exam for a specific degree. Study periods are not expressed in years but in credit points.

General academic degrees: There are three types of first final degrees: *The Högskoleexamen* which requires at least two years of full time study. The *Kandidatexamen* which requires at least three years of full-time study and at least one and a half years of study in the major subject including a thesis of at least ten Swedish credit points (one point – one week) The *Kandidatexamen* can be of a general academic nature or it can be of a professionally oriented degree. The *Magisterexamen* requires four years of full time study including two years of study in the major subject and a thesis work of normally half a year's full-time work (twenty credit points).

Professional degrees (medicine, teaching degrees' and engineering etc.) are organised according to a somewhat different structure. There are more than fifty professional degrees varying from four to five-and-half years' duration.

Doctoral programmes include a two-year *Licentiatexamen* in some fields and a four-year *Doktorexamen* in all academic fields. Course work and the writing and public defence of a

thesis are the main components of a doctoral programme. Access requirements are at least a *Kandidatexamen* or equivalent qualifications. Up to one year of a *Magisterexamen* may count in the *Doktorexamen*.

Higher education institutions offer more and more master programmes in English both for national students and for international students, some of these master courses are just translations of the regular university courses, other of these are specially designed programmes.

United Kingdom: Higher education follows a *unitary two-tier model* up to the doctoral level. There are several doctoral level possibilities, the *PhD* being the most predominant. The former polytechnics were integrated into the university structure in 1992 and given full university status and degree-awarding power. There are no central or official regulations regarding the duration of studies in universities, and thus both the nomenclature and the structuring of qualifications may differ between universities. There are also some differences between England, Scotland and Wales.

According to the UK nomenclature, qualifications can be grouped into two major categories: undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications.

The undergraduate level includes both sub-degree qualifications and all first degree qualifications irrespective of the length of the programme:

Sub-degree qualifications include the *Higher National Diploma* (two years) and the *Higher National Certificate* (one year).

Bachelor degrees are usually awarded after a study programme of three or four years (the bachelor programmes for a degree in medicine and veterinary science last five years).

Bachelor degrees are classified according to programme requirements as well as student performance. The classification goes from an ordinary non-honours degree, a third class honours, a second class honours (with two divisions) to a first class honours.

The degree classification system is being discussed.

Courses are increasingly being offered on a modular and credit accumulation basis.

Some qualifications which are at undergraduate level, but taken by students with bachelor degrees for conversion to another subject lead to Master's degrees at present.

The postgraduate level includes a wide variety of *Master* programmes, course programmes as well as research programmes, usually of one to two years' duration, and a number of postgraduate diplomas and, finally, the doctorate programmes leading to a *PhD degree* are the most common.

One of the recommendations of the Dearing Report from 1997 was the establishment of a national framework for higher education qualifications. This is being discussed, and the Quality Assurance Agency has put forward a discussion paper on a national framework for qualifications as well as a system for assuring the standards of awards.

In recent years there has been an enormous expansion of international activities at UK universities and colleges and especially of study programmes delivered in co-operation with overseas institutions. To a certain extent there has been doubt about the standards and quality of such arrangements. In order to assure quality, special provisions and procedures have been established on a voluntary basis to ensure that UK overseas activities meet the same standards as the study programmes at home.

Table 1: Higher education systems and degree structures

(Cf. Annex one for definitions of unitary/binary and one-tier/two-tier systems)

Country	The HE System		Degree structure at universities		Doctoral degree structure	
	Unitary	Binary	One-tier	Two-tier	One-tier	Two-tier
Austria		x	x		x (c)	
Belgium (Fr)		x	x (d)		x	
Belgium (NI)		x	x (d)		x	
Germany		x	x (e)		x (c)	
Denmark		x		x		x
Finland		x		x	x (b)	
France		x		x	x (b)(c)	
Spain	x		x		x	
Greece		x	x		x (b)	
Italy		x(a)	x		x	
Ireland		x		x	x	
Iceland		x		x		x
Liechtenstein		x		x	x	
Luxembourg		x	Not applicable	Not applicable		
The Netherlands		x (f)	x		x	
Norway		x		x	x	
Portugal		x		x	x	
Sweden	x			x	x (b)	
United Kingdom	x			x	x	

- a) The higher education system is primarily a binary system, but the non-university sector is relatively small.
- b) An intermediate research oriented degree is offered. In Finland and Sweden the degree is an optional choice for having a lower doctorate; it is not a prerequisite for continuing for a doctor degree. In France and Greece the “intermediate” degree is a condition for the doctoral programme.
- c) Apart from the award of the doctoral degree the possibility of Habilitation exists.
- d) The degree structure of B (Fr) and B (NI) may be characterised both as a one tier or a two tier system. Most university degrees consist of two cycles and after the first cycle of two-three years the award of a *Candidat/Kandidaat* is given. The award is primarily considered as an intermediate degree as it has academic implications but no civil effects.
- e) A possibility of a bachelor as a first degree and a master as a second degree is being introduced.
- f) A possibility of a three year first degree - a *Kandidaats* -is being introduced.

Table 2: Higher education qualifications in the EU/EEA countries *)

Country/ Type of institution	Higher education qualifications before PhD/doctoral studies according to total number of years of higher education					PhD/doctoral level degrees	
	1-2 years+	3 years+	4 years+	5 years+	6/7 years+ (e)	Intermediate degrees	PhD/Doctoral degrees
Austria <i>University</i>			Magister/Magistra	Magister/Magistra Diplom-Ingenieur/in	Professionally oriented qualifications (e.g. in Medicine)		Doctor
<i>Fachhochschulen</i>			Magister/Magistra (FH) Diplom-Ingenieur/in (FH)				
Belgium (fr) <i>University</i>	Candidat (a)	Candidat (a)	Licencié	Licencié Maître or a professionally oriented title DEA/ DEC/ DES	Professionally oriented titles e.g. in Medicine		Docteur
<i>Hautes Ecoles</i>	Candidat (a)	Professionally oriented titles, e.g. Gradué /in	Licencié or professionally oriented titles, e.g. Gradué /in	Licencié or professionally oriented titles, e.g. architecte, ingénieur DESS			
Belgium (nl) <i>University</i>	Kandidaat (a) Baccalaureus (a)	Kandidaat (a)	Licentiaat	Licentiaat or a professionally oriented title, e.g. burgelijk ingeniur, dentist, pharmacist	Professionally oriented titles (Medicine and Veterinary Sciences)	Certificate awarded after doctoral training courses	Doctor
<i>Hogescholen</i>	Kandidaat (a)	Professionally oriented titles, e.g. Gegraduateerde in...	Licentiaat	Licentiaat or a professionally oriented title, e.g. Meester (in Fine Arts, Architecture)			

Country/ Type of institution	Higher education qualifications before PhD/doctoral studies according to total number of years of higher education					PhD/doctoral level degrees	
	1-2 years+	3 years+	4 years+	5 years+	6/7 years+ (e)	Intermediate degrees	PhD/Doctoral degrees
Germany <i>University</i>			Diplom Magister Artium Staatsexamen Bachelor b) Master b)	Diplom Magister Artium Staatsexamen Master b)	Staatsexamen		Doktor
<i>Fachhochschulen</i>		Bachelor b)	Diplom (FH) b) Bachelor b) Master b)	Diplom (FH) b) Master b)			
Denmark <i>University</i>		Bachelor		Candidatus/a	Candidatus/a (Medicine)		PhD h)
<i>Non-university institutions</i>	Professionally oriented qualifications, e.g. market economist	Professionally oriented qualifications, e.g. nurse	Professionally oriented qualifications, e.g. teacher				
Spain Unitary university system		Diplomado	Diplomado Licenciatura	Licenciatura or a professionally oriented title e.g. in engineering or architecture	Licenciatura (in Medicine)		Doctorado
Greece <i>University</i>			Diploma Ptychio	Diploma Ptychio	Diploma Ptychio (in Medicine).	Meptyhi- ako Di- ploma Eidikesis	Didaktoriko.
<i>Technologika Ekpaideftika Idrymata (TEI)</i>		Diploma Ptychio	Diploma Ptychio				
France <i>University</i>	DEUG DEUST DUT	Licence Licence- professional f)	Maîtrise	DESS Titre d'ingénieur Magistrère Mastaire f) DEA	Professionally oriented qualifications (in e.g. Medicine, Dentistry and Architecture) DRT		Docteur

Country/ Type of institution	Higher education qualifications before PhD/doctoral studies according to total number of years of higher education					PhD/doctoral level degrees	
	1-2 years+	3 years+	4 years+	5 years+	6/7 years+ (e)	Intermediate degrees	PhD/Doctoral degrees
<i>Grandes Ecoles and other higher education establishments d)</i>			Titre ingénieur Diplôme des Ecoles de Management	Titre ingénieur			
<i>Non-university institutions</i>	BTS						
Finland <i>University</i>		Kandidaatti		Maisteri	Lisensiaatti (e.g. in Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary. Science)	Lisensiaatti fg	Tohtori
<i>Ammattikorkeakoulu</i>		Professionally oriented qualifications	Professionally oriented qualifications				
Italy <i>University</i>	Diploma Universitario (DU)	Diploma Universitario (DU)	Diploma di Laurea Titles: Dottore/Dottoressa	Diploma di Laurea Titles: Dottore/Dottoressa	Diploma di Laurea (in Medicine) Titles: Dottore/Dottoressa		Dottore di Ricerca
<i>Non-university</i>			Diploma (in the artistic sector)				
Ireland <i>University</i>		Bachelor (general or honours)	Bachelor (honours) Master..	Bachelor (e.g. in Veterinary Science, Dentistry and Architecture) Master	Bachelor (in Medicine)		PhD
<i>Institutes of Technology</i>	National Certificate	National Diploma Bachelor	National Diploma Master...	Master			
Iceland <i>University</i>		Bachelor	Bachelor	Kandidatspróf			PhD h)

	Higher education qualifications before PhD/doctoral studies according to total number of years of higher education					PhD/doctoral level degrees	
Country/ Type of institution	1-2 years+	3 years+	4 years+	5 years+	6/7 years+ (e)	Intermediate degrees	PhD/Doctoral degrees
<i>Non-university institutions</i>		Professionally oriented qualifications	Professionally oriented qualifications				
Liechtenstein University	Baccalaureate		Master				Doctor
<i>Non-university</i>			Qualifications in engineering, architecture, information				
Luxembourg University	A one-year intermediate qualification						
<i>Non-university</i>		Professionally oriented qualifications	Professionally oriented qualifications				
The Netherlands University		Kandidaats	Doctoraal Diploma. Titles: Doctorandus, Meester, Ingenieur, Master	Doctoraal Diploma. Titles: Doctorandus, Ingenieur	Professionally oriented qualifications		Doctor
<i>Hogescholen</i>			Getuigschrift Hoger Beroepsonderwijs c). Titles: Baccalaureus, ingenieur Bachelor				
Norway University			Candidatus magisterii	Candidatus/a	Candidatus/a (e.g. in Medicine)		Dr. Philos Doctor
<i>Statslige høgskoler</i>	Høgskolekandidat	Høgskolekandidat Professionally oriented qualifications	Candidatus magisterii (state colleges) Professionally oriented qualifications				

Country/ Type of institution	Higher education qualifications before PhD/doctoral studies according to total number of years of higher education					PhD/doctoral level degrees	
	1-2 years+	3 years+	4 years+	5 years+	6/7 years+ (e)	Intermediate degrees	PhD/Doctoral degrees
Portugal <i>University</i>		Bacharelato	Licenciatura	Licenciatura Mestrado	Licenciatura (in Medicine, Dentistry and Engineering) Mestrado		Doutor
<i>Instituto Politécnico</i>		Bacharelato	Licenciatura	Licenciatura			
Sweden <i>Unitary university system</i>	Högskoleexamen Professionally oriented qualifications	Kandidat Professionally oriented qualifications	Magister Professionally oriented qualifications	Professionally oriented qualifications	Professionally oriented titles	Licentiate (g)	Doctor
United Kingdom <i>Unitary university system</i>	Various university certificates and diplomas and BTEC Higher National Certificate (HCD) and Diploma (HND)	Bachelor (O) Bachelor (Hon)	Bachelor (Hon) Master (taught)	Bachelor (in Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science Master (taught or research)	Various post-graduate qualifications for professional purposes	MPhil (i)	PhD DPhil h)

*) This table should be read together with the supplementary information on each country in annex one. The aim is to indicate some of the main degree possibilities in each country. It should be noted that years of study do not in itself say much about the level and contents of the qualifications. It should also be noted that the table does not illustrate the various possibilities of progression from one qualification stage to another. E.g. the requirements for access to doctoral level studies vary from three to five years of previous higher education. Neither has it been possible to illustrate all degree possibilities – especially not at postgraduate level.

- a) The degree is considered to be an intermediate degree
- b) Permission to establish bachelor and master programmes has been granted with the latest University Act (1998).
- c) Entrance requirements are one year less secondary schooling than for university programmes.
- d) Admission to the Grandes Ecoles is highly selective and includes preparatory classes and entrance examinations.
- e) In all countries the longer degrees of 6-7 years' duration include degrees for professional qualifications in such fields as medicine, veterinarian science and in some countries also pharmacy and others. Usually these degrees do not follow the degree structure for the more general academic degrees, e.g. there is very seldom a first intermediate degree possibility.

- f) The Ministry of Education has initiated the introduction of a three-year professional Licence and a five year Maitre with three sections, professional, research-oriented and general as a follow-up to the Sorbonne declaration.
- g) The Licentiate is an optional degree and not a condition to obtain the Doktor degree.
- h) Apart from the PhD degree Denmark and Iceland also have a higher doctorate which is obtained after several years of independent research and a dissertation the *Doctor in...* In the UK there are also several higher doctorate possibilities.
- i) Candidates who do not hold a postgraduate research qualification are usually registered initially for the MPhil. If progress is satisfactory they may then may be transfer to a PhD programme.

Table 3: Admission to higher education

Country	Admission to higher education (a)	Numerus Clausus/Limitations in admission
Austria	Students have to meet the <i>general access requirements</i> (a recognised secondary school leaving certificate or equivalent) and <i>the special requirements for admission</i> to the chosen programme.	No numerus clausus for universities. Admission to Fachhochschulen is limited, and applicants have to sit for entrance exams.
Belgium (fr)	All students with a recognised secondary school leaving certificate are eligible for admission except in a few fields with special requirements.	No numerus clausus.
Belgium (nl)	All students with a recognised secondary school leaving certificate are eligible for admission, except in a few fields with special requirements. Entrance examinations must be passed by any student (Flemish or other) who wants to study civil engineering, civil engineering architectural, dental, medical and nautical sciences (university degrees) and fine arts (Hogescholen degrees).	No numerus clausus.
Germany	Access to universities requires an Abitur (12- 13 years of schooling) or equivalent qualifications. Access to Fachhochschulen requires a Fachhochschulreife (12 years of schooling) or equivalent qualifications. Special admission requirements for some programmes, especially in academies of music and fine arts	So far no overall numerus clausus for universities, except in certain fields. Admission to Fachhochschulen is limited in certain fields.
Denmark	Students have to meet both the <i>general access requirements</i> (a recognised secondary school leaving certificate or equivalent) and <i>the specific requirements for admission</i> to the chosen programme.	No overall numerus clausus except for a few fields (medicine, some paramedical fields and others). Institutions are free to set their own limitations, e.g. due to lack of places.
Spain	The general access requirements are a recognised secondary school leaving certificate or equivalent qualifications and the one year preparatory course (COU) or the <i>Bachillerato LOGSE</i> . Furthermore, there is an entrance exam for most studies.	There is a numerus clausus in certain fields.
Greece	The general access requirements are a recognised secondary school leaving certificate and the passing of the Panhellenic examinations.	So far admission to universities are highly selective with a numerus clausus in all fields. This will be changed according to a new reform "Education 2000" which will abolish the Panhellenic examinations and introduce another more flexible admission system.
France	The general access requirements for universities are a recognised secondary school leaving certificate. Usually there are no other admission requirements. Other types of institutions have various other admission requirements.	Universities do not apply a numerus clausus system. Other types of institutions (IUT and Grandes Ecoles) have selective or highly selective admission systems.
Finland	The general access requirements are a recognised secondary school leaving certificate or equivalent qualifications and the matriculation exam. Admission is usually based on marks in the matriculation examination/school leaving certificate and on entrance tests.	There is a numerus clausus in most fields of study.
Italy	The general access requirements are a recognised secondary school leaving certificate or equivalent qualifications.	There is a numerus clausus for DU courses and for a limited number of university courses.

Country	Admission to higher education (a)	Numerus Clausus/Limitations in admission
Ireland	The general access requirements are a recognised secondary school leaving certificate. Students very often also have to meet some special admission requirements.	There is no overall numerus clausus, but universities are allowed to select students according to their own admission standards.
Iceland	Students have to meet both the <i>general access requirements</i> (a recognised secondary school leaving certificate or equivalent) and <i>the specific requirements for admission</i> to the chosen programme.	There is a numerus clausus in certain fields.
Liechtenstein	The general access requirements are a recognised secondary school leaving certificate or equivalent qualifications.	No information
Luxembourg	The general access requirements are a recognised secondary school leaving certificate or equivalent qualifications.	No numerus clausus.
The Netherlands	The general access requirements for universities are a recognised secondary school leaving certificate (VWO - 13 years of schooling). The general access requirements for <i>the Hogeschoolen</i> (universities of professional education) are a recognised secondary school leaving certificate (HAVO - 12 years of schooling). Admission depends on meeting <i>the special requirements</i> for the chosen programme.	There is a numerus clausus in certain fields.
Norway	Students have to meet both the <i>general access requirements</i> (a recognised secondary school leaving certificate or equivalent) and <i>the specific requirements for admission</i> to the chosen programme.	There is a numerus clausus in most fields.
Portugal	The general access requirements are a recognised secondary school leaving certificate or equivalent qualifications.	There is a numerus clausus in most fields. Students have a right to be offered a study place, but not necessarily in the chosen field.
Sweden	Students have to meet both the <i>general access requirements</i> (a recognised secondary school leaving certificate or equivalent) and <i>the specific requirements for admission</i> to the chosen programme.	There is a numerus clausus in all fields. The limitations in the number of admitted students may be set by the individual institution.
United Kingdom	The general access requirements are two or more subjects passes at the advanced level or equivalent qualifications. Admission is determined by the fulfilment of both the general and the special course requirements.	There is a numerus clausus in certain fields, and institutions are free to set their own limitations.

- a) According to the Lisbon Convention the terms access and admission are distinct, but linked. They denote different steps in the same process towards participation in higher education. Meeting the access requirements is necessary but not always sufficient for actually gaining admission to a higher education programme (getting a study place).

When comparing access and admission requirements one also has to look into the structuring of secondary schooling which in some countries is based on a high degree of streaming in academic and less academic tracks. These differences are only partially included in this table.

Table 4: Credit transfer systems

Country	Credit systems
Austria	No national credit system. ECTS is used by some institutions.
Belgium (fr)	No national credit system. ECTS is applied by all institutions for international co-operation and to some extent also for national students. in use at some institutions.
Belgium (nl)	A national credit transfer system is applied. It can also be used as an accumulation system. ECTS is used by some institutions.
Germany	The University Act of 1998 provides for the introduction of a credit transfer and accumulation system. ECTS is already in use at many institutions.
Denmark	So far there has been no national credit system. However, many institutions apply institutionally based credit system or use the ECTS system. In a report from February 1999 to Parliament the Minister of Education recommends the introduction of a credit transfer system based on ECTS.
Spain	A national credit system based on contact hours must be applied by all institutions. ECTS is also used at some institutions. The two systems are compatible although with some difficulties due to the differences between contact hour based and student load based systems.
Greece	No national credit system, but many institutions apply the ECTS system.
France	No national credit system, but many institutions apply the ECTS system.
Finland	A national credit transfer and credit accumulation system is applied. The system is compatible with the ECTS system. Many universities also apply the ECTS system.
Italy	So far no national credit system, but many institutions apply the ECTS system for international co-operation. A new law introduces the ECTS credit system at higher education institutions.
Ireland	In the university sector there is no uniform credit transfer system. The ECTS system is being applied in some institutions. In the non-university sector courses are structured on a credit basis which enables further access and progression.
Iceland	A national credit system, compatible with the ECTS system. Most institutions use ECTS in international co-operation.
Liechtenstein	No information
Luxembourg	No information
The Netherlands	A national credit system is applied which is compatible with the ECTS system. Many institutions also use the ECTS system.

Country	Credit systems
Norway	A national credit system compatible with the ECTS system is applied. Many universities also use the ECTS system in connection with international co-operation.
Portugal	No national credit system. Some universities are applying ECTS.
Sweden	A national credit and accumulation system is applied. ECTS is used parallel to the national system used by many institutions.
United Kingdom	In Scotland the SCOTCATS system enables easy credit transfer between institutions. In England and Wales there is so far no national credit transfer system, but a majority of institutions use a credit system. It is expected that proposals for a national credit accumulation and transfer system in England and Wales will be adopted in the wake of a report commissioned by the Department for Education and Employment – <i>A Common Framework for Learning</i> , September 1998. The ECTS system is also applied by many institutions.

Table 5: Organization of the academic year

Country	Start of academic year	Organisation of the academic year/lecturing periods
Austria	October.	The academic year is organised after a two semester system with tuition provided from October 1 to the end of January and from March 1 to the end of June.
Belgium (fr)	September/October.	Universities may have different organisation of the academic year. a) A yearly basis with all examinations in June. b) A semester basis with some exams after each semester or c) A three term basis, also with some exams after each term.
Belgium (nl)	September/October.	Universities may have different organisations of the academic year: a) A yearly basis with all examinations in June. b) A semester basis with some exams after each semester or c) A three term basis, also with some exams after each term.
Germany	September/October.	The academic calendar is based on a two semester system. There are some varieties in the calendar between to different Länder and between the universities and the non-university sector. The first semester normally runs from the start or from Mid October to Mid February and the second semester from Mid April to end of July. Examination periods after each semester.
Denmark	Mid August/First week of September.	For most programmes the academic year is divided into semesters: From September to end of January and from February to end of June. January and June are the main examination periods. A few non-university programmes are organised according to a yearly calendar with examinations at the end of each academic year.
Spain	The first/second week of October.	The academic calendar is primarily organised on a yearly basis. Some universities apply a semester system.
Greece	September 1. Tuition starts Mid September.	The academic calendar is divided into semesters. The first semester start Mid September and ends with examinations January/February. The second semester states end of February and ends Mid June also with a period of exams.
France	October 1. The start of the tuition may differ somewhat.	The academic year is organised either on a yearly basis with examinations at the end of the academic year (June) or on a semester basis with exams after each semester – usually in January and June.
Finland	August 1. Tuition usually starts Mid August or Mid September.	The academic year is divided into two semesters. Each ending with a period of examinations.
Italy	Until recently the academic year in Italy began November 1. Lately some faculties have divided the year into semesters and begin earlier.	The academic year may be organised in one of the following ways: - on a yearly basis, - on a compact semester basis (a) - on an ordinary semester basis. The compact semester basis is the most frequently used.
Ireland	Usually in October, but occasionally in September.	Traditionally the academic calendar has been organised according to a three term system. However, in recent years a number of universities have changed from a three term academic year to a two semester year, and the question of semesterisation is under active considera-

Country	Start of academic year	Organisation of the academic year/lecturing periods
		tion by others.
Iceland	Beginning of September.	The academic year is organised according to a two semester system. The first semester runs from September until December. The second semester from January until May. December and May are examination periods.
Liechtenstein	End of October.	The academic year is divided into semesters. The first semester beginning no later than the end of October, the second beginning in April.
Luxembourg	Beginning of October.	Studies at the Centre Universitaire de Luxembourg is organised on a two semester basis.
The Netherlands	August/ Beginning of September.	The academic year is divided after one of the following two models: a) Two semester model. One semester from September to end of December and the second semester from January/February to July. b) A modular system. Usually consisting of five modules/blocks of about eight weeks each (two before Christmas and three after Christmas. Examinations are held at the end of each semester or block.
Norway	Mid August.	The academic year is usually divided into a two semester system. The first semester runs from Mid August to December and the second from Mid January to Mid June including examination periods. A three term system may also be applied at some institutions.
Portugal	Beginning of October.	A semester-based system is becoming the most frequently used. Examinations periods are usually January/February and June/July.
Sweden	End of August	The academic year is not nationally regulated. Most institutions apply a two semester system. Courses and programmes may also start in January.
United Kingdom	End of September/Beginning of October.	The organisation of the academic year varies across institutions; the main types are term-based and semester-based. In some institutions the academic year is organised in semesters within a term-based structure. The organisation of examinations periods also varies as these are organised by the individual institutions. An increase in the number of institutions moving towards a semester-based academic year is expected.

- a) Compact-semester courses correspond to an annuality because even if concentrated in a semester, they are equivalent to an annual subject-course in terms of contact hours and workload.

Table 6: Tuition fees and student support systems for study abroad

Country	Tuition fees for regular study programmes (a)	Student support systems for studies abroad
Austria	No tuition fees for home, EU/EEA of students and certain other groups. Fees may be charged for students from countries which do not fall in one of the above categories.	Study abroad: Educational assistance may be provided for recognised study periods.
Belgium (fr)	Means-tested registration and tuition fees depending on level of study. There is also a minor fee for participation in exams. The fee for a basic year is around EURO 650.	Study abroad: In general no educational assistance for studies abroad, neither for full degree courses nor for study periods.
Belgium (nl)	Means-tested tuition fees are charged, dependent on the level of study. The total fee for a basic year is around EURO 460.	Study abroad: In general no educational assistance for studies abroad, neither for full degree courses nor for study periods.
Germany	No tuition fees, neither for home/EU nor for foreign students.	Study abroad: Educational assistance may be provided for study periods for a period of max. one or one and a half year.
Denmark	No tuition fees, neither for home/EU nor for foreign students.	Study abroad: Educational assistance may be provided for recognised courses (both study periods and full degree courses) for a period of four years. The limit is six years in the Nordic countries.
Spain	Means tested tuition fees for home/EU and foreign students.	Study abroad: No overall national educational assistance system for studies abroad.
Greece	No tuition fees for home and EU students. Students from other countries pay a fee.	No information
France	Means-tested registration fees for home/EU and for foreign students. The amount varies from EURO 100 to around EURO 230.	Study abroad: Educational assistance may be provided for recognised study periods of max. one year.
Finland	No tuition fees, neither for home/EU nor for foreign students.	Study abroad: Educational assistance may be provided for recognised courses abroad (both study periods and full degree courses).
Italy	Means tested tuition fees for home/EU and for foreign students. The amount differs dependent on the level of study.	Study abroad: No overall national educational assistance system for studies abroad.
Ireland	The tuition fee system was abolished in 1996 for first level degrees. Tuition fees are still charged for post-graduate degrees.	Studies abroad: Educational assistance may be provided for recognised full degree programmes in other EU countries. Student assistance is also possible for study periods abroad both in other EU and other non-EU countries.
Iceland	No tuition fees, neither for home/EU nor for foreign students.	No information
Liechtenstein	No information	No information
Luxembourg	No tuition fees.	No information

Country	Tuition fees for regular study programmes (a)	Student support systems for studies abroad
The Netherlands	Means-tested tuition fees of about EURO 1200 are charged for home and EU students. Institutions are free to set different fees for foreign students.	Study abroad: Educational assistance may be provided for recognised programmes abroad – both study periods and full degree programmes.
Norway	No tuition fees, neither for home/EU nor for foreign students.	Study abroad: Educational assistance may be provided for recognised courses abroad (both study periods and full degree courses).
Portugal	Tuition fees for home/EU and foreign students. For undergraduate studies the amount is about EURO 294.	Study abroad: National students studying abroad for shorter periods keep their grants
Sweden	No tuition fees, neither for home/EU nor for foreign students.	Study abroad: Educational assistance may be provided for recognised courses abroad (both study periods and full degree courses).
United Kingdom	Fees differ for home/EU and for students from non-member countries. For full-time undergraduate studies the full tuition fee for UK and EU students is £ 1,025. The fee is means-tested and may be partially or fully met depending on income. Institutions are free to set the fees for part-time students, postgraduate studies and for students for non-EU countries.	Study abroad: Educational assistance may be provided for recognised courses abroad (both study periods and full degree courses).

- a) Only registration and tuition fees for regular study programmes are included in the table, not mandatory fees for participation in student bodies, social care systems etc.

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The Sorbonne Declaration of 25 May 1998: what it does say, what it doesn't

G.Haug

A major issue concerning the planning of follow up activities to the Sorbonne Declaration is that there is widespread confusion about its content and significance. The present note tries to summarise what the Sorbonne Declaration does say and what it does not. For the sake of deeper understanding of the Declaration, the analysis and comments that follow are based not only on the actual text signed by the 4 ministers, but also on presentations and interventions made during the intensive 2-day seminar which preceded the signature.

The Sorbonne declaration immediately attracted a lot of attention but also met with a significant degree of resistance, which can be traced to the following 3 main reasons.

1. The announced aim to 'harmonise' the architecture of the European higher education system.

The term 'harmonisation' appears twice, each time in relation with structural aspects only:

- in the title, with reference to the 'architecture' of the system,
- and in the penultimate paragraph, with reference to the 'overall framework of degrees and cycles'. The same observation would emerge from an analysis of the debate, where the term harmonisation appears with reference to 'the main levels, not to the content and paths leading to these levels'.

Nowhere is there a reference, or even a hint, to a harmonisation of content, curricula or methods. This is confirmed extensively by the debate preceding the adoption of the declaration, where numerous speakers (including minister Allègre and other major speakers) repeatedly stressed the need for diversity and respect for national differences. A harmonisation of content was clearly not envisaged (except in a question emanating from the floor, when an unidentified student was of the opinion that a better harmonisation of content in terms of substance and rhythm would make mobility easier: page 72 of Acts).

The final paragraph of the Declaration (which contains the actual commitment made by the signatories) explains the aims and purpose of the Declaration without using the word 'harmonisation' and without any reference to the content of studies:

- ministers commit themselves to encouraging a 'common frame of reference' (this is, interestingly, very similar to the language used in Britain by the Dearing report of 1997: sub-report 11 deals with 'The development of a framework of qualifications: relationships with continental Europe');
- the common frame of reference to be encouraged aims at 'improving external recognition and facilitating student mobility and employability'. There is no mention of a harmonisation of studies, let alone of a single, uniform 'model'. As a matter of fact it was clearly said the 'setting up of any kind of single model' was out of the question.

2. The controversial proposal for a European-wide pattern of qualifications after 3,5,8 years in higher education.

This has been maybe the strongest ground for opposition to the Declaration, even though it does not even mention the 3-5-8 scheme which is contained only in the Attali report for France.

The main confusion surrounding the Sorbonne Declaration stems from the nearly simultaneous release in May 1998, in the same city of Paris, of the Sorbonne Declaration and the Attali report. This report sets out a series of recommendations for key changes in the higher education system in France, but bears a surprising title ('For a European model of higher education') not warranted by its content – but maybe by the context in which it was chosen. This led to confusion between the two documents, which seem to be amalgamated in the mind of many players in the higher education community.

The Attali report was produced at the request of minister Allègre who in the terms of reference for the study expressed concern about the competitiveness of the French system, with particular reference to its unique dichotomy between universities and 'grandes écoles'. The report indeed focuses on these issues. It was prepared by a commission of French experts from various backgrounds. From the list of 71 people whom the commission met, only one was a foreigner.

The annexes to the report provide a rather short introduction to a few foreign systems, with surprising assertions such as the alleged similarity between French IUTs on the one hand, and German Fachhochschulen and former British polytechnics on the other. In the case of the UK, 4-year honours and Scottish degrees are not mentioned, and the role of sub-degree diplomas is ignored. The presentation of the US system mentions 4-year Bachelor's and the great many community colleges offering 2-year qualifications, but these facts seem not to have been taken into account in the recommendations. The report does not actually attempt to justify its reference to a would-be European pattern of qualifications in two stages (a first degree/qualification after 3 years, followed by post-degrees studies leading either to a Master's after altogether 5 years or a Doctorate after altogether 8 years). It seems to be based mainly on the awareness of trends and reforms announced or in progress in the UK, Italy and Germany at the time with a perceived convergence on a first degree after 3 years.

The Attali report, in spite of its title, should therefore be seen for what it is: a national report addressing national issues, within a perceived European and international context. Its pertinence and relevance for policy setting in France are clearly an issue that is totally outside of the scope of the present paper. The main aspects relevant to the debate concerning post-Sorbonne developments are two:

- the 3-5-8 'model' on which its recommendations are based is far from an established common feature, even though it is important to locate and measure convergence trends in Europe;
- reactions, mainly negative ones, have affected the perception of the Sorbonne Declaration, albeit it does not even mention the 3-5-8 pattern.

What the Sorbonne Declaration does mention is the need to have first cycle degrees which are 'internationally recognised' as 'an appropriate level of qualification', and a graduate cycle 'with a shorter master's degree and a longer doctor's degree' with possibilities to transfer from one to the other'. It also says that such a two-cycle system 'seems to emerge' and 'should be recognised for international comparison and equivalence'.

3. The signature of the Declaration by the ministers in charge of higher education in the 4 biggest EU countries.

Even though representatives from governmental and academic authorities from other countries were present at the Sorbonne seminar, the Declaration was signed on site by only 4 ministers. The clearest commitment they made concerns changes to be introduced in their own countries, but in its last sentences the scope of the declaration was broadened: the ‘solemn opportunity to engage in the endeavour to create a European area of higher education’ signed in Paris by 4 countries is clearly an undertaking which concerns all other countries in Europe and, where appropriate and in line with the Maastricht treaty, the European Union. This also emerged from presentations to the meeting, especially when Mr Moscovici (Deputy Minister for European Affairs in the French government) called for a comprehensive plan aimed at guaranteeing that rights related to the “Europe of knowledge” (e.g. mobility, recognition, access to labour market) can actually be exercised in practice by students, graduates and teachers and all obstacles are taken away by e.g. 2005 (in the same way as the Single Act was needed for the completion of the Internal Market a decade ago).

This is probably the reason why in the next sentence of the Declaration, which is also the concluding one, signatories ‘call on other Member States of the Union and other European countries to join (them) in this objective and on all European universities to consolidate Europe’s standing in the world’. The appeal does not explicitly mention a role for the European Union.

It has been announced by French authorities that a number of countries have in the meantime adhered to the Declaration (Denmark, the Flemish and German communities of Belgium, Switzerland, Bulgaria and Romania) or have expressed their willingness to do so (Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia).

It is beyond the scope of this document to analyse the political choices and diplomatic handling of the Sorbonne events and to map whatever frustration may have resulted from them. What is probably relevant and appropriate to say is that both the declaration itself and the debate underline in no ambiguous way that the Sorbonne events were seen as early steps in a gradual process: terms used include ‘engaging in an endeavour’ (Declaration), ‘envisaging virtual moves which need to be discussed in working groups (Vice-President of the French Conference of university presidents), ‘progressive’, ‘gradual’ processes (Mr Allègre and many others).

In addition to these observations, there are two other aspects of the Sorbonne Declaration which seem quite important but have attracted surprisingly little attention.

4. The challenge represented by the need for European higher education to retain (or in the mind of many speakers, to regain) its competitiveness in the world markets of knowledge production and dissemination. This essential aspect is not absent from the Declaration itself, but it was much more prominent during the debates. If read together with the proceedings of the Sorbonne seminar, the Declaration could easily be interpreted as a plea for international competitiveness. The costs associated with losing ground in the international educational markets are sketched. By the time of the Declaration, the UK had already embarked on a

major effort to market its higher education to the world, fears about diminishing attractiveness was a key factor underpinning Germany's efforts to increase its compatibility with world systems, and the French ministry was about to announce the creation of a new national agency to attract to France paying students from areas other than the francophone region and Europe.

Most of the major speakers referred to the fact that Europe was losing ground in the competition with the USA, and that a more 'readable' and compatible set of qualifications was needed to counteract this trend.

Interpretations of the Sorbonne Declaration which would fail to recognise the underlying role played by concerns about Europe's future role in the world market for students, teachers and researchers would be severely short-sighted and dangerously wrong. The concern about competitiveness provided both a good deal of the impetus to act and sense of emergency expressed by politicians.

5. The labour market dimension

The Sorbonne Declaration is about 'qualifications' (knowledge and skills acquired which can be applied in the labour market) rather than academic degrees. Some aspects related to this dimension are clear (e.g. those concerning the employability of graduates or their mobility throughout the European space), while others do not show in the text although they may bear equal implications for employment in Europe: the role of world-class universities as nurseries for innovative business, the need to have alumni in key positions abroad and the role played by the educational sector in export-oriented trade in certain countries were all mentioned by ministers during the debate.

Hence the Sorbonne Declaration is not only about academic recognition or comparability *per se*: the *raison d'être* of the debate is intimately linked to the emergence of an ever more European and indeed international labour market.

Conclusion: **what the Sorbonne Declaration is and is not.**

It is an appeal to set up in stages a more coherent framework of reference for major levels of qualifications, not an attempt to limit cultural or educational diversity.

It is based on cooperation between the worlds of universities and governments, with some involvement from students and economic circles.

It deals with qualifications rather than academic titles *per se*.

It advocates the introduction and recognition of articulated undergraduate and graduate cycles, but it does not even mention the '3-5-8' degree structure found in the Attali report. Ministers who signed the Declaration have not signed a appeal for a standardised 3-5-8 'model'.

It is not the first step in a process, but rather it takes stock of changes initiated or proposed in a series of national reports completed within the previous year.

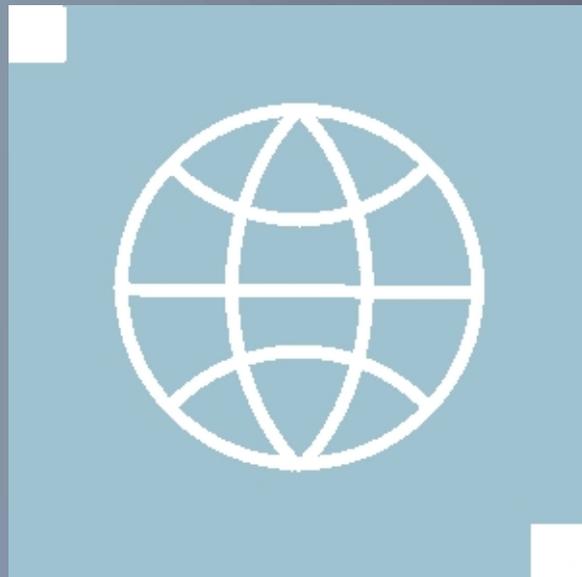
It is a plea for Europe to take up its full role in the world markets of knowledge and education.

It is not a closed initiative and can only be successful if supported by many more than the initial 4 countries.

Guy Haug, 25 March 1999

(This working paper was prepared as part of the joint project “Trends in learning structures in higher education in Europe” of the Confederation of European Union Rectors’ Conferences and CRE-Association of European Universities. The opinions are those of the author).

Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education (II)



by Guy Haug and Christian Tauch

2001

Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education (II)

**Follow-up Report prepared for the Salamanca and
Prague Conferences of March / May 2001**

by Guy HAUG and Christian TAUCH

April 2001



The report Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education (II) is the result of a lead project undertaken by the Finnish National Board of Education, Finland, with financial support from the European Commission, and of two complementary projects undertaken by the Association of European Universities (CRE) with support from the European Training Foundation. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the National Board of Education, the Association of European Universities, the European Commission or the European Training Foundation.

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Towards the European higher education area :

survey of main reforms from Bologna to Prague

Summary and conclusions

Guy HAUG and Christian TAUCH

Review of structures and trends in the countries not covered in 1999 in the Trends 1 report

Trends 1 was mainly based on a survey of structure and trends in higher education in the EU/EEA countries. Trends 2 surveyed the other signatory countries of the Bologna Declaration.

This review:

- confirms all the main conclusions reached in the Trends 1 report;
- - reinforces the observation concerning the move towards a two-tier system, but not necessarily corresponding to the definitions used for the degree structure outlined in the Bologna Declaration (e.g. the notions of "postgraduate" or "binary" system of higher education);
- - confirms the observation concerning the move towards accreditation;
- - shows that long study programmes at all levels, and rather inflexible mono-disciplinary curricula still exist in several countries and would need to be adjusted to meet the principles of the Bologna Declaration.

The follow-up process to the Bologna Declaration: widespread interest and support -

- The Bologna Declaration is on all agendas: all countries have established a unit or a forum to explain and discuss its content and implications. It serves as a new source of dialogue between Ministries and higher education institutions, and between sub-sectors of higher education;
- - It is mostly seen as confirming/reinforcing national priorities: this is the process' biggest strength, i.e. it "crystallises" major trends and reveals that issues and solutions have a European dimension; as a consequence the process is not (or no longer) seen as an intrusion, but as a source of information on the most suitable way forward for Europe;
- - It has been used to accelerate, facilitate and guide change: the main role of the Declaration has become to serve as a long term agenda for structural change;
A major strength of the process is its complementarity with other developments in progress. It reinforces and it is being reinforced by other tools/factors which point in the same direction: Lisbon Convention, Diploma Supplement, ENQA, EU Directives, EU mobility programmes including ECTS, ENIC/NARIC network, reforms entailed by the accession process to the EU in the countries concerned;
- The Bologna process is both a consequence of, and a contribution to the process of integration of European higher education.

Consensus on the core objectives of the process

- **Mobility:** there is unanimous support to the promotion of the mobility of students as well as of graduates, both outbound and (less expectedly) inbound. Teacher mobility seems to still receive insufficient attention. The mobility agenda of the Declaration is strongly underpinned by EU tools (ECTS, SOCRATES, TEMPUS, directives on professional recognition, Mobility Action Plan) and by the Lisbon Convention as well as by the willingness to prepare for EU integration in the countries concerned. ECTS and the Diploma Supplement receive very strong support.
- **Employability:** the Bologna Declaration has reinforced the debate and increased the awareness that employability is an issue all over Europe. There are new "professional Bachelors" in several countries, and new "professional Masters" in some. The change to a two-tier structure does not necessarily come with immediate in-depth renovation of the underlying curricula. The debate has now taken into account that there are various ways in which first degrees can be "relevant to the European labour market" and that all need not to be directly geared towards short term employment in a particular profession. In some countries university Bachelors are mainly seen as a preparation and a platform for the choice of postgraduate studies; this is less a problem where a strong college sector produces a significant number of holders of professionally oriented Bachelors.
- **Competitiveness/attractiveness:** most countries now seem to understand "competitiveness" in a positive sense and to endorse the need for their higher education systems to be "attractive". The issue is seen as "important" or "crucial" in an unexpectedly high number of countries: several have specific comprehensive plans aimed at non-European students; accession countries want to enhance their attractiveness to EU students in order to balance their exchanges within SOCRATES. No country said competitiveness was irrelevant, but it is not yet on the agenda everywhere. Most countries show little concern about transnational education and foreign accreditation sought by their universities.
Answers to transnational education are mainly of two types: to rule it out, or to subject it to national rules; neither is likely to resolve the issue. The Bologna Declaration is attracting interest outside Europe, in particular in Latin America: this confirms that understandable higher education structures would make Europe a more attractive study destination in other world regions.

Instruments of the convergence process

- **Easily readable and comparable degrees:** three countries developed comprehensive and coherent qualifications frameworks which could be useful for similar exercises in others and therefore relevant for Europe as a whole. Regional higher education areas are being consolidated in the Baltic Republics and the Nordic countries. Far from imposing uniformity as was sometimes feared, Bologna has encouraged more diversity and more flexibility. In particular, there are now more binary systems, with more bridges between sub-systems and more "professional Bachelors/Masters": The surprising fears that the Bologna Declaration had the intention to transform all colleges into universities seems to be disappearing.
On the contrary, the move towards integrated systems (one system with different institutions and various bridges between them) is confirmed in a number of countries. The Diploma Supplement is seen as a major instrument to facilitate readability and comparability. There are still very complex degree structures in many countries, e.g. systems which are in fact not binary but "trinary" (universities, colleges/polytechnics, short post-secondary courses) with different degree structures in different sectors and in different disciplines. The least compatible sector seems to be the non-university sector, which is growing but without sufficient convergence

between countries. There are also still many examples of confusing names/nomenclature (e.g. undergraduate "Master" degrees or "academies" focussing on Bachelor education).

The integration of lifelong learning as a regular part of higher education and of the qualification framework is a priority in only a relatively small number of countries.

- Mainly organised in undergraduate/postgraduate phases: the movement of convergence towards a two-tier structure continues, through the implementation of reforms previously adopted, the consolidation of Bachelor/Master structures introduced during the last decade and the initiation of reforms in several new countries.

There are examples of two-tier structures in ALL disciplines including engineering (few in medicine). There are however also many countries where the Bachelor/Master structure does not concern certain professional curricula, which remain organised in long, one-tier courses. The strongest trend is towards 3-year Bachelors, but there are many examples of Bachelors lasting 3 - 4 years. A limited move towards professional Bachelors is in progress. Several comprehensive plans combine the introduction of Bachelor/Master degrees, credits and accreditation ("the golden triangle of reforms"), mostly in countries that engaged early in the reform process. There is not a similar effort towards convergence at the postgraduate level: there is therefore a need for debate/progress concerning the various types of Master degrees.

Admission to Master courses is usually not automatic, at least not for "outside" students.

- Credit accumulation and transfer systems: there is a strong push towards ECTS-compatible credits based on national systems with easy translation into ECTS, or on the adoption of ECTS itself, either by obligation or more often following the strong recommendation of rectors' conferences and/or ministries. There is concern about the potential of divergence in the implementation of the system. The fears that the introduction of credits would deprive universities of the possibility to organise their curricula and oblige them to recognise all imported credits seem to be diminishing.
- Quality assurance: there is a powerful movement towards more quality assurance (new agencies, ENQA network), but in very different ways: unclear relationship between "quality assurance" and "accreditation", applied to all or only part of the higher education system, focussing on programmes (sometimes along subject lines across a whole country) or on institutions, with different types of consequences. The development of "accreditation" is now more easily recognisable than in the Trends 1 report: many non EU/EEA countries have accreditation, and several others are considering the possibility or have firm plans for a new accreditation agency (separate from the quality assurance agency or combined with it). In some countries that wish to increase the international acceptance of their new degrees, accreditation is seen as a *sine qua non*. There is however still confusion about the benefits and the meaning of accreditation. The decentralised approach to quality assurance/accreditation (sometimes referred to as "meta accreditation") which is being experimented in one country may provide inspiration for European mechanisms based on mutual acceptance of quality assurance decisions, respecting national and subject differences and not overloading universities.

A significant impact in non-signatory countries

- The Trends II report covers six non-signatory countries: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It does not cover other countries, although it is known that there is interest in e.g. Turkey, Russia and some other CIS countries.

- In these six countries the Bologna Declaration receives strong attention, in particular as a reference for long term structural reforms and as an agenda for change in the whole of Europe.
- In the countries of former Yugoslavia and in Albania the structure of curricula, degrees and institutions differs significantly from the principles of the Bologna Declaration, but the reform process has started or is in progress and is supported by various European programmes and initiatives.
The reform prepared for Kosovo by the International Administration took direct inspiration from the Bologna Declaration. A major difficulty for the development of the kind of curricula envisaged by the Bologna Declaration is the fragmentation of universities into independent faculties (resulting in inflexible mono-disciplinary curricula) in the countries of the former Yugoslavia.
- The higher education system in Cyprus is already largely in line with the principles of the Bologna Declaration.

Some indications and directions for the future

- In future priority attention should be paid to :
 - - the challenge of readability of the Master level;
 - fostering convergence in the college/polytechnic sector;
 - the reform/adaptation of curricula at higher education institutions that have adopted or are adopting a two-tier articulation (there are good examples showing the way towards shorter, more broadly based and relevant Bachelors in all areas);
 - the development of quality assurance mechanisms extending to the European level *bona fide* quality labels earned at the national or regional level; ENQA is likely to have a major role and responsibility in meeting this challenge;
 - external aspects, in particular concerning the attractiveness and credibility of European higher education at the global level;
 - support to the process of system reforms and curricular renovation in Southeast European countries.
- Some fears which were initially felt from the Bologna Declaration seem to be diminishing or even vanishing. It is now in general accepted that:
 - the Declaration does not challenge the diversity of systems and disciplines, but rather to promote it and organise it;
 - it is fully compatible with binary systems;
 - credit systems do not deprive universities of the possibility to organise their curricula in a coherent way, and do not oblige them to accept without discrimination all credits which students would like to transfer;
 - there are various ways in which degrees can be "relevant to the labour market" and the need is for a diversity of first degrees opening possibilities in the labour market and/or the way to various types of postgraduate studies.
- As the process develops, there is a need and a demand for:
 - the reconfirmation of the main aims and principles of the Bologna Declaration, in order to underpin its role as a reference for long term reforms and as a European agenda of change;
 - more co-ordination, in particular concerning the implementation of ECTS and the profile of Bachelor and Master degrees, in order to avoid that too much variance creates a new type of obstacles and annihilates the benefits of the convergence process.

- The general trend towards diversified systems (with diverse institutions offering a variety of Bachelors, a variety of Masters and various types of "bridges" allowing students to change track) points in the direction of a network, rather than a ladder of qualifications:
 - the continuation of long one-tier curricula in a limited number of areas does not contradict the overall objectives and principles of the Bologna Declaration (even though there is no convincing argument – except maybe in medicine- that the adoption of a two-tier structure would not provide significant benefits);
 - even though the main direction is towards 3-year Bachelors, any European system needs to accommodate first degrees with diverse purpose, orientation and profile requiring the equivalent in credits of 3 to 4 years of full time study. Extended first degrees would not pose any difficulty if they formed a common European base in a given subject area (e.g. engineering); otherwise, it would be useful to distinguish them from other Bachelor degrees (e.g. by calling them "advanced" Bachelor or Honours degrees").

- There is still a growing need for information about how the main issues are seen and addressed elsewhere in Europe and in the world:
 - even more than hitherto, progress towards more convergence will be dependent on the availability of comparative studies, the dissemination of good practice and the tracking of problem areas;
 - in the vocabulary for higher education as a whole (e.g."binary", "two-tier", "non-university", "accreditation") and in the nomenclature of degrees there are certain confusions or inconsistencies to which attention should be paid (e.g. what is postgraduate, name of certain degrees or institutions and their translation into English).

- The marked growth of the attention given to the "external" dimension of the process and to the development of tools/plans to make national higher education more attractive at home, in Europe and in the world should continue. The fact that this process could be made easier and more successful if it had a European dimension has not yet been acknowledged: European degrees will not be generally accepted in the world if they are not generally accepted in Europe.

- Future progress towards comparable qualifications requires additional work at the European level within particular subject or professional areas. A series of publications or databases on studies in Europe in all major subject areas would enhance comparability and mobility both within Europe and with the rest of the world.

Finally, it seems important to point out that the future of the Bologna process and indeed of European higher education is bound to be related to two fundamental principles which could guide all future action :

- students in Europe have a need and a *right* to study for degrees that can effectively be used in Europe, not just in the country/region where they were earned;
- a major responsibility of higher education institutions and governments in Europe is to ensure that they take all steps needed to be in a position to award this type of qualifications to their students.

Part I. Background information to the present survey of change in higher education from Bologna to Prague

LINKS WITH THE 1999 REPORT TRENDS IN LEARNING STRUCTURES IN HIGHER EDUCATION ("TRENDS I")

The present report complements and updates *Trends 1*. The present report should be understood as a complement and an update to the report *Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education* prepared for the Bologna Conference of June 1999 ("Trends 1").

Trends 1 was prepared by Guy HAUG and Jette KIRSTEIN, on behalf of the Association of European Universities (CRE) and the Confederation of EU Rectors' Conferences, with support from the European Commission. It was mainly based on a survey of the structure of higher education (institutions, degrees) in the 18 countries of the European Union and the European Economic Area and served as a main background report for the preparation of the Bologna Conference and Declaration.

The report was published in 1999 by the Danish Rectors' Conference in the English and French language. It has been translated in full or in part in several other languages at the initiative of various organisations and persons. The full report, together with an executive summary, the text of the Bologna Declaration, country profiles, overview tables and comments can be found on the following websites:

www.rks.dk/trends1.htm

www.unige.ch/eua

Since the present report prepared for the Salamanca and Prague Conferences of March/May 2001 builds on data and conclusions of the 1999 report prepared for Bologna, it has been considered useful to include here for reference the text of the Executive Summary of *Trends 1*.

Executive summary of the Trends 1 report

TRENDS AND ISSUES IN LEARNING STRUCTURES IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE:

BOLOGNA, JUNE 1999

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Guy HAUG

This document is meant as a contribution to the follow up work to the Sorbonne Declaration of May 1998 which called for the harmonisation of the architecture of higher education qualification systems in Europe. Its main purposes are to map areas of convergence between these systems in Europe (mainly EU/EEA), to identify trends affecting them and to indicate ways towards greater convergence in the future.

The **survey of existing structures** shows the extreme complexity and diversity of curricular and degree structures in European countries. The Sorbonne Declaration recommended that studies should be organised in an undergraduate and a graduate cycle, but did not provide an indication of their duration. The debate that followed

focussed on the alleged existence (or emergence) of a European “model” with 3 main levels of qualifications requiring 3, 5 or 8 years of study.

No significant convergence towards a 3-5-8 model was found. Whether traditional or newly introduced, Bachelor-type degrees require 3 to 4 years, and many European countries without Bachelors have first degrees in 4 years; there is however a high degree of convergence towards a duration of about 5 years for Master-level studies; but there is no 8-year standard duration for doctoral degrees. In addition, whereas the UK, the US and most countries in the world - except in continental Europe - apply two-tier (undergraduate-postgraduate) systems, the length of studies and the degree structures vary considerably within and between these countries, and duration tends to be expressed in academic credits rather than in years.

Several important **trends affecting the structure of degrees/qualifications** in Europe could be identified. There is a strong and growing governmental push towards shorter studies, first aimed at reducing the real duration of studies to their official length (which is typically exceeded by 2 to 4 years in many countries), and more recently through the introduction of first degrees in countries with traditionally long curricula without an intermediate exit point. Recent reforms in Germany and Austria have introduced new Bachelors/Masters curricula on a voluntary basis alongside traditional diplomas, whereas in Italy and France existing curricula are being re-arranged in a first and postgraduate cycle. Elements of two-tier systems exist in many other European countries, and it seems that currently only a few countries in the EU/EEA do not have, or are not experimenting with two-tier curricula in at least part of their higher education system.

In countries with a binary system, the line of divide between the university and non-university sectors (and their degree structure) is become increasingly blurred. Most countries have adopted, or are adopting various types of systems for the transfer, and to a lesser extent also the accumulation of academic credits; most are compatible with the ECTS system, which is gaining ground at many institutions. There is a marked trend towards more autonomy of universities, coupled with new initiatives for quality control and evaluation in many countries.

In recent years, European higher education has been faced with mounting challenges from abroad. Transnational education delivered in English by foreign/overseas providers

through branch campuses, franchising, or by electronic means has grown rapidly in many European countries; a whole new sector of higher education is emerging alongside traditional, national, state-regulated systems, but until now it has been largely ignored by governments as well as universities in Europe.

Four main avenues of combined **action which may foster the desired convergence and transparency in qualification structures in Europe** are being suggested.

* The gradual adoption of an ECTS-compatible credit accumulation system. This would enhance the flexibility of national/institutional systems (in particular in view of the development of lifelong learning), bring them more in line with each other and with world systems, and ease mobility both within and from outside the EU/EEA area.

* The adoption of a common, but flexible frame of reference for qualifications. A rigid, uniform model (like the 3-5-8 model) is neither desirable nor feasible in Europe. In line with the analysis of existing systems and reforms in progress, the following broad frame could serve as a common reference, while at the same time allowing for flexibility and differences in countries and subjects (length of studies are expressed not in years, but as the number of academic credits that must be successfully completed (one academic year corresponds to 60 ECTS credits):

- sub-degree level (certificate, diploma): 1 to 2 years worth of ECTS credits;
- first degree level (Bachelor, Honours, other first degree): no less than 3, no more than 4 years worth of ECTS credits;
- Master level: about 5 years worth of ECTS credits, of which at least 12 months worth of Master-level credits;
- doctoral level: variable (about 7 or 8 years in total).

The main conditions for meaningful first degrees of the Bachelor/Honours type are being set out. Key factors are the introduction of new curricula (instead of a sheer re-packaging of existing ones), a guaranteed level (gauged on the basis of knowledge and competencies acquired rather than time spent), real possibilities on the market labour, a clear separation from postgraduate studies, and formal accreditation.

Short Master programmes (12 months) present specific opportunities for intra-European mobility and international competitiveness.

* An enhanced European dimension in quality assurance, evaluation and accreditation:

- compatible quality assurance systems, especially regarding the setting of threshold standards based on learning acquired (outputs) rather than on time spent and curriculum content (inputs);
- independent evaluation leading to European quality labels in broad subject areas; the current vacuum for independent evaluation in Europe would best be filled through agencies independent from national and European authorities, and working along subject lines; they could draw on existing and future European-wide subject-based networks;
- a coordinated approach to quality standards for transnational education, which raises the question of the recognition of foreign private providers.

* Empowering Europeans to use the new learning opportunities. Compatible credit systems, understandable degree structures, increased quality assurance and an more European labour market are structural improvements which would create a whole new range of learning opportunities for all; their impact would be even greater if they were combined with measures such as short Master degrees favouring new types of mobility, the further strengthening of the NARIC/ENIC network, counselling with a European dimension, and the elimination of remaining obstacles to student and teacher mobility.

The combined impact of the suggested action lines would also make European higher education more understandable and attractive to students, scholars and employers from other continents; they would **enhance European competitiveness** and thus help to consolidate (or in the eyes of many, to re-establish) its role and influence in the world.

PURPOSE AND METHODS OF THE PRESENT REPORT

Purpose

This report has two main purposes:

- to extend to all signatory countries (and a few non-signatory ones) the data collected and analysed in Trends 1 with respect to the EU/EEA countries; this will be found in Part III below, which contains an analysis, country profiles and supporting overview tables for the 12 non-EU/EEA countries that signed the Bologna Declaration and for 6 non-signatory countries;
- to update the analysis of the main structures and trends in all 35 countries, through a survey of change and reforms since the Bologna Declaration, with a view to provide background information to the Convention of European higher education institutions (Salamanca, 29-30 March 2001) and the meeting of Ministers of Education with the participation of representatives of the higher education community of Europe (Prague, 18-19 May 2001). This will be found in Part II below. Its main aim is not to review what exists or does not exist (e.g. which countries have or do not have a quality assurance agency), but to focus on change and reforms, in order to identify the major trends in the follow-up to the Bologna Declaration in the perspective of the setting up of the European higher education area by 2010.

Methods of the survey

The data collected on higher education structures (institutions, degrees) in non EU/EEA countries (Part III of this report) used the questionnaire developed by Jette Kirstein for the Trends 1 report of 1999. This guarantees the comparability of data and tables between all countries involved in the process. The authors wish to express their gratitude to Jette Kirstein for her kind co-operation which greatly facilitated their task.

The survey of reforms and changes from Bologna to Prague (Part II below) is mainly based on information gathered in the last two months of 2000 through questionnaires sent to all countries. The questionnaire used focussed on the organisation of the follow-up process, on the three main goals of the Declaration (mobility, employability, competitiveness) and on the five main action lines outlined in it.

- In the 29 signatory countries the questionnaire was sent to the officially designated "contact persons" in the Ministry with copies to the rectors conferences. In a majority of these countries some or extensive co-ordination took place in order to reflect the view of both government and higher education. It was not considered essential to stress the diversity of views between the various stakeholders involved, but rather to gather information on main changes at the national level;
- A slightly different version of the questionnaire was prepared and sent to the governmental and higher education authorities in the non-signatory countries;
- A simpler and shorter version of the questionnaire was designed and sent to a limited number of governmental and non-governmental European organisations who had shown their interest in the process. The main purpose, and indeed the main benefit from this exercise was to help looking at certain issues from a non national or "European" angle.

The authors wish to express their deep gratitude to all respondents who accepted to answer the questionnaires and sometimes also complementary questions by phone, fax or email. In spite of the length and complexity of the questionnaire the majority of respondents provided detailed, accurate and comprehensive information on all aspects. Other countries provided less detailed answers to some, or in a few cases to most questions. Two countries did not return the questionnaire.

The "country reports" prepared by a number of signatory countries for (or shortly after) the meeting of the Follow-up Group in Lisbon in June 2000 were used as a complementary source of information.

However the most detailed "country reports" tended to be those produced by the countries that also provided detailed answers to the questionnaire. One country, for which there was neither a country report nor answers to the questionnaire, could not be included in the survey and the report.

Other references: in addition to questionnaires et country reports a series of other documents were used. A list of the main ones is provided at the end of Part II below.

Part II

Towards a European higher education area: survey of change and reforms from Bologna to Prague

WIDESPREAD INTEREST AND SUPPORT

The Bologna process is high on national and institutional agendas

The Bologna process is on the higher education agenda of *all* signatory countries: each has either a unit, a working group, a forum or a debate dealing with the Declaration and its significance for governments and higher education institutions in the national context.

The follow-up debate and process has been organised according to several different patterns. In a majority of the countries concerned, the Ministry of Education has taken on a leading role, in all cases in more or less close co-operation with other key actors. In the most frequently encountered pattern the main partner organisations are the national Rectors' Conference(s). Other partners are also found in some countries: a broad range of stakeholders (e.g. in the UK), student unions (e.g. in Sweden) or the national ENIC/NARIC unit, especially in Central/Eastern Europe.

Several countries have set up a special (sometimes a formal) follow-up group, usually in the form of a working group bringing together ministerial officials and higher education representatives, as in e.g. three Nordic countries, Germany (where it includes the federal and *Länder* authorities) or Spain. A similar working group is planned in Portugal. In Austria, the Ministry has created a "progress chasing project" to monitor the implementation of the Declaration.

In several countries without a mixed follow-up unit, the Rectors' Conferences have set up special committees or working groups to consider the Declaration. This is the case in e.g. France, Belgium (both the French Community and Flanders) as well as in Switzerland. In the latter countries the working groups are specific for the university and college/polytechnic sector. In Malta, the University of Malta, as the only university in the country, has taken on the role to monitor the process. In Switzerland universities have set up a "Steering Committee" with a "Bologna co-ordinator" and an Advisory Group with the mission to ensure a co-ordinated introduction of the changes resulting from the implementation of the Bologna Declaration.

The Bologna Declaration has been discussed in an impressive number of events and fora

It is not possible to draw up a full picture of the information and discussion events dealing mainly or partly with the Bologna Declaration since June 1999. The following paragraphs try to convey an impression of the scope of the debate, distinguishing between the European, national and institutional levels.

At the European level, a series of seminars dealing with the main objectives of the Bologna Declaration was commissioned by the "Follow-up Group" put in place by Ministers for the implementation of the Declaration. They received financial support from the European Commission and focused on the following aspects:

- mechanisms for credit accumulation and transfer (Leiria, Portugal, November 2000);
- quality assurance and "accreditation" (i.e. the certification that certain standards of quality are met) in the European higher education area (Lisbon, January 2001);
- patterns for undergraduate studies and degrees (Helsinki, February 2001);
- transnational education (i.e. education delivered in a country different from the country of the institution controlling the course programme) in the broader context of "competitiveness" or "attractiveness" of European higher education (Malmö, Sweden, March 2001).

Apart from these "official" seminars, the Bologna Declaration was discussed in a series of meetings organised or supported by inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations. What follows is just a few examples to provide an idea of the breadth of the debate.

A major positive change has been the recent creation of the European Network of Quality Agencies in higher education (ENQA) on the basis of a recommendation by the EU Council of Education Ministers. It was launched in February 2000 and all future work related to quality assurance aspects in the emerging European higher education area should be able to benefit from it. Current and anticipated developments related to the Bologna Declaration have quite naturally been a major topic on the agenda of ENQA meetings.

The ENIC/NARIC network co-ordinated by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and CEPES/UNESCO has set up a working group and produced a statement on the implications of the Bologna Declaration on recognition issues.

The creation of the European higher education area was also on the agenda of the 2000 annual conference of OECD's programme on institutional management (IMHE).

The Bologna Declaration was an important topic at numerous workshops and conferences organised by European associations and networks in higher education, e.g. CRE (Association of European Universities), the Confederation of EU Rectors' Conferences, EURASHE (institutions of the college/polytechnic sector), ESIB (National Unions of Students in Europe), SEFI (European Society for Engineering Education), EAIE (European Association for International Education), ELIA (European League of Institutes of the Arts), ELFA (European Law Faculties Association) and many others.

At the national level, many countries have reported that the Declaration was discussed not in one or two, but in many different meetings. In countries where the implementation process is already well under way, such as Italy, Germany or the Netherlands, there were specialised seminars dealing with particular issues emerging from the reforms in progress. Several countries had a national "Bologna information day" organised by the Ministry (e.g. in Austria and Greece), the Rectors' Conference (e.g. in Hungary and Switzerland), the quality assurance agency (in the UK), the NARIC/ENIC (in five countries in Central and Eastern Europe) or the national student unions (e.g. in Malta, Sweden, Norway). Such "Bologna days" are also planned in Portugal and in Ireland in April 2001. Germany invited representatives from all other signatory countries to its national Bologna Day in Berlin in October 2000.

Other reports on information activities include the translation of the Bologna Declaration and the main background report ("Trends 1") into the national language and their dissemination to various actors (e.g. in Greece, Spain and several countries in Central and Eastern Europe), explanatory articles in university magazines (e.g. Iceland) or

interviews/press conferences for major newspapers (reported by e.g. Malta and the UK). Some co-ordination meetings took place at the level of a region (e.g. the Baltic Higher Education Co-ordination Committee in April 2000) or across a common border (e.g. between Flanders and the Netherlands on quality assurance and accreditation).

There were in many countries ministerial statements supporting the goals and principles of the Bologna Declaration or stressing its compatibility with the national higher education policy. Such statements were made in Parliament in e.g. Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, Sweden and Switzerland. In Germany they were issued by the federal authorities (BMBF) as well as by the Conference of State Ministers of Education (KMK). In a number of countries (e.g. Belgium and Spain) the Ministers have decided not to issue an official opinion before the rectors' conferences produce their own.

Liechtenstein confirmed that it felt in line with the Declaration and could sign it any time. The debate did, of course, not start and develop at the same pace everywhere. In Finland it seems that the most intensive discussion took place *before* the country agreed to sign the Declaration and a more technical debate has taken place since. In other countries, the debate has reached public attention more recently, e.g. in Greece (where it came into focus mainly since December 2000) or in the French Community of Belgium (where the Minister emphasised that the process is one of long-term considerations and that premature action should be avoided). In Portugal, government as well as higher education institutions have expressed their deep interest in achieving the goals of the Bologna Declaration and in introducing the necessary reforms.

The higher education sector itself organised numerous meetings and discussion forums, in addition to those held in conjunction with governmental authorities already mentioned in the previous paragraphs. Rectors' conferences were very active in this area in many countries, both in the university and in the college/polytechnic sector (e.g. in Belgium). Many rectors' conferences have issued statements expressing their basic support to the creation of a European higher education area, e.g. in Poland, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland (the "Twelve-point Statement"), the Netherlands, etc. Meetings and debates for members were also organised at the initiative of other national organisations like student unions (in e.g. Sweden and Austria) or the association of international officers (e.g. HEURO in the UK). Finally, it is important to mention that a large number of individual universities and other institutions organised internal seminars and information days for their own staff, students and partners (e.g. in Barcelona, Malmö, Gent, Lille, Bordeaux, Brussels, Brno, etc.)

Interestingly, the development towards a more coherent, and hence more compatible European higher education system has already received attention from universities outside Europe. This shows that the completion of an understandable degree structure in Europe would make the continent more attractive to students, teachers and universities from the rest of the world, and provide a suitable alternative to study destinations in other continents. Contacts have been established on this basis with the Association of Universities of Asia and the Pacific (AUAP). Within the framework of the COLUMBUS programme two seminars on regional convergence in higher education between Europe and Latin America were organised in 2000. The Association of Commonwealth Universities is also showing an interest in the European convergence process.

Integration into national policy plans and action programmes

The Bologna Declaration has been taken up in several national (governmental) reports on higher education. Examples can be found in Norway (where the Mjø's Report of May 2000 on the Bachelor/Master structure took account of the Declaration and served as a basis for the White Paper on higher education), the Czech Republic (White Paper of

December 2000 on government's education policy), Slovakia (Strategic Plan For Higher Education of August 2000), Latvia (Conception Plan for Higher Education Development), Estonia (Development Plan of Estonian Education) or in the Netherlands (where the Minister's Policy Memorandum draws on the report of the Rinnooy Kan Committee of July 2000). In other countries, the Declaration has been considered in the cyclical policy planning or reporting to Parliament, e.g. in Austria (Three-Year Report of 1999), Finland (governments' Five-Year Plan for Education for 1999-2004), Flanders (Policy Paper on Education/Training for 2000-2004) or Sweden (Minister's 2000 Report to Parliament). In Switzerland, the Rectors' Conference and the Science Council produced two action-oriented reports on the implementation and co-ordination of the process in the country.

In some countries, action is mostly based on major higher education reports produced prior to the Bologna Declaration that are in various stages of their implementation phase: the Dearing and Garrick Reports in the UK, the Martinotti Report in Italy and the Steering Group Report on Higher Education in Ireland (all 1997) as well as the 1998 Attali report in France. The countries concerned all have mentioned that the implementation measures, while they would have happened in some way anyhow, have been influenced in their content and timing by the Bologna Declaration (e.g. for the finalisation of the two new Qualification Frameworks in the UK). In Spain, it is not yet clear to what extent the Bricall Report ("University 2000") is being drawn upon for the preparation of the planned reform of the 1983 Law on Higher Education.

STRONG CONSENSUS ON THE CORE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROCESS

The three core objectives of the Bologna Declaration for the European higher education area are free mobility, employability on the European labour market, and international competitiveness/attractiveness of European higher education. The survey reveals an amazingly strong consensus on these objectives.

Unanimous support to promotion of mobility The aim of the Bologna Declaration to promote more and freer mobility is seen as relevant, important, very relevant, of greatest importance, or even as crucial or vital, by 25 of the 29 countries.

In most countries the Bologna Declaration is perceived as supporting an already existing priority given to mobility, or "as an important step in a process that started some years earlier" (Netherlands). Its main roles are described as:

- stimulating the debate (Sweden, Finland, Malta, Czech Republic) and creating new dynamics (Flanders);
- accelerating or facilitating reforms (French Community of Belgium, Czech Republic, Austria, Finland), in particular by creating a common awareness of the need to reform (Spain, Portugal);
- clarifying the issues and the direction of reforms for European compatibility (Estonia, Latvia, Czech Republic).

In line with this, many countries are of the opinion that the changes they have introduced or planned would have happened anyway, but that their scope, orientation and timing have been influenced or determined by the Bologna Declaration.

Against this background of unanimous support to mobility, it is interesting to observe that the reasons underpinning this unanimity vary considerably. The main reasons mentioned by the various countries are:

- long-standing emphasis on mobility as a national priority, e.g. in the Nordic countries, the Netherlands, Ireland, the UK or Switzerland;

- new emphasis on student and staff mobility in accession countries, as part of their integration into SOCRATES/ERASMUS and other EU programmes; the answers of these countries reflect their dual concern to allow the effective participation of their own students (in particular in view of their need for substantial top-up grants within ERASMUS, which many countries have decided to provide in spite of their very tight budgets) and to balance their higher education exchanges (by measures aimed at increasing their attractiveness to students from other countries);
- the implementation of the Lisbon Convention on recognition and of the Mobility Action Plan adopted by the EU in November 2000;
- new or renewed national priority in countries where the process of internationalisation of higher education is seen as insufficient in view of national needs; this was stressed in particular by Italy, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Greece, as well as by Hungary and Slovenia. The first four countries have recently taken measures to support double-degree curricula and/or to provide significantly more funding for mobility (e.g. the budget for grants is to triple in Spain). Greece regrets that its higher education is still a "rather closed system";
- free mobility is seen as particularly important in "small" countries with a strong need for study and employment abroad, e.g. Iceland, Malta, Liechtenstein and the Baltic Republics.

Another interesting aspect is that many countries approve of mobility not only for outgoing students, but place new emphasis on incoming mobility and on the need to eliminate obstacles encountered in this area. The underlying reasons are related to the desire to fill labour shortages (e.g. in Ireland), to attract more foreign students (the UK, Malta, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden), especially young researchers needed to sustain high level research centres and programmes (Ireland, Germany, Finland).

Only a few countries mentioned the importance of teaching staff mobility. According to the new Italian Law of 1999, teaching abroad should become a criterion for the selection and promotion of university teachers; similar provisions are planned in Belgium (French Community) and France. Austria plans to eliminate from its legislation on civil servants articles seen as incompatible with international mobility in higher education.

Several countries, in particular those with a federal or very decentralised higher education system, stressed that free mobility in Europe would also enhance mobility between their constituent units (Germany, Spain, Switzerland) or their different types of higher education institutions (a few countries in Central Europe).

This is not the place to draw up an inventory of all the various measures taken or planned to encourage or support mobility. The following observations are meant to draw attention to certain specific or new directions in reforms:

- several accession countries have taken measures to lighten visa obligations for exchange students, or to ensure national treatment to citizens of EU countries; the current limitations of mobility between the EU and non-EU countries are seen as important obstacles;
- the decision to accept foreign students is becoming increasingly decentralised and left to colleges/polytechnics, e.g. in Sweden or Belgium (French Community), where universities have enjoyed this freedom previously as part of their autonomy;
- a database on the recognition of foreign degrees should be operational in Norway from 2002; this kind of public, stabilised and timely data on recognition reduces the risks of mobility and the underlying mechanism could apply in the wider European context.

More structural measures were also mentioned as factors facilitating mobility: the adoption of a credit system, the streamlining of the degree structure, the Bachelor/Master articulation, the implementation of the Lisbon Summit on employment, etc. This signals the direction of efforts towards changing the conditions in the environment and thus creating more opportunities for students (as was emphasised in particular by the Netherlands).

Another key observation made by many countries is that the aims of the Bologna Declaration in the area of mobility are strongly underpinned by parallel developments and existing instruments.

The adoption of the *acquis communautaire* in education, the implementation of the Lisbon Convention on recognition and the implications of the Mobility Action Plan adopted by the EU in November 2000 are important factors of reform mentioned by many countries. The EU mobility programmes (mainly ERASMUS), the Diploma Supplement, the European credit transfer system (ECTS) and the EU Directives on professional recognition were mentioned as instruments for the implementation of the aims and principles of the Bologna Declaration.

Two important conclusions can be drawn from this:

- The Bologna Declaration is largely in line with national priorities and other European actions; it is reinforcing these other priorities and activities and is being reinforced by them.
- The scope and level of mobility required in a well-functioning European higher education area depends on the fair, timely and efficient recognition of qualifications for academic and professional purposes; the necessary tools and instruments exist; the main challenge now is for higher education institutions and governments to make use of them (cf. report of the NARIC/ENIC working group on recognition issues in the Bologna process; this view has also been emphasised by the Swedish Ministry).

Employability: an increasingly important and common concern

The Bologna Declaration has had a strong and positive effect on the debate about the relationship between higher education and professional life, in particular concerning the preparation of graduates for "employability". It has raised the profile of the issue and increased the awareness that it is a shared concern all over Europe.

Just as its intention to increase mobility, the aim of the Bologna Declaration to promote the employability of graduates on the European labour market is seen as very important and relevant by the vast majority of signatory countries. In a similar way as for mobility, the Declaration is seen as underpinning national plans in promoting employability as a priority, for four different types of reasons.

Several countries stressed that employability has been a long-standing guide or baseline in national higher education policy and see the Bologna Declaration as reinforcing it. In Sweden the collaboration of higher education institutions and professional and economic circles is seen as "generalised, natural and easy" and responsiveness to the needs of the surrounding society has been made the "third pillar" of higher education, on an equal footing with research and teaching. Similar attitudes exist in other Nordic countries. The Netherlands also see employability as a major issue for which there is broad support from government and social partners. France stressed that the shift towards "professionalisation" has been the backbone of national higher education policy for three decades and is strongly reflected in the 4-year contracts signed between the Ministry and each university.

In countries where qualifications, including first degrees, have confirmed acceptance on the labour market (Ireland, the UK, Sweden, Malta, Iceland) the main emphasis seems not so much to be on employment in general (graduate unemployment is low), but rather on the adjustments to specific market needs, especially in view of growing skills and labour shortages (as reported in particular by Ireland and some Nordic countries). The introduction of the new 2-year "Foundation Degrees" in the UK is also mainly a response to a shortage of qualified graduates at this level.

The emphasis in the Bologna Declaration on employability meets other, convergent calls for reform related to the process of preparation for entrance into the EU. This has been stressed by all accession countries in various ways. Some regretted the restrictions to access to the European labour market which still exist in both directions between the EU and accession countries.

In several countries employability is seen as a particularly important national priority as a response to high graduate unemployment. This has been stressed in particular by Italy and Spain. Greece underlined that the necessary change in this direction would require a more intensive dialogue between government, higher education institutions, students and employers. In Italy, "one of the most innovative aspects of the new architecture of the whole higher education system introduced from 1999 is that it is also based on convergence with the labour market".

Employability : a powerful source of change and reform

From the three aims underpinning the Bologna Declaration, enhanced employability seems to be the strongest source of change and reform in higher education. This has also been significantly reinforced by the Lisbon Summit on Employment of March 2000, which has contributed to guiding national agendas in education and other areas. The impact of the Bologna Declaration can be found mainly in three areas.

The most visible aspect is that the Declaration created a broad debate about employability after a first (Bachelor-type) degree, e.g. in Finland, Switzerland, Austria, Flanders, etc. A few countries recalled that education is not only for professional purposes (e.g. Spain), or reported concern from the university sector that first degrees should not be geared too narrowly to short-term needs on the labour market. In countries where Bachelor degrees were introduced about a decade ago (in particular Denmark, Finland, Czech and Slovak Republics) there is a renewed debate around the definition (or redefinition) of Bachelor degrees . The general move is clearly towards a stronger attention to employment prospects and the acquisition of core, or transversal, skills. The new qualification frameworks adopted in the UK and Ireland are strongly "outcome-based" and qualifications are mostly defined in terms of skills/competencies acquired by graduates. Denmark noted that both academic and professional Bachelor degrees needed to be "relevant" (although in not exactly the same way). Recent legislation in many countries made relevance to labour market a key factor for the authorisation (or "accreditation") of new programmes or made the collaboration with professional bodies compulsory in the development of new curricula, e.g. in Italy (where employability is seen as the major change required in the new system launched in 1999), Germany, Austria, Latvia, France, Flanders or in Switzerland's plans for a new quality assurance agency. This is often combined with the requirement that all curricula must provide core skills (Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Bulgaria) or with an encouragement to create shorter curricula (Estonia).

Some countries have also undertaken specific efforts to promote first degree graduates on the labour market. In Germany, where the Conference of Ministers of Education (KMK) in March 1999 stressed market relevance as a key dimension in the new degree

structure, this was reinforced by a similar emphasis in the German Employers' Association's "Cologne Declaration" (October 1999) on new higher education qualifications. Some countries reported concrete measures aimed at adjusting the statutes/laws regulating access to civil service (e.g. Austria, Italy, Germany) or to regulated professions (e.g. Slovakia) in order to create opportunities for holders of first degrees.

The second impact of the Bologna Declaration's interest in employability is that it provided new impetus for the further development of the college/polytechnic sector and for its creation in a few more countries. In nearly all countries with a binary system the Declaration opened a renewed debate on the respective roles of various types of higher education institutions and on the profile of their degrees. This debate has been widespread in countries with a binary system, especially in those where a strong college/polytechnic sector provides a relatively high number of graduates with qualifications geared towards access to the labour market after 2, 3 or 4 years. In these countries the need for a shift towards "employability" in the university sector is clearly not felt in the same way as in those where higher education is mostly or exclusively found at universities.

The new impetus for professional higher education has led to the creation or extension of a binary system in several countries, e.g. Finland, Malta, Estonia, Slovakia, and Italy. Italy has recently introduced in some regions a new sector for advanced professional education and training (FSI) with a view to creating an alternative to university education. The current introduction of Foundation Degrees at British universities, although not in direct response to the Bologna Declaration, also points in the direction of the diversification of higher education as a means towards broader access and easier employability. The creation of the *licence professionnelle* at French universities and of professional bachelors in several countries are on the contrary largely a response to the Bologna Declaration. The debate about Master degrees at colleges/polytechnics (cf. section on the Bachelor/Master articulation) should also be seen in this connection.

Finally, the Bologna Declaration has played an important role in drawing attention to the increasingly European dimension of the issue of employability. This was noted by e.g. France, Malta, Latvia, Iceland and Sweden. Sweden stressed that "for a small country, it is natural to develop employability for the national, European and international market in parallel with measures for mobility". In most countries the widening of the European dimension in higher education qualifications is seen mainly in conjunction with the development of EU programmes for co-operation and mobility.

There is renewed attention given to the setting up of joint, integrated or double-degree courses in several countries, e.g. Germany and Italy (which have both created special funding possibilities for such courses), Estonia, France, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Iceland and Denmark. Greece regrets that only a few universities/faculties are engaged in this type of curricular development in the country. A dozen countries mention the development of courses with a "European" orientation taught in English and designed for national and foreign students alike (there are for example some 500 such courses in Sweden). The continuous development of European summer courses in a wide spectrum of disciplines and specialisation areas, run by a single institution or jointly by higher education networks (e.g. UNICA or ECIE), should also be noted in this regard.

Several countries see the EU Directives on professional recognition as an important tool for the implementation of the Bologna Declaration's aims concerning employability in Europe. Accession countries are integrating in their curricula the standards set by the EU for various specific professions (e.g. nurses and midwives in Poland, health professions and teachers in Romania, etc). These changes, while mainly related to the

accession process and the *acquis communautaire* are mentioned as measures which would have happened anyway in these countries, but at the same time underpin the objectives of the Bologna Declaration.

Acknowledging the need for European higher education to become more attractive (or "competitive")

While support for mobility was predictable and support for employability expected, the strong backing of the Bologna Declaration's aim to promote competitiveness (in the meaning of "attractiveness") was much less foreseeable. The answers collected for this study reflect a remarkable increase of awareness of what is at stake and the beginning of a mobilisation of energies and resources. In stressing the need for European higher education to compete for its place in the world, the Declaration has played a major role in this direction.

The issue of competitiveness is seen as an important priority by an amazingly high number of countries. Very few countries do not see it as an area of concern. **The Bologna Declaration has had three different effects on the issue of competitiveness.**

First, it brought the issue into focus, as was mentioned by e.g. Norway, Flanders, or even Switzerland (in spite of its 20-30 % foreign students, 40 % at postgraduate level). In Finland the work on a strategy to promote the country as a study destination "would not have started without the Bologna Declaration". Germany sees the internal restructuring of its higher education system and its international promotion as two equally important pillars of its comprehensive reform process. Quite understandably the push for competitiveness is less felt in countries (mainly in Southeast Europe) where higher education is still considerably oversubscribed.

Second, the Bologna Declaration has drawn attention to signals that "went unnoticed for a long time" (France) pointing to declining overall attractiveness. This seems to apply to various aspects: the overall decrease in student numbers from non-EU/EEA countries has long been ignored in the countries concerned; the generalisation of the Bachelor/Master structure throughout the world except in continental Europe went unnoticed (as reported by Germany, but applicable elsewhere); and the belated acknowledgement that "foreign students have problems with the recognition of our long diplomas in their country" (e.g. by Germany and Italy).

It should however also be pointed out that several issues are still not fully acknowledged. Ministries and higher education organisations in most countries show limited awareness and little concern about European universities seeking U.S. accreditation, the proposed inclusion of certain aspects of education into WTO negotiations or the development of various forms of transnational education. Only Greece and Portugal reported serious concern about the role of imported education. Answers to transnational education have been mainly of two types: to rule it out (as in Greece) or to subject it to national quality assurance or accreditation (e.g. Hungary, Lithuania or Austria). Neither is likely to resolve the issue. As was pointed out by Latvia, national regulations are not in a position to stop the development of unofficial transnational education, mainly because it does not seek, and maybe does not need to be integrated in the national frame.

Third, the Bologna Declaration added a new dimension to the policy of internationalisation by "articulating national and European attractiveness" (France). There seems to be a growing awareness that for foreign students the choice is first between Europe and other continents, and only once Europe is seen as a real option

does the student refine his/her choice. Austria sees the promotion of Europe as a whole as a study/research place as the "backbone of the Bologna Declaration". For Greece, the increased competitiveness of Europe is a means to improve the situation in each individual country. For the Netherlands, the need to be attractive and readable was a major reason for signing the Bologna Declaration in the first place .

There are, of course, various reasons why the attention paid to attractiveness and competitiveness is growing throughout Europe.

Three main motivations seem to play a role.

For several countries, the main goal is to attract more foreign students, in particular non-Europeans. France and Germany expressed concern about diminishing attractiveness and Sweden wants to prevent a similar drift. Receiving more foreign students is mentioned as a national goal in the UK, Norway and Sweden (which have long "exported" many students and now want to "import" more), Austria, Germany, France, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands as well as in Malta, Hungary and Latvia. Many of these countries, as well as Switzerland, are in particular interested in attracting young researchers in order to maintain a world-class research environment. Another goal they have in common is to increase the international acceptance of their own degrees.

Another major reason for policies aimed at increasing the attractiveness of national higher education is related to European integration. For countries in the accession process to the EU, their integration into the EU programmes has stimulated the need and willingness to be attractive to students from other European countries. Some countries stress that their graduates will seek study and employment in Europe and therefore the national system must be competitive (e.g. Estonia or Malta), several others emphasise that in the framework of the EU programmes they need to be attractive in order to have "real exchanges" and not only an outflow of students (all 3 Baltic countries, Slovenia, Romania, etc).

As Bulgaria put it, "these efforts are mainly related to European integration, but they also meet the objectives of the Bologna Declaration".

A third, slightly different reason can be found in some countries which see the Europeanisation of their higher education systems as a means to make them more competitive. This is strongly emphasised in Italy, where a "very high national priority" and the main aim of the broad reforms in progress are to increase the competitiveness of Italian universities. Other countries, e.g. Austria and Malta, also see Europeanisation as a factor to gain a competitive edge.

With these various aims in mind, **different types of measures have been introduced throughout Europe.** Several countries have developed comprehensive strategies. These are typically based on co-operation between government (Ministry of Education and Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and higher education institutions and usually start as a response to a national report confirming the need for action in this area. In Sweden a State Committee proposed in February 2001 a five-year action plan ("Advantage Sweden") which was perceived as urgently needed. In Finland the Ministry set up a working group in the fall of 2000 to design a marketing strategy for Finnish higher education. In Germany the process was started at the end of 1999 with a report adopted jointly by the federal and states governments stressing the need to increase the international competitiveness of German higher education. This led one year later to a major federal marketing project to stimulate through DAAD and the Rectors' Conference the "export" of German higher education, with a budget of over DM one billion. In the UK the Prime Minister set a clear target in June 1999: to increase Britain's market share to 25 % of the world's mobile students. The British Council now operates a major five-

year worldwide plan to establish the "EducationUK" brand name to help British universities in their marketing efforts.

Measures applied include traditional ones, such as information (brochures, databases, student fairs) and the provision of language courses for incoming students (both for ERASMUS exchange students and for others). There is, however, a whole range of other developments which demonstrate the growing role and the re-orientation of policies for higher education competitiveness.

Active marketing is rapidly gaining ground and is becoming an increasingly important task for many existing national agencies such as the British Council, DAAD, NUFFIC, etc. France has recently created a marketing body (Edufrance) and Switzerland is considering creating one. In many cases these agencies push for the transformation of existing study programmes and the creation of new ones responding to the needs of international students. In many countries (e.g. the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany and Hungary) universities are setting up a new generation of internationally oriented, mostly postgraduate programmes taught in English, either specifically for foreign students or for a mixed audience of local and international students. There seems to be a growing awareness that Europe could offer on the world market unique programmes drawing on the joint curricular work of institutions in more than one country. Some countries are establishing support centres *in* the targeted countries (e.g. Netherlands, Germany; the UK has already established such centres around the world).

A profound, long-overdue change can be noticed in visa policies.

After at least one decade of disastrous visa policies applied to foreign students, interns and teachers/researchers, a number of countries are now changing their approach. The UK, Ireland and Malta are the only countries referring to a well-established policy of making immigration procedures in this area as user-friendly as possible. Other countries seem to have discovered the need for a drastic change (France, Germany, the Netherlands). Several are now introducing more user-friendly procedures (Germany, France), the possibility for students to work part-time, to return home in the summer or to bring along their family (Austria, Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, Flanders). Some countries now recognise the need to improve non-educational services to foreign students, concerning e.g. accommodation (in Italy, Sweden, Austria and France) or "social and academic tutoring" (in Germany). Some countries also recommend a more generous approach to the recognition of foreign degrees (e.g. Sweden, or Germany's "Master Plus" scheme aimed at helping holders of a foreign Bachelor degree to find their way into German higher education).

It is interesting to observe that while very few countries see tuition-free education as a key factor of attractiveness (exceptions are the Czech Republic regarding Slovak students and Belgium) equally few (the UK, the Netherlands, to a limited extent Malta, Latvia or Hungary) mention financial reasons as an important motive for international marketing. On the contrary the no-fee policy in the international context has been recently reconfirmed in Sweden (overall) and in Germany (for studies up to the first degree) and several countries have announced their intention to provide additional grants to incoming students, e.g. Germany, the UK, Austria, Sweden and the Netherlands. From these observations it should be clear that in most cases the efforts towards increased attractiveness and competitiveness of European higher education are driven mostly by non-financial motives, such as cultural influence, the internationalisation of the national higher education system, labour market and research policy needs, the safeguarding of the higher education sector through the inflow of talent, etc.

Another important observation is that in all countries the national schemes put in place stress that it is the responsibility of higher education institutions themselves to be attractive to foreign applicants and to act to recruit them. At the same time, few plans seem to consider it important to provide incentives to institutions. In the UK a main aim of the national scheme is to develop the "entrepreneurial skills" at universities. Sweden and Germany provide some initial support for marketing initiatives. Flanders provides to its universities the same funding for non - EU students as for European students for up to 2 % of their total enrolments. In a few countries (e.g. Malta, Latvia, Iceland) some other financial incentives seem to exist.

A number of countries have taken measures to foster the international acceptance of their degrees, mostly through traditional instruments (e.g. bilateral agreements or the dissemination of information through the NARIC network or the national Ministry of Education). In several countries the better international acceptance of their degrees is seen as a major reason for, and a main benefit of the 1997 Lisbon Convention. Some are increasing their support (e.g. through the Diploma Supplement or more specific backing) to foreign graduates who need to get their degree recognised or accepted in their home country. Other countries rely on more structural reforms to improve the international acceptance of their degrees, e.g. through ECTS credits or grading (Italy, Estonia), the adoption of a Bachelor/Master structure (Germany, Austria, Italy) or through the creation/strengthening of a trustworthy accreditation system (the Netherlands, Switzerland, Romania). The most comforting aspect, however, is that more and more European countries and universities seem to have become aware that their degrees are not automatically recognised at their real level in the

outside world and that co-ordinated action is needed in this area (starting with a thorough survey of the actual situation).

PROGRESS TOWARDS READABLE DEGREE SYSTEMS

This section deals with changes and reforms affecting the overall architecture of higher education systems, from the point of view of the readability and comparability of the degrees and qualifications offered.

New qualification frameworks

In the UK two new comprehensive qualification frameworks have been adopted recently: one for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (November 2000) and another one for Scotland (January 2001). They are mainly a development recommended in the Dearing and Garrick Reports of 1997 to enhance internal transparency, but the Bologna Declaration shaped the later stages and added impetus for clear definitions of levels, accurate qualification descriptors and a consistent nomenclature. Both frameworks are output-based; they differ in some respects (with Scotland putting more emphasis on credits and keeping its traditional dual system of Bachelors-Honours degrees), but they come together at the level of the Honours degree and have an identical structure for postgraduate degrees.

In Ireland, where higher education is a binary system and lifelong learning a major priority, the Qualifications Act of July 1999 led to the development of a national qualifications framework which is now operational. It covers all qualifications except those from universities, with which it is however closely co-ordinated.

The definitions and approach adopted in these three frameworks, including their attempt to eliminate all inconsistencies in the degree nomenclature, will no doubt contribute to the objective of a more easily understood degree system at European level. No other European country has developed a similar comprehensive framework of qualifications, but other efforts were undertaken.

Finland, Bulgaria and Malta have specifically tried to streamline their degree systems. In France the introduction in 1999 of the *Mastaire* as a master-level degree common to universities and *Grandes Ecoles* is also a first step in this direction in a particularly complex degree system. Lithuania tried to put its national degree structure in line with UNESCO's ISCED scale, and several countries in Central and Eastern Europe are streamlining their lists of areas of specialisation in order to keep pace with transformations of their system (e.g. Slovenia, Bulgaria).

Increased integration of higher education systems

The move towards integrated systems of higher education (i.e. various types of different and complementary institutions and qualifications organised within a single, cohesive system) has been confirmed. Austria pointed out that the Bologna Declaration had increased the awareness that higher education has become a diversified system extending beyond universities. In the Czech Republic, where a move in this direction has been in progress, it may have served to clarify the issue. In Norway's integrated system (*Network Norway*) the two sub-sectors usually recognise each other's study programmes on a time-for-time basis. Sweden also has universities and colleges but sees its higher education as a "unitary" system accepted by the educational community as well as by the labour market. In several other countries recent developments point in the same direction, in particular through the adoption of identical or symmetric degrees structures. In Portugal the law of 1997 introduced the same degrees at colleges and universities. In Germany, the new Bachelor/Master degrees introduced as of 1998 are the same, irrespective of the institution which awards them (university or

Fachhochschule), and they are subject to the same accreditation procedures. In response to the Bologna Declaration several countries introduced Bachelor (and in some cases also Master) degrees in their non-university sector instead of the traditional vocational diplomas. Professional Bachelors have been created since 1999 in Denmark, Malta, Lithuania, Slovakia, France, Slovenia and Latvia and the MjØs report proposed to establish a common degree system for professional and academic studies in Norway.

The Bologna Declaration has clearly stimulated a new debate on "bridges" between the sub-systems of binary higher education systems and in some cases new possibilities have been introduced.

The main aim of these changes seems to be - in perfect harmony with the lifelong learning objective - to avoid dead ends for students who did not make the right choice immediately and for those who change their plans. Agreements between colleges and universities setting out the transfer possibilities have been encouraged in the Netherlands and in both higher education systems of Belgium.

Belgium's French Community adopted in 1999 new legislation aimed at unifying the transfer possibilities, some becoming guaranteed and others subject to clearly defined conditions. In the Netherlands, Germany, Hungary, Estonia, Slovenia and Bulgaria, the possibilities for college graduates to continue their studies towards a Master degree at a university have been expanding, either according to new rules or simply by changed practice.

France's new professional *licence* is being developed mainly for graduates of two-year professional courses such as BTS and IUT.

In all countries where college-type higher education has been introduced recently, "bridges" towards university studies were included in the new legislation, e.g. in the UK ("foundation degrees" can be converted into Bachelors after no more than 4 terms of further studies), Malta, Italy or Lithuania. There seems however to be a significant gap between the possibilities existing in the legislation and the actual practice, as reported by e.g. the Czech Republic, Finland and in particular Greece, where transfers remain very uncommon.

Widespread support to the Diploma Supplement

The Bologna Declaration called for the implementation of the Diploma Supplement and has indeed significantly contributed to its rapid dissemination. Most countries see the Bologna Declaration and the Diploma Supplement as complementary, the implementation of one pushing for the fuller implementation of the other.

The review of measures already taken or planned with respect to the Diploma Supplement shows that it is seen as a key instrument for the achievement of systems of more readable and comparable degree systems. The measures planned by governments and by higher education organisations and institutions indicate that the Diploma Supplement should be very widely used in the very near future.

At the EU level a project was launched in late 1998 to promote and implement the Diploma Supplement, and by March 2001 Diploma Supplement promoters have undertaken various information activities in EU and EEA countries, often in close co-operation with national authorities, in a joint effort to create widespread understanding of, and knowledge about the Diploma Supplement.

The project has developed a template which will be available to higher education institutions in April 2001. The project has been based on the final version of the Diploma Supplement jointly developed by the Council of Europe, the European Commission and UNESCO/CEPES.

In a few countries the introduction of the Diploma Supplement is or will be compulsory, e.g. in Denmark, Italy, Latvia, Romania, Slovenia and at Swiss *Fachhochschulen*. In some systems a compulsory or generalised national Diploma Supplement has been in use previously and the transition to the European version is in progress, e.g. in Hungary and Flanders. Many countries predict that the Diploma Supplement will be in common use by 2002 or 2003, not on the basis of a compulsory introduction but rather at the initiative of the higher education institutions themselves or as a response to a "recommendation" by the Ministry, the Rectors' Conference or both, e.g. all Nordic countries, French Community of Belgium (universities only), Estonia, Malta, Liechtenstein, Iceland and Germany). In the Czech Republic higher education institutions must issue a Diploma Supplement to students who request it. A similar obligation is planned in Slovakia. In a number of countries, the Diploma Supplement is still being tested, but its generalisation is expected (Spain, France, Poland, Portugal, Austria). In the French Community of Belgium (*Hautes Ecoles*), the UK, Lithuania and Bulgaria the introduction of the Diploma Supplement is under consideration.

In several countries a national template for the Diploma Supplement is either already in use (Hungary, Finland, Germany, Czech Republic, Italy) or in preparation (e.g. in Sweden and Estonia). An English version will be added either for all students or at students' request (as in Slovenia). With a view to enhance the Diploma Supplement's role as a tool for employability, Italy plans to include additional information of interest for employers. Liechtenstein will use ECTS credits and grades in its Diploma Supplements. In several countries the method and the speed adopted for the introduction of the Diploma Supplement may differ between universities and colleges/polytechnics, either as a result of different policies (e.g. French Community of Belgium), various degrees of autonomy (e.g. in Switzerland) or because of differently structured databases (e.g. Norway). Finally it should be pointed out that the Diploma Supplement is of paramount importance in those countries where old and new degrees co-exist, as in Italy during the transition years and in Germany, where old and new degrees may coexist within the same institution and perhaps for years to come.

MOVE TOWARDS MORE COHERENT DEGREE STRUCTURES

The move towards a more coherent system of degrees has been the most visible part of the process which should lead to the completion of the European higher education area by 2010.

The gradual replacement of long first degrees by studies articulated in an undergraduate and a postgraduate phase has been accelerating since the signature of the Bologna Declaration. This section will review the main reforms in progress or in preparation and draw some key interim conclusions from the analysis of these changes.

Sustained reforms towards a Bachelor/Master articulation

This section will try to identify the main patterns followed by reform processes to introduce and extend the Bachelor/Master structure.

Bachelors/Masters are traditional in the UK, Ireland and Malta and are well established in Iceland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. In the Nordic countries a varying number of long one-tier "professional" degrees have been kept from the old system (in e.g. medicine, law, theology or technology) and the consolidation of the Bachelor/Master structure continues, in relation with the Bologna Declaration. In Norway the MjØs report proposes a common degree structure for universities and colleges with 3 or 3.5-year Bachelors and 2 or 1.5-year Masters (except for some long one-tier professional degrees). The proposal is supported by the Network Norway Council and a new law is in preparation. Sweden is debating its "undergraduate *magister*" degree which is not

easy to reconcile with the Bologna pattern. Denmark is introducing professional Bachelors in the college sector and Bachelors in Life Science on the road towards Medical degrees, and is strengthening its efforts to establish Bachelors as the normal entrance level to a broader spectrum of careers.

In all three Baltic countries Bachelors and Masters were introduced within a few years from independence and have in the meantime become widespread at universities, except in certain "professional" subject areas with long, one-tier curricula (mainly medical disciplines and some other such as law, agronomy, architecture, engineering, depending on the country). The consolidation of the new system continues, in particular through its extension to the college/polytechnic sector. In Latvia the legislation was changed in 2000 and a new degree structure will be in place from 2002; it will be symmetric for academic and professional studies at universities, and Bachelors/Masters will replace the old 3 to 6-year professional degrees after a transition period during which the two systems will run in parallel. A similar move is planned in Estonia, where the new plan is for 3-year Bachelors at colleges as well as at universities. In Lithuania the new law introducing a binary system will come into force from September 2001.

In Germany and Italy the reforms introduced since 1998 - 1999 in relation to the Sorbonne and Bologna Declarations have entered the phase of full-speed implementation. In Germany the new legislation adopted at federal and state level provides for the voluntary development of Bachelor and Master curricula (in parallel to traditional long ones or replacing them) but requires that they be based on modules and ECTS credits and accredited through the new, independent accreditation system. There are currently over 600 new Bachelor and Master courses offering different "profiles", covering all subject areas (except medicine and theology) and involving a large number of different universities and *Fachhochschulen*. The process enjoys strong support from the Ministry, the Rectors' Conference and the DAAD and is still gaining momentum: the pace of creation of new courses is fast, and the number of students enrolled grew by 40 % in the last academic year. Two entire universities (Bochum and Greifswald) and many faculties at other universities have decided to drop their traditional courses and to offer only Bachelors and Masters. The Rectors' Conference expects the new structure to develop and become standard throughout the country. At the same time Germany has adopted and is now implementing a comprehensive marketing plan to promote its higher education in the world.

The other major reform scheme already in full implementation is that of Italy. On the basis of new legislation passed for the most at the end of 1999 the introduction of a new degree structure is compulsory at all universities and in all disciplines from the academic year 2001-2002 at the latest (some universities introduced it voluntarily one year earlier). The new 3-year *Laurea* (180 credits) and 5-year *Laurea Specialistica* (300 credits in total) will replace the "old" one-tier *Laurea* which will be phased out after a short transition period. A national credit system based on ECTS will be applied for all courses. Curricula need to be fully redeveloped, in connection with regional and professional partners, and must meet minimum requirements for each main component (transversal skills including a foreign language, specific subject skills, free choice courses, dissertation). These requirements have been fixed for each "subject class" (42 for the first degree, 104 for the second) with a view to guarantee the breadth and flexibility of curricula and avoid an overload of traditional lecture hours. The system foresees quality evaluation, but no formal periodic "accreditation" of the new programmes.

Since the signature of the Bologna Declaration, other countries have in various ways addressed its recommendation concerning degree structures. France created the

Licence professionnelle (requiring a total of 3 years of study) and the *Mastaire* (as a common denominator for diverse qualifications requiring 5 years of study at universities or *Grandes Ecoles*). Universities developed in close co-operation with professional circles over 600 proposals for *Licence professionnelles*, of which 170 were accepted to start in October 2000. In Austria recent legislation created the possibility for universities to introduce Bachelor and Master courses, but not as in Germany in parallel with existing long, one-tier programmes. After a slow start (only 2 Bachelor courses in 2000-2001) the development of new curricula seems to be gaining momentum: 6 more degrees will be offered from 2001-2002 and at least 8 others are in preparation. There is as yet no accreditation agency for these courses. In Flanders universities and the Rectors' Conference are preparing a move in the same direction, with 3-year Bachelors and mostly 1.5-year Master degrees based on accreditation. In Switzerland the two-tier structure has been adopted independently by some universities (in particular the University of St-Gallen, where 3-year Bachelors and 1 to 2-year Masters will start in 2001) and its introduction is planned on a step-by-step basis elsewhere, with due co-ordination at the national level in order to avoid too wide variations in the new degrees. The National University Council has obtained the possibility to pass directives for this purpose, and an accreditation agency and a credit system are envisaged. Liechtenstein's two higher education institutions have adopted the Bachelor/Master structure based on ECTS credits.

In several countries where Bachelors were introduced during the last decade, the Bologna Declaration has provided renewed impetus to establish them more firmly as genuine degrees in their own capacity or to further generalise them. In the Netherlands the possibility to have a Bachelor-type *kandidaats* degree already existed but was not much used. A new law will change the system to enable the widespread introduction of 3-year Bachelors and 1-2 year Masters, together with a new system of accreditation as a *sine qua non* requirement. Graduates will be able to choose between the Dutch titles and international Bachelor/Master degrees and the funding system for institutions and students will be adjusted. Higher education institutions are already changing their curricula and rapid implementation is expected when the law comes in force from 2002/2003. In the Czech and Slovak Republics the possibility for universities to offer Bachelor degrees was introduced in 1990, but has not been widely used. In the Czech Republic some 75 % of students still study in long one-tier programmes and only 17 % are enrolled in Bachelor courses. Additional legislation is being considered to establish Bachelors as more independent degrees, standardise their duration, and make them more clearly a requirement for admission to Master studies. Similarly, in the Slovak Republic only few Bachelors were created under the 1990 law; the country is now preparing profound changes with a new reform aimed at establishing three clear levels (Bachelor, Master, Doctorate), with broadly based and versatile Bachelors serving both as a qualification giving access to the labour market and as a requirement for further studies (except in a small number of fields like medicine). In Finland Bachelors were abolished in 1980 and re-introduced in 1995 mainly as an intermediary step towards Master programmes. The government's 1999-2004 Plan for Higher Education Development includes proposals to bring the Finnish system in line with the Bologna Declaration. In Bulgaria an amendment to the 1995 Law on Higher Education changed and simplified the degree structure and redefined Bachelors more in line with the Bologna Declaration. Poland plans to move from its already existing 2-stage higher education system (Bachelor/Master) to a 3- stage one thanks to the integration of Doctoral studies (which were hitherto not considered as a part of higher education) as the third level. Portugal is considering the best way to reconcile its current 4- level degree structure with the Bologna Declaration and plans to adopt a subject-by-subject

approach, in co-ordination between universities and *politecnicos*, towards a newly defined system of degrees, probably starting with engineering.

In Hungary and Romania the new higher education laws of the early 1990s created undergraduate "colleges" within universities – in parallel to external colleges of professional studies in Hungary.

Where they exist these university colleges offer mainly "professional" education up to the Bachelor level, while the universities continue to run academic degrees as a separate one-tier track leading straight to the Master level. In these systems there are formally Bachelors and Masters, but not in a sequence as in the Bologna Declaration - even though the "bridges" leading from a college Bachelor to a university Master degree may be somewhat expanded in order to make the whole system more flexible. A similar model exists in Spain, where universities offer short and long courses leading to degrees of different orientation and level; an overall revision of the 1983 Law on Higher Education in the light of the Bologna Declaration and other changes is in preparation.

Some countries in Central and Eastern Europe have two-tier systems consisting of long "undergraduate" studies (4-5 years in the non-medical areas) leading to the main degree (whether called Bachelor or not) and "postgraduate" studies of a duration of usually 2 years leading to various types of specialisation or "Master" degrees. Doctoral studies require an additional 2-4 years and are sometimes structured in 2 steps (Doctorate, Higher Doctorate or "Habilitation"). While this structure may be seen as in line with the principles of the Bologna Declaration because it is formally "two-tier", the long duration of studies and the notion of what is "undergraduate", "graduate" and "postgraduate" raise issues that would need to be considered.

NEW BACHELOR DEGREES: 3 to 4 YEARS, DIVERSE PROFILES

Not less than 180, not more than 240 ECTS credits

The reforms under scrutiny confirm a crucial feature which was already emphasised in the preparatory report for the Bologna Conference in 1999. All reforms endorse the underlying principle that Bachelor degrees in Europe require no less than 3 and no more than 4 years, or rather no less than 180 and no more than 240 ECTS credits. These limits are explicit in legislation or regulations in e.g. Germany, the Czech Republic, Poland, Finland, Hungary, Iceland and Latvia. Ireland has a tradition of 4-year Bachelors. In Denmark, Iceland, Sweden and Norway most Bachelor (or *kandidaat*) degrees take 3 years. In the UK (except Scotland) the standard duration of Bachelor (Honours) courses is usually 3 years for full-time students, but many sandwich courses require the equivalent of 4 years and there are some 4-year courses classified as "undergraduate" although they are called "Masters" (Sweden and France also have this type of degrees). Portugal seems to be considering 4-year first degrees in at least certain subjects. Scotland and Malta have two levels of first degrees, i.e. an "ordinary" Bachelor after 3 years and an advanced Bachelor or "Honours" degree after 4 years (this distinction has become obsolete in England, Wales and Northern Ireland).

A main conclusion is that any system of readable and comparable degrees in Europe needs to take full account of this variance in the "normal" time required for the completion of a first, Bachelor-type degree. The seminar on undergraduate degrees held in Helsinki in February 2001 came to the conclusion that Bachelors in Europe should require no less than 180 and no more than 240 ECTS credits. In view of developments since June 1999 the suggestion made in the preparatory report for the Bologna Conference still holds that 4-year curricula with proven quality could lead to an "advanced" undergraduate qualification. The co-existence in Europe of these two types

of Bachelors would be all the less problematic if there were particular patterns in specific subject or professional areas (e.g. if Bachelors at universities/faculties of technology all required the equivalent of 4 years worth of credits).

A clear trend towards 3-year Bachelors

There is however a clear trend in recent reforms towards 3-year Bachelors. This should of course be seen also in conjunction with the fact that the majority of existing degrees of this type are in 3 years. The new Italian *Laurea*, which will be generalised throughout the system, is in 3 years or rather 180 ECTS credits. In Germany 84 % of the Bachelor degrees created at Universities are of 3 years' duration and at *Fachhochschulen* 48% are of 3 years' and 30% of 3.5 years' duration. The first Austrian and Swiss Bachelors and the new French *licence professionnelle* are also of 3 years' duration.

Estonia plans to reduce its current Bachelor degrees from 4-year to 3-year curricula. The Netherlands and Flanders are preparing for 3-year Bachelors at universities, and in Norway the MjØs report's proposal is for a 3 + 2 or 3.5 + 1.5 Bachelor-Master articulation in the whole system. In addition, where college/polytechnic diplomas have been changed into Bachelors, these are mostly 3-year degrees.

Diverse types and profiles of Bachelor degrees

As could be expected, the general trend towards a main articulation in undergraduate and postgraduate studies comes together with a diversification of the purpose and profile of the Bachelor degrees which are being introduced. The requirement in the Bologna Declaration that first degrees should be "relevant to the labour market", which first created fear that all Bachelors would be expected to be purely vocational and geared to specific short term needs of the labour market, has now been interpreted in a more open and positive way: there are various ways in which degrees can be "relevant", and this diversity is of essence to the whole process towards a European higher education area. In several countries the professionally oriented diplomas of the colleges/polytechnics have been adjusted to "professional Bachelors" and co-exist with more "academic" or "scientific" Bachelors offered by universities. This is e.g. the case in Denmark, which underlines that both types of qualifications are expected to be "relevant", but of course not in exactly the same way.

In most reform processes a major requirement is that the development of the new curricula at universities must involve some kind of participation or involvement from professional circles before the new courses are authorised or accredited. The requirement is not that degrees should be just a preparation for a particular, well-defined profession, but rather that certain dimensions required for nearly all future professional activities ("transversal skills") should receive due attention. Several models have been developed for broadly based Bachelor degrees (e.g. the "Greifswald-Modell" in Germany or the "college" approach at the universities of Utrecht or Maastricht in the Netherlands). There is clear emphasis in reform processes that Bachelors should have a profile of their own and at least some degree of autonomy from a particular, predetermined Master specialisation.

In some countries (particularly in Finland, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Flanders) universities have explicitly stressed that their Bachelor degrees should be mainly seen as providing a solid scientific basis for further studies and thus as a step towards the Master level. Similar views certainly exist at universities in other countries. This type of mainly non-terminal Bachelors is however more than just a pass-through: the University of Leuven sees them as marking the time when students select their options for Master studies and the Swiss University Rectors' Conference sees them as the stage at which students can choose, and possibly change the place and field of their further studies.

This calls for the development of less narrowly focused undergraduate curricula serving as a common basis for various areas of later specialisation.

The role of Bachelor degrees as a platform and an instrument facilitating choice and mobility should not be underestimated in the European higher education area and does not seem to be in contradiction with the principles of the Bologna Declaration. This is

probably all the more true in countries with a binary or an integrated higher education system where a sufficient number of graduates enter the labour market with a professional Bachelor from the college/polytechnic sector.

The pattern of Bachelor degrees which is emerging in Europe is one of diversity, with more or less vocational and professional Bachelors; broadly based Bachelors with a dual purpose (i.e. developing skills required in a wide range of professional activities or giving access to postgraduate studies in a selected area); and scientific or academic Bachelors providing the basis for further studies in several related areas of specialisation. With adequate bridges, fair credit transfer and customised gap courses between these various tracks, the "system of readable and comparable degrees" in Europe could be effective and would resemble a network rather than just a ladder of qualifications.

POSTGRADUATE DEGREES: SOME ADDITIONAL COHERENCE, BUT....

The postgraduate level of higher education is receiving growing attention in many countries in Europe. Competition for students and talent has increased in particular at the Master and Doctoral levels.

The most visible trends are the continuing diversification of Master-type qualifications and some general efforts to organise this diversity in order to create increased transparency and coherence in postgraduate higher education.

Increasingly diverse Master degrees

The diversity of Bachelors is matched by a diversity of Masters and postgraduate diplomas, and the articulation between the two levels has become a major topic in the debate on the emergence of a system of readable and comparable degrees in Europe. Master degrees differ considerably in their profile and purpose: further specialisation, broader competencies through study in a different or complementary area, professional preparation, European courses offered by a consortium of institutions or targeting international students, preparation for doctoral studies, etc. As was already pointed out previously the relation of the postgraduate level with the undergraduate level is also diverse: nearly automatic pass-through, Bachelors as a platform for choice and mobility, more or less selective admission procedures to Master programmes (e.g. in the new Dutch law), etc. This underlying diversity of curricula is not made more transparent by a consistent nomenclature of degrees. The same generic name "Master" (or its equivalent in other languages) designates official or accredited postgraduate courses as well as simple certificates like e.g. in Spain, where "Masters" are not part of the official degree structure. In many countries there are "postgraduate" degrees *following* a long one-tier degree requiring some 5 years of study, e.g. in Romania and several other countries in Central and Eastern Europe. A few countries already have two levels of postgraduate degrees before the Doctorate (e.g. Finland with the *licenciaat*) or might have two in the future, e.g. Italy (in some areas where the new second degree, the *Laurea Specialistica*, is followed by studies for a Master degree) or Switzerland (in case the existing DEA after the current one-tier degree is kept for post-Master studies in the new degree structure).

The diversity of Master degrees is further increased by developments in binary systems. The possibility for colleges/polytechnics to award Master degrees has been in many countries the subject of a very intense debate dominated by two questions: the respective role of the two types of institutions (in several countries universities have opposed non-university Masters) and the development of franchised postgraduate courses in co-operation with foreign universities where polytechnics do not have the possibility to offer such courses themselves. The outcomes of the debate until now have

been manifold. Denmark has clearly excluded the possibility of Master degrees outside universities. In Austria, *Fachhochschulen* may award *Magister* and engineering diplomas which are specific to them and are not part of the Bachelor/Master scheme. In Finland, polytechnics (AMK) have won a limited right to offer from 2002 postgraduate courses requiring from 1 to 1.5 years of study but leading to a *sui generis* diploma rather than to a Master degree. In the Netherlands *hogescholen* will be able to offer from 2002 Master courses recognised by law provided they can fund them from non-governmental sources. Liechtenstein's *Fachhochschule* will soon offer a new Master programme leading to a British degree. In Germany, where the degrees of *Fachhochschulen* are traditionally different from those of universities, courses created in accordance with the new Bachelor/Master structure are subject to a single set of criteria, lead to the same degrees and are under the purview of the same accreditation agencies. There are examples of courses offered in co-operation between *Fachhochschulen* and universities, but there are still not many Master degrees outside universities. In Poland, the Czech Republic or Portugal, where the possibility for colleges/polytechnics to offer Master degrees has existed for some years, it has not become common practice yet. Recent moves towards symmetric degree structures (e.g. in Norway or Lithuania) have not yet led to actual changes. The main conclusion which can be drawn from this overview is that the pressure for Master degrees at colleges/polytechnics has led to limited change until now.

In a number of binary systems where the Bachelor/Master structure is being introduced universities plan to keep the Master degree as their "normal" final degree (e.g. in Switzerland, Flanders, Finland and the Netherlands). This means that while the Bachelor level may serve as a platform for choice and mobility, the majority, if not all students are expected to continue their studies immediately in a Master programme. At the same time, many universities stress that admission to their Master programmes should not be automatic (e.g. in the Netherlands) for all holders of a Bachelor degree, even in a related area. As has already been mentioned previously the possibilities for holders of a professional Bachelor degree or a Bachelor-level diploma from a college/polytechnic to study for a university Master degree have increased substantially in several countries.

Some more coherence at the Master level

The diversity of curricula and the inconsistent nomenclature of degrees have led some countries to undertake specific efforts to streamline their qualifications framework at this level. The two new qualifications frameworks in the UK pay special attention to postgraduate degrees and introduce a consistent nomenclature which could usefully be taken into consideration for more transparency in the European system. Finland also plans to address the structure of its postgraduate levels. The new French *Mastaire* introduced in 1999 to designate qualifications requiring 5 years of higher education is the first qualification in the system common to *Grandes Ecoles* and universities. Efforts towards a more coherent nomenclature of postgraduate degrees would also be needed within particular subjects to distinguish between various types of qualifications. The European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD) has adopted a proposal distinguishing between three broad categories of Master degrees (generalist M.Sc. in Management, specialised Masters in a particular area, and post-experience MBAs). In other subject areas (e.g. engineering) a similar distinction between broadly based scientific degrees, more professional degrees and more specialised degrees seems also desirable.

As the Bachelor/Master sequence becomes more common in European higher education some trends are emerging concerning the average duration of studies leading

to a Master-type qualification. In several countries a more or less formal standard requires a total of 5 years in differently articulated combinations. In Italy the total required for the new *Laurea Specialistica* is 300 ECTS points (of which 180 for the first degree, if it is fully credited). Some countries have set a minimal duration of 3-4 years for the Bachelor and 1-2 years for the Master, but a total of 5 years as the minimum (e.g. Latvia or Estonia). In Finland the minimum is also 5 years for one-tier or sequential studies. In some cases the combined duration of undergraduate and Master studies may actually result in slightly longer studies than in the current system in certain subject areas (e.g. in Switzerland).

In all systems with separate Master degrees (i.e. those following the previous completion of an undergraduate degree) its minimal duration is never inferior to one year. In several countries it is however higher, e.g. 1.5 years in Latvia in certain subjects or 2 years in Italy. There are few examples of Master degrees requiring more than 2 years of study; some can be found in Poland (up to 2.5 years) or the Czech Republic (up to 3 years). Hence, the "normal" duration of Master courses is between 1 and 2 years and is required by the legislation (e.g. in Germany) or by the planned regulations (e.g. in Switzerland) in a significant number of countries.

There is a need for higher education institutions in Europe to agree on some basic minimal requirements for Master degrees. A key requirement is that they should be postgraduate not only in terms of timing, but also of orientation and content. For genuine Masters of Arts and of Science a thesis and the equivalent of one calendar year (rather than an academic year of 9 -10 months) or 90 (rather than just 60) postgraduate credits seem to be the minimal requirements, in particular when they follow immediately a 3-year Bachelor degree. This principle has been advocated by some universities when preparing their plans for conversion to a Bachelor/Master structure. It should be given consideration in order to ensure the quality, readability and credibility of European Master degrees.

In conjunction with the general trend towards a Bachelor/Master structure many higher education systems have kept, or are planning to keep some long curricula leading straight to the traditional Master-level degree or diploma. This is the case mainly in medicine and other regulated professions for which there are specific European Union Directives on professional recognition, in theology and to a lesser extent in engineering and law. In many countries such long one-tier degrees exist as exceptions to the Bachelor/Master structure which applies everywhere else. In some countries (e.g. Switzerland) and some disciplines (e.g. engineering) universities have stressed the need for some such exceptions. In Germany traditional long degrees are seen as a reality in the short term, but are unlikely to stay as exceptions isolated from the main pattern of degrees in the longer term (with the exception of medicine and a few other disciplines). In several countries, the number of "exceptions" is shrinking: Denmark has introduced in 2000 a Bachelor in medicine, leaving theology as the only discipline still not organised according to the Bachelor/Master structure. In Latvia's new law and in the plans of Norway and Finland the number of areas with long one-tier courses is diminishing. A major point in the Italian reform is that Master degrees require 300 credits in total, but can only be accessed after the completion of the 180 credit points Bachelor-type *Laurea* (universities are not allowed to offer Master courses without corresponding Bachelor courses). In the Czech Republic, an amendment has been proposed to the law on higher education to make the Bachelor degree compulsory for admission to Master studies, with the possibility of some exceptions if authorised by the Accreditation Council. A reasonable conclusion of this analysis seems to be that the existence of a limited number of long one-tier, Master-level degrees in some

professional disciplines would not seriously undermine the overall convergence towards an undergraduate-postgraduate system of qualifications.

There are however examples of quality curricula articulated as Bachelors/Masters in all disciplines and professional areas, and the benefits of an intermediary degree are increasingly recognised (in particular concerning their role as a platform for mobility and choice, for easier recruitment of foreign students and better international acceptance of degrees).

More convergence in Doctoral studies

Several interesting changes point in the direction of increased convergence in Europe at the doctoral level and could encourage further movement towards doctorate degrees acceptable throughout Europe.

The first is that the previously started move towards the setting up of Doctoral Schools or Doctoral Centres (as opposed to traditional doctoral programmes) has been emphasised in several countries, e.g. Sweden, Germany, Denmark, Finland, Switzerland, Hungary or France. The main reasons for these changes are the need and willingness to meet high international standards in research and the growing awareness of the acute competition for talented students and young researchers, partly in the wake of the Bologna Declaration's emphasis on international competitiveness.

The second trend, also recognisable before but stimulated by the Bologna process of convergence, is towards one-tier doctoral studies of the Ph.D. type, i.e. towards the disappearance of the "Higher Doctorate" or "Habilitation" as in Latvia (where it was recently abolished) or Lithuania (where it is no longer required). In other countries, e.g. Austria, the Bologna Declaration has started a new debate about this issue. These changes also point in the direction of a Ph.D. based on a combination of lectures and research and opening access to an academic career.

The third trend concerns the integration of doctoral studies as the highest level of university studies as a more or less direct response to the Bologna Declaration. In several countries in Central and Eastern Europe doctoral studies were not formally part of higher education, but of research under the purview of research academies or research councils. The new Estonian law put them back into universities as the third level of degrees, and similar amendments are planned in Poland and Slovakia. Also in Italy the new laws of 1999 abolished the centrally planned State doctorate and integrated it more firmly in universities. The possibility for holders of a Bachelor degree to undertake doctoral studies, which has existed in some countries (e.g. the UK), has been introduced recently in Slovenia and Bulgaria, but there does not seem to be a generalised move in any particular direction concerning this question.

Finally, the development of joint supervision of doctoral theses (*co-tutelle de thèse*) is attracting growing interest in e.g. Italy, France, Germany or Slovakia and could encourage new initiatives towards "European" doctorates.

All these changes should of course be seen also in connection with the development of the European Research Area in parallel with the move towards a European higher education area, since their aims are similar.

LESSONS FROM THE EXPERIENCE WITH NEW BACHELOR-MASTER STRUCTURES

Based on the review of the reforms in degree structures presented in the previous sections, a series of relevant observations are proposed in the following paragraphs.

The basic triangle of reforms: new degrees + credits + accreditation

The analysis of the reforms introduced up to now shows that in most cases they combine the introduction of a new Bachelor/Master degree structure (for readability and efficiency) with a credit system (for flexibility and curricula renovation) and with a system of certification of the quality of the new programmes ("accreditation").

In some cases, one of these elements already existed (e.g. credits in the Netherlands, accreditation in Latvia). In a few cases, the introduction of one element is delayed (e.g. in Austria where the creation of a quality assurance/accreditation agency is still under consideration). In several countries the basic triangle is complemented with other items such as the development of new bridges between the university and the college/polytechnic sub-sectors, the requirement that new degrees be developed in connection with external partners (relevance) or the obligation to deliver a Diploma Supplement to all students (transparency).

Structural reforms + greater autonomy

It is interesting to observe that in the majority of countries where a recent reform plan based on the above basic triangle has been introduced it is part of a broader process which includes, or entails, a greater curricular autonomy of universities. In Italy and Austria more university autonomy is an underlying policy line in the higher education agenda. In other countries (e.g. Germany) increased curricular autonomy results from the relaxation of nationally fixed degree contents in favour of more diverse profiles and of a degree of competition between them.

Various patterns of reform

The introduction of the Bachelor/Master articulation in countries with a tradition of long one-tier degrees seems to be following different patterns according to the existing structure of the higher education system (with or without a strong college/polytechnic sector, centralised or federal authorities), the scope of the reform (nearly all disciplines, or without changing the many long professional degrees) or the transition horizon considered (compulsory change within a few years, optional change substituting old courses by new ones, or running new and old curricula in parallel). It can be observed that in many cases the adoption of the new degree structure seems to happen in two stages: first the *possibility* to create Bachelors was introduced but without enough incentives or guidance, leading to limited change (few new degrees or no real curricular review to create a profile for the Bachelor degrees); later on, often as a response to the Bologna Declaration, the reform was re-confirmed and deepened. Two-stage processes more or less following this pattern could be found in e.g. the Czech and Slovak Republics, the Netherlands or Finland.

Some particular challenges

The implementation of the Bologna Declaration seems to meet specific challenges in certain countries (e.g. Greece), certain disciplines (e.g. engineering), certain types of degree structures (e.g. those with traditional degrees requiring 4 years of study, which may need to be shortened, repositioned as advanced Bachelors or upgraded to Masters) and in some binary systems (where the profile and position of Bachelor degrees in each sub-sector is an issue).

At the same time it is interesting to point out that genuinely new programmes (e.g. those with a European dimension) and new institutions (e.g. the Dutch-Flemish University of Limburg or the *Università della Svizzera Italiana*) tend to opt for the more internationally compatible Bachelor and Master qualifications. This is a clear indication of the direction chosen by those programmes and institutions which are maybe freer than others to design higher education in accordance with the expectations of tomorrow.

STRONG MOVE TOWARDS ECTS-COMPATIBLE CREDIT SYSTEMS

ECTS, a multi-purpose tool

The information gathered for this report reflects a very strong move towards ECTS-compatible credit systems as a multi-purpose tool not only to ease recognition and facilitate mobility, but also to reform curricula and enhance universities' autonomy in this area (cf. the Italian reform process or the position of the French rectors' conference welcoming the ministerial proposal to introduce ECTS).

It is used in most countries and by many higher education institutions as an instrument for credit transfer within the framework of EU programmes – including by those which have their own, different national or institutional credit system. In several accession countries the interest in ECTS has been encouraged first as a TEMPUS priority (e.g. Czech Republic or Romania), then through their participation in ERASMUS (e.g. in Poland or Malta) and more recently by the Bologna Declaration: in the area of credit systems the Bologna process and the EU's higher education programmes act obviously as complementary moves reinforcing each other. In a number of countries the development of ECTS is also encouraged as a tool facilitating internal mobility, i.e. mobility between institutions and/or sectors of higher education in the same country.

This has been mentioned by several countries with a federal-type structure in education (Germany, Spain, Switzerland) but also by e.g. Slovakia.

Widespread adoption of ECTS as a common denominator

By the time of the signing of the Bologna Declaration over a dozen countries already had credit systems of various types. In the UK both newly adopted qualification frameworks are primarily based on outcome descriptors rather than on students' workload as in ECTS.

In Scotland however the role of SCOTCATS as a common credit system for lifelong learning has been kept, while in the rest of the UK credits should henceforward play a lesser, more implicit than explicit role.

Many countries with a credit system in place have taken steps to ensure its compatibility with, or its replacement by ECTS. In Ireland and Flanders the national system introduced as of 1995 throughout higher education is in line with ECTS and no difficulties are expected for further extension. Several countries with national workload-based credit systems checked their compatibility with ECTS; Norway (with 20 credits per year), Iceland (with 30 credits per year) and the countries around the Baltic Sea sharing the same credit system (with 40 credits per year, in Finland, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) see easy compatibility with ECTS, using a simple conversion factor. The Dutch system based on 42 credits corresponding to as many weeks of study is less easy to convert into ECTS and renewed interest in ECTS has been reported.

Spanish credits based on contact hours and the credit accumulation system used by Portuguese universities (but not by the *politecnicos*) are likely to be changed in the near future. Spanish universities have agreed on the adoption of ECTS at least for transfer purposes and the new law on higher education in preparation is expected to confirm this. Portuguese universities envisage a credit accumulation and transfer system based on ECTS which seems to receive interest also from polytechnics. In Hungary a decree of 1998 requiring all higher education institutions to introduce some credit system before 2002 was complemented by a new decree of 2000 establishing a *national* credit system fully in line with ECTS.

Several other countries have recently adopted ECTS or a national system based on ECTS, or are preparing to do so. It has become compulsory in Denmark in both higher and adult education and at Austrian universities (from 2002) and universities of

arts (from 2003). The introduction of ECTS is on its way in Switzerland (independently of the Bologna Declaration) as well as in France and in the French Community of Belgium (as a direct response to the Declaration); its generalisation is expected in all three systems on a voluntary or contractual basis (in the 4-year plans signed between French universities and the Ministry) rather than as a compulsory requirement. The new law on higher education in Slovakia foresees a national credit system based on ECTS. In Italy and Germany courses developed as part of the new degree structure must be based on ECTS to be registered or accredited. In Slovenia it is compulsory for all new curricula. In Italy an additional dimension is that the workload on which credits are based must include at least 50 % personal work, in order to move away from the traditional overload of class hours. Some countries adopted ECTS as a means to unify the credit systems in use at different institutions or faculties (e.g. in Malta). In others, ECTS grades were adopted as a means to unify the various grading systems in use (e.g. in Estonia and Latvia). In Germany the Ministries (KMK) and the rectors' conference (HRK) have agreed on a common conversion scale between German and ECTS grades.

Finally it is important to stress that **many institutions of higher education have introduced ECTS at their own initiative** even in countries with no national or compulsory credit system or before such a system becomes operational. This is the case in e.g. the Czech Republic, where the universities of technology and of economics have introduced ECTS with a view to increase student choice or to facilitate their co-operation policy. In Germany the HRK has called for further implementation of ECTS, i.e. also for traditional courses where it is not obligatory. Greece, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria do not have national systems in preparation, and ECTS exists mainly for transfer purposes within the framework of EU programmes.

Finally it should be noted that the Bologna Declaration seems to have had **very little effect on the acceptance of prior professional experience** as a replacement for traditional credits or for advanced entry into study programmes. Either the possibility already existed (e.g. in the UK, Iceland, Sweden, the French community of Belgium, Ireland, France or Portugal) or was introduced or extended for other reasons related e.g. to lifelong learning policies (as in Norway, the Netherlands and France), to the rules of the European Social Fund (e.g. in Austria) or to those of the new GRUNDTVIG strand of the SOCRATES programme (e.g. in Malta). An exception may be Italy, where the possibility to count credits for prior work-based learning has been introduced as part of the 1999 law reforming the structures of higher education.

Need for more co-ordination in the implementation process

The strong move towards ECTS as a common reference in European higher education is a signal of the broad agreement which exists on its aims and general principles. As it becomes more widespread there is a growing concern in several countries that inconsistencies in its implementation might inhibit or undermine its potential as a common denominator. Some countries have taken national measures to monitor the process. In Hungary, the adoption of a national credit system based on ECTS has been coupled with the creation of a National Credit Council with the responsibility to ensure that ECTS-type credits are introduced in a co-ordinated way at all institutions. In Germany fears about inconsistencies at the operational level led the Conference of Ministers of Education (KMK) to adopt a national framework aiming at more homogeneity in the implementation of ECTS. Coherence at the national level is an objective in many other plans for ECTS development prepared by governments or rector conferences. Spain and several other countries also reported concern about inconsistencies at the European level. In the UK, plans for ECTS under consideration

are hindered by a perceived need for more comparable level descriptors. In Norway its introduction coincides with questions about the link between workload and credits in different systems.

Switzerland underlined the complexity of the introduction and implementation process and called for more co-ordination at the European level as an urgent priority. The project "Tuning educational structures in Europe", initiated by a group of European universities and supported by the European Commission, is a two-year pilot project which intends amongst other things - by using ECTS as an accumulation and transfer system - to tune the different educational structures in Europe and to develop professional profiles and desired learning outcomes, in terms of knowledge, skills and competencies in five subject areas.

At institutional level fears that ECTS would deprive universities of the possibility to organise coherent and progressive curricula or would force them to automatically accept credits from all other institutions seem to have decreased considerably. At the same time as the autonomy of universities in these matters has been reconfirmed a need for more transparent policies for credit transfer has emerged. In several countries the risk of arbitrary or inconsistent recognition of transfer credits has been acknowledged.

The guiding principle seems to be that the receiving institution decides on transfers, but "according to predetermined criteria and procedures", as set out in e.g. the Italian reform law or the French Community of Belgium.

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION: A NEED FOR MORE CONVERGENCE

The European dimension in quality assurance foreseen in the Bologna Declaration is a vital aspect of any system of easily readable and comparable degrees as well as of Europe's attractiveness and competitiveness in the world. Its importance is widely recognised or indeed emphasised in the vast majority of European countries, in order to ease recognition procedures, facilitate mobility, increase confidence and avoid any lowering of standards. Its development is seen as a necessary complement to increased curricular autonomy of universities.

More quality assurance with a European dimension

The major event in this area has been the creation of the European Quality Assurance Network (ENQA) which was launched by the European Commission in March 2000 on the basis of a Recommendation on European co-operation in quality assurance issued by the Education Council of the EU. Most EU/EEA countries see their participation in ENQA as an important aspect of their quality assurance policy and others seem to be keen to join.

All countries have some kind of quality assurance mechanism in place, although they differ significantly in terms of purpose, focus and organisation. Quality evaluation is only an internal responsibility of higher education institutions in some countries where no national agency exists, e.g. in Austria, Switzerland, the French community of Belgium, Germany or Slovenia. In many countries there is an obligation for universities to have their own quality evaluation system and a body at national level responsible for the organisation and stimulation of this process, e.g. in Portugal, Spain, Germany and Iceland.

However the majority of countries have a quality assurance agency also carrying out external evaluation functions. Most were created or restructured in the 1990s. Some operate as single national agencies in unitary or integrated systems (e.g. in the UK, Norway, Sweden and Romania) or in binary systems (e.g. Denmark and Estonia). Other

countries have an agency for each sub-sector of a binary system, e.g. Poland and Ireland. In countries with decentralised or federal structures in higher education some specific features exist; in Spain, some communities like Andalucia and Catalunya have their own quality assurance system and agency that follows the same principles as the national level. In Germany the Federal Ministry is funding a special project operated by the Rectors' Conference for the sharing of information and experience concerning quality evaluation between the federal states. In the UK there are two agencies, one for Scotland and one for the rest of the country.

A few new quality assurance agencies were set up or are in preparation. In Italy the 1999 reform laws required all universities to re-organise their self-evaluation and replaced the former "observatory" for university evaluation by a new, independent National Committee for Quality Assurance which can set standards and produce reports. The first phase of Spain's national plan for quality evaluation expired at the end of 2000 and it is at this moment not yet clear which changes will be introduced. In Ireland the new Qualifications Act of 1999 created a new National Qualifications Agency with two awarding bodies (for higher education and for further education) next to the standing Higher Education Authority which reviews the quality assurance procedures of universities. Austria, Switzerland, the French community of Belgium and Slovakia have plans to set up a national quality assurance agency which would seek links with ENQA. A project also exists in Greece, where quality assurance has gained acceptance, but the role of the agency under consideration has not yet been defined. No plans for the creation of an agency were reported by Slovenia.

While in the UK and in Ireland quality assurance is mostly outcome-based, many other systems remain primarily based on inputs such as curricula and resources. In most cases external quality assurance agencies deal with programmes rather than whole institutions and in several countries the evaluation process is organised along subject lines on a cross-institutional basis, e.g. in the Netherlands, Flanders, Estonia and the UK. This type of "benchmarking" of particular disciplinary or professional areas is becoming more important and more common.

Accreditation is gaining momentum

Accreditation, defined as the public confirmation by an external body that certain standards of quality are met, is not a tradition in Europe. Many countries in Central and Eastern Europe established accreditation agencies after the political changes and transformations in higher education in the region. These agencies differ from each other in several respects. Their status and composition reflect various degrees of independence from the ministry, government or parliament whom they advise. In most cases their prime mission has been to "accredit" new programmes or institutions (universities or faculties), in particular private ones. In this case accreditation is rather an authorisation to set up an institution or a programme based on an *ex ante* evaluation of the components presented. Such authorisations have also existed in other countries to protect the homogeneity of nationally defined curricula and degrees, e.g. in France, Spain and Italy. In its broader, more widespread definition accreditation refers to a cyclical process (e.g. every 5 to 6 years) of certification of the quality of a programme (sometimes a whole institution) based mainly on outcomes rather than on inputs. This mission of accreditation agencies is well-established in some countries (e.g. in Hungary) and is gaining importance in others.

The relationship between quality assurance and accreditation varies from one country to another. In the UK and Ireland accreditation is carried out *de facto* not by separate specialised agencies but by the quality assurance agencies; in these cases a

publicly expressed opinion on the quality of a programme, based on established standards, is seen as the final step of the quality assurance process. This is also the case in countries with an "accreditation agency" responsible both for external quality assurance and for accreditation, e.g. in Hungary, Latvia, Estonia and Sweden. In other countries such as Denmark, Finland and Lithuania quality assurance agencies have no specific accreditation mission, or accreditation agencies have no specific role in quality assurance (even though their activities may have an important function in terms of quality evaluation and assurance at institutional level, as e.g. in the Czech and Slovak Republics). There are also examples of accreditation bodies responsible for only certain disciplines (e.g. teacher education in Portugal or engineering studies in France) or certain types of institutions: Austria has two separate accreditation agencies for *Fachhochschulen* and for private universities, but none yet for public universities. In Poland the draft new law on higher education plans to unify the hitherto split accreditation bodies for universities and polytechnics.

Since the adoption of the Bologna Declaration several countries have taken measures to introduce accreditation in their higher education system. In Germany, the Netherlands and Flanders programme accreditation is directly linked to the Bachelor/Master reform and aims at guaranteeing the quality, visibility and credibility of the new degrees. In Germany the National Accreditation Council created in 1999 does not directly accredit programmes (except under special circumstances); rather, it authorises regional or subject-based accreditation agencies organised by the higher education community to accredit new programmes and allow them to carry the quality label of the National Council. This decentralised, indirect structure of accreditation, sometimes referred to as "meta-accreditation", is an interesting pattern combining the advantages of a national quality label with those of a single procedure and flexible standards administered by higher education itself and respecting the diversity of disciplines and systems. In the Netherlands an accreditation system should be in place by 2002 as a constituent part of the reform introducing Bachelor/Master degrees. It will be built on the already existing quality assurance system and will be implemented through a single agency with two awarding bodies, for professional and scientific courses. It is interesting to point out that the dividing line does not formally depend on the type of institution undertaking the course (i.e. whether it is a university or a *hogeschool*) but on the content and orientation of the course. An accreditation agency is also in preparation in Flanders and close co-operation between the Dutch and Flemish agencies is foreseen.

Switzerland is preparing a single agency for quality assurance and accreditation. Plans for an accreditation scheme and agency are also under consideration in Norway (following a suggestion in the MjØs report) and Austria. Most of these projects have been inspired by the Bologna Declaration.

The still limited, but growing phenomenon of European universities seeking accreditation from overseas seems to be largely ignored.

The cases reported are few in comparison to those which are known to exist. They concern mainly programmes in the areas of engineering, veterinary or business studies accredited by U.S.

professional bodies. The fact that foreign accreditation produces no direct legal consequence in any of the countries concerned should not occult the main issue, which is related to the reasons why European universities seek international acceptance and credibility from abroad. It is also interesting to point out that the only real case of "European" accreditation, the EQUIS scheme run by the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD), is attracting growing interest, both within Europe and from non-European universities. This seems to indicate that the best way to

contain the need for European universities to seek foreign quality labels may well be to create such labels at the European level.

Fostering readability and transparency in European higher education

The trends presented in the previous sections show a move towards more attention paid in Europe to quality evaluation and assurance, with or without special accreditation agencies next to quality assurance agencies. The creation of ENQA carries hopes that these developments will indeed help to create more readability and transparency. There is, however, a danger that Europe may be moving out of a jungle of degrees but into a jungle of quality assurance and accreditation standards, procedures and agencies.

A precondition for progress would be to clarify the confusion in terminology. The word "accreditation" is used to designate the administrative process leading to the authorisation to establish an institution or a programme as well as a recurrent quality assurance process. It may also apply to credit transfer, e.g. in the process of "accreditation" of prior learning.

Tools and models exist. The development of ENQA may prove of paramount importance to progress in the whole area of quality assurance and "accreditation". There seems to be unanimous agreement that Europe should not plan for a single quality assurance agency trying to enforce a single set of criteria. Ranking and uniformity in procedures are neither wanted nor needed. The decentralised approach imagined in Germany could provide inspiration for a future architecture of quality assurance in Europe respecting system and subject differences and not overloading universities. The notion of a European "platform" or "clearing house", based on criteria to be met by quality assurance/accreditation agencies and on their mutual acceptance of their conclusions, could be a possible way into the future of the European higher education area. It would enhance quality and transparency (and thereby also mobility within Europe) as well as readability and acceptance (and thereby also attractiveness in the world).

THE DECLARATION'S EFFECT IN NON-SIGNATORY COUNTRIES

This section reviews the situation and trends relevant to the Bologna Declaration in six non-signatory European countries : Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia with its three higher education systems (in Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo).

This report will not try to review the effect of the Declaration in other areas, although it is known that it has also attracted serious interest in Turkey as well as in Russia and other CIS countries. The changes in progress, which have the potential to make Europe a more understandable partner and a more attractive study and research destination, have also drawn the attention of universities in the Asia-Pacific region and in particular in Latin America.

The situation in the six aforementioned countries is set out in the tables and country notes in Part III of the present report. The following paragraphs will attempt to sketch some major trends in progress in the six countries and relevant to the higher education convergence process.

Cyprus and the Bologna Declaration

Cyprus is in many respects in a different situation from the other five countries. It is the only one participating in the SOCRATES programme, and changes required for this purpose are also supportive of the principles of the Bologna Declaration. The credit

system (30 points per year) is easily compatible with ECTS and the degree structure (with a 4-year first degree serving as the main entrance to the labour market) is already broadly in line with the Bologna Declaration. Several moves towards greater compatibility have been undertaken. The college sector is being consolidated.

Transnational education is an issue and legislative action is under preparation. A new accreditation agency has been set up in 2000 for private institutions, and the Diploma Supplement is expected to be commonly used in the near future.

The Bologna Declaration: a reference for long term reforms and concerted action in Southeast Europe

The five countries of continental Southeast Europe which were surveyed for this report have some features in common and some particular difficulties to overcome.

- In all five countries the traditional degree structure is seemingly in two tiers, but with long, highly structured, mono-disciplinary first degrees not easily compatible with the kind of Bachelor degrees proposed in the Bologna Declaration. There is no credit system and students' choice is usually limited.
- In the four countries which were part of the former Yugoslavia some common characteristics still exist. The most important one is the fragmentation of universities into independent faculties and institutes which makes institutional strategies and the development of multidisciplinary curricula extremely challenging (the abolition of this system was achieved only recently in Slovenia and in Tuzla and is foreseen in the draft law for Kosovo prepared by the International Administration). Another characteristic is the absence of post-secondary, college-type education (only Croatia established it in 1996). Another difference with Albania is that the TEMPUS programme could start only later and is still in the inception phase in Croatia and the FRY.
- Finally higher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is confronted with unique problems of governance and co-ordination.

As a result of the Dayton Peace Accords education is subject to different legislation in the Republika Srpska and in each of the ten cantons of the Federation. Attempts at co-ordination between cantons often meet strong political resistance, and co-operation between the two entities is also lacking. In the absence of competent authorities at national level, the country is yet to become a party to important European Conventions, and there is still no national Rector's Conference. The universities remain loose association of independent faculties, with the exception of Tuzla, where legislation has been passed to ensure that the university is unified. However a Higher Education Co-ordination Board (HECB) could be established in June 2000 as the first national higher education body to encompass both the Federation and the Republika Srpska. Interest in the Bologna Declaration is very strong among the members of the HECB and within higher education institutions. This is reflected in particular in the recent creation (March 2001) of an HECB working group on the compatibility of higher education in the country with the Bologna Declaration.

In spite of all difficulties the same strong interest in the Bologna Declaration exists throughout the region, both within higher education institutions and among governments and other national bodies. Thanks to several important information events the awareness about its existence and significance has grown significantly, even though its detailed implications are still not widely known. The Bologna Declaration is mainly seen as a key reference for the long term agenda of both governments and universities. It is also used in this way by the international partners working in co-operation with them to foster an *aggiornamento* in higher education.

Thus the Bologna process underpins the programmes for structural change of European organisations and the reforms encouraged by e.g. the LRP programme of the Council of Europe, the Stability Pact, the Graz process, the Lisbon Convention on Recognition, the PHARE Multi-country Programme or the TEMPUS scheme. These activities in turn enhance the role and usefulness of the Bologna Declaration.

Steps in the direction sign-posted by the Bologna Declaration

In the five countries concerned the Bologna Declaration is seen as supporting their own national priorities on mobility, curricular change and compatibility with the rest of Europe. At the same time they all expressed concern about brain drain and signalled that their most pressing need was for co-operation and exchange with European partners rather than for mere student mobility on a large scale.

A major priority is legislative change as a basis and condition for other reforms. New laws on higher education were recently adopted in Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The Bologna Declaration plays a significant role as a point of reference for planned legislative changes in Croatia (where the law of 1996 is planned to be amended or replaced) as well as in Serbia and Montenegro. The International Administration of Kosovo has prepared a draft new law fully in line with the Bologna Declaration.

A major issue in the legislative process in the countries of the former Yugoslavia is the status of faculties. There has been consistent advice from the international community to reform it, but the various laws adopted in Bosnia-Herzegovina (except in Tuzla), the draft new law proposed in Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's new law of 2000 all stick to the tradition of independent faculties. As was already indicated above the newly established Higher Education Co-ordination Board produced guidelines for a higher education strategy recommending the Bologna Declaration as a set of common guiding principles for legislation and reforms.

The need for deep curricular change is generally recognised but actual change has been limited and the crucial move towards multidisciplinary curricula will be difficult to organise in universities weakened by independent faculties not accustomed to co-operate.

A few examples however exist, e.g. new Master courses at the universities of Sarajevo and of Montenegro or at the Advanced Academic Educational Network (AAEN) in Serbia. In Bosnia-Herzegovina many curricula were revised since the Dayton Peace Agreement and some 3-year B.Sc. courses were developed. Since TEMPUS support is dependent on the participation of all faculties offering the same programme, progress in curriculum development is on a discipline-by-discipline basis. The main aim of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's new law of 2000 is to promote more flexible and compatible curricula. In Albania the current law reserves university status to study programmes lasting at least 4 years, and shorter Bachelor degrees would either be downgraded or require a change in law. The draft law prepared by the International Administration for Kosovo is based on a 3-5-8 structure of degrees.

The adoption of ECTS credits is foreseen or planned in all countries and is perceived as a major change entailing in-depth curricular renovation. In Croatia it was approved by the Rectors' Conference for introduction from 1999 and is already used by 11 faculties. The working groups, pilot experiments and changes in laws which exist for ECTS announce its widespread adoption in the next 3 to 5 years. The same applies to the Diploma Supplement, for which there are plans and working groups as well as a few pilot experiments.

Quality assurance is also receiving growing attention, starting with self-evaluation, e.g. in Bosnia-Herzegovina (where a quality assurance or accreditation agency would be conceivable only at the national level) or at the University of Montenegro. Accreditation agencies were created in 1996 in Croatia, in 1999 in Albania (in co-operation with the Hungarian Accreditation Council and with TEMPUS support) and in 2000 in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and there are plans to create one as part of the new law on higher education which is in preparation in Serbia.

ENIC recognition centres exist in Albania and are in creation or preparation in Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The implementation of the Bologna Declaration in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia will be dependent on the success of all these initiatives. Reforms would be significantly boosted by a change in the status of higher education institutions.

The action of the groups supporting reforms would be underpinned by the reconfirmation of the Declaration's main aims and principles and by the renewed commitment of signatory countries to their implementation.

MAIN REFERENCES

This report is mainly based on questionnaires filled in October-November 2000 by the countries and some international organisations involved in the process towards the creation of the European higher education area. It draws also on the "country reports" produced in the summer of 2000 by most signatory countries, and on the conclusions of the various thematic seminars organised at the initiative of the Bologna Follow-up Group.

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Part III: Learning structures and higher education systems in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe, Cyprus, Malta and Switzerland

THEMATIC OVERVIEWS

In the first project report on Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education, prepared for the Bologna Conference in 1999 ("Trends I"), Guy Haug and Jette Kirstein presented an outline of some of the main trends in the higher education systems of the EU/EEA countries. In particular they looked at institutional structures, credit and recognition systems, quality assurance, the organisation of the academic year and similar matters.

A main purpose of the present "Trends II" report is to provide the same analysis and overview for those countries that have signed the Bologna declaration but, due to time constraints, had not been included in "Trends I". This concerns mainly countries in Central and Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. In addition this group includes Malta and Switzerland.

Finally, six states that have expressed interest in the process towards the creation of a European higher education area have been included in the survey: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The following part of "Trends II" should be read as a direct complement to Jette Kirstein's survey of EU/EEA countries in "Trends I". We have used her questionnaire and prepared similar country reports for the above mentioned additional 18 countries. For reasons of consistency and comparability we also used her definitions and explanations and we are very grateful to her for her permission to do so.

Unlike the group of countries analysed in "Trends I", the 18 countries that form the object of "Trends II" represent a fairly heterogeneous group:

There are Cyprus, Malta and Switzerland whose higher education systems have long-standing links to some EU member states' systems such as Greece, the UK, Germany or France.

Then there are the countries of Central and Eastern Europe who freed themselves of their Communist regimes a decade ago, introduced new higher education laws and more or less fundamentally reformed their higher education systems.

Lastly, there are the countries in Ex-Yugoslavia plus Albania, who have not signed the Bologna Declaration but have started to restructure their higher education systems, and to whom the convergence process in higher education means new challenges and opportunities. After the democratic changes in Serbia in October 2000, also the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was included in the survey.

As Jette Kirstein pointed out concerning the first study, a comprehensive survey of this kind, dealing with very different aspects and diversified developments in a large number

of countries can only offer a glimpse of what is emerging in European higher education. Any comparison of higher education systems and identification of common trends can only be considered a fairly simplifying generalisation. Further information therefore has to be obtained from more extensive and detailed publications such as those of the European Commission, EURYDICE, the Council of Europe, the ENIC/NARIC network, the Association of European Universities (CRE) or the Confederation of EU Rectors' Conferences.

National frameworks for higher education institutions and qualifications

Diversification of institutions

As Jette Kirstein pointed out in "Trends I", two different types of higher education systems prevail world-wide, in spite of the existing diversification:

- ◆ a so-called *unitary* or comprehensive system where most higher education is catered for by universities or university-like institutions, offering both general academic degrees and more professionally-oriented programmes of various lengths and levels;
- ◆ a so-called *binary* or dual system with a *traditional university sector* based more or less on the Humboldt university concept and a separate and distinct *non-university higher education sector*.

In all European countries the need for diversified offers in higher education to serve the different needs of students and employers has been recognised and taken into account. In the *unitary system* the diversification is taken care of by a single type of institution, normally the university. The study programmes are therefore often much more varied in level, character and academic and theoretical orientation than in traditional universities in a binary system. Many programmes are professionally oriented. Among the countries surveyed in this study unitary systems exist today in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, FYROM, Romania, the Slovak Republic and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In FYROM, however, the new Higher Education Law of November 2000 calls for the creation of professional schools, thereby changing the system into a binary one.

The binary systems in some of the other countries are still in the development phase, with the new laws on higher education adopted in the 1990s providing for the possibility to set up non-university and private institutions. As for Malta, higher education is just changing from a unitary to a binary system.

In binary systems developed in Western Europe there is a traditional difference between universities offering the theory- and research-based programmes and the non-university institutions taking care of high-level professional programmes. In Central and Eastern Europe the Soviet division of labour between universities and very specialised higher education schools (in charge of teaching) and academies (in charge of research) prevailed up to 1990. Many countries have by now re-integrated more research into the universities and are re-defining the tasks of the academies and their relationship to the universities. The definition of universities as places where teaching and research should take place in a large variety of disciplines and doctoral degrees are awarded is very much alike in all the countries. Academies, on the other hand, are either defined as a sort of smaller universities with a more narrow range of disciplines, or as research institutions that may run post-graduate programmes (in particular doctoral programmes) in co-operation with universities.

Finally, as in Western Europe, there is a tendency to up-grade existing vocational and professional institutions and to integrate them fully into the higher education sector.

The reasons for these developments are the same as those listed by Jette Kirstein for the EU/EEC countries:

- ◆ to offer more professionally-oriented and economically relevant types of education in order to meet a labour market demand for such candidates;
- ◆ to cater for a growing number of higher education applicants without substantially increasing governmental expenditure for higher education;
- ◆ to cater for non-traditional groups of students in a more innovative manner;
- ◆ to offer primarily teaching-oriented programmes with some use of applied research; ◆ to upgrade existing vocationally oriented post-secondary education.

Also another diagnosis of Jette Kirstein with regard to Western Europe is equally applicable to the countries studied in this report, namely that those who "have or are developing a distinct binary system want to keep it, but with a clear intention to build on the specific qualities and characteristics of each sector as well as to establish more flexibility, interlinkages and co-operation between the sectors." This is in particular true of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Slovakia and Slovenia.

E.g. in the Czech Republic the Ministry of Education is currently elaborating a strategy for the restructuring of the non-university institutions, as they are seen as being too numerous (around 170) and too small (in 1998/99 only 13 institutions had more than 400 students). The plan foresees that they will be merged, where possible, and will be expected to offer very diversified programmes ranging from one to three years in accordance with labour market needs.

In November 2000 Latvia passed an amendment to the Law on Higher Education that introduces a system of professional Bachelor degrees enjoying full equivalence with academic degrees. Estonia is planning to strengthen its non-university sector by combining the two existing types of non-academic institutions into one.

In Switzerland, as in Germany, *Fachhochschulen* (universities of applied sciences) offer an alternative to traditional university education by putting the emphasis on application-oriented teaching and research.

Tables 1 and 2 below describe in more detail the present higher education structures in the Central, Eastern and South Eastern European countries as well as Cyprus, Malta and Switzerland, together with indications about some major developments.

Degree structures

The Trends I report showed that the traditional differentiation between the "continental European" degree structure with rather long, academically integrated university studies (one-tier) and the "Anglo-American" degree structure with shorter first degrees and many post-graduate possibilities often based on a more modular system (two-tier) was getting blurred¹.

As Jette Kirstein pointed out, there is a push in the university sector, mostly coming from the political side, to establish shorter university programmes - i.e. a first degree on the Bachelor level.

The same conclusion can be drawn with regard to the Trends II study. With the exception of Switzerland and Hungary all countries offer a two-tier system, with a first-cycle degree before the Master's degree. It should be noted, however, that some of the two-tier systems still contain one-tier Master programmes in specific fields, e.g. in Bulgaria, Poland and Slovakia and that some institutions in Switzerland and Hungary have started to offer Bachelor and Master degrees.

¹ *ibid.* p.34

In a number of countries the Bologna Declaration clearly seems to have influenced the introduction of a two-tier system, if only by the acceleration of processes that had already started, as in the Czech Republic, where the introduction of two tiers had been decided as early as 1990.

In Switzerland the introduction of Bachelor and Master degrees is currently under discussion.

In Estonia there is a move to standardise the duration of Bachelor programmes to three years and of Master programmes to two.

Croatia is discussing a reform of its diversified degree system in the light of the Bologna declaration.

In Poland, where the existing system still combines one-tier and two-tier programmes, the draft of the new higher education act concentrates on the two-tier model.

In Slovakia a new higher education law is being prepared, taking into account the Bologna principles. It provides for an institutional diversification into universities (offering all three levels of degrees in a large variety of subjects), specialised higher education institutions on university level, but with a more limited range of disciplines, and professional higher education institutions offering Bachelor programmes relevant to the labour market. Slovakia is planning to introduce the 3-2-3 model as the standard structure. Moreover, the new act takes into account all the other points of the Bologna Declaration, such as ECTS, the Diploma Supplement etc.

Bosnia-Herzegovina is facing the particular difficulty that 11 different laws regulate higher education and that the adoption of a system of easily readable degrees is therefore rather complicated.

Also with regard to the non-university sector, the development towards an ever wider diversification of qualifications is the same in the countries surveyed in Trends II as in those of the EU/EEA: "Many new undergraduate programmes are being established to meet new labour market needs in specific professional fields, and at the same time a great variety of post-graduate courses are being developed either as part of ordinary programmes or as programmes aimed at recurrent education activities."²

As in Western Europe, non-university institutions do not offer doctoral degrees in their own right but in some countries the possibility exists for non-university graduates to enter a doctoral programme in a university. Thus in Slovenia three-year professional higher education programmes have been introduced that give direct access to doctoral programmes. Also in Bulgaria the Bachelor gives access to doctoral studies of four years' duration (as opposed to three years after a Master). In the majority of countries, however, a Master degree is the precondition for admission to doctoral programmes.

Table 2 illustrates, tentatively, the degree framework and major qualifications of the Central, Eastern and South Eastern European countries, plus Cyprus, Malta and Switzerland, according to length and types of institutions/institutional affiliations (university/non-university). It should be noted that neither the length of qualifications nor the type of institution/institutional affiliation say much about the level of the qualification, its contents and the learning outcomes. Degree titles also vary considerably and often they do not by themselves give an explicit indication of the type and character of a specific qualification. Thus they have to be seen in the national framework of qualifications to be understood. Qualifications should therefore not be compared according to years of study but according to learning outcomes, predefined standards of learning and acquired competencies.

² *ibid.* p.34

Access and admission requirements

By and large access to higher education (access meaning general eligibility for higher education programmes) is in all countries subject to the completion of twelve to thirteen years of prior schooling. In a few countries there are slight differences in the required length of secondary education programmes giving access to university and to non-university programmes, respectively³.

Thus in Switzerland universities require a *Matura* (maturity certificate), while *Fachhochschulen* demand a *Professional Matura* which is normally acquired during an apprenticeship.

The same principle applies in Slovenia.

Furthermore, there are major differences in the actual requirements for being admitted to a particular programme and obtaining a study place.

Only in Switzerland and Malta applicants with final secondary school qualifications have free access to most university programmes. In the other countries admission is usually on a competitive basis and depends on a special combination of the secondary school leaving examination subjects and on other requirements concerning e.g. the level of the subjects studied in secondary school and the grades obtained, as in Latvia or Bosnia-Herzegovina. The dominant model is a combination of the secondary school leaving certificate and an entrance examination, set by the higher education institutions or the faculty, respectively. This procedure can be found in Albania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, FYROM, Montenegro, Poland and Serbia.

In Romania admission tests are still required but there is a tendency to abolish them and rely exclusively on the results of the secondary school leaving certificate. Slovakia has a diversified approach, in that either the school leaving certificate or entrance examinations or a combination of both are required. National examinations as in Estonia are the exception.

The information gathered for this study does not allow a more differentiated statement on the selectivity of the different types of higher education institutions.

Several countries refer explicitly to the Lisbon convention of 1997 on the recognition of higher education qualifications that they have ratified. It states that parties to the convention shall mutually recognise qualifications giving general access to higher education in the home country unless substantial differences can be shown between the general access requirements in the countries in question.

See table 3 for more information on admission systems for higher education.

International credit transfer systems

Table 4 shows the situation with regard to national or international credit systems.

Cyprus, Malta and Switzerland work with ECTS and ECTS-compatible systems, respectively, and the situation in those countries resembles that of most EU/EEA countries where ECTS has been more or less firmly established as an instrument for international credit transfer. On the other hand, none of the Central and Eastern European states has as yet introduced ECTS nationwide and only a few use a national credit system.

Most countries, however, are planning the introduction of ECTS or a national credit system and, for the time being, allow their higher education institutions to experiment with ECTS and other systems.

Estonia and Latvia use national credit systems similar to those of Nordic countries. Latvia is working on proposals to reduce the split between the academic and the professional sector by introducing full transferability of credits between the two types of

³ *ibid.* p.35

programmes. In Romania higher education institutions are free to experiment with an ECTS-compatible system but there is awareness that the participation in Socrates/Erasmus will require a stricter application of ECTS-principles. Hungary has made the introduction of a national, ECTS-compatible credit system compulsory from September 2002.

Organisation of the academic year

Table 5 shows that the surveyed countries all have divided their academic year into two semesters, but that the dates for the beginning and end of the semesters vary considerably, from the beginning of September to mid-October and from the end of May to mid-July. Thus in Romania, in the spirit of university autonomy, a new regulation has been introduced in 1999, allowing individual higher education institutions to begin their winter semester any time in September or October, although in practice most start on 1st October. Just as in the EU/EEA countries, student mobility is not made easier by this very heterogeneous picture.

Tuition fee systems and support for study abroad

The majority of the "Trends II" countries charge tuition fees in some form.

Many Central/Eastern European countries have a partial fee system, in which the state finances a number of study places that are normally allocated on a performance basis (secondary school results, entrance examinations). Higher education institutions may, however, admit additional students on a fee-paying basis. This system is presently applied in Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, FYROM, Montenegro and Romania. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia national students do not pay fees for regular full-time courses within the standard duration of studies. In almost all states foreign students have to pay fees. The participation in European mobility programmes will require adjustments in a number of countries in this regard, and some of them, like Bulgaria, have stated explicitly that they are already undertaking the necessary preparations.

Latvia is discussing the introduction of a "participation fee" to be paid by all students to cover the gap between the state funding available and the real costs of the programmes, combined with the prior introduction of a loan system.

National support for study periods or full degree courses taken abroad is unknown or very limited in many CEE countries. In some (Albania, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia) the state provides a limited number of scholarships, often within the framework of bilateral agreements with foreign governments/institutions.

Some countries also referred to the support coming from EU-programmes. Cyprus and Malta provide full support for study abroad as their national higher education systems do not offer the whole range of academic disciplines. Similarly, a Swiss student entitled to a cantonal grant may use it for study abroad if the chosen programme is not offered in Switzerland. Also Montenegro applies such a regulation.

COUNTRY PROFILES

Albania

Higher Education was reformed by the “Law for Higher Education in the Republic of Albania” of February 1999 that for the first time allows for the creation of private institutions. The Council of Ministers will pass more detailed regulations regarding private higher education in the near future. The situation in higher education in Albania is characterised, as in the states of former Yugoslavia, by a traditionally very strong autonomy of faculties vis-à-vis the university rector.

Higher education follows a unitary two-tier model. There are two kinds of university-type higher education institutions: 8 universities and 2 academies.

In some disciplines like nursing a professional diploma is offered after 2 to 3.5 years, but the regular first degree at universities and academies, the university diploma, which is equivalent to a Bachelor, takes 4 to 6 years.

There are graduate courses (specializations) of up to one year, or equivalent to the Master after 1 to 2 years. An advanced post-graduate degree, comparable to the French DEA, is a prerequisite for admission to doctoral studies.

Doctoral degrees take between 2 and 5 years.

In addition to the universities and academies there is a nursing school that awards a professional diploma after 2 to 3.5 years.

There are plans to strengthen the non-university sector in the future. Some of the short diploma programmes offered at various universities will then be taught at the newly established institutions.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

The situation regarding higher education is complicated by the fact that it is governed by 11 different laws (10 cantonal laws in the Federation, one in the Serb Republic).

Higher education is organized in a unitary two-tier system with universities as the only higher education institutions. Within the universities there are faculties, colleges and pedagogical academies. The faculties enjoy a very strong degree of autonomy within the universities.

The following degrees are offered:

1. Two types of first degrees: VI grade: awarded after 2 to 3 years of college-level education. This degree is given to lawyers, teachers, engineers, medical technicians, computer experts, etc.

VII grade: awarded after 4 to 6 years by faculties and academies. This degree corresponds to the Bachelor and bears the titles B.Sc. Engineering, B.Sc. Sociology, B.A. Journalism, Attorney at Law, Medical doctor, etc.

2. Second degrees (only after successful completion of first degree): Specialisation studies of one year Master degrees of 2 to 3 years.
3. Doctoral degrees: A doctoral degree may be obtained after successful completion of a Master programme.

Bulgaria

Higher education is governed by the Higher Education Act of 1995 that guarantees the autonomy of higher education institutions. Amendments, adopted in July 1999 and July 2000, regard the degree system and related matters.

Bulgarian higher education is largely organized in a binary two-tier system but there are still some one-tier degrees. At the university level there are universities and specialised higher education schools (i.e. academies and institutes), the latter offering training and research only in specific fields such as science, arts, sports and defence, but conferring the same degrees as the universities. In addition there are colleges with shorter, professionally oriented courses. They result from a re-shaping of the former semi-higher education institutions. In most cases they are incorporated into the structure of universities but there are also some independent colleges.

The university sector:

Universities and specialised higher education schools offer a Bachelor degree after 4 years and a Master degree after one additional year. In addition to these two-tier degrees, there are still some fields, e.g. in architecture, where only a 5-years Master degree can be obtained.

Doctoral degrees require at least 3 years of study and research after the Master and 4 years after the Bachelor. The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the Academy of Agriculture and other academic institutions may also confer the doctoral degree. Finally, there is the degree of Doctor of Sciences, corresponding to a *doctor habilitatus*.

The non-university sector:

Colleges offer after 3 years the degree of “specialist”.

Croatia

The 1996 Higher education act provides the legal basis for higher education in Croatia, stressing the principle of academic autonomy. The proposal for a new Higher Education Law, which was to be adopted by the end of 2000, includes proposals for greater faculty autonomy in terms of finances and management and for the introduction of tuition fees and mechanisms for quality assurance. Several changes to the draft have been proposed and the adoption of the law has been postponed.

Higher education is organized in a binary two-tier system: there are 4 universities and 7 polytechnics offering academic and professional studies, respectively, on a “superior” tertiary level. Their programmes are divided into an undergraduate and a graduate level. In addition there are schools of higher education, either as independent institutions (there are 8 of them) or integrated into universities, offering 2 - 4 year professional programmes.

The university sector: After 4 years the University Diploma (e.g. for engineers) can be obtained, after 5 years the Diploma in Medicine and after 6 to 7 years a Master of Science/Arts degree.

Both the University Diploma and the Master give access to doctoral studies that last 3 years (after the Diploma) or one year (after the M.Sc./M.A.), leading to a Doctor of Science.

The non-university sector:

The professional studies at polytechnics are organised as undergraduate studies (2 to 4 years), postgraduate professional studies (at least one year) and postgraduate artistic studies (at least one year).

Cyprus

A state law of 1989 governs the University of Cyprus.

Higher education is organized in a binary two-tier system. Only the University of Cyprus offers university-level degrees, whereas various public and private higher education institutions offer vocational degrees.

The university sector:

The first university degree is the *Ptychio* after 4 years (corresponding to the Bachelor), followed by the Master after at least 18 months of study. The Master is the prerequisite for admission to a doctoral programme.

The non-university sector:

The non-university higher education institutions offer vocational degrees, called Diplomas of Higher Education, after 1 to 4 years: after one year a certificate is awarded, after 2 years a diploma, after 3 years a higher diploma and after 4 years a Bachelor. These schools also offer some postgraduate diplomas at the level of a Master degree.

Czech Republic

Two laws reformed higher education: the Higher Education Act of 1990 and the new act of 1998.

The new system is unitary and offers new two-tier programmes as well as the traditional one-tier programmes with Master-level degrees lasting 4 to 6 years. The new law directs its focus rather on a study programme – which has to be duly accredited - than on the institution providing the programme. The law aims at the broad diversification of institutions and programmes. Since 1990 there are degrees at Bachelor, Master and doctoral level. Tertiary education comprises state-run and private universities, non-university higher education institutions and higher professional education offered by tertiary, but non-higher education schools.

University-type institutions provide Master and doctoral programmes as well as Bachelor programmes. A Bachelor programme takes 3 to 4 years. There are still one-tier Master degrees that take between 4 and 6 years. If the Master programme follows a Bachelor, it takes 2 to 3 years.

The standard duration for doctoral studies, which require a Master degree as prerequisite, is 3 years.

The non-university higher education institutions – which despite their name operate on university level - have only begun their operations and concentrate on Bachelor programmes of 3 to 4 years, but they also may offer Master programmes.

Bachelor programmes are not yet well known to students and employers; only 17.5 % of all students are enrolled in Bachelor programmes, compared to 75 % in Master programmes and 7,5 % in doctoral programmes.

There are also *tertiary education institutions* called “*higher professional schools*” which award the diploma of specialist, after 2 to 3.5 years of study. These institutions do not belong to the higher education system in the Czech Republic.

Estonia

Higher education is regulated by the Law on universities (1995), the Law on private schools (1998), the Law on applied higher education institutions (1998), the Law on vocational education institutions (1998), the Law on the University of Tartu (1995) and the Law on the organisation of research and developmental activities (1997).

In addition there is the Standard of higher education of 2000, the fundamental legal act for the accreditation of study programmes.

The higher education system is a binary two-tier system and consists of universities and applied higher education institutions.

The university sector:

1. Diplomas in vocational higher education, comparable to those offered at the applied higher education institutions, after 3 to 4 years, often using modules and parts of the Bachelor programmes.
2. Bachelor programmes with a focus on general education of 3 to 4 years (teacher training: 5 years).
3. Master programmes to deepen specialised and theoretical knowledge and improve research proficiency. Admission requirement is the Bachelor. Duration: 1 to 2 years, together with the Bachelor not less than 5 years.
4. Other degrees: Medical doctor after 6 years, degrees in veterinary medicine, pharmacy, architecture, etc. after 5 years.
5. Doctorate: the nominal length is 4 years and a Master degree is the prerequisite.

There are research doctorates and professional doctorates.

Universities are currently changing their programmes to 3-year Bachelor and 2-year Master programmes. The doctorate will be changed from 4 years to 3 - 4 years.

The non-university sector:

Non-academic professional diplomas are awarded after 3 to 4 years and include an important part of practical training (e.g. nursing, midwifery, social work, etc.). At present there are two different types of non-academic professional degrees, but it is planned to combine them into one. Whether the non-university institutions will also offer Bachelor programmes has not yet been decided.

Hungary

A new higher education law was adopted in 1993, authorising the setting-up of private colleges and universities, including church-run institutions.

Private institutions enrol some 10 percent of all students.

Higher education is organised in a binary system with basically one-tier degrees. In the wake of the Bologna Declaration, many institutions have started to introduce a two-tier system of degrees, especially in programmes for foreign students.

Today there are 17 state universities and 13 state colleges as well as 26 church-run institutions and 6 foundation colleges. The number of state institutions has been reduced from previously 55 to the present 30 institutions. Some of the colleges are, as college faculties, part of the universities.

The university sector:

Universities follow a one-tier system leading to a Master level degree (or *egyetemi oklevél*) after 5 years (medicine: 6 years) and offer doctoral degrees of 3 years.

The non-university sector:

Colleges offer Bachelor degrees (or *főiskolai oklevél*) after 3 to 4 years, with the possibility to obtain a Master at a university after another 2 to 3 years. Colleges have an assignment not only to teach, but also to carry out research and development activities.

Both universities and colleges may organise short-cycle post-secondary courses of two years called Accredited higher vocational training courses, leading to a certificate.

Latvia

Higher education is regulated by three laws, with the Law on higher educational institutions of 1995 being the most important one, followed by the Law on education of 1998 and the Law on professional education of 1999. An amendment to the 1995 law, adopted in November 2000, takes into account the principles of the Bologna Declaration.

Latvia organised higher education in a binary two-tier system, with universities and other higher education institutions on the one hand and professional higher education institutions on the other.

The university sector:

The universities offer all academic degrees up to the doctorate level in a variety of fields.

The “other higher education institutions” also offer university level degrees but concentrate more on Bachelor and Master and less on doctoral programmes than the universities. They offer programmes only in a limited number of fields. Both the universities and the other higher education institutions may also offer professional qualifications.

A Bachelor degree can be obtained after 3 to 4 years. Alternatively the level V professional higher education qualification can be obtained after 4 years. Both degrees make a graduate eligible for a Master programme.

A Master takes another 1 – 2 years. In medicine and dentistry there are one-tier degrees of respectively 6 and 5 years that give access to doctoral studies.

A doctoral degree takes 3 to 4 years (with the Master as a prerequisite). The doctoral degree has been transformed into a one-tier degree, the *habilitets doktors* (doctor habilitatus) not being awarded any more since 1 January 2000.

The non-university sector:

Professional higher education institutions offer various professional qualifications, with a compulsory component of applied research. A new type of professional degrees is just being introduced, the 2-3 year college programmes (“level IV qualifications”).

The second type of professional degree (“level V qualifications”) can be obtained either in a 4-5 year programme leading to a degree equivalent to a Bachelor (eligibility for a Master programme), in a supplementary programme (1-2 years) for holders of a Bachelor (but without eligibility for doctoral programmes) or in applied professional 4-year programmes, without eligibility for Master studies.

The amendment to the Law on Higher Education of November 2000 introduces a symmetric structure of academic and professional Bachelor and Master degrees. The introduction of the new degrees that will eventually replace the existing professional diplomas will start in 2001.

Latvia is considering increasing the mobility between the academic and the professional sector of higher education by introducing full compatibility and recognition of those academic and professional degrees that require the same number of ECTS credits.

Lithuania

The Law on research and higher education of 1991 and the Law on higher education of March 2000 form the basis for higher education.

It is organised in a binary two-tier system: according to the new law of March 2000 some colleges were established in Lithuania in autumn 2000, which provide non-university type education.

Up to now there are 19 state (10 universities, 5 academies and 4 colleges) and 7 non-state (4 university-type and 3 colleges) higher education institutions in Lithuania.

The university sector:

The universities offer Bachelor, Master and doctoral degrees (including the *doctor habilitatus*) and also professional studies on two levels.

Academies are of the same academic status as universities, but offer a more limited range of programmes.

Bachelor degrees (or equivalent professional qualifications) take 4 years.

Master degrees require another 1.5 to 2 years.

The doctoral degree is not considered a higher education qualification but a research degree. It should not take more than 3 years (for holders of a Master degree) or 4 years (after the completion of specialised professional studies or continuous studies in some study fields, such as law or medicine), out of which 1 to 2 years are spent in doctoral courses as a requirement for the admission to the doctoral research project.

Doctoral students may also be trained at research institutions, in cooperation with universities.

Colleges:

The colleges offer a professional qualification after 3 years (or 4 years for extramural studies).

Macedonia **Former Yugoslav Republic of)**

Higher education was, until 2000, regulated by the Specialised Education Act of 1985 that was, however, not in compliance with the new Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, adopted in 1991. A new higher education law has therefore been drafted with the support of the Legislative Reform Project for higher education of the Council of Europe and adopted in November 2000. The new law provides for a new legal status for higher education institutions, affirming their autonomy, offering the possibility to establish both state and private institution and introducing new recognition procedures in accordance with European standards etc.

Higher education is organised in a two-tier system that has been unitary until now, with the two state universities as only providers of higher education. The new law calls for the setting-up of vocational higher education schools.

The equivalent to the Bachelor, the Diploma for completed level VII (1) of professional education is awarded after 4 to 6 years.

After one more year the level VII (2) is attained, finishing with the degree of Specialist studies. The Master programme, also leading to level VII (2), takes 2 years after the Bachelor.

A Master degree is the regular prerequisite for admission to a doctoral project. The doctoral degree corresponds to level VIII of professional training.

The faculties that enjoy a very high degree of autonomy offer postgraduate programmes of 4 to 6 years, plus doctoral studies. Their level is the same as that of universities, but they offer fewer programmes, often with specialisations.

A vocational sub-degree is offered after 2 years, the certificate for level VI (1), but this will be replaced by new vocational degrees delivered by the new vocational higher education institutions.

Malta

Higher education used to be offered by one state institution only, the University of Malta. It offers all degrees, from university diploma and Bachelor to Master and Doctor.

Presently, however, the Malta College of Arts, Sciences and Technology is being set up by merging various colleges for shorter, vocational education. Maltese higher education is therefore becoming a binary two-tier system.

The University:

Undergraduate courses lead to a Diploma after 1 to 2 years, a Bachelor after 3 years and to a Bachelor Honours after 3 to 4 years.

After another 1 to 1.5 years a Master can be obtained. A M.Phil. takes another 15 months to 2 years, a Ph.D. 3 to 5 years.

The programmes and degrees at the new college are still under development.

Poland

The Act on Higher Education of 1990 and the Act on Higher Vocational Education of 1997 provide the legal basis for the higher education system.

It is a binary system, partly one-tier and partly two-tier. The two types of higher education institutions are the universities and academies (e.g. the academies of economy, of agriculture, of pedagogy etc.) on the one hand and the schools of higher vocational education on the other. Currently a single Law on Higher Education is under preparation that will, however, maintain the institutional diversification into universities, academies and schools of vocational higher education. It will also formally introduce the 3-stage higher education system of Bachelor, Master and doctoral studies. The 5-year programmes will be maintained in some fields.

The university sector:

There are courses leading to a first degree with a professional orientation, the *Licencjat*, after 3 to 3.5 years and the *Inzynier* after 3.5 to 4 years.

The *Licencjat* degree gives access to Master programme of 2 to 2.5 years.

There are, however, also one-tier Master programmes for certain professions: 5 years or more for law, psychology, pharmacy, etc. and 6 years for medicine.

Doctoral studies last 4 years. They still have a separate status and are not regarded as the third level of the higher education system. The new law will change this.

The draft of the new higher education act concentrates on the two-tier model with *Licencjat/Inzynier* studies as first degree, followed by Master and doctoral degrees. It limits the possibility for evening and extramural studies by stipulating that studies in medicine and dentistry can only be carried out in full-time intramural classes.

The non-university sector:

Schools of higher vocational education offer exclusively vocational studies leading to the titles of professional *Licencjat* and *Inzynier*. The introduction of professional Bachelor degrees is planned.

Romania

Higher education is governed by the Education Law of 1995, amended and republished in 1999.

It is organised in a unitary two-tier system: there are university colleges that are part of the universities, and universities (plus university-level institutions like academies). Although the system is therefore formally a unitary one, the colleges offer different degrees and courses.

The universities (and academies) offer courses leading to a *Diploma de licenta* or a *Diploma de absolvire* (Bachelor-level degree) that take

- 4 years in the sciences, humanities, law, sports, etc.,
- 4 to 5 years in economics, theatre, cinematography, 5 years in arts, agronomy, pharmacy etc. and
- 6 years in architecture, medicine and veterinary medicine.

Starting with the academic year 2000-2001, for engineers and architects the final diploma of *Licenta* was replaced with *Diploma de inginer* and *Diploma de arhitect*.

Holders of a first degree may continue at the postgraduate level in a Specialist programme (one year or more) or a Master programme (1 to 2 years) The doctorate, comparable to a Ph.D., takes 3 to 5 years.

The university colleges offer courses of 3 to 4 years in such fields as technology, sports, agriculture, economics, etc., leading to a University College Diploma. Graduates from a university college programme can apply directly for admission to the third year of university programmes (in related fields).

Slovak Republic

The Higher Education Act of 1990 laid down fundamental academic rights and freedoms and also introduced the Bachelor degree, thereby opening the system from the traditional one-tier towards a two-tier system. The amendment of 1996 provided for the possibility to establish private higher education institutions. In the academic year 1999/2000 only one such institution existed.

Slovak higher education today is therefore a unitary two-tier system, as all institutions are of the university type and offer the three degrees of Bachelor, Master and Doctor.

However, one-tier Master programmes are still the most popular programmes with students for the time being. In 2000 a new concept for the further development of higher education was adopted which provides for the creation of a non-university sector in Slovakia that will concentrate on Bachelor programmes. Also a consistent application of the Bachelor-Master-Doctor model (with the exception of medicine) in the spirit of the Bologna Declaration is foreseen.

The Bachelor takes normally 3 years, with the exception of some 4-year programmes in engineering, architecture, fine arts and design. There are professional Bachelor degrees, relevant to the labour market, and academic ones qualifying for a Master course of 1.5 to 2 years duration.

Master and "Engineer" studies take 4 to 6 years in the traditional one-tier system that still exists in parallel to the new two-tier system. On average the total duration of study required for the Master/"Engineer" degree is 5 years, but there are also degrees after 4 years (teacher training, dramatic art) and 6 years (architecture, fine arts, design).

Furthermore, there is a 6-year degree in Medicine and Veterinary Medicine called MUDr or MVDr. This "Doktor" degree is, however, part of the second cycle. Holders of a Master degree may take the *Examina rigorosa* (including the defence of a thesis) and are then awarded the following degrees: doctor farmácie (PharmDr.), doctor filozofie (PhDr.), doctor práv (JuDr.), etc.

The actual doctoral studies, leading to a Master, last around 3 years. There is the possibility of Habilitation.

Slovenia

Higher Education legislation was reformed in two steps: by the Higher Education Act of 1993 and the Higher Education Amendment Act of 1999. The 1993 law provided for the setting-up of non-state higher education institutions and the introduction of new 3-year professional higher education programmes. In 1999 it became possible to enrol for a doctoral programme immediately after graduation (first university degree), without first obtaining a Master degree.

Post-secondary vocational education is offered by vocational colleges and is not considered to be part of the higher education sector.

The higher education system is a binary two-tier system. The two universities plus the art academies and independent faculties (private institutions) offer both academically oriented studies and professionally oriented studies. In addition there are professional colleges that offer only professionally oriented programmes.

The university sector:

Academically oriented programmes at the undergraduate level last 4 to 6 years (plus an additional year for the preparation of a dissertation), finishing with a Diploma.

Professionally oriented programmes take 3 to 4 years (plus one additional year) and lead to a Diploma.

At the postgraduate level there are the following degrees:

1. Specialisation (1 to 2 years), ending with the defence of a thesis and requiring either a first university degree or, in some cases, a professionally-oriented first degree as access condition;
2. Master (2 years), also ending with the defence of a thesis and requiring either the first university degree or a professionally-oriented first degree;

3. The doctoral degree requires either the first university degree or a Master degree and takes 4 or 2 years, respectively.

The non-university sector:

Professional colleges offer study programmes that lead to a Diploma after 3 to 4 years. It is intended to turn these degrees into professional Bachelors.

Switzerland

Higher education is structured in a binary one-tier system. There are 10 cantonal universities and 2 federal technical universities, both types research-oriented and awarding all academic degrees including doctorates. The other type of higher education institution are the 7 *Fachhochschulen* (Universities of Applied Sciences), based on federal law and currently under reorganisation, with an emphasis on teaching and applied research.

Universities:

There is only one main type of university degree: the *Diplom/Diplôme* (more in engineering and the sciences) or *Lizenziat/Licence* (more in the humanities) after 4 to 5 years, giving access to doctoral studies (normally 2 to 4 years, but without time limit). In addition, the French-speaking universities issue a number of postgraduate diplomas, like the *diplôme d'études supérieures*.

Fachhochschulen:

The Universities of Applied Sciences (FH) award the *Diplom/Diplôme FH* after 3 (in some cases 4) years.

There are as yet not many Bachelor/Master degrees, but some universities have started to translate their traditional diplomas as "Masters", and some FH translate their diplomas as "Bachelors". There is a discussion among Swiss higher education institutions on the possible introduction of Bachelor and Master degrees: the universities of St. Gallen and Lucerne and the Swiss Italian university have started to adopt the new system.

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

Serbia

The University Act of June 1998 had abolished any kind of university autonomy. After the democratic changes that took place in October 2000 and the elections in December 2000 the new government is now drafting a new provisional University Act. Amongst other objectives it will mandate the revision of all appointments and expulsions that occurred under the act of 1998. Afterwards a law for a thorough reform of higher education will be prepared that should comply as much as possible with the new trends in European higher education.

Serbian higher education is structured in a unitary two-tier system and is offered at universities and research institutes. Universities are the only institutions to offer a first

degree (Diploma or Bachelor) after 4 years in social sciences and humanities, 5 years in engineering and sciences and 6 years in medicine.

Postgraduate studies can be carried out either at universities or at accredited research institutes and lead to a M.Sc. after 2 years or to a Master after 3 years.

Access to doctoral studies can be granted straight from the Bachelor level or after obtaining a Master.

Montenegro

The University Law of 1992 regulates higher education. It defines the university as consisting of higher professional schools, faculties, art academies and scientific institutes.

The law allows for the creation of private higher education institutions but at present there is only the public University of Montenegro.

Higher education is a unitary two-tier system.

At the sub-degree level the higher professional schools deliver degrees after 2 years.

A Bachelor degree is awarded at the faculties after 4 to 5 years, depending on the subject. In medicine and related fields the Bachelor requires 6 years of study.

Postgraduate studies (Master) take 2 years. Research for a doctoral degree must not exceed a period of 5 years.

Kosovo

The situation in Kosovo is characterised by the Interim Statute that was introduced within the UNMIK system in October 2000. At present the executive power in higher education matters lies with the International Administrator who is also co-head of the Department of Education (or Ministry). The Interim Statute aims at restoring autonomous governance at the University of Prishtina.

The higher education is unitary. Until now the university comprised 14 faculties offering Master and doctoral degrees, and 7 higher schools offering 2-year degrees.

In 2001 the system will be re-organised along a 3 – 5 – 8 model, introducing Bachelor and Master degrees in all disciplines with the exception of medicine.

OVERVIEW TABLES

Table 1 Higher education systems and degree structures

Country	The HE system		Degree structure at universities		Doctoral degree structure	
	Unitary	Binary	One-tier	Two-tier	One-tier	Two-tier
Albania	●			●	●	
Bosnia-Herzegovina	●			●	●	
Bulgaria		●		● ⁴	●	
Croatia		●		●	●	
Cyprus		●		●	●	
Czech Republic	●			● ¹	●	
Estonia		●		●	●	
Hungary		●	●		● ⁵	
Latvia		●		●	● ⁶	
Lithuania		●		●		● ⁷
Macedonia (Former. Yugosl. Republic of)	●			●	●	
Malta		●		●	●	
Poland		●		● ¹	● ²	
Romania	●			●	●	
Slovak Republic	●			●	● ²	
Slovenia		●		●	●	
Switzerland		●	●		● ⁸	
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: Serbia	●			●	●	
Montenegro	●			●	●	
Kosovo	●			● ⁹	●	

⁴ Higher Education is a mixed system as there are also one-tier programmes.

⁵ The possibility of Habilitation exists.

⁶ The habilitation existed in the Latvian system but was abolished in 2000.

⁷ The possibility of Habilitation still exists, but there are discussions about abolishing it.

⁸ Habilitation still required in the German-speaking part of the country, with the exception of the ETH Zürich

⁹ Higher education in Kosovo used to be a one-tier system and will have two tiers from 2001 onwards.

Table 2 Higher education qualifications *

Country Type of institution	Higher education qualifications before PhD/doctoral studies according to total number of years of higher education					PhD/ doctoral level degrees	
	1-2 years+	3 years +	4 years +	5 years +	6/7 years + ¹⁰	Inter-med. de-grees	PhD/ Doctoral degrees
Albania Universities and academies		Professional degree ¹¹ (engineer, teacher etc.)	University diploma qualification/ specialisation	Post-university Study degree	Master, advanced		Doctor
Bosnia-Herzegovina University		First degree: VI grade ¹²	First degree: VII grade ¹³	Specialisation studies	Master		Doctor
Bulgaria Universities			Bachelor	Master ¹⁴			Doctor
Colleges		Specialist					
Croatia Universities			University diploma	Diploma in medicine	Master of science		Doctor of science
Polytechnics		Professional degree ¹⁵		Postgraduate professional degree ¹⁶			
Cyprus University			Ptychio	Master			Doctor
Higher education schools	Certificate, Diploma	Higher diploma	Bachelor	Postgraduate diplomas at Master level			
Czech Republic Universities and non-university types of higher education		Bachelor ¹⁷		Master ¹⁸			Doctor
Estonia Universities		Bachelor	Bachelor ¹⁹	Master, Diploma	Degree in basic medical studies.		Doctor
Applied higher education institutions		Diploma	Diploma				
Hungary Universities	Accredited higher			Master or egyetemi	Medical degree		Ph.D., DLA ²⁰

* This table should be read together with the supplementary information on each country in the Country profiles. The aim is to indicate some of the main degree possibilities in each country. It should be noted that the number of years of study does not in itself say much about the level and contents of the qualifications. It should also be noted that the table does not illustrate the various requirements for moving from one qualification stage to another. Thus the conditions for access to doctoral level studies vary from three to five years of previous higher education. Neither has it been possible to illustrate all degree possibilities – especially not at postgraduate level.

¹⁰ In almost all countries the longer degrees of 6 – 7 years duration include degrees in such fields as medicine, veterinarian science, dentistry and others. Usually these degrees do not follow the degree structure for the more general academic degrees, e.g. there is very seldom a first intermediate degree possibility.

¹¹ Only in some disciplines like nursing

¹² Awarded after 2 – 3 years, e.g. to lawyers, teachers, engineers, medical technicians

¹³ Awarded after 4 – 6 years, e.g. Bachelor, Medical doctor, etc.

¹⁴ Either as a one-tier programme of 5 years or consecutive to a Bachelor in one year

¹⁵ Awarded after 2 – 4 years.

¹⁶ Requires at least 1 year of studies after the first professional degree

¹⁷ Awarded after 3 – 4 years

¹⁸ Either as a one-tier programme of 4 – 6 years or consecutive to a Bachelor, lasting 2 – 3 years

¹⁹ There is a tendency to standardize the duration of Bachelor degrees to 3 years and of Master's to 2 years.

²⁰ DLA: Doctoral degree in arts

	vocational certificate			oklevél			
Colleges	Accredited higher vocational certificate	Bachelor or fõiskolai oklevél					
Latvia Universities and academies		Bakalauris	Bakalauris, professional degree	Master, professional qualifications level v	Professional qualifications		Ph.D.
Professional higher education institutions ²¹	College degrees: level IV qualifications		Professional degree, level V; applied professional degrees	Professional degrees for holders of a Bachelor			
Lithuania Universities and academies			Bakalauras, professional qualifications	Professional qualifications	Magistras, professional qualifications	1 - 2 years doctor. course	Doctor
Colleges		Professional qualification					
Macedonia (Form. Yugosl. Republic of) Universities/ Faculties	Certificate for level VI(1) ²²		Diploma for level VII(1) (Bachelor) ²³	Diploma for level VII (2) (Specialist)	Diploma for level VII (2) (Master)		Doctor (level VIII)
Malta University	Diploma	Bachelor	Bachelor honours	Master ²⁴		M.Phil. ²⁵	Doctor
College		Degrees still being developed					
Poland Universities		Licencjat, Bachelor	Inzynier	Master	Professional qualifications		Doctor
Schools of higher vocational education		Licencjat	Inzynier				
Romania Universities and academies		Diploma de absolvire (Bachelor)	Licenta diploma de inginer or diploma arhitect ²⁷	Master, DEA			Doctor
University colleges ²⁸		Diploma de absolvire					
Slovak Republic Universities		Bachelor	Bachelor or Master /engineer	Master ²⁹ /engineer	Professional qualifications		Doctor
Slovenia Universities		Professional diploma	University diploma ³⁰	Specialisation degree	Master, professional qualifications		Doctor
Professional colleges		Professional Diploma					
Switzerland Universities		³¹	Lizentiat/ Licence or Diplom/		Professional qualifications		Doctor

²¹ Introduction of professional Bachelor/Master degrees starting in 2001

²² A vocational sub-degree level in the traditional system, presently disappearing

²³ After 4 to 6 years

²⁴ After Bachelor honours

²⁵ After Bachelor honours or Master

²⁶ After 4 to 5 years

²⁷ After 6 years

²⁸ Integrated into universities

²⁹ Either as a one-tier programme of 5 years or consecutive to a Bachelor in one year

³⁰ Duration 4 – 6 years, depending on the subject; 1 additional year (*absolventska leto*) is required for degree dissertation

³¹ By spring 2001 three Swiss universities had started to introduce Bachelor and Master degrees

			diplôme ³²				
Fachhochschulen		Diplom/ Diplôme FH					
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: Serbia Universities			Bachelor ³³	Bachelor ³⁴	M. Sc.		Doctor ³⁵
Montenegro University	Professional degree		Bachelor ³⁶	Medical degree	Master		Doctor
Kosovo University		Bachelor ³⁷		Master	Postgraduate degrees		Doctor

³² The licence is awarded more in humanities, the diplôme more in engineering and sciences, after 4 – 5 years

³³ Social sciences and humanities

³⁴ Engineering and natural sciences: 5 years; biomedical sciences: 6 years

³⁵ Also the Bachelor gives direct access to doctoral studies

³⁶ 4 to 5 years

³⁷ The degree structure at the University of Prishtina is currently being reformed: in 2001 a 3-5-8 model is being introduced

Table 3 Admission to higher education

Country	Admission to higher education³⁸	Numerus Clausus/ Limitations in admission
Albania	The general access requirements are a secondary school leaving certificate and a compulsory entrance examination set up by the institution and the ministry.	There is a general numerus clausus.
Bosnia-Herzegovina	The general access requirements are a secondary school leaving certificate – the results of which are weighted, depending on the study programme chosen - and an entrance examination.	No information available.
Bulgaria	Students have to meet both the general access requirement (a recognised secondary school leaving certificate) and the specific requirements (entrance examination) set by the higher education institution.	No information available.
Croatia	The general access requirements are a secondary school leaving certificate and an entrance examination set by the Ministry of Education.	There is an overall numerus clausus for all institutions and all disciplines.
Cyprus	The general access requirements are a secondary school leaving certificate and an entrance examination set by the Ministry of Education.	There is an overall numerus clausus in all public higher education institutions.
Czech Republic	Students have to meet both the general access requirement (a recognised secondary school leaving certificate) and the specific requirements (entrance examination) set by the higher education institution or faculty.	There is no overall numerus clausus; admission is decentralized.
Estonia	The general access requirement is a secondary school leaving certificate plus the State examination certificate (Riigeksamitunnistus). In addition, there may be entrance examinations set by the faculties, depending on the individual institution/programme.	There is a numerus clausus for the state-financed study places. The institutions can accept additional students on a tuition fee basis.

³⁸ According to the 1997 Lisbon Convention the terms access and admission are distinct, but linked. They denote different steps in the same process towards participation in higher education. Meeting the access requirements is necessary but not always sufficient for actually gaining admission to a higher education programme (getting a study place). When comparing access and admission requirements one has also to look into the structuring of secondary education which in some countries is based on a high degree of streaming in academic and less academic tracks. These differences are only partially reflected in this table.

Hungary	Students have to meet both the general access requirement (a recognised secondary school leaving certificate) and – for most programmes - an entrance examination in two subjects, depending on their choice of study programme.	There is a numerus clausus for the state-financed study places. Higher education institutions can accept additional students in exchange for tuition fees.
Latvia	The general access requirement is a recognised secondary school leaving certificate. The higher education institution may specify the necessary elective subjects during secondary education for admission to a programme of study.	There is an overall numerus clausus, set annually by the Ministry of Education.
Lithuania	The general access requirements are a secondary school leaving certificate plus an entrance examination set by the higher education institution in a number of disciplines, such as medicine, languages, arts, music, law, etc.	Admission procedures are decentralised, higher education institutions may set a numerus clausus in certain disciplines with regard to state-financed places and accept additional students for fees.
Macedonia, Former Yugoslav Republic of	The general access requirements are a secondary school leaving certificate plus an entrance examination (no uniform admission procedure, departments may decide). It is planned to abolish the entrance examination.	There is a numerus clausus for the state-financed study places. Higher education institutions can accept additional students in exchange for tuition fees.
Malta	All students with a recognised secondary school leaving certificate (Matriculation certificate) are eligible for admission. There are no entrance examinations.	The numerus clausus policy has been abolished.
Poland	The general access requirements are a secondary school leaving certificate plus an entrance examination set by the higher education institution.	There is no overall numerus clausus yet but the new higher education act provides for the possibility to introduce a numerus clausus in certain disciplines.
Romania	Students have to meet both the general access requirement (a recognised secondary school leaving certificate) and an entrance examination set by the higher education institution in accordance with criteria defined by the Ministry.	Government defines a numerus clausus, but each HEI may accept additional students on a tuition fee basis.
Slovak Republic	Admission is granted either based on the secondary school leaving certificate or on entrance examinations set by the higher education institution or on a combination of both.	No general numerus clausus. Higher education institutions may introduce a local numerus clausus.
Slovenia	Access to academically oriented programmes requires a secondary school leaving certificate (<i>matura</i> , in the future also <i>poklicna matura</i> , a sort of vocational <i>matura</i>) plus an examination in an additional subject. Access to professional programmes requires the <i>matura</i> or the <i>poklicna matura</i> .	No general numerus clausus, but higher education institutions may introduce local limitations with governmental authorisation (e.g. in medicine, law, business).
Switzerland	Access to universities requires a secondary school leaving certificate (<i>Matura, maturité</i>). Access to Fachhochschulen requires a professional <i>matura</i> , normally obtained during an apprenticeship.	A numerus clausus in medicine is applied in the German-speaking part of the country.
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: Serbia	Students have to meet both the general access requirement (a recognised secondary school leaving certificate) and an entrance examination set by the department.	The government defines a numerus clausus each year for each department.
Montenegro	Students have to meet both the general access requirement (a recognised secondary school leaving certificate) and an entrance	A numerus clausus is defined each year by the government.

	examination.	
Kosovo	Students have to meet both the general access requirement (a recognised secondary school leaving certificate) and an entrance examination.	The International Administrator may define a numerus clausus.

Table 4 Credit transfer systems

Country	Credit systems
Albania	No credit system in use yet. The introduction of an ECTS-compatible system is being prepared.
Bosnia-Herzegovina	No national credit system. The introduction of ECTS as a pilot project is currently being considered.
Bulgaria	No national system. So far only two universities use a credit system. The general introduction of credits is being discussed as a medium-term priority.
Croatia	No national credit system. The introduction of ECTS is being prepared.
Cyprus	There is a national credit system that is ECTS-compatible with one national credit equalling two ECTS-credits. E.g. the Ptychio, 4 years, requires 120 credits.
Czech Republic	No national credit system. There is a general trend to introduce ECTS, also due to Socrates/Erasmus, and to use it not only for foreign students but also for Czech students (both for accumulation and transfer).
Estonia	A national credit system is used in all higher education institutions, academic and professional, with 40 credits equalling one academic year. One credit corresponds to 40 hours or one week of study. Conversion into ECTS-credits possible.

Hungary	In 1998 the introduction of a credit system was made compulsory for all higher education institutions by September 2002, supervised by the National Credit Council. It will be ECTS-compatible, with one semester equalling 30 credits, and one credit corresponding to 30 hours of work. The institutions will have some autonomy in defining the operational details.
Latvia	There is a national credit system, similar to that of Scandinavian countries: 40 credit points equal one academic year and one credit corresponds to 40 hours or one week of study. The system is compatible with ECTS, but different.
Lithuania	The new higher education law of March 2000 establishes a relation of the national system to ECTS: 1 credit equals 1 week of study, 40 credits equal 1 year.
Macedonia (Form. Yugoslav Republic of)	No national credit system. The new higher education law of 2000 makes the introduction of ECTS compulsory.
Malta	National credit system with 30 credits per year, ECTS-compatible.
Poland	No national credit system. Some institutions have started, however, to introduce credit systems for specific disciplines and some are working with ECTS
Romania	A national decentralised credit transfer system has been introduced since 1998/99 on a voluntary basis. It is ECTS-compatible, with one semester equalling 30 credits.
Slovak Republic	No national credit system. Individual institutions experiment with ECTS. According to the concept for the future development of Slovak higher education, an ECTS-based system is to be developed for all institutions.
Slovenia	No national system. Both universities are introducing a credit system and use ECTS for student exchange within Socrates/Erasmus. In one university ECTS is compulsory for all newly introduced programmes. The basis, however, is not student workload, but contact hours.
Switzerland	All universities and Fachhochschulen are introducing ECTS for transfer purposes. Credit accumulation is being introduced simultaneously.
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: Serbia	No system yet. The introduction of ECTS is planned. For the time being one of the newly established post-graduate institutions is experimenting with ECTS.
Montenegro	No system yet. The introduction of ECTS is planned as part of the university reform.
Kosovo	No system yet.

Table 5 Organisation of the Academic Year

Country	Start of the academic year	Organisation of the academic year/lecturing periods
Albania	First week of October	The academic year is divided into two semesters of 38 to 42 weeks. There are three examination periods (in winter, summer and autumn)
Bosnia-Herzegovina	October	The academic year is divided into two semesters, from October to July. There are three exam periods (January-February, June-July, September-October).
Bulgaria	October	The academic year is organised in two semesters, from October to June. After each semester there follows an examination period, defined by the higher education institution.
Croatia	1 October	The academic year is divided into two semesters. There are three examination periods, in winter, summer and autumn.
Cyprus	September	The academic year is organised in two semesters of 15 weeks duration each: from September to January and from January to May. Examinations are organised at the end of each semester.
Czech Republic	Between 15 September and 15 October, decided by the individual higher education institution.	The academic year is divided into two semesters of 14 weeks duration each. Examinations are organised at the end of each semester.
Estonia	September	The academic year is divided into two semesters. Each lasts 20 weeks, including an examination period at the end.

Hungary	Beginning of September, but this may vary significantly	The academic year is divided into two semesters. Each lasts 14 to 15 weeks, followed by an examination period of six weeks.
Latvia	Normally the first week of September, but there may be differences between the higher education institutions	The academic year is organised in two semesters. After each semester there follows an examination period of two to three weeks, in January/February and in June/July.
Lithuania	1 September	The academic year is divided into two semesters of 20 weeks (September – January, February – June), including a 4-week examination period at the end of each semester.
Macedonia (Former Yugoslav Republic of)	1 October	The academic year is semester-based. The two semesters run from 1 October to 15 January and from 15 February to 31 May. The new higher education law of 2000 allows each institution to set their examination periods.
Malta	1 October	The academic year is divided into two semesters, from 1 October to 31 January, and from 1 February to 15 July. Exams are organised during the last week of January, and between the last week of May and 15 July.
Poland	1 September	The academic year is organised in two semesters of 15 weeks duration each, followed by an examination period.
Romania	1 October for most institutions, but they are free to choose the exact date in September and October	The academic year is organised in two semesters of 15 weeks duration each, followed by an examination period.
Slovak Republic	1 September	The academic year is organised in two semesters: From 1 September to 31 January and from 1 February to 30 June. Examinations are organised at the end of each semester.
Slovenia	1 October	The academic year is organised in two semesters of 15 weeks duration each. There are three examination periods, in January/February, June/July and September.
Switzerland	Second half of October	The academic year is divided into two semesters of 15 weeks duration each. They run from the second half of October to the beginning of March and from mid-April to mid-July. Examination periods are organised independently in spring, summer and autumn.
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia:		
Serbia	1 September	The academic year is organised in two semesters: from September to January and from February to June. Examinations are organised in September, October, January, April and June.
Montenegro	1 October	The academic year is organised in two semesters of 15 weeks duration each: from 1 October to 15 January and from 15 February to 31 May. There are three examination periods, in January/February, June/July and September.
Kosovo	1 October	The academic year is semester-based with fixed examination periods.

Table 6 Tuition fees and student support systems for study abroad

Country	Tuition fees for regular study programmes	National student support systems for studies abroad
Albania	A tuition fee system was introduced in the past years. The government determines the fee level (identical for all disciplines) but higher education institutions may keep up to 90 percent of the fees.	No national support system, but some grants are offered by foreign institutions within bilateral agreements.
Bosnia-Herzegovina	No tuition fees yet, although the higher education law allows the introduction of fees. Foreign students pay fees, depending on the study programme.	No support system.
Bulgaria	A tuition fee system was introduced in 1999. The fee level depends on the kind of degree and is set by the government. Foreign students also pay fees.	No national support system, but some grants are offered by foreign institutions within bilateral agreements.
Croatia	A number of places are state-financed, for the rest the higher education institutions charge tuition fees. Foreign students generally pay fees. The introduction of a general tuition fee system is under discussion.	The government provides grants for Master and doctoral programmes abroad. In addition, foreign governments offer grants within bilateral agreements.
Cyprus	At the University of Cyprus the state pays the fee (CP 2000 p.a.) for Cypriot students. Foreign students pay CP 4000 p.a. At other institutions, Cypriots pay CP 1000-3500 CP., foreigners often more.	National support plus scholarships for study abroad provided by the Ministry of Finance
Czech Republic	At state and public institutions regular studies at all levels are free within the standard duration plus one year. Students exceeding this duration by more than one year pay fees. Foreign students pay for courses taught in foreign languages. 24 private institutions (non-university type) charge fees.	No specific national system, but grants for study abroad may be provided by the department, the higher education institution or the Ministry (within the framework of international cooperation agreements)
Estonia	A number of places are state-financed, for the rest the higher education institutions charge tuition fees. Foreign students generally pay fees.	Educational assistance (loans) is provided for studies abroad.
Hungary	General tuition fees, introduced in 1996, were abolished again in 1998. A number of places are state-financed, for the rest tuition fees are set by higher education institutions (Euro 400 - 2400 per semester). Foreign students	There are a very limited number of grants for study abroad; they are normally allocated in bilateral agreements between Hungary and foreign governments.

	generally pay fees.	
Latvia	A number of places are state-financed, for the rest tuition fees are charged. A system of study loans is being introduced.	A limited number of grants for study abroad are available if it is academically justified. Study loans are available for studies abroad if these studies require paying a tuition fee.
Lithuania	A number of places for "good students" are state-financed; an additional 25 percent are admitted in exchange for tuition fees charged by the higher education institutions (Euro 375 - 6000 per year). Foreign students generally pay fees.	The Lithuanian government abroad finances a few programmes for study.
Macedonia (Former Yugoslav Republic of)	A number of places are state-financed. For the other students the higher education institutions charge fees. Foreign students generally pay fees. The introduction of a general fee system for all students is planned.	No national support system, but some grants are offered by foreign institutions within bilateral agreements.
Malta	All full-time programmes are free of charge for Maltese students. Tuition fees, set by the Ministry, are to be paid for part-time courses and by foreign students.	All Maltese undergraduate students are entitled to a maintenance grant, also for study abroad as part of their programme
Poland	Regular studies are free of charge but tuition fees are charged for evening classes, extramural studies and the repetition of exams. These fees, set by the Ministry, are not related to the student's nationality	There is no national support system yet, but a system for all types of study is being prepared
Romania	In state institutions, a number of places are state-financed, for the rest tuition fees are charged (Euro 1500 per year). Private institutions charge similar fees. Foreign students pay around Euro 400 per month, also in state institutions.	There is a national scholarship office for study abroad, and grants are also given by foreign countries and higher education institutions (cooperation agreements)
Slovak Republic	No tuition fees for full-time Slovak students (only administrative fees for certain services and part-time programmes, life-long learning etc.). Tuition fees may be charged to foreign students.	No national support system, study abroad is either self-financed or through grants available through bilateral agreements
Slovenia	No fees for undergraduate programmes in state institutions and in private institutions with a concession. All part-time and postgraduate students, and also full-time students in private institutions pay fees, set by the institution in accordance with ministerial regulations. Foreign students pay around Euro 1500 - 2000 p.a. for undergraduate, Euro 2250 - 3000 for graduate programmes.	No national support system, but some grants are available through bilateral agreements.

Switzerland	Yes, fixed by the institutions: SFR 500 – 800 per semester at universities and SFR 500 at <i>Fachhochschulen</i> . (At the Swiss Italian University SFR 2000 per semester.)	No specific system, but students with a cantonal grant may use it for study abroad if their programme is not offered in Switzerland
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: Serbia	At the state universities there are 3 categories of students: fully funded and with a tuition waiver, subsidised (with reduced tuition) and paying full tuition. The decision is performance-based. In private universities all students pay full fees. All foreign students pay fees. The government sets fees at state universities.	No support system.
Montenegro	A number of places are state-financed. For the other students tuition the higher education institutions charge fees. The university, in accordance with the Ministry of Education, defines the fee level. A new system is being developed.	A grant for study abroad can be obtained for programmes not offered in the country.
Kosovo	All students pay a tuition fee of Euro 13 per semester. Foreign students pay a slightly higher fee. The decision on fees lies, under the Interim Statute that is currently in effect, with the International Administrator.	There is for the time being no support system.

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Trends 2003 Progress towards the European Higher Education Area

Trends 2003

Progress towards the European Higher Education Area

Bologna four years after: Steps toward sustainable reform of higher education in Europe

A report prepared for the European University Association
by Sybille Reichert and Christian Tauch

July 2003

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PREFACE

EUA is pleased to present the third report on trends in higher education in Europe, prepared with the support of the European Commission through the Socrates Programme, on the occasion of the September 2003 Berlin Ministerial Conference to discuss next steps in the Bologna Process.

Four years after the launch of the Bologna Process we have entitled this third report "TRENDS 2003: Progress towards the Higher Education Area". We have chosen this title as the report concentrates not only on changes in learning structures in Europe, but for the first time analyses and compares developments from the point of view of all the major actors in the process: governments, national rectors' conferences, higher education institutions and students. The report reflects the views of these different stakeholders on the Bologna Process as a whole, and on its different "action lines", in terms of implementation, problems encountered and challenges for the future.

EUA decided to widen the scope of the report, in comparison to those prepared for the Bologna and Prague Conferences respectively, in order to underline the growing importance of the full support and involvement of higher education institutions and students in the implementation of the process. The enthusiastic response of higher education institutions to the questionnaires sent out early in 2003 confirmed the validity of this approach and enabled the authors, Sybille Reichert and Christian Tauch, to analyse the views of institutions and to compare their responses to those of the other players.

Therefore the report looks not only at policy developments and changes in structures at national level but also reflects institutional positions and the views of students. It concludes that the realisation of the European Higher Education Area will only be possible if higher education institutions and their staff and students subscribe to its aims and implement the different objectives. Therefore a particular challenge for the next phase of the process will be to ensure that Bologna, now that the majority of institutional leaders are convinced of its importance, reaches out to include the essential actors, the academics who are responsible for teaching and research in their daily lives, the administrative staff and the students. It is only in this way that the change process, initiated across Europe, will become embedded in the institutions and thus be implemented in an innovative and sustainable way. This reality will guide EUA's action in the coming years.

In addition, we have learned that the Bologna reforms, if they are to be meaningful at institutional level, have to be integrated into the other core functions and development processes of Europe's higher education institutions, and should not be pushed forward at the expense of other urgent innovations and reforms. These and the Bologna reforms also need to be considered as a package at institutional level. All this will require the highest level of leadership, quality and strategic management inside each institution. Above all, the message is that Europe's universities stand firmly behind the Bologna Process. Much has been achieved over the last four years since 1999, but in order to ensure sustainable reform it will be important to allow enough time for institutions to transform legislative changes into meaningful academic aims and institutional realities. Supporting institutions in this process will be EUA's key objective as the association too moves forward into the next phase of the process.



Eric Froment
President, EUA



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AIMS OF THE STUDY

This study aims to capture the most important recent trends related to the Bologna reforms. It is a follow-up to the two *Trends reports* which were written for the Bologna Conference in 1999 and the Prague Conference in 2001. Unlike the two first reports, which were mainly based on information provided by the ministries of higher education and the rectors' conferences, *Trends 2003* tries to reflect not only these two perspectives but also those of students, employers and, most importantly, the HEIs themselves, thus giving a fairly comprehensive picture of the present phase of the Bologna Process. If the EHEA is to become a reality, it has to evolve from governmental intentions and legislation to institutional structures and processes, able to provide for the intense exchange and mutual cooperation necessary for such a cohesive area. This means that higher education institutions are heavily and directly involved in the development of viable interpretations of concepts which were and are sometimes still vague, even in the minds of those who use these concepts most often. Concrete meaning needs to be given to:

- the term "employability" in the context of study programmes at Bachelor level;
- the relation between the new two tiers;
- workload-based credits as units to be accumulated within a given programme;
- curricular design that takes into account qualification descriptors, level descriptors, skills and learning outcomes;
- the idea of flexible access and individualised learning paths for an increasingly diverse student body;
- the role of higher education inserting itself into a perspective of lifelong learning;
- the conditions needed to optimise access to mobility; and last but not least, to
- meaningful internal and external quality assurance procedures.

We may thus assert from the outset that this study emphasises the need for complementarity between the top-down approach applied so far in the Bologna Process, with the emerging bottom-up process in which higher education institutions are already playing and should continue to play a key role - as expected of them by the ministers when they first met in Bologna. Institutional developments in line with the objectives of the Bologna Process are not only emerging rapidly, but also represent challenges worthy of our full attention, as this study hopes to prove.

AWARENESS AND SUPPORT OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

Awareness of the Bologna Process has increased considerably during the last two years. Nevertheless, the results of the *Trends 2003 survey* and many other sources suggest that, despite this growing awareness among the different HE groups, the reforms have yet to reach the majority of the HE grass-roots representatives who are supposed to implement them and give them concrete meaning. Deliberations on the implementation of Bologna reforms currently involve heads of institutions more than the academics themselves. Hence, interpreting Bologna in the light of its goals and the whole context of its objectives at departmental level, i.e. rethinking current teaching structures, units, methods, evaluation and the permeability between disciplines and institutions, is a task that still lies ahead for a majority of academics at European universities. Administrative staff and students seem so far to be even less included in deliberations on the implementation of Bologna reforms. Generally, awareness is more developed at universities than at other higher education institutions. In Estonia, Lithuania, Sweden, Germany, Ireland and most strongly the UK, deliberations on institutional Bologna reforms are even less widespread than in the other Bologna signatory countries. This does not mean, of course, that no reforms are being undertaken, but that if there are reforms they are not explicitly associated with the Bologna Process. In the case of Sweden, for instance, reforms along the lines of the Bologna Process are often not carried out in the name of Bologna.

In the light of the scope of the Bologna reforms, which involve not only all disciplines but different groups of actors in the whole institution, it should be noted that only 47% of universities and only 29,5% of other HEIs have created the position of a Bologna coordinator.

There is however **widespread support for the Bologna Process among heads of HEIs**. More than two thirds of the heads of institutions regard it as essential to make rapid progress towards the EHEA, another 20% support the idea of the EHEA but think the time is not yet ripe for it. However, some resistance to individual aspects and the pace of the reforms obviously remains. Such resistance seems to be more pronounced in Norway, France, the French-speaking community of Belgium, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Ireland and the UK. Though some South East European (SEE) countries have not yet formally joined the Bologna Process, they already take it as a reference framework and actively promote its objectives.

THE ROLE OF HEI IN THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

While being mostly supportive of the Bologna process, 62 % of university rectors and 57% of heads of other HEIs in Europe feel that institutions should be involved more directly in the realisation of the Bologna objectives.

Moreover, 46% of HEI leaders find that their national legislation undermines autonomous decision-making – at least in part. Particularly in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and SEE, higher education representatives and rectors' conferences point to the limits of autonomous decision-making by institutions.

While many governments have made considerable progress with respect to the creation of legal frameworks which allow HEIs to implement Bologna reforms, only half of them seem to have provided some funding to the HEIs for these reforms. **The lack of financial support for the Bologna reforms is highlighted by nearly half of all HEIs of the Bologna signatory countries.** This means that the Bologna reforms are often implemented at the cost of other core functions or essential improvements. 75% of all heads of HEIs think clear financial incentives for involvement in the Bologna reforms should be provided. Obviously, the dialogue between rectors and academics, institutions and ministry representatives has to be intensified, beyond the reform of legislation, including both the implications of Bologna reforms at institutional level and the State support needed to foster these reforms, without detriment to other core functions of higher education provision.

THE ROLE OF STUDENTS IN THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

At 63% of universities in Bologna signatory countries, students have been formally involved in the Bologna Process, through participation in the senate or council or at faculty/departmental level. The same trend is valid for the non-signatory countries in SEE.

A significantly lower degree of formal participation in the Bologna Process at institutional level can be noted in Greece, Portugal, Slovenia, Iceland and the UK. Half of the students, as represented by their national and European student associations, feel they are playing a very or reasonably active role in the construction of the European Higher Education Area. At institutional and particularly at departmental level, the inclusion of students in the deliberations concerning a qualitative reform of teaching and learning structures, methods and evaluation in the spirit of the Bologna Declaration still leaves considerable room for improvement.

Student representatives express the highest hopes concerning the principles of the Bologna reforms and the harshest criticism concerning their implementation and frequently reductive interpretations. The students' contribution to the deliberations on the Bologna reforms has been particularly strong on issues of the social dimension of higher education and the emphasis of HE as a public good, and in connection with discussions of the possible consequences of GATS on higher education institutions. Students have also continuously stressed the values of student-centred learning, flexible learning paths and access, as well as a realistic, i.e. empirically-based, estimation of workload in the context of establishing institution-wide credit systems.

ACADEMIC QUALITY AND GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY AS COMPATIBLE AIMS

Enhancing academic quality and the employability of graduates are **the two most frequently mentioned driving forces behind the Bologna Process** according to the representatives of ministries, rectors' conferences and higher education institutions.

A remarkable consensus has been reached at institutional level on the value of the employability of HE graduates in Europe: 91% of the heads of European higher education institutions regard the employability of their graduates to be an important or even very important concern when designing or restructuring their curricula. However, **regular and close involvement of professional associations and employers in curricular development still seems to be rather limited**. HEIs should be encouraged to seek a close dialogue with professional associations and employers in reforming their curricula. However, fears of short-sighted misunderstandings of the ways in which higher education should aim at employability and relevance to society and the economy have re-emerged frequently in the context of comparing and redesigning modules or degree structures. To do justice to the concerns of stakeholders regarding the relevance of higher education and the employability of HE graduates, without compromising the more long-term perspective proper to higher education institutions and to universities in particular, may well be the most decisive challenge and success-factor of Bologna-related curricular reforms. It should be noted that the growing trend towards structuring curricula in function of the learning outcomes and competences, is often seen as a way to ensure that academic quality and long-term employability become compatible goals of higher education. This understanding has also been the basis for the project "Tuning Educational Structures in Europe" in which more than 100 universities have tried to define a common core of learning outcomes in a variety of disciplines.

PROMOTION OF MOBILITY IN EUROPE

While outgoing and incoming **student mobility has increased** across Europe, incoming mobility has grown more in the EU than in the accession countries. **A majority of institutions report an imbalance of outgoing over incoming students**. Net importers of students are most often located in France, The Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and, most strongly, in Ireland or the UK where 80% of the institutions report an imbalance of incoming over outgoing students.

Teaching staff mobility has increased over the last three years at a majority of higher education institutions in more than two thirds of the signatory countries.

Public funds for mobility have been increased in the majority of EU countries but only in a minority of accession countries. However, the number and level of mobility grants for students is not sufficient to allow for equal access to mobility for those from financially less privileged backgrounds.

Comparable and European-wide data on all mobility (including free movers), including students' financial and social conditions, **is urgently needed** in order to allow monitoring of any progress in European mobility and benchmarking with other regions in the world.

ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE EHEA AND THE NATIONAL HE SYSTEMS

Enhancing the attractiveness of the European systems of higher education in the non-European world is a **third driving force of the Bologna Process**, ranked by *Trends III* respondents after **improving academic quality and preparing graduates for a European labour market**. **The EU is by far the highest priority area for most institutions** (mentioned by 92%). The second priority area is Eastern Europe (62%), followed by US/Canada (57%), Asia (40%), Latin America (32%), Africa and Australia (24% and 23%) and the Arab World (16%). In some European countries, the priorities diverge considerably from this ranking, notably in the UK, Spain, Germany and Romania where Europe is targeted significantly less often.

In order to promote their attractiveness in these priority areas, joint programmes or similar co-operation activities are clearly the preferred instrument (mentioned by three quarters of all HEIs). **Only 30% of HEIs mention the use of targeted marketing for recruiting students**, with the notable exceptions of Ireland and the UK where more than 80% of universities conduct targeted marketing.

A majority of countries have developed national brain drain prevention and brain gain promotion policies. Most HEIs still have to define their own institutional profiles more clearly in order to be able to target the markets which correspond to their priorities. In light of the competitive arena of

international student recruitment, HEIs will not be able to avoid targeted marketing techniques if they want to position themselves internationally, even if such efforts may go against the grain of established academic culture and habits.

HE AS A PUBLIC GOOD

A large consensus appears to exist in the emerging EHEA regarding **Higher Education as a public good and a public responsibility**. It is widely recognised that social and financial support schemes, including portable grants and loans, and improved academic and social counselling are conditions for wider access to higher education, more student mobility and improved graduation rates.

However, the conflict between cooperation and solidarity, on the one hand, and competition and concentration of excellence, on the other, is currently growing as HEIs are faced with decreasing funds. Higher education institutions can try to combine widened access, diversified provision and concentration of excellence, but often have to pursue one option to the detriment of the others. In competing with other policy areas for public funding, HEIs still have to convince parliaments and governments of the vital contribution of HE graduates and HE-based research to social and economic welfare.

HE IN THE GATS

Only one third of the ministries have developed a policy on the position of **Higher Education in the World Trade Organisation's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)**, while two thirds have not. The situation is similar for the rectors' conferences. Only 20% of HEI leaders declared themselves to be fully aware of the GATS negotiations, almost half of these leaders considered themselves to be aware without having specific details, and 29% said they were *not yet aware* of GATS, with considerable differences between countries.

Students' associations seem to be well aware of GATS and the threats posed by the further inclusion of HE in the on-going negotiations. There is a consensus that more transparency and consultation of higher education representatives is needed in the ongoing and future GATS negotiations.

To meet the internationalisation challenges, there is a growing need for enhanced quality assurance procedures and regulatory frameworks, also given the emergence of many private for-profit institutions in Europe.

DEGREE STRUCTURES, QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORKS AND CURRICULA

Regarding the introduction of study structures based on undergraduate and graduate tiers, important progress has been made in legal terms. Today, **80% of the Bologna countries either have the legal possibility to offer two-tier structures or are introducing these**. Many governments have fixed deadlines for the transition from the traditional to the new degree system. In the remaining 20% of countries, the necessary legislative changes are being prepared. The latter holds true also for SEE countries.

As for the HEIs, 53% have introduced or are introducing the two-tier structure while 36% are planning it. In other words, **almost 90% of HEIs in the Bologna countries have or will have a two-tier structure**. Only 11% of HEIs see no need for curricular reform in this process. About 55% of HEIs in SEE have not yet introduced the two-tier structure.

The need for more structured doctoral studies in Europe has been highlighted repeatedly in recent years. The traditional procedure of leaving doctoral students largely on their own and providing them with individual supervision only is no longer suited to the challenges of modern society and hampers the realisation of the European Higher Education Area.

Europe is divided in two halves regarding the organisation of these third-tier doctoral studies. In half of the countries, doctoral students receive mainly individual supervision and tutoring, while in the other half, taught doctoral courses are also offered in addition to individual work. HEIs still face the challenge of how to cooperate, with the support of governments, at doctoral level nationally

and across Europe, and whether or not this should involve **the setting-up of structured doctoral studies, particularly in interdisciplinary and international settings.**

Student support for the new degree structures clearly outweighs the reservations, but the risk of putting too much emphasis on “employability” still causes unease among a substantial number of student associations.

In countries where first degrees at Bachelor level have not existed in the past, there still appears to be a tendency to see these as a stepping stone or orientation platform, rather than as degrees in their own right. The perception of Bachelor degrees as valid and acceptable qualifications still leaves room for improvement.

Governments and HEIs will have to cooperate closely to **ensure that the implementation of the new degree structures is not done superficially**, but is accompanied by the necessary curricular review, taking into account not only the ongoing European discussions on descriptors for Bachelor-level and Master-level degrees, learning outcomes and qualification profiles, but also institution-specific needs for curricular reform.

To achieve the objective of a “system of easily readable and comparable degrees” within the European Higher Education Area, it will be essential that governments and HEIs use the next phase of the Bologna Process to **elaborate qualifications frameworks based on external reference points (qualification descriptors, level descriptors, skills and learning outcomes), possibly in tune with a common European Qualifications Framework.** The outcomes of the Joint Quality Initiative and the Tuning project may be relevant in this respect.

JOINT CURRICULA AND JOINT DEGREES

Joint Curricula and Joint Degrees are intrinsically linked to all the objectives of the Bologna Process and have the potential to become an important element of a truly European Higher Education Area. Nevertheless, and in spite of the appeal in the Prague Communiqué, joint curricula and joint degrees still do not receive sufficient attention, as is confirmed by the fact that most ministries and rectors’ conferences attach only medium or even low importance to these. More than two thirds of the ministries claim to give some kind of financial incentive to the development of joint curricula/joint degrees but the extent of such support is not known.

While support for joint curricula and joint degrees is clearly higher among HEIs and students, these have not yet been recognised as core tools for institutional development. Their creation and coordination still appears to be left entirely to the initiative of individual professors.

HEIs and national higher education systems in the EHEA would lose an enormous opportunity to position themselves internationally if they were not to focus their attention more than before on systematic – including financial – support for the development of joint curricula/joint degrees. Of course, such support would entail amendments and changes in the existing higher education legislation of many countries, as **in more than half of the Bologna Process countries, the legislation does not yet allow the awarding of joint degrees.** It would also call for the elaboration of agreed guidelines and definitions for joint curricula/joint degrees, both at national and European level, and would rely on enhanced networking between the HEIs themselves.

RECOGNITION

About **two thirds of the Bologna signatory countries have so far ratified the most important legal tool for recognition, the Lisbon Recognition Convention.** The European Higher Education Area would benefit if this Convention were ratified by all Bologna signatory States as soon as possible.

Correspondingly, more than half of the academic staff are reported as being not very aware or not aware at all of the provisions of the Lisbon Convention. **Close cooperation** with the relevant ENIC/NARIC is reported by only 20% of HEIs, while 25% do not cooperate at all with their ENIC/NARIC. A further 28% of HEIs say they don’t know what ENIC/NARIC is (or at least not under this name).

Thus **awareness of the provisions of the Lisbon Convention, but also of the ENIC/NARIC initiatives (recognition procedures in transnational education etc.) among academic staff and students needs to be raised**, through cooperation between international organisations, national authorities and HEIs. Moreover, the position of the ENIC/NARIC also needs to be strengthened in some countries.

Two thirds of the ministries, more than half of the HEIs and slightly less than 50% of the student associations expect that the Bologna Process will greatly facilitate academic recognition procedures. While HEIs are rather optimistic with regard to the smoothness of recognition procedures of study abroad periods, in many countries, however, institution-wide procedures for recognition seem to be quite under-developed, and the recognition of study abroad periods often takes place on a case-by-case basis. Even where formal procedures exist, students, as the primarily concerned group, often say they are unaware of these. Almost 90% of the students' associations reported that their members occasionally or often encounter recognition problems when they return from study abroad.

It is a positive sign that more than 40% of the students' associations indicated that appeal procedures for recognition problems were also in place in their members' institutions. But, clearly, more HEIs should be encouraged to **develop more and better institutional recognition procedures, and especially to intensify communication with students** on these matters.

The **Diploma Supplement** is being introduced in a growing number of countries, but the main target group - the employers - is still insufficiently aware of it. Awareness of the potential benefits of the Diploma Supplement therefore also needs to be raised. The introduction of a **Diploma Supplement label** (like that of an **ECTS label**) would probably lead to a clear qualitative improvement in the use of the Diploma Supplement.

CREDITS FOR TRANSFER AND ACCUMULATION

ECTS is clearly emerging as the European credit system. In many countries it has become a legal requirement, while other countries with national credit systems are ensuring their compatibility with ECTS.

Two thirds of HEIs today use ECTS for credit transfer, 15% use a different system. Regarding credit accumulation, almost three quarters of HEIs declare that they have already introduced it – this surprisingly high figure needs further examination and may result from an insufficient understanding of the particularities of a credit accumulation system.

The ECTS information campaign of the past years, undertaken by the European Commission, the European University Association and many national organisations, has yet to reach a majority of institutions where the use of **ECTS is still not integrated into institution-wide policies or guidelines**, and its principles and tools are often insufficiently understood.

The basic principles and tools of ECTS, as laid down in the **"ECTS Key Features" document**, need to be conveyed to academic and administrative staff and students alike in order to exploit the potential of ECTS as a tool for transparency. Support and advice is particularly needed regarding credit allocation related to learning outcomes, workload definition, and the use of ECTS for **credit accumulation**. The introduction of the ECTS label will lead to a clear qualitative improvement in the use of ECTS.

AUTONOMY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

Increasing autonomy normally means greater independence from state intervention, but is **generally accompanied by a growing influence of other stakeholders in society, as well as by extended external quality assurance procedures and outcome-based funding mechanisms**. However, many higher education representatives stress that a release of higher education institutions from state intervention will only increase institutional autonomy and optimise the universities' innovative potential, as long as this is not undone by mechanistic and uniform ex post monitoring

of outputs, or by an overly intrusive influence of other stakeholders with more short-term perspectives.

All Bologna signatory countries have established or are in the process of establishing agencies which are responsible for external quality control in some form or another. 80% of HEIs in Europe already undergo external quality assurance procedures in some form or another (quality evaluation or accreditation). The **previous opposition between accreditation procedures in the accession countries and quality evaluation in EU countries seems to be softening**: a growing interest in accreditation and the use of criteria and standards can be observed in Western Europe, while an increasing use of improvement-oriented evaluation procedures is noted in Eastern European countries. Two recent comparative studies also observe a softening of opposition between institution- and programme-based approaches among QA agencies and an increasing mix of these two approaches within the same agencies.

The **primary function of external quality assurance** (quality evaluation or accreditation), according to the responsible agencies and the majority of HEIs, consists in **quality improvement**. Only in France, Slovakia and the UK, accountability to society is mentioned more frequently than quality improvement. Even accreditation agencies, traditionally more oriented toward accountability, have stressed improvement in recent years. Generally speaking, external quality procedures are evaluated positively by the HEIs. Most frequently, they are regarded as enhancing institutional quality culture. Higher education representatives, however, often observe that the effectiveness of the quality evaluation procedures will depend to a large extent on their readiness to consider the links between teaching and research and other dimensions of institutional management. As complex systems, universities cannot react to a problem seen in one domain without also affecting other domains indirectly. Likewise, the efficiency and return on investment in quality review processes will depend on the synergies and coordination between the various national and European accountability and quality assurance procedures, as well as the funding mechanisms in place across Europe.

Internal quality assurance procedures seem to be just as widespread as external ones and mostly focus on teaching. 82% of the heads of HEIs reported that they have internal procedures to monitor the quality of teaching, 53% also have internal procedures to monitor the quality of research. Only a quarter of the HEIs say they have procedures to monitor aspects other than teaching and research. At the moment, however, internal procedures are not yet developed and robust enough to make external quality assurance superfluous.

Ministries, rectors' conferences, HEIs, and students all generally **prefer mutual recognition of national quality assurance procedures over common European structures**. However, the objects and beneficiaries (or "victims") of quality evaluation and accreditation, the higher education institutions themselves, are significantly more positively disposed toward common structures and procedures than the national actors. For instance, nearly half of higher education institutions say they would welcome a pan-European accreditation agency.

The ultimate challenge for QA in Europe consists in creating transparency, exchange of good practice and enough common criteria to allow for mutual recognition of each others' procedures, without mainstreaming the system and undermining its positive forces of diversity and competition.

LIFELONG LEARNING

Definitions of Lifelong Learning (LLL) and its relation to Continuing Education (CE) and Adult Education are still vague and diverse in different national contexts. Generally speaking, as far as the HE sector is concerned, LLL debates constitute the follow-up to the older debates on Continuing Education and Adult Education, sharing their focus on flexible access to the courses provided, as well as the attempt to respond to the diverse profiles and backgrounds of students. All of the recent definitions of LLL reflect an emphasis on identifying how learning can best be enabled, in all contexts and phases of life.

The need for national LLL policies seems to be undisputed, and was strongly pushed in the context of the consultation on the European Commission's Memorandum on LLL (November 2000). The *Trends 2003 survey* reveals that in 2003 the majority of countries either intend or are in the process of developing a LLL strategy. Such policies already exist in one third of Bologna signatory countries, namely in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, Ireland, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden and the UK.

Most of the policies and actions undertaken at European and national levels do not target the higher education sector as such, and do not address the particular added value or conditions of LLL provision at HEIs.

At institutional level, the UK, Iceland, France, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic and Bulgaria have the highest percentages of higher education institutions with LLL strategies, while Germany, Austria, Italy, Hungary, Turkey, Romania and other SEE countries have the lowest percentages.

A majority of student associations have observed changes in attitude to LLL over the last three years at institutions in their countries. Nearly half of the student representatives noted changes with respect to the courses offered to non-traditional students, while a third observed greater encouragement of LLL culture among students. Little change was observed with respect to teaching methodologies or access policies.

Most national LLL policies comprise two co-existing agenda of social inclusion, stressing flexible access and diversity of criteria for different learner profiles, and economic competitiveness, focusing on efficient updating of professional knowledge and skills. The latter dimension is often funded and developed in partnership with labour market stakeholders. If the competitiveness agenda is reinforced by tight national budgets and not counterbalanced by government incentives, university provision of LLL may well be forced to let go of the more costly social agenda.

The development of LLL provision reflects a clear market orientation and a well-developed dialogue with stakeholders. Two thirds of the European institutions provide assistance on request and respond to the expressed needs of businesses, professional associations and other employers. Nearly half (49%) actually initiate joint programmes, with considerably more institutions doing so in Finland, Iceland, Sweden, Norway, Estonia, France, Ireland and the UK. However, the inclination to respond directly to market needs is also one of the reasons for the critical attitude of many academics toward LLL units at higher education institutions, especially at universities.

European reforms of degree structures seem to affect LLL at many institutions. 39% of heads of institutions find that the implementation of new degree structures also affects the design of LLL programmes and modules.

With the exception of exchanging experience in major European networks of continuing education, European cooperation between institutions in LLL, e.g. for the sake of joint course development, is still the exception rather than the rule.

LLL provision is still generally marginalised, i.e. rarely integrated in the general strategies, core processes and decision-making of the institution. Even in those countries where CE or LLL has been playing an important political role and where incentives are provided to develop LLL, such as France, the UK and Finland, CE centers are not always recognised on an equal footing with the rest of university teaching and research. In order to position themselves in an expanding market and clarify the added value of their expertise, HEIs will have to make more of an effort to integrate LLL into their core development processes and policies.

**DIVERSIFICATION OF
INSTITUTIONAL
PROFILES**

Currently, a large majority of European higher education institutions are alike in the relative weight they attribute to teaching and research, and in the dominance of a national orientation regarding the community they primarily serve. Only 13% of all European HEIs (16% of universities) see themselves as serving a world-wide community (with large country divergences in this respect), while only 7% see themselves as primarily serving a European community.

Higher education institutions are facing an increasing need to develop more differentiated profiles, since the competition for public and private funds, as well as for students and staff, has increased in times of more intense internationalisation and even globalisation of parts of the higher education market. However, the readiness of HEIs to develop more differentiated profiles depends to a large extent on increased autonomy – which is only partially realised in Europe, as well as on funding mechanisms which allow for such profiling, and which are not yet in place in any European country.

A major challenge for the future consists in addressing the new needs which arise from the diversified body of immediate partners in teaching and research. Universities will not only have to decide what the limits of these partners' roles should be, in order to maintain their own academic freedom, but will also have to sell the “unique added value” of what the university's role and contribution to teaching and research can be, distinguishing themselves from other organisations which also offer teaching or research. Their learning structures and outcomes, with suitable supporting quality criteria, including their individual ways of relating academic quality to sustainable employability, will certainly become one of the prime ingredients of institutional positioning in Europe and the world.

2. INTRODUCTION: ON THE AIMS AND METHODOLOGY OF THIS STUDY

Four years after the Bologna Declaration, governments of all signatory countries have shown manifold evidence of legislative initiatives and attempts to realise the proposed Bologna reforms to which they had committed themselves in 1999 and 2001. They have initiated new procedures, fostered cooperation between national agencies, developed new policies, exchanged and adopted good practice. Already in 2001, the level and growth of Bologna-related activities at national levels were reported and welcomed by the ministers in the Prague Communiqué. But how are these initiatives accepted, interpreted and turned into reality at the level of the institutions? That is the question which is becoming more and more decisive as the outlines of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) become clearer and expectations grow.

This study is supposed to capture the most important recent trends related to the Bologna reforms. It is a follow-up to the two *Trends reports* that were written for the Bologna Conference in 1999¹ and the Prague Conference in 2001². Unlike the two first reports, which were mainly based on information provided by the Ministries of Higher Education and the rectors' conferences, *Trends 2003* tries to reflect not only these two perspectives but also those of students, employers and, most importantly, the HEIs themselves. *Trends 2003* is meant to give a fairly comprehensive picture of the present phase of the Bologna Process. If the EHEA is to become reality, it has to be transformed from governmental intentions and legislation into institutional structures and processes, providing for the intensity of exchange and mutual cooperation necessary for such a cohesive area. This means that higher education institutions are heavily and directly involved in the development of viable interpretations of concepts which were and sometimes are still vague, even in the minds of those who use these concepts most often. For instance, concrete meaning has to be given to:

- the term "employability" as an aim of a shorter first-degree cycle;
- the relation between the new two-tiers;
- workload-based credits as units to be accumulated within a given programme;
- the idea of flexible access and individualised learning paths for an increasingly diverse student body;
- the role of higher education inserting itself into a perspective of lifelong learning;
- the conditions needed to optimise access to mobility; and last but not least, to
- meaningful internal and external quality assurance procedures.

Such challenges are only beginning to be realised in their full scope. As institutions dive into the vicissitudes of designing new curricula in accordance with Bologna principles, they are often not yet aware of the systemic changes which Bologna, as a package of different but interlinked objectives, implies. At first, most institutions are focusing on curricular reform. Other Bologna objectives, such as establishing ECTS on an institution-wide basis or promoting mobility, may not be new and are rarely seen as systemically relevant. But it may be expected that the more curricular changes advance and the more systemically relevant aims of Bologna and Prague, such as encouraging lifelong learning and looking for mutual recognition between quality assurance procedures, are acknowledged at institutional level, the more challenging the Bologna reforms will become.

In this study, we departed from the assumption that Bologna reforms, if taken as a whole, are necessarily relevant to the overall system of higher education, not just at national but also at institutional level. We therefore tried to uncover where those challenges are felt most strongly, where problems occur and where conflicts between these reforms and other conditions of institutional development are emerging. Most importantly, we sought to highlight what interpretations are given by institutional actors to the various Bologna goals and objectives and what success factors they attribute to the individual change processes involved in making the EHEA a reality.

1 Guy Haug, Jette Kirstein: *Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education*, Brussels 1999. See <http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de>, "main documents".

2 Guy Haug, Christian Tauch: *Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education II*, Helsinki 2001. See <http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de>, "main documents".

In order to capture trends not only at national but also at institutional level, and to do justice to students' views and experiences as well as to at least one stakeholder perspective, questionnaires were sent to five different groups:

- the 33 ministries in charge of higher education (as had already been done in the precursor study "*Trends II study*", with the exception of Turkey);
- the 33 rectors' conferences (also approached in *Trends II*, likewise with the exception of Turkey);
- the ministries and rectors' conferences in the South East European countries that want to join the Bologna Process (the SEE ministries had already been included in *Trends II*);
- 1800 heads of higher education institutions (HEIs), including not just the heads of universities but also other higher education institutions (i.e. all EUA member institutions, all EURASHE member institutions, and all other HEIs with EC Socrates contracts);
- the national and European student associations;
- the national employers' associations (members of UNICE - Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe).

The deadlines were set between the months of December 2002 and February 2003, so that the processed data became available in several phases between mid-February and mid-March 2003.

In order to encourage optimal feedback, open questions were avoided in the design of the questionnaires, especially for the heads of institutions. The response rate was thus also sufficiently representative: 45% of the HEIs returned the questionnaires, all but one of the ministries, 90% of the rectors' conferences, 80% of the student associations and 50% of the employers' associations.

In addition to the data gathered through the questionnaires, we included all the recent studies on the Bologna and Prague objectives and related issues which had been published since the EUA Salamanca Convention in 2001 (see Bibliography). We also looked at the most important EU communications and working documents relevant to the Bologna Process. Furthermore, the national reports submitted to the Bologna Follow-up Group were taken into account in so far as these were already available (which was the case for about a third of the Bologna signatory countries). Finally, the authors attended as many Bologna-relevant events as they could, and included all of the conclusions and recommendations of the official Bologna seminars in their analysis and synthesis of recent trends.

We should point to the limits imposed by the availability of data and thus implicitly also to recommendations for the future monitoring of the Bologna Process.

Firstly, it should be stressed that all of the questions asked to the various stakeholders groups were requests for subjective judgements regarding facts and opinions on current structures and developments. No hard data was requested, not only because it would have been impossible to process with the time and resources available, but it would also have resulted in low and therefore unrepresentative response rates to the questionnaires. The authors are convinced, however, that the various converging and conflicting judgements reflected in the answers to the questionnaires, as well as the additional studies consulted, result in a reasonably reliable picture of reality in the various national and European contexts. For the future, it would nevertheless be desirable to add qualitative monitoring visits and some quantitative data collection on a small set of questions to the data gathering process. Of course, a sufficient amount of time would have to be foreseen to collect and process such data.

Secondly, it should be pointed out that, although this phase of observing the Bologna Process has already been much more inclusive than the previous ones, by reaching out to the institutions and students in order to obtain reliable estimations of progress and remaining challenges, one group of stakeholders has still been left out of the survey: the academics.

The information gathered on HEI realities has been obtained through the voices of their leaders and their students, but not through those of the academics who are currently involved in making sense of the proposed reforms. Of course, the studies which we consulted and the meetings we attended often included the views of the academics concerned. On the other hand, the fact that the vast majority of academics refrain from organising themselves in national or European professional bodies or associations makes it particularly difficult to obtain representative opinions from this group, and consulting them all would not be feasible given the number of constituents of the group. Their natural form of networking occurs via their fields of research and teaching, rather than on the basis of any transdisciplinary professional self-definition. But the results of the project "Tuning Educational Structures in Europe", the only European project which is currently being designed and conducted by academics and for academics to give concrete meaning to the Bologna reforms in various academic disciplines, shows that gathering input from this group is not only the most challenging but also potentially the most rewarding exercise in the reform process.³ For the next phase of observing the Bologna Process, one should plan some way of ensuring the direct surveying and consultation of the academic staff, in spite of its size and lack of European-wide representation. The engagement of these academics will now become the decisive success factor in the creation of a European Higher Education Area.

3 For the outcomes of the first phase of the "Tuning" project, see: Julia Gonzalez and Robert Wagenaar, eds. (2003) *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe. Final Report. Phase One*. Bilbao/Groningen. The book can also be downloaded from the following websites: <http://www.relint.deusto.es/TuningProject/index.htm> or <http://www.let.rug.nl/TuningProject/index.htm>.

3. THE BOLOGNA PROCESS AND ITS ACTORS

3.1 AWARENESS AND SUPPORT

3.1.1 Analysis

Four years have passed since the Bologna Declaration and it seems that the Bologna Process is now viewed by a majority of higher education representatives in most European countries as a reform agenda which cannot be ignored, but which should be dealt with proactively if universities are not to be overtaken by unwanted interpretations of what Bologna should mean at institutional level. The ongoing challenge faced by all participants in the Process, be they enthusiasts or sceptics, is to make sense of the Bologna objectives in each institutional context.

Awareness of the Bologna Process (BP) seems to have increased significantly over the last two years. While no quantitative data was available then, the many Bologna seminars and information workshops at the time revealed a considerable lack of information as to the contents and scope of the Bologna Process. In 2003, ministries, rectors' conferences as well as the student associations judged this awareness to be highest among the heads of institutions, all of whom were felt to be very much or reasonably aware. The only exception was among the heads of UK institutions, who were generally felt to be not very aware of the Bologna Process by their rectors' conference.

The second ranked, but considerably less informed group, appears to be the academic staff. No more than 15% of the representatives of ministries, rectors' conferences, heads of institutions and student associations, judged academic staff to be very aware of the BP, with the more removed observers being more optimistic in this respect. Only about 12 % of the heads of institutions thought their academic staff was very aware of the BP, while more than half felt they were reasonably aware of the BP. However, more than a quarter of the heads of institutions and nearly half of the student association representatives – i.e. both groups who are in close contact with academics – judged academics to be not very aware of the BP.

Both the administrative staff of HEIs and the students are seen to be not very aware of the BP by more than half of the HEI heads. More than half of the student associations judge their own constituencies to be quite unaware of the BP. The fact that the more removed ministries have a more positive judgement in this respect might reflect that the dialogue between ministry, HE representatives and students is often more developed at national than at institutional level.

One should note that there are considerable differences between individual countries as far as BP awareness is concerned, reflecting, one may assume, the intensity of ongoing discussions and deliberations regarding the implementation of Bologna with the relevant groups. According to the rectors' conferences and the heads of institutions, academic staff awareness of the BP seems to be particularly low in Estonia, Lithuania, Sweden, Germany, Ireland and the United Kingdom (the UK has by far the lowest reported BP awareness level for academics). This does not mean, of course, that no reforms are being undertaken, but that if there are reforms they may not be explicitly associated with the Bologna Process. In the case of Sweden, for instance, reforms along the lines of the Bologna Process are often not carried out in the name of Bologna. Furthermore, there are sometimes sub-sectors of a higher education system where the Bologna Process is more widely debated than in the general national HE debate. Thus, in Ireland, in contrast to the average national figures, the engineering departments have been reported to be quite aware and very actively involved in debates on Bologna.

It should be noted that the awareness among academic staff in universities is judged to be considerably higher than that of the academic staff in other higher education institutions.

The same basic trends may also be identified in South East European (SEE) countries, though it should be noticed that a higher proportion of academics and students seems to be very much or reasonably aware of the BP.

These awareness levels can be said to reflect to some extent **the state of implementation of the Bologna reforms at institutional level**. Thus the fact that awareness is greatest among heads of institutions, less but still reasonably developed among academics and relatively low among administrative staff and students, clearly reflects the relative top-down quality of Bologna reforms, as well as the fact that discussions among heads of institutions and academics have progressed considerably, presumably concerning the guidelines and contents of curricular reform at institutional level. However, at most institutions the implementation of the various Bologna operational objectives does not seem to have progressed far enough to have reached administrative planning and adjustment, e.g. concerning exam administration, credit point registration, new access guidelines for Master level applicants, changes in room administration due to different course sizes (a possible effect of modularization or of a different distribution of courses between Bachelor and Master level), new or increased budget lines, or whatever else one may imagine as administrative tasks faced in the context of Bologna.

Furthermore, student involvement at departmental level, i.e. in the actual shaping of curricular reform, seems to be less developed than the dialogue between higher education representatives and students at national or institutional level.

Support for the Bologna Process is remarkably widespread not only among representatives of ministries but also among rectors' conferences and heads of institutions. More than two thirds of the heads of institutions regard it as essential to make rapid progress towards the EHEA, and another 20% support the idea of the EHEA but think the time is not yet ripe for it. Only in Norway, France, the French-speaking community of Belgium, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Ireland and the UK, more reserves regarding rapid progress toward the creation of the EHEA are noted by heads of institutions and/or rectors' conferences. Despite their not having formally joined the BP, SEE higher education institutions take the Bologna Declaration as their reference framework and 90% consider that it is essential to make rapid progress in the creation of the EHEA. Considering a number of newspaper articles on opposition to overly rapid Bologna reforms among academics, it is unfortunate that their opinion could not be gathered in the framework of this study, especially since the current phase of the Bologna reforms depends essentially on their curricular ideas and definitions of meaningful innovation. From the student associations it can also be gathered that, while there is ample support for many aspects of the Bologna reforms, others are met with considerable resistance (see section 3.3). Generally, it may be said that the pace of the BP reforms, the necessity of sufficient intra-institutional dialogue and coordinated processes of implementation are becoming more and more in need of support by academics and students alike, i.e. by the HE groups most directly concerned as actors and beneficiaries of the reforms.

Considering the widespread support for the Bologna Process among heads of higher education institutions and their relatively high level of awareness of the Bologna Process, it is somewhat surprising how few of them find it necessary to coordinate such widespread reforms at institutional level. **Only a little more than a third of the higher education institutions have a Bologna coordinator as such**. Differentiated by universities and other HE institutions, one notes that 47% of universities have a Bologna coordinator whereas only 29,5% of other HEIs have created such a position. Of course, this does not mean that those who do not have a coordinator do not have other existing or especially created institutional bodies which coordinate the Bologna reforms, or at least some aspects of these. However, in light of the scope of the Bologna reforms, which involve not only all disciplines but different groups of actors across the whole institution, it remains an open question how such reforms can be planned, handled and communicated effectively without an institutional coordinator acting as overall project manager.

3.1.2 Key findings

- Awareness of the Bologna Process has increased considerably during the last two years. It is generally more developed at universities than at other higher education institutions.

- Awareness is most developed among heads of institutions while being less but still reasonably well developed among academic staff.
- As yet, administrative staff and students seem to be less included in deliberations of the implementations of Bologna reforms, judging from the awareness levels attributed to those groups.
- In Estonia, Lithuania, Sweden, Germany, Ireland and most strongly the UK, deliberations regarding institutional Bologna reforms seem to be considerably less widespread.
- There is widespread support for the Bologna Process among heads of HEIs, with some resistance to individual aspects and the pace of the reforms. Such resistance is more pronounced in Norway, France, the French-speaking community of Belgium, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Ireland and the UK.
- Though some SEE countries have not yet formally joined the Bologna Process, they already take it as a reference framework and actively promote its objectives.
- Little more than a third of the HE institutions have a Bologna coordinator.

3.1.3 Future challenges

- The reforms still have to reach the majority of the HE representatives who are supposed to implement them and turn them into reality.
- Interpreting Bologna in the light of its goals and the whole context of its objectives at departmental level, i.e. rethinking current teaching structures, units, methods, evaluation and the permeability between disciplines and institutions, is a task that still lies ahead for a majority of academics at European universities.

3.2 THE ROLE OF HEI IN THE CREATION OF THE EHEA

"European higher education institutions, for their part, have accepted the challenge and taken up a main role in constructing the European area of higher education in the wake of the fundamental principles laid down in the Bologna Magna Charta Universitatum of 1988." (Bologna, 1999)

"Ministers stressed that the involvement of universities and other higher education institutions and of students as competent, active and constructive partners in the establishment and shaping of a European Higher Education Area is needed and welcomed. The institutions have demonstrated the importance they attach to the creation of a compatible and efficient, yet diversified and adaptable European Higher Education Area. [...] Ministers expressed their appreciation of the contributions toward developing study programmes combining academic quality with relevance to lasting employability and called for a continued proactive role of higher education institutions." (Prague, 2001)

3.2.1 Analysis

In the Prague Communiqué, the ministers highlighted the role of higher education institutions in the creation of a European Higher Education Area. This may seem tautological: as one European rector put it, not having HEIs play the decisive role in the creation of the EHEA is like playing Hamlet without the prince. It becomes a more meaningful emphasis, however, if seen in the light of the fact that the Bologna Process started out as an intergovernmental process. Of course, it must have been self-evident already to the ministers who signed the Bologna Declaration that the higher education institutions would ultimately be responsible for the realisation of the Bologna objectives. Nevertheless, ongoing discussions regarding Bologna implementation reveal that quite a number of ministry representatives still feel that the heart of Bologna lies in the requirement to adapt and adopt "Bologna-compatible" legislation. Anyone in touch with higher education realities will agree, however, that Bologna-compatible legislation is a necessary but insufficient condition for the successful realisation of the European Higher Education Area and the Bologna objectives.

Half of the heads of HEIs from Bologna signatory countries believe they are playing a very or reasonably active role in the construction of the EHEA. This holds true also for the heads of HEIs from SEE. In contrast, 42% of HEIs from Bologna signatory countries feel they are not yet playing an active role in this regard. While "active role" scores are noticeably high for HEIs from The

Netherlands, France, Switzerland (universities), Italy and Finland, it is particularly the heads of HEIs in Estonia, Croatia, Germany, the Slovak Republic, Sweden and the UK, as well as the non-university HEIs of Switzerland and the Czech Republic who find room for improvement as far as their role in the construction of the EHEA is concerned. 62% of all European university rectors and 57% of heads of other HEIs feel that institutions should be involved more directly in the realisation of the Bologna objectives. A high proportion of HEIs in Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and other SEE countries (more than 60%, i.e. more than double the Europe-wide average of 30%) also believe that a monitoring and reporting system should be established in order to increase HEI participation in the construction of the EHEA.

As far as the conditions under which institutions are trying to implement the Bologna reforms are concerned, it should be noted first of all that **50% of HEIs find that the legal framework in their countries supports autonomous institutional decision-making, while 46% find that their legislation at least partly undermines such decision-making.** Particularly in Belgium, Germany, Portugal, Slovenia, SEE countries and the non-university sector of Italy, many HEI leaders find that legislation undermines their autonomous decision-making. The rectors' conferences of Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Hungary, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Spain and Sweden also point to problems of autonomous decision-making by institutions. Representatives of HEIs and rectors' conferences of those countries call for legislative reforms to allow for more room for institutional initiative. In contrast, only three of the ministry representatives acknowledge constraints with respect to autonomous institutional decision-making (Greece, Portugal, Turkey).

It should be noted in this context that a comparatively high number of HEIs with a specialisation in business and economics find that the legal framework in their country undermines institutional autonomy. (The concerns associated with institutional autonomy will be discussed in section 6.1.) Apart from institutional autonomy, another success factor for reform should be mentioned, namely funding, which determines to a considerable extent the scope of possible reform initiatives which HEIs are able to undertake. It goes without saying that the Bologna higher education reform Process will only be realised if and when these reforms are implemented by higher education institutions. **What seems less obvious to some actors in the Bologna Process is that the Bologna reforms cannot be realised without additional funding.** While legislation sets the framework within which HEIs can or cannot act, financing provides the fuel which helps to ignite and to support the necessary reforms at institutional level. The improvements implied in the Bologna reforms (see sections 5 and 6) propose a higher education system which performs at a higher qualitative level than before, and which involves even closer cooperation between its institutions than before. Moreover, it is becoming more and more apparent in the course of implementing the new (or adapting the old) curricular structures in line with the Bologna Declaration, that such reforms involve the creation of more flexible or even individualised learning paths (see section 5.1). Such diversified access and learning paths within HE entails more counselling, tutoring, smaller and possibly more diverse groups, intensified dialogue between teachers and students, more time investment in quality assurance and qualitative self-enhancement, better support services for the diversified student body and improved access conditions. These implications of the Bologna reforms contrast sharply with the ideas of some HE administrations that the introduction of a shorter first degree would be a way to reduce the unit costs of HE at Bachelor level (which would become the "normal" degree for a majority of students) and to limit access for the increasing number of students to the second level degree. In this scenario, the unit costs at Bachelor level would be reduced and only the more selective Master studies would allow closer attention to individual students. To sustain the illusion of saving costs in higher education or of not increasing funding, despite the steadily increased or increasing number of students, one must also ignore all the other Bologna dimensions, such as increased attention to quality assurance and lifelong learning, together with the idea of individualised learning paths.

In short, the ministers of education have signed a Declaration in 1999 (and confirmed it in 2001) which implies considerable increases of investment in teaching and learning. These implications

are only beginning to become evident, at a time when many higher education ministries in Europe are struggling to maintain current funding levels, let alone to meet the aims and funding targets set for the research dimension of higher education by their heads of governments in Lisbon in 2000 and in Barcelona in 2002.

Indeed, while many governments have made considerable progress with respect to the creation of legal frameworks which allow HEIs to implement Bologna reforms, only half of them seem to have provided some funding to the HEIs for the reforms. The **discontent with financial support for Bologna reforms** is voiced most often (by more than 80% of HEIs) in Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, The Netherlands, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, the UK and the SEE countries. Generally, 75 % of the HEIs and two thirds of the rectors' conferences find that clear financial incentives should be provided in order to support the involvement of HEIs in the Bologna reform. As might be expected, there is a discrepancy of opinion between HEIs and ministries on this point: while two thirds of the ministry representatives feel that the national financing mechanisms support the Bologna Process and only one quarter mentions that no support is given for Bologna, only half of the HEIs find that current funding supports the BP.

There is no data on the number of countries which have attempted to estimate the additional first time investment and additional running costs of Bologna-compatible HE structures. One known example to mention is Switzerland, where the universities have estimated that the Bologna costs (mostly related to curricular reforms and the introduction of ECTS) amount to initial investment costs of Euro 34 million (as a conservative estimate) and additional yearly recurring costs in the medium term of Euro 135 million (excluding "non-specific measures" such as the extension of doctoral studies, increased mobility, additional language courses, additional grants and additional marketing etc.). This would amount to Euro 3.4 initial investment costs per university and additional yearly running costs of Euro 13.5 per university.⁴ Whether such support will actually be made available by the government without simultaneous subtraction of public HE funding in other domains remains as yet unresolved in Switzerland, as it does in other Bologna countries. Clearly, some mutual understanding of the financial implications of Bologna (and other) reforms still has to be found between funders and funded institutions.

But leaving financial conditions and legislative frameworks aside for a moment, we should ask what precisely is the role of universities and other HEIs in realising the Bologna objectives, be these more general (quality enhancement, increased competitiveness and cooperation, employability of graduates) or more operational (introducing a two-tier structure, credit transfer system, recognition procedures)? Some empirical evidence on the nature and quality of the processes of implementing Bologna reforms was gathered in the framework of the EUA Quality Culture Project. In one of the project thematic networks, ten institutions from all over Europe compared their Bologna reform processes in an attempt to establish a blue-print action plan, and to collect models of good practice which might help other institutions as a possible guideline for their own Bologna reforms. Their report will be published in summer 2003, but one basic element has already become evident: while the individual institutional challenges, strengths and weaknesses differed widely, this institutional benchmarking exercise revealed clearly that the greatest challenge consisted in implementing an overall institutional change which had to combine strong institutional coordination with deep academic ownership. The strong central coordination was deemed necessary in view of the scope and multi-dimensional nature of the reforms, affecting content, methods, structures and units of teaching, but also many administrative issues, such as new assessment arrangements in the wake of introducing ECTS, more counselling and support services, extended information and marketing, to mention just some of the tasks involved when taking Bologna seriously. But strong central initiatives would not lead to the desired results without the large-scale involvement of academics, since the heart of Bologna lies in the enhancement of quality and curricular reform, the core competence of the academics. Thus, universities in Europe, which are often strongly decentralised in their decision-making structures, are facing in the Bologna reforms a particularly far-reaching institutional reform process, requiring an unusual effort of communication and orchestration on

4 Planning Report of the CRUS (Conférence des Recteurs des Universités Suisses) 2002.

the part of institutional management. The right mix of guidance and outcome orientation on the one hand, and free reflection on the sense of the reforms in different disciplinary and transdisciplinary contexts, on the other, is needed in order to lead to sustainable change for the better.

3.2.2 Key findings

- 46% of HEI rectors/presidents find that their national legislation undermines autonomous decision-making, at least in part. Particularly in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and SEE, HEIs and rectors' conferences point to the limits of autonomous decision-making by institutions.
- 62 % of university rectors and 57% of heads of other HEIs in Europe feel that institutions should be involved more directly in the realisation of the Bologna objectives.
- While many governments have made considerable progress with respect to the creation of legal frameworks which allow HEIs to implement Bologna reforms, only half of them seem to have provided some funding to the HEIs for these reforms. The lack of financial support for the Bologna reforms is highlighted by nearly half of all HEIs in the Bologna signatory countries. This means that Bologna reforms are often implemented at the cost of other core functions or essential improvements.
- 75% of all heads of HEIs think clear financial incentives for involvement in the Bologna reforms should be provided.

3.2.3 Future challenges

- The dialogue between rectors and academics, institutions and ministry representatives needs to be intensified, beyond the reform of legislation, concerning both the implications of Bologna reforms at institutional level and the support from the State needed to foster these reforms.
- Institutions will have to calculate all the costs connected with the Bologna reforms, not just individual ingredients, including the increased recurrent running costs, and show the ramifications of Bologna reforms for all regular institutional processes, in order to convince governments that the Bologna goals cannot be pursued seriously without additional funding.
- Governments should show their genuine support for the Bologna reforms by providing sufficient funding for their implementation, without reducing the already tight budgets for other core areas of universities, such as research and infrastructure, which in most countries have been severely underfunded for decades.
- Important changes in HEI governance and management structures are needed in order to cope with the needs for increased coordination, communication and orchestration of institutional academic and service units.

3.3 THE ROLE OF STUDENTS IN THE CREATION OF THE EHEA

"Ministers stressed that the involvement of universities and other higher education institutions and of students as competent, active and constructive partners in the establishment and shaping of a European Higher Education Area is needed and welcomed. [...] Ministers affirmed that students should participate in and influence the organisation and content of education at universities and other higher education institutions. Ministers also reaffirmed the need, recalled by students, to take account of the social dimension in the Bologna process." (Prague, 2001)

3.3.1 Analysis

At 63% of universities in Bologna signatory countries, students have been formally involved in the Bologna Process, i.e. through participation in the senate or council or at faculty/departmental level. In the HEIs of the non-signatory countries in SEE an even higher proportion of students are formally involved in the process. A significantly lower degree of formal participation at institutional level can be noted at other higher education institutions, but also at universities in Greece, Portugal, Slovenia, Iceland and a considerably lower degree again in the UK. In these countries,

information on the issues involved in the Bologna Process was also provided less often to students. (In the UK, however, such lack of participation was not seen as problematic, since the BP was not regarded as a priority by the students themselves.) In general, information on the BP was provided to students by more than half of the universities and slightly less than half of the other HEIs.

Reflecting such involvement, half of the students, as represented by their national and European student associations, feel they are playing a very or reasonably active role in the construction of the EHEA. Particular discontent is noted by the students from Germany ("student involvement seems to be practically not or hardly wanted").

In spite of their many criticisms of individual aspects of the BP, which mostly have to do with the implementation rather than its principles, student associations still strongly support the BP. One may even say that they express the highest hopes concerning its principles and the harshest criticisms concerning its implementation and frequently reductive interpretations. A comment by one student association reflects this tension: *"Except for a few experts, hardly anyone sees and implements the whole number of instruments or measures of the Bologna Process. Only technical or virtual changes take place, there seems to be no interest in a qualitative reform of study programmes."* We should add that, quite often, student representatives express hopes that European cooperation and peer pressure among governments concerning the Bologna Process will push the long-awaited reforms in their national systems.

The student contributions to individual Bologna action lines is discussed in the relevant sections of this report. At this point, we should highlight that the **students' contribution has been particularly strong and outspoken on issues of the social dimension of higher education and the emphasis of HE as a public good, in connection with discussions of the possible consequences of GATS on higher education institutions.** In fact, not only in Prague in 2001 but also in many national debates, student representatives were often the ones to stress the values of HE which lie beyond its contribution to economic welfare and labour market concerns. Students have also continuously stressed the values of student-centered learning, flexible learning paths and access, as well as a realistic, i.e. empirically based, estimation of workload in the context of establishing institution-wide credit systems. Their contribution to the analysis of conditions and obstacles to mobility, as well as to an increased focus on learners' needs in the context of quality assurance procedures, has become a vital ingredient of these reform processes.

3.3.2 Key findings

- At 63% of universities in Bologna signatory countries, students have been formally involved in the Bologna Process, i.e. through participation in the senate or council or at faculty/departmental level. The same trend is valid for the non-signatory countries in SEE.
- A significantly lower degree of formal student participation in the Bologna Process at institutional level can be noted in Greece, Portugal, Slovenia, Iceland and the UK. In these countries, information on the issues involved in the Bologna Process was also provided less often to students. In the UK, however, the Bologna Process was not seen by students as a priority and their lack of participation therefore not as problematic.
- Half of the students, as represented by their national and European student associations, feel they are playing a very or reasonably active role in the construction of the European Higher Education Area.
- Student representatives express the highest hopes concerning the principles of the Bologna reforms and the harshest criticisms concerning their implementation and frequently reductive interpretations.
- The students' contribution has been particularly outspoken on issues of the social dimension of higher education and the emphasis of HE as a public good, in connection with discussions of the possible consequences of GATS on higher education institutions.
- Students have also continuously stressed the values of student-centered learning, flexible

learning paths and access, as well as a realistic, i.e. empirically based, estimation of workload in the context of establishing institution-wide credit systems.

3.3.3 Future challenges

- At institutional and particularly at departmental level, the inclusion of students in deliberations concerning a qualitative reform of teaching and learning structures, methods and assessment in the spirit of the Bologna Declaration, still leaves considerable room for improvement.
- The dialogue between students and other HE groups should focus more strongly on the individual Bologna objectives and issues of meaningful implementation, rather than just on the overarching goals. In some countries, debates on the perceived relation of the Bologna reforms to a purely economic agenda have often reinforced existing divides between students and other groups in HE, rather than opening doors to allow for their justified concerns regarding the quality of higher education.

4. THE BOLOGNA PROCESS AND ITS GOALS

4.1 ENHANCING THE EMPLOYABILITY OF EUROPEAN HE GRADUATES WITHOUT COMPROMISING ON ACADEMIC QUALITY

"The Sorbonne declaration stressed the Universities' central role in developing European cultural dimensions. It emphasised the creation of the European Area of Higher Education as a key way to promote citizens' mobility and employability and the continent's overall development." [...] Objectives: adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees in order to promote European citizens' employability ..." (Bologna, 1999)

"Ministers expressed their appreciation of the contributions [of higher education institutions] toward developing study programmes combining academic quality with relevance to lasting employability and called for a continued proactive role of higher education institutions." (Prague 2001)

4.1.1 Analysis

Preparing graduates for the European labour market is regarded as one of the three most prominent driving forces of the Bologna Process. Together with the enhancement of academic quality, this constitutes the most frequently mentioned force behind the Bologna Process, according to the representatives of ministries, rectors' conferences and higher education institutions. Student associations also regard this as the most important driving force, together with the competitiveness of the national HE systems in the wider world.

But in addition to these judgements, which may be said to reflect ongoing national debates, a remarkable consensus has been reached at institutional level on the value of the employability of HE graduates in Europe: 91% of the heads of European HEIs regard the employability of their graduates to be an important or even very important (56%) concern when designing or restructuring their curricula. However, monitoring of progress appears to be less strongly developed, with 30% of HE institutions actually tracking the employment of all of their graduates, 40% tracking the employment of some and 25% not tracking any. These findings have been confirmed in the framework of the Transnational European Evaluation Project which discovered a low extent of systematic feedback from stakeholders, the labour market or graduates at programme level. Perhaps one may conclude from this discrepancy between the importance attributed to the value of employability and the limited extent of concrete measures for its implementation, that the relative importance of this issue has been established only recently in some countries, such as Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Norway and Slovakia. In these countries, over 40% of HEIs have no system for tracking graduates yet, while in SEE about 70% of HEIs do not have such a system in place (and 15% consider that graduate employability should not be their concern).

A problem arises, however, with the various interpretations of the term "employability", which is associated with the introduction of a two-tier system and in particular with the introduction of a first Bachelor degree after three years of study. It was stressed in the Bologna Declaration, of course, that even this first degree should imply the employability of the graduate. All over Europe, the most heated debates among university representatives have revolved around fears of an overly narrow interpretation of the term "employability" which could threaten to undermine academic quality. The fear consisted in "producing students prepared for a limited niche of markets with an overly short-term perspective, rather than focussing on the whole range of academic skills which would enable graduates to adapt continuously to changing social and economic needs."⁵ The EUA Salamanca Convention in 2001 had already focused on this issue and stressed the value of transferable skills and competences in promoting long-term employability.

Fears of short-sighted misunderstanding of the ways in which higher education should aim at "relevance" to society and the economy have re-emerged frequently, mostly in the university sector, and in the context of comparing and redesigning modules or degree structures. According to some university representatives, aligning Bachelor degrees too narrowly with short-term, nationally

⁵ Jürgen Kohler, *Workshop Report on the Construction of a Campus Europae*, produced for the HRK Conference on Quality Assurance, Bonn 2002.

defined employability often results in curricula which are overloaded with content defined to a large extent (though indirectly) by national employers. Complaints of such developments have been voiced particularly strongly in higher education systems in which the national legislation has highlighted the “employability” issue, and in which legislators have stressed the current national labour market demands, as is the case in Italy, for example.

A noteworthy discussion of the goal of enhancing employability in an academic context could be observed in the framework of the EUA Quality Culture Project. One thematic network, which comprised eight very different universities from all over Europe, focussed on the implementation of the Bologna reforms, thus offering the most in-depth European comparison currently available of Bologna implementation processes at institutional level. Their discussion of “employability” in a university context may be taken as a *pars pro toto* in this context. Employability of university graduates was understood by these universities to mean “acquiring competences of innovation and leadership which are important both in the academic field and in other employment sectors”.⁶ According to the institutions in this network, the link between employability and academic quality should be achieved by fostering analytic thinking, competent reasoning, the ability to structure information and arguments, and the ability to interact in a social context. Participants in the network shared the fear that if employability were too narrowly associated with fitness for a specific professional field, this would result in a downgrading of universities to “mere teaching institutions”. When debating the optimal procedures to foster employability in a university context, however, the network did not reach a consensus. Two different views were expressed. A “consecutive” view sees a division between competences more closely associated with academic quality and those associated with employability. In this view, the “employability competences” are more often attributed to the Bachelor level programmes, whereas “academic competences” are supposed to be concentrated at the Master level (unless a Master programme is specifically designed to serve specific professional markets). The other, “integrated”, view argued that academic quality and employability are specifications of the same competences, useful both to academia and to other sectors of the labour market. Hence, such competences are supposed to be fostered at both Bachelor and Master levels, but with different degrees of specialisation.⁷

Generally speaking, we may say that the agreement reached in Salamanca in 2001, that universities should aim at sustainable employability rather than respond to short-term labour market concerns, has been confirmed strongly in many national and institutional debates on the best ways to reform learning structures, contents and methods. The growing trend toward structuring curricula in view of the learning outcomes and competences is often seen as a way to ensure that academic quality and long-term employability become compatible goals of higher education.

4.1.2 Key findings

- Enhancing academic quality and the employability of graduates are the two most frequently mentioned driving forces behind the Bologna Process, according to the representatives of ministries, rectors' conferences and higher education institutions.
- A remarkable consensus has been reached at institutional level on the value of the employability of HE graduates in Europe: 91% of the heads of European HEIs regard the employability of their graduates to be an important or even very important concern when designing or restructuring their curricula.
- Fears of short-sighted misunderstanding of the ways in which higher education should aim at employability and relevance to society and economy have re-emerged frequently in the context of comparing and redesigning modules or degree structures.
- The growing trend toward structuring curricula in view of the learning outcomes and competences is often seen as a way to ensure that academic quality and long-term employability become compatible goals of higher education.

6 EUA Quality Culture Project, *Network Report of Thematic Network 4, “Implementing Bologna Reforms”*, March 2003.

7 EUA Quality Culture Project, *Network Report of Thematic Network 4, “Implementing Bologna Reforms”*, March 2003.

4.1.3 Future challenges

- To meet the justified concerns of stakeholders about the relevance of higher education and the employability of HE graduates, without compromising the more long-term perspective proper to higher education institutions and universities in particular, may well be the most decisive challenge and success-factor of Bologna-related curricular reforms.
- The issues of enhancing academic quality and fostering sustainable employability will have to form and remain a pair, if the Bologna reforms are to be realised by higher education institutions.
- How academic quality relates to employability at any given higher education institution will be a prime matter of institutional positioning in Europe and the world.

4.2 PROMOTION OF MOBILITY IN HE

"[...] creation of a European area of higher education as a key way to promote citizens' mobility. [...] Promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement, with particular attention to students, access to study and training opportunities and to related services, to teachers, researchers and administrative staff, recognition and valorisation of periods spent in a European context researching, teaching and training, without prejudicing their statutory rights." (Bologna, 1999)

"Ministers reaffirmed that the objective of improving the mobility of students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff [...] is of the utmost importance. Therefore they confirmed their commitment to pursue the removal of all obstacles to the free movement of students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff and emphasised the social dimension of mobility." (Prague, 2001)

4.2.1 Analysis

Of all the overarching aims of the Bologna Process, the promotion of mobility is clearly the most concrete, easily interpreted and uncontroversial. Of course, apart from being an aim in itself (expanded mobility as a vital ingredient of a European Higher Education Area), the promotion of mobility can also be seen as an instrument for achieving the other aims of the Bologna Process. The underlying assumption is, of course, that only extended exposure to other parts of Europe will build a sense of a common cultural and civic European identity. Indeed, one may note that, when asked in the context of this study how large the proportion of mobile students and staff should be in order to make the EHEA a worthwhile reality, half of the student representatives found 25% to be the minimum participation rate for student mobility and 20% for staff mobility.

The correlation between employability and student mobility is also undisputed. Even though a methodology for measuring the professional impact of periods of mobility has not yet been devised, employers continuously point to the benefits of periods of study abroad in enhancing the social, communicative and intercultural competences of graduates.

Given such far-reaching agreement on this aim, one may ask what the actions for its realisation should be. The Bologna Declaration and Prague Communiqué highlight the **removal of any obstacles to mobility as central actions** in this context.⁸ The widely accepted measures proposed in the Commission's Action Plan aim to "democratise access" to mobility, i.e. by allowing groups that are under-represented in student mobility to participate more easily.

The **most decisive obstacle to mobility lies in insufficient means to pay for the additional mobility costs incurred**, even if mobility grants are provided. Indeed, financial cost is mentioned as the main obstacle to mobility by 80% of the students asked in the context of this study. The second most important obstacles pointed to (by 42% of the students) consist in academic recognition issues (discussed in section 5.3 below) and language barriers.

⁸ In December 2000, the European Council and the representatives of the governments of the EU Member States agreed to facilitate the implementation of Community initiatives in this area and welcomed the Commission's *Action Plan on Mobility*, which identified mobility obstacles and 42 measures aimed at removing them, including increased and more diversified financing of mobility, and retention of benefits during mobility period (including grants), better information on mobility programmes and mobility statistics, better language training, more flexible forms of mobility as well as the quality of reception services, counselling and administration of mobility, to name just a few. Cf. *Official Journal of the European Communities* (2000/C 371/ 03).

Another important obstacle, which is less often acknowledged sufficiently, may be the locally-based commitments such as part-time work positions, family obligations, rent and other financial obligations which have to be paid even while being a short-term resident elsewhere etc. A recent study on the social and economic conditions of student life in Europe (in eight EU countries) confirms the extent of such obligations which may act as obstacles to mobility.⁹ This study shows that a majority of students are employed in part-time positions (ranging from 50% in Belgium to 77% in The Netherlands), and that they derive between 24% (French-speaking Belgium) and 54% (Austria) of their total income from such employment, using more than 25% of their time for this work (11 hours per week for most countries) in comparison to the 75% (31+ hours) spent studying.¹⁰ Such part-time working students obviously require different mobility services and support than traditional mobility students, e.g. by differentiated grant schemes or by providing job opportunities abroad.

While the aims and benefits of mobility as well the obstacles and ways of removing these have been identified and even agreed upon at European level, **it is difficult to establish to what extent any progress has actually been achieved concerning the implementation of these during the last two years.** A majority of ministries and rectors' conferences report that actions have been taken to remove obstacles to student and/or staff mobility (with no notable regional particularities to these answers). However, no exact data has been obtained on a European scale on the scope of these measures. Some examples may be mentioned, such as the introduction of portable grants for students who receive public support (in Scandinavian countries and, more recently with some conditions attached, also in Germany), the relaxation of residency regulations for researchers and research students wishing to remain in the host country, as practiced in the UK. Regarding staff mobility, one should mention the introduction of an academic, more advantageous visa status for visiting researchers and of automatic work permits for spouses, as well as personalised assistance to researchers from abroad provided by the Kastler Foundation in France. Several EU Member States have reduced income tax regimes for a limited period of time for foreign researchers (Denmark, Finland, The Netherlands and Sweden). However, generally speaking, the taxation of student grants and fellowships still varies between countries. The above examples had already been gathered as good practice by the "High Level Expert Group on Improving Mobility of Researchers" in the context of the European Commission's support for the creation of a European Research Area.¹¹

Of course, the most important obstacle, according to most HE representatives, is inadequate funding for student grants and fellowships, or for positions for foreign research students in the context of research projects. From the official answers of the ministries and rectors' conferences to the *Trends 2003 questionnaires*, it appears that in half of the Bologna signatory countries, public funds for mobility have been increased (Austria, Belgium (FR), Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, UK) – a clearly western European reality, one should note. Again the extent of such additional public funds (and whether they entailed reduction of HE funds on other fronts) could not be established in the context of this study. For the accession countries, public funds do not seem to have increased. Erasmus student grant levels have even decreased, according to the Erasmus national agency reports.

Many HEIs report that they have significantly improved conditions of student mobility in the last two years. In particular, welcome and orientation services have been improved by more than three quarters of all HEIs. More than half of the institutions say they have improved language training (60%), counselling services (60%), social and cultural activities for incoming students (58%), accommodation facilities (57%), academic tutoring (57%) and information on study opportunities in other institutions (56%). Increased help with the provision of job opportunities, which might allow some of the least affluent students to finance their stays abroad, has been provided by a very small proportion of HEIs: 13% on average and slightly more often in Switzerland, the UK, Italy and Spain (22-30%). Country divergences are significant (see below, Figure 1). HEIs in Spain, Slovakia,

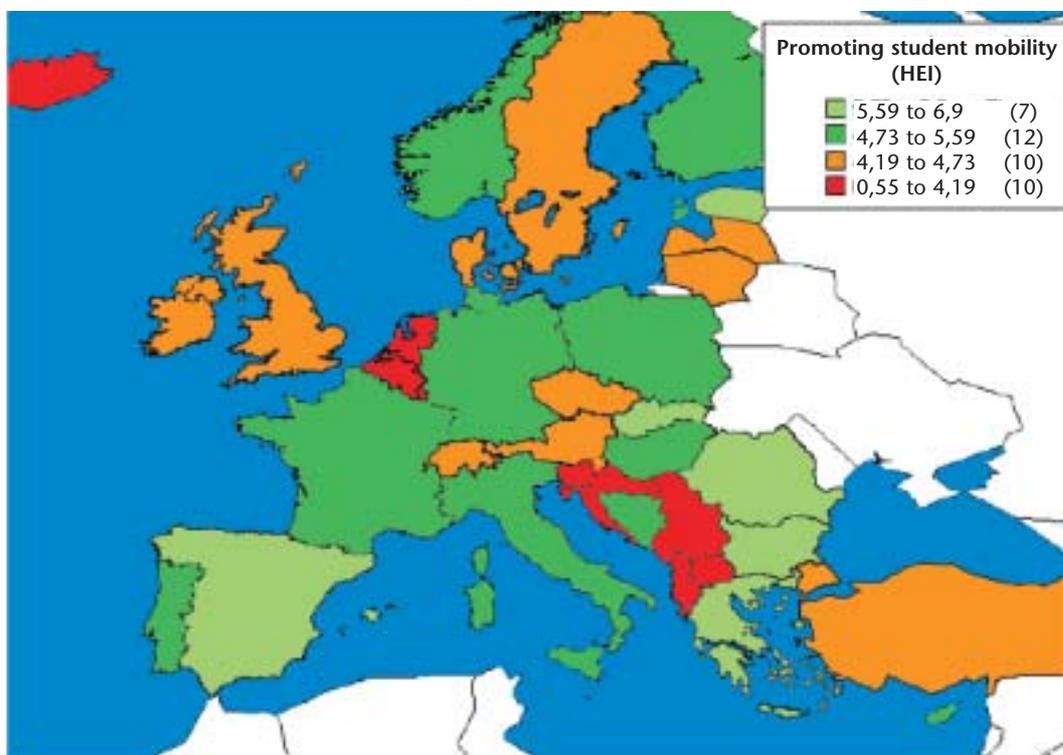
9 Eurostudent. *Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe 2000*, HIS, Hannover, 2002.

10 Eurostudent. *Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe 2000*, pp. 96-99. Interestingly, the extent to which students are engaged in part-time work is not as dependent on parental income as one might think.

11 High Level Expert Group on Improving Mobility of Researchers, *Final Report*, European Commission DG Research, 2001.

Bulgaria, Romania, Greece and Estonia are those which most often claim recent efforts to increase mobility support services. HEIs in The Netherlands, Belgium, Iceland and most of the countries of the former Yugoslavia have apparently shown very little engagement in such improvements in recent years, according to their own self-estimation.

Figure 1 - Improving conditions for student mobility in Europe: general index¹²



Source: Trends 2003

While exact mobility data is not available, **HEIs, ministries and rectors' conferences all agree that mobility has clearly increased over the last three years.** Outgoing student mobility has grown significantly at 33% of the HEIs and slightly at another 40%, particularly from universities (not other HEIs) in Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Lithuania, Latvia, Cyprus and Malta. Only in The Netherlands 80% of the universities and in the UK a majority of all HE institutions reported that outgoing student mobility had not increased or had even decreased.

For incoming mobility, reports are similar (33% significant increases, 41% slight increases), but, as may be expected, with a different country distribution. **Considerably more western European institutions report significant growth in incoming student mobility.** Here, Germany, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Italy and Spain take the lead (more than 50% of HEIs). In the accession countries, only a minority (about a quarter) of HEIs report no increase in incoming student mobility, while Bulgaria and Slovenia report considerably higher percentages of institutions with no such increase.

12 This index reflects the average sum of all promotion activities at HEIs in a given country, on a scale of 1 to 9, given in response to the following question:

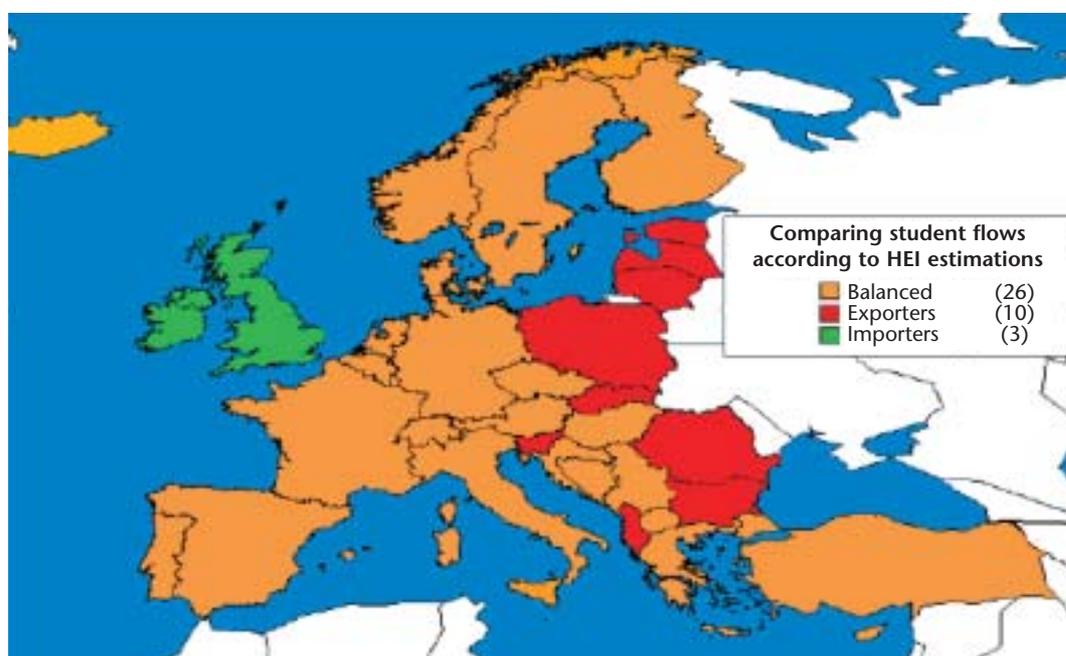
"To improve the conditions of student mobility, has your institution significantly improved any of these services in the last two years?" (several answers allowed)

- welcome and orientation services
- accommodation facilities
- job opportunities
- counselling services
- academic tutoring
- information on study opportunities in other institutions
- language training
- social and cultural activities
- other (please specify).

A third of the ministries and rectors' conferences reported that incoming mobility from non-European countries to their country had risen significantly (Austria, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Malta, The Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Turkey), and another third noted a slight increase. Only two Bologna signatory countries (Denmark and Slovakia) saw no increase of incomers from outside Europe, and four countries reported a decrease (Belgium (Fr), Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia).

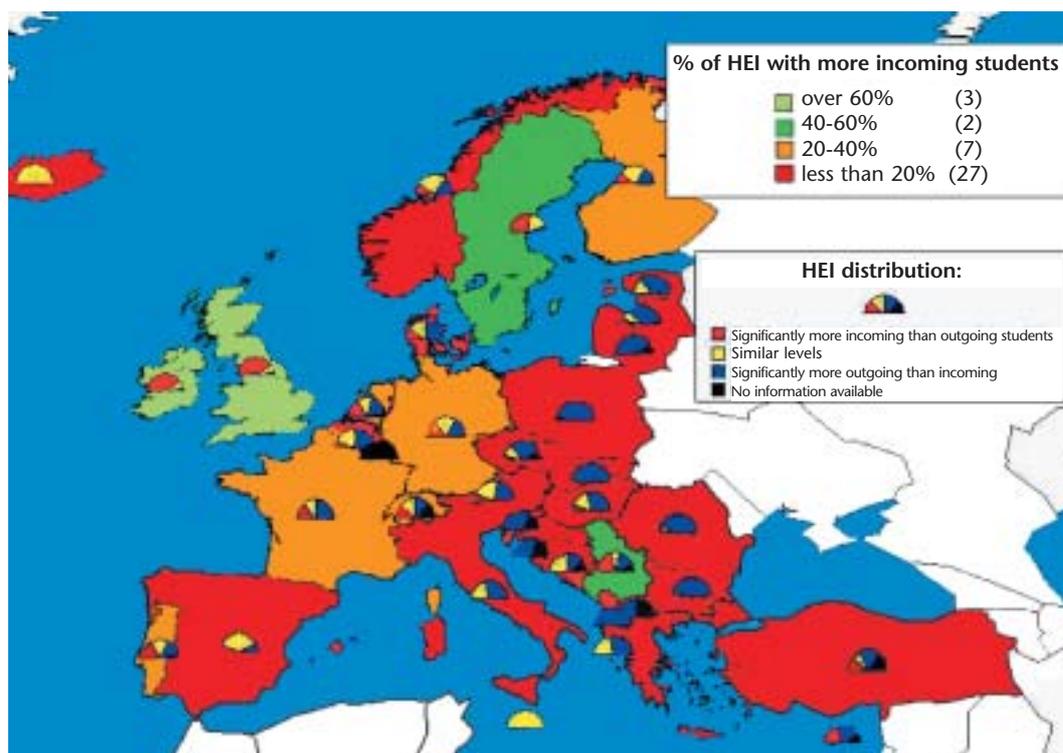
Generally, a considerable imbalance between outgoing and incoming mobility is noted (see Figure 3): only a little more than a quarter of HEIs have achieved a balance of incoming and outgoing students. Those institutions with more incoming than outgoing students (only 21%) are most often located in France (46% of the universities), Netherlands (40% of the universities), Denmark (40% of the universities), Sweden (52% of all HEIs) and, most strongly, in Ireland and the UK where more than 80% of the institutions report such imbalances. Thus only the UK and Ireland are overall net importers of student mobility. However, these figures are based on institutional data and thus do not take into account students who are enrolled in another country for a full study programme (free movers) as this mobility does not take place via the institutions. In some countries, the overall balance may thus be different if the "free movers" are also taken into account. This is the case of The Netherlands, e.g. where the group of free movers is substantial enough to make the country an overall exporter of students in spite of its relatively large import of student mobility via exchange schemes. Generally speaking, a vast majority of institutions report an imbalance of outgoing over incoming students and such a trend is particularly strong in SEE. Thus, a concentration of net student mobility importation and a general mobility preference for western European institutions can be noted. However, the most recent Erasmus mobility figures suggest that incoming mobility to the EU accession countries has increased considerably (39% increase from 2000/2001 to 2001/2002). The existing imbalance of student flows is also reflected in the OECD data on flows between world regions (see Figure 4).

Figure 2 - Overall import and export balance of student mobility in Europe per country



Source: Trends 2003

Figure 3 - Percentage of HEIs with more incoming than outgoing student mobility per country



Source: Trends 2003

Despite many individual higher education representatives expressing fears about a decrease in horizontal mobility (i.e. mobility within a given degree programme) due to shorter degree cycles,¹³ such fears are not shared by the majority of HEI leaders. Only 19% of these expect horizontal mobility to stagnate, only 2% fear a decrease, while 74% expect an increase. The representatives of student associations, whose judgements are presumably most authoritative on this issue, are more sceptical: 50% expect stagnation or a decrease in horizontal student mobility. Regarding vertical mobility (i.e. mobility after completion of the first cycle), 44% of all HEIs and 42% of students expect significant increases in opportunities for mobility with the introduction of a generalised two-cycle structure in Europe.

Absolute statistics on the percentage of students who have spent some period abroad during their studies, including those who went abroad outside of any mobility scheme, cannot yet be obtained for the majority of Bologna countries and are not collected on a European scale. The only European comparative study available ("Eurostudent 2000", published in 2002), with data on Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy and The Netherlands, reveals that 10% (France and Ireland) to 19% (Germany) of students have spent some foreign study-related time abroad (studies, internships or language courses), but only 3% (Italy and France) to 9% (Finland) have actually been enrolled for studies at a foreign HEI. Some comparative data on the mobility of higher education graduates from the EU has recently been published, revealing that 4-5% of highly qualified labour originates from other countries and that more than half of the "mobile" EU graduates choose to work in other countries of the European Union, but most return to their home countries after a number of years.¹⁴

Regarding European mobility, one should emphasise that comparable and European-wide data on mobility are urgently needed, in order to allow for monitoring of any progress in this field and for benchmarking with other regions in the world.

¹³ Such fears were expressed by the institutions participating in the EUA Quality Culture Project network on implementing Bologna, for example, but also by Bologna working groups of various rectors' conferences.

¹⁴ Volker Jahr, Harald Schomburg, Ulrich Teichler, *Internationale Mobilität von Absolventinnen und Absolventen europäischer Hochschulen*, Werkstattberichte 61, Wissenschaftliches Zentrum für Berufs- und Hochschulforschung, Kassel 2002.

With the exception of Ireland and the UK, in all BP signatory countries **teaching staff mobility has increased at a majority of the HEIs**. More than two thirds of the ministries and rectors' conferences also note a significant or slight growth in teaching staff mobility over the last three years. The most recent Erasmus figures also point to a steady rise of teaching staff mobility over the last five years, with an 8% increase in the number of mobile teachers last year. Indeed, within the Erasmus scheme, there are proportionally more "mobile" teachers than students, the highest ratios of "mobile" teachers over total teacher population being noted for Finland, Belgium and Liechtenstein. Here again, a considerable concentration of most popular host countries can be observed, namely Germany, France, Spain, Italy, and the UK, which account for 52% of all incoming teacher mobility.

4.2.2 Key findings

- Public funds for mobility have increased in a majority of EU countries but only in a minority of EU accession countries.
- Both outgoing and incoming student mobility have increased. Incoming mobility has grown more in the EU than in the accession countries.
- A majority of HEIs report an imbalance of outgoing over incoming students.
- Net importers of students are most often located in France, The Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and, most strongly, in Ireland and the UK, where 80% of the institutions report an imbalance of incoming over outgoing students.
- Teaching staff mobility has increased over the last three years in more than two thirds of the signatory countries, and at a majority of higher education institutions.

4.2.3 Future challenges

- The number and level of mobility grants for students should be augmented, especially for those from financially less privileged backgrounds, if the EHEA is not to become a space reserved for the more privileged students only.
- Comparable and European-wide data on all mobility (including free movers) is urgently needed, in order to allow for monitoring of any progress in this field and for benchmarking with other regions in the world.

4.3 ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE EHEA TO THE REST OF THE WORLD

"The vitality and efficiency of any civilisation can be measured by the appeal that its culture has for other countries. We need to ensure that the European higher education system acquires a world-wide degree of attraction equal to our extraordinary cultural and scientific traditions." (Bologna, 1999)

"Ministers agreed on the importance of enhancing attractiveness of European higher education to students from Europe and other parts of the world." (Prague, 2001)

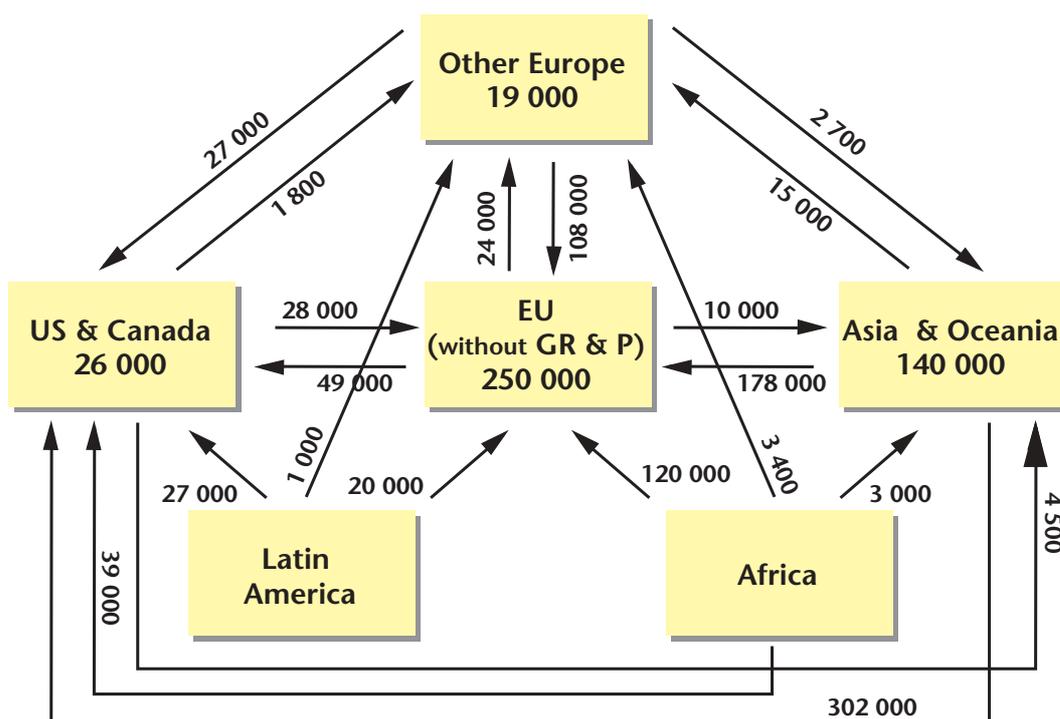
4.3.1 Analysis

One of the main aims of the increased transparency and structural convergence between European higher education systems is to enhance the attractiveness of the European systems of higher education in the rest of the world. Indeed **most of the ministries and nearly two thirds of the rectors' conferences find this to be a driving force for the Bologna Process, ranked third after improving academic quality and preparing graduates for a European labour market**. The student associations consider this to be the main driving force for the Bologna Process.

30% of heads of HEIs believe that the added value of the EHEA, with the Bologna degree structures considered to be the most prominent ingredient in this, will have its strongest effect at the international level. 47% of HEI leaders believe, more predictably perhaps, that this added value will be most enhanced at the European level.

Given that such attractiveness is often measured by the appeal to students from abroad, one may note (see below, Figure 4) that the biggest student movements between world regions occur from Asia/Oceania to the US/Canada (302,000) or to the EU (178,000) and from Africa to the EU (120,000). Interestingly, the second largest flow of students actually occurs within one region, namely within the EU. If one combines the EU and “Other Europe” as one region, the future European Higher Education Area, the largest international student flows in the world already occur within this area (401,000). Looked at separately, however, a huge asymmetry of flows can be observed in Europe between West and East.

Figure 4 - Student migration between world regions: foreign students enrolled in tertiary education in 1999



Source: DG Research, Key Figures 2002; Data: OECD

Note: The EU totals do not include Greece and Portugal. Due to limited data availability, the data for the various regions is incomplete.

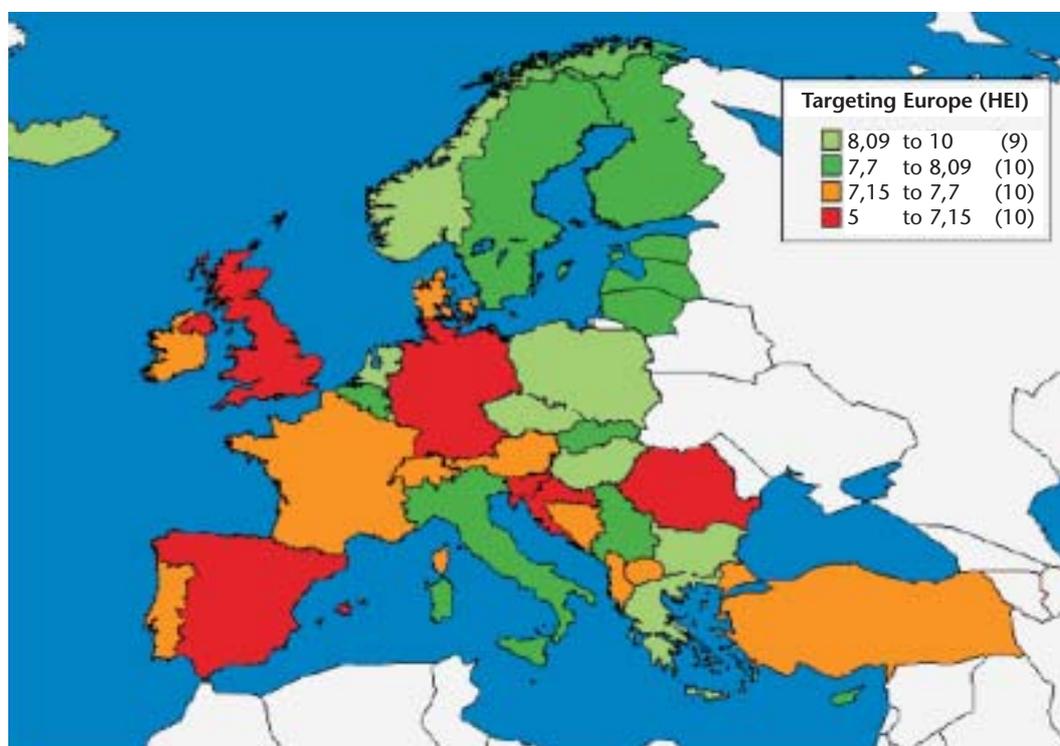
Regarding the attractiveness of Europe to the other world regions, it should be noted that as yet such attractiveness is associated with the EU countries rather than non-EU countries, although such aggregates do not reveal the huge divergences between countries of those regions.

Secondly, as many readers may have expected, students from Asia and Oceania obviously find Europe considerably less attractive than the US/Canada region, with about one third more outgoing students from Asia/Oceania preferring North America than the EU (63% vs. 37%). Preferences are reversed for Africa where 75% choose to study in the EU and only 25% in North America.

How does this reality compare with European preferences? How do these existing flows compare with the priorities of the European HEIs? Asked about the **priority geographical areas** in which European institutions would like to enhance their attractiveness, **a clear preference for the EU area emerges**, mentioned by 92% of the HEIs. (The EU was least mentioned by Bulgarian, German and British institutions.) 62% of HEIs mentioned Eastern Europe as a priority area, with Turkey, Spain, Croatia, Slovenia and Romania at the bottom of this list. Combined preferences for the EU and Eastern Europe can be seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5 - Targeting Europe

This index represents the average number of positive answers by country, scaled from 0 to 10, to the question regarding the geographical areas in which each HEIs would most like to enhance its international attractiveness. Only the answers "EU" and "Eastern Europe" have been considered here. 10 means that all HEIs in the respective country wish to enhance their international attractiveness in both the EU and Eastern Europe; 0 means that no HEI mentioned either part of Europe as a target area.



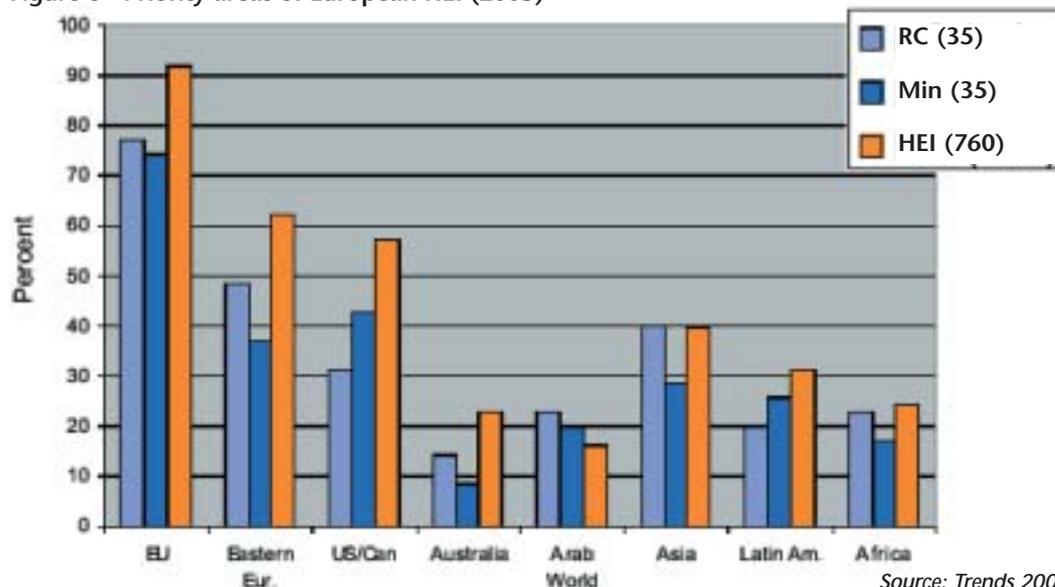
Source: Trends 2003

After a **considerable gap of 30%**, **US/Canada and Eastern Europe obtain comparable priority scores**. Here universities and other HEIs diverge slightly: while universities attribute the same priority to Eastern Europe as to US/Canada (60%), other HEIs clearly prioritise Eastern Europe more highly than US/Canada (63% vs. 55%). Institutions specialising in business and economics share this preference with the other (non-university) HEIs. It should be noted that US/Canada is a priority considerably more often than Eastern Europe for universities in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Romania, Spain, Sweden and the UK.

As a fourth priority, Asia is mentioned by 46% of the universities and 35% of other HEIs. Universities with a specialisation in technology and engineering attribute a higher priority to Asia (56%). Likewise the **fifth priority area, Latin America**, is mentioned considerably more often by technology and engineering institutions (44%) than by all universities (39%) or other HEIs (27%). **Africa, Australia and the Arab World are the lowest priority areas**, all mentioned by less than 25% of HEIs. Again universities and other HEIs diverge in their priorities: while universities attribute comparable priorities to the three areas (Africa 26%, Australia 24% and Arab World 23%), the other HEIs clearly attribute higher priority to Africa and Australia (23% and 22%) than to the Arab World (only 11%).

The rectors' conferences and ministries reveal the same series of preferences as the HEIs in promoting the attractiveness of their national HE systems. The only exception is a higher priority attached to the Arab World by the rectors' conferences in Bulgaria, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland and Italy, and by the ministries in France, Greece, Latvia, Malta, Romania and the UK.

Figure 6 - Priority areas of European HEI (2003)



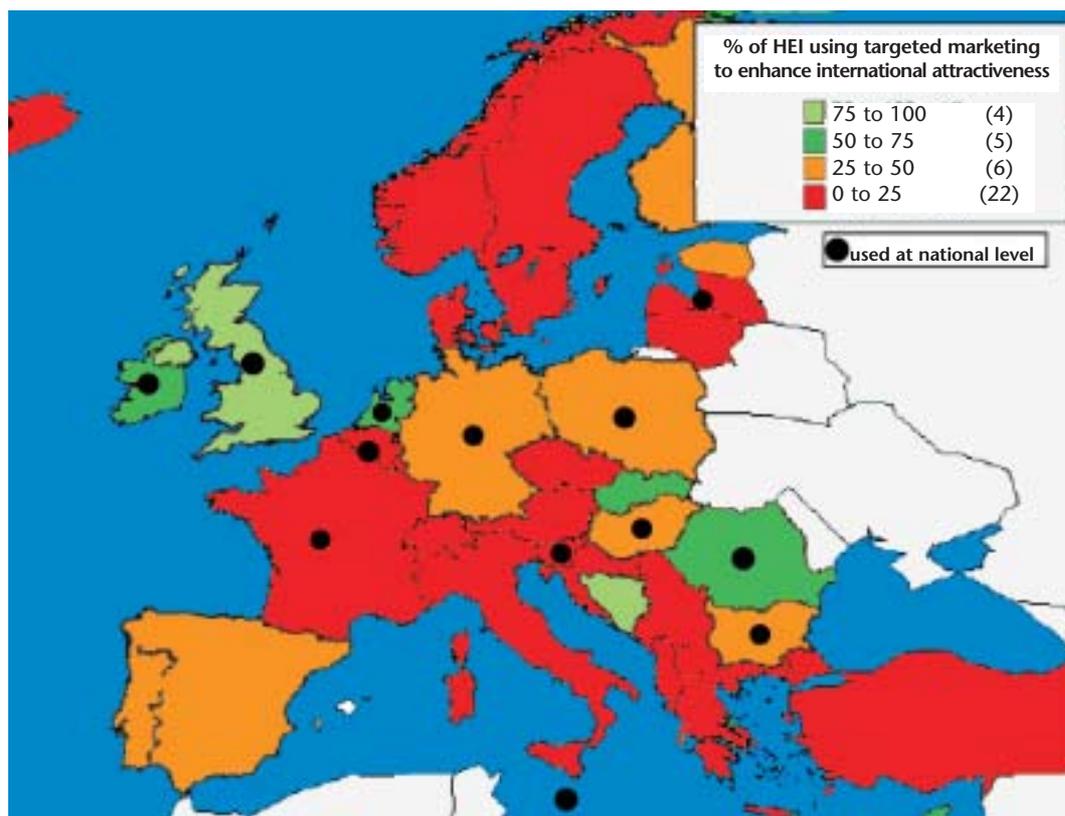
In order to promote attractiveness in these priority areas, joint programmes are clearly the preferred instrument, being mentioned by three quarters of all HEIs. Scholarships for outgoing student mobility is mentioned by two thirds of HEIs, with scholarships and study places for incomers only by a third. Inter-institutional partnerships and collaborative arrangements are mentioned by 57%. At ministry level, offering scholarships for incoming and outgoing students from/to these areas is the most prominent promotion instrument provided. Half of the rectors' conferences support new programmes taught in English or another major European language (slightly fewer ministries mention this instrument). More than half of the HEIs offer new programmes in English or another major European language.

Only a third of the rectors' conferences and slightly fewer ministries apply targeted marketing techniques for student recruitment. Such marketing initiatives are being undertaken by the ministries or rectors' conferences of Belgium (FL), Germany, Finland, France, Ireland, The Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Latvia, Hungary, Poland, Malta, Slovenia and Romania. The most prominent marketing initiative is perhaps the "Prime Minister's Initiative" in the UK, a national strategy aimed at attracting international students, which is promoted through a worldwide campaign launched under the brand of *EducationUK*. (In addition, higher education in the UK is promoted through the worldwide offices of the British Council, the UK's international organisation for educational and cultural relations, as well as through the involvement of the HE Funding Council for England, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, the Quality Assurance Agency, the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the UK NARIC.)

Only 30% of HEIs mention the use of targeted marketing for recruiting students. Notable exceptions are Ireland and the UK, where more than 80% of universities conduct targeted marketing, in addition to the manifold marketing activities at national level and the already high level of incoming students from abroad. In The Netherlands, Slovakia, Cyprus and Romania, targeted marketing is also used by a majority of institutions, as can be seen from Figure 7.

One should note that a majority of countries have developed national brain drain and brain gain policies. Ministries or rectors' conferences reported on schemes to prevent brain drain from their countries (namely Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Germany, France, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland and the UK), and to promote brain gain into their countries (Austria, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Malta, The Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden and the UK). However, only four countries say they have developed policies to prevent brain drain from other countries into their own, these being France, Greece, Norway and the UK.

Figure 7 - Use of targeted marketing by HEIs in Europe



Source: Trends 2003

4.3.2 Key findings

- Enhancing the attractiveness of the European systems of higher education in the rest of the world is a driving force of the Bologna Process, ranked third after improving academic quality and preparing graduates for a European labour market.
- The EU is by far the highest priority area for most institutions (mentioned by 92%). The second priority is Eastern Europe (62%), followed by US/Canada (57%), Asia (40%), Latin America (32%), Africa and Australia (24% and 23%) and the Arab World (16%).
- In order to promote their attractiveness in the priority areas, joint programmes or similar cooperation activities are clearly the preferred instrument (mentioned by three quarters of all HEIs).
- Only 30% of HEIs mention the use of targeted marketing for recruiting students, the notable exceptions being Ireland and the UK where more than 80% of universities conduct targeted marketing.
- A majority of countries have developed national brain drain prevention and brain gain promotion policies.

4.3.3 Future challenges

- Most HEIs still have to define their own institutional profiles more clearly in order to be able to target the markets which correspond to their priorities. In the competitive arena of international student recruitment, HEIs will not be able to avoid targeted marketing techniques if they want to position themselves internationally, even if such efforts may go against the grain of established academic culture and habits.

4.4 HEIs: INCUBATORS FOR COMPETITIVENESS OR GUARDIANS OF A PUBLIC GOOD?

As the Bologna Declaration sets out, Ministers asserted that building the European Higher Education Area is a condition for enhancing the attractiveness and competitiveness of higher education institutions in Europe. They supported the idea that higher education should be considered a public good and is and will remain a public responsibility (regulations etc.), and that students are full members of the higher education community.[...] Ministers also reaffirmed the need, recalled by students, to take account of the social dimension in the Bologna Process. (Prague Communiqué, 2001)

4.4.1 Analysis

Several recent global developments have contributed to a growing awareness among many students, academics, and higher education officials that the social and public functions of higher education may soon be at stake. Various factors such as the emerging global market for higher education - brought to the fore most recently in the framework of the re-opened round of the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) negotiations - the emergence of for-profit providers, the growing presence of institutions of higher education working across national borders, as well as the partial retreat of governments from higher education funding, have raised questions as to the role and responsibilities which higher education institutions should have in society, the conditions needed to perform such a role, and the role of the State in relation to higher education.

The drive for a European Higher Education Area has emerged from decades of intense cooperation between European HEIs. And yet, the fact that governments have initiated the Bologna Process clearly has to do with a sense of threatened competitiveness vis-à-vis prime competitors like the US, rather than from sheer enthusiasm for the increasing intensity of cooperation within European higher education. Thus, the basic fabric of the Bologna Process is woven from two co-existing threads, cooperation and competition. Clearly, both dimensions are needed for the sustained vitality of the process, but the question of the right balance between competition and cooperation resurges again and again in public debates on higher education in Europe.

In an academic arena, it is well established that your closest cooperation partners, helping you to compete against others, can also be your prime competitors in other projects and contexts. This is true in research but also in institutional positioning. But the potential conflict between cooperation and solidarity, on the one hand, and competition, on the other, is currently re-emerging with renewed vehemence as higher education is facing fundamental value choices in the light of constantly decreasing public funds. In an attempt to concentrate on the most urgent needs for development, institutions have to decide how to ensure that widened access, diversified provision and concentration of excellence are compatible functions within the same institution, or whether to pursue one of these to the detriment of the other.

Most countries have witnessed and fostered growing participation in higher education, as a recipe for increased individual, social and economic welfare. Growing participation entails flexible access, diversified student bodies, attention to individual learning paths, breaking down the internal barriers which have contributed to the universities' traditional status in society. At the same time, global competition in research and technology transfer makes concentration of excellence and selective support of the proven strong players seem the most efficient and promising path to follow. Thus, for higher education institutions, the challenge consists in creating the optimal environment for the best and giving them all the support they need to excel nationally and internationally, while offering flexible open access to as many students as possible, with diversified levels of performance and diversified attention needed to accommodate these different levels and backgrounds. All of this has to be achieved with decreasing state funds and increasing demands from new funders who may be indifferent about the many varied public functions which HEIs are trying to perform.

On the one hand, HEIs have to develop an institutional culture and management which is able to select those areas, institutions, departments, researchers and students that show the clearest

potential, because they have to focus their efforts in times of budget constraints and to ensure that the strong do not lose the international race because they are held up by the weak.

On the other hand, HEIs should also contribute to building a society in which equality of opportunity is taken seriously and in which multiple measures to optimise these opportunities are pursued, including for those who have not benefited from privileged starting points.

In a European Higher Education Area, this issue of solidarity also applies to the relation between countries and institutions. Building up potential, performance and competitiveness in those countries that have suffered from the most serious political, social and economic constraints on creative freedom in higher education, and are still suffering from the after-effects, is an essential ingredient of the value system of the European Union, the Council of Europe, the EUA and many other bodies.

Events since the Prague Conference in 2001

What actions have been taken, what consensus has been reached, since the Prague Communiqué of 2001 highlighted the social dimension of higher education and the value of higher education as a public good? What actions have been taken to build up the competitiveness of the European Higher Education Area? To answer the latter question we may point to all the initiatives reported in the other sections of this report, since these are all meant to contribute to the overall goal of enhancing the competitiveness of Europe. But to answer the former question, we should point to some separate events and actions which are not presented elsewhere in this report.

First and foremost, at the initiative of the student associations (ESIB in particular) and Greece, a Bologna follow-up seminar was organised on the topic of the social dimensions of the European Higher Education Area. Several issues were addressed under this heading:

- the social conditions of studying, including the topics of flexible and open access to HE, and obstacles to equal opportunity incurred by the existence of tuition fees;
- the social conditions of, and obstacles to, student mobility;
- the social and public value of higher education, which should not be reduced to the mere pursuit of economic welfare and competitiveness;
- and the implications of GATS for the idea of HE as contributing to the public good and as a public responsibility.

The Athens conclusions¹⁵ reaffirm the position that higher education should be seen as a contributor to the public good and treated as a public responsibility, ensuring wide access to higher education, continued public support and efficient use of these resources by HEIs. The need for enhanced quality assurance procedures, in conditions of widened access, and regulatory frameworks, given the emergence of many private for-profit institutions of higher education in Europe, was also emphasised in this context. Social and financial support schemes, including loans and portable grants, and improved academic and social counselling were highlighted as conditions of wider access to higher education and to student mobility, as well as a decisive success factor in achieving improved graduation rates.

It was pointed out that the influence of such support on access, mobility and student success rates is widely acknowledged, but has not yet been researched sufficiently, as a recent first attempt to describe student social and financial conditions in a European comparative perspective has made evident.¹⁶ Considering the competition for public funding between HE and other public services, such as health care or pension rights, it was stressed that HEIs would have to make it clearer to public authorities, parliaments and governments, how vital the contribution of HE graduates and HE-based research has become to national and global social and economic welfare.

¹⁵ See <http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de>, Bologna Seminars.

¹⁶ *Eurostudent 2000*, HIS, 2002, op.cit..

The central concern of financial discrimination regarding access to higher education is widely supported by evidence from a large number of European countries. If we look at the situation in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), we should note the particularly rapid expansion of participation rates during the 1990s. Current access requirements are the upper secondary school leaving certificate plus entrance examinations in most countries, normally set by the institution or the departments (exceptionally by the government). However, in most countries, some sort of *numerus clausus* applies, often for the state-financed study places. Additional study places are usually available for fee-paying students.

Vehement opposition to the possible discrimination between students on the basis of their private wealth is raised in Northern and Western Europe, both by individual governments and most strongly by student associations. Thus, the Swedish ministry of education recently re-emphasised the principle of studies without fees for individual students, even in the context of contracted training programmes which universities might organise at the request of clients from outside the EU and EEA.¹⁷

Discrimination between different types of students on the basis of their nationality is also known in EU countries, with different levels of tuition imposed on students on the basis of their country of origin. A well-known example is the UK, where non-EU students are charged significantly higher tuition fees than nationals and other EU-citizens, and where considerable efforts are made to recruit such non-EU students because of the additional income they bring to the institution. (We have already noted the significant engagement in HE marketing by HEIs in the UK.) But many other countries, even where tuition fees are still unacceptable for public undergraduate HE courses (with the exception of small administrative fees, which have already caused major uproar), are also introducing the possibility of generating income by fees from foreign Master-level students (e.g. in Germany).

The meaning of GATS for higher education

The debate on the respective advantages of treating HE as a contributor to the public good or as a competitive field of individual actors with particular interests has gained currency due to the new round of GATS negotiations which began in 2000. The General Agreement on Trade in Services is the multilateral trade agreement organised by the World Trade Organisation designed to liberalise the global economy, removing obstacles to free trade.¹⁸ Higher education was already included in the 1994 round of GATS negotiations but has assumed a much more prominent and highly disputed position in the current round.

The GATS is almost universal in scope and coverage, according to Article I.3 of the Agreement, but it excludes “services supplied in the exercise of governmental authority” (with the additional requirements that the service be provided on a non-commercial basis and that no competition be involved). Far-reaching agreement has been obtained among higher education representatives in Europe on the opportunities and threats implied by the inclusion of higher education services in further trade liberalisation, a consensus which is reflected in a number of common declarations of European organisations and various communications from national rectors’ conferences.¹⁹ Considerable differences remain, of course, as to the weight attributed to the individual points.

Among the **opportunities associated with the GATS** and the associated further increase in competition in services, the following are often mentioned:

- The qualitative review of teaching and learning is put at the center in the context of GATS debates.

¹⁷ Summary of government bill 2001/02:15, U01.016 November 2001.

¹⁸ For general information about the EU and GATS, see <http://gats-info.eu.int> and http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/wto_overview/index_en.htm. Several position papers have been formulated by national and European agencies, including the EUA. For a compilation of these positions see <http://www.unige.ch/eua/En/Activities/WTO/welcome.html>. The specific country commitments in HE can be accessed under <http://gats-info.eu.int/gats-info/swtosvc.pl?SECCODE=05.C>.

¹⁹ The Joint Declaration of the EUA with the American Council on Education (ACE), the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), as well as the Joint Declaration of the EUA with ESIB “Higher Education on the Move”, can be found on the EUA website, <http://www.unige.ch/eua>.

- The concentration on high-level programmes will be encouraged further in order to optimise market survival.
- The development of joint programmes and consortia to face competition together is likely to increase.
- The quality of information to the public, potential users and partners is likely to increase.
- More pressure will be exerted for the efficient use of financial and human resources.

Critics point to the following **threats posed by the inclusion of HE in the GATS**:

- National authority could be undermined since the negotiations fall under the purview of the EU's DG for Trade and the European trade regulations, while higher education is still governed by the principle of subsidiarity.
- Sectorial authority is being undermined by the fact that the EU commissioner and ministers of trade negotiate within the GATS, including higher education offers, with no mandatory consultation of representatives of the higher education sector. Moreover, transparency regarding the progress of negotiations is limited since no negotiators want to weaken their position by revealing their negotiating fields, limits or tactics.
- Increased competition and commercialisation to secure market advantage might undermine the Bologna Process which depends on cooperation and exchange of good practice.
- The competition may result in brain drain and reduced opportunities for community-building and democratic development in some countries.
- The increased market orientation of higher education may run counter to core academic values, the recognition of students as partners rather than customers and the commitment to widened access as a mechanism for social, political and economic inclusion.
- Since only some processes and functions of HE would fall under the GATS regime, there is a risk of fostering institutional fragmentation within higher education institutions, with part of an institution's activities falling within the GATS regime while others do not. This would make institutional steering very difficult and would weaken the strategic capacity of institutions.
- Finally, the increase of for-profit providers and for-profit activities of public higher education institutions would result in further decreases in state funding and the erosion of European higher education as a public sector activity. Those parts of the university which operate in more competitive or lucrative spheres, which may be more entrepreneurial than others, and which are net generators of income, are often currently used to help support other parts of the university which may engage in non-commercially viable activities such as contributing to regional and community development, widening participation and encouraging social inclusion. With a widening influence of GATS such lucrative activities may be favoured over others.²⁰

The recommendations of EUA, various national rectors' conferences, ESIB and the official Bologna follow-up seminar all stress the need for increased transparency in the GATS negotiations, for well-developed national and regional quality assurance frameworks and increased mutual acceptance among these to face further globalisation, the need for establishing specific transnational procedures, for respecting the integrity of higher education institutions and the centrality of students as partners. The priority of ongoing agreements and cooperation initiatives, such as the Lisbon Convention and the Bologna Process, has been repeatedly underlined, together with their centrality for internationalising higher education and respecting quality concerns and national differences.

Generally, these discussions on GATS and the social dimension of higher education have continuously reaffirmed that the main objective driving the creation of a European Higher Education Area and the internationalisation of higher education on a global level, should first and foremost be based on academic values and cooperation between different institutions, countries, and regions of the world.

²⁰ The preceding list of opportunities and threats has been based on the summaries provided in an EUA working document on GATS for the EUA Council by Andrée Surssock (10 October 2002) and a presentation on European Higher Education in a globalised world by Peter Scott and Frans Van Vught for the same Council Meeting (10/10/2002). Similar arguments can be found in the above-mentioned joint declarations as well as in EUA, ESIB and national discussion papers. The ESIB website also has numerous additional information and legal opinions: <http://www.esib.org>.

Since the discussion on GATS is often clouded by wrong assumptions and expectations, three basic facts should be recalled:

The question is not whether higher education should be regulated by the GATS or not: it was included into the Agreement eight years ago and this decision is, to all practical intents and purposes, irreversible.

The European Commission has stated that it will make no further request regarding higher education in the current round of negotiations, except that it asks the US to open its market to European HEIs (i.e., to make concessions comparable to those already made by the European Union in 1995).

The issue of trade in higher education is here to stay and will reappear on the agenda of subsequent rounds of GATS negotiations. Ministries in charge of higher education and HEIs should keep this in mind and prepare themselves to ride the tiger of globalisation rather than to hope it will disappear.

It can be expected that the *Global Forum on International Quality Assurance, Accreditation, and the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education* which UNESCO established in September 2002 will continue to provide an important forum for higher education stakeholders to discuss GATS-related developments.²¹

Different levels of awareness of GATS

Unlike the round of GATS negotiations in the mid-90s that went largely unnoticed by the main actors in higher education, the present GATS talks caused a flurry of reflections, rumours and discussions. Lack of transparency and information on GATS has been one of the most frequently voiced criticisms, since staff and students, even the rectors and ministerial representatives felt taken by surprise when the issue emerged. The *Trends 2003 questionnaire* therefore asked the various actors about their knowledge of GATS and their involvement in national GATS discussions.

One third of the ministries have developed a policy on GATS, while two thirds have not yet done so. 22 of the 36 ministries are in dialogue with their country's ministry of trade, 13 with national HEI bodies, nine with student organisations and four with their ministry of foreign affairs. Six ministries said they had not discussed GATS with any partners.

As for the rectors' conferences, 14 out of 36 declared themselves fully aware of the GATS issue, while 18 said they were aware but without specific details. 13 rectors' conferences have a policy on GATS and 21 do not – which is surprising, as the EUA position paper on GATS was approved in September 2001 by the rectors' conferences that are EUA members.

22 rectors' conferences are in dialogue with their country's HE ministry, eight with their country's ministry of trade, ten with national HE bodies and seven with national student associations. Ten rectors' conferences have not exchanged views on GATS with any national partners.

A rather high percentage of HEI leaders – 19% – declared themselves to be fully aware of the GATS negotiations, almost half of the HEI leaders consider themselves to be aware without having specific details, and 29% said they were not yet aware of GATS. The largest numbers of such leaders fully aware of GATS can be found in Belgium and The Netherlands (58%) and the UK (41%). Few HEI leaders declared themselves to be fully aware in France and Latvia (14%), Hungary (13%), Germany and Greece (10%) and Bulgaria and Poland (8%).

Above average percentages were aware without any specific details in Sweden (53%), Greece (55%), Spain (57%), Germany (65.5%), Slovenia (67%), Estonia (71%) and Romania (73%).

21 <http://www.unesco.org/education/studyingabroad>.

More than 50% of HEI leaders in Bulgaria and Turkey declared they were not yet aware of GATS. As an interesting detail one might add that awareness of GATS seems to be particularly low among those HEIs specialising in business and economics. Only 15% of their leaders were fully aware of GATS, compared to 19% at all HEIs and to 26% at universities only. Aware without specific details was answered by 32% of business and economics institutions (universities: 50%, other HEIs: 43%), and not yet by 44.5% of business and economics institutions (universities: 19.5%, other HEI: 36%).

It came as no surprise that students seem to be the best informed group: 17 out of 37 student associations declared themselves to be fully aware of GATS discussions, while 13 feel aware without having specific details, and only five feel they are not yet aware.

4.4.2 Key findings

- The conflict between cooperation and competition is growing as HEIs are faced with decreasing funds. They can try to combine widened access, diversified provision and concentration on excellence, but often have to pursue one option to the detriment of the others.
- In the European Higher Education Area, the issue of solidarity also applies to the relation between countries.
- A large consensus appears to exist in the EHEA regarding higher education as a contributor to the public good and a public responsibility.
- Only one third of the ministries have developed a policy on the position of higher education in the GATS. The situation is similar for the rectors' conferences.
- Almost 20% of HEIs declared themselves to be fully aware of the GATS discussions, almost half of the HEIs consider themselves to be aware without having specific details, and 29% said they were not yet aware of GATS. There are considerable differences between countries.
- Students' associations seem to be well aware of GATS.

4.4.3 Future challenges

- There is a growing need for enhanced quality assurance procedures and regulatory frameworks, given the emergence of cross-border institutions in Europe.
- Social and financial support schemes, including portable grants and loans, and improved academic and social counselling are conditions for wider access to higher education, more student mobility and improved graduation rates.
- More research is needed into the social and financial conditions of students in a comparative European perspective.
- In competing with other policy areas for public funding, HEIs must convince parliaments and governments of the vital contribution of HE graduates and HE-based research to social and economic welfare.
- There is a need for more transparency and consultation of HE representatives in the ongoing and future GATS negotiations.
- It would probably be beneficial for all if ministries of higher education, rectors' conferences and HEIs agreed on a regular exchange of information and policy coordination with regard to GATS, transnational education, etc. Ministries of trade, foreign affairs and other stakeholders should equally be involved.

5. THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA: TOWARD COMPARABLE STRUCTURES

5.1 DEGREE STRUCTURES

Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, also through the implementation of the Diploma Supplement, in order to promote European citizens' employability and the international competitiveness of the European higher education system.

Adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate. Access to the second cycle shall require successful completion of first cycle studies, lasting a minimum of three years. The degree awarded after the first cycle shall also be relevant to the European labour market as an appropriate level of qualification. The second cycle should lead to the Master and/or doctorate degrees as in many European countries. (Bologna, 1999)

5.1.1 Analysis

The legal framework for degrees: Bologna-compatible in most countries

A superficial notion of the Bologna Process might suggest that the creation of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, based primarily on undergraduate and graduate cycles, is what "Bologna" is really all about. The question of cycles and degrees is undoubtedly at the very heart of the reforms, but singling them out – because of their visibility – and treating them separately from the other objectives would be a very myopic view indeed. "In most cases the reforms combine the introduction of a new Bachelor/Master degree structure with a credit system and a system of certification of the quality of the new programmes ('accreditation')." ²² This analysis from the *Trends II* report already indicated that the national reforms seemed most promising where a comprehensive and thorough approach was taken. Two years later, the reform train is gathering steam and speed almost everywhere in Europe, and it is becoming even more obvious that all the different aspects of the process are closely interrelated – curricular reform, credit systems, comparability, recognition, quality assurance and so on – and can be successfully tackled only in a consistent and comprehensive way.

Thus the mere act of introducing a two-tier degree structure can only be a very first step toward a transparent system of degrees. So far, relatively little attention has been paid to the need for common definitions of degree requirements, work loads, level descriptors etc. All Bologna countries have initiated some reforms, often concentrating on matters that were deemed particularly urgent from a national perspective.

However, as the reform moves along, it becomes clear that the emerging solutions bear the risk of creating new incompatibilities and that, once a certain level of comparable structures has been reached, the horizon opens onto an entirely new set of challenges such as defining transparent and comparable "level descriptors", "learning outcomes", "qualification frameworks" and so on.

What does the legal situation look like?

Since the Prague Conference, noticeable progress has been made in this respect in many countries. More than half (19) of the ministries indicated that they have changed their higher education legislation since 2001 and a further 40% said they had plans to do so. In many cases, these legal changes relate to the types and structures of degrees. ²³

Around 40% of the ministries reported that there was a two-cycle structure in their national higher education systems even before the Bologna Declaration. This group spreads all across Europe and includes, apart from the UK, Ireland and Malta, for instance Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Latvia, Poland, Turkey and Greece.

²² Guy Haug, Christian Tauch, *Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education II*, Helsinki 2001, p.31.

²³ New higher education laws have, *inter alia*, been adopted in Austria (August 2002), Belgium (Fl., April 2003), France (April 2002), Norway (July 2002), Spain (December 2001).

Other ministries also indicated that their countries had two cycles before the beginning of the Bologna Process, but that they are now working to adjust them to the emerging consensus on degree structures in the EHEA, as expressed e.g. in the Helsinki seminars on Bachelors (in 2001) and Masters (in 2003). This is true for Belgium, Croatia, Finland, France, Norway, Portugal and Serbia.

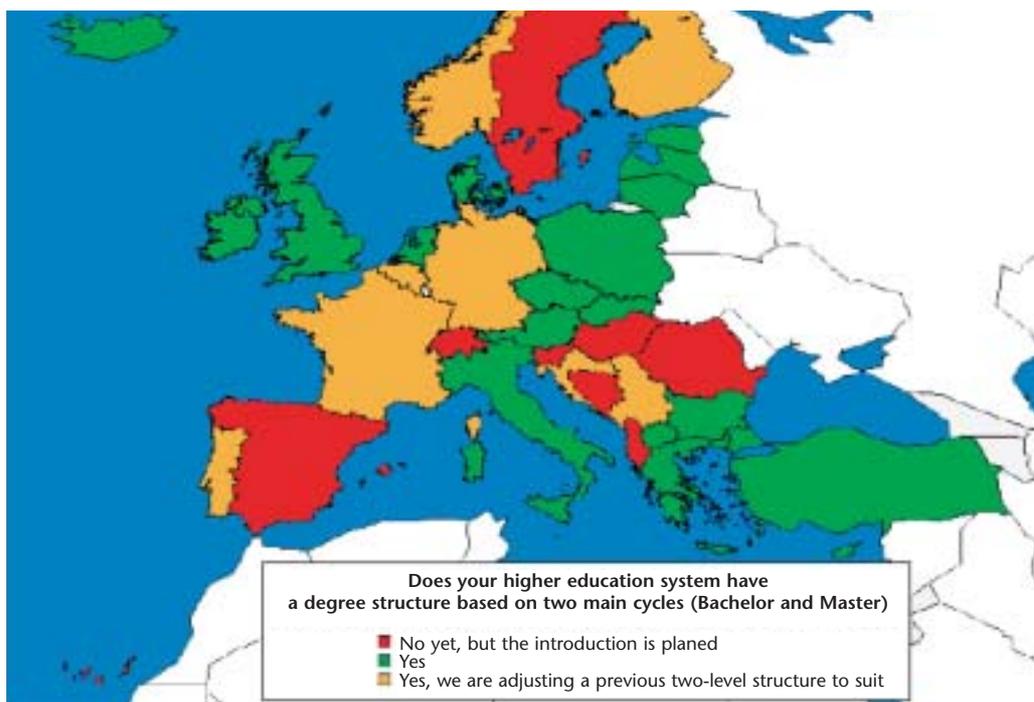
In some cases this implies very radical and far-reaching changes, as in France, where the traditionally most important final university degree, the *maitrise* at 240 ECTS credits, is to give way to a Master degree at the 300 credits level. The *Conférence des Grandes Ecoles* has decided to create an MSc label as a special “quality label” to distinguish the Master degrees awarded by its members from the other Master degrees.

Some ministries indicated that their countries were introducing the two cycles as a result of the Bologna discussions, e.g. Austria, Estonia, Italy, Liechtenstein, The Netherlands, Romania and some SEE countries. In other countries, like Germany, Denmark and many of the CEE countries, the Bologna Process coincides with a national reform process that had already started before 1999.

Finally, certain countries declared that they do not have a two-cycle structure yet but that the introduction is planned, e.g. Hungary, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland and some SEE countries. In Switzerland, the approach to implementation differs from the European norm in that actions at national level are issued in the form of coordinating directives rather than legislation. Thus Switzerland has already started the implementation without any legal changes having been introduced in the HE laws,²⁴ and some higher education institutions are already in the process of converting some or all of their study programmes to the new type. The recently established *Fachhochschulen* are planning to follow suit shortly.

Figure 8 - Implementation of Bachelor/Master structures according to ministries

This map reflects the answers of the ministries to the question of whether or not the national higher education system already has a degree structure based on two main cycles in place. Thus a country which is in the process of implementing such a structure without having introduced national level legislation will have answered “Not yet, but the introduction is planned” (as is the case in Switzerland). To reflect the overall HE system, this map should be seen in conjunction with Figure 9 where the percentages of institutions which have already introduced Bachelor/Master degrees in a majority of departments are given.



Source: *Trends 2003*

24 The Swiss government entrusted the *Conférence des Recteurs des Universités Suisses* (CRUS) with the implementation of this reform. See *Directives de la CRUS pour le renouvellement coordonné de l'enseignement des hautes écoles universitaires suisses dans le cadre de Bologne*, CRUS 02 215, décembre 2002.

In Spain in February 2003, the ministry presented a detailed proposal to the Council for University Coordination on how to adjust the traditional Spanish system to the two-cycle model and a very lively and constructive discussion among the representatives of governments and HEIs is presently taking place.²⁵ A new law in the Flemish Community of Belgium (April 2003) provides for the introduction of Bachelors and Masters.

Often the legislation fixes a deadline after which no study programmes of the old type will be accredited/authorised any more, or by which the transition to the two-tier system must be completed. France, for instance, expects the reform, adopted in April 2002, to be completed in the universities by the academic year 2005/06. In Italy, where the transformation of the system started with the academic year 2001/2002, the reform is now fully operational. The reform of degree structures in Norway should be completed by the end of 2003. The new Austrian University Act of 2002 allows only new programmes of the two-tier type.

Relatively few countries leave the introduction to HEIs on a purely voluntary basis, as in Poland. In Germany, it is still left entirely to the discretion of the institutions and their departments whether to introduce the new system, keep the previous (traditional) system or run the two in parallel. Obviously the latter solution puts considerable strain on the institutions' resources and may have a confusing effect on both students and employers, as HEIs themselves seem to doubt the validity of the reforms undertaken.

Some countries have set up expert committees to work out proposals for a higher education reform along the Bologna lines, and the decisions now need implementation. This is true e.g. for Finland where the experts proposed that the two-tier structure should be implemented in all disciplines by August 2005, with Bachelors of 180 and Masters of 120 ECTS credits.

Generally speaking, the legal possibility to offer programmes of the undergraduate/graduate type either exists or will exist soon in all Bologna countries. No ministry rejects the idea altogether – as was to be expected in a process to which they adhered voluntarily.

Growing agreement on the duration and workload of undergraduate and graduate cycles

Ministers in Prague welcomed the conclusions of the Conference held in Helsinki in February 2001 on undergraduate degrees. The conclusions contained a recommendation that such degrees should carry between 180 and 240 ECTS credits, equalling 3 to 4 years full-time study. Such a first degree, awarded after a relatively short period of study, was indeed unknown in many continental European higher education systems. Almost everywhere, however, they are now being introduced in a consistent way, always respecting the Helsinki recommendation regarding the length. To quote but one example: Hungarian universities used to offer only long one-tier programmes of 5 to 6 years and are now introducing a 180 (first cycle) + 120 (second cycle) ECTS credits structure.

Across Europe, there is a clear trend toward attributing 180 ECTS credits for first cycles, but 210 and 240 can also be found. While no problem seems to exist with regard to undergraduate degrees that are too short – anything under 180 credits is recognised everywhere as belonging to the sub-degree level, there are still a few countries that offer undergraduate programmes that are too long in comparison to the emerging norm: either because they carry more than 240 credits or because they are combined with long postgraduate degrees (e.g. 240 + 120). This is e.g. true for Slovenia, but also for a few other countries, especially in Central and South East Europe. In the higher education traditions of these countries, there seems to be a deep conviction that no valid higher education qualification can be awarded after three years, notwithstanding the positive experiences of many other systems. This is inevitably going to increase the pressure on the resources available for HEIs in these countries.

25 *La integración del sistema universitario español en el espacio europeo de enseñanza superior*, Documento-Marco, Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, Febrero 2003.

Regarding graduate degrees at Master level, a recent study by Andrejs Rauhvargers²⁶ has shown that although there is still a significant variety in duration and architecture, there is a dominant trend toward Master level degrees requiring a total of 300 ECTS credits. These Master degrees can be awarded either at the end of long integrated programmes or, in two-cycle structures, at the end of the second cycle. The Conference held in Helsinki in March 2003 on Master degrees recommended the following: "While Master degree programmes normally carry 90 – 120 ECTS credits, the minimum requirements should amount to 60 ECTS credits at Master level. As the length and the content of Bachelor degrees vary, there is a need to have similar flexibility at the Master level."²⁷

The most common pattern appears to be: 180 credits Bachelor + 120 credits Master. The Master degree can also carry less than 120 credits, depending on the length and content of the Bachelor programme, but a minimum of 60 credits at postgraduate level has to be respected. Some countries, such as Sweden and the Netherlands, also offer the combination 180 credits Bachelor + 60 credits Master.²⁸ Under the influence of the Bologna Process, however, at least Sweden seems to be reconsidering this structure: a discussion is presently taking place on the definition of undergraduate and graduate levels of degrees so as to ensure compatibility of Swedish degrees with those of other European countries. The Ministry has appointed a project group to this end.²⁹

In the UK, a one-year Master degree typically carries the equivalent of 75 or even 90 ECTS credits since the workload is calculated on the basis not of two semesters but a full calendar year. This interpretation continues to be a matter of discussion between British and continental HEIs.

The study also confirmed that medicine and related disciplines still require a different scheme in many countries, namely long integrated programmes of 300 or more ECTS credits, but these are exceptions to the converging trend across Europe in most other disciplines.

How much of the legal reforms has reached the institutions?

As one would expect, there tends to be a gap between the stipulations in the rather recent legal changes and the institutional reality. Nevertheless, the average figures at institutional level look quite impressive: one third of institutions declared that they already had a two-tier structure before the Bologna Process, and 21% have introduced it as a result of Bologna. More than 36% intend to introduce it and only a small minority (7.5%) say they have no intention of doing so.

However, depending on the country, the number of institutions that have already embarked on the often long and winding process of structural reform is often smaller than the legal situation might suggest. A differentiation by types of institutions shows that almost two thirds of the universities already had or have introduced two cycles, but only 46% of other HEIs.³⁰ Business and economics institutions are particularly active in that regard (almost 60%), while engineering and technology institutions seem a bit more hesitant (around 45%).

Occasionally, there seems to be a different perception between ministries and higher education institutions regarding the reform process. Thus, while the Dutch ministry indicated that the two tiers are being introduced as a result of the Bologna Process, more than 40% of the Dutch HEIs indicated that they had them already before Bologna (while 50% declared that they had introduced them or were introducing them as a result of Bologna). The opposite situation may be less surprising: in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic, the ministries declared that the two tiers had existed before 1999, but around 55% of the HEIs in both countries indicated that they are introducing such programmes only as a result of Bologna.

26 Christian Tauch, Andrejs Rauhvargers, *Survey on Master Degrees and Joint Degrees in Europe*, September 2002, EUA.

27 Conference on Master-level degrees, Helsinki 14 -15 March 2003, *Conclusions and Recommendations*, p.5.

28 It should be mentioned that in the context of Continuing Education/Lifelong Learning there are also professionally oriented Master degrees such as MBA degrees in many countries that carry only 60 ECTS credits.

29 Cf. Memorandum, *Assignment to review certain issues relating to university degrees*, 26 April 2002, and Fact Sheet: *Review of certain issues concerning higher education qualifications*, December 2002, both published by the Swedish Ministry of Education and Science.

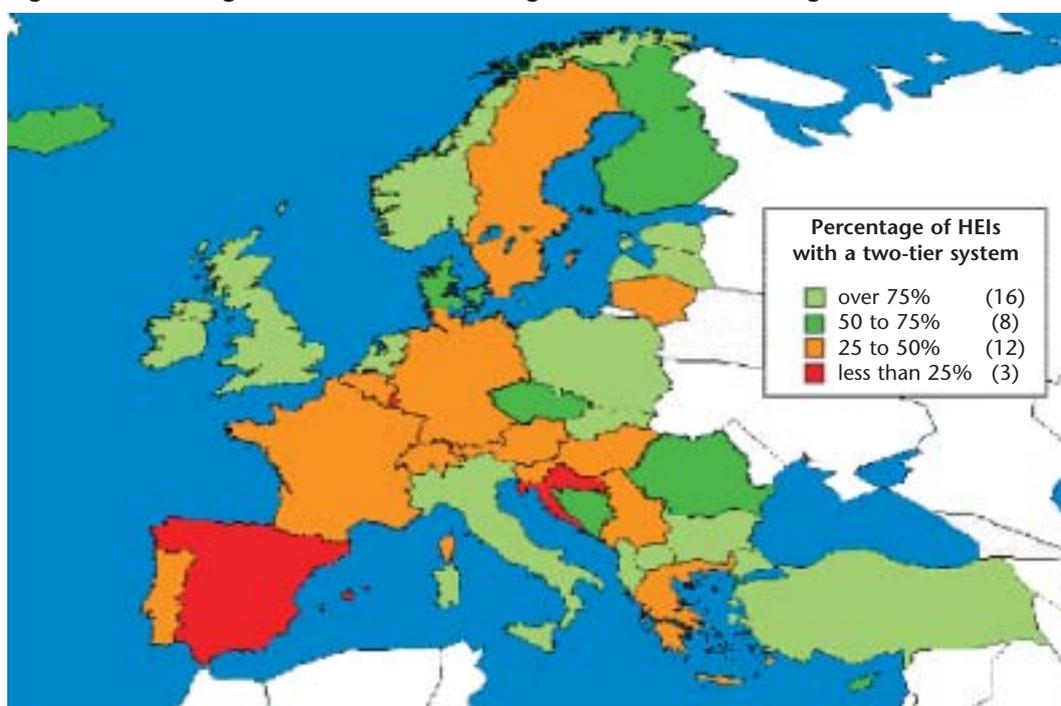
30 In assessing the *Trends 2003* figures on this particular aspect, one should bear in mind that the questionnaires were sent to all types of HEIs, including colleges, polytechnics and similar institutions that offer only first-cycle degrees and would therefore reply negatively to the question whether they have already introduced a two-cycle structure.

Obviously, the Bologna discussions have persuaded the institutions in these countries to make use of legal options that seemed less attractive before. Not surprisingly, Bologna has had a particularly strong impact in countries where governments defined a deadline for the compulsory introduction of the new system. Half of the HEIs in The Netherlands, 62% in Norway and 74% in Italy have changed their degree structures as a result of Bologna.

In those countries where the reform decision has been taken only recently or not yet at all, or where the introduction is still voluntary, high percentages of HEIs so far declare only their intention to shift to the new structures: 52% in Germany, 53% in Austria, 59% in Hungary, 67% in Slovenia, 72% in Portugal, and 82% in Spain. There is little opposition in principle to the two-tier structure, with the exceptions of Greece and Lithuania, where 25% and 19% of HEIs respectively declared that they had no intention of introducing such a system.

The students' perception of the present state of introducing two tiers largely confirms the HEIs view: almost two thirds of the students' associations indicated that their institutions either have two tiers or are introducing them.

Figure 9 - Percentage of HEIs with two-tier degree structures, according to the HEIs



Source: *Trends 2003*

From two to three tiers: including doctoral studies in the Bologna Process

Although the Bologna Declaration explicitly mentioned doctorate degrees, the discussion on post-graduate degrees has so far focused largely on Master degrees. On the other hand, the need for more structured doctoral studies in Europe has been highlighted repeatedly in the past years. Thus the Directors for Higher Education and the Presidents of Rectors' Conferences of the EU countries, at their annual meeting in Cordoba in 2002, adopted recommendations that stressed the relevance of doctoral studies to the Bologna Process.³¹ They also stated somewhat optimistically that the Bologna Process had already contributed to a large extent to eliminating the divergences in the provision of doctoral studies around Europe with regard to structure, content, formal aspects and orientation. Participants called for the setting-up of structured doctoral studies, including provisions for quality assessment, and for making employability a criterion also in the design of doctoral studies. They stressed the need for joint European programmes at doctoral level, for mobility support to doctoral students

³¹ Meeting of Directors General of Higher Education and Presidents of Rectors' Conferences of the EU/EEA, Cordoba, 7-9 April 2002, see <http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de>.

and for the creation of a **European doctorate label**. The recommendations concluded by pointing to the central role of doctoral studies and the training of young researchers in the creation of a European Higher Education Area and, more generally, of a European Knowledge Area. In that context one should mention EURODOC, an association of doctoral students and young researchers from various European countries.³² EURODOC was founded in Spain in 2002 and aims at providing a discussion platform to doctoral students and representing their interests at institutional, national and European levels. It would seem advisable to involve EURODOC in further discussions on how to develop postgraduate and in particular doctoral studies in the European Higher Education Area.

It is becoming more and more acknowledged that the European tradition which still exists in many disciplines (i.e. leaving doctoral students largely to their own devices and providing them only with more or less intensive individual tutoring and supervision) is for many reasons not suited any more to the needs of modern societies. More to the point, it hampers the realisation of the European Higher Education Area (and, one might add, of the European Research Area). Doctoral programmes, where they exist, and in particular Joint Degree programmes at doctoral level, can be among the most attractive features of the EHEA. But for the time being, interested students are still confronted with a confusing variety of national and institutional structures that are anything but “easily readable and comparable”. While HEIs in some countries have begun to set up doctoral studies, including graduate schools, others still consider the traditional model of strictly individual tutoring to be sufficient.

The results of this survey suggest that Europe is today divided exactly into halves with regard to the two basic types of organising the doctoral phase: 18 ministries replied that in their countries most doctoral students received only individual tutoring and supervision, while 17 ministries indicated that taught courses were normally offered in addition to tutoring.

The data received in response to the questionnaires must however be interpreted carefully, as the questions did not differentiate between HEIs with and without the right to award doctoral degrees. The more traditional style of providing doctoral students only with supervision seems to prevail in Greece where 40% of HEIs answered yes to this question, while 20% indicated that taught courses were offered in addition to supervision and 40% found the question not applicable to their situation. Also in Slovakia (44%), Bulgaria (62%), Ireland and Romania (80%) and in SEE the supervision only-model seems to be dominant. In the following countries, on the other hand, a large proportion of HEIs offer taught courses for doctoral students: France (41%), the Czech Republic (48%), Finland, Norway and Poland (55%), Italy (63%), Sweden (73%) and Spain (89%).

A further indicator of whether doctoral studies are offered in a rather structured way or on a largely individual basis is the question of whether credit systems are already being applied to the doctoral phase or not. Around 20% of the ministries declared that ECTS is applied at the doctoral level in their HEIs, slightly less than 20% said that a different credit system was used. Almost half answered that credit systems were not yet applied at this level and more than 15% replied that their HEIs had no intention of doing so.

One example for the application of ECTS to doctoral studies is the new Austrian University Act: it specifies that a doctoral degree requires a minimum of 120 ECTS credits, whereas 240 ECTS credits or more lead to a PhD.

As for the HEIs themselves, the highest positive replies to the idea of using credits for doctoral studies came from Finland (44%), Sweden (53%), Estonia and Spain (71%). The clearest resistance came from Switzerland (where 36% declared they did not intend to take such a step), the UK (39%) and Ireland (40%).

Curricular renovation, employability and e-learning

Since the differentiation between undergraduate and graduate levels of higher education is new to many continental European countries, it is clear that a real reform cannot stop at cutting the tradi-

³² <http://www.eurodoc.net>

tional one-tier programmes into two slightly longer and slightly shorter halves, leaving the curricula otherwise unchanged. The Bologna Declaration hinted at this problem by underlining that undergraduate degrees should be relevant to the labour market. Subsequently, much concern from teaching staff, trade unions and students has focused on the term “employability”, which seemed to many to imply a surrender of higher education systems to the short-term requests of an unpredictable labour market. Even in replying to this survey, more than 40% of the student associations supported the view that “too much importance is attached to the ‘production’ of employable graduates, at the expense of the traditional advantages of academic education.” Around 20% saw Bachelor/Masters mainly as an attempt by governments to save money by shortening study durations and some 17% fear that mobility might be hampered by the new degrees.

Generally speaking, however, the discussion today has taken a more constructive and less polemical turn than a few years ago: most of the former critics have understood that employability is not about producing graduates to the orders of the employers, but about the responsibility of higher education institutions toward their graduates and about the whole new range of possibilities that the Bachelor-level degree, if properly introduced, can open to students (and, indeed, to the labour market).

The positive judgements by student associations regarding the introduction of the two tiers far outweigh the critical remarks: around 50% indicated that Bachelor/Master will allow for more individual learning paths and facilitate mobility, and 12.5% even explicitly welcomed the increased employability provided by the new degrees.

This discussion has become part of a much wider process that can truly be called a change of paradigm in education, and which is not limited to higher education. This change can be seen as part and parcel of a new emphasis on lifelong learning, of a changing student population, of new modes of delivery of study programmes, and involves a shift from input to output definitions, from a teacher-centred to a student-centred approach, from formal definitions (length of programmes etc.) to definitions of competences.

Several initiatives which have been taken since the Prague meeting highlight these trends. A recent study by Stephen Adam gives a comprehensive overview of the present situation.³³ Adam observes that “many European countries have recently adopted the two-cycle qualification structure based on the Bachelor and Master distinction, but have done so with little Europe-wide agreement or common understanding to resolve what exactly distinguishes the two. Some hurried reforms have led to simplistic solutions where old qualifications have been crudely repackaged without due regard to levels and standards”.³⁴ Projects like the Joint Quality Initiative or “Tuning Educational Structures in Europe” intend to remedy this problematic situation, by discussing descriptors and trying to define outcome levels and qualifications for different levels and disciplines.

Many higher education institutions are involved in these projects, but the majority are struggling on their own with curricular reform – or are they?

According to the ministries, in almost half (16) of the countries, a majority of HEIs have started curricular reform as a result of Bologna, and in nine others a minority have started to do so. As for the HEIs themselves, almost 28% report that they are undertaking curricular reform in all departments and 25% are doing it in some departments. In some countries, the real figures are far above this average: in The Netherlands 42% of HEIs have started the reform in all departments, in Switzerland 43%, in Bulgaria 54%, in Latvia 55%, in Estonia 57%, in Norway 66% and in Italy 74%. On the other hand, 40% or more of HEIs in Belgium, France, Finland, Greece have not started curricular reform yet, in Turkey this figure amounts to 53%, in Portugal to 63%, in SEE countries to 75% and in Spain to 82%. Obviously, these figures also reflect the state of political decision-making in the respective countries: in Portugal and Spain, for instance, the HEIs are still awaiting detailed guidelines for the implementation of the two-tier structure.

³³ Stephen Adam, *Qualification structures in European Higher Education*, Study prepared for the Danish Bologna Seminar, Copenhagen, 27-28 March 2003.

³⁴ *op.cit.*, p.i.

Seven ministries indicated that curricular reform will start soon in their countries. Only two ministries, four rectors' conferences and some 11% of the HEIs report that they feel no need for such a reform. Interestingly, 77% of British institutions see no need for reform, while in Ireland only 20% take this attitude and almost 47% say they will start curricular reform in the near future. The latter group includes the Institutes of Technology which are currently reforming their degree structures.

Generally speaking, universities are slightly more advanced than other HEIs in implementing curricular reforms.

It is difficult at this stage to assess the thrust and scope of the reforms taking place. One indicator can be the concern with employability. It turns out that this issue provides a remarkable case where HEIs themselves are committed even more strongly to reform than ministries or rectors' conferences.

13 out of 36 ministries declared employability to be a very important criterion in curricular reform, 19 saw it as important and only four as not very important. For the rectors' conferences the figures are: 10 (out of 36) very important, 17 important and 8 not very important.

As for the HEIs, they are taking the issue much more seriously: almost 56% see it as very important and 36% as important. A differentiation according to types of HEI shows that it is even more important to the "other" HEIs than to the universities: 45% of universities, but 63% of other HEIs replied very important. Employability is of particular importance to business/economics (very important: 72%) and to technology/engineering (58%). Only 5% of HEIs attach little relevance to employability.

The students' views confirm the weight attached to the issue by a vast majority of HEIs: almost 60% of the students indicated that in their institutions, "employability" was a very important criterion in curricular reform, 17% saw it as important and only 21% as not very important.

In the context of curricular renewal, it is worth mentioning that so far e-learning appears to play a rather minor role in European HEIs. There is little evidence of any targeted attempts to pool resources and make use of e-learning developments to complement traditional modes of course delivery and to target additional learners beyond the bounds of the normal student population. While a number of e-learning initiatives are developing all over Europe, especially in the context of distance and lifelong learning, their deliberate development as complements to regular teaching seems so far to be in an embryonic phase. The potential benefits of innovating learning methods, targeting additional user groups or reaching a wider audience do not seem to be recognised or valued strongly enough to justify the respective investments in the eyes of governments or higher education institutions.

In light of the potential for saving development costs, for pooling not just resources but also user groups, such abstinence is rather surprising since opportunities would seem to be particularly worthwhile in a European context, where networking between institutions has become a strong tradition. The relatively low level of activity on this front is presumably due to the high level of initial investment needed to provide the necessary infrastructure and updating of technological and methodological expertise on the part of many of the academics concerned, both of which are necessary conditions for any market success in this area. In times of tightening budgets and cuts even in the most traditional and fundamental HE provision, such investments are deemed impossible at most public European institutions.

Limited involvement of professional associations and employers in curricular reform

Since employability matters in curricular reform, it would appear logical to involve professional associations and employers in designing and restructuring the curricula, but the feedback from

HEIs seems somewhat slow in this regard: in three countries only, more than 50% of institutions indicated a close involvement of this kind: Ireland (60%), the UK (61%) and Lithuania (87.5%). Also France is doing rather well, with 43% reporting a close and almost 40% an occasional involvement of employers. At the other end of the scale, institutions in Germany (22%), Norway and Sweden (20%), and Greece, Portugal, Spain, Poland, Romania, Turkey and SEE countries (with 15% or less) indicate close employer involvement. In Belgium, Spain, Turkey and Greece, around 50% of HEIs report that professional organisations and employers are only rarely involved in curricular development. At institutional level, universities are less likely than other HEIs to involve employers: 37% of other HEIs, but only 23% of universities declare a close involvement, whereas 31% of universities, but only 22% of other HEIs involve these groups rarely.

The Bachelor: a valid degree in its own right or only a stepping stone?

The Bachelor enjoys full acceptance as a terminal degree in the British Isles. In Ireland 33% and in the UK 50% of HEI leaders expect students to leave their institutions with a first degree.

The general picture across the whole of Europe, however, looks different: only few institutions (17%) expect their graduates to leave with a Bachelor-level degree. This would suggest a certain lack of confidence in the “relevance to the labour market” that these degrees actually should possess. Universities particularly appear to harbour doubts about the terminal status of first degrees: only 9% of universities, but 22% of other HEIs can imagine their graduates leaving with “only” a Bachelor.

There are, however, vast differences between countries. In Germany only 10% of HEIs expect holders of a Bachelor degree to leave the system, in Austria only 9%, Italy 7%, Spain and Switzerland 7%, Portugal 6% and France 4%. In some countries like Estonia, Poland or Greece, not a single institution replied positively to this question. This may reflect the novelty of, and lack of familiarity with the new degrees, which expresses itself foremost in the function attributed to first degrees: as a stepping stone or an orientation platform. It may also reflect the insufficient design and content of some of the new Bachelor programmes – they may not include the skills and competences students will need to become employable. This in turn can be explained by the non-involvement of employers in designing the curricula – a vicious circle that can be broken only by more communication between HEIs and the world of work.

In the following countries, close to half of the HEIs or more have a balanced stand on the matter (“some will leave and some continue at Master level”): Ireland, UK, Greece, Sweden, Portugal, Slovenia, Romania and Turkey. In France, Switzerland, Finland, Poland and Slovakia, between 60% and 77% of HEIs think that students will stay for a Master programme.

Passing from the Bachelor to the Master level

The Helsinki Conference of March 2003 on Master degrees stated the following: “The entry to a Master programme usually requires a completed Bachelor degree at a recognised higher education institution. Bachelor and Master degrees should have different defined outcomes and should be awarded at different levels (...) All Bachelor degrees should open access to Master studies...”³⁵

The responsibility for defining entry requirements for Master programmes varies across Europe. Almost 30% of HEIs indicated that this has been taken care of within an overall institutional policy, while 26.4% allow departments to define their own programme conditions. Almost one fifth of HEIs have not tackled the problem yet.

Countries favouring a more “centralised” approach include Switzerland, Norway, Ireland, the UK, Italy, Bulgaria, Poland and Turkey, whereas in Germany, the Czech Republic and SEE countries a majority of HEIs leave the decision to the departments.

In Portugal and Spain, HEIs are expecting clear political decisions on structural reforms and 50% or more have therefore not yet discussed the matter of access to Master programmes.

Beyond structures: the need for descriptors, level indicators and qualification frameworks

While the introduction of two tier structures has made significant or considerable progress in most Bologna countries, “there is a danger that the creation of Bachelor-Master awards will mask significant differences in their level, regard and practical application. It is possible that a hollow framework may emerge that hides and confuses, rather than illuminates. This would set back the Bologna Process.”³⁶

Higher education reforms have always been a national, regional or institutional matter, rather than a European or an international issue, and the Bologna Process is not an attempt to change this reality. A set of objectives has been agreed upon in Bologna and Prague, but as countries have begun to implement these, it is becoming increasingly important to ensure that the process does not result in more instead of less confusion. Before Bologna, everyone knew that national higher education systems were indeed as different and incompatible as they looked. Bologna must avoid the risk of producing seemingly converging and compatible structures that could turn out to be, in spite of a common terminology, just as irreconcilable as the old ones.

To avoid this, the Copenhagen Seminar on qualification structures proposed a number of steps: “The ministers meeting in Berlin in September 2003 should encourage (the elaboration of) national qualifications frameworks for their respective higher education systems...”

They should also “launch work on an overarching qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area, with a view to providing a framework against which national frameworks could articulate.”

“At each appropriate level, qualifications frameworks should seek to describe the qualifications making up the framework in terms of workload, level, quality, learning outcomes and profile.”

“Within the overall rules of the qualifications frameworks, individual institutions should have considerable freedom in the design of their programmes. National qualifications frameworks, as well as an EHEA framework, should be designed so as to assist higher education institutions in their curriculum development”.³⁷

Examples of qualifications frameworks based on external reference points – qualification descriptors, level descriptors, skills and learning outcomes – exist or are in the process of elaboration in England and Wales, Scotland, Ireland and Denmark. They do not in any way prescribe core curricula for specific disciplines, but contain quite general descriptors, thus leaving ample room for a diversity of curricular designs.

Governments and higher education institutions should make the elaboration of qualifications frameworks one of the priorities of the next phase of the Bologna Process. National frameworks will have to be in tune with “an acceptable, non-intrusive, overarching European qualifications framework to accommodate the huge diversity of European educational awards”.³⁸

5.1.2 Key findings

- 80% of the Bologna countries either have the legal possibility to offer two-tier structures or are introducing them at present. Many governments have fixed deadlines for the transition from the previous (traditional) to the new degree system. In the remaining countries, the necessary legislative changes are being prepared. The latter holds true also for SEE countries.

³⁶ Stephen Adam, *Qualification structures in European Higher Education*, Study prepared for the Danish Bologna Seminar, Copenhagen, 27-28 March 2003, p.i.

³⁷ Recommendations of the Danish Bologna Seminar, Copenhagen, 27-28 March 2003, p.1-2.

³⁸ Stephen Adams, *op.cit.*, p.i.

- 53% of HEIs have introduced or are introducing the two-tier structure, 36% are planning it. About 55% of HEIs in SEE have not yet introduced the two-tier structure.
- Only 11% of HEIs see no need for curricular reform as part of the Bologna Process.
- In half of the countries, doctoral students receive mainly individual supervision and tutoring while in the others taught doctoral courses are offered additionally.
- 56% of HEIs see “employability” as a very important criterion in curricular reform, and a further 36% see it as important.
- The regular and close involvement of professional associations and employers in curricular development still seems to be rather limited.
- Student support for the new degrees clearly outweighs their reservations, but the risk of putting too much emphasis on “employability” still causes unease among a substantial number of them.
- In countries where first degrees at Bachelor level have not existed in the past, there still appears to be a tendency to see them rather as a stepping stone or orientation platform than as valid terminal degrees.

5.1.3 Future challenges

- Governments and HEIs have to cooperate closely to ensure that the implementation of the new degree structures is not done superficially but is accompanied by the necessary curricular reform, taking into account the ongoing European discussions on descriptors for Bachelor-level and Master-level degrees, learning outcomes and qualification profiles.
- Governments and HEIs should also cooperate, both at national and European levels, in encouraging the setting-up of structured doctoral studies, particularly in interdisciplinary and international settings.
- At many institutions and in many countries, Bachelor-level degrees are still not regarded as valid degrees in their own right but rather as mere stepping stones in a Master-level programme. Ensuring Bachelor degrees are seen as valid and accepted qualifications is a challenge still to be met by academics and employers.
- HEIs should be encouraged to seek a close dialogue with professional associations and employers in reforming their curricula.
- To achieve the objective of a “system of easily readable and comparable degrees” within the European Higher Education Area, it will be essential that governments and HEIs use the next phase of the Bologna Process to elaborate qualifications frameworks based on external reference points (qualification descriptors, level descriptors, skills and learning outcomes) in tune with a common European Qualifications Framework.

5.2 JOINT CURRICULA AND JOINT DEGREES

In order to further strengthen the important European dimensions of higher education and graduate employability, Ministers called upon the higher education sector to increase the development of modules, courses and curricula at all levels with “European” content, orientation or organisation. This concerns particularly modules, courses and degree curricula offered in partnership by institutions from different countries and leading to a recognized joint degree. (Prague Communiqué, 2001)

5.2.1 Analysis

That ministers in Bologna and Prague called for more joint curricula and degrees came as a logical step, given that these are relevant to virtually all objectives of the Bologna Process, be it cooperation in quality assurance, recognition of degrees and qualifications, transparency and convergence of European higher education systems, more mobility of staff and students, international employability of graduates, and finally, enhanced attractiveness of European higher education to other parts of the world.

The motivations for offering joint curricula/joint degrees can be manifold. European bodies and national governments may see them as a means to foster European citizenship and employability

among their graduates. National and regional governments may encourage them to strengthen the attractiveness of a region. For the higher education institutions, joint curricula/joint degrees may be a means to upgrade their own programmes, to gain foreign accreditation, to award types of qualifications that their national system does not offer, to strengthen their institutional competitiveness, or to generate extra income (by “franchising” their programmes and degrees).

Some important events related to joint degrees have taken place since Prague, most importantly the publication of a study on the current state of affairs regarding joint degrees in the countries taking part in the Socrates programme.³⁹ Moreover, Sweden and Italy have taken the initiative of organising seminars and conferences on joint degrees and integrated curricula, leading to detailed recommendations.⁴⁰

Taking stock: Joint Curricula and Joint Degrees around Europe

Rauhvargers’ study raised a number of important issues. While in most Bologna countries, HEIs appear to have at least to some extent established joint curricula and even joint degrees with foreign partner institutions, this often seems to take place solely at the individual initiative of particular institutions. Ministries were therefore often not in a position to provide reliable data on the state of affairs and, worse, legislation in many countries does not refer to joint degrees or even excludes them.

Not surprisingly, bilateral cooperation is more common than multilateral, even within networks that are designed for multilateral cooperation.

Joint curricula, developed by two or more higher education institutions in different countries, would be the first step toward joint degrees and do not normally present legal problems. The situation becomes more difficult in many countries as regards joint degrees, as the study showed: awarding joint degrees and their recognition at national level still poses legal problems in a majority of countries. The Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research of the Council of Europe therefore discussed this issue in October 2002 and adopted a set of recommendations. In these, the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee is encouraged to consider adopting a subsidiary text to the Convention on the Recognition of Joint Degrees, and governments are asked to review national legislation to remove obstacles to joint programmes and qualifications.⁴¹

As for the disciplines, joint degrees exist in every field of study and are most common in economics/business and engineering, followed by law and management. Interestingly, the regulated professions such as architecture, engineering, medicine, were considered by some respondents to be particularly difficult fields for the creation of joint degrees and especially easy by others.

There seems to be quite a lot of cooperation underway at the level of doctoral studies, especially in the form of jointly supervised theses, leading either to one degree (with specific mention of the binational character of the research) or to two separate degrees.

Joint degrees are most common at Master level and exist in more or less all Socrates countries. There are far fewer examples at Bachelor level.

There are several ways in which joint degrees are awarded. Issuing one single degree in the name of both (or all) participating institutions appears to be legally possible for the time being only in the UK and Italy. Awarding two separate degrees (“Double degree”) is a more common and relatively longstanding practice. In a majority of countries, however, both possibilities are precluded by law and the only possibility is to issue one single certificate by one institution that in one way or another explains the specific learning itinerary of the graduate.

39 Christian Tauch, Andrejs Rauhvargers, *Survey on Master Degrees and Joint Degrees in Europe*, September 2002, EUA.

40 *Seminar on Joint Degrees*, Stockholm, 31 May 2002, *Seminar on Integrated Programmes*, Mantova, 11-12 April 2003 – for the conclusions of both seminars, see <http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de>, “Bologna seminars”.

41 Council of Europe Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research, Meeting Report, Strasbourg 3-4 October 2002, p.12, <http://www.coe.int>.

In the absence of specific regulations for joint degrees, all the national requirements for “normal” degrees apply, regarding e.g. the national approval of programmes, specific names and classifications for programmes, regulations for quality assurance, specific requirements for the precise text on certificates and the language of instruction, etc. Some higher education laws do not allow students to be enrolled at more than one institution, or they require that students spend 50% of their study time or more at a national institution and that they defend their final thesis at a national institution. Thus the Icelandic ministry reports that the present legal situation in their country would not allow joint degrees, as only one single institution can be responsible for a degree. However, specific events organised to discuss the matter of joint degrees, such as the Austrian-Slovak workshop on Double Degrees in Bratislava in May 2003, show that the issue is receiving increasing attention.

The EUA Joint Masters pilot project

The European University Association is currently running, with financial support from the European Commission, the *Joint Masters pilot project*. Eleven existing Joint Masters programmes have been selected, involving 73 European universities, to try to identify what factors make such programmes successful and attractive, and to find solutions to common problems. Final results will be presented at the Berlin Conference in September 2003 but a discussion document of April 2003 already lists a number of interesting observations.⁴² It shows the participating networks as pioneers, “being a step ahead of current Bologna reforms in their multiple national contexts” and therefore confronted with numerous obstacles. These may pertain to financial constraints (often as a result of non-recognition of the programme at national level), different recruitment and admission procedures, different Bachelor/Master structures, diverse fee levels, matters of quality assurance and accreditation, the use of ECTS and the Diploma Supplement etc. The list of obstacles shows the central position of joint degrees in the Bologna Process since virtually all the various Bologna objectives and action lines are involved. It is all the more reassuring, though, that both academics and students agree that the Joint Master programmes are worth their while and that the benefits clearly outweigh the disadvantages.

Proposed definition for joint degrees

On the basis of Rauhvargers’ study and the recommendations of the two seminars held in Stockholm (May 2002) and Mantova (April 2003), and in the absence of an officially agreed European definition, it is at least possible to establish a working definition for joint degrees. They should have all or at least some of the following characteristics:

- The programmes are developed or approved jointly by several institutions.
- Students from each participating institutions study parts of the programme at other institutions.
- The students’ stays at the participating institutions are of comparable length.
- Periods of study and exams passed at the partner institution(s) are recognised fully and automatically.
- Teaching staff of each participating institution should also teach at the other institutions, set up the curriculum jointly and form joint commissions for admission and examinations.
- After completion of the full programme, the student should either obtain the national degrees of each participating institution or a degree awarded jointly by them.⁴³

What do ministries, HEIs and students really think of these?

Given the call for more joint degrees in the Prague Communiqué and the subsequent events and discussion, the findings of the *Trends 2003 report* are at least partly disappointing:

It looks as if in many countries, neither governments nor institutions have discovered the real potential of joint curricula/joint degrees, while in some countries they are deliberately used to push certain goals.

⁴² EUA Joint Master pilot project, Inter-Network Thematic Meeting, Discussion Working Document, April 2003.

⁴³ Cf. Andrejs Rauhvargers, *High Expectations – Joint Degrees as a Means to a European Higher Education*. In: NAFSA International Educator, Washington, Spring 2003, pp.26-31, 48 .

Only around 20 percent of ministries indicated that they consider the topic very important, namely Italy, Liechtenstein, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, Turkey and the UK. To the majority of ministries and rectors' conferences, joint curricula and degrees are only of medium importance.

The matter of joint curricula/joint degrees is, like employability, one of the few examples where HEIs are more "Bologna-minded" than their ministries. Almost one third of the HEIs attach high importance to both joint curricula and joint degrees. Business and economics institutions are the strongest supporters: around 50% of them find both joint curricula and joint degrees very important.

42% of all HEIs think that joint curricula are of medium importance, with 37% for joint degrees. To one quarter of HEIs, joint curricula are rather unimportant and 28% even attribute low importance to joint degrees. Institutional support for joint degrees is particularly high in SEE countries (45%), France (55%), Romania (60%) and Italy (63%), and especially low in Estonia, Finland and Switzerland (around 14%), Norway and Sweden (around 6%) and the UK (4.5%).

Student support for both joint curricula and joint degrees resembles that of the HEIs: almost one third of their associations thinks they are very important. More than 40% attaches medium importance and one quarter sees them as rather unimportant.

Legal situation and financial incentives

More than half of national legislations (19, according to the ministries) appear not to allow joint degrees at present, most of them (15), however, will be amended accordingly. One third of the ministries reported that their legislation allowed it already, and in five countries legislation has been changed recently. These answers probably refer to the possibility of awarding the more traditional "Double Degrees" or a common certificate with an explanation of the students' specific learning itinerary. However, genuine joint degrees in the sense of "supranational" awards remain an unknown concept in most countries. The Lisbon Recognition Convention does not yet cover these either as it is based on the mutual recognition of national degrees. An amendment of the Lisbon Convention to include genuine joint degrees also is being prepared and it is safe to assume that similar changes in almost all European recognition regulations will be needed.

It would seem that the explicit inclusion of the joint degree issue into higher education laws, combined with financial incentives for the HEIs, is rather the exception. One example for such an approach is the new Austrian University Act of 2002. It makes joint degrees one of the criteria for funding laid down for the so-called performance agreements, and the ministry therefore expects that this will be an incentive for HEIs to address this topic.

More than half of the ministries declared that they promoted joint curricula/joint degrees by providing grants for student mobility. Unfortunately, no precise data on the dimension of these grant schemes are available. One third of the ministries also declared that they provide financial incentives for staff mobility and one third for programme development. On the other hand, almost 30% give no financial support at all to joint curricula/joint degrees.

European joint degrees: a hallmark for the European Higher Education Area

The focus of interest in European higher education from non-European students is and will probably continue to be directed at the graduate levels of Master and doctoral studies. Developing European joint degrees at these levels, jointly awarded by several European institutions, could become a hallmark of excellence of the European Higher Education Area.

There is already a sound basis for European cooperation in this field. Many hundreds of HEIs have gathered experience for more than ten years in student exchange through Erasmus and other

mobility programmes. Those who worked with ECTS have gained further expertise in assessing curricula from other institutions and defining equivalencies and compatibilities with their own.

One should add that there are today a number of networks at both European and regional levels, e.g. in border regions, where students can change freely from an institution in one country to one in a neighbouring country, within the framework of a joint degree programme. One regional example would be EUCOR, the cooperation between French, German and Swiss universities on the Upper Rhine. A more recent creation is the Øresund University, a network of 12 Danish and Swedish universities. There are also institutions that are *de facto* or *de jure* binational institutions, like the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt/Oder on the German-Polish border, the Transnationale Universiteit Limburg (Flemish-Dutch cooperation) or the newly founded Bulgarian-Romanian Interuniversity Europe Centre (BRIE) in Rousse/Giurgiu.

Another form of support for the development of joint curricula and joint degrees is provided by larger institutions like the Franco-German University in Saarbruck - which is not, as its name would suggest, a “real” university but a binational centre which promotes and supports cooperation between HEIs not only in the border region, but everywhere in France and Germany. The FGU is about to open its support programmes to third countries to enlarge their scope of activities.

Lastly, many activities have taken place at the grassroots level. Countless departments all over Europe have gone beyond the rather loose Erasmus-style cooperation and set up networks for joint curricula and joint degrees. These can be thematic networks, networks among institutions or departments with similar profiles (such as the members of the *CLUSTER* or *TIME* networks, the *Coimbra* or *Santander Groups* or the *IDEA League*), even self-declared networks of excellence – there is a remarkable variety. Some, like *Campus Europae*, have the ambitious objective of developing fully integrated curricula leading to genuine European degrees. But generally, one may say that only a few institutions see the full potential of using joint degrees to position themselves strategically in an international student market.

While all this shows that Europe is not starting from scratch in the development of joint degrees, it should be emphasised that these activities have been left largely to the individual initiative of professors, supported by the demands of students for certain study-abroad possibilities.

If political authorities, the rectors’ conferences and the HEIs themselves want to capitalise on existing knowledge and experience and to make joint degrees a real asset of the European Higher Education Area, they will have to make a deliberate and systematic attempt to promote joint degrees as a strategic objective. In most countries this requires amendments in the existing higher education legislation, but also the elaboration of agreed guidelines and definitions for joint curricula/joint degrees, both at national and European level.

Finally, the Bologna Process could probably benefit from the development of truly joint European degrees in the sense of supranational degrees. Such degrees would have to fulfil most, if not all of the criteria listed above (see “proposed definition for joint degrees”), and would in particular lead to degrees awarded jointly by all participating institutions. However, this calls for a new approach to degree and recognition regulations both at national and European levels.

A strong incentive to governments and HEIs to advance along that road may come from a new initiative by the European Commission. The Commission has realised the potential of joint degrees at postgraduate level and therefore proposed *ERASMUS Mundus*, a programme which aims at boosting the attractiveness of Europe as a study destination through European Master programmes, taking into account the experience gathered in the *EUA Joint Master pilot project*. From 2004 onwards, *ERASMUS Mundus* will provide support to HEIs for the development of joint degrees and mobility grants for students and teachers/researchers from outside Europe.

5.2.2 Key findings

- Joint curricula and joint degrees are intrinsically linked to all the objectives of the Bologna Process and have the potential to become an important element of a truly European Higher Education Area.
- Nevertheless, and in spite of the appeal in the Prague Communiqué, joint curricula and joint degrees still do not receive sufficient attention, as is confirmed by the fact that most ministries and rectors' conferences attach only medium or even low importance to the matter.
- While support for joint curricula and joint degrees is clearly higher among HEI and students, they have not yet been recognised as a core tool for institutional development and strategic planning, and their creation and coordination still appears to be left entirely to the initiative of individual professors.
- More than half of national legislations do not yet allow for the awarding of joint degrees.
- More than two thirds of the ministries claim to give some kind of financial incentive to the development of joint curricula/joint degrees, but the extent of such support is not known.

5.2.3 Future challenges

- Ministries and HEIs in the EHEA will lose an enormous opportunity to position their HE systems internationally if they do not focus their attention more than before on systematic – including financial - support for the development of joint curricula/joint degrees, also in view of the new *ERASMUS Mundus* programme.
- This will entail amendments to the existing higher education legislation of many countries.
- It will also call for the elaboration of agreed guidelines and definitions for joint curricula/joint degrees, both at national and European level.

5.3 RECOGNITION

“Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, also through the implementation of the Diploma Supplement, in order to promote European citizens’ employability and the international competitiveness of the European higher education system.” (Bologna, 1999)

“Ministers strongly encouraged universities and other higher education institutions to take full advantage of existing national legislation and European tools aimed at facilitating academic and professional recognition of course units, degrees and other awards, so that citizens can effectively use their qualifications, competencies and skills throughout the European Higher Education Area. Ministers called upon existing organisations and networks such as NARIC and ENIC to promote, at institutional, national and European level, simple, efficient and fair recognition reflecting the underlying diversity of qualifications.” (Prague Communiqué, 2001)

5.3.1 Analysis

There are two basic types of recognition: academic recognition, e.g. when a student wants to change to another higher education institution, and recognition for professional purposes, when a graduate wants to use his/her qualifications on the labour market. Often, the term “professional recognition” is used to mean *de jure* professional recognition, i.e. recognition for the purpose of access to a regulated profession, such as lawyer, medical doctor or architect. The Bologna Process is concerned with both types.

The Bologna Declaration and the Prague Communiqué clearly indicate the necessary steps toward improved recognition in Europe:

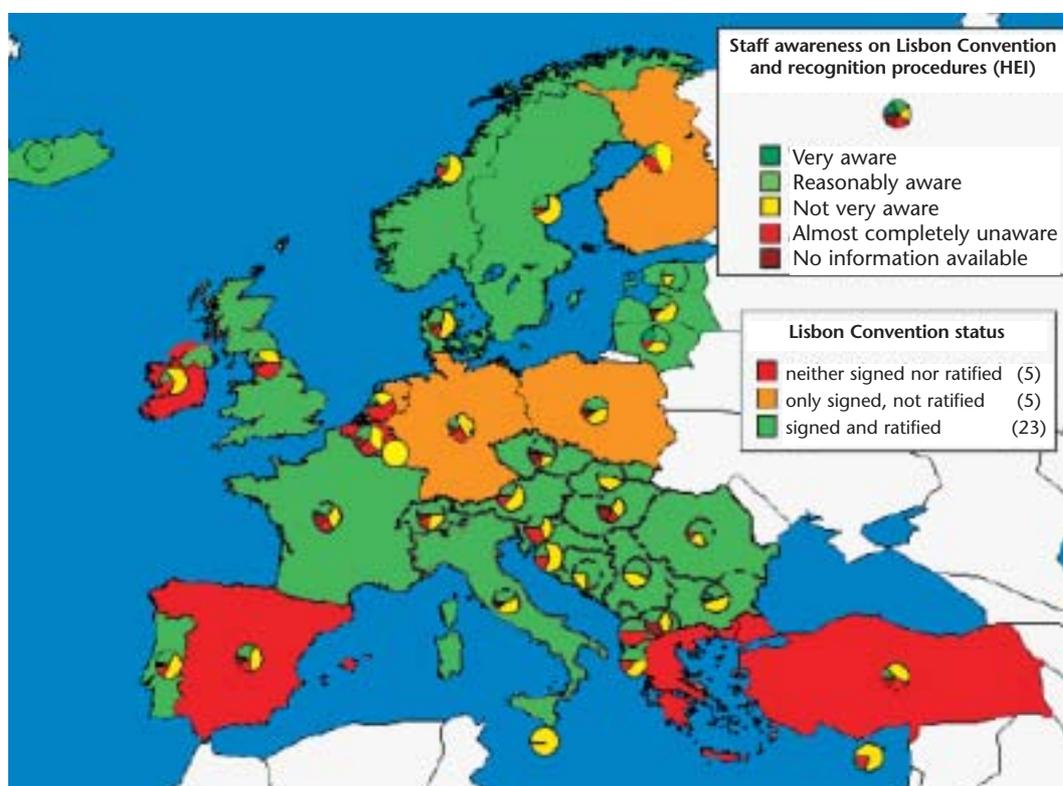
- Awareness of the existing legal tools, mainly the Lisbon Convention, and application of the principles contained therein;
- Cooperation of the national recognition bodies (ENIC/NARIC) with their HEIs and among each other at European level;
- The widespread use of credits and the Diploma Supplement.

The Lisbon Convention

The *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region* was adopted in Lisbon in April 1997. It is the most important legal document for recognition in Europe today, containing principles of good practice regarding the recognition of qualifications giving access to higher education, recognition of periods of study and recognition of higher education qualifications, and emphasising the importance of transparent criteria and procedures and the rights of the individual to fair treatment.

At the time of writing, 23 “Bologna” countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK) had ratified the *Lisbon Convention*. Finland, Malta, the Netherlands and Poland have signed but not yet ratified it. Germany will ratify in the near future. Belgium, Greece, Ireland, Spain and Turkey have not yet signed the Convention.

Figure 10 - Status of Lisbon Convention in Europe, staff awareness and recognition procedures



Source: *Trends 2003*

In a survey carried out among government representatives by the Council of Europe in preparation for the seminar on “Recognition Issues in the Bologna Process” in 2002, 33 of 58 respondents indicated that their recognition legislation had been adapted to the provisions of the Lisbon Convention. However, this information apparently has not yet reached the HEIs.

When asked about the awareness of the provisions of the Lisbon Convention within their countries’ HEIs, only 9 ministries and only a single rectors’ conference considered it to be very high. 16 ministries and 19 rectors’ conferences expected a reasonable awareness, and 10 ministries and 10 rectors’ conferences indicated that the HEIs were not very aware. The heads of HEIs themselves are even more sceptical: only 3% think their academic staff are very aware (at universities even less than at other HEIs) and 28% reasonably aware. 42.5% are reported to be not very aware and 17%

almost completely unaware. Most worrying was that 7% (less at universities, more at other HEIs) indicated that they had no information on the Lisbon Convention.

As for the students: only two out of 37 students' associations thought that there was a very high awareness of the Lisbon Convention in their members' HEIs. Around 30% considered the awareness to be reasonable and more than half of them thought that the HEIs were not very aware or almost completely unaware.

Staff in Lithuanian HEIs seem to be by far the most informed: 22% are reported to be very aware of the Lisbon Convention, a clear lead against the closest countries in the table, the Netherlands (8%) and Norway (7%). High percentages of reasonable awareness can be found in Estonia (83%), Romania (67%), Slovakia (56%), the Czech Republic (51%), and Switzerland (50%). As for an almost complete lack of awareness, this appears to be particularly high in The Netherlands (58%) and the UK (45.5%). No information available applied most frequently to institutions in Hungary (23%), the Czech Republic (14%), Belgium and France (almost 13%). (See Figure 10 for country distribution.)

The ENIC and NARIC networks – very active, but...

The main agent for the implementation of the Lisbon Convention and, more generally, for improved recognition within Europe is the ENIC network. For improved recognition within Europe it cooperates closely with the NARIC network. While the European Network of Information Centres (ENIC) was established jointly by the Council of Europe and UNESCO, the National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) were set up by the European Commission. All the Bologna countries have ENIC/NARIC offices.

The ENIC/NARIC networks have been quite active since the Prague Conference in complementing the provisions of the Lisbon Convention in the light of the Bologna-related developments. In June 2001 the ENIC network prepared a *Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications* as a supplement to the Lisbon Convention.⁴⁴ At the same meeting, it also prepared a *Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education*.⁴⁵ These reports were later adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee.

Moreover, the report *Recognition Issues in the Bologna Process*⁴⁶ was prepared and served as the main background document for the Conference in Lisbon in April 2002 under the same title. This conference made it obvious that the understanding of recognition needed to undergo a profound change if the objectives of the Bologna Process were to be achieved: from the formal acknowledgement of a foreign degree to a more substantial and sophisticated assessment of it within the receiving country's education or employment system. The conference emphasised moreover the vital role of information in recognition, and gave recommendations to the various stakeholders on how to improve recognition.⁴⁷

Finally there is ongoing operation between ENIC/NARIC and ENQA about possibilities for linking quality assurance procedures to recognition issues.

...are higher education institutions aware of them?

As the Final Recommendations of the Lisbon Conference in 2002 rightly put it, the problem is not a lack of information on recognition issues, but rather its abundance and how to structure it in a user-friendly way. One of the most important tasks of the ENIC/NARIC is to advise HEIs on good practice in recognition and inform them on developments at the European and international level. As the initiatives mentioned above show, there is constant and close cooperation going on within the ENIC/NARIC network. The question however is: how good is the cooperation of the ENIC/NARIC offices with the HEIs in their respective countries? In the survey carried out in 2002

44 http://www.cepes.ro/hed/recogn/groups/recomm_assess.htm.

45 <http://www.cepes.ro/hed/recogn/groups/transnat/code.htm>.

46 http://www.cepes.ro/hed/recogn/network/Riga_enic/final_rec.htm.

47 <http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de>, "Bologna seminars".

for the Lisbon Conference, seven countries indicated that the role of their ENIC/NARIC had been strengthened, e.g. as a coordinating body between national institutions in matters of quality assurance.

70% of the ministries and more than 50% of the rectors' conferences replying to the *Trends 2003* survey think that this cooperation is close. One quarter of the ministries and slightly more rectors' conferences see a limited cooperation and only one ministry and two rectors' conferences think there is no cooperation at all.

The ministerial view is rather optimistic, as a look at the HEI answers to *Trends 2003* shows: only 20% of the HEIs (27.5% of universities, 16% of other HEIs) report a close cooperation with their NARIC/ENIC. 24% regard their cooperation as limited and almost one quarter indicated that there is no cooperation at all. What is even worse: a full 28% frankly admitted that they did not know what ENIC/NARIC was. In SEE countries, 50% of HEIs have no cooperation with ENICs, 25% do not know what ENIC is and about 50% of the academic staff are unaware of the Lisbon Convention. It should be pointed out, however, that this seemingly high level of ignorance among HEIs regarding ENIC/NARIC might be at least partly explained by the fact that the national ENIC/NARIC are often known under a different name to theirs HEIs: e.g. NUFFIC in the Netherlands, ZAB in Germany, AIC in Latvia etc.

Among the students, a quarter signalled close cooperation between their members' HEIs and the ENIC/NARIC, and slightly more than that see limited cooperation. Only around 12% think there is no cooperation at all and some 14% of the student associations wrongly think that there is no ENIC/NARIC in their country, but this may again be due to different denominations.

The highest scores for close cooperation between HEIs and their ENIC/NARIC office come from Estonia (86%), Sweden and Ireland (53%) and Norway (45%). No cooperation was reported most frequently from Italy and Spain (around 40%), Poland and France (around 36%), Lithuania, Romania and Slovenia (33%). The institution ENIC/NARIC was unknown to around 47% of HEIs in Denmark and France, to around 42% in Germany and Switzerland, to 38.5% in Hungary and 37% in Turkey.

Will Bologna facilitate academic recognition?

Given that the Bologna Process is a governmental initiative with the establishment of a system of readable and comparable degrees as its first objective, it may surprise observers that only two thirds of the ministries expect that the Process will greatly facilitate academic recognition. 20% think there will be a slight improvement and for 10% it is difficult to say at this stage. One ministry thinks it will have not much impact and another one even expects Bologna to complicate recognition.

Rectors' conferences were even less optimistic, with less than half expecting much improvement.

On the other hand, almost 55% of the HEIs think that Bologna will greatly facilitate recognition, with engineering schools being the most optimistic (62%). A further 21% of the HEIs expect a slight improvement, and almost the same number think it is too early to tell. Almost no institution expected a negative or zero impact.

The staunchest believers in a clear improvement are to be found among HEIs in Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania, Spain and SEE countries (all between 70% and 86%). At the other end of the scale come the UK institutions with 27%.

Students share similar views to the HEIs. Around 45% expect Bologna to bring a very clear improvement to recognition, one quarter sees a slight improvement and around 28% think it is difficult to say at this stage. Only one student association fears that it might actually complicate recognition.

Have HEIs established internal recognition procedures and are students aware of it?

More than 70% of the student associations reported that their members experience occasional recognition problems when returning from a study abroad period, and 17% also say this happens often.

To find out about the internal arrangements of HEIs for recognition, the *Trends 2003* questionnaire to the HEIs contained a number of questions regarding institution-wide procedures for different kinds of recognition.

It would seem that a large majority of institutions, around 82% (and 85% in SEE), have such procedures for study abroad recognition: in Austria, Bulgaria, Italy, Norway, Poland and the UK this figure is even higher, between 92 and 97%. On the other hand, in Lithuania only 67% reported they had such procedures, in Denmark only 64% and in Turkey only 47%. Student associations, by the way, did not confirm this information from the institutions: only one quarter said that to their knowledge, HEIs had such procedures.

Recognition of periods of study at another institution in the same country is – surprisingly – less well developed than for periods of study abroad, but 66% of HEIs claim to have mechanisms in place. Estonia, Ireland, Sweden and the UK all reported above 80%, while Portugal with 47% and Greece with 40% scored lowest. Only around 12% of the students think their institutions have such a policy.

As for the recognition procedures for degrees from other institutions in the same country, 65% of all HEIs responded positively to this question. The leading group was Sweden (80%), Estonia (86%), Ireland (87%) and the UK (91%). In Hungary only 51% of HEIs have such procedures, and in Greece only 40%. In the perception of the students, only about 18% of HEIs have such procedures.

The weakest point appears to be the recognition of foreign degrees. Only 58% of HEIs declared they had an institution-wide procedure for this issue, with as many as 83% positive replies in the Netherlands, 86% in Estonia and 93% in the UK, but only 45% in Latvia, 42% in Denmark, 38.5% in Bulgaria, 33% in Romania, 32% in Spain, 20% in Greece and 13% in Lithuania. Unexpectedly, this is the recognition issue seen most positively by the students: almost a third think their institutions have such procedures.

5.5% of all HEIs declared they had no recognition procedures whatever, with the highest percentages coming from Greece (10%), Denmark and Lithuania (13%) and Switzerland (14%).

As for the students, more than a third thought their institutions had no institution-wide recognition policy but were taking decisions on a case-by-case basis, and almost one quarter of the students had no information available on the issue.

It is clear that there is room for improvement, in particular in certain countries, but also in the institutions' internal communication with the students, who seem not always to be aware of existing procedures. However, it can be seen as a positive sign that more than 40% of the student associations reported that in their HEIs there existed an appeal procedure to deal with recognition problems. Around 20% said there was no such procedure, and more than 30% declared that there was no information available on the issue – which is obviously not satisfactory.

Complementing ECTS: the Diploma Supplement

The first action line of the Bologna Declaration calls for introduction of the Diploma Supplement (DS) as one key instrument for the creation of a **system of easily readable and comparable degrees**.

The DS is designed to facilitate both the academic mobility between HEIs and the mobility of job-seekers on the European labour market. In the present situation of transition, with various old and new degree structures existing in parallel, the DS is of particularly high importance.

Employers do not seem to be familiar with the DS yet, which is not surprising as it is only being introduced. A large majority of employers' associations indicated that they occasionally experienced problems with the recognition of foreign degrees but none of the 17 respondents indicated that their members were reasonably familiar, let alone very familiar with the DS. Most were not very familiar and three indicated they had no information available on the DS. Insufficient information presumably also explains why only 5 associations consider it very useful and 4 reasonably useful, whereas 7 had no opinion yet.

Employers' associations have apparently not yet felt an urgent need for assisting their members in the assessment of foreign degrees and qualifications: none declared to be often involved in this field, 7 seem to do so occasionally and 10 are not active at all.

Some countries had introduced a Diploma Supplement even before "Bologna", e.g. Belgium and the Czech Republic. Others have made or are making it an important element of their Bologna-inspired legislative reforms, e.g. Austria, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Sweden, Switzerland and Spain, while others are planning to make the DS a legal requirement in the near future. In the survey carried out for the Lisbon Conference, ten respondents referred to specific legal provisions for the introduction of the DS in all HEIs in their countries.

As with ECTS, however, a considerable gap appears to exist between the macro and the micro level, between ministerial decrees and lip service paid to the DS by various officials on the one hand, and the daily reality in the academic departments on the other: disagreement on responsibilities between departments and central administration, software problems and other such issues seem to hamper the speedy implementation of the process.

The European Commission has therefore identified the wide-scale introduction of the Diploma Supplement as the first measure it will support as part of its action plan "From Prague to Berlin".⁴⁸ The Commission is considering the introduction of a DS label, as a complement to the ECTS label.

In 2002, the two pools of ECTS Counsellors and Diploma Supplement Promoters, both set up by the EU Commission and coordinated by the EUA, were merged. Governments, quality assurance bodies and HEIs would benefit from being made more aware of the existence of this pool of experts and from a regular and close consultation with them on national and regional levels.

5.3.2 Key findings

- About two thirds of the Bologna signatory countries have so far ratified the most important legal tool for recognition, the Lisbon Convention.
- Since Prague, the ENIC/NARIC networks have taken a number of very useful initiatives to improve academic and professional recognition.
- More than half of the academic staff seem to be not very aware or not aware at all of the provisions of the Lisbon Convention.
- Cooperation with ENIC/NARIC is reported to be close by only 20% of HEIs while 25% do not cooperate at all with their ENIC/NARIC, and 28% do not know what ENIC/NARIC is, at least not under this name.
- Two thirds of the ministries, more than half of the HEIs and slightly less than 50% of the students expect that the Bologna Process will greatly facilitate academic recognition procedures.
- Almost 90% of the student associations reported that their members occasionally or often encounter recognition problems when they return from study abroad.

48 From Prague to Berlin: Progress report of the EU Commission.

- In a number of countries, institution-wide procedures for recognition seem to be quite under-developed.
- Even where such procedures exist, students - as the group primarily concerned - are often unaware of these.
- It is a positive sign that more than 40% of the student associations indicated that there were appeal procedures for recognition problems in place in their members' institutions.
- The Diploma Supplement is being introduced in an increasing number of countries, but employers as the main target group are still insufficiently aware of it.

5.3.3 Future challenges

- All Bologna signatories should ratify the Lisbon Recognition Convention as soon as possible.
- Awareness of its provisions and of the ENIC/NARIC initiatives (recognition in transnational education etc.) among academic staff and students must be raised through cooperation between international organisations, national authorities and HEIs.
- The cooperation between HEIs and their ENIC/NARIC could be greatly improved in many countries. Moreover, the ENIC/NARIC need to be strengthened in some countries.
- In many countries, HEIs should be encouraged to develop more and better institutional recognition procedures, and especially to intensify communication with students on these matters.
- Awareness of the potential benefits of the Diploma Supplement needs to be raised, especially among employers.
- The introduction of a **Diploma Supplement label** (like that of an **ECTS label**) would probably lead to a clear qualitative improvement in the use of the Diploma Supplement.

5.4 CREDIT TRANSFER AND ACCUMULATION

Establishment of a system of credits – such as in the ECTS – as a proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility. Credits could also be acquired in non-higher education contexts, including lifelong learning, provided they are recognised by receiving universities concerned. (Bologna, 1999)

Ministers emphasized that for greater flexibility in learning and qualification processes the adoption of common cornerstones of qualifications, supported by a credit system such as the ECTS or one that is ECTS-compatible, providing both transferability and accumulation functions, is necessary. (Prague, 2001)

5.4.1 Analysis

For the last 15 years the introduction of ECTS in higher education institutions has been fostered by the EU Socrates-Erasmus programme.

At present some 1200 of the 1820 institutions with a Socrates-Erasmus Institutional Contract have received a Socrates grant for the introduction of ECTS. It would be wrong, however, to conclude from these figures that two thirds of HEIs are applying ECTS today and that the task ahead consists simply in taking care of the remaining third.

The present dilemma of ECTS

Today's situation with regard to ECTS is characterised by two very ambivalent tendencies:

On the one hand it seems that a high degree of acceptance and momentum for this once controversial tool has been reached almost all over Europe. ECTS gained further importance when the Bologna Declaration listed the introduction of credit systems as one of its main objectives. While the Declaration mentioned ECTS only by way of example, it is clear that no other European system is emerging. Instead, ECTS has spread fast all over Europe and has been included in many new higher education laws. The students, as the body most immediately concerned, also take a rather favourable stand on ECTS: most of the answers received from student associations agree on its main advantages, i.e.

- Easier recognition for study abroad periods
- Greater transparency of the actual student workload
- ECTS as a trigger for long-needed reforms and
- Greater flexibility in defining individual learning paths.

It is worth underlining that one quarter of the responding students' associations indicated that ECTS had not yet been introduced in their institutions.

On the other hand, ECTS as a tool is undergoing rapid and far-reaching extensions before it has been properly understood and introduced in its original form in many institutions. While in many places the system is still applied in a very rudimentary or haphazard fashion to student exchange and **credit transfer** only, the European discussion is now focusing on its use also for **credit accumulation**. This development has to be seen in the wider context of a shift from teacher-orientation to student-orientation, from inputs to outputs, from formal study structures to the definition of learning outcomes and qualification profiles, as described briefly in 5.1.1.

Credit transfer: legal provisions and institutional reality

As many countries have amended or changed their higher education laws since the Bologna Declaration, ECTS or ECTS-compatible systems have often become a central element of the national reform. Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Hungary, Slovakia and other countries have linked the introduction of two cycles to the simultaneous, compulsory introduction of ECTS. Other countries, especially in Northern Europe, have a tradition of national credit systems that are largely compatible with ECTS, and in some of these countries the two systems co-exist for the time being. Denmark and Norway, however, have decided to replace their national systems with ECTS. Even in those countries where no obligation to use credits exists, e.g. in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland or Slovenia, many HEIs now use ECTS for credit transfer.⁴⁹

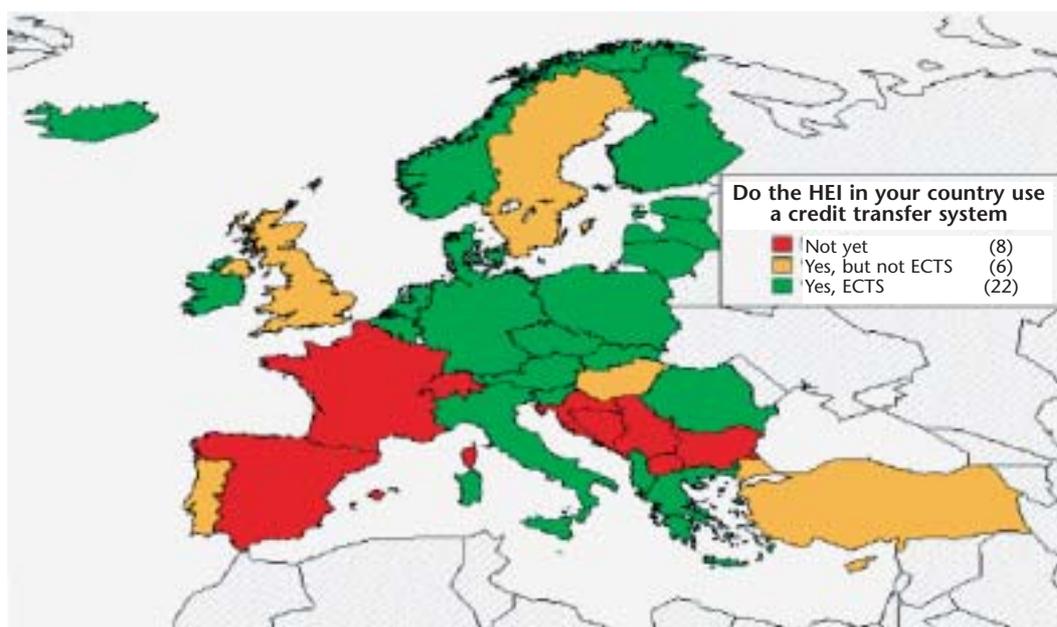
All in all, almost two thirds of the ministries replied that their HEIs use ECTS for **transfer purposes**. In around 15% of the countries, a different transfer system seems to apply and, in the remaining countries, no system is used yet. These figures are backed by similar answers from the rectors' conferences and the HEIs themselves. Two thirds of HEIs use ECTS for transfer purposes. Among the engineering institutions this percentage is even as high as 83%. More than 20% of HEIs use a different system and almost none declared that they have no intention of introducing a credit transfer system.

In the following countries the use of ECTS for transfer is particularly widespread: Greece and Sweden (80%), Finland and Poland (81.5%), Austria and Belgium (84%), Romania (87%), Norway (90%), Ireland and Denmark (93%). Other systems than ECTS seem to be applied above all in the UK (45.5%) and Turkey (58%). In some countries, relatively large percentages use neither ECTS nor other systems: e.g. in Portugal (34%), Bulgaria (38.5%) and Hungary (44%). In SEE countries about 75% of HEIs have not yet introduced ECTS as a credit transfer system.

Figures 11 and 12 give a quick overview of the ministerial estimate regarding the use of ECTS and the HEIs' own declared use of ECTS for transfer, with an interesting divergence between the two: ECTS appears to have established itself in various countries without the national ministries being aware of it.

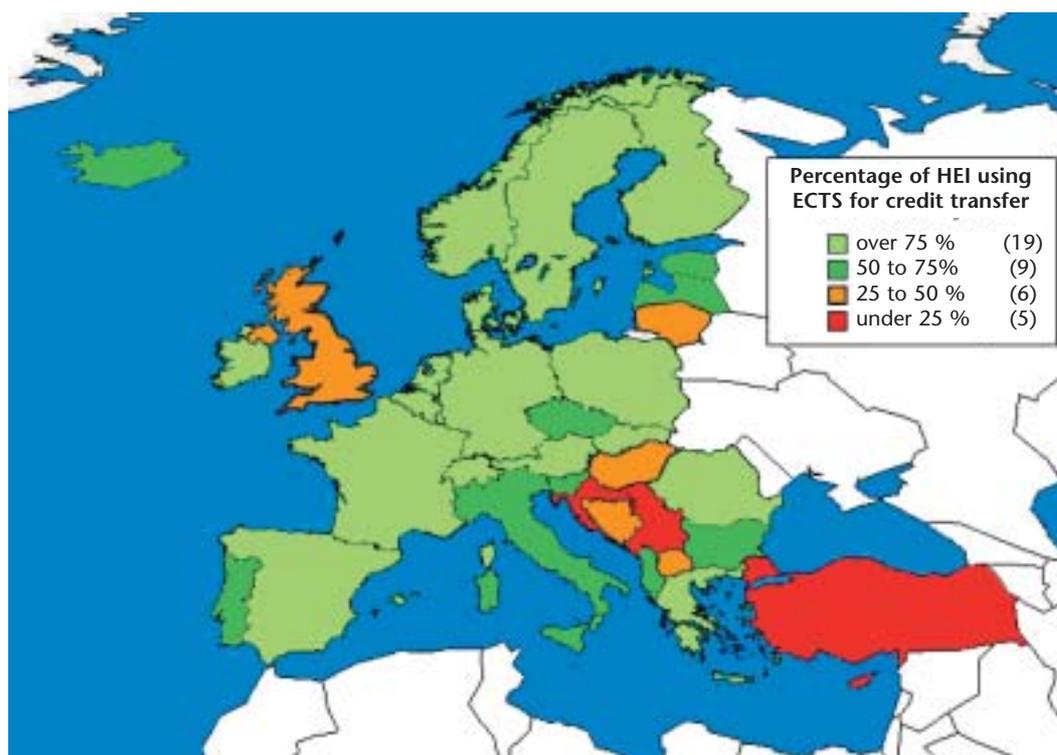
⁴⁹ For the use of ECTS at doctoral level see also Chapter 5.1.1: "From two to three tiers: including doctoral studies into the Bologna Process".

Figure 11 - Use of ECTS or other credit transfer systems by HEIs, according to the ministries



Source: Trends 2003

Figure 12 - Use of ECTS for credit transfer by HEIs, according to the HEIs



Source: Trends 2003

The new dimension: credit accumulation

The idea of using ECTS as an accumulation system for all students, not just the mobile ones, was already contained in the Bologna Declaration with its reference to the use of credits in the context of lifelong learning, and was confirmed by the Prague Communiqué. Meanwhile, the idea has been discussed by the Tuning Project, the group of ECTS Counsellors and at other fora and con-

ferences, and a clearer picture is emerging. The basic principle is to complement the workload definition by the specification of level, contents and, finally, also learning outcomes of a given unit in relation to a degree programme. This is by no means alien to the original idea of ECTS as a transfer system. The recognition of ECTS credits for periods studied abroad was, from its beginning as a pilot scheme, always supposed to occur on the basis of prior agreements between academic staff about level, content and workload of course units. ECTS requires not just the calculation of the workload of each unit and of an according number of credits but also, and this aspect has often been neglected, a detailed description of the course offer of the institution with information on contents, teaching methodologies, assessment methods of the courses, as well as of support services for international students.

One simple but essential feature of ECTS was clarified and emphasised in the discussion on learning outcomes: credits are not entities in themselves but always describe work completed as part of a curriculum. Hence, in a credit accumulation system, credits are accumulated within a coherent study programme, reflecting a certain amount of work successfully completed at a certain level for a recognised qualification.

One very desirable side effect of using ECTS as a central tool in curricular reform and quality improvement lies in the fact that it often leads departments to the realisation that their curricula are overloaded, making it impossible for the students to finish on time. Moreover, the use of an accumulation system in a modularised study structure allows final degrees to be awarded on the basis of continuous assessments and accumulated credits, rather than traditional final exams that can pose an artificially high risk of failure for students.

Experts agree that ECTS can be used for accumulation purposes without any alterations or adaptations of the basic elements of the system. Indeed, plans to extend it to cover the whole learning experience of a given person are slowly taking shape,⁵⁰ following the idea of “credit accumulation for lifelong learning”, as supported by ministers both in Bologna and Prague.

Students generally take a favourable view of the accumulation question: almost three quarters of the student associations saw its most important advantage in the fact that it allows *for more flexible learning paths*. Also less overloaded curricula and greater coherence between study programmes within the same institution ranked rather highly among the advantages of credit accumulation in their opinion. Only one fifth of the student associations said the benefits of credit accumulation remained unclear to them.

Credit accumulation: already a reality?

The present reality regarding the use of ECTS (or, for that matter, any other credit systems) for accumulation is even more difficult to assess than for transfer. The *Trends 2003* results come definitely as a surprise:

Almost 40% of ministries across Europe declared that their HEIs already used ECTS for accumulation purposes and another 30% said they used a different accumulation system. The answers from rectors' conferences point in the same direction.

Half of the HEIs declare they use ECTS for accumulation (only 35% in SEE countries), and 22% claim to use another system. One fifth of them even declare they award their degrees exclusively on the basis of accumulated credits, while 47% say they do so on the basis of accumulated credits plus traditional end-of-year exams. (Students' answers largely confirm this point.)

In some countries, the use of ECTS for accumulation seems to be particularly common: in Germany (52%), France (56%), Greece (60%), Austria (66%), Ireland (80%), Switzerland and Norway (around 86%), Romania (93%) and Denmark (96%). Other countries are quite advanced

50 E.g. the TRANSFINE project coordinated by EUCEN is pursuing this objective.

in applying national accumulation systems, e.g. Sweden (60%), the UK (63.6%), Turkey (68.4%), Finland (81.5%) and Estonia (85.7%).

The result that almost three quarters of European HEIs are already using credit accumulation systems seems surprising, especially to the ECTS Counsellors who are familiar with the realities of implementing ECTS and other credit systems. The assumption may be made that these high percentages might at least partly be explained by a widespread non-familiarity with the concept, and might therefore be partly based on a misunderstanding. But the results clearly show the overwhelming acceptance of ECTS as one of the core tools of the EHEA.

Making ECTS work in practice

“As ECTS becomes more widespread, there is growing concern in several countries that inconsistencies in its implementation might inhibit or undermine its potential as a common denominator.”⁵¹ This statement of the *Trends II report* in 2001 is even more accurate today. The basic elements and principles of ECTS seem simple enough, but its implementation in the highly differentiated European higher education systems is fraught with all sorts of problems. As ECTS is spreading to an increasing number of countries and institutions, the practical issues encountered are multiplying. Despite many years of promoting the introduction of ECTS, the financial support provided through the Socrates/Erasmus programme and the activities of the ECTS Counsellors Group (set up by the EU Commission and managed by the European University Association), a relatively high level of ignorance and insecurity regarding the basic mechanisms of the system persists.

Ministries seem to judge the situation in a resolutely optimistic way: 80% of them consider their academics to be highly or fairly familiar with credit systems. This view is contradicted by the students who are probably in a better position to formulate an opinion on this matter: only around 15% consider the academic staff in their institutions to be highly familiar and about 35% see them as fairly familiar. Almost 40% of the students think that a large proportion of their academic staff is not yet familiar with ECTS.

The site visit reports by ECTS Counsellors tend to support the students' perception. The same deficits and weaknesses keep reappearing in the reports over the years. One common weakness is the lack of an institutional policy or implementation guideline: in many institutions, ECTS is being introduced at the initiative of one or several departments only, without real support from the university as such. Often ECTS depends entirely on the personal engagement of one or several individuals, and withers away when these people retire or change jobs.

The course catalogue (previously known as the information package), although simple enough in its structure, also poses seemingly eternal problems. Some staff are reportedly unwilling to provide short summaries of their courses or to formulate learning outcomes. Linked to the matter of the course catalogue is one of the most neuralgic issues - the way in which workload is measured and credits are allocated.

Officially, the basic principle of ECTS, that credits have to be allocated not on the basis of contact hours but of working hours, has been accepted everywhere. E.g. Spain, where the contact hours principle applied until now, is also currently changing to the workload criterion.⁵²

A study carried out by ESIB⁵³ on the basis of replies from 27 National Student Unions from 23 different countries revealed that, in many institutions, a rather mechanistic approach is still used in defining workload: either contact hours form the basis, despite decisions to the contrary, or the total amount of credits is simply divided by the number of courses required for a certain degree. A growing number of countries, however, seem to have adopted detailed regulations for ECTS, including nation-wide criteria for defining workloads, e.g. Denmark, Hungary, Lithuania and

51 Guy Haug, Christian Tauch (2001), *Trends in Learning Structures in Higher Education II*, Helsinki, p.34.

52 *La integración del sistema universitario español en el espacio europeo de enseñanza superior*, Documento-Marco, Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, p.6, Febrero 2003.

53 ESIB, *Survey on ECTS*, February 2003.

Norway. Of course, a uniform national approach is easier to realise in smaller countries with few institutions than in large countries with numerous and highly diversified institutions. Thus, Dutch students seem to report few problems for the time being, while German students complain about a confusing variety of approaches to ECTS. Many institutions, not only in Germany, still seem to try to adjust ECTS to their needs, selecting some elements and omitting or redefining others, rather than implementing the system in the simple but comprehensive way it was devised. Students rightly attribute this to a persistent lack of information among both staff and students.

One of the simplest criteria to assess ECTS as a transfer system is to ask whether students returning from study abroad encounter recognition problems or not. Three quarters of the ministries report that their students occasionally encounter problems upon their return, only two ministries think this happens often and three believe it never happens. The figures are almost the same for the rectors' conferences. Interestingly, the HEI heads themselves take a much more confident and optimistic view: more than 41% are convinced that their students never encounter problems, and more than half think this may happen occasionally. This is in striking contradiction to the experiences of the student associations: almost one quarter indicated that their members were often faced with recognition problems, and around 47% indicated occasionally. Only about 11% never seem to have any problems and a surprisingly large number, around 17%, of the student associations had no information available on this issue.

Tools and strategies for improving ECTS

The European Commission, one of the driving forces behind the extension of ECTS to credit accumulation and lifelong learning, is aware of the problem, as are the European University Association, the ECTS Counsellors and many national bodies.

An ECTS Conference in Zurich in October 2002, jointly organised by the EUA and the Swiss Confederation, led to a fresh consensus on the purposes of ECTS.⁵⁴

“As a credit transfer system:

- to facilitate transfer of students between European countries, and in particular to enhance the quality of student mobility in Erasmus and thus to facilitate academic recognition;
- to promote key aspects of the European dimension in higher education.

As an accumulation system:

- to support widespread curricular reform in national systems;
- to enable widespread mobility both inside systems (at institutional and national level) and internationally;
- to allow transfer from outside the higher education context, thus facilitating lifelong learning and the recognition of informal and non-formal learning, and promoting greater flexibility in learning and qualification processes;
- to facilitate access to the labour market;
- to enhance the transparency and comparability of European systems, therefore also to promote the attractiveness of European higher education towards the outside world.

As a credit transfer and accumulation system, the key goals of ECTS are:

- to improve transparency and comparability of study programmes and qualifications;
- to facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications.”

The Zurich Conference also reached agreement on the key features and documents of the system, which were further refined by a working group of the EU Commission, EUA and national ECTS Counsellors.⁵⁵ The list contains no new elements but recalls in a very concise form the essential principles (number of credits, workload principle, grading etc.) and elements: course catalogue, learning agreement and transcript of records.

⁵⁴ Credit Transfer and Accumulation – the Challenge for Institutions and Students, EUA/Swiss Confederation Conference, Zurich 11/12 October 2002, *Conclusions and Recommendations for Action*.

⁵⁵ European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System - *Key features*, February 2003.

The coming years will require an even stronger effort than in the past to ensure the proper and coherent achievement of the following objectives:

- to generalise ECTS as a credit transfer system among the vast majority of institutions participating in Socrates-Erasmus;
- to prepare the ground further for ECTS as a coherent credit accumulation system, involving formal, informal and non-formal learning (“credit accumulation for lifelong learning”);
- to attest its proper use through an **ECTS label**, to be introduced from November 2003.

So far, ECTS as a system has shown an impressive flexibility in its application to new contexts and purposes. All concerned, in particular the HEIs themselves and the students, have to continue their work in properly implementing ECTS while at the same time extending its use to new fields. The Copenhagen Seminar of March 2003 on the European Qualifications Framework therefore pointed to the need to make sure that “transparency instruments such as the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS be reviewed to make sure that the information provided is clearly related to the EHEA framework.”

5.4.2 Key findings

- ECTS is clearly emerging as the European credit system.
- In many countries it has become a legal requirement, and other countries with national credits systems are ensuring their compatibility with ECTS.
- Two thirds of HEIs today use ECTS for credit transfer, while 15% use a different system.
- As for credit accumulation, almost three quarters of HEIs declare that they have already introduced it – this surprisingly high figure needs further examination.
- While HEIs are rather optimistic with regard to the smoothness of recognition procedures of study abroad periods, students’ experiences partly contradict this.
- In many HEIs, the use of ECTS is still not integrated into institution-wide policies or guidelines, and its principles and tools are often insufficiently understood.

5.4.3 Future challenges

- The information campaign of the past years, undertaken by the European Commission, the European University Association and many national organisations, has yet to reach a majority of institutions.
- The basic principles and tools of ECTS, as laid down in the *Key Features* document, have to be conveyed to academic and administrative staff and students alike in order to exploit the potential of ECTS as a transparency tool. To achieve this, ECTS requires institutional guidelines.
- Support and advice is particularly needed regarding credit allocation related to learning outcomes, workload definition, and the use of ECTS for credit accumulation.
- The introduction of the ECTS label will lead to a clear qualitative improvement in the use of ECTS.

6. THE EHEA: INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND POSITIONING

6.1 INSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMY, QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION: JUGGLING BETWEEN SELF-IMPROVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

“European higher education institutions, for their part, have accepted the challenge and taken up a main role in constructing the European Area of Higher Education in the wake of the fundamental principles laid down in the Bologna Magna Charta Universitatum of 1988. This is of the highest importance, given that Universities’ independence and autonomy ensure that higher education and research systems continuously adapt to changing needs, society’s demands and advances in scientific knowledge. [...]

We engage on coordinating our policies to reach in the short term the following objectives [...]

- *promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies.” (Bologna 1999)*

“Ministers [...] especially appreciated how the work on quality assurance is moving forward. [...] Ministers recognised the vital role that quality assurance systems play in ensuring high quality standards and in facilitating the comparability of qualifications throughout Europe. They also encouraged closer cooperation between recognition and quality assurance networks. They emphasised the necessity of close European cooperation and mutual trust in and acceptance of national quality assurance systems. Furthermore, they encouraged universities and other higher education institutions to disseminate examples of best practice and to design scenarios for mutual acceptance of evaluation and accreditation/certification mechanisms. Ministers called upon the universities and other higher education institutions, national agencies and the ENQA, in cooperation with corresponding bodies from countries that are not members of ENQA, to collaborate in establishing a common framework of reference and to disseminate best practice.” (Prague 2001)

6.1.1 Analysis

6.1.1.1 From autonomy via accountability to quality improvement?

Of all the Bologna action lines, quality assurance has attracted the longest sentences and the most prominent declarations of intent on the part of governmental and institutional actors. Quality concerns have also been at the heart of most Bologna reform packages, whenever ministries and institutions have tried to define coherent frameworks for Bologna reforms. Such concerns have pertained to the quality of teaching and learning, of programmes, of institutional management and governance structures. Equally evoked has been the quality of the dialogue with external stakeholders as well as the links between teaching, research and innovation and the transfer of these into economic competitiveness. We should state in this context that **the data gathered in this study also confirm the primacy of the concern with quality as a motor of the Bologna reforms**: together with the preparation of graduates for a European labour market, it is the improvement of academic quality which is seen as the most important driving force of the Bologna Process, not just at the institutional level but also at the level of governments and rectors’ conferences (see section 3.2). Moreover, within institutions, it is now becoming more and more obvious that Bologna reforms which are not part of the quest for enhanced academic quality have little chance of gaining sustained support from the academics who are supposed to give concrete meaning to the proposed changes.⁵⁶

At the same time, the concern for quality, which seems to be a shared ground of action on the Bologna stage, is also the scene of underground and explicit struggles to redefine the respective roles which public authorities, universities and society should play in defining higher education in the future. Under the heading of “increased autonomy”, such debates have been the prelude to several major reforms of national higher education systems, in which an increase in university autonomy is accompanied by a multiplication of different procedures of accountability and external quality control.⁵⁷ The Bologna Declaration clearly includes itself in this widespread public

⁵⁶ Such are the findings of the Thematic Network focusing on “Implementing Bologna” in the framework of the EUA’s Quality Culture Project.

⁵⁷ A very useful and stimulating discussion of the relation of university autonomy, collective decision-making and quality assurance, based on a comparison of 8 different national contexts of recent university reforms, has been put forward by Ulrike Felt in her study *University Autonomy in Europe: a background study* (2003) loc. cit., pp.13-104.

rhetoric, when it associates the need for university autonomy with the need to adapt to changing social demands.

What is the link between autonomy, accountability and quality assurance? To start with, we may point to a useful broad definition of autonomy (by Stichweh, 1994) as the ability to

- make independent decisions on the limits of institutional commitment in certain topics and areas;
- decide on the criteria of access to the institutions, both at the level of academics and students;
- define strategic tasks and set institutional aims;
- determine the links to other fields in society which are seen as crucial for further development (e.g. politics, economics etc.);
- assume responsibility for the decisions taken and their possible effects on society.⁵⁸

Thus granting autonomy to a scientific institution will be accompanied by systems of accountability toward society. This explains why the marked shift away from concrete *ex ante* state intervention and regulation which many governments have been and are currently orchestrating, seems often to be accompanied by a mix of extended intervention by other stakeholders (in less regulated forms) as well as by tightened control mechanisms via quality monitoring and outcome-based funding. A comparison of recent national higher education reforms, all of which point to institutional autonomy and quality improvement as the cornerstone of the reforms, reveals that a welcome increase of institutional autonomy vis-à-vis the State does not equal complete freedom and pure self-regulation. Accountability with respect to the public function of higher education is simply taking on new forms. Thus it may now assert itself by way of increased intervention from a variety of different stakeholders, such as external members of newly established governing boards with extensive decision-making powers, partners or sponsors in privately-funded research projects, contractors of professional development programmes which the HEI design upon request, to name but a few examples. Furthermore, no State in Europe which is letting go of its *ex ante* interference in the core processes of higher education (e.g. by having the final say on new programmes or recruitment of new professors), seems to regard current institutional capacity for qualitative self-regulation as being sufficiently developed for it also to let go of its *ex post* control. One of the primary reasons for this distrust may be the high drop-out rates in HE. On average, 30% of students in OECD countries drop out before they complete their first degrees. In individual countries and individual programmes, such rates are sometimes considerably higher. While such drop-out rates do not necessarily mean failure on the part of the individuals (and in many cases may even be induced by the success of such students in other working contexts), it still poses a major problem to institutions and HE funding agencies.

In order to increase institutional autonomy while retaining monitoring control, a majority of States have decided to shift their focus from control of the inputs to that of monitoring previously agreed outputs. This is reflected in more than half of the Bologna signatory countries, reporting in the context of our survey, that their HEI funding is allocated on the basis of quality or output indicators in teaching and/or research. As Felt comments, “in some countries more or less detailed contracts are devised [e.g. in Finland, France, some *Länder* in Germany, soon also in Denmark, *author’s note*] and in some cases formulae are developed on the basis of which funds are allocated [e.g. in the UK, Netherlands, Finland, Sweden, some *Länder* in Germany, *author’s note*].”⁵⁹ Last but not least, quality evaluation mechanisms become a central ingredient of such “management by results” (Felt).

The newly gained “autonomy”, while being generally welcomed as a pre-condition for responsive and responsible institutional development, can become highly problematic for HE institutions when the notion of autonomy is used in a technical sense “as a juridical, operational tool necessary for running the university and formally recognised by the State through clearly defined legal provisions” (Felt), as is sometimes the case in current policy debates in Europe. Accountability can thus become reduced “to a technical exercise, evaluated through the use of a clear and rigid set

58 Stichweh, R. (1994) *Wissenschaft, Universität, Profession – Soziologische Analysen*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp. Quoted in Felt, U. (2003) “University Autonomy in Europe: a background study” in *Managing University Autonomy. Collective Decision Making and Human Resources Policy*. Proceedings of the Seminar of the Magna Charta Observatory, 17 September 2002, Bologna: Bononia Univ. Press, pp.28-29.

59 Felt, op.cit., p.70.

of indicators,” rather than a process of negotiation between universities and the representatives of society.⁶⁰ If accountability and evaluation are reduced to a primarily technical exercise by way of rigid output measurements or overly standardised evaluation exercises, then the essential debate about the values and assets which HEIs are best suited to develop for society is clearly at risk. Institutional leaders across Europe have been and are repeatedly pointing to this danger in national debates on HE reforms (e.g. in Finland, Germany, Hungary, The Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, and the UK).

The current challenge for state and university representatives consists in establishing meaningful quality assurance procedures, which reveal the successes and shortcomings of higher education institutions with respect to their public function and responsiveness to society, without falling short of the universities’ institutional uniqueness in seeking a creative and critical distance from society. If quality evaluation and accountability procedures do not leave enough room for higher education institutions continuously to redefine and renegotiate their roles in their local, national, European and international contexts, with new challenges and a changing system of actors and conditions into which they insert themselves, they will undermine the responsiveness of the institutions to these contexts, and, even more disastrously, their capacity to help in innovating within these contexts. Existing quality control and improvement mechanisms in European higher education are currently in the process of trying to strike a fragile balance: how to evaluate enough to raise the institutions’ own awareness of the challenges and thus help improvement, while at the same time avoiding too much or too rigid evaluation, thereby hindering institutional profiling and stifling innovative potential.

In the end, the most decisive question for state and university representatives in this decade of rapidly expanding QA procedures, will be how to apply quality evaluation to the universities’ unique time frame: if universities are to be defined by their capacity to think ahead for society, not just to solve problems but to identify emerging ones, how can quality evaluation and accountability procedures do justice to the free and unforeseeable movements of science and critical reflection needed to perform this function? How can one prevent evaluation procedures from being too backward-looking, too concerned with compliance rather than with innovation? If a consensus is indeed emerging that evaluation in a European Area of Higher Education will need some common criteria, how can such criteria be found and applied without mainstreaming HEIs into merely compliant institutions? This is the challenge that lies ahead for quality assurance, for 2010 and beyond.

6.1.1.2 External quality assurance structures and procedures

Since the late 1990s, quality evaluation in European higher education has been expanding continuously. In the wake of the EU-funded Quality Assurance Pilot Projects and the subsequent 1998 European Council of Ministers’ Recommendation on European Cooperation in Quality Assurance in Higher Education, which suggested that EU Member States establish quality assurance systems, many new quality assurance or accreditation agencies have been established.⁶¹

According to the data gathered in this survey (see Table 1), only 6 of the 33 Bologna signatory countries do not have an agency responsible for quality assurance and/or accreditation, namely, Austria (which is about to establish such an agency for the universities), the French Community of Belgium, Croatia, Greece, Iceland and Italy. For one country (Luxemburg) no data could be obtained.⁶² We should add that in the case of the six countries where the rectors’ conferences or ministries reported that no national QA agency exists, the recent comparative review of external QA procedures in Europe, conducted by ENQA, contradicts three of these statements (which are thus marked * in Table 1), showing that external quality control is indeed undertaken by national agencies in these countries: this is the case in the French Community of Belgium where the *Conseil des Recteurs* is responsible for programme evaluation, and in Italy where the *Comitato*

60 Felt, op. cit., p.30.

61 Holm, T., Sorup, R., Biering-Sørensen, M., and Thune, C. (2003), *Quality Procedures in European Higher Education*, ENQA Occasional Papers, Section 2.

62 Luxemburg is the only Bologna signatory country for which no national level data could be obtained since neither the RC nor the ministry questionnaire was answered.

Table 1 - External quality assurance in Europe

Questions asked in the Trends 2003 survey:

Do you have a quality assurance agency (=QAA) in your country, with regard to teaching, research, overall institutional mission, other activities? Yes or No.

What do you see as the most important feature of the existing external quality assurance and/or accreditation procedures in your country? Public Accountability (=PA), Enhancing institutional quality culture (=QC), Improving Higher Education across the country (IHE), no imp. feature, not applicable (=NA)

Are there any quality criteria/ indicators used in the allocation of public funds in your country? For teaching and research (=T&R), for research only (=R), for teaching only (=T), not yet but this is planned (=Not Yet), no.

COUNTRY	QAA FOR TEACHING	QAA FOR RESEARCH	QAA FOR INSTITUTIONAL MISSION	QAA FOR OTHER ACTIVITIES	No QAA	MOST IMPORTANT FEATURE OF EXTERNAL QA	QUALITY CRITERIA/ INDICATORS USED IN ALLOCATION OF PUBLIC FUNDS
Austria (RC Universities)*	No	No	No	No	Yes	QC	T&R
Austria (RC Pedagogical Acad.)	No	No	No	No	Yes	QC	No
Belgium (Fr)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	IHE	No
Belgium (Fl)	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	QC	R
Bulgaria	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	PA	Not yet
Croatia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	QC	Not yet
Cyprus (Ministry)	No	No	No	Yes	No	QC	No
Czech Republic	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	QC	T&R
Denmark	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	PA/QC	R
Estonia	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	IHE	T&R
Finland	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	QC	T&R
France (RC Grandes Ecoles)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	QC	R
France (RC Directors IUFM)	No	No	No	Yes	No	NA	T&R
France (RC Universities)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	IHE	R
Germany	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	PA	T&R
Greece	No	No	No	No	Yes	IHE/QC	T
Hungary	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	IHE/QC	Not yet
Iceland*	No	No	No	No	Yes	IHE	T&R
Ireland (RC Inst. of Technology)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	IHE	T&R
Ireland (RC Universities)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	NA	No
Italy*	No	No	No	No	Yes	QC	T&R
Latvia (Ministry)	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	PA	No
Liechtenstein (Ministry)	No	No	Yes	No	No	QC	Not yet
Lithuania	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	IHE	R
Malta	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	QC	No
Netherlands	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	PA	T&R
Norway	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	QC	T
Poland	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	PA	R
Portugal	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	PA	R
Slovak Republic	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	IHE	T&R
Slovenia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	IHE	T&R
Spain	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	IHE/QC	T&R
Sweden	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	PA	No
Switzerland (RC Universities)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	PA	Not yet
Switzerland (RC FH/HES)	No	No	No	No	Yes	QC	Not yet
Turkey (Ministry)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	QC	No
UK (RC Universities)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	QC	T&R
UK (SCOP)	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	PA	R

Source: Trends 2003

Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema Universitario conducts programme and institutional evaluation as well as institutional audits and accreditation.⁶³ It may be assumed that the term “national agency” was interpreted more narrowly by the respective ministries and rectors’ conferences. This is also reported by the Austrian ministry, where national agencies are already in existence for the private and non-university sector, but are only about to be established for the university sector, thus resulting in the ministry and rectors’ conference having answered “No” to the respective question.

Some countries have recently established or are in the process of establishing new agencies. In Austria the Universities Act 2002, effective in 2003, calls for the establishment of a quality assurance agency for all universities. The *Österreichischer Akkreditierungsrat* has already been conducting accreditation of programmes as well as of institutions in the private and *Fachhochschul* (other higher education institutions) sectors. As for Greece, which has no QA agency yet, one should report that the law concerning the establishment of the national system for quality assurance and evaluation in higher education was introduced before the Greek Parliament during the first months of 2003 and is likely to be implemented soon. The Greek system is limited to quality evaluation and will not contain any kind of accreditation mechanisms. The ministries of Portugal, Iceland and Belgium (FI) also mention plans to establish independent national accreditation agencies (the Belgian (FI) one will be established in cooperation with The Netherlands). In Iceland, the ministry of education already has a division of evaluation and supervision which carries out programme evaluation.

One may also note that all Bologna signatory countries and non-signatory countries of SEE have established or are about to establish agencies which are responsible for external quality control in some form or another.

Our own data reveal that **80% of HEIs in Europe currently undergo external quality assurance procedures** (quality evaluation or accreditation). There is no notable difference between universities and other HEIs in this respect. Institutions specialising in business and economics and those specialised in technology and engineering are affected even more often (85% and 89% respectively). In fact, even in those countries where QA agencies have only recently been or are about to be established, more than 50% of the institutions (45% in SEE) mention the existence of external quality assurance procedures. Only in Greece and among the non-university HEIs of Spain, a majority of institutions report that no external QA procedures exist.

The ENQA study confirms that the **primary function of external quality assurance**, at least according to the responsible agencies, **consists in quality improvement**, which is of course the traditional role such procedures were designed to perform. Of course, the procedures themselves need reviewing in order to make sure that they do contribute to institutional quality improvement and to the development of an appropriate quality culture. Transparency of performance and use of funds for the sake of public accountability is often mentioned as an important function, but not as the most important one. The distribution of functions according to the different types of evaluation can be seen in the following overview taken again from the ENQA study:

Table 2 - Objectives of external evaluation⁶⁴

<i>What are the objectives of the evaluations?</i>	Accountability	Quality improvement	Transparency comparability	National comparability	International comparability	Ranking
Evaluation	71%	93%	74%	55%	26%	3%
Accreditation	86%	91%	76%	71%	62%	5%
Audit	67%	83%	50%	33%	33%	0%
Benchmarking	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	0%
Other	100%	100%	50%	50%	50%	0%
N=61	46	56	45	36	25	2

Source: data gathered in the framework of the ENQA survey 2002-2003, see footnote below.

63 Holm et al. (2003) op.cit., Appendix A.

64 Holm et al. (2003) op. cit., section 3.3.

The relative balance between accountability and improvement are also confirmed by the recently published study on Quality Assurance by Campbell and Rozsnyai.⁶⁵ Indeed, the authors even observe a trend in the accreditation agencies of CEE countries toward improvement orientation, pointing to the various forms of warning, giving institutions or programmes time to improve, and relying more on internal quality control at higher education institutions.⁶⁶ Campbell and Rozsnyai generally attribute the increasing focus on improvement to the increasing maturity of a given QA system: "It might be appropriate in certain circumstances, for instance, if addressing the rapid growth of unregulated private education or the introduction of new types of institutions or qualifications, to put an emphasis on accountability and compliance. However, as institutions develop more effective and sophisticated internal quality assurance mechanisms, pressure will grow to move the balance from compliance to improvement."⁶⁷

The findings of the above-mentioned comparative studies are confirmed by our data. Generally speaking, **external quality procedures are evaluated positively** by the HEIs, i.e. most often seen as serving their own purposes. Only 1,5% of HEIs cannot detect any important feature in such procedures, with the notable exception of Austrian universities, where 25% of the heads of institutions cannot see any important feature. Most frequently, the external QA procedures are regarded as enhancing institutional quality culture (40%). 27% of HEIs find that they serve to improve HE across the country. 21% see public accountability as their most important feature. With the exception of France, Slovakia and the UK (as well as the non-university HEIs of Italy and the Czech Republic), in each country a majority of heads of universities and other HEIs regard the enhancement of institutional quality culture (rather than public accountability) as the most important feature of external QA procedures.⁶⁸

One should note that in some countries with long-standing QA systems, there has been media coverage of some of the **unwanted effects of exhaustive quality control** and accountability procedures. The most widely noted and heated debate has occurred in the UK, where quality review and accountability procedures were criticised as being disproportionate and even counter-productive by many HE representatives. An independent study of the costs incurred by the national review system was eventually commissioned.⁶⁹ The study indeed revealed disproportionate costs which the public purse had to pay, even though very few cases of abuse were ever uncovered. The costs resulted not only from the heavy procedures, demanding extensive data and document production on the part of higher education institutions, but also from the fact that the various authorities had not coordinated their procedures so that data and documents had to be produced from scratch for the different reviews. Once the costs and burdens of the review system were uncovered, the latter was put on hold. New procedures have been introduced under the heading "academic review".

Apart from the costs, the other important criticism concerned the **mainstreaming effect** which a linear link between output assessment and funding allocation produced. This was the case in the so-called Research Assessment Exercise which treated institutions with very different profiles, aims and conditions according to the same pre-defined performance criteria and rewarded or punished them accordingly. Moreover, since the overall sum for re-distribution was limited and the capacity of HEIs to adapt to the performance rules proved to be greater than expected, many institutions which increased their overall performance still had to face reduced budgets as a consequence.

Of course, the above-mentioned problems should not distract from the many positive experiences of evaluation procedures in the UK, the manifold effects of enhanced performance and the many good practices which such a long-standing system of QA has to offer, particularly with respect to programme evaluation, teaching, counselling and student support services. (We may also recall the positive comments of the student representatives regarding quality evaluation in their country,

65 Campbell, C. and Rozsnyai, C. (2002), *Quality Assurance and the Development of Course Programmes*. Bucharest: UNESCO/CEPES Papers on Higher Education, Annex 1.

66 Campbell and Rozsnyai, op.cit., p.62.

67 Campbell and Rozsnyai, op.cit., p.26.

68 For 10% the question is not applicable or no answer can be given.

69 PA Consulting Group (2000), *Better Accountability for Higher Education. Summary of a review for the HEFCE*. London. http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2000/00_36.htm.

in this context.) Our more extensive description of the problems noted in the UK context is only meant to point out that, as Europe's most radical example of linking performance output and quality assessment to funding, and as a system with a long-standing experience of different approaches to quality assurance, the UK QA system offers a wide array of models of good practice as well as less successful practices, all of which deserve close scrutiny before similar alleys are pursued elsewhere.

In most other European countries, the burden of external quality control does not yet seem to affect institutions heavily enough to be noted by their leaders. (A relevant European survey of academics who are directly concerned by the production of the data and documents for QA as well as by the consequences of any reviews, has not been conducted to this date.) The positive judgement of institutional leaders revealed in our study does not only apply to quality evaluation in the traditional sense but also to accreditation procedures which seem to have been experienced positively by most institutions: 66% of respondents said they found the programme accreditation process which their institution had undergone helpful, while only 8% did not and 26% had not undergone such programme accreditation. However, considering the expansion of external programme evaluation and accreditation, one may expect such procedures to be perceived as more burdensome in the future, as more HE representatives spend more time in review exercises, either as objects or as subjects of evaluation. This assumption would be corroborated by the noted quality and accreditation fatigue in some of the countries with a longer experience of external QA systems, as is reported by HE and QA representatives from Scandinavian countries and the UK, for example.

What is the focus of such external quality assurance? According to the ministries and rectors' conferences, 23 of the 26 national agencies evaluate teaching, 19 evaluate research performance, while 20 agencies evaluate institutional performance in relation to the mission (see Table 1). Interestingly, there is no country which has an agency evaluating research without also evaluating teaching. Similarly, all but 2 of the countries with agencies evaluating institutional mission also evaluate teaching. In 14 countries, QA agencies evaluate teaching, research and overall institutional performance (though not necessarily the same agency).

Neither our data nor the ENQA study reveals the links between evaluation procedures focusing on teaching and those focusing on research or other activities. While we know that institutional evaluation and audits sometimes address these issues, we should point out that they are not the most frequently used evaluation methods (see Figure 14 below). For the universities, however, **the value of the evaluation procedures probably depends to a large extent on their readiness to consider the links between teaching and research, as well as between these core functions and other dimensions of institutional management.** As complex systems, they cannot react to a problem seen in one domain without also affecting another domain indirectly. Similarly, the solution of problems seen within the framework of quality reviews may be undermined by other external mechanisms such as funding formulae. To look at the quality of teaching or research, without considering institutional and national conditions, may well prove to be ineffective: the transparency created remains partial and thus distorting, and paths towards quality improvement remain obscure. Quality improvement in one domain may even foster quality impairment in another. Hence HE representatives frequently report that the focus on an increase in research performance undermines the quality of teaching and counselling and vice versa. Furthermore, insights gained into institutional management which do not address successes and shortcomings in the core competences of a university, teaching and research, are also likely to remain superficial. Institutional audits in Sweden, for instance, were criticised for not reaching the core activities of the institutions at departmental level.⁷⁰

Thus, it may not come as a surprise that QA agencies are increasingly complementing established focuses with new ones: to institutional evaluation audits they add programme focuses (e.g. in France or Sweden), to programme evaluation they add some institutional dimension

70 Franke, S. (2002) "From Audit to Assessment: A National Perspective on an International Issue", *Quality in Higher Education*, Vol.8, No1.

(Netherlands). This trend toward an **increasing mix of evaluation methods within the agencies** has also been observed by the authors of the recent ENQA study. They note that this is clearly a change from 1998, the year of the last status report on QA in Europe, when agencies were still “sticking to the evaluation type (combination of method and focus) that they had traditionally used.”⁷¹ Campbell’s and Rozsnyai’s CEPES study confirms the trend of a softening opposition between institutional and programme focuses, and an increasing mix of the two. The combination of programme evaluation with institutional audit which is gaining popularity is particularly noteworthy, of course, since institutional evaluation and programme evaluation were still opposite parties in older debates on the best QA methodologies. Today, the French CNE (*Comité National d’Evaluation*), known for its institutional approach to evaluation, is also conducting programme and subject evaluations.⁷² Another example of a mixed strategy with a changed focus is pursued by the UK’s QAA. Here the focus has shifted away from an in-depth programme evaluation to utilising information from internal evaluation processes while stressing institutional audit. The concluded round of programme reviews was criticised for the disproportionate administrative burden it imposed on institutions, when less than 1% of provision had been judged to be failing. While institutional evaluations are often criticised for not reaching the core of the universities’ performance, programme evaluations, if pursued exhaustively, are reproached for the administrative burden they create. Considering the softening positions on both ends, one may hope that agencies and institutions will learn from each other regarding the right balance to strike.

According to the ENQA study, the **focus, scope and methods used by these agencies still vary widely** across countries. The consensus on the basic methodological ingredients of quality assurance is now firmly established. In addition to the independence of the agency conducting the quality reviews, they consist in self-evaluation undertaken by the representatives of the unit which is to be evaluated, external review by peers and other stakeholders with an on-site visit (or visits), and a final report which is made public. The studies of ENQA and the UNESCO-CEPES both point to a number of additional elements which are becoming general practice in many agencies, namely

- statistical data from national or institutional sources,
- qualitative information from the institution’s internal quality assurance processes,
- performance indicators,
- user surveys of employers, graduates, students, as well as
- other external examiner reports, which are often gathered and made available to the evaluating peers.⁷³

A noteworthy development in this respect is the greater involvement of stakeholders, especially students, in the external evaluation processes. Particularly in Sweden and the UK, student participation and input into external evaluation processes has been experienced very positively. ESIB, the National Unions of Students in Europe, also cooperates closely with the ENQA network. As Campbell points out, “this involvement is more than ‘representational’. Recent revisions of external evaluation have put the interests of students at their core.” Examples of “new” issues raised in reviews are the quality of information provided to students, the learning support facilities, the discrepancies between academic standards and achievements in practice.⁷⁴

The following useful overview is given regarding the frequency of use of the various methods among the 34 European quality assurance agencies (from 23 countries) which participated in the ENQA survey:

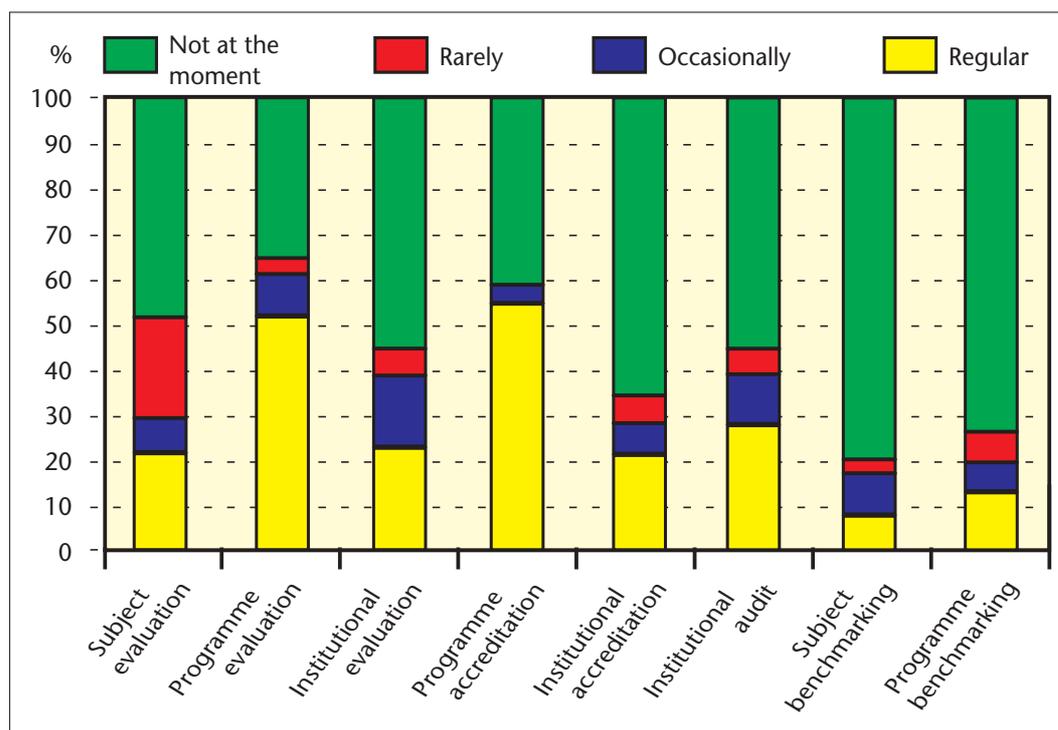
As one can see from Figure 13, **programme evaluation is used most frequently** (by 53% of the agencies), while institutional evaluation is used regularly by only 22%. Half of the 34 agencies surveyed mention programme accreditation as one of their functions.

71 Holm et al. (2003) op.cit., section 4.5. The status report referred to was published by the European Commission (1998), *Evaluation of European Higher Education: A Status Report*. Prepared for DG EAC (then DG XXII) by the Danish Center for Quality Assurance and Evaluation of Higher Education, in cooperation with the French *Comité National d’Evaluation*, Paris.

72 Report of Gilles Bertrand, President of the *Comité National d’Evaluation* of France at the Kassel Symposium “Universities: Fit for the Future?”, 18-19 October 2002.

73 Campbell and Rozsnyai, op.cit., p.48; Holm et al., op.cit., section 5.

74 Campbell and Rozsnyai, op.cit., p.56.

Figure 13 - Frequency of the types of evaluation ⁷⁵

Apart from the focus on programmes, subjects or institutions, the most widely debated issue across Europe is the relation between and respective advantages of quality evaluation vs. accreditation, although the two are seen to be complementary by many representatives.

Accreditation is yet another term which is commonly used but associated with different procedures in different countries. Generally, it differs from other evaluation procedures in that judgments are provided according to pre-defined standards which function as a threshold to decide whether a given subject, programme, institution or theme meets the level defined as necessary to obtain the accreditation label. Having passed this threshold of standards, an accreditation label is awarded. Often these standards are set as minimum standards, though increasingly standards of good practice or excellence, which have already been in practice in individual private accreditation schemes such as the EQUIS scheme for Management and Business Schools, are also being considered.

Accreditation is a widely used method in accession countries, but a number of EU countries (France, Germany, The Netherlands, Finland and Norway) are also in the process of introducing accreditation in their QA systems. The reasons why CEE countries preferred accreditation in higher education in the early 1990s have been analysed by various authors. The need to establish comparability with western HE and thus to use threshold standards, the urgency to re-evaluate programme content and approach, and to introduce more flexible programme structures for a rapidly increasing number of students, are perhaps the most frequently cited reasons.⁷⁶

Of particular interest for the current European discussion may be those countries which already have a tradition of quality evaluation but decide to add accreditation procedures to this. According to public statements by QA agencies and HE representatives, the main added value of such accreditation in these countries is reported to consist in the application of benchmarks and the attribution of a quality label, the label being seen as a currency which can be used in the wider world, which is also the reason for accreditation being popular in most accession countries.⁷⁷ Thus accreditation is associated with the hope of increased international recognition. Peer

⁷⁵ Holm et al. (2003) op.cit., section 4. Only methods used by more than two agencies are taken into account.

⁷⁶ Cf. Kristoffersen, D., Sursock, A. and Westerhijden, D. (1998), *Quality Assurance in Higher Education. Manual of Quality Assurance: Procedures and Practices*, European Training Foundation.

⁷⁷ Cf. comments on the Dutch introduction of an accreditation agency by T. Vroeijsstijn at the Kassel Symposium "Universities: Fit for the Future?" 18-19 October 2002. For trends in CEE accreditation, cf. Campbell and Rozsnyai, op.cit., p.62.

pressure, i.e. pressure to follow suit in an arena where accreditation is spreading in Europe, also seems to play a role. Some QA systems also welcome the association of accreditation with clearer consequences such as funding decisions (mentioned by QA representatives of Norway, The Netherlands and Germany). The ENQA study reveals that, when compared with quality evaluation and audit procedures, accreditation procedures generally seem to be geared more toward accountability, transparency and national as well as international comparability.⁷⁸ One should note, however, that accreditation procedures are more and more interlaced with quality evaluation elements, geared toward institutional improvement, as Campbell and Rosznyi point out. Thus a Polish HE representative's comments apply to accreditation procedures in many accession countries: "Accreditation committees are not merely stating whether the various curricula meet the minimum requirements, but they also look at the degree to which these requirements are exceeded and compare this 'excess' against the achievement of set goals (fitness of purpose). In this sense, the work of the accreditation committees has got more to do with the kind of quality assessment carried out in many western European countries, with accreditation being merely a form of utilising the results of the assessment."⁷⁹

In this context, we should note that our data reveal a **widespread support for accreditation among HEIs**, which may come as a surprise to some participants in the recent debates on the need for accreditation in Europe. Only 4% of the HEIs see no need for accreditation. 65% of the 74% of HEIs which had undergone programme accreditation found the process helpful. All in all, 81% of HEIs intend to encourage programme accreditation in the future. Most student associations also find academic accreditation of institutions important when choosing their study programmes. The issue of the potentially considerable investments of time and money into programme accreditation, both by state administration and by HE institutions, is often brought up in discussions on accreditation among state, QA agency and HE representatives but does not seem to have negatively predisposed the majority of institutional leaders yet.

6.1.1.3 Internal quality assurance

As far as institutional realities are concerned, the first question we should raise is, of course, what effect external quality assurance has on internal quality awareness and self-improvement. An international comparative study which has focused on institutional assessment and change suggests that managing quality can bring either benefits or threats depending on how it is undertaken, in what context and for what purpose. The authors argue that quality management is as much about power, values and justification of change as it is about quality, and that is why it is frequently a source of tension and conflict.⁸⁰ Generally, more research is needed on the effects of existing external QA on actual quality improvement in different European HE systems, comparing different national and institutional conditions and their effects on the "learning capacity" of the institution. The most relevant project in this respect is the ongoing EU-supported "Quality Culture" project of the EUA, which organised 6 networks of institutions from all over Europe. Each network focuses on a different theme (research management, teaching and learning, student support services, implementing Bologna reforms, collaborative arrangements, and communication flow and decision-making structures), comparing how institutions are trying to enhance the quality of the relevant processes involved.

While we cannot offer any analysis on the links between external quality assurance and its effects on internal quality awareness and conduct, our own data do allow some notes on the extent to which internal quality procedures have been established at European HEIs. Indeed it seems that **internal quality assurance mechanisms are just as widespread as external ones**. Most often they focus on teaching. 82% of the heads of HEIs reported that they have internal procedures to monitor the quality of teaching, 53% also have internal procedures to monitor the quality of research (with 66% of HEIs defining themselves as research-based). 26% monitor other activities. Only 14% of the HEIs (9% of universities, 17% of other HEIs) do not have internal QA mechanisms, according to their presidents or rectors.

⁷⁸ Holm et al. (2003), op.cit., section 3.3.

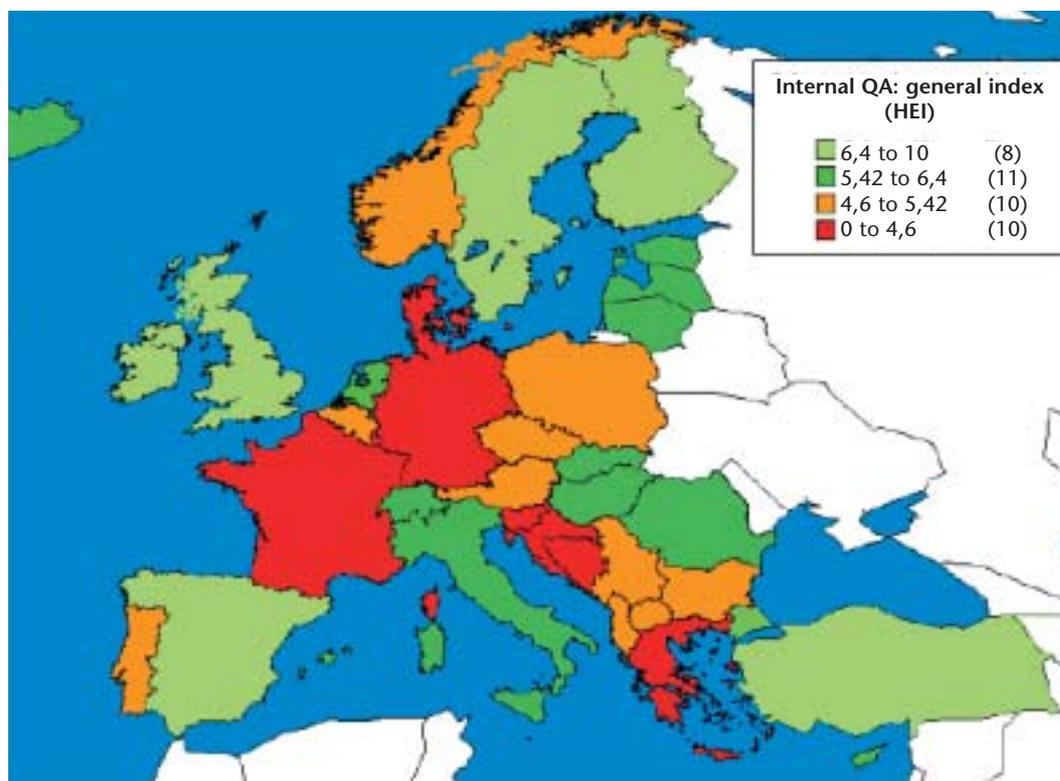
⁷⁹ Quoted in Campbell and Rosznyi, op.cit., p.62.

⁸⁰ Brennan, J. and Shah, T. (2000), *Managing Quality in Higher Education: An international perspective on institutional assessment and change*. Buckingham: SRHE and Open University Press.

At the same time, the widespread existence of such mechanisms, at least as far as teaching is concerned, should not make us overconfident as to the inclination or capacity of institutions to really address or tackle important quality problems. Apart from resource constraints (too many students per professor, too little money for additional support through tutors, counsellors or information technology), the existing procedures may not be designed or used well enough to disclose the core problems. As one national student association points out with respect to the internal monitoring of teaching quality: "Quality assurance is most often dealt with by 'evaluation' and writing of standardized teaching reports, with hardly any active student involvement and recognition of substantial learning/student research problems. Quality is most often reduced to quantitative figures with little meaning. There is no concept of quality." One should note in this context that the questionnaires returned within our study reveal an acute quality awareness on the part of student associations, which has probably not been made sufficient use of by HEIs or by quality assurance agencies. Even though student assessments of the quality of teaching and related services would seem to be more than relevant, since they are on the receiving end of the provision, students are only involved in HEIs' internal quality assurance mechanisms in about half of the Bologna signatory countries. Only a minority of the students are satisfied with their involvement in such mechanisms. A noteworthy example of positive student involvement seems to be the UK, where students are not only systematically involved in internal QA mechanisms in a majority of HEIs, but are also very satisfied with this involvement. As far as QA agencies are concerned, there seems to be a noticeable difference between EU- and non-EU countries: in the EU, a quarter of the agencies use students on their expert panels while in the accession countries only 13% have student representatives on their panels. Generally, student participation in the self-assessment of the institutions and in the framework of the experts' site visit interviews was much more widespread.⁸¹

Figure 14 - Internal quality procedures at HEIs in Europe: aggregate index

This aggregate index is based on HEI responses to three questions, namely whether they have internal mechanisms for monitoring quality with regard to teaching, to research and to other aspects of their mission. An aggregate score on a scale from 0 to 10 is computed for each country, based on the scores for each HEI within that country. The higher the index values, the higher the declared achievement of the Bologna goals with respect to the promotion of quality assurance. An index value of 10 indicates that all HEI within the respective country declared they had developed all three internal quality mechanisms.



Source: Trends 2003

81 Holm et al. (2003) op.cit., section 5.1.

To conclude our comments on internal quality procedures, we should draw attention to the fact that **aspects other than teaching and research are only being addressed in a quarter of the HEIs** (26%), even less at HEIs specialising on technology and engineering (18%). No data exists on the extent to which management, infrastructure and services are being reviewed by HEIs and how they conduct such reviews. Since external quality procedures only rarely focus on these themes, internal reviews would be all the more necessary to uncover existing problems.

An increasing amount of **benchmarking**, not just on curricular reform but also on management and issues of institutional development, seems to be emerging, especially within institutional networks. Existing initiatives, such as the benchmarking activities of the CLUSTER network, of the IDEA-League or of the Benchmarking Club of Technical Universities in Germany (organised by the CHE, the German Centre for Higher Education Development, a private foundation which focuses on issues of HE management and reform), Universitas21 or the Coimbra group, give very positive reports of their experiences with introducing a comparative perspective into their institutional management, particularly when institutions with a similar profile join forces to exchange such information.⁸² Examples of such cooperation among institutions even include internal QA mechanisms.⁸³ Another attempt to organise benchmarking on individual aspects of university development on a European scale are the benchmarking activities organised by ESMU.⁸⁴

On the whole, there seems to be an unmet need for institutionally led international benchmarking of given aspects of university management, to allow for exchange of good practice and possible solutions to common problems.

All in all, if we look at the European national HE systems in general, and abstract from individual models of good practice, internal institutional quality culture does not seem to be robust enough at this stage to make external evaluation unnecessary.

6.1.1.4 European cooperation in quality assurance

In the light of all these QA activities aimed at, or performed by HE institutions, as well as the few noted European benchmarking activities, one may ask more generally what added value can actually be associated with European cooperation in QA, which, after all, is supposed to be the focus of the Bologna activities in QA.

First of all, the recent trends which the already cited ENQA study on quality evaluation procedures pointed to, namely the increasing number of QA and/or accreditation agencies and the increasing mix of different evaluation methods used by each, may indeed have resulted from the **increased communication and exchange of good practice between the existing agencies and national authorities**, inside or outside of the framework of the Bologna process.

Our own data revealed the general attitudes toward different types and levels of European cooperation in QA. First of all, one should note that **a vast majority of ministries, rectors' conferences, HEIs and student associations agree that greater participation by European partners in the national QA systems is needed**. Many agencies already make use of international experts in peer reviews, but international experts on peer review panels still constitute a small minority, so such practice can clearly be extended. The most extensive use of foreign experts can be observed in smaller countries with a shared or closely related language, e.g. Netherlands and Belgium (Flanders), the Nordic countries, most extensively in Latvia, but also in the German accreditation agencies.⁸⁵

The central question which many ministries, rectors' conferences and QA agencies are currently debating, however, concerns the **extent to which common structures are needed at a European level and what core elements such structures should comprise**. Is it enough to have

82 Report of the Rector of the TU Darmstadt, Prof. Wörner, at the HRK Conference on Quality Assurance in Europe, October 2002, <http://www.hrk.de>. Cf. also <http://www.universitas21.com/collaborative.html> and <http://www.coimbra-group.be>.

83 Thus the TU Darmstadt, for example, is cooperating with a few other universities, using the ETH Zürich departmental evaluation procedures and advice.

84 Cf. <http://www.esmu.be>.

85 Some examples of practices in respect of the selection and training of experts are included in Campbell's and Rozsnyai's study, op.cit., Part II, Annex 4.3.

a common network of different but compatible institutions of QA, or does one actually need a common agency? Especially regarding accreditation, institutions ask themselves whether it would be preferable to seek centralised recognition by one pan-European accreditation agency, or whether they would rather envisage a network of national accreditation agencies with each institution seeking accreditation from these national bodies, also for their jointly developed programmes. An intermediate solution sometimes suggested would be a common system, a franchise-like network with national agencies agreeing on a set of core elements, minimum standards and requirements for essential processes, topped up by additional procedures which differ from agency to agency but do not prevent them from recognising each others' results and labels. A fourth option consists in a possible addition of a trans-European label in the name of some transnational joint action of the various accreditation or quality agencies.

To convey the essentials of the ongoing discussion, one should note that advantages and disadvantages are cited for all options. On the pan-European end, a common agency would have the advantage of offering evaluation results or accreditation labels which are more readable for most users in and outside higher education, since one would not have to know the minutiae of national differences between evaluation procedures to understand the status and exact meaning of the results. However, the existence of a common agency would have the disadvantage of reducing national differences, i.e. of ignoring different cultures of communication, management and higher education in general. Thus one would lose some degree of sensitivity and differentiation with respect to national conditions. In contrast, if one maintained the current array of national QA agencies, creating transparency and defining a core of minimum standards for mutual recognition is a significant challenge. But at the same time, the opportunities for mutual stimulation, constant emergence and exchange of new practices could add to the flexibility of QA in Europe in such a system of multiple agencies. Considering the fact that notions of quality have been and will be undergoing constant change, adapting to new social needs and scientific practices, the loss of flexibility may be considered the most serious risk of creating one common agency.

So what are the current dominant attitudes of ministries, rectors' conferences and HEIs in this regard? While cooperation among existing national systems is widely welcomed, **only a quarter of the ministries and a little more than a third of the rectors' conferences would opt for a pan-European system for academic QA.** About a sixth of ministries and rectors' conferences would even welcome a global system for academic QA (the ministries of Bulgaria, France, Hungary, Portugal, Spain and Turkey, and the RCs of Belgium (French-speaking), Germany, Hungary, The Netherlands, Slovenia).

Regarding accreditation, the vast **majority supports national accreditation agencies and a system of mutual recognition among the agencies.** A pan-European accreditation agency would only be welcomed by a sixth of the ministries and a quarter of the rectors' conferences. The idea of a global accreditation agency only finds the support of one rectors' conference (Slovenia) and two ministries (Cyprus and Turkey).

While the majority of HEIs agrees with the preference for national accreditation agencies and a system of mutual recognition among these agencies, **nearly half of HEIs** (48%, 43% of universities, 52% of other HEIs), a remarkably large proportion in comparison with the national actors, **would welcome a pan-European accreditation agency.**

As may be expected, there are significant country divergences. One may even speak of regional clusters: in most accession countries where accreditation is more widely used than in the EU, but also in southern European countries (Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece), in France and in SEE countries, the majority of institutions would welcome such a pan-European accreditation agency (see Table 3). By contrast, western and northern European countries show considerably less support for this option (averaging about a quarter of institutions in these countries). Interestingly, one should note that most countries in which national accreditation agencies have been established for a

number of years continue to see the need for a national accreditation agency while also opting for a pan-European agency. 17% of European HEI leaders would even favour a world-wide accreditation agency.

Table 3 - The need for different types of accreditation agencies or systems, as seen by HEIs per country

Percentages of heads of institutions who answered "Yes" to the question: "Do you see a need for ... ?"

	<i>A national accreditation agency</i>	<i>A system of mutual recognition between national accreditation agencies</i>	<i>A pan-European accreditation agency</i>	<i>A world-wide accreditation agency</i>	<i>No, there is no need for accreditation</i>
COUNTRY	%	%	%	%	%
Albania	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%		
Austria	53,1%	25,0%	43,8%	12,5%	3,1%
Belgium	35,5%	64,5%	48,4%	12,9%	3,2%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	75,0%	75,0%	75,0%	25,0%	
Bulgaria	69,2%	76,9%	69,2%	30,8%	
Croatia	80,0%	80,0%	40,0%	20,0%	
Cyprus	80,0%	100,0%	80,0%	20,0%	
Czech Republic	62,1%	58,6%	34,5%	17,2%	
Denmark	31,1%	37,8%	22,2%	33,3%	17,8%
Estonia	85,7%	85,7%	85,7%	14,3%	
Finland	40,7%	48,1%	29,6%	7,4%	11,1%
France	35,9%	62,8%	59,0%	19,2%	2,6%
Germany	43,1%	72,4%	43,1%	15,5%	1,7%
Greece	95,0%	65,0%	70,0%	5,0%	
Hungary	69,2%	59,0%	61,5%	20,5%	
Iceland	100,0%	100,0%	50,0%		
Ireland	53,3%	73,3%	33,3%	6,7%	6,7%
Italy	59,3%	55,6%	59,3%	11,1%	
Latvia	65,5%	55,2%	37,9%		3,4%
Lithuania	73,3%	60,0%	40,0%	26,7%	
Luxemburg			100,0%		
Macedonia		100,0%	100,0%		
Malta	100,0%				
Netherlands	83,3%	75,0%	50,0%	8,3%	
Norway	86,2%	58,6%	34,5%	20,7%	3,4%
Poland	65,8%	68,4%	68,4%	21,1%	
Portugal	59,4%	75,0%	59,4%	9,4%	
Romania	20,0%	40,0%	66,7%	33,3%	
Serbia & Montenegro	83,3%	66,7%	50,0%	33,3%	
Slovakia	66,7%	55,6%	66,7%	11,1%	
Slovenia	33,3%	66,7%	66,7%		
Spain	60,7%	82,1%	60,7%	14,3%	
Sweden	66,7%	60,0%	6,7%	13,3%	6,7%
Switzerland	50,0%	50,0%	28,6%		7,1%
Turkey	78,9%	73,7%	68,4%	57,9%	5,3%
UK	34,1%	79,5%	9,1%	2,3%	13,6%

Thus, one may summarise that a consensus has emerged as to the **preferability of mutual recognition of national procedures over common European structures**. However, the objects and beneficiaries (or victims) of quality evaluation and accreditation, the higher education institutions themselves, are significantly more positively disposed toward common structures and procedures, perhaps in the hope of reducing the number and extending the scope of a given QA review.

But even with respect to the option of extending mutual recognition among national systems, the key question remains, under what conditions such recognition may occur. In addition to the already established consensus on key elements of QA methodology (self-evaluation, peer review, final public report), some **common criteria** will be unavoidable if such recognition is to occur. First experiments with mutual recognition of external QA procedures confirm that the quest for mutual recognition of external QA procedures of other agencies go hand in hand with the definition of a common set of criteria. One such initiative is being conducted by the Nordic QA agencies. Another attempt is the *Joint Quality Initiative* (JQI). The latter was started by the Dutch and Flemish QA agencies, but also includes a number of other QA agencies across Europe, on a voluntary basis. The initiative aims to develop criteria for quality evaluation and accreditation which would be flexible but shared, including Bachelor/Master descriptors and subject benchmarks. Currently, a common accreditation procedure between the Flemish and the Dutch agencies is being developed. If successful, such practice could be extended to the other agencies of the JQI. The recently launched *Transnational European Evaluation Project* (TEEP), funded by the European Commission and coordinated by ENQA, also attempts to develop common criteria for programme evaluation (currently in three different disciplines), using the descriptors developed by the Joint Quality Initiative and by the project *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe*. The most long-standing example of mutual recognition of other agencies is the *Washington Accord*, a multinational agreement signed in 1989 by Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Ireland, Japan (provisional status), New Zealand, South Africa and the UK. The Accord recognises the substantial equivalency of accreditation systems of signatory organisations, and the engineering education of programmes accredited by them. Thus, graduates of programmes accredited by the accreditation organisations of each member nation are considered as prepared to practice engineering at entry-level. Here the close link **between mutual recognition of agencies and mutual recognition of qualifications**, which the Prague Communiqué emphasised, has already become an international reality in a particular domain for a number of countries. In Europe, attempts to link QA agencies through ENQA with the academic recognition information networks ENIC/NARIC are still in the first phases. Issues for further work have been identified, such as how to improve communication between the networks and how to improve the definition of quality and recognition issues in non-formal education. Interesting examples of national agencies which combine both functions of QA and recognition of qualifications are the Network Norway Council, the Swedish *Hogskoleverket* and the Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education.⁸⁶

The most recent ENQA study also observed that **more and more agencies are using standards and criteria in the evaluation procedures**,⁸⁷ not just in accreditation where this is of course a defining feature. Generally, one can say that the “standards” used in accreditation function as threshold values, while the “criteria” used more often in evaluation procedures tend to be reference points, which are not fixed but function as suggestions or recommended good practices against which the subject, programme or institution is evaluated.⁸⁸

It is to be expected that the increased interest in, and use of criteria will help find a common ground on which mutual recognition among external QA practices may occur. Clearly a common understanding seems to emerge that, while common criteria are needed, these are to be understood and used as flexible points or references rather than hard standards or thresholds, similar to the current use of criteria in the UK’s QA procedures. Whether such flexibility can be upheld also in the context of establishing a common ground for mutual recognition of accreditation procedures still remains to be seen.

86 Campbell and Rozsnyai, op.cit., p.47.

87 Holm et al. (2003) op.cit., section 6.

88 Holm et al. (2003), op.cit., section 6.1.

In light of the increasing need of European and international regulatory frameworks for the delivery and quality assurance of HE degrees, UNESCO, finding itself best suited for such an approach, took the initiative to set up the “First Global Forum on International Quality Assurance, Accreditation and the Recognition of Qualifications in HE”, also dealing with the topic of globalisation and HE, and of promoting HE as a public good.⁸⁹ In order to confront the mushrooming of national, regional and international activities in the field of international accreditation, QA related to e-learning and transnational and borderless education, and to confront the liberalisation in education services under the GATS, it is planned to compile directories of “trustworthy” accreditation agencies and of good practices.⁹⁰ While such meta-accreditation-like initiatives are seen by some QA and HE representatives as the reinforcement of an unwelcome trend toward standardisation, they are welcomed by others as an attempt to create transparency in an increasingly labyrinthine market of QA and accreditation agencies and procedures. Again, in QA as elsewhere in European higher education, the ultimate challenge consists in creating transparency, readability, exchange of good practice and enough common criteria to allow for mutual recognition of each others’ procedures, without mainstreaming the system and undermining its positive forces of difference and competition – creating a single market without fostering monopolies, so to speak.

6.1.2 Key findings

- Increasing autonomy normally means greater independence from state intervention, but it is generally accompanied by a growing influence of other stakeholders in society, as well as by extended external quality assurance procedures and outcome-based funding mechanisms (management by results).
- All Bologna signatory countries have established or are in the process of establishing agencies which are responsible for external quality control in some form or another.
- Currently 80% of HEIs in Europe undergo external quality assurance procedures (quality evaluation or accreditation).
- The divide between accreditation procedures in the accession countries and quality evaluation in EU countries is narrowing: a growing interest in accreditation and the use of criteria and standards can be observed in western Europe, and an increasing use of improvement-oriented evaluation procedures in eastern European countries.
- The primary function of external quality assurance (quality evaluation or accreditation), according to the responsible agencies and the majority of HEIs, consists in quality improvement. Only in France, Slovakia and the UK, accountability to society is mentioned more frequently than quality improvement. Even accreditation agencies, traditionally more oriented toward accountability, have stressed improvement in recent years.
- Generally speaking, external quality procedures are evaluated positively by the HEIs. Most frequently, they are regarded as enhancing institutional quality culture.
- Two recent comparative studies observe a softening of opposition between institutional and programme focuses among QA agencies, and an increasing mix of the two focuses within the same agencies.
- Internal quality assurance procedures are just as widespread as external ones. Most often they focus on teaching. 82% of the heads of HEIs reported that they have internal procedures to monitor the quality of teaching, 53% also have internal procedures to monitor the quality of research. Only a quarter of the HEIs have internal QA procedures to address aspects other than teaching and research.

⁸⁹ For the conclusions and recommendations of the UNESCO September 2002 meeting, see <http://www.unesco.org/education/studyingabroad>.

⁹⁰ See UNESCO-CEPES (2003) *Preliminary Report on Trends and Developments in Higher Education in the Europe Region*, for the 6th Session of UNESCO-CEPES Advisory Board and the 2nd Meeting of the World Conference on Higher Education Regional Follow-up Committee for Europe Region, 9-10 September 2002.

- Ministries, rectors' conferences, HEIs, and students, generally prefer mutual recognition of national QA procedures over common European structures. However, the objects and beneficiaries (or victims) of quality evaluation and accreditation, the higher education institutions themselves, are significantly more positively disposed towards common structures and procedures than the actors at national level. Nearly half of HEIs would welcome a pan-European accreditation agency.

6.1.3 Future challenges

- A release of HEIs from state intervention will increase institutional autonomy and release universities' innovative potentials only if this is not then undone by mechanistic and streamlined ex post monitoring of outputs, or by an overly intrusive influence of other stakeholders with more short-term perspectives.
- The effectiveness of the quality evaluation procedures will depend to a large extent on their readiness to consider the links between teaching, research and other dimensions of institutional management. As complex systems, universities cannot react to a problem seen in one domain without also affecting other domains indirectly.
- Likewise, the efficiency and return on investment in quality reviews will depend on the synergies and coordination between the various national and European accountability and quality assurance procedures, as well as the funding mechanisms, under which institutions operate.
- The ultimate challenge for QA in Europe consists in creating transparency, exchange of good practice and enough common criteria to allow for mutual recognition of each others' procedures, without mainstreaming the system and undermining its positive forces of diversity and competition.

6.2 LIFELONG LEARNING: OLD AND NEW CHALLENGES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

"Lifelong learning is an essential element of the European Higher Education Area. In the future Europe, built upon a knowledge-based society and economy, lifelong learning strategies are necessary to face the challenges of competitiveness and the use of new technologies and to improve social cohesion, equal opportunities and the quality of life." (Prague, 2001)

6.2.1 Analysis

6.2.1.1 Context and definitions

The recent dramatic increase of the use of the term "lifelong learning" (LLL) might lead one to believe that we are dealing with a new development. Of course, the idea of lifelong learning is probably as old as humanity. Even its connection to higher education may be traced back more than 2300 years, since already the Platonic academies sought to foster what are now called "learning-to-learn" skills, encouraging students to think of learning as a lifelong process demanding constant care and attention. In more recent times, what one may call subsets of LLL, namely continuing education (CE), adult education (AE) and continuing professional development (CPD) have developed both in- and outside of the growing university sector. In some northern European countries there are strong traditions of "liberal adult education" (e.g. Denmark, Sweden and Finland) enhancing personal general education, while in other countries the original focus was on continuing professional development, e.g. in France, where CPD goes back to the French Revolution.⁹¹ However, the upsurge of CE in the 1970s and 1980s and of LLL more recently, is a particularly striking development, both from the point of view of a rapid increase of users' demand and from that of a rise in political awareness, since it reflects profound changes in the status of knowledge and skills in society, changes which are and will be affecting universities more than their leaders may currently be able to address. Already by 1996, the year of the most recent Eurobarometer survey, 70% of all those polled said they wanted to continue learning and training throughout their lives, 56% believed education and training had become a necessity, 80% thought CE can improve their working lives and 72% that it would also improve their personal lives.⁹²

91 Jallade, J.-P. (2000) *From Continuing Education to Lifelong learning: A survey of current practice in four French universities*. Paris: Centre for Social Morphology and Social Policy, p.5.

92 The Eurobarometer data is mentioned by E.J. Thomas in: Osborne, M.J. and Thomas, E.J. (2003), *Lifelong Learning in a Changing Continent*. Leicester: NIACE, Chapter 1.

Before we begin to trace recent developments in LLL in higher education, we should face the often debated question of appropriate definitions. While LLL naturally comprises all contexts and stages of education, from pre-school to higher education and beyond, its use in the context of higher education is most often associated with continuing and/or adult education. As pointed out by E.J. Thomas in the most recent comparative study on university continuing education, definitions of continuing education and lifelong learning vary greatly across Europe. Indeed, the country reports of the mentioned study all begin by making their own national definitions transparent in order to avoid confusion.⁹³ Generally speaking, one may venture to say that, as far as the HE sector is concerned, LLL debates constitute the follow-up to the older debates on CE and AE. Continuing education stresses the fact that the education offer was resumed after an interval following an uninterrupted initial education. Adult education encompasses all education and training activities undertaken by adults for professional reasons, including general, vocational and enterprise-based training within a lifelong learning perspective. **CE, AE and LLL all share a focus on flexible access to the courses provided (including learners without formal higher education or even secondary school qualifications) as well as the attempt to respond to the diverse profiles and backgrounds of their students.** Even the recently stressed focus on learners' needs was already present in CE in some countries, although perhaps not as centrally and often only in an embryonic form. Indeed, some HE representatives feel that the comprehensive nature of the term LLL prevents it from offering enough conceptual leverage, preferring the use of the term CE in the context of higher education, which comprises the updating of skills, i.e. an economic agenda, and the inclusion of adults without formal degrees, i.e. a social justice agenda.

What may be called the "added value" of the new term of LLL is the central attention to the multiplicity of contexts in which learning can take place, both from the point of view of life phases (lifelong learning) and from that of the different realms of life (lifewide learning) which even includes non-formal education. As Thomas observes, after several international bodies such as UNESCO and the Council of Europe offered their definitions, the most deeply (and widely) considered definition of LLL may be that advanced by the European Commission after an extensive consultation of the Member States and accession countries on its Memorandum on LLL.⁹⁴ Lifelong learning is defined as: "All learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective."⁹⁵

6.2.1.2 New focus on learners' needs

All of the recent definitions of LLL reflect a paradigmatic shift from teaching to learning which had already been highlighted in the OECD report on LLL (1996): the emphasis is being placed on identifying how learning can best be enabled.⁹⁶ Thus the needs and aspirations of the students, rather than the aims and values of academics, should constitute the driving principle in the creation of the offer provided. As may be expected, this demand orientation has been seen as an opportunity by some and a threat by other HE representatives.⁹⁷ Proponents of such a demand orientation see LLL as a key to opening the doors of HE institutions to the outside demands of society. Critics fear that the critical distance and uniqueness of universities in thinking ahead, beyond current demands and markets, is being undermined by such orientation. Hence discussions on LLL often expose a wider and deeper issue which HEIs are generally facing, namely the conflict between relevance of HE provision and the critical distance which constitutes the core of the university's uniqueness as an institution.

93 Osborne, M.J. and Thomas, E.J. (2003), *Lifelong Learning in a Changing Continent: Continuing Education in the Universities of Europe*. Leicester: NIACE.

94 E.J. Thomas in: Osborne, M.J. and Thomas, E.J. (2003), *Lifelong Learning in a Changing Continent*, Chapter 1.

95 European Commission (2001), *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality COM (2001), 678 final*. Brussels: Commission of the European Communities, p.9.

96 OECD (1996), *Lifelong learning for All*. Paris, OECD. Quoted in: Askling, B., Henkel, M. and Kehm, B. (2001), Concepts of Knowledge and their Organisation in Universities, *European Journal of Education*, Vol. 36, No.3, p.345.

97 Mora, J.G. and Vidal, J. (2000), "Lifelong Learning in Spanish Universities: the market inside a public system", *European Journal of Education*, Vol. 35, pp. 317-327.

Of course, the new focus on learners presupposes that learners must be capable of identifying their own learning needs and of keeping track of their own learning progress, for which they need support from the institutions. Interesting steps in this direction are the VAP scheme in France (*"validation des acquis professionnels"*, i.e. accreditation of prior experience, achievement and learning, also known as APEAL or APL in other contexts) and the negotiated curricula at the Open University in the UK, to mention just two examples.⁹⁸ For the Bologna process, the focus on learners and the diversity of their needs in the context of LLL supports an overall trend of increased attention to learning processes and to student-centered approaches to curriculum development. Especially, the new focus on skills and competences which has been at the centre of some national and European discussions of curricular reforms (notably in Ireland, the UK, Denmark and in the context of the "Tuning" project mentioned in section 2) may well help the development and integration of LLL at universities and vice versa. Indeed, the so-called learning-to-learn skills are not just at the heart of lifelong learning strategies but form an integral component on the list of learning outcomes which are being developed as benchmarks for various subjects, both nationally and at European level. Hence it does not come as a surprise that the recent recommendations of the Bologna seminar on recognition and credit systems in the context of lifelong learning (Prague, June 2003) stresses the need to link lifelong learning strategies with the description of qualification frameworks, level descriptors and learning outcomes, as well as with the recognition of skills and competencies:

"Higher education institutions and others should:

- reconfirm their historical commitment to, and reconsider their approach and relationship to, lifelong learning, bring learning closer to the learner and interact more with local communities and enterprises;
- adopt internal policies to promote the recognition of prior formal, non-formal and informal learning for access and study exemption;
- reconsider skills content in courses and the nature of their study programmes;
- use the Diploma Supplement, ECTS credits and skills portfolios to record learning as well as to facilitate individual learning paths;
- express all qualifications in terms of explicit reference points: qualifications descriptors, level descriptors, learning outcomes, subject-related and generic competencies;
- integrate lifelong learning into their overall strategy, global development plan and mission;
- develop partnerships with other stakeholders.

Public authorities responsible for higher education should:

- clarify and define their goals with regard to lifelong learning and develop appropriate implementation strategies;
- develop new style national qualifications frameworks that integrate forms of lifelong learning as possible paths leading to higher education qualifications, as well as access qualifications, within this qualifications framework;
- take appropriate measures to ensure equal access to, and appropriate opportunities for success in lifelong learning to each individual in accordance with his/her aspirations and abilities;
- ensure the right to fair recognition of qualifications acquired in different learning environments. [...]"⁹⁹

6.2.1.3 Recent trends: extensive policy development

Since lifelong learning was added to the list of Bologna action lines in Prague, there is, as yet, no longitudinal comparison to be drawn with the previous *Trends reports*. Nevertheless, other political events on the European stage have made the issues of LLL particularly visible in the last two years. Most observers of these trends note the **apparent divergence between the high level of activity in terms of policy development** (where many actors have been intensely busy all over

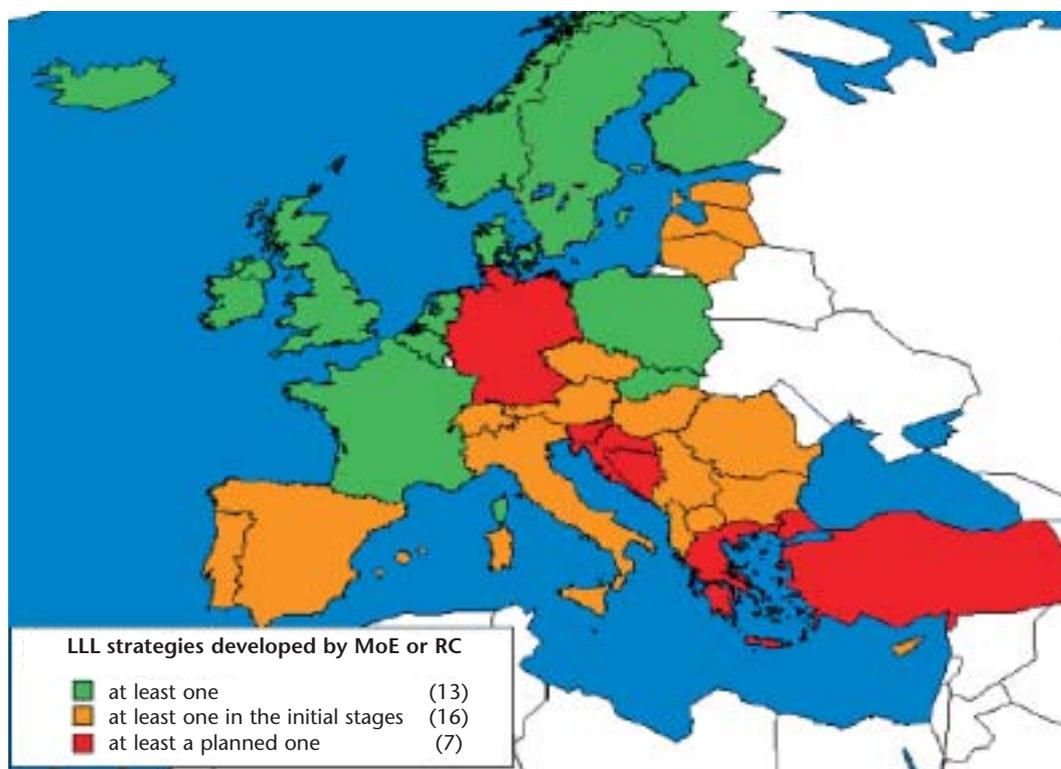
⁹⁸ See "Lifelong Learning in European Universities: Institutional Responses", *European Journal of Education* (2001) Vol.36, No.3. In particular: Jallade, J.-P., "From Continuing Education to Lifelong Learning in French Universities", pp. 291-304, "Henkel, M., The UK: the home of the lifelong learning university?" pp. 277-290, as well as Askling, B., Henkel, M. and Kehm, B., "Concepts of Knowledge and their Organisation in Universities", p.348.

⁹⁹ Excerpt from the "Recommendations" of the Bologna Seminar on Recognition and Credit Systems in the Context of Lifelong Learning, Prague, 5-7 June 2003.

Europe), on the one hand, and the comparatively slow progress at HE institutional level, on the other. But institutional development and national incentives are closely linked (see 6.2.1.4 below). Indeed, within institutions, the attention to LLL provision is most strongly hampered by national conditions such as decreasing or stagnating government grants for HE in general, increasing pressures on the expansion of the regular teaching provision due to the continuing growth of HE participation rates all over Europe, as well as by ever stronger pressures on increased research performance as the decisive ingredient of overall institutional reputation, at least at universities.

The need for national LLL policies is undisputed and was strongly pushed in the context of the consultation on the European Commission Memorandum on LLL of November 2000.¹⁰⁰ The *Trends 2003 survey* reveals that in 2003, a majority of countries have the intention or are in the process of developing a LLL strategy. Such policies already exist in one third of Bologna signatory countries, namely in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, Ireland, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden and the UK. The extent to which these policies focus on higher education or describe the precise role of various sectors in fostering LLL remains to be seen.

Figure 15 - LLL strategies developed at national level



Source: *Trends 2003*

It is difficult to ascertain whether or not the policy development intentions are a direct outcome of the Commission's Memorandum on Lifelong Learning and the extensive national consultations following its publication. In several countries, of course, such policy development had already been defined before the policy push from the Commission, notably those countries which reported that a LLL strategy has already been developed (see Figure 15). Furthermore, the Commission's Memorandum should be seen in the context of a series of attempts by international bodies to draw attention to LLL, with the European Commission being perhaps the most effective in the sense of demanding a response from national policy-makers. Already in the late 1960s, the concept of LLL emerged more or less simultaneously in the Council of Europe, UNESCO and the OECD as "recurrent education", "adult education" and "éducation permanente", with the central idea being the development of coherent strategies to provide education and training opportuni-

¹⁰⁰ European Commission (2000), *Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*. Brussels: Commission of the European Communities. For the national reactions to the Memorandum, see http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/life/consultation_en.html. The European Commission had already organised a European Year of LLL in 1996, with hundreds of events, seminars, television programmes. The Memorandum on LLL (2000) can be seen as a later consequence of the European dialogue initiated in 1996 and of its conclusions as adopted by the Council of the EU.

ties for all individuals during their entire life.¹⁰¹ One generation later, a UNESCO report on education for the 21st century (headed by Delors) presented the centrality of learning for the emerging knowledge societies, highlighting the role of the higher education institutions. The report was seen by its authors “as a ‘necessary utopia’ to mobilise the dwindling energies of the education community or to convince decision-makers in countries with scarce resources to invest more in education.”¹⁰² Subsequently, at the World Conference on Higher Education (1998), a UNESCO-led world-wide debate on higher education, LLL principles were incorporated into policies or proposals as “one of the major challenges and missions of HE at this stage in history” (UNESCO, 1998). Meanwhile, the OECD had shifted from a conceptual approach to more empirical analyses and took up the term LLL to emphasise formal and non-formal learning in a variety of settings. It also stressed the “shared responsibility” in organising, managing and financing learning systems.

Nevertheless, the strongest push in terms of policy development, was clearly brought about in the framework of the consultation on the Commission’s Memorandum in 2001 involving 12 000 citizens in all EU and accession countries. The consultation revealed that there is a large consensus on the long-term goals, such as the need to contribute to regular updating of skills to help economic growth, to target low educational attainment, to intervene for social cohesion, as well as to create the basis for more active citizenship.¹⁰³ The consultation also identified six essential elements for coherent and comprehensive LLL strategies:

- partnership between decision-making levels and public providers, authorities and private businesses;
- insight into the demand for learning, including a redefinition of basic skills;
- adequate resourcing, involving a substantial increase in public and private investments in learning and ensuring its effective allocation;
- facilitating access to learning opportunities, including removal of obstacles to access;
- fostering a learning culture;
- quality assurance of provision and monitoring of progress through indicators.

Interestingly, the consultation on the Commission’s Memorandum also revealed that many national LLL policies share a contradictory quality. **The potentially contradictory dimensions of most national LLL policies derive from their two coexisting agenda of social inclusion and economic competitiveness.** While social inclusion stresses flexible access and diversity of criteria for different learner profiles – with knowledge promoting integration into society, the competitiveness agenda tends to focus on excellence and efficiency in the updating of knowledge and skills. Here, knowledge often plays the opposite role of reducing exclusion and stratification in and between societies. If the competitiveness agenda is reinforced by tight national budgets, university provision of LLL may well be forced to let go of its social inclusion agenda. Askling et al. describe the effect on universities:

“On the one hand, open access is supposed to produce more social inclusion and cohesion and provide a higher degree of equality and societal participation. On the other, the appropriation and updating of knowledge through lifelong learning are part of a growing market in which cost effectiveness, income generation and competition play a major role. For the universities, this means that they have, as part of their commitment to their mandators (the State), to ‘produce’ well-prepared students and, due to economic restrictions, they have to be efficient (have a high through-put rate). The more carefully they can select students with well-known and trusted entrance qualifications, the better. Thus, the distribution of knowledge becomes selective.”¹⁰⁴

This potential contradiction between social inclusion policies and economic competitiveness is not supported, however, by the recently published *Thematic Innovation Scoreboard* of the

101 Jallade, J.-P. and Mora, J.-G. (2001), “Lifelong learning: international injunctions and university practices”, *European Journal of Education*, Vol.36, 3, p.362.

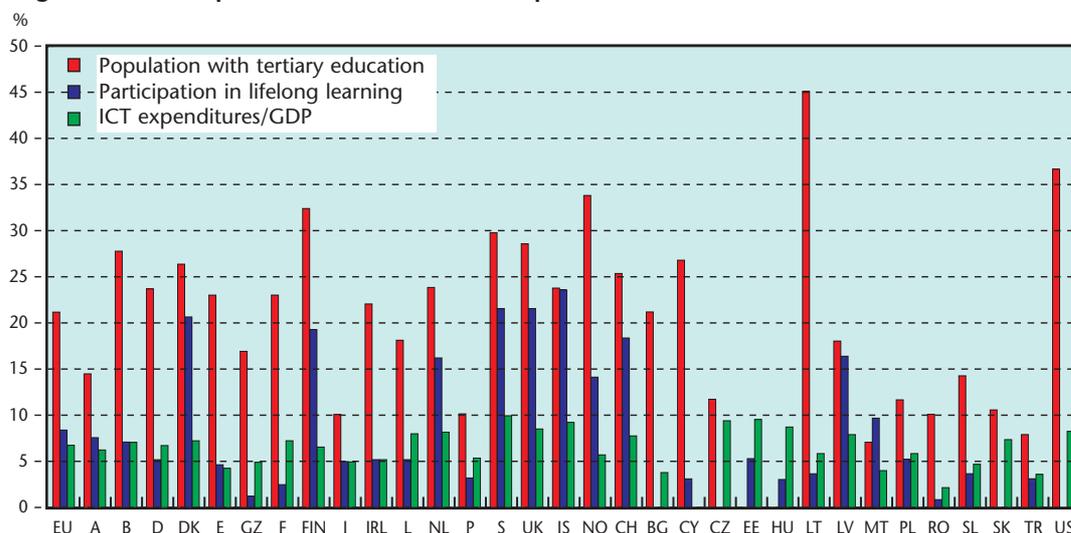
102 Jallade and Mora, op.cit., p.363.

103 These goals are not just highlighted in the national reports on the outcome of their consultation on the Commission’s Memorandum (see http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/life/what_islll_en.html) but also confirmed in the recently published OECD thematic review on adult education: *Beyond Rhetoric: Adult Learning Policies and Practices* (2003). See also <http://www.oecd.org/els/education/adultlearning>.

104 Askling, B., Henkel, M. and Kehm, B. (2001) Concepts of Knowledge and their Organisation in Universities, Lifelong Learning in European Universities: Institutional Responses, *European Journal of Education* (2001), Vol.36, No.3., p.345.

European Commission (DG Research, 2002). In fact, the scoreboard confirms that there is a correlation (seen already in 2001) between participation rates and LLL, on the one hand, and the general innovative capacity of a given country, on the other. Taking the range of indicators as a whole, the “best performing” countries in LLL (Sweden, Denmark, The Netherlands and Finland, see figure 16) are also leading innovators on the scoreboard in general.¹⁰⁵

Figure 16 - Participation in HE, LLL and ICT expenditure



Source: *European Innovation Scoreboard 2002, published by European Commission, DG Research*

For our purposes, it is important to note that **most of the action undertaken at European and national levels does not target the higher education sector as such**. The vast majority of the current EU activities, for instance, derive mainly from employment strategies and the European social agenda, rather than from the framework of educational programmes and the HE action lines. As the EUA's *Consultation of Universities* on the Commission's Memorandum has already pointed out, part of the general problem for HEIs lies in the fact that their institutional constraints are not taken into account in the design of this action.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, the “Quality Indicators” recently developed at European level (such as new skills for the learning society, learning-to-learn-skills, cultural and social skills, access, participation, investment strategies, guidance and counselling, accreditation and certification, quality assurance etc.) are very relevant for HEIs measuring their own progress in LLL, but have to be interpreted concretely in order to be usable and useful for HEIs.¹⁰⁷ Without targeted measures and incentives, however, it is unlikely that HEIs will be able to expand their current offer in LLL, since pressures to expand and reform traditional HE teaching and research are already overwhelming in times of stagnating budgets.

6.2.1.4 From policy to institutional realities

In light of such active policy development at international and national level, what can we report of the institutional development of lifelong learning?

First of all, it should be noted that, in a rapidly expanding market, western European HEIs (those for which data were available) have not shown themselves to be the most enthusiastic participants in CE. Even in Scandinavia and the UK, where the CE offer at universities is relatively well developed, all the further education colleges and universities together provided only 10% of the continuing education offer in their countries in 1996. The rest of the provision was offered by employers and private training companies.¹⁰⁸ One problem which may partly explain this feeble involvement in the sector may be a lack of attention to the added value or “unique selling points”

¹⁰⁵ European Commission (2002), *Thematic Innovation Scoreboard – Lifelong learning for innovation*, available at <http://trendchart.cordis.lu/Reports/Documents/reports5.pdf>.

¹⁰⁶ Mary O'Mahony (2001) for the EUA, *EUA Consultation on the EC Draft Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*.

¹⁰⁷ European Commission (2002), *European Report on Quality Indicators of Lifelong Learning. Fifteen Quality Indicators*. Report based on the work of the Working Group on Quality Indicators. Brussels: Eur. Com., DG EAC.

¹⁰⁸ Thomas, E.J. (1999), “Current Issues in University Continuing Education”, *Lifelong Learning in Europe*, 4(4), p.228.

which universities have to offer in comparison with other providers, and the generally less developed marketing awareness and skills of universities. Likewise, the national LLL strategies rarely define or highlight the particular role of higher education institutions in the provision of CE, AE or LLL. In any case, this task is best undertaken by universities themselves. Common sense would suggest that their primary role in pushing the frontiers of science and technology forward would also make them the most eligible providers of CE on the latest developments in scientific research. Furthermore, their traditional role of providing a critical forum for new ideas and scenarios of future social development would also suggest a privileged role in offering such fora to a wider public interested in accessing the most informed and differentiated reflections on far-reaching social and political issues. But are universities really playing this role? The extent to which they do seems to depend largely, but not only, on national or regional incentives. One should note that insofar as such incentives exist in today's Europe, they tend to foster the updating of skills for professional development rather than any other possible dimensions of LLL. "Liberal adult education" (i.e. general education for adults), for example, is going through hard times, despite its strong traditions in some northern European countries.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, with all the hype on LLL, many European CE centres are under pressure to remain cost-neutral or even to generate income.

Our own survey reveals that **attention to LLL at the strategic level of institutional development is clearly on the rise**. More than a third (35%) of HEIs report that they have developed an overall lifelong learning strategy for their institution. Another 31% say they are in the initial stages of this, 26% state they plan to develop one and only 5% do not see a need for this (3% gave no answer). With only small divergences between the two HE sectors (universities have developed strategies slightly more often than other HEIs), one should note that institutions specialising in business and economics have developed such strategies considerably more often (49%), and those specialising in technology and engineering have done so slightly more often (40%), than the average. Evidently, having more defined target groups and regular partnerships with outside stakeholders helps the development of LLL and the formulation of strategies.

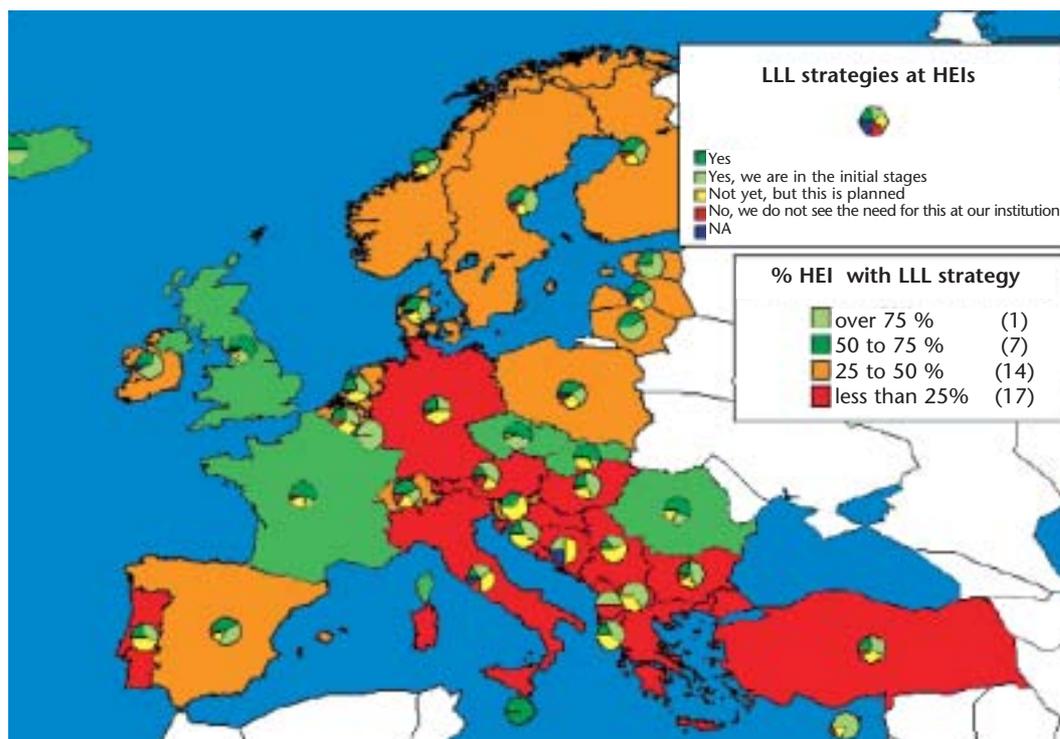
Behind the European averages, one can detect major divergences between individual countries. Thus, the average is surpassed considerably in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Switzerland and the UK. It should be noted that all of the countries with national LLL strategies also have a higher than average proportion of HEIs developing such LLL strategies. The UK, Iceland, France, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Romania have the highest percentages of HEIs with LLL strategies. In contrast, Germany, Austria, Italy, Hungary, Turkey, Romania and SEE countries have the lowest percentages of HEIs with LLL strategies.

Unfortunately, evidence on contents and effectiveness of such strategies could not be obtained in the context of this study. Some information could be obtained, however, regarding the incentives for developing LLL at HEIs. In a number of western European countries some funds are provided for new LLL projects. In Finland, for instance, performance-based funding is provided on the basis of high-quality adult education as well as targeted funding for innovative projects. In France, where flexible access is at the heart of the LLL policy, the principle of validation of previous studies and personal experiences of the students has been broadened and is now about to be applied on a wider scale at HEIs. In the UK, extra grants are provided for part-time students and student parents returning to higher education. Financial incentives are rarer and more limited in eastern European countries.

Interestingly, most of the student representatives consulted have observed changes of attitude to LLL over the last three years at institutions in their countries. Nearly half of the student representatives noted changes with respect to the courses offered to non-traditional students, a third observed a greater encouragement of LLL culture among students. However, little change was observed with respect to teaching methodologies or access policies.

¹⁰⁹ As Alan Rogers (2001) notes in a recent overview over adult education, "Today, in the UK as in much of Western society, under the influence of what is often called post-welfare 'neo-liberalism', occupational education is clearly privileged although some elements of personal growth and some minor elements of social transformation still survive. Contemporary adult education is dominated by instrumental concerns rather than empowerment, social transformation or personal fulfillment." (*Teaching Adults*, 3rd edition).

Figure 17 - Percentage of HEIs with a LLL strategy



Source: Trends 2003

One outstanding aspect of LLL is certainly the **comparatively well-developed dialogue with stakeholders** which the development of LLL provision often involves. Regarding cooperation with stakeholders in the labour market, such as businesses, professional associations and employers, two thirds of the HEIs responded that they provide assistance to such stakeholders on request and respond to their expressed needs. Nearly half (49%) actually initiate joint programmes, with considerably more institutions doing so in Finland, Iceland, Sweden, Norway, Estonia, France, Ireland and the UK. Surprisingly, considering the more professional orientation of many of the non-university institutions, cooperation with such stakeholders is more developed at universities than at other HEIs, with the notable exception of institutions in The Netherlands, Bulgaria, Hungary, Turkey and Germany. More predictably, institutions specialising in business and economics cooperate more intensely with outside stakeholders than all other types of institutions.

In this context, one should point to the **problems associated with the market orientation of LLL provision** which are mentioned in the recent comparative studies. First of all, the problem of equity of access is mentioned frequently. Jallade and Mora observe that, as a result of the major difficulties on the labour markets during the 80s and 90s, the equity objective was progressively abandoned in favour of more career-related objectives in many universities.¹¹⁰ In Spain, for example, LLL provision is mostly based at public universities but functions as a private system. Students have to pay the full cost of the programmes and grants are scarce.¹¹¹ More and more institutions in Europe gear their offer mainly to the employed in need of upgrading their skills, in order to limit costs or even allow income generation through their CE activities. In Eastern Europe, the updating of skills has been pushed particularly strongly because of the overwhelming demand for skilled labour in new professions since 1989. In many European countries (east and west), the lack of public funding for LLL activities is also noted. The most recent OECD review of adult education, which includes all providers (not just HEIs) in eight western European countries and Canada, observes that more than 50% of those trained did so with employers' support, and that employers tend to choose investments from which they expect a high return. Thus training tends to concentrate on workers who are already qualified and enjoy relatively high professional status in large companies, leaving out low-skilled or older workers, those in small companies, and those on tem-

110 Jallade, J.-P. and Mora, J.-G. (2001), "Lifelong learning: international injunctions and university practices", *European Journal of Education*, Vol.36, 3, p.372.

111 Mora, J.-G. (2001), "Lifelong Learning Policies in Spanish Universities", *European Journal of Education*, Vol.36, pp.317-328.

porary contracts.¹¹² The drawbacks of this increasingly market-oriented LLL offer seems to be the focus on fee-paying students and the less regulated provision, often resulting in less rigorous attention to quality assurance.

European cooperation in LLL is as yet not very developed. In light of the intensity of European cooperation in research and in teaching, the creation of a “European Area of Lifelong Learning” propagated by the European Commission seems considerably more remote than the Commission’s goal of creating a European Research Area or the intergovernmentally initiated European Higher Education Area. One should note that the intensity of cooperation between European HEIs with respect to the development or delivery of LLL courses or modules (mentioned by 25% of HEIs) reflects national encouragements in a quite symmetrical way. Given that the ministries of Austria, Denmark, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Malta and Spain (i.e. a quarter of all Bologna countries) report that European cooperation is actively encouraged, it is interesting to note that these countries also have an above average number of HEIs (33%-50%, the Europe-wide average being 25%) cooperating within a European network. Generally, however, cooperation in LLL course development is more frequent at local or national level (52%). One may even say that HE cooperation in LLL is not as developed as cooperation in the other core competences of HEIs. 38% of HEIs do not cooperate with other HEIs at all, as far as LLL development is concerned, either because they prefer to act independently from other HEIs in the development of their LLL offer, or because they do not offer LLL courses.

A few **European networks** and their recent projects should be highlighted as notable exceptions to the lack of intense European cooperation in university LLL. One is EUCEN (the European University CE Network) with its “*TRANSFINE*” project (*Transfer between Formal, Informal and Non-formal Education*), in which European procedures of assessing, accrediting and recognising prior learning are being developed.¹¹³ Acknowledging that learning of equal value to university learning can take place, and that new knowledge can be produced outside the academy is, of course, a major rupture in the long-standing tradition of universities deciding what constitutes valuable knowledge, in addition to conserving, extending and transmitting it to the next generation.¹¹⁴ The university’s monopoly over the production of higher level knowledge is being challenged in order to do greater justice to the multiplicity and relevance of learning contexts. The project’s aim consists in comparing current practice in several European countries and in proposing a European framework for procedures of accreditation and recognition of prior learning at universities. This constitutes a considerable challenge, not just because of the many differences across Europe but also given the fact that in some countries, e.g. in Germany and Italy, legislation constrains the actions of universities in this domain. Another recently launched EUCEN project responds to the need for new arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement to be put in place, in order to include new practices such as guidance services, accreditation of prior learning, open and distance learning and individual or customised programmes of learning. This EU-funded project, known as *EQUIPE* (*European Quality in Individualised Pathways in Education*), aims to develop a web-based toolkit designed to support quality projects in university adult learning, highlighting new forms of practice.

Another example of a European cooperation network focussing on LLL at higher education institutions is the EU-funded Thematic Network “*The NUCE*” which seeks to compare and build up good practice in CE in European universities with the help of national relay centers in each country.¹¹⁵ The most recent comparative study of CE in Europe, by E.J. Thomas and others (mentioned above), is a prominent undertaking of this network. Some strategic university networks also have established working groups on LLL or e-learning which, in the long-term, even aim to develop common LLL and e-learning modules (such as the *World-Wide University Network*, *Coimbra Group*, *CLUSTER*, *IDEA-League*). But, for the most part, such development of common provision is in its initial stages.

112 OECD (2003), *Beyond rhetoric: Adult learning policies and practices*. Paris: OECD. Highlights: <http://www.oecd.org/els/education/adultlearning>, p.5.

113 See <http://www.eucen.org> for further details.

114 Pat Davies (2003), *Assessment and accreditation of informal and non-formal learning at universities: a summary of issues*. See <http://www.eucen.org>.

115 See <http://www.thenuce.net>.

However, while European cooperation seems to have a minor impact on LLL development, the **European-wide reform of degree structures does seem to affect LLL provision at many institutions**. 39% of heads of institutions find that the implementation of new degree structures also affects the design of LLL programmes and modules.

ICT is used by nearly two thirds of HEIs to support LLL offer and delivery, most often to support courses taught on site (60%). 41% also use ICT to support “virtual mobility” of staff and students, another 37% support their joint programmes with other institutions or stakeholders in this way. A below average use of ICT in LLL can be noted in Germany, Italy, Poland and particularly in Turkey. National support for ICT use in LLL is widespread, and reported in 17 Bologna signatory countries. In the UK, the *e-Universities* project was set up to encourage higher education institutions to work together to reduce the development costs of e-learning materials and thus to reduce barriers to market entry.

Concerning the organisation and management of LLL within a university context, the most salient problem is clearly the **lack of integration of LLL provision** in the general strategies, core processes and decision-making of the institution. Even in those countries where CE or LLL has been playing an important political role and where incentives are provided to develop LLL, such as France, the UK and Finland, CE centers are not always recognised on an equal footing with the rest of university teaching and research.

This lack of status or value attributed to LLL in the university may result from

- the perception that quality assurance of teachers and courses is less rigorously pursued than for the traditional core offer of the universities;
- the more tenuous link of such provision to research in the field;
- the more varied background of the teachers who provide LLL courses, who often have less traditional academic careers or even come from outside academia;
- the relatively low status of “practice” as a valuable realm of scientific reflection;
- the non-existent rewards or incentives (monetary or career advancement) for academics who offer CE courses in addition to their normal teaching and research activities;
- the lack of integration regarding the contents of LLL provision with the rest of the teaching or research offer.¹¹⁶

Thus, Jallade’s and Mora’s comments on the problems encountered by active promoters of LLL in the French university context may be said to apply to most European institutional realities of LLL in higher education:

*“Significant efforts have been made [...] to make the supply of LLL more flexible, whether in terms of curriculum concepts, alternative delivery or certification. They are often supported by individual promoters who complain that they have to swim ‘upstream’ within an institution that does little to support them. The issue is both institutional and financial. The institutional challenge consists in organising, strengthening and harnessing these limited and often fragile experiments in the framework of a university policy. In other words, the challenge is ‘mainstreaming’.”*¹¹⁷

As far as good practice at universities is concerned, very few are actually published. The useful compilation of good practices by the European Commission and Eurydice mentions only very few examples from the HE sector.¹¹⁸ But two useful, recently published handbooks, derived from a comparative perspective on current institutional good practice in Europe, offer possible approaches to policies and instruments of integrating CE in universities and offer some guidelines as to how a successfully integrated LLL or CE offer could be developed.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Many of these problems have already been highlighted in the synthesis report of the CRE’s consultation of universities on the Memorandum on Lifelong learning, cf. Mary O’Mahony, *EUA Consultation on the EC Draft Memorandum on Lifelong Learning*, 2001.

¹¹⁷ Jallade, J.-P. and Mora, J.-G. (2001), “Lifelong learning: international injunctions and university practices”, *European Journal of Education*, Vol.36, 3, p.372. According to Jallade and Mora, in the national survey of institutional practices in France only one university offered a fully-fledged coherent university LLL.

¹¹⁸ European Commission (2001), *Lifelong Learning Practice and Indicators. Commission Staff Working Document. Supporting Document to the Communication from the Commission Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning*; and Eurydice and CEDEFOP (2001), *National actions to implement lifelong learning in Europe*. Brussels: European Commission DG EAC.

¹¹⁹ Palomar, A. J., and Parellada, M. (2001), *Continuing Education in Universities: Policies and Instruments*, Columbus Papers on University Management. Paris: Columbus/UNESCO. The NUCE (2003), *European University Continuing Education. The Managers’ Handbook* ed. by Valerie Mitchell. The Nuce, SOCRATES Publications.

6.2.2 Key findings

- Definitions of LLL and its relation to Continuing Education (CE) and Adult Education (AE) are still vague and diverse in different national contexts. Generally speaking, as far as the HE sector is concerned, LLL debates constitute the follow-up to the older debates on CE and AE, sharing their focus on flexible access to the courses provided, as well as the attempt to respond to the diverse profiles and backgrounds of their students. All of the recent definitions of LLL reflect an emphasis on identifying how learning can best be enabled in all contexts and phases of life.
- The need for national LLL policies is undisputed and was strongly pushed in the context of the consultation on the European Commission's Memorandum on LLL (November 2000). The *Trends 2003 survey* reveals that, in 2003, a majority of countries either have the intention or are in the process of developing a LLL strategy. Such policies already exist in one third of Bologna signatory countries, namely Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, Ireland, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden and the UK.
- Most of the policies and actions undertaken at European and national levels do not target the higher education sector as such, and do not address the particular added value or conditions of LLL provision at HEIs.
- At institutional level, the UK, Iceland, France, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Bulgaria have the highest percentages of HEIs with LLL strategies. Germany, Austria, Italy, Hungary, Turkey, Romania and the SEE countries have the lowest percentages of HEIs with LLL strategies.
- A majority of student associations have observed changes of attitude to LLL at institutions in their countries over the last three years. Nearly half of the student representatives noted changes with respect to the courses offered to non-traditional students, a third observed greater encouragement of LLL culture among students. Little change was observed with respect to teaching methodologies or access policies.
- The development of LLL provision reflects a clear market orientation and well-developed dialogue with stakeholders. Two thirds of HEIs provide assistance on request and respond to the expressed needs of businesses, professional associations and other employers. Nearly half (49%) actually initiate joint programmes, with considerably more institutions doing so in Finland, Iceland, Sweden, Norway, Estonia, France, Ireland and the UK. However, the inclination to respond directly to market needs is also one of the reasons for the critical attitude of many academics toward LLL units at HEIs.
- The Europe-wide reforms of degree structures seem to affect LLL at many institutions. 39% of heads of institutions find that the implementation of new degree structures also affects the design of LLL programmes and modules.
- European cooperation in LLL course development is still the exception rather than the rule.
- LLL provision is still generally marginalised, i.e. rarely integrated in the general strategies, core processes and decision-making of the institution. Even in those countries where CE or LLL has been playing an important political role and where incentives are provided to develop LLL, such as France, the UK and Finland, CE centers are not always recognised on an equal footing with the rest of university teaching and research.

6.2.3 Future challenges

- Most national LLL policies comprise two coexisting agenda of social inclusion, stressing flexible access and diversity of criteria for different learner profiles, and economic competitiveness, focusing on efficient updating of professional knowledge and skills. The latter dimension is often funded and developed in partnership with labour market stakeholders. If the competitiveness agenda is reinforced by tight national budgets and not counterbalanced by government incentives, university provision of LLL may well be forced to let go of the more costly social agenda.
- In order to position themselves in an expanding market and clarify the added value of their expertise, HEIs will have to make more of an effort to integrate LLL into their core development processes and policies.

6.3 DEVELOPING A DIVERSITY OF PROFILES

"Ministers agreed that more attention should be paid to the benefit of a European Higher Education Area with institutions and programmes with different profiles." (Prague, 2001)

6.3.1 Analysis

The concept of differentiation of profiles among institutions and programmes as beneficial for the attractiveness and competitiveness of the European Higher Education Area seems to be a more recently defined phenomenon, which has not resulted in many targeted actions so far. Of course, we may say that profiling can only occur if autonomy from state intervention is guaranteed in the core areas in which universities can define their profile, i.e. their teaching programmes and their research areas, their student and staff composition. For sure, this would seem to be a necessary condition, one which has not been accomplished fully in any European country. But even if it had, it would not be a sufficient one.

While greater autonomy is clearly a necessary condition for greater institutional differentiation, the various traditions of the primary functions, partners, funding sources, management cultures and decision-making structures from which European universities are emerging make it difficult for them to respond to increased autonomy and the increased need for diverse profiles. Therefore, they will need support and incentives to help them manage these changes. For the time being, there is no evidence of either well-functioning support for this transition, or of incentives given to universities to foster these changes. On the contrary, funding mechanisms continue to treat and measure universities in the same way, regardless of their attempts to set different emphases and define individual profiles. Even the widespread use of performance indicators, which would seem to encourage differentiation since different funding levels are applied on the basis of different levels of success, in fact serve to undermine the emergence of different profiles: the pursuit of new alleys and the establishment of new focuses which might be necessary to define that profile do not pay in terms of indicator performance. Subtler rewards and incentives would be needed to foster such developments.

As yet, judging from their basic self-definition as primarily teaching or research-oriented, from their self-understanding of the primary community they serve, the European landscape of higher education is remarkably homogeneous: 88% of universities and 50% of other higher education institutions describe themselves as both research-based and teaching-oriented. Only 9% of the universities but 46% of other HEIs define themselves as primarily teaching-oriented. Even less, only 1,3% of all universities think of themselves as primarily research-based, with no significant difference between the university and non-university sector in this respect (in fact, more "non-university" institutions adhere to this self-definition: 1,6%). The two sectors of university and "non-university" higher education are also not as clearly separable as some HE representatives might think. Of course, one should not misunderstand the category "other HEI" to constitute a relatively homogeneous group of teaching colleges. A significant sub-sector of the "other" HEIs, seems to be indistinguishable in basic orientation from the universities, with teaching and research orientation combined and the right to award doctorates (26% seem to fall into this group).

Finally, a majority of HEIs are primarily oriented toward their national community: 52% of universities and 46% of other HEIs see themselves as primarily serving a national community. The numbers of universities primarily serving a regional or local community (22%, of which 20% regional and 2% local) and primarily serving an international community (23%, of which 7% primarily European and 16% primarily world-wide) are similar. The other HEIs only differ significantly from the universities in having 10% more institutions serving a regional community and 5% less serving a world-wide one. Interestingly, there are enormous country divergences, especially between the universities: the world-wide orientation is considerably above the aggregate average in the university sectors of Austria (25%), Belgium (25%), France (29%), Germany (31%), The Netherlands (40%) and the UK (52%) (see Figure 18). We should also note that a significantly lower proportion of institutions specialising in technology and engineering see themselves primar-

ily as serving a regional community, while a higher proportion serves an international community (9% European-oriented, 22% world-oriented). An above-average proportion of HEIs specialising in business and economics are primarily oriented towards their national communities, with a below-average focus on the regional community.

Table 4 - Primary target communities of HEIs in Europe

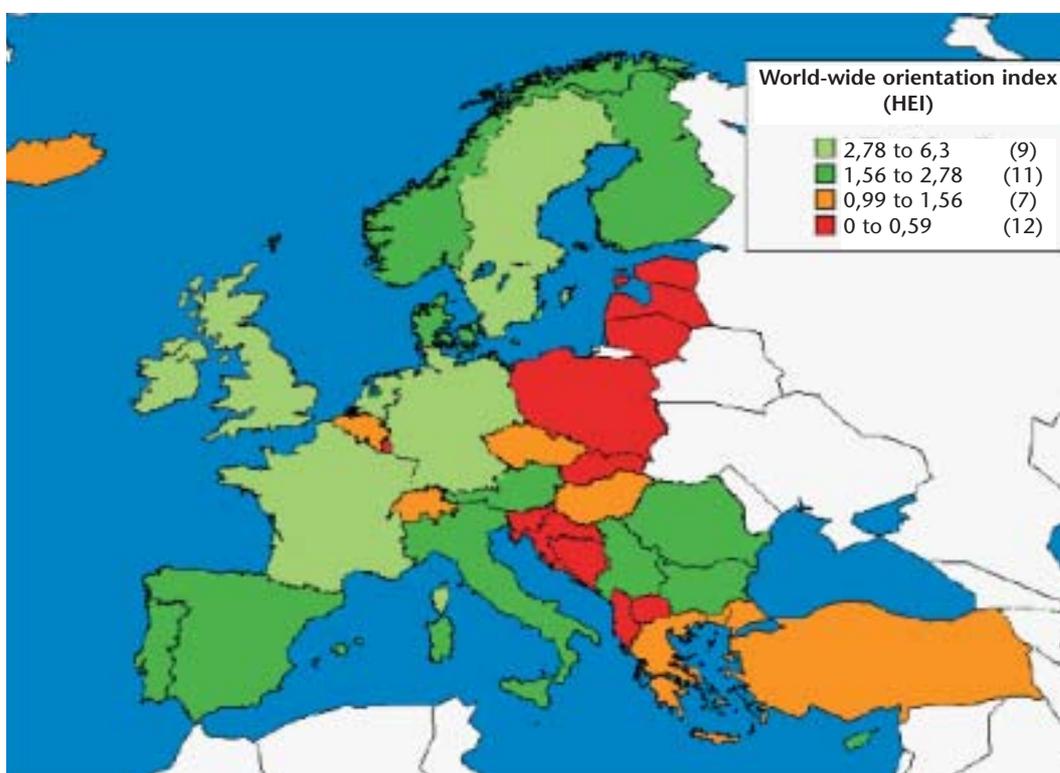
Question to Heads of HEIs: Which community do you see your institution primarily as serving?

Community	Universities	Other HEIs	Institutions specialising in business & economics	Institutions specialising in technology & engineering
Local	1,8%	2,2%	3,8%	3,8%
Regional	20,3%	31,1%	16,3%	11,8%
National	51,9%	45,9%	60,2%	47,8%
European	6,9%	6,8%	9,0%	8,7%
World-wide	15,9%	10,3%	9,3%	21,6%
NA	3,1%	3,8%	1,5%	6,3%
TOTAL	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Source: Trends 2003

Figure 18 - World-wide orientation index of HEIs in Europe

This index aggregates all those HEIs which answered "world-wide" when asked about the community they primarily serve, those which reported more incoming than outgoing students and those which mentioned priority areas for promoting their attractiveness outside Europe. The index values vary from 0 to 10, higher values meaning a higher orientation of the HEI within the respective country towards the world-wide community.



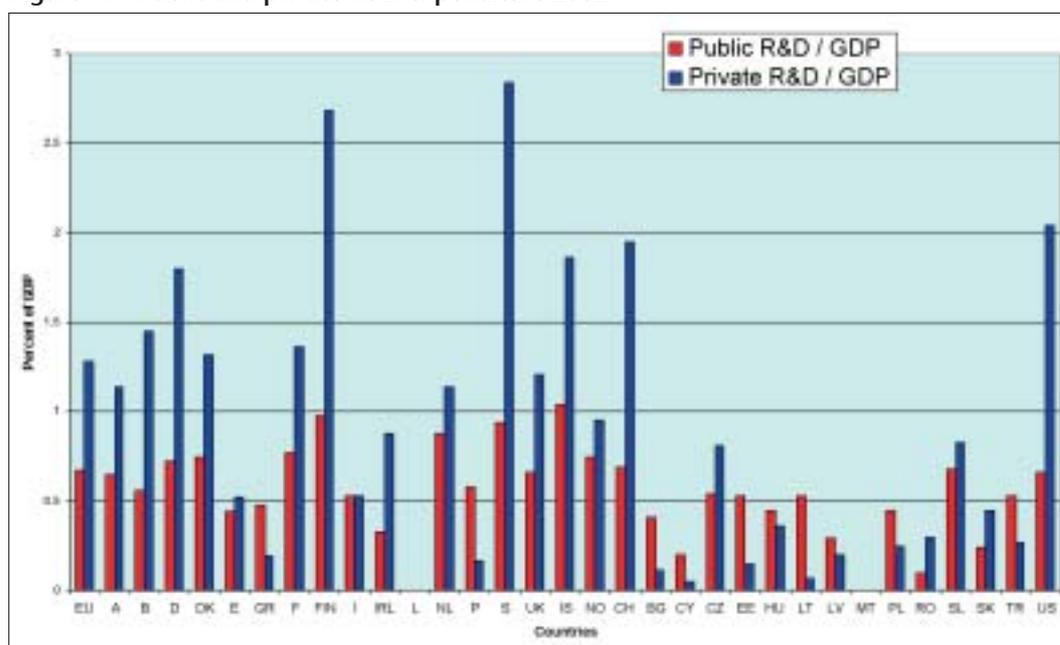
Source: Trends 2003

To move from the description of the status quo to the normative realm, we may conclude that institutional differentiation does not and cannot derive from the differentiation between teaching and research, or between international vs. regional orientation. But more fundamentally, we should ask where the need for “different profiles” actually comes from. Should we really accept this as given? We would argue that such profiling is indeed urgently needed, for the following reasons.

To begin with, it should be recalled that, over all, the number of students in higher education in Europe has doubled in the past twenty-five years. The largest increases have been in the accession countries such as Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, Slovenia. Only in Malta, Bulgaria and Cyprus have there been no increases in enrollment.¹²⁰ Increased participation rates have resulted in a more diversified student body, demanding not just more time but also additional didactical skills from university teachers, in addition to the heightened need for counselling. Moreover, we all know that increased participation rates have not resulted in proportionately increased budgets. Indeed the average unit costs per student in the EU are now at less than half of the average unit costs per student in the United States. And, as the Commission “Communication on investing efficiently in education and training”¹²¹ points out, the discrepancy will be exacerbated by the imminent EU enlargement. Such cuts have not “just” reduced investment in the most urgent maintenance and renewal of infrastructure (buildings and scientific equipment), they also reduce the professor/student ratio, i.e. the net attention each student will receive from his professors.

Severe budget problems are reported in most higher education systems in Europe. The most extreme example may have been reported by Italian HE representatives, where all university rectors threatened to resign *in toto* to protest against the severity of the underfunding and the most recent budget cuts. But the struggles in Britain and France have also been strong enough to attract significant media coverage beyond the world of HE proper. Thus French research institutes have had 30% of their operating and investment credits frozen for 2003. In Germany, the universities of Berlin even threaten to stop immatriculation because repeated cuts in government grants over a decade have not allowed basic provision for the expanded student population.

Figure 19 - Public and private R&D expenditure 2002



Source: European Commission, DG Research, European Innovation Scoreboard 2002

For our purposes, the British HE system may be the most telling example since, having undergone budget cuts already for two decades, it has been pushed more strongly than any other continental

120 Key Data on Education in Europe, 2002, European Union (2003).

121 Communication from the Commission, Investing efficiently in education and training: an imperative for Europe. COM (2002) 779.

European system towards a more market-oriented model. Such orientation has also been entering the debates on HE in the rest of Europe, e.g. in The Netherlands.¹²² In the UK, attempts to broaden participation in HE for decades without increasing public funds have resulted not only in severe infrastructural and maintenance problems, but also in British universities having more diversified funding bases, higher tuition fees, more entrepreneurial activity and more dependence on industrially financed research than any other universities in Europe. While the current budgetary situation has of course led to even more urgent pleas to increase public funding for HE, the other proposed remedies again emphasise the trend of strengthening the managerial, market orientation of the universities. These consist in diversifying the funding base even further (the current one already being more diversified than any other European country), putting less emphasis on research in general with a concentration of research capacity in fewer institutions, in enhancing differentiation between types of institutions, as well as in further increasing tuition (which is already higher in the UK than anywhere else in Europe).¹²³ With the exception of the proposal to increase public funding, the other proposals would all enhance the trend in British HE to move even further away from continental European HE systems, where a sustained emphasis on HE as a public good and responsibility is still the dominant model, even though public funding is in the process of undermining this.

Of course, the UK's clearly market-oriented approach to HE and its funding problems may be seen as one possible route for other systems to follow. And indeed, while tuition fees may still be a taboo in many continental European countries, the idea of introducing a more market-oriented managerial perspective into the governance of higher education institutions by way of managing boards or supervisory councils composed predominantly of external stakeholders has already been realised in several countries. The primary aim of such boards consists in anchoring the university more firmly in the community by appointing prominent figures from that community. This is the case in The Netherlands (supervisory councils) and Austria (*Universitätsrat*), has been introduced in Denmark and some German *Länder* and is gaining ground in several other western European countries. Furthermore, fostering a diversified funding base for the steadily growing costs of research has already been the most favoured option in many continental European countries, including Sweden, Finland, Switzerland, Germany, i.e. countries with comparatively high public spending on R&D. The European Commission's recent Communication on *The Role of Universities* also clearly supports this notion of diversified funding bases as the only way out of the research funding dilemma, including the increase in private R&D funding. Naturally, such a development would force universities not just to present their strengths to competitive public funding agencies, but also to present sharper profiles in order to attract other external sponsors in an increasingly tough competition for private support.

But the need for a differentiation of institutional and programme profiles does not only result from increased competition for public and private funds and the best staff. Universities also have to perform a number of new functions which make the need for choices of profiles all the more evident. These include:

- playing a more active role in ensuring lifelong learning, especially the updating of knowledge and skills, taking account of the latest scientific developments;
- building up an internal management and quality assurance system which allows for optimal use of funds, pro-active human resource development and recruiting, and constant self-improvement of internal processes and performance;
- building up technology transfer services, to support the formulation of collaboration contracts with private partners, intellectual property agreements, submission of patents and emergence of spin-offs;
- building up a state-of-the-art IT infrastructure to give optimal support to research, teaching and services, in order to remain at the forefront of research and technological development;
- offering career services for students to facilitate their insertion into the labour market and allowing for rewarding career choices and sustainable employability;

¹²² Felt proposes a useful distinction between four different models of higher education management and discusses recent university reforms in the UK and to a certain point also in the NL in the light of the "managerial" model; see Felt (2003), op.cit., sections I.3 and II.1.

¹²³ Cf. UK Dep. of Education's White Paper (2003), <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/index.htm>.

- communicating the most recent scientific developments and difficult ethical choices in scientific research to a frequently suspicious public;
- raising interest in science and technology among a larger part of the population, especially school children, who may thus be encouraged to embark on scientific study and career paths;
- attracting individuals to the university from traditionally less academically inclined backgrounds;
- designing curricula and choose research focuses of short- and long-term relevance to society and economic welfare, fostering the competitiveness of the national and European economy.

These new functions must be added to the old ones, of marrying teaching, which in Europe most often implies targeting a predominantly regional student body, with research, which by definition is international in scope. As we have already observed in section 4.5, institutions have to face a fundamental dilemma of conflicting values and orientation. On the one hand, they have to focus their efforts in times of budget constraints by becoming more and more selective in terms of areas, institutions, departments, researchers and students that show the clearest potential, in the fear that their flagship niches might otherwise lose the international race. On the other hand, they should contribute to building a society in which opportunities are optimised also for those who have not had the most privileged starting points.

All of these old and new functions and values should be realised against the backdrop of increased autonomy, which usually implies (see section 6.1.1.1) less state intervention, less state funding, greater stakeholder influence, a larger network of outside partners, more procedures of external quality assurance and accountability, as well as a diversified funding base. Indeed, the need to develop clearer profiles and to set priorities regarding the respective weight of the individual functions and areas to which these are to be applied becomes a matter of survival.

6.3.2 Key findings

- The readiness of HEIs to develop more differentiated profiles depends to a large extent on increased autonomy which is only partially realised in Europe, as well as on funding mechanisms which allow for such profiling, and which are not yet in place in any European country.
- Currently, a large majority of European higher education institutions are similar in the relative weight they attribute to teaching and research and in the dominance of a national orientation regarding the community they primarily serve.
- Only 13% of all HEIs (16% of universities) in Europe see themselves as serving a world-wide community, and only 7% see themselves as primarily serving a European community.
- Higher education institutions are facing an increasing need to develop more differentiated profiles, since the competition for public and private funds as well as for students and staff has increased in times of rapid internationalisation and even the globalisation of parts of the higher education market.

6.3.3 Future challenges

What does the diversification of functions and target groups mean for higher education institutions in Europe, their internal functioning and the reforms needed to position themselves in a new context of values, partners and users?

First, one may say that higher education institutions will have to make some difficult choices:

- Insofar as they are responsible for choosing their students, they may have to define more clearly how this student body should be composed, in order to be able to respond to its needs (different numbers of students with different needs, e.g. a certain number with special counselling needs, a certain number of students from different language backgrounds with language tuition needs, a certain number of students with clear potential for academic research careers with needs for additional research project exposure etc).

- If they choose to allow for a very diverse student body with diverse levels of performance and academic potential, they will also have to consider and develop the didactic capacities of their teaching and counselling staff more strongly than before.
- In order to recruit the right staff and students and choose the right partners in accordance with their mission and profile, they will have to prioritise whether they want to be more primarily teaching-oriented with a research base to support the teaching, or whether they want to focus primarily on research, with teaching to build up research-based careers in- and outside academia.
- If research is to be a priority, then the internationalisation of the university in its student body, staff composition, partnerships, external and internal communication and services will have to be pursued more aggressively to succeed in competing for people, projects and funding.
- For teaching or for research, emphases and profiles have to be defined, in order to attain critical mass and be attractive for outside partners. However, choosing such focus areas, which are meant to reflect scientific areas combining current strengths with the greatest future potential, goes against the grain of those scientific developments which are neither planable nor foreseeable. Hence such choices have to be balanced: focus areas with more predictable medium-term potential may be complemented by more risky investments in emerging areas. Moreover, in order to ensure innovative potential even in the longer term, profiling choices have to be compensated by increased horizontal communication if new scientific areas and cooperation are to emerge continuously.

The second consequence for universities consists in addressing the new needs which arise from the diversified body of immediate partners in the planning and implementation of teaching and research. Universities will have to decide what the limits of these partners' interventions should be with due regard to academic freedom. What does academic freedom mean in a world of multiple stakeholder influence?¹²⁴ What is the "unique added value" which universities can contribute as institutions which distinguishes them from other organisations also offering teaching or research? In emerging partnerships with outside stakeholders, universities will have to reflect and defend their interests, responsibilities and long-term perspectives more strongly and vocally than before. Only if universities improve their ability to communicate the social and economic value attached to their "disinterested" long-term perspectives in teaching and research to these partners and to society at large, will they be able to flourish as institutions defined by their reflective distance and their capacity to identify emerging problems, and propose sustainable solutions.

¹²⁴ These questions concerning the relation between the new autonomy and academic freedom have been formulated and discussed by U. Felt (2003) in the above-mentioned study, *University Autonomy in Europe: Changing Paradigms in Higher Education Policy*, loc.cit., section I.2.

7. CONCLUSIONS: TOWARD SUSTAINABLE REFORMS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE?

This study has looked at the Bologna Process from a predominantly institutional point of view. It has traced European and national trends pertaining to the overall Bologna goals and operational objectives, and has attempted to draw attention to implications, emerging consequences and possible interpretations of such developments at the level of higher education institutions. While concrete conclusions have already been drawn at the end of each individual section, we would like to emphasise four more fundamental conclusions which have emerged from the current phase of implementing the Bologna reforms at national and institutional levels, and which apply to any given ingredient of the reforms:

1. HOLISTIC BOLOGNA

Implementing the Bologna objectives becomes most fruitful if they are taken as a package and related to each other. Thus, for instance, the links between creating a Bachelor/Master degree structure, establishing an institution-wide credit transfer and accumulation system, and, less obvious to some, opening a lifelong learning perspective, have clearly emerged as points of synergy in the course of reflections on how to implement such reforms at institutional level. These links have crystallised around the issues of creating modular structures and defining qualification frameworks and profiles, as well as concrete learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, competences and skills. Other links were already clearly visible two years ago, such as the fact that creating compatible structures and improvement-oriented quality assurance would build trust and facilitate recognition, which in turn would facilitate mobility. In the course of devising viable academic solutions to some of the Bologna challenges, higher education representatives are now beginning to discover that, if given enough time, they may have embarked on more far-reaching and meaningful reforms than they had originally envisaged, enhancing attention to learners' needs as well as flexibility within and between degree programmes, institutions and national systems.

2. SYSTEMIC BOLOGNA

Implementing the Bologna objectives has far-reaching implications for the whole institution, not just in terms of reforming the teaching provision but also regarding counselling and other support services, infrastructure and, last but not least, university expenditure. Bologna reforms are not "cost-neutral"; they imply initial investments as well as increased recurrent costs of provision which affect other core functions of the institutions if overall budgets do not increase in real terms. But the systemic integration of the Bologna reforms does not just assert itself in administrative, infrastructural and financial terms. It also becomes blatantly obvious in the establishment of the new Bachelor and Master degrees, in which the role of research may have to be redefined. Master degrees, of course, cannot be reformed without due regard to their links and interrelation with doctoral-level teaching and research. To state the obvious, teaching cannot and should not be reformed at universities without considering its interrelation with research, from creating opportunities of recruiting young researchers to the integration of research projects into teaching.

3. AMBIVALENT BOLOGNA

In practically all action lines of the Bologna reforms, two potentially conflicting agenda emerge:

On the one hand, there is the competitiveness agenda, which aims at bracing institutions and national systems for global competition, using transparent structures and cooperation with European partners in order to survive or even thrive in an increasingly tough competition for funds, students and researchers. According to this agenda, greater concentration of excellence and centres of competence, clearer emphases of strengths and harsher treatment of weaknesses are necessary, even urgent, if European higher education is to contribute to reaching the lofty goal of Europe becoming "the most competitive dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world" by 2010 (Lisbon 2000).

On the other hand, there is the social agenda, stressing cooperation and solidarity between equal and unequal partners, flexible access, attention to individuals and individual contexts, including addressing issues such as the dangers of brain drain. It would be naïve to assume that the European Higher Education Area is being built only on the latter agenda.

Both agenda are needed to fuel the process. But they also have to be weighted, balanced and adapted to any given institutional context as well as interpreted in the light of each institution's attempts to find an appropriate niche in the national and European system of higher education. Well-meaning attempts to square the circle by trying to pursue both agenda, without any further differentiation regarding their application to different parts of each given system or institution, are bound to kill the fragile emerging institutional profiles which can be witnessed in a number of European countries. In any case, national legislators, policy-makers and institutional leaders must try to avoid the considerable danger of creating contradictory policies, incentives or measures if they want to succeed in either or both of these agenda. Instead, legislators and policy-makers should enlarge – and higher education institutions should use – the spaces for autonomous decision-making in order to allow for such differentiation.

4. FURTHERING BOLOGNA

So far, the Bologna Process has made considerable progress in achieving the objectives set out in 1999. This study proves once again that these objectives are realistic enough to inspire confidence in the developments leading to the European Higher Education Area. However, we should point to some neglected viewpoints and issues which seem to us to be essential for the creation of a genuine European Higher Education Area:

There seems to be a surprising lack of attention to the issue of facilitating a truly European-wide recruitment of professors. There are very few European higher education institutions which have a sizeable minority, let alone a majority, of non-national European academic staff. While this issue is addressed in the framework of the European Research Area, it belongs just as centrally to the creation of a European Higher Education Area and it should receive greater attention in the next phases of the Bologna Process. How can HEIs be encouraged to internationalise their recruitment procedures? What obstacles to long-term staff mobility must be overcome in terms of health insurance, pensions rights etc.?

Furthermore, the issue of free choice of study locations anywhere in Europe, even at undergraduate level at the very beginning of a study career, has not received attention. This is surprising, especially if one considers that the removal of all obstacles to such free choice would be the clearest evidence of a European Higher Education Area worthy of this name.

Linguistic matters are another neglected aspect of the EHEA: impressive progress is being made in terms of structural convergence, greater transparency, portability of grants etc., but many years of experience with EU mobility programmes have shown the effectiveness of language barriers. Is the total dominance of the English language in most institutions and programmes really the price we have to pay for true European mobility, or are there ways to safeguard Europe's linguistic and cultural diversity and convince students (and institutions) that "small languages" are worth bothering about?

Last but not least, if the enormous potential of using the Bologna objectives as a trigger for long-needed, fundamental and sustainable reforms of higher education in Europe is not to be wasted, the voice of the academics, within the institutions, will need to be heard and listened to more directly in the Bologna Process.

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9. ANNEXES

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ANNEX 1 – AGGREGATE RESULTS OF TRENDS 2003 QUESTIONNAIRE TO HEADS OF HEIs

EUA TRENDS III SURVEY: FINAL AGGREGATE RESULTS FROM HEIs

760 completed questionnaires were received from HEIs and processed by this date. However, these results do not include the questionnaires received from Armenia, Russia and the Ukraine.

**The figures in the tables represent % of total cases.
“NA” means “not answered”**

**Produced for EUA by Bogdan Voicu, RIQL. Data processing made by RIQL.
12.02.2003**

TRENDS IN LEARNING STRUCTURES IN HIGHER EDUCATION (III)

QUESTIONNAIRE

FOR HEADS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

This questionnaire is designed to gather information on the development of the Bologna Process. The collected information will:

- i) provide an important input to the Trends III Report¹ on developments in European higher education;
- ii) be used to monitor, for the first time, the response of higher education institutions themselves to the creation of the European Higher Education Area;
- iii) make a direct contribution to the next stage of the Bologna Process at the EUA Convention of Higher Education Institutions in Graz (May 2003) and the Summit of Ministers of Education in Berlin (September 2003).

The questionnaire has been structured to address the six main action lines of the Bologna Declaration and three additional priorities of the Prague Communiqué. The main purpose of this exercise is to analyse the impact of the Bologna Process on the daily reality of higher education institutions across Europe. *It is therefore essential that as many institutions as possible respond to this questionnaire.* The format of the questionnaire should facilitate rapid completion.

PLEASE RETURN THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE VIA E-MAIL BY 27 NOVEMBER 2002 TO EUA,
USING THE EMAIL ADDRESS: trends3@eua.be

¹ The *Trends III report* is a follow-up of the first *Trends report* made prior to the signing of the Bologna Declaration in 1999 and the *Trends II report* presented in 2001 at the EUA Convention of European Higher Education Institutions in Salamanca and at the Summit of European Education Ministers in Prague.

About the Questionnaire

The European University Association (EUA) is addressing this questionnaire to:

- i) EUA member universities;
- ii) EURASHE (European Association of Institutions of Higher Education) members;
- iii) Other higher education institutions taking part in the Socrates Programme and the Bologna Process.

Information from completed questionnaires will be transformed into aggregated, anonymous, statistical data and will be used only for the purposes specified above. Only aggregate data will be used by the authors of the report and by EUA. This report will be published on the Internet under www.unige.ch/eua and www.bologna-berlin2003.de. You will also receive a printed copy of the final Trends III report.

Format of Questionnaire

The questionnaire contains two types of questions. Some will invite you to choose one response from several options. An example of how to answer this type of question follows. Other questions offer the possibility of selecting more than one answer.

Please express your opinions as sincerely as possible.

Example question with answer

Q0. How many academic staff are employed at your institution?

- | | | |
|----|----------|-------|
| 1. | Under 20 | _____ |
| 2. | 20 - 40 | _____ |
| 3. | 40 - 65 | _____ |
| 4. | Over 65 | _____ |

Before you begin:

Please indicate the following:

Country:

City:

Institution:

Filled in by:

E-mail:

Start of questionnaire**0. General Questions****Q1. How many full time equivalent students are enrolled at your institution?**

1. Under 1000	28,5
2. 1000-5000	33,5
3. 5000 - 15000	23,6
4. 15000 - 30000	9,4
5. Over 30000	3,3
NA	1,7
Total	100,0

Q2. How would you describe the profile of your institution?

1. Primarily research-based	1,5
2. Primarily teaching-oriented	31,5
3. Both research-based and teaching-oriented	64,9
NA	2,1

Q3. Which is the highest level (or equivalent) to which your institution trains students?

1. Bachelor	20,6
2. Master	23,5
3. Doctorate	51,1
NA	4,8

Q4. Which community do you see your institution primarily as serving?

1. Local	1,9
2. Regional	26,9
3. National	48,3
4. European	6,8
5. World-wide	12,5
NA	3,5

Q5. Does your institution have a Bologna coordinator?

1. Yes	36,3
2. No	61,8
NA	1,9

Q6. If yes, please specify what position this coordinator holds.

1. Administrative	8,2
2. Academic	11,6
3. Both	16,0
4. Not applicable	61,1
NA	3,1

Q7. In general, how aware do you consider the academic staff, administrators and students in your institution to be regarding the Bologna Process?

Q7_1. Academic staff:

1. Very much aware	12,3
2. Reasonably aware	51,6
3. Not very aware	28,7
4. Almost completely unaware	4,4
NA	3,0

Q7_2. Administrative staff:

1. Very much aware	10,1
2. Reasonably aware	40,8
3. Not very aware	35,0
4. Almost completely unaware	11,1
NA	3,0

Q7_3 Students:

1. Very much aware	4,9
2. Reasonably aware	29,8
3. Not very aware	41,2
4. Almost completely unaware	20,8
NA	3,4

Q8. Would you say that, in your country, the legal framework supports or undermines autonomous institutional decision-making?

1. Significantly supports	11,9
2. Supports	38,4
3. Supports and undermines to varying degrees	40,6
4. Undermines	5,2
NA	3,9

Q9. Would you say that, in your country, the mechanisms for financing higher education support the implementation of the Bologna Process?

1. Significantly support	4,2
2. Support	44,7
3. Offer no support	41,3
4. Work against the implementation of the Bologna Process	4,0
NA	5,7

Q10. Which statement best represents your opinion regarding the creation of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA)?

1. It is essential to make rapid progress towards the EHEA	67,6
2. The EHEA is a good idea, but the time is not yet ripe	21,2
3. I do not trust the idea of the EHEA	1,2
4. I do not have an opinion on the EHEA	6,3
NA	3,8

1. Degree Structures and Curricula

Q11. Does your institution have a degree structure based on two main cycles (Bachelor, Master) as envisaged by the Bologna Declaration, in most academic fields?

1. Yes, we already had it before the Bologna Declaration	32,3
2. Yes, we introduced it as a result of the Bologna Process	20,9
3. Not yet, but this is planned	36,2
4. No, we do not plan to do this.	7,5
NA	3,2

Q12. Has your institution recently initiated a reform of the curricula in connection with the Bologna Declaration?

1. Yes, in all departments	27,7
2. Yes, in some departments	24,8
3. Not yet, but we will do so in the near future	33,3
4. No, we do not see the need for this in our institution	10,9
NA	3,2

Q13. In your institution, how important is the concern with the “employability” of graduates when designing or restructuring the curricula?

1. Very important	55,7
2. Important	35,8
3. Not very important	5,3
NA	3,2

Q14. Are professional associations and employers involved in the designing and restructuring of curricula with the relevant faculties and departments?

1. Yes, closely involved	31,5
2. Yes, occasionally involved	40,3
3. Rarely	25,1
NA	3,1

Q15. With a two-cycle degree structure, do you expect your students to leave after a Bachelor degree, or to continue at Master level at your institution?

1. Many will leave our institution after a Bachelor	16,9
2. Some will leave and some continue at Master level	32,0
3. Many will continue at Master level at our institution	29,4
4. Difficult to say at this stage	13,6
NA	8,0

Q16. In the framework of the two-cycle structure, has your institution recently defined the entry requirements for the Master level programmes?

1. Yes, within an overall institutional policy	29,7
2. Yes, each department/faculty takes care of its programme conditions	26,4
3. No, our institution has not yet discussed such issues	19,4
4. Not applicable	18,1
NA	6,4

Q17. If your institution awards doctoral degrees, what structure of doctoral degree studies exists at your institution?

1. Individual tutoring with supervisor only	17,8
2. Taught courses in addition to tutoring	32,2
3. Not applicable	37,3
NA	12,7

Q18. How much priority does your institutional leadership attach to the development of joint curricula with institutions in other countries?

1. High	31,2
2. Medium	42,3
3. Low	24,4
NA	2,1

Q19. How much priority does your institutional leadership attach to the development of joint degrees with institutions in other countries?

1. High	31,1
2. Medium	37,2
3. Low	28,2
NA	3,6

2. Recognition of Degrees

Q20. To your knowledge, how aware are the academic staff in your institution of the provisions of the Lisbon Convention and recognition procedures, in general?

1. Very aware	3,1
2. Reasonably aware	27,8
3. Not very aware	42,5
4. Almost completely unaware	16,8
5. No information available	7,4
NA	2,3

Q21. Does your institution co-operate with the ENIC/NARIC of your country?

1. Yes, there is close cooperation	20,7
2. There is only limited cooperation	23,8
3. There is no cooperation	24,5
4. I don't know what ENIC/NARIC is.	28,0
NA	3,0

Q22. Do you think that the emerging European Higher Education Area will facilitate the processes of academic recognition?

1. Yes, very much so	54,4
2. Yes, slightly	20,9
3. Difficult to say at this stage	20,3
4. It might complicate recognition processes	0,8
5. I don't think it will have much impact	0,9
NA	2,7

Q23. Does your institution have institution-wide recognition procedures?*(several answers allowed; please fill in "*" for each selected choice)*

Q23_1 Yes, for the recognition of foreign degrees	57,9
Q23_2 Yes, for periods of study abroad	81,9
Q23_3 Yes, for periods of study in another institution in our country	65,6
Q23_4 Yes, for degrees from other institutions in our country	65,1
Q23_5 None	5,5

3. Credit Systems**Q24. Does your institution use a credit accumulation system?**

1. Yes, ECTS	50,0
2. Yes, but not ECTS	22,4
4. Not yet	22,5
5. We do not intend to implement one	1,8
NA	3,3

Q25. If your institution has introduced a credit system, on what basis do you now award degrees / diplomas?

1. On the basis of accumulated credits only	20,4
2. On the basis of accumulated credits plus traditional end of year exams	46,8
3. Only on the basis of traditional exams	14,4
4. Not applicable	13,3
NA	5,1

Q26. Does your institution have a credit transfer system?

1. Yes, ECTS	68,0
2. Yes, but not ECTS	11,9
3. Not yet	16,3
4. We do not intend to implement one	1,2
NA	2,6

Q27. If your institution has a credit system, is it also applied at the doctoral level?

1. Yes	12,9
2. Not yet	20,4
3. We do not intend to apply this system at the doctorate level	11,3
4. Not applicable	47,4
NA	8,0

Q28. Do students returning to your institution from study abroad encounter problems with the recognition of their credits?

1. Often	3,1
2. Occasionally	50,1
3. Never	41,1
NA	5,7

4. Promotion of Mobility**Q29. Has outgoing student mobility increased at your institution over the last three years?**

1. Significantly	33,1
2. Slightly	40,8
3. Not at all	14,6
4. No, on the contrary it decreased	5,1
5. No information available	3,7
NA	2,6

Q30. Has incoming student mobility increased at your institution over the last three years?

1. Significantly	32,8
2. Slightly	42,7
3. Not at all	15,7
4. No, on the contrary it decreased	2,4
5. No information available	3,4
NA	2,9

Q31. When comparing incoming and outgoing student mobility, is there an imbalance?

1. Significantly more incoming than outgoing students	20,7
2. Similar levels	27,3
3. Significantly more outgoing than incoming	44,2
4. No information available	4,5
NA	3,4

Q32. Do you expect the two-cycle degree structure will provide more opportunities for horizontal mobility (moving from one faculty or institution to another within a degree cycle)?

1. Significantly	23,9
2. Slightly	50,4
3. Not at all	18,9
4. On the contrary, it will decrease	1,9
NA	4,8

Q33. Do you expect the two-cycle structure will provide more opportunities for vertical mobility (moving from one institution to another for the next cycle of study - e.g. from Bachelor to Master)?

1. Significantly	44,0
2. Slightly	43,1
3. Not at all	7,4
4. On the contrary, it will decrease	0,0
NA	5,5

Q34. To improve the conditions of student mobility, has your institution significantly improved any of these services in the last two years? (several answers allowed; please fill in "*" for each selected choice)

Q34_1 Welcome and orientation services	77,6
Q34_2 Accommodation facilities	56,9
Q34_3 Job opportunities	13,3
Q34_4 Counselling services	59,6
Q34_5 Academic tutoring	57,4
Q34_6 Information on study opportunities in other institutions	56,4
Q34_7 Language training	60,3
Q34_8 Social and cultural activities	57,9
Q34_9 Other (please specify:)	5,2

Q34_9OTH which other aspects has your institution improved in order to improve student mobility?

		Frequency	Percent
0	No response	716	94,8
1	International Commission	2	0,3
2	Traineeship opportunities	1	0,1
3	Pastoral care	3	0,4
4	Practical internship in companies	1	0,1
5	Artistic production	1	0,1
6	Students and families association welcome, administrative help	2	0,3
7	Buddy system	1	0,1
8	Facilities for incoming students, courses in English	5	0,7
9	Increase of personnel at the IRO	1	0,1
10	Introduction of Common Framework	1	0,1
11	Guest student club	1	0,1
12	Brochures	1	0,1
99	NA	19	2,5
	Total	755	100,0

Q35. Apart from ERASMUS grants, are there other stipends for student mobility? (several answers allowed; please fill in "*" for each selected choice)

Q35_1 Yes, from the national authorities	50,5
Q35_2 Yes, from the regional/local authorities	27,8
Q35_3 Yes, from the private sector	21,3
Q35_4 Yes, from charitable/religious bodies	9,7
Q35_5 Yes, from the institution's own sources	39,9
Q35_6 Yes, from other international sources	33,3
Q35_7 No	17,3

Q36. Has teaching staff mobility increased at your institution over the last three years?

1. Significantly	18,3
2. Slightly	47,7
3. Not at all	27,2
4. No, on the contrary it decreased	2,6
5. No information available	2,0
NA	2,3

5. Quality Issues**Q37. Do you have internal mechanisms for monitoring quality in your institution?**

(several answers allowed; please fill in "" for each selected choice)*

Q37_1 Yes, with regard to teaching	82,4
Q37_2 Yes, with regard to research	52,7
Q37_3 Yes, with regard to other activities in the institution <i>(Please specify:)</i>	26,3
Q37_4 Not yet established	13,8

Q38. Do external mechanisms for monitoring quality assurance and/or providing accreditation exist in your country?

1. Yes	79,2
2. No	16,1
NA	4,7

Q39. What do you see as the most important feature of the existing external quality assurance and/or accreditation procedures in your country?

1. Public accountability	19,4
2. Enhancing institutional quality culture	39,2
3. Improving higher education across the country	27,1
4. No important feature	2,0
5. Not applicable	6,2
NA	6,1

Q40. If your institution has been the subject of programme accreditation, has this process been generally helpful?

1. Yes	65,7
2. No	8,6
NA	25,6

Q41. Do you intend to encourage such programme accreditation in the future?

1. Yes	81,4
2. No	7,4
NA	11,2

Q42. In your opinion, considering the emerging European Higher Education Area and globalisation trends, is there a need for :*(several answers allowed; please fill in "*" for each selected choice)*

Q42_1 A national accreditation agency	54,1
Q42_2 A system of mutual recognition between national accreditation agencies	60,9
Q42_3 A pan-European accreditation agency	48,4
Q42_4 A world-wide accreditation agency	17,2
Q42_5 No, there is no need for accreditation	3,7

6. Life-Long Learning**Q43. Has your institution developed an overall strategy regarding Life-Long Learning (LLL) initiatives?**

1. Yes	35,1
2. Yes, we are in the initial stages	30,8
3. Not yet, but this is planned	26,0
4. No, we do not see the need for this at our institution	5,0
NA	3,2

Q44. How does your institution cooperate with professional associations, employers, and other stakeholders in developing LLL programmes?*(several answers possible; please fill in "*" for each selected choice):*

Q44_1 We initiate joint programmes	48,6
Q44_2 We respond to their expressed needs	65,9
Q44_3 We provide assistance on request	62,7
Q44_4 Not applicable	14,1

Q45. Does your institution cooperate with other higher education institutions in the development and/or delivery of LLL modules or courses?*(several answers possible; please fill in "*" for each selected choice):*

Q45_1 Yes, as part of a local or national network	52,4
Q45_2 Yes, as part of a European network	25,0
Q45_3 Yes, as part of a wider international network	10,6
Q45_4 No, we act independently	22,3
Q45_5 Not applicable	16,1

Q46. Does the implementation of new degree structures (Bachelor/Master) affect the design of LLL programmes and modules?

1. Yes, they are connected	39,1
2. No, they are designed separately	27,1
3. Not applicable	28,2
NA	5,6

Q47. Does your institution use information and communication technology to support LLL offer and delivery? (e.g. internet, distance-learning based modules)

(several answers possible; please fill in "" for each selected choice)*

Q47_1 Yes, to support courses taught on site	51,3
Q47_2 Yes, to support virtual mobility of staff and students	34,5
Q47_3 Yes, to support joint programmes with other institutions or stakeholders	30,1
Q47_4 Yes, in other ways <i>(please specify:.....)</i>	3,2
Q47_5 No, not yet	23,7
Q47_6 Not applicable	11,9

Q47_4OTH Other ways to use ICT for LLL

	Frequency	Percent
0 No response	716	94,8
1 To support courses offered in our own network	2	0,3
2 E-learning	5	0,7
3 Invitation for courses on Internet	2	0,3
4 For advertisements	1	0,1
99 NA	29	3,9
Total	755	100,0

7. Role of Higher Education Institutions and Students in the EHEA

Q48. In your opinion, is your institution already playing an active role in the construction of the European Higher Education Area?

1. Yes, very active	10,8
2. Reasonably active	41,5
3. Not very active	25,1
4. Not yet	17,1
5. We do not think this is a priority	2,2
NA	3,3

Q49. What can be done to increase the role played by your institution?

(several answers possible; please fill in "" for each selected choice)*

Q49_1 Reform legislation to allow institutions more room for initiative	36,6
Q49_2 Involve institutions more directly in the process	59,1
Q49_3 Provide clear financial incentives for institutional involvement	75,0
Q49_4 Establish a monitoring and reporting system	29,6
Q49_5 Allow for greater competition and cooperation between institutions across Europe	27,5
Q49_6 Other <i>(please specify:</i>)	2,2

Q49_60TH Other ways to increase the role played by HEI in constructing EHEA

		Frequency	Percent
0	No response	739	97,9
1	Disseminate info/ideas at faculty/department level	2	0,3
2	Coordinate academic calendars	1	0,1
3	Train all academic and administrative staff	1	0,1
4	Staff development	1	0,1
5	Active management support from the Ministry of Education	1	0,1
6	Programmes in English language policy	2	0,3
7	Allow European and/or international accreditation procedures	1	0,1
8	Local reform and legislation change needed	1	0,1
9	Bilateral and multilateral agreements for cooperation	1	0,1
99	NA	4	0,5
Total		755	100,0

Q50. How have you involved your students in the implementation of the Bologna Process at your institution?

(several answers possible; please fill in "*" for each selected choice)

Q50_1	Formally, through participation in senate/council	48,9
Q50_2	Formally, through faculty/department level	39,4
Q50_3	By providing information on the issues involved	48,4
Q50_4	By supporting our students to attend national discussions	22,0
Q50_5	Other (please specify:)	2,9
Q50_6	Not applicable	18,3

Q50_50TH Other ways for involving students in EHEA construction

		Frequency	Percent
0	No response	717	95,0
1	Supporting students to attend international discussions	3	0,4
2	Socrates Committee	1	0,1
3	Participation in specific steering committee	1	0,1
99	NA	17	2,3
Total		739	97,9
System		16	2,1
		755	100,0

8. Attractiveness of European Higher Education**Q51. Do you expect that the emerging European Higher Education Area (EHEA) will provide better opportunities for:****Q51_1. Students:**

1.	All students at your institution	54,0
2.	Most outgoing students from your institution	20,7
3.	Most incoming students to your institution	4,3
4.	Mainly the more affluent students at your institution	9,7
5.	Non-European students considering higher education in your country	3,0
6.	None	1,6
NA		6,7

Q51_2. Higher education systems:

1.	All national systems of higher education that are part of the EHEA	40,8
2.	Mainly those systems most competitive on the European higher education market	18,8
3.	Mainly those systems most open to international cooperation	34,4
3.	None	1,1
	NA	4,9

Q51_3. Higher education institutions:

1.	All institutions part of the EHEA	47,5
2.	Mainly the institutions most competitive on the European higher education market	31,5
3.	Mainly the most prestigious institutions	4,6
4.	Mainly transnational providers	4,1
5.	Mainly postgraduate institutions	2,7
6.	Mainly institutions within the larger countries in the EHEA	2,6
7.	None	1,1
	NA	5,9

Q52. Does your institution systematically track the employment of graduates?

1.	No, there is no system	25,7
2.	Yes, we track some graduates	40,3
3.	Yes, we track the employment of all recent graduates	30,2
	NA	3,8

Q53. In your opinion, will the envisaged EHEA bring added value to the degrees / diplomas awarded by your institution?

1.	Yes, definitely	36,4
2.	Probably yes	37,4
3.	Difficult to say at this stage	22,7
	NA	3,6

Q54. At which level will this added value be most enhanced?

1.	Regional	2,7
2.	National	12,1
3.	European-level	47,0
4.	International	29,3
5.	None	1,6
	NA	7,4

Q55. In which geographical areas would your institution most like to enhance its international attractiveness? (several answers possible; please fill in "*" for each selected choice)

Q55_1 EU	91,8
Q55_2 Eastern Europe	62,0
Q55_3 US /Canada	57,0
Q55_4 Australia	22,7
Q55_5 Arab World	15,9
Q55_6 Asia	39,8
Q55_7 Latin America	31,6
Q55_8 Africa	24,2
Q55_9 None	0,0

Q56. Which instruments (incentives or other measures) are used to pursue these priorities? (several answers possible; please fill in "*" for each selected choice)

Q56_1 Offer scholarships to students coming from abroad	33,0
Q56_2 Apply targeted marketing techniques for student recruitment	30,2
Q56_3 Establish inter-institutional partnerships/collaborative arrangements/branch campuses in other countries	57,2
Q56_4 Develop joint programmes or similar cooperation activities	69,9
Q56_5 Offer study places from students coming from priority areas	34,1
Q56_6 Offer new programs taught in English or in another major European language	53,9
Q56_7 Send our students there for limited periods of study	66,7
Q56_8 Other (please specify:)	1,9

Q57. Is your institutional leadership aware of the present GATS discussions concerning Higher Education?

1. Yes, fully aware	19,3
2. Yes, but without specific details	45,9
3. Not yet	29,3
NA	5,5

COMMENTS

Please use the space below to share with us some of your hopes and fears regarding the European Higher Education Area. Please add any comments and reactions to this questionnaire as well.

.....

.....

.....

.....

End of Questionnaire

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME. PLEASE RETURN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE BY EMAIL TO trends3@eua.be BY 27 NOVEMBER 2002

ANNEX 2 – RESPONSES TO TRENDS 2003 QUESTIONNAIRES, BY COUNTRY AND TARGET GROUP

	University	Other HEI	Rectors' Conference	National Association other HEI	Ministry	Student Association	Employers' Organisation	Total
Albania	2				1	1		4
Andorra	1							1
Armenia	1							1
Austria	12	20	1	1	1	1		36
Belgium	8	20	2		2	2		34
Bosnia-Herzegovina	4		1		1	1		7
Bulgaria	11	2	1		1	2		17
Croatia	4	2	1		1	2	1	11
Cyprus	1	4			1		1	7
Czech Republic	17	12	1		1	1		32
Denmark	10	36	1		1			48
Estonia	4	3	1		1	1	1	11
Finland	15	12	1		1	1	1	31
France	27	52	1	2	1			83
Germany	20	39	1		1	1	1	63
Greece	11	9	1		1		1	23
Hungary	21	18	1		1	1	1	43
Iceland	1	1	1		1	1		5
Ireland	7	9	1	1	1		1	20
Italy	25	5	1		1	2		34
Latvia	4	26	1		1	1		33
Lichtenstein					1			1
Lithuania	2	14	1		1	1	1	20
Luxemburg	1	1					1	3
Macedonia	3				1	1		5
Malta	1				1		1	3
Netherlands	5	10		1	1	2	1	20
Norway	5	24	1		1	1	1	33
Poland	23	14	1		1	1		40
Portugal	11	24	1		1	1		38
Romania	15				1	1		17
Russia	1							1
Serbia & Montenegro	7		1		2	1		11
Slovakia	8		1		1	1	1	12
Slovenia	1	3	1		1	1	1	8
Spain	26	1	1		1			29
Sweden	13	2	1		1	1	1	19
Switzerland	10	4	1	1	1	1		18
Turkey	18	1			1			20
Ukraine	2							2
United Kingdom	36	9	1	1	1	2	1	51
European associations						6		6
Total	394	377	29	7	38	39	17	901

ANNEX 3 – OVERVIEW OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN TURKEY

The studies prepared for the Conferences of Bologna and Prague, *Trends I* and *Trends II*, contained country-specific information on the HE systems of all the “Bologna” signatory States. The only exception was Turkey which joined the Process in 2001 at the Prague Conference. Therefore this overview of the higher education system in Turkey, following the structure of the country portraits in *Trends I* and *II*, is included as an Annex to the *Trends report* in 2003.

Overall structure

The Turkish higher education system consists at present of 53 state universities, including two state higher institutes of technology, and 23 private/foundation universities. It is a unitary system, based only on university-type institutions. Higher technical and vocational studies are offered at two-year and four-year higher schools affiliated to the universities. The Turkish HE system is centralised, and all state and private universities are equal regarding the legal status and regulations. Foreign universities may not operate in Turkey, which excludes the provision of transnational education.

Degrees and qualifications

Higher education follows a two-tier model. At the sub-degree level the *On Lisans Diploması* (pre-licenciate or associate degree) is offered after two years of study.

A degree at Bachelor level, the *Lisans Diploması*, is awarded after a four-year programme in most disciplines, with the exception of dentistry and veterinary medicine (5 years) and medicine (6 years).

Master-level programmes may last either 3 semesters (without thesis) or 4 semesters (including a thesis) and lead to the *Yuksekk Lisans Diploması*.

Doctoral studies are organised in doctoral programmes and last about 4 years.

Admission

Admission to all undergraduate programmes requires a secondary school leaving certificate (or equivalent) plus a sufficient score at the Student Selection Examination (ÖSS). The ÖSS is administered centrally by the Student Selection and Placement Centre (ÖSYM) which is affiliated to the Council of Higher Education (YÖK). For foreign students wishing to register for undergraduate studies in Turkey, there is a separate “entrance examination for foreign students” (ÖSYM).

Credit systems and modules

All universities use a national credit system that resembles those of North America, i.e. it is based rather on contact hours than on student workload and serves primarily for credit accumulation rather than transfer.

Since Turkey is planning to participate in the EU mobility programmes as of the academic year 2004/05, a National Agency has been set up to prepare and manage these programmes. Part of the preparation is a stricter application of ECTS principles and most of the Turkish universities have already started to introduce ECTS.

The programmes in medicine, dentistry and veterinary science are organised in modules.

Structure of the academic year

The academic year is divided into two semesters of 16 weeks duration. The winter semester runs from the last week of September until mid-January, the summer semester from mid-February until mid-June.

Tuition fees and grants/loans

Students pay different levels of tuition fees, according to the type of programme/discipline and the type of university. The levels are fixed each year centrally by the Council of Higher Education

(*YÖK*). The share of the fees to be paid by the State is determined each year by the Council of Ministers and allocated to the budget of the universities. The minimum share paid by the State is 50%. Tuition fees for foreign students are three times higher than for national students. Private/foundation universities determine their tuition fees themselves. There are national grants/loans schemes for Turkish students. There are specific scholarship programmes for study abroad at Master and Ph.D. level. In the framework of bilateral agreements, some scholarships are also available to foreign students for study in Turkey.

Quality assurance

All universities are state-founded. This implies institutional recognition. Equally, all new programmes have to be authorised traditionally by the *YÖK*. In 2003, however, new “Regulations on Academic Assessment and Quality Control in Higher Education” have been adopted by the Interuniversity Board. These provide for the evaluation of all degree programmes, starting with self-assessment. It is planned to transform these evaluation procedures into an accreditation system in the longer run.

ANNEX 4 – LIST OF BOLOGNA-RELATED EVENTS ATTENDED BY TRENDS 2003 AUTHORS DURING 2002-2003

2002

12-13 March	“Working on the European Dimension of Quality”, Amsterdam
11-12 April	“From Lisbon to a European Higher Education Area: Recognition Issues in the Bologna Process”, Lisbon
17-20 April	EUA General Assembly and Conference “Autonomy and Quality - the Challenge for Institutions”, Roskilde
30-31 May	Seminar on Joint Degrees within the framework of the Bologna Process, Stockholm
24 June	EUA Bologna Promoters Group meeting, Geneva
4-6 July	ECTS National Coordinators and Counsellors annual meeting, Graz
11-12 September	EUA/EAIE Bologna Seminar, Porto
20 September	Launch of EUA Joint Masters pilot project, Brussels
11-12 October	“ECTS – The Challenge for Institutions and Students”, Zürich

2003

3-5 February	“Quality Assessment and Accreditation in Higher Education”, Madrid
19-20 February	Seminar on the Social Dimension of the Higher Education Area, Athens
21-23 February	ESIB European Student Convention, Athens
6-8 March	“The External Dimension of the Bologna Process. Southeastern European Higher Education and the European Higher Education Area in a Global World”, Bucharest
14-15 March	Seminar on Master Degrees, Helsinki
27-28 March	Seminar on Qualification Structures in Higher Education in Europe, Copenhagen
10-11 April	“Bologna - A European space for talented young artists?”, Vienna
10-13 April	“Shaping the European Area of Higher Education and Research”, Berlin
28-29 April	“Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education”, Berlin
9 May	Launch Conference of Tuning II, Brussels
11-17 May	“Smashing the Ivory Tower - Equal Access to Higher Education”, Sofia
29-31 May	“Convention of European Higher Education Institutions”, Graz
5-6 June	EURASHE 13th Annual Conference, Gyöngyös
5-7 June	“ECTS and ECTS compatible credit systems for Higher Education in the context of Lifelong Learning”, Prague
12-14 June	Seminar on Student Participation in Governance in Higher Education, Oslo
29 June - 2 July	“Parity of Access across Europe? - Equity and Future Higher Education Development: EAN Contribution to the Bologna Process”, Prague

WHAT IS EUA ?

The European University Association, as the representative organisation of both European universities and national rectors' conferences, is the main voice of the higher education community in Europe. Its membership includes 655 individual members, 37 collective members and 11 affiliate members in 45 countries throughout Europe.

EUA's mission is to promote the development of a coherent system of European higher education and research, through active support and guidance to its members, to enhance their contributions to society and the quality of their core activities.

EUA focuses its policies and services to members on the creation of a European area for higher education and research. More specifically, EUA's objectives are to develop consensus on

- a European higher education and research identity based on shared values;
- the compatibility of European higher education structures through commonly accepted norms;
- convergence of the European higher education and research areas to strengthen further the sector's attractiveness in Europe and beyond.

QU'EST-CE QUE L'EUA ?

Organisation représentant à la fois les universités européennes et les conférences nationales de recteurs, l'Association Européenne de l'Université est le principal porte-parole de la communauté de l'enseignement supérieur en Europe. 655 membres individuels, 37 membres collectifs et 11 membres affiliés dans 45 pays d'Europe en constituent les forces vives.

L'EUA a pour mission de favoriser la mise en place d'un système cohérent d'enseignement supérieur et de recherche en Europe en orientant ses membres vers une amélioration de la qualité de leurs activités fondamentales, soutenant ainsi activement leur apport à la société.

L'EUA articule sa politique et ses services autour de la construction d'un espace européen de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche. Plus spécifiquement, elle vise à rassembler ses membres sur:

- une identité européenne de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche qui se fonde sur des valeurs partagées;
- la compatibilité des structures de l'enseignement supérieur européen à travers des normes acceptées en commun;
- la convergence en un espace européen des systèmes d'enseignement supérieur et de recherche pour renforcer l'attrait des institutions en Europe et dans le reste du monde.

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Trends IV: European Universities Implementing Bologna

**Sybille Reichert
Christian Tauch**



Education and Culture

Socrates

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Executive Summary

1. **Trends IV: Universities implementing Bologna:** Trends IV has been undertaken through extensive field research, with 62 site visits to universities (using the broad sense of the term) at the core of information gathering. While the research findings contained in the report are qualitative in nature, and therefore do not provide statistical certainty, Trends IV provides an in-depth and the most up-to-date snapshot of the state of implementation of Bologna reforms in Europe's universities.

2. **Embracing Reform:** The findings regarding attitudes to reform in universities contrast sharply with the views expressed by institutional leaders only two years ago through the Trends III questionnaires. General acceptance of the need for reforms seems to be wide-spread in universities. Indeed, many institutions have made great efforts to "internalise" the reform process, incorporating Bologna issues into their own institutional strategies and activities. In many cases, reforms are recognised as an opportunity to address problems which have long been known to exist. The overwhelming perception from the site visits is that actors in institutions are now facing and tackling the challenges of implementation with commitment and energy.

3. **Coping with Reform:** Criticism of the reforms from within universities tends not to focus on the purpose of reform – there is considerable consensus that change is needed - but rather upon the extent to which reforms are, or are not, being supported. Often implementation is being hindered by lack of the necessary institutional autonomy to make key decisions or the additional financial resources for universities to cope with such a major restructuring exercise and the new tasks which have emerged as part of the reforms. At the same time, the role of leadership within universities is also critical: wherever the leadership is providing strong and positive support to the process, allowing enough space for internal deliberation, progress is smoother.

4. **The introduction of three cycles:** Considerable progress has been made in introducing three-cycle structures across Europe, although there are still some legislative obstacles to structural reform in a few countries five years after signing the Bologna Declaration. Many institutions, however, have now reached the heart of the transition process. Structural change must be matched with proper redevelopment of the curricula, and often this has not been completed. Confusion sometimes exists regarding the objectives of the first cycle degree (which many mistakenly regard as a compressed version of former long-cycle programmes) and in many cases there has not been adequate time for institutions and academics to address reforms in a comprehensive way and to benefit from the opportunities offered through restructuring the curricula.

5. **The impact of structural reforms:** All too often, Bologna is still conceived as essentially a process of harmonising degree structures. Trends IV illustrates that, although much progress is being made, the process of moving towards a comprehensible three-cycle system throughout Europe is a highly complex cultural and social transformation that has set off a chain of developments with their own dynamics in different contexts. While changes to the length of studies can be described easily, measuring their significance and their impact requires much greater and more sophisticated analysis: for example, the acceptance of new first-cycle qualifications in society, the extent to which these new qualifications meet the needs of the labour market, and the implications of a pedagogical shift to student-centred learning.

6. **Employability of first cycle graduates:** In the majority of universities visited concerns were expressed about the employability of first cycle graduates. Indeed, in countries moving away from a long first cycle, many academics are not ready yet to trust fully the new first cycle qualifications, and are frequently advising their students to remain in higher education until the end of the second cycle. On the other hand, institutions in countries where the structural reforms began earlier report far fewer problems of labour market acceptance of first cycle graduates – indicating that countries experiencing difficulties are perhaps simply at an earlier phase of a normal transition. However, significant differences do also exist between the disciplines. The findings also show that more public debate on the reforms is needed and suggest that public authorities are lagging behind in adapting their own career structures to accommodate new first cycle qualifications. Professional bodies – especially in

regulated professions – also play an important role. The report includes both examples of areas in which professional bodies encourage new programmes, and others where there are major obstacles. Meanwhile, many institutions themselves are also still not addressing seriously the needs of local, regional, national and international employers when constructing their new study programmes.

7. Enhancing quality: The study's findings show that universities are increasingly aware of the importance of improving the quality of their activities, and this is expressed in a wide range of processes that go far beyond formal and obligatory responses to the requirements of external quality assurance. While the need for improved cooperation between institutions and quality assurance bodies is undisputed, Trends IV points to a range of other factors, including student participation, which have a very direct impact on quality improvement. Notably there is clear evidence that success in improving quality within institutions is directly correlated with the degree of institutional autonomy. Institutions which display the greatest ownership for internal quality processes are also those with the most functional autonomy.

8. Recognition of qualifications: Improved quality is regarded as one of the keys to more automatic recognition of qualifications across Europe. The site visits show that considerable progress in recognition is being made, but again there is a need to do more to ensure a systematic use of the commonly agreed Bologna transparency tools, in particular ECTS and the Diploma Supplement. The Diploma Supplement is certainly being introduced in all the countries visited, in line with the commitment of the Berlin Communiqué, but in addition to technical problems, the challenge of providing clear information about learning outcomes remains. Meanwhile ECTS is being widely used for "student transfer", and generally seems to work well. However, it is still often perceived as a tool to translate national systems into a European language, rather than as a central feature of curriculum design. Thus strengthening efforts to mainstream these European tools in institutions across Europe continues to be a priority.

9. The link between higher education and research: In relation to their teaching and research missions institutions and individual academics often experience a pull in different directions by the conflicting demands placed upon them. According to many academics, the necessary focus upon restructuring curricula and the challenges of designing new study programmes and putting in place additional counselling and support for more flexible learner-centred teaching have meant that they have less time than before to devote to their research activities. This is a particular cause for concern in view of the growing awareness at European level of the need to enhance the attractiveness of research careers and underlines the importance of linking the higher education and research agendas. There is so far little evidence that such discourse has been translated into concrete action and prioritised in universities.

Conclusions

10. Trends IV shows that **continuous reform and innovation** is already a reality - and the only serious option - at many universities, and that many factors are combining to affect the nature and success of these complex processes. If reforms are to be successful, there needs to be a much greater awareness throughout society that this current period represents a major cultural shift which is transforming long-accepted notions of higher education and that implementing the reforms in a sustainable way needs **time and support**. Governments must be sensitive to the fact that the goals will not be achieved simply by changing legislation. Institutions need more functional autonomy as a fundamental condition for successful reform and accept that this implies strengthening governance structures, institutional leadership and internal management. The question of the funding of reform has to be addressed and with it the broader issues of investment in higher education as a means of the demands of Europe's developing knowledge societies. After all, Europe's strength derives from the conception of higher education as a public responsibility responding to societal needs, and this requires the commitment to a long-term and sustainable public funding base.

Acknowledgements

This study would not have been possible without the support of a number of institutions and individuals who were keen to take the Bologna reforms seriously by focusing on the institutional realities. First and foremost, the study was supported financially by the European Commission. It could not have been realised without the flexible and astute help of a team of European experts who have undertaken the site visits to many European Higher Education Institutions, which formed the main basis of the study's data. They managed to deal with a packed agenda of interviews of different institutional groups, to summarise an abundance of different perspectives without reducing them and to submit the reports within a very short time span. In addition, they came upon very short notice to share their reflections after the completion of the whole round of visits. Without their dedication, and their detailed observations this study could not have been realised.

Trends IV would have been far less informative and representative without the input of the Coimbra Group that kindly agreed to carry out 14 additional site visits in their member institutions. The findings from these reports completed those organised by the EUA in a very helpful way and we thank the Coimbra Group very much for their active participation.

We also thank the great support we received from the national rectors' conferences, in particular by the national experts who accompanied the European experts on their site visits, helping them to grasp the particularities of the national higher education landscape and current debates.

Finally, the authors would like to thank the immensely helpful advice and editorial support they have received from the EUA secretariat, in particular Kate Geddie, David Crosier, Andrée Surssock and Lesley Wilson. Given that the Trends IV data had to be analysed and key findings had to be synthesized within a very short amount of time, the untiring intellectual (and emotional) support, keen sense of the political process which forms the backdrop of this study, and last but not least, dedicated editorial care given by EUA were vital to the survival of the authors and contributed to making this intense experience actually a lot of fun.

Sybille Reichert
Christian Tauch

List of Acronyms

APEL	Accreditation of prior experiential learning
APL	Accreditation of prior learning
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENIC	European Network of Information Centres
ERA	European Research Area
EUA	European University Association
HEIs	Higher education institutions
LLL	Lifelong learning
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centres
QA	Quality assurance

1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

The Bologna Declaration of 1999 has initiated the widest reaching reforms to European higher education in recent decades. The breadth of the process refers both to the extent of the reforms themselves at the European, national, and institutional level, and to the growing number of countries committed to creating a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010 – now involving 40 countries with more expected join at the next Ministerial meeting. At this five-year mid-point in the process, the meeting of European Ministers of Education in Bergen, May 2005, offers an ideal opportunity to reflect on the ways in which Europe's higher education institutions (HEIs) are implementing the Bologna reforms, to see what progress has been made and what challenges remain.

Through the *Trends* reports prepared for the Ministerial meetings taking place every two years, the European University Association (EUA) or a predecessor association has been involved in “taking stock” of changes to the European higher education landscape since the Bologna process began. This is a major activity for EUA as part of its active involvement in shaping and developing the EHEA.

The approaches and scope of the *Trends* reports have changed over the years to respond to the evolution of the Bologna process and the changing priority of issues. The primary aim of *Trends IV* is to shed light on the conditions, problems, challenges and achievements which are encountered by Europe's HEIs in implementing the Bologna reforms. It continues the institutional focus which the predecessor study, *Trends 2003: Progress towards the European Higher Education Area*, commonly known as “*Trends III*,” began two years ago. Taking up the thread from *Trends III* which was still chiefly concerned with identifying the expectations, opinions and main problems that HEIs associate with the different aims and action lines of the Bologna reforms, *Trends IV* is now proceeding into a more detailed analysis of these issues at a more advanced stage of implementation. In particular, this report explores the ways in which institutions are responding to the Bologna process, offers insight into the impact that the Process is having on overall institutional development, and looks at the levels of awareness and support for these changes among the various actors across Europe's higher education academic community.

Furthermore, *Trends IV* enables EUA members to have up-to-date information on changes taking place across Europe's HEIs in this collective process of reform and to guide EUA's future work plan in a way that addresses the most important member' needs.

1.2. Methodology

The primary source of information for *Trends IV* was 62 site visits to HEIs in 29 European countries (listed in appendix 1). The visits lasted one to one-and-a-half days and were conducted by a team of international experts well versed with European policy and institutional developments, with appropriate language capabilities to conduct nearly all visits in the local language. The international expert was supported by a national expert nominated by the national rectors' conference of the country to provide details on national conditions and debates that contextualised the institutional information (listed in appendix 2). In addition, the institutional site visits were complemented by questionnaires from the respective national rectors' conferences that gave background information on recent national legislation and developments along the various Bologna action lines (appendices 3 and 4).

The site visits consisted of the researchers conducting small group interviews with different groups within the institution: institutional leadership (rector and vice-rectors), deans, academics, junior staff, PhD candidates, students, and administrators. All institutional actors were asked questions along a common framework (see appendix 5). For compatibility with the stocktaking of the “mid-term priorities”

as outlined in the Berlin Communiqué, the questions addressed the implementation of two-cycle structures, recognition arrangements, and quality assurance processes. Furthermore, EUA chose to also address general attitudes towards and awareness of the Bologna process within the institution, as well as issues of research and research training to follow up on the recognised link between the EHEA and European Research Area (ERA) introduced in the Berlin Communiqué. Each of these themes is addressed in this report in separate chapters, with a concluding chapter that identifies the key success factors for implementation as well as the systemic challenges which emerge in the process.

The decision concerning which countries to visit was governed by research imperatives. The financial limitations of the *Trends IV* budget, of which over half is covered by EUA itself, precluded the possibility of conducting multiple visits in all 40 signatory countries. Having to limit the overall number of countries, it was decided to exclude those where there is only one university, which was the case in Cyprus, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, and Malta because it was considered more valuable to spend travel resources to gain an understanding of the situation in a national context where several affected institutions could be compared. EUA also decided it was too early to assess progress made by institutions in countries that only recently signed the Bologna Declaration in Berlin, namely Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Holy See, Serbia and Montenegro, FYROM, and Russia.¹

The selection of institutions for site visits was based upon creating a theoretical sample of different types of institutions (university and non-university, comprehensive and more specialised, metropolitan and regional, research intensive and teaching-oriented) but that were roughly comparable with regards to minimum student population size, profile, level to which degrees are offered, and having a Bologna coordinator (where possible). This was determined by referring to *Trends III* questionnaire responses. EUA's member national rectors' conferences were asked to select relevant institutions, and in total 48 HEIs were involved through this process. The need for institutions to be willing to participate meant, of course, that some bias was introduced; in addition, the fact of being "selected" for the project may also have created a bias. The sample, on average, is therefore likely to be more positively disposed and advanced in introducing the reforms than the average institution in each national context. Such bias was judged to be legitimate given that the aim of the study is to see what challenges are being faced and to assess the nature and quality of the reforms undertaken in light of institutional development and self-improvement, and not to measure how far institutions have progressed overall in the implementation.

The Coimbra Group generously contributed to the *Trends IV* project by offering to interview member institutions of their network using the same methodology and questions of *Trends IV*. Coimbra Group institutions "paired up" to introduce an external perspective to the questioning, and contributed 14 of the institutional cases to the sample - thus bring the total number of institutions participating to 62. Given the fact that the Coimbra Group institutions involved were all multi-disciplinary research-intense universities with an international orientation, this type of institution is somewhat overrepresented in the study's institutional sample.

A last note should be made on the very limited time for the project, which started in June 2004 with research design and concluded at EUA's Convention of Higher Education Institutions in Glasgow, April 2005. EUA faced a challenge of finding qualified and available researchers at short notice, which coupled with academic calendars and summer breaks meant that the visits could not begin before October 2004. In the end, little more than two months was available to the main authors for reading, analysing the institutional reports and pulling central findings together. This report therefore presents key findings but cannot possibly do full justice to the wealth of the data collected. To make full and differentiated use of the many observations and perspectives gathered in the framework of this study's site visits, additional follow-up actions and more in-depth analyses on individual aspects will be pursued after this study.

¹ EUA has extensive information on many of the Balkan countries from conducting Institutional Evaluations over the past few years. For example, country-wide reviews have been conducted in Serbia and Montenegro (2003/4), BiH (2004) and FYROM (2004/5). It is felt that the particular challenges facing the region merit specific attention to consider progress on the Bologna reforms in line with the political transformations and restructuring of higher education systems in these former Yugoslav states. EUA has therefore decided to pursue these challenges and issues in the region outside this project.

2. Two Cycle Degree Structure – Christian Tauch

Degree structure: Adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles

All Ministers commit themselves to having started the implementation of the two cycle system by 2005.(...)

Ministers encourage the member States to elaborate a framework of comparable and compatible qualifications for their higher education systems, which should seek to describe qualifications in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile. They also undertake to elaborate an overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area. (...) First cycle degrees should give access, in the sense of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, to second cycle programmes. Second cycle degrees should give access to doctoral studies.(...)

Berlin Communiqué (2003)

Creating a system of easily readable and comparable degrees is a central - and for many even the essential - objective of the Bologna process. Since 1999, however, the experience of introducing two or three cycles to Europe's national higher education systems has demonstrated that there is ample room for different and at times conflicting interpretations regarding the duration and orientation of programmes. Especially the employability of 3 year Bachelor graduates continues to be an issue in many countries. On the other hand, the unique opportunity provided by the Bologna process to revise pedagogical concepts by introducing student-centred learning has been utilised in practically all countries, and modular structures and clearly defined learning outcomes for the various degrees awarded are being introduced. Correspondingly, a sincere determination to overhaul the entire approach to teaching and learning in a great number of HEIs is expressed, rather than simply comply with legal obligations at a formal level. And while the relevance of qualifications frameworks to curricular development and recognition are not yet well-known in most HEIs, this can be explained by the rather scarce activities initiated in this field at the national level between Berlin and Bergen. The two topics of access to higher education and progression from one cycle to the next receive greater attention in many countries as HEIs are under pressure to make optimal use of their resources, reduce the duration of studies and sharpen their institutional profiles. This chapter describes the wider setting of these curricular reforms.

2.1. Implementation of the two cycles at national level

Almost all countries in this study have by now introduced the two-cycle system. Only in very few countries were HEIs still waiting for more detailed governmental regulations regarding the operational aspects of the system, such as the length of the cycles, ECTS, and the Diploma Supplement, before implementing the structural changes. At the time of the site visits in late 2004, this concerned institutions in Portugal, Spain and Sweden. However, government decrees were passed in Spain in January 2005. It should also be noted that in some Bologna signatory countries, such as the UK, institutions have the autonomy to make structural changes without needing to wait for governmental/legislative reforms.

There are various modes and speeds of introducing the new systems. For example, in Hungary the introduction began in 2005 and will already be compulsory in 2006, and in Croatia time pressure is equally intense with radical change intended to take effect in the academic year 2005 - 2006. In Norway the first cycle will be fully implemented by 2005 after a longer preparation phase with the old system being completely removed by 2007. In Finland the new degree system will officially start in August 2005, after long deliberations at national and institutional levels. In a few countries where the reform has already been implemented, e.g. in Italy and the Netherlands, the government is considering some adjustments to the system (e.g. nomenclature). Estonia is in the peculiar situation of changing from one two-cycle system to another two-cycle system, namely from 4+2 to 3+2, with resulting problems of acceptance and confusion. HEIs in Denmark introduced a 3+2+3 structure in 1993 but are now rethinking the content of programmes, restructuring the curricula in a process

including stakeholder consultation and definition of learning outcomes.

Numerous institutions confirmed that the speed of (and motivation for) reforms is perceived very differently across some disciplines and faculties. In some universities the Humanities disciplines seem to have the least problems offering first- and second-cycle degrees; in others they find it almost impossible to do something meaningful at Bachelor level. The same is true for the regulated professions where professional bodies play a significant role in helping or hindering the introduction of the new degree structures. The HEIs in some countries, e.g. in Spain, Finland, and Romania, referred to subject-specific coordination groups or pilot projects at national level that helped them considerably with the development of the new curricula.

Overall, however, **the situation is remarkably different from two or three years ago**, when not only medicine, but also teacher training, engineering, architecture, law, theology, fine arts, psychology and some other disciplines were excluded from the two-cycle system in many countries. Today, if at all, this restriction seems to apply only to medicine (and related fields) in most countries. Where medicine has been or will be included – e.g. in Flanders, Switzerland and Denmark - the duration of the Master degree amounts to 180 or even 240 ECTS credits, resulting in 360 – 420 ECTS for the Bachelor and Master combined. Teacher training and certain other disciplines still pose problems, in some national contexts more than others, and here national systems are experimenting with a variety of solutions.

2.2. Attitudes in HEIs towards Bachelor and Master degrees

Generally speaking, the higher education communities visited for *Trends IV* see the advantages of the two-cycle system, even though they may be critical with regard to specific aspects of the implementation.

Especially many institutions in Northern Europe reported that the dominant attitude was positive across the institution and that there were few problems. Sometimes the complete revision of study structures and programmes was and is embedded in a larger national reform effort, such as the Quality Reform Project in Norway.

In the large majority of HEIs visited for *Trends IV* staff supported the underlying ideas of a student-centred approach and problem-based learning, even if they were critical of various features of the implementation process. Some institutions self-critically acknowledged that the introduction of the two cycles, initiated some years ago, has so far led mainly to structural changes while the issue of quality is only now moving to the fore. Often, but not always, however, these institutions linked their observation to a complaint about time pressure imposed by legal regulations: too much reform in too little time.

A negative attitude was found in only a few HEIs, where academics complained that they did not see the value of the reforms and felt that Bologna was being imposed on them - by the institutional leadership and/or by the ministry.

In most cases criticism was directed not against the two cycles as such but against the conditions of implementation and the resulting extra work. For example, a few HEIs in Italy and Hungary were unhappy with the fact that they had been asked to devise Bachelor programmes without receiving clear ministerial guidelines about what the Master programmes should resemble. But even when the structural requirements for both cycles are clear, the task of meaningfully dividing teaching contents between Bachelor and Master levels remains difficult, leaving open questions regarding how to balance general subjects vs. specialised subjects and theory vs. practical experience. Also teaching at Master rather than at Bachelor level sometimes seems to be perceived as much more prestigious or relevant to research interests by certain professors, resulting in difficult negotiations within faculties.

Academics in many countries expressed concern about the negative effects brought about by the focus on teaching (as opposed to student learning) in the Bologna process, especially at the Bachelor level, with language such as “*Verschulung*,” “*Didatticizzazione*” being used. The primary worries are

that curricula are becoming more rigid and compressed with less space for creativity and innovation, and in this respect there were frequent complaints that too many units of former longer degrees were being crammed into first-cycle programmes. In addition, the enormous time invested in reform has forced many academics to reduce their research activities, which in turn is having negative repercussions on the quality of their teaching.

An important, albeit transitory problem for institutions, is coping with the students that are caught between the old and the new system, with old courses disappearing or being offered in a different order, and new ones emerging. HEIs try to cope with this situation by offering improvised solutions, but these place additional strains on time and budget. Another transitory problem is the “generation gap” reported in some HEIs: while in general younger colleagues were very supportive, older ones often did not feel motivated to undertake major structural reforms. The exception to this trend was found in institutions in France, where reforms were generally being overseen and implemented by the more experienced academics.

The introduction of a two-cycle structures, normally linked to modularisation and ECTS, often implies much extra work also for university administrations, such as adapting electronic student services to the individualised learning paths. In some countries “Bologna” meant also the shift from one academic year to two semesters, with the consequence of additional work related to the new examination schedules. As a result, **even academic and administrative staff that are fully supportive of the reforms point to the need for compensation, incentives, and extra funding** - otherwise frustration and the dragging of feet will be inevitable.

2.3. Degrees at Bachelor level

Discussions on both the duration and the purpose of programmes at Bachelor level continue. The misconception that the Bologna process “prescribes” in any way the 3+2 year structure is still widespread. 3+2 is indeed the dominant model across the European Higher Education Area, even in countries where HEIs have the choice between three and four years for the Bachelor level, as in Germany. In most countries three-year Bachelors are the legal rule, and only few have a standard length of four years, e.g. Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Scotland and Turkey (and the non-university sector in some countries).

In many universities professors and, to a lesser degree, deans and sometimes the institutional leadership, still express profound doubts regarding the possibility to offer a degree after only three years that is both academically valid and relevant to the labour market: “Employability” to these critics often seems to be synonymous to a lowering of academic standards. Reservations about the validity of three-year Bachelors are particularly strong in engineering, the physical sciences and fine arts.

Three observations can be made with regard to the criticism of the three-year Bachelor:

- Firstly, the three-year model has been not only adopted, but also accepted in many countries and disciplines. It might be helpful for the critics to seek the advice of those institutions and faculties that showed that three-year Bachelor programmes can indeed work.
- Secondly, in many universities the discussion still appears very much centred on the formal duration, with not much attention given to the intended outcomes. In these cases three-year Bachelors can become a matter of academic reputation – universities do not want to be seen as awarding degrees at a level that is traditionally reserved for the professional or vocational sector. The problem is compounded (and seemingly substantiated) in some universities by attempts to squeeze the content of traditional four (or even five) year programmes into three-year Bachelor programmes. As a result, students are unable to study the programmes in the foreseen time span and professors see themselves confirmed in their conviction that nothing academically viable can be achieved after three years. These problems stem from a misunderstanding or disregard of the pedagogical re-orientation that has come to be associated with the Bologna reforms, characterised by the terms “outcome-orientation”, “student-centred learning.” The opportunity to review and “clear out” curricula is being missed

in these institutions. Bachelor programmes are not supposed to provide the same level of knowledge and skills as traditional five-year programmes.

- Thirdly, there is justified concern about the “one size fits all” approach taken in many national laws that impose three-year Bachelor degrees: some disciplines argue convincingly that three years is too short a period of time to impart the knowledge and skills necessary for a meaningful first degree and they would like to see the existing regulations replaced by greater autonomy for the HEIs in designing their degree programmes. Three and a half years as well as four years would still be fully within the “Bologna consensus” – requiring, however, a shorter duration where there are consecutive Master programmes.

As to the question of whether Bachelor graduates are more likely to enter the labour market or go on for a Master programme, answers varied substantially from country to country. In the UK and Ireland most students leave higher education with the Bachelor, returning to do a Master degree later in life. But also HEIs in a few countries that introduced Bachelor level degrees some years ago, such as in Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden, and Turkey, confirm that there are no major problems with acceptance by industry and other employers.

On the other hand, in many HEIs in countries where the two cycle structure is only now being introduced students declare themselves badly informed about the value and meaning of a Bachelor (“degree for the less able”) and generally plan to continue for a Master, “to be on the safe side.” Their professors often support and encourage this attitude. There are also frequent reports in these countries that employers are equally poorly informed about the purpose and value of Bachelor degrees.

A very important impediment for a better acceptance of the Bachelor degrees is the **failure of many governments to set a clear example of the value of Bachelor graduates with regard to public service employment**, through adjusting civil service grades, and demonstrating positively the career and salary prospects of Bachelor graduates.

Countries with binary systems (university/polytechnic sectors) seem to have some specific issues with regard to the Bachelor degree: for example, in the Netherlands, Latvia and Finland, a distinction is made between professional and academic Bachelor degrees. Normally holders of a professional Bachelor are expected to enter the labour market, while the academic bachelors are more likely to continue for a Master programme. In these countries the professional Bachelor can take four years, while the academic Bachelor takes only three years. Universities in countries with binary systems are sometimes worried about the competition from the polytechnic sector: Bachelor-degree holders from the polytechnics, normally with compulsory practical elements in their programme, can be more attractive to employers than Bachelor graduates from universities. Some of these universities currently draw the conclusion that their Bachelor degrees are more of a formal step, or at best a platform for re-orientation. The polytechnic-type institutions, on the other hand, are quite confident that their Bachelor graduates are competitive on the labour market.

Career paths and employment of higher education graduates are being monitored to varying degrees in many countries at national level, but it is too early for this to be undertaken specifically for Bachelors in many countries. Meanwhile activities of HEIs themselves in this regard seem to be patchy at best.

Similarly, cooperation with the world of work in designing curricula – as called for in the Berlin Communiqué - still does not seem to be the rule. Academics often content themselves with assuming they know best what kind of knowledge and skills will help their graduates to find a job. The acceptance or non-acceptance of the Bachelor degree is often described in somewhat fatalistic terms, such as: “time will show whether the labour market will receive the new degree well.” Only a minority of HEIs carry out market research before the opening of a new programme and actively promote their new degrees among employers. Examples of successful dialogue between HEIs and employers’ associations, chambers of commerce, for example in Germany, Spain, and the UK, could serve as an inspiration to others.

2.4. Degrees at Master level

Consensus on the length, functions and profiles of Master programmes in the European Higher Education Area has been reached at successive conferences and seminars between Bologna and Berlin, especially in Helsinki in 2003, and yet there is still a significant variety of programme structures to be found.

Duration is still an issue in some countries. The most frequent type of Master programme is a postgraduate Master, building on a Bachelor programme and requiring between 60 and 120 ECTS credits. Universities in Belgium, the Netherlands and Sweden consider their 60 ECTS Masters, following a 180 ECTS Bachelor, as too short and not internationally competitive.² Universities in the UK, on the other hand, consider their one-year Master programmes (often amounting to more than 60 ECTS) as a particularly attractive element of their study offers, especially to students from outside Europe.

Some exceptions to these reform trends can still be found. Old-style, long one-cycle programmes of 300+ ECTS credits at universities continue to exist and to be popular in some countries (e.g. Poland, Hungary) and also in some disciplines (notably medicine and engineering). In Belgium there is also a phenomenon of post-Master Master programmes that require a first Master degree to be eligible for admission. In Ireland and Scotland a few examples of a move towards five-year integrated Master programmes were also found, for example in nursing, midwifery, dentistry, medicine and in sciences and engineering while the model of a four-year “Integrated Masters” also exists in the UK. It is difficult to see how this model in its present form could be integrated as a *second* cycle qualification to the overarching European higher education qualifications framework.

No European consensus exists with regard to the question of whether Master programmes should be differentiated systematically between more applied/professional on the one hand, and more research-oriented on the other. Institutions in several countries, including Latvia, France, Germany and the Netherlands find such a differentiation useful, while others in countries such as Austria, Belgium and Poland do not. Meanwhile in the UK and Ireland an important distinction is drawn between “taught” and “research” Masters, and the Turkish system provides for Masters “with thesis” or “without thesis.”

The overwhelming majority of university Master degrees in the institutions visited give access to doctoral studies, as stipulated in the Berlin Communiqué.

In the non-university/polytechnic sector considerable differences between countries can be observed. In Austria and Germany, *Fachhochschulen* may offer both professional and research Masters, both giving access to doctoral studies at university level. In the Netherlands the case very similar with the *Hogescholen*, which offer mainly professional Master programmes and they receive no public funding for these. In Finland no decision has been taken yet.

Where the reform is still in its early phase, Bachelor programmes are sometimes being developed without taking into account what should be taught and achieved at the Master level (“one step at a time”- approach). Some HEIs are fully aware that this approach is unsatisfactory and will have negative repercussions, yet they feel unable to develop Master programmes without the Ministry providing the necessary frameworks and guidelines for the framework at Master level.

In countries where second-cycle Master programmes have been introduced recently or are just being introduced there is often a tendency to create too many programmes because “all professors want to have their own.” Sometimes no institutional strategy is apparent and it is quite likely that there will be neither funding nor accreditation (where appropriate) for all these programmes. Such master programmes are often designed with a very narrow focus on the preceding Bachelor programme, i.e. Bachelor and Master are seen exclusively as one consecutive entity, for the same students.

² Unless specified otherwise, Belgium is used to refer to HEIs in both the French and Flemish-speaking communities.

This is confirmed by the fact that “stand-alone” Masters, sometimes designed explicitly to attract foreign students and possibly taught in English, are still the exception in most countries and are common only in the UK and Ireland. The majority of HEIs continue to target mainly their own Bachelor graduates. Vertical mobility (i.e. between Bachelor and Master or between Master and PhD) is perceived as a threat in some institutions where it is viewed as a potential “brain drain” of the best students rather than an opportunity for “brain gain.”

Many institutions explicitly praise the new freedom to design interdisciplinary Master programmes, as well as programmes in emerging areas of science and knowledge.

In a few countries (Greece, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland), students expressed doubt over the continuity of public funding for the Master level, fearing that fees will be charged for new postgraduate Master programmes that will be too expensive for them. Whether the fears are founded or not, governments have not succeeded, and sometimes not even tried, to dissipate these anxieties among students.

2.5. Joint Degrees

According to the national rectors’ conferences, the situation regarding the legal possibility to award joint degrees is improving. In many countries they are now allowed, e.g. in Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, and Spain. HEIs in the UK universities have the most far-reaching autonomy in deciding whether to set up Joint Degree Programmes and with whom. HEIs in Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Turkey can award Joint Degrees since the law does not mention them and therefore does not exclude them. Only in a relatively small group of countries, like in Estonia, Hungary, Norway and Sweden, are Joint Degrees still not possible but amendments to the legislation are being prepared. In Danish HEIs, it is felt to be a question of the institutional autonomy of institutions; currently the government does not allow Joint Degrees unless it can be argued that the degree in a specific field is “indispensable.”

The *Trends III* study of 2003 had revealed that the level of interest in Joint Degrees among Rectors’ Conferences and Ministries was “medium to low.” Apparently this has changed for the better in most countries, perhaps due to the influence of the Erasmus Mundus programme. Interest levels increased and greater offering of Joint Degrees in the coming years seems likely. Italy for instance sees Joint Degrees as a particularly important tool in the internationalisation of its HE system. Only in half a dozen countries did the level of interest remain unchanged or even decrease in the last two years.

Nonetheless, despite the growing interest in Joint Degrees, there remains little available information about the number of existing programmes, with exact figures available only in a few countries, like France, Germany and Italy.

One of the biggest practical problems with Joint Degree programmes is the question of quality assurance/accreditation. Transnational higher education programmes need special forms of quality assurance and it is to be hoped that the progress made at European level for quality in agreeing on shared guidelines and standards will also facilitate appropriate accreditation mechanisms for Joint Degree programmes.

2.6. Curricular reform: Modules

An introductory cautionary remark on the data gathered on the modularisation of study programmes: unlike ECTS or the Diploma Supplement, “modularisation” is a concept for which no European reference documents exist (for example, standard forms, “key features”, users’ guides). Therefore **a huge variety of interpretations of the concept can be found, ranging from defining each single unit (lecture, seminar, etc.) as a module to full-fledged and very elaborate modular systems with interdisciplinary elements.** Consequently, the information provided by the institutions varies considerably and makes comparison difficult.

A large number of HEIs declare that their programmes have been or are presently being modularised, e.g. in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Sweden, Turkey. In France, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland HEIs reported that they had started the process by introducing semesters (with compulsory examinations at the end), thus replacing the academic year as the reference unit. Some HEIs are preparing modularisation by taking examples of good practice into account, notably from the Tuning project, and looking to good models of ECTS use.

However, the observation was made that modularisation especially at Bachelor level could be rather difficult because curricula tend to be more rigidly structured than in the traditional one-tier system and require a high number of compulsory subjects and contact hours. Reaching internal agreement (within the HEI or the department) on what modularisation is and what modules should look like seems to be a common challenge.

Particularly central administration sometimes complained about the heavy additional workload caused by the “atomisation” of programmes. Some HEIs underlined that modularisation, if done properly, requires careful attention to be paid to the internal coherence of programmes through a meaningful grouping of courses, so as to maximise the spectrum of choices for the students. Otherwise the risk is that curricula are not really reviewed and adjusted, but simply cut and squeezed into fewer semesters.

Generally, students welcomed modularisation - where it works - as making the study programmes more manageable and flexible, but they also **underlined the need for more advice and counselling to profit from the sometimes confusing range of options**. Some complained that modularisation in their HEI had been superficial, and instead of encompassing entire programmes had only taken effect with regard to a few optional courses, while the bulk of the programme remained un-modularised and compulsory. As a result, the increased flexibility students expected from modularisation did not occur. Some institutions, for their part, reported that they could not introduce as much flexibility as they wanted due to limited resources and limited space. Many of these institutions pointed to the additional burden on human resources (staff time) incurred in introducing flexible learning paths.

2.7. Curricular reform: Learning outcomes

A significant group of HEIs in our sample from all parts of Europe declare themselves fully or largely familiar with the concept of learning outcomes (or competences), have implemented (or are implementing) them in all programmes and consider them a helpful tool. The Tuning project was mentioned by several groups in certain HEIs as one source of information and inspiration.

The Berlin Communiqué had called for the elaboration of national qualification frameworks but little progress has been in most countries. Denmark, Scotland, England, Wales, Northern Ireland, Ireland, and Hungary continued to use or develop their existing frameworks, while in Germany a framework for the higher education awards was written in 2003. Indeed, very positive reference to the existing national qualifications framework as a tool for curricular development and recognition was made by the HEIs visited in Denmark and the UK. Danish students declared they had been involved in the definition of learning outcomes, based on the qualifications framework, and that this has been a very positive experience indeed.

The absence of national qualifications frameworks, however, does not mean that requirements and subject-specific standards for curricular development in a national context do not exist. These standards may assume the form of core curricula defined by the ministry, of accreditation requirements or of regulations issued by professional bodies (e.g. in engineering and health sciences). In some cases these approaches may still be rather input and teacher-oriented but this is nevertheless as close as some HEIs get to the concept of learning outcomes.

In a number of HEIs only vague notions of learning outcomes exist, and sometimes with only one group (for example, deans or central administration) showing some degree of familiarity, while others (often the students) have never heard of the concept. In some HEIs in Austria, Germany, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and other countries where learning outcomes are not yet part of the

institutional reality, the attitude is often rather positive and the wider implications of learning outcomes (such as an institutional approach, the link to ECTS and student-centred learning) are well perceived.

Very few HEIs voiced explicit criticism or reservations against the concept of learning outcomes. On the other hand, the European dimension of the concept of learning outcomes was perceived only by those academics that had some knowledge of the Tuning Project.

2.8. Access to higher education, progression through the system

The Berlin Communiqué states the commitment of Ministers to make higher education equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity. With reference to the last part of this phrase, many HEIs are exploring the question of student selection that corresponds to their institutional profile and standards of quality.

Access to Bachelor programmes:

In a number of countries, e.g. Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Switzerland, HEIs reported that no real institutional selection at Bachelor level is possible: unless a *numerus clausus* applies for a specific discipline, all holders of the formal qualification (secondary schooling) whose grades are above a certain level have to be admitted – sometimes after successful participation in a national competitive exam.³

In some of these HEIs a selection takes place after the first year of the Bachelor, on the basis of performance. In Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands, worries were expressed that the obligation to accept all applicants will weaken the institutions' competitiveness at European level. In Germany the legal possibility for HEIs to select applicants has been considerably enlarged in 2004.

Many HEIs, for example those in the sample from Croatia, Finland, Ireland, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, and the UK can select their students according to criteria defined either at the institutional or departmental level.

Access to Master programmes:

In line with the Berlin Communiqué most awards at Bachelor level seem to make a graduate eligible for application to a Master programme. The majority of HEIs in this study, nonetheless, have the possibility to select candidates for Master programmes although some constraints remain: in the Netherlands, Switzerland, France, Belgium, and Denmark, Bachelor graduates are guaranteed access to a Master programmes in the same discipline: however, Netherlands and Switzerland can apply selection procedures among foreign applicants.⁴ France seems to be unique in having in place a selection mechanism at the end of the first year of two-year Master programmes.

Where Master programmes have not yet been introduced, like in Finland, Sweden, Portugal, the modalities of transition from the Bachelor to the Master level are still under discussion.

Admission to doctoral level:

With regard to the doctoral level, most Master degrees allow the graduate to apply for admission to a doctoral project, and in the UK bachelor degrees may be sufficient to give access to doctoral study. The selection process is in the large majority of HEIs left to the discretion of the faculty. However, in a small group of HEIs – in Belgium and universities in Austria - no selection seems to be possible at any

³ The reference to Austria refers solely to the university sector as the legal prescriptions for student access/admission differ for the non-university sector where institutions may select their students.

⁴ This relates to government-funded programmes from research-oriented universities in the Netherlands. The *Hogescholen* have and use all options to select Masters students.

point, either at Master or at PhD level – as all candidates that satisfy the formal admission requirements have to be accepted.

2.9. Challenges for the Future

- **The implementation of two-cycle structures and curricula review is well underway** in most institutions, but the reorientation and rationalisation of curricula in the sense of alleviating and focussing contents still has to be completed. Thus the relatively frequent misunderstanding that Bologna is about teaching the same subjects in less time needs urgent clarification: a new three-year programme cannot provide the same level of qualification nor attain the same learning outcomes as a traditional four-year, let alone five-year programme.
- In several countries, there is a high risk that concepts and tools such as student-centred learning, learning outcomes, and modularisation in curricula development, and the link to ECTS and the Diploma Supplement are implemented haphazardly to comply with existing regulation, without a deep understanding of their pedagogical function.
 - **Learning outcomes are vital** if the system of easily readable and comparable degrees across Europe is to be based on the same nomenclature for degrees. Learning outcomes are **still considered by many deans, professors and students as an accessory**, but must become an intrinsic element of the pedagogical shift intended by the Bologna process.
 - **Modularisation** continues to be a difficult topic, often rather poorly understood. Each HEI would benefit from taking a coordinated approach to modularisation, defining the size and format of modules across the institution.
 - **Examples of good practice and information on developments at subject, national or European level should be widely distributed** and discussed in workshops and conferences. This should be a joint task of ministries, professional networks, rectors' conferences, and students' associations.
- In re-designing more student-centred curricula, institutions must foresee that **students will need more guidance and counselling** to find their individual academic pathways in a more flexible learning environment.
- There is a strong interest at the disciplinary and institutional level to learn from experiences elsewhere. The **national coordination groups for developing new curricula at subject level** that have been established could serve as an example of good practice, particularly for the “difficult” disciplines such as medicine, law, fine arts etc. where examples at European level should be also collected and made available.
- HEIs may benefit from developing a **strategic plan for curricular development** in new learner-oriented programmes that respond to different needs with different programme profiles. Bachelor and Master programmes should be conceived as part of a whole system.
- **Master degrees have an often unrealised potential for the strategic positioning of the HEI.** In developing their curricular planning, institutional leaders and deans might therefore want to put particular emphasis on the Master level, in particular focusing upon international and interdisciplinary aspects, with teaching in widely-spoken languages.
- **Qualifications frameworks** have been mentioned in the Berlin Communiqué as one of the next tools to develop, but little has happened outside those countries that already had a

framework before Berlin. **All countries should now take a more systematic approach to this topic**, taking into account the model for a European qualifications framework endorsed by the Bologna Seminar in Copenhagen in January 2005.

- The relatively large variety of Master profiles (long integrated vs. short programmes, professional vs. research orientation) makes **the need for qualifications frameworks and the Diploma Supplement** all the more obvious.
- Bachelor degrees often suffer from lack of credibility among students and employers in many countries. Institutions and governments should try to intensify the dialogue with employers. **It is vital that governments set a good example by declaring clearly their willingness to hire Bachelors for public service posts** and with which conditions (career prospects, salaries). In many countries there is still a clear need for clarification of possible Bachelor profiles and of the meaning of employability. The experience of those countries where the Bachelor is or has become a degree that is fully accepted by the labour market should be drawn upon.
- Few HEIs trace the career paths of their graduates. **More studies on graduate employment**, both at national and institutional level, and the feedback of the results into curriculum development would be helpful.
- **Joint Degrees** are increasingly recognised as a particularly attractive element of the European Higher Education Area. However, **amendments to the higher education laws are still needed** in some countries where Joint Degrees are either excluded or at least not explicitly mentioned and encouraged in the national legislation.
- Questions of student access to and progression through the higher education system are highly influenced by national traditions and priorities. However, **the lack of institutional autonomy in student selection creates a tension with the general reduction of public funding and increased expectations regarding the institutional accountability**. The time might be right for a review of the legislation on access and selection (in the countries concerned) to enable HEIs to set priorities, develop a clear profile and be competitive at the regional, national or European level.

3. Recognition – Christian Tauch

“Recognition of degrees: Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees

Ministers underline the importance of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, which should be ratified by all countries participating in the Bologna Process (...).

They set the objective that every student graduating as from 2005 should receive the Diploma Supplement automatically and free of charge. It should be issued in a widely spoken European language.

Promotion of mobility

Mobility of students and academic and administrative staff is the basis for establishing a European Higher Education Area. Ministers emphasise its importance for academic and cultural as well as political, social and economic spheres (...) and agree to undertake the necessary steps to improve the quality and coverage of statistical data on student mobility.

Establishment of a system of credits

Ministers stress the important role played by the ECTS in facilitating student mobility and international curriculum development. They note that ECTS is increasingly becoming a generalised basis for the national credit systems. They encourage further progress with the goal that the ECTS becomes not only a transfer but also an accumulation system, to be applied consistently as it develops within the emerging European Higher Education Area.

Ministers furthermore call those working on qualifications frameworks for the European Higher Education Area to encompass the wide range of flexible learning paths, opportunities and techniques and to make appropriate use of the ECTS credits.

Berlin Communiqué (2003)

The European Higher Education Area is about the mobility of students, graduates, teachers, and researchers. A condition for mobility is efficient recognition procedures and ECTS and the Diploma Supplement are the tools to this end. While significant progress has been made in the implementation of these tools, a number of common problems can be identified that require further collaborative efforts by institutional leaders, administrators, professors and students, and sometimes governments.

Recognition procedures face new challenges as the new Bologna-inspired degrees and programmes are implemented. The lack of autonomy that some institutions suffer in recognition matters is not in line with the spirit of the Bologna process that places HEIs at the heart of the reforms. This chapter briefly describes trends in mobility, the state of implementation of ECTS and the Diploma Supplement, and some Bologna-related developments in recognition.

3.1. Mobility of students

Mobility of European students funded through the European Commission's Socrates Programmes has increased - significantly in some countries - between 1999 and 2003. Some HEIs in Ireland and the UK insist on a 1:1 ratio in exchange to avoid too great an imbalance between incoming and outgoing students, but other non-Anglophone countries also saw a substantial increase in incoming mobility. Other HEIs, for example in some in South East Europe, specifically declared their intention to increase the number of incoming students by capitalising more on their specific assets and

advantages.

With regard to outgoing mobility, many HEIs, for example in Austria, France, Greece, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK, expressed concern with low or decreasing levels of outgoing students. This may be due to students wanting to finish on time, lacking the necessary foreign language skills, or generally being averse to incurring additional financial costs required to live abroad or to giving up current employment. Furthermore, problems of recognition and over-complicated application procedures for mobility programmes were referred to as impediments to mobility, as are the conflicting academic calendars across Europe.

Regarding the impact of the introduction of the two-cycle structure on mobility, some HEIs, notably in Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Switzerland and Sweden, fear that the introduction of very differentiated and relatively short programmes will lead to a dramatic reduction of horizontal free mover mobility (i.e. within a given programme).

On the other hand, some HEIs expect or hope that mobility will increase through the existence of two-cycle degree structures across Europe once the problems of transition to the new system are overcome. This view was expressed in Austria, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Spain, Turkey and the UK. Some HEIs favour the solution of using the stay abroad for practical assignments, because this poses fewer recognition problems, or of formally integrating it as an additional year in the curriculum. Admirably, mobility periods for students are considered so valuable in Norway that the Norwegian "Quality Reform" Project stipulates that all students are entitled to one semester abroad and to take their study grants with them.

A small number of HEIs, notably those in Spain, take the opportunities offered by vertical mobility - i.e. between first and second cycles, or between second and third cycles - explicitly into consideration. As for joint degree programmes and Erasmus Mundus in particular, students confirmed that horizontal mobility - within a programme - can be encouraged by double or joint degree programmes.

3.2. Mobility of staff

The Bologna process aims at strengthening the European dimension in higher education. An essential element of this should be increasing long-term mobility of academic teachers and researchers around Europe. It has been very difficult, however, to obtain any data on this matter: the mobility of academic staff is barely monitored at all so far in Europe. Only very few countries, such as Hungary, collect data on the number of foreign staff working in their HEIs. In most countries this basic information is not available, let alone more detailed data like country of origin and academic specialisation. A particular detail in Lithuanian is that the government does not allow a teacher to be abroad for more than two months, due to fears of "brain drain."

3.3. ECTS

A majority of the HEIs visited declared that they have implemented ECTS and use it both for accumulation and transfer: in Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Romania, Sweden and Switzerland. Others, for example in Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, Poland, Spain, are presently working on the implementation, some of them especially on the accumulation aspect as they used it for transfer before. HEIs in the UK and Turkey use ECTS only for student mobility within Europe, relying normally upon a different national credit system(s) for accumulation. Portuguese HEIs were at the time of the site visits still waiting for national legislation.

Changing the basic unit from the number of professor contact hours to student workload is still an issue in a number of HEIs as reported in Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Spain, and Switzerland. In one case, ministerial regulations stand in the way of replacing the principle of contact hours with the workload concept. Occasionally reservations were also expressed regarding ECTS

standards and levels and the ECTS grading scale, while some HEIs have not solved the problem of different numbers of credits being awarded to the same course, depending on the programme studied. One university told of a different problem linked to workload: reduced contact hours that should allow for more individual study had apparently led some students to neglecting their studies.

ECTS as a transfer instrument can cause problems with regard to regulated professions in some countries because of the strict existing directives regarding the curriculum. On the other hand, some HEIs suggested that the definition of core subjects may be necessary to prevent students from becoming exclusively oriented towards a mere accumulation of credits where it seems easiest.

3.4. Diploma Supplement

A majority of HEIs appears to be able to comply with the specification in the Berlin Communiqué that the Diploma Supplement be issued to every graduate by the end of 2005. In HEIs in Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Norway, and Sweden, it had already been introduced by the time of the *Trends IV* site visits in 2004.

HEIs in Austria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey and the UK, indicated that implementation will be completed in the course of 2005. In other HEIs visited in Austria, Croatia, Germany, Greece, Italy and the UK, a more vague reply as to the planned date of introduction was given.

The most frequently reported difficulties concerned the following points:

- the student record system does not yet contain the necessary information;
- the national student data software has not yet been adjusted to Bologna requirements;
- the Diploma Supplement requires considerable information technology development to properly deal with the complexity of individual study paths;
- high costs are involved, especially for translation.

In France the need to first harmonise the degree denominations at national level was pointed out, while in Greece legal changes regarding the national language requirements in documents are needed before the Diploma Supplement can be offered in a foreign language. Italian universities reported problems linked to the traditionally decentralised storing of student data in the faculties and the insufficient cooperation between academics and central administration. It seems that similar problems occur in other countries.

Only one HEI mentioned a reluctance of professors to see their units described in the parameters required by the Diploma Supplement. This phenomenon is probably not so much linked to the document as such but rather to reservations against the entire concept of defining learning outcomes and competences, and in this sense it is not an isolated incident at all. French HEIs mentioned the crucial problem of integrating learning outcomes into the Diploma Supplement. In relatively few HEIs students and/or academics were unaware of the Diploma Supplement.

All HEIs in the study planned to issue the Diploma Supplement in English, with some also in the national language(s) (in Austria, Finland, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden). One HEI plans to issue the Diploma Supplement in three languages and one, upon request, is willing to issue it in all official EU languages. Only one HEI of those visited intends to charge a fee for the Diploma Supplement.

3.5. Recognition of exchange mobility

Those HEIs that use ECTS for mobility periods along with a learning agreement reported few or no problems with the recognition of exchange mobility in Belgium, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey and the UK. In a small number of cases, however, this

perception varies between the leadership and/or central administration who consider the system to work well, and students who report a variety of difficulties.

A few cases were found where HEIs did not seem to be taking their responsibility concerning student mobility seriously enough, and consider it normal to occasionally refuse recognition of study periods abroad, even if a learning agreement had been signed. In a similar vein, some HEIs report difficulties that are either linked to a perception of superior quality of their own teaching as compared to that at their partner institutions, or to the poor administrative handling of the exchange at the partner institution: in either case recognition can be difficult, and even impossible. More generally, while the number of credits was often transferred without problem, many students faced difficulty in getting their foreign courses recognised as anything other than “optional” or “elective” courses, rather than counting as part of the core or required programme component.

Some HEIs, in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and the UK, declare that they still encounter major difficulties in the recognition of exchange mobility, the validation of courses taken abroad, the translation of marks and transfer of credits. Many called for a more “European” implementation of ECTS that would preclude inconsistencies caused by national or institutional approaches.

3.6. Recognition of non-formal/non-academic qualifications

Ministers in Berlin stressed that the recognition of prior learning must become an integral part of higher education activity. The topic is part of the wider theme of lifelong learning that has been very much neglected so far in the Bologna discussions. Many factors are presently combining to make the issue of accreditation of prior learning (APL) and accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) more visible than ever before, such as the debate on the Lisbon agenda, demographic trends in Europe, and the recent initiative of the European Commission for a European qualifications framework for higher education and vocational training. Yet the *Trends IV* research shows that prior learning is still not perceived as an important topic in many institutions.

Several HEIs, notably in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain, declared that they have no provision at all for this kind of recognition. Others, e.g. in Austria, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Lithuania, Portugal, Spain, indicated that, while there are no provisions yet, discussions have started and/or future legislation will regulate this problem.

Only in a minority of countries and HEIs explicit strategies for the recognition of non-formal or non-academic recognition exist, notably in Belgium, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, the UK and Switzerland. These strategies are addressed mostly to mature or disadvantaged students, to applicants with non-standard secondary education or with a defined minimum of professional education, e.g. in architecture, medicine, sports sciences and fine arts. Sometimes extracurricular activities like social engagement, language assistance, singing in the university choir were mentioned as examples.

Some HEIs explicitly welcomed the idea in the context of LLL. In Norway, for example, there is a tradition of accepting off-campus students who study on their own and come to the university only to pass exams. However, the question on APL/APEL was often not clearly understood by the different groups, which shows the limited awareness that exists in many HEIs, although this kind of recognition clearly is part of the Bologna objectives of increased mobility and LLL. In some universities in binary higher education systems this question was misunderstood as referring to the permeability between the university sector and the polytechnic/college sector. Only one HEI made the connection to qualifications frameworks by stating that a European qualifications framework would be helpful in this matter.

3.7. Recognition of national degrees

At a formal level, the recognition of national degrees is generally legally regulated and automatic in

most countries, although sometimes requires certain supplementary certifications or assessments as in Belgium (Fr), Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Sweden. In Ireland and Scotland the national qualifications framework was referred to as a very helpful tool in recognising national awards.

It is, however, quite likely that most replies implicitly referred to the traditional degree system. Few HEIs seem to anticipate the difficulties that may arise with the introduction of two-cycle degrees (from which they are not yet many graduates) and greater variety of curricula. Some countries have already developed special regulations for their two-cycle system and recognition of national degrees for progression within the country.

Occasionally, recognition within the university sector appears to be easy, while problems are encountered with regard to mobility between the university sector and the other-HEI sector. One HEI reported problems of compatibility with other national degrees, due to the high level of autonomy of faculties and the strongly teacher-centred style of education.

3.8. Recognition of foreign degrees

The variety of approaches in the recognition of foreign awards is wider than in the field of national awards. A surprisingly large number of HEIs in this sample (compared to the findings of *Trends III*) referred to their ENIC/NARIC as a source of information and support, namely in Estonia, Germany, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey.⁵ Some HEIs, e.g. in Ireland, the UK and Turkey, also use lists established either at the level of the HEI or centrally, at the Ministry or the ENIC/NARIC of recognised and trustworthy foreign HEIs and/or qualifications.

In some countries, e.g. Croatia, France, Hungary and Spain, HEIs reported that the recognition of foreign degrees is still the responsibility of the ministry and is done through rather cumbersome procedures, such as “*naturalisation*” or “*homologation*”. Meanwhile other HEIs in Austria, Belgium (Fl. and Fr.), Germany, Poland, the UK, seem to have relative or full autonomy in their decisions regarding recognition of foreign degrees. In some cases where the institutions must wait for external assessments, the HEIs (e.g. in Croatia, Belgium (Fr), Italy and Portugal) expressed their discontent with the effectiveness, duration and reliability of recognition procedures.

The Lisbon Recognition Convention was quoted several times as a frame of reference and many interviewees believed that instruments like ECTS, the Diploma Supplement or the “Dublin descriptors” would facilitate recognition in the future.

3.9. Challenges for the future

- **The recognition of exchange mobility is greatly facilitated by ECTS** and in particular by the learning agreement. This is confirmed by the majority of HEIs who already use the learning agreement. However, in a few institutions, professors and students assume that full recognition is not possible, even if a Learning Agreement has been signed. This is a clear violation of a basic ECTS principle which must remain on the Socrates agenda and addressed in ECTS site visits.
- The use of **ECTS is widespread**, although problems remain, in particular concerning how to assign credits to courses by assessing properly student workload. More information on good practice is needed, for example through the Tuning Project, thematic networks, and through dissemination of pilot projects at national level.

⁵ For more information on ENIC/NARIC, please refer to www.enic-naric.net.

- **Horizontal mobility** might become more difficult to arrange in Bachelor and Master programmes than in the previous long one-cycle programmes. Greater efforts are needed, such as better preparation of stays abroad with guaranteed recognition (ECTS Learning Agreement) and receiving credit for the courses taken abroad as programme requirements.
- **Vertical mobility** offers possibilities for attracting the best students from other HEIs and from abroad that have not yet been realised in most HEIs. Much remains to be done in this field, such as through the creation of Master programmes targeted at specific audiences at national and international level.
- The large differences in the academic calendars across Europe are a major obstacle to mobility that requires attention and action. A first step towards improving the situation could be a Europe-wide agreement on a period for the end of the first/ the beginning of the second semester.
- The implementation of the **Diploma Supplement** is quite advanced in most HEIs but two main challenges remain: the technical implementation (software programmes, data flow between faculties and central administration, etc.) and the formulation of the input (denominations of programmes and courses, translations, etc.)
- Most HEIs seem unaware that the greatest challenge for implementing the Diploma Supplement may still lie ahead: the **inclusion of learning outcomes in the Diploma Supplement**, an essential component to provide information on the knowledge, skills and competences of the award-holder.
- **The recognition of non-formal/non-academic qualifications (APL/APEL)** needs to be put on the agenda of more HEIs as it will be an increasingly important topic in future national and European discussions on higher education and vocational training.
- **The recognition of national degrees** seems to be more or less automatic in many countries. However, many HEIs may not have realised that the Bachelor-Master structure may confront them with a kind of vertical mobility in their national system that did not exist in the past and that will require new solutions. The automatic recognition of nation-wide regulated degree programmes practiced in the past may not work any longer with specialised and diversified Bachelor and Master programmes.
- **The recognition of foreign degrees** is done through a variety of procedures – from full departmental autonomy to ministries being solely in charge. This situation is not ideal for smooth mobility within the European Higher Education Area.
- The link between the Diploma Supplement and the correct implementation of ECTS, the modularisation of programmes and the emergence of qualifications frameworks has not always and everywhere been understood.
- The old Erasmus principle of “mutual trust and confidence” is becoming more important than ever at a time when the content of programmes can become increasingly specialised. HEIs should firstly carefully select their international partners and secondly learn to compare the defined learning outcomes of a module or a course rather than look for contents identical to their own.
- Ministries in the countries concerned should be prepared to relinquish the right to take recognition decisions and empower their HEIs to do that.
- Awareness of ENIC/NARIC and the Lisbon Convention seems to have increased in the

past two years, but there is still a lot of work to do to convince all HEIs to cooperate more closely with their ENIC/NARIC respective offices and to apply the principles of the Lisbon Convention.

4. Quality Enhancement and Quality Assurance – Sybille Reichert

In the Berlin Communiqué, the European Ministers of Education clearly expressed their belief that “*the quality of higher education has proven to be at the heart of the setting up of a European Higher Education Area.*” They also stressed that “*the primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution itself and this provides the basis for real accountability of the academic system within the national quality framework.*” A European Higher Education Area in which students and professors move around freely presupposes a basis of knowledge and trust concerning the different environments of learning, teaching or research. In this study, we therefore focus on the efforts of higher education institutions to assure and enhance quality within the institution.

4.1. Quality and the Bologna reforms

The Trends IV site visits show very clearly that institutional efforts to develop the quality of education, research and services go far beyond actual internal quality processes and procedures. Many other institutional processes, such as staff and student recruitment, staff development, resource allocation and infrastructure management have a major impact on the quality of core institutional functions, and when combined effectively constitute the quality culture of an institution.

Indeed, the Bologna Reforms themselves are a good case in point: the process of addressing major structural and curriculum reform issues has brought added value to institutions in a variety of ways, in particular enhancing the quality of teaching. It should be emphasised that a vast majority of institutions regard the Bologna reforms as an opportunity to reflect upon and review their own teaching offer, and find that this has helped in catalysing the internal reforms of their curricula and teaching. This has often led to more rational planning of course offers - eliminating redundant or duplicated courses - and even to a complete redesign of curricula linked to the introduction of student-centred or competence based teaching and learning. The following comment from the report on a Finnish institution was echoed in a wide range of different national and institutional contexts: “*The major result so far is the ongoing work to analyse and restructure all curricula. A process of discussing, comparing and implementing measures across faculty borders has started. A key word for this process is reinforcement, as the Bologna Process has been used as a vehicle to carry out reform work which was needed with or without Bologna.*”

Nevertheless, there are important differences regarding the effect of Bologna reforms on quality. At some institutions, it was noted that the Bologna process, with its external pressures and benchmarks, helped to focus and drive forward reforms by enabling targets to improve quality to be set and reached more quickly. However, at other institutions, it was felt that improvements in quality had not been considered strategically or in central policy-making, but had rather been dominated by structural discussions concerning which course units to offer at what level.

4.2. Internal quality assurance processes at European HEIs

While the level of activity regarding internal quality processes at higher education institutions has clearly grown in all parts of Europe, the focus of such activity is largely restricted to teaching and learning processes. Indeed, all institutions represented in the study sample have some form of internal quality processes with respect to teaching. Yet only one third undertakes any internal quality activity related to research (external review of research being the more frequent quality tool). Internal quality reviews of administration and support services are even rarer - found in less than one-sixth of the institutions in the sample. In the category of administration and support, only student services are reviewed slightly more frequently.

4.2.1 Student Participation in the evaluation of teaching

Examining more closely the way in which the internal reviews of teaching are conducted, it is apparent that they differ widely between institutions and countries in terms of organisation, feedback loops, student participation and perceived effectiveness.

Student evaluation questionnaires are a tool used everywhere, but there is a wide range of practice in how they are used. At many institutions, faculties and even individual professors may decide whether questionnaires are actually handed out and analysed, and can also influence whether and how the results are taken into account.

At other institutions, however, the systematic use of student questionnaires is obligatory across the whole institution, and responsibility for using information is clearly attributed to competent bodies such as quality councils or programme committees at faculty, department or institutional level. Such bodies were found at a quarter of the institutions visited. Moreover in some institutions in Belgium, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the UK, teaching and learning units are playing an important role in quality development. These units are often responsible for the analysis of evaluation questionnaires, as well as for providing continuing professional development training and support to teachers, or helping with IT based teaching.

In more than a quarter of the institutions, student involvement went beyond filling in questionnaires to active participation in the feedback processes. This could be ensured in a number of ways, including through regular meetings between students and staff, or within committees of students and staff focused on teaching and learning. This type of practice was found at institutions visited in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Switzerland, and the UK. At a Finnish institution, the students even underwent an induction course to gain understanding of quality processes and of their own role in contributing to institutional quality development.

The most significant finding regarding student participation is that there were no reports of problems with the feedback of criticisms, complaints and recommendations regarding teaching and learning in institutions where student participation is active and encouraged. However, the opposite is true in those institutions where students are not involved in quality processes (a quarter of the institutions in the sample).

4.2.2 *Monitoring success and drop-out*

Perhaps surprisingly, given the increased attention on internal quality development, very few institutions in the sample systematically track basic information regarding success-rates and drop-out rates of students. If institutions are going to have strategies to improve teaching and learning, this is clearly a basic information requirement for strategic management and development which is currently lacking.

Sometimes, but rarely, detailed data is gathered at institutional level on the career choices of graduates. In other institutions such information may be gathered by individual departments or faculties but is not treated systematically across the whole institution. Again, it seems that the increased realisation of the importance of stakeholder relationships and employability has not yet deeply affected institutional monitoring processes.

4.2.3 *Research: the use of peer review*

Only one institution in three in the Trends IV sample undertook any form of internal quality activities related to research, while the majority relied upon external quality procedures. However, the relationship of internal and external procedures is not clear-cut, and poses some challenges to institutions. The most central and frequent ingredient of all procedures, the peer review, can be initiated internally by the institution or externally by a national authority and most often involves both an external and an internal evaluation. Only peer review associated with submission of articles to academic journals or grant applications involves no self-evaluation. The fact that peer reviews of research are most often initiated externally, by funding authorities (as is the case in the regular

reviews by the research funding authorities in Portugal, Spain, and the UK), grant awarding agencies, or journals, does not prevent this process from being generally regarded as the best possible quality instrument for research by universities. A few institutions have even initiated such peer reviews themselves (e.g. in Denmark, Finland, Italy).

According to universities, two problems can undermine the effectiveness of peer reviews. First, they can lose their legitimacy when the pool of available peers is too small to prevent “inbreeding” by way of quid pro quo exchanges. To tackle this problem, some smaller national systems are thus introducing more extensive international participation although this is sometimes made difficult by financial and language restrictions. Second, the success of peer review depends on the perceived quality of the peers. If they are not regarded as meeting the quality demands of the department which is to be evaluated, then their peer assessment will not be taken seriously. This is the prime reason why some internationally competitive institutions in the sample sometimes mention a preference for an internally initiated external review, to safeguard the standards against which their performance will be judged.

While being the most dominant method of assuring or enhancing quality of research, peer review of research projects and results is only one of many methods. The institutions visited in Trends IV highlighted a wide range of quality related processes many of which depend on the internal quality culture of the institutions and which can have a major impact on the improvement of research quality at the institution:

- Recruitment of professors and scientific staff is widely regarded as the most vital method to ensure and improve quality. Yet the power to recruit does not always lie with the institution. Moreover the ability to attract staff is greatly affected by the quality of the research environment - in terms of human and financial resources, and scientific infrastructure.
- Quite often teaching evaluations and incentives to improve are part of the re-election and promotion procedures for professors and research staff. This is the case in institutions visited in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovak Republic and Spain, where re-election of professors or a part of the salaries may depend upon research performance. In some other countries salaries cannot be influenced by institutions but have fixed levels which are set in legislation.
- Internal distribution of research grants on the basis of both research performance and quality of the grant proposals was mentioned by a few institutions (in Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK). Such internal research funding allocation is managed in a similar manner to external grant distribution (on the basis of peer review often with external peers) and serves primarily to jump-start new research directions or provide grants more flexibly and quickly than external funders.
- Competitive resource allocation between departments, based on research performance, exists at some institutions (e.g., in the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, UK).
- Internal scrutiny of research performance indicators at institutional, faculty or departmental level seems to be a growing practice, in line with the frequent use of such quantitative indicators at national level. In several institutions (in the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK) academics and junior staff mentioned that a new mentality of mutual scrutiny of performance was developing.
- Quality monitoring of research training at doctoral level is usually dealt with at programme, department and faculty level. At the institutions or faculties which have quality councils or committees these would also address the quality of research and doctoral provision.

4.2.4 Administration, Support Service, External and International Relations

While many institutions mention occasional ad hoc evaluations of particular administrative services, usually triggered by the perception of a particular problem or reason for change, only a sixth submit their administration and support services to regular review. However, at another sixth of the institutions in the sample, representatives mention that they are beginning to address the quality of administration and support services more regularly and systematically.

Student services were more often reviewed than other services, often with the help of student satisfaction questionnaires.

At many institutions, technology transfer or entrepreneurial support services had only been established recently and, although some isolated examples of quality processes were found, in general it was felt that evaluation of quality of such services was premature.

The quality of international relations seemed to be an issue only with respect to the growing need to concentrate on trusted well known partners, so that exchange and recognition procedures could be dealt with more smoothly and reliably.

4.3 The relationship between internal and external quality assurance

All over Europe, higher education institutions are both expanding their internal quality arrangements and facing a growing number of external quality assurance procedures. The relationship between internal quality and external quality assurance was evaluated quite divergently across Europe. In systems where internal quality processes are still being established, the relationship between internal and external quality mechanisms seems to work well. In more established systems with intricate and more institutionalised QA processes, external quality assurance tends to be seen as a bureaucratic burden of limited use for institutional development.

Most importantly, institutions find that a well developed internal quality culture should be associated with a light external quality approach. Generally, institutions considered internal quality processes to be more improvement-oriented than external quality assurance procedures. These external procedures were felt to be more geared toward control and compliance and less attuned to the aims, priorities and conditions under which the institutions or evaluated unit was developing.

Self-evaluation reports provide an interface between internal and external quality assurance processes. Frequently, institutional representatives mentioned that these constitute the most useful part of any quality assurance process, but only if they lead to follow up and concrete implementation.

4.4 Relative effectiveness of quality assurance procedures

Many comments were made regarding the relative effectiveness of different external quality assurance measures, mostly with respect to teaching. The external evaluation of teaching is either examined indirectly at the level of institutions through quality audits that review the internal quality processes, or through programme evaluation, as is the case in Finland, Ireland, in recent years also the UK, and most recently in Switzerland. While programme evaluation is generally concerned with teaching outputs, programme accreditation is often reported to be predominantly focussed on input and structure -although exceptions to this general rule do exist. In the case of subject or programme evaluations, some positive examples of meaningful improvement-oriented processes were reported, especially concerning improvements in feedback from negative assessments. However, some institutions point out that the link to relevant research and support services is often missing when the evaluation only focuses on teaching.

Institutions were more often critical of programme accreditation, in particular objecting to the controlling, prescriptive and limiting outcomes of accreditation practices. For example, complaints were voiced about the practice of prescribing a list of subjects in which programmes can be offered or preventing interdisciplinary programmes from being established because of accreditation committees' disciplinary prejudices. Institutions see no difference whether such restrictions of their freedom to develop new programmes are set by the government or by an independent accreditation body. Often accreditation was demanded and defined by professional bodies, with no consideration to other internal quality processes at universities and thus no regard to possible synergies or overlap with institutional quality processes. This posed additional and unnecessary bureaucratic burdens to institutions.

Such problems were not, however, reported with respect to institutional quality audits. These were seen to be useful only if they considered the aims and strategic priorities set by the institution and considered the links between teaching, research and support services. Otherwise audits were seen to run the risk of being too focussed on procedures and instruments and to pay too little attention to the most important quality concerns of the institution. This was reported as limiting their usefulness for the audited institution. Some institutional representatives also pointed to the danger of a community of quality assurance specialists justifying their existence by promoting the establishment of more and more quality assurance procedures with little regard to academic issues which should be central to the definition of quality in a given domain. Generally, while experiences with institutional audits were more positive than with accreditation, they also drew mixed reactions, from being seen as a welcome experience helping with the establishment and enhancement of internal quality development processes to being criticised for their narrow focus on procedures, stopping short of the real quality questions.

Thus, from the point of view of institutions, the debate on evaluation vs. accreditation and programme vs. institutional focus is continuing, and evolving into a more complex discussion on the best desirable mix. At national level, mixed models are gaining popularity, with quality assurance or accreditation agencies conducting reviews of institutions as well as programmes. A majority of institutions nevertheless prefers institutional audits as they are usually lighter and more often attuned to institutional aims and strategies.

4.5 Limits to quality improvement

The findings from the site visits also illustrate very forcefully that in a considerable number of HEIs pursuing a reform agenda, the most restricting factors to quality enhancement are limited available resources and the scope of autonomy - the extent to which institutions can decide and plan their own future.

Limits to institutional autonomy are still widespread in Europe and cover all the institutional processes that influence overall quality and profile setting, from student selection to staff recruitment and development (promotion, rewards), educational programme development, setting research priorities or internal resource allocation.

The differences among individual European countries are enormous: some countries, such as the UK, Ireland, Finland, the Netherlands, and recently also Denmark and Austria, grant wide-reaching autonomy to their universities with clear requirements of accountability. Other countries, such as the French Community of Belgium, Germany, and Greece impose severe restrictions on the internal governance of their institutions. Sometimes autonomy is not limited by ministerial intervention but rather by accreditation bodies, which may restrict the types of courses that can be developed and offered (see also chapter 6, p. xx). However, with respect to institutional quality provisions, some form of interference by national level authorities was generally accepted by institutions as long as it did not result in a disproportionate amount of bureaucratic effort, and was generally oriented towards quality development rather than control. Such accountability demands were also much better accepted when they went hand in hand with wide-reaching institutional autonomy.

Clearly, Trends IV data show that the institutions with the most systematic approach to quality are also those that benefit from the greatest institutional autonomy. Conversely, the institutions with the lowest degree of autonomy have not started to develop a systematic approach to quality. In a great majority of institutions - especially those lacking autonomy - internal quality processes suffer from lack of coherence. Indeed less than a quarter of the institutions in the sample actually address their internal quality arrangements in a systematic manner. Very often quality practices can differ greatly from one faculty to the other.

There is a clear trend toward more institutional approaches to exploit synergies, economies of scale and spread models of good practice at institutions which do not suffer from low degrees of autonomy. More than a quarter of the institutions have established institutional structures to make their internal quality processes more systematic, optimise feedback, exploit synergies and exchange models of good practice across the different parts of the institution.

All over Europe, institutional representatives express a growing discontent that external quality assurance is futile when weaknesses with known solutions are revealed but then cannot be addressed for lack of funding. Many representatives believed quality assurance should only be established and further developed if there is a commitment to quality improvement once problems have been clearly identified.

Limits to quality enhancement through restricted financial resources were reported at many institutions, most frequently in the Czech Republic, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, France, Italy and Slovakia. Thus different groups at a French university pointed out that the Bologna reforms discussions had already fostered interdisciplinary programme development, led to more group work and to a better understanding of the university as a whole. But while the fact that the Bologna emphasis on flexible learning paths and learning outcomes was widely appreciated (e.g., in particular the fact that it “assumes that students are adults capable of making choices), such flexible choices were made impossible because of lack of resources and classrooms. The goals of the reform were thus regarded as offering great potential for quality improvement but as being utopian.

Similar comments could be heard all over Europe, not just in relation to the Bologna reforms but also concerning other ideas with the potential for quality enhancement which could not be realised because of limited resources. Concrete measures which suffered from the lack of funding ranged from the establishment of appropriate student guidance and counselling services to the recruitment of internationally outstanding professors and the updating of research infrastructure.

The essential aim of the Bologna reforms, namely to create a European Higher Education Area which is predicated on quality and therefore attractive to its members as well as the outside world, can only be achieved if the concern for quality is not reduced to the establishment or optimisation of external quality assurance processes alone, but considers all processes of institutional development.

4.6 Challenges for the future

- Following on the positive example of a few institutions, HEIs may benefit from a more systematic approach to quality improvement across the institution, exploiting synergies between evaluation of teaching and evaluation of research, and supporting services and administration. Governments and QA agencies should support such combined reviews, to ensure the link between research and teaching and the appropriateness of the existing services, as well as to enhance efficiency of evaluation procedures.
- HEIs and QA agencies should cooperate in optimising the relations and coordination between internal and external quality assurance processes, to alleviate the administrative burden on institutions without reducing the value for quality improvement. In particular, external quality assurance should be reduced in direct correlation to the evidence of robust internal quality processes.
- Governments should recognise that quality enhancement, as aimed for in the Bologna Process, is not only pursued through quality assurance measures and procedures but often introduced through other channels of institutional development.

5. The Relation of the Bologna Reforms to Research and Research Training - Sybille Reichert

5.1. Implications of the Bologna reforms for research and research training

This study into the implementation of Bologna at 62 institutions across Europe confirms that the European Ministers of Education showed great wisdom in 2003 when introducing the research dimension into the Bologna process. In the Berlin Communiqué, the Ministers recognised “*the importance of research as an integral part of higher education across Europe [...] and emphasised the importance of research and research training and the promotion of interdisciplinarity in maintaining and improving the quality of higher education and in enhancing the competitiveness of European higher education more generally.*” They therefore saw “*the need to promote closer links between the EHEA and the ERA in a Europe of Knowledge, to go beyond the present focus on two main cycles of higher education to include the doctoral level as the third cycle in the Bologna Process.*” Indeed, the *Trends IV* data shows that the Bologna reforms, while primarily addressing matters of education, also bring opportunities and risks to the quality of research and research training within HEIs. This study reveals that while institutions are aware that the development of research and research training can positively affect the success of the Bologna reforms, that the Bologna reforms could also hurt research and research training if they are not underpinned by the right conditions and concern with quality improvement.

Concentrating on the institutional implications of the Bologna reforms on research and research training, the *Trends IV* site visit interviews revealed that four main issues can be distinguished:

1. At most institutions, the link between research and teaching constitutes a pressing issue in the design and implementation of the new curricula in the two-cycle structures. The new curricula often weaken students’ research exposure at Bachelor level. In contrast, the new Master level is usually regarded as offering the opportunity to link education most intimately to the research conducted at the institution, a link that is assured by emphasising the students’ research experience in the Master programmes.
2. The doctoral level is affected in different ways by the Bologna reforms: with respect to the transition from Master to doctoral level; with respect to the desired length of doctoral training; or with respect to increased attention to mentoring and counselling at the doctoral level, brought about by the Bologna curricular debates.
3. The Bologna reforms encourage inter-institutional communication and decision-making, which can positively influence research development. Most noticeably, interdisciplinary programmes that are being developed at a considerable number of institutions, especially at Master level, are bringing together teaching and research interests on the basis of strengthened and sometimes even new inter-faculty linkages. In a few cases, institutions explicitly develop such Master programmes to position their research strengths nationally or internationally, as part of their research strategy.
4. The Bologna reforms are absorbing a considerable amount of time and resources - not just in the implementation phase but also for the additional teaching and assessment time for professors needing to run the new structures and approaches – to the detriment of research.

The following sections will describe these effects in greater detail.

5.2. The relation of Bologna reforms to research training

The obvious link between the quests for a common EHEA and ERA consists in the area of research training for which universities bear the primary responsibility. As the principal provider of doctoral training and the only provider of research training at Bachelor and Master level, HEIs are facing many new challenges:

- the growing awareness of the importance of research for an array of professions beyond academia poses new questions to the scope and weight of research training, from early research project exposure to fostering professionally relevant transferable skills;
- fundamental and applied research in industry and academia increasingly requires interdisciplinary perspectives to be developed in research training;
- the natural and technical sciences are recognising the need for intense cooperation with industry for research and research training, requiring new forms of communication and administrative support;
- an increased awareness of the importance of general public interest in and understanding of science requires a greater time investment on the part of researchers for communicating the social or economic implications of research results, but also to new demands on the communication skills of researchers.

Thus, it may not be surprising that a considerable number of university representatives during the site visits mentioned research training, especially at doctoral level, to be the next major reform issue on their agenda. Most institutions are waiting to finish the implementation of the first and second cycle reforms before taking on the third cycle, but some are trying to tackle research training reforms simultaneously with the ongoing educational reforms.

Research exposure and training at Bachelor and Master levels

The site visits in the framework of this study do not confirm the European Commission's High Level Group on Science and Technology's statement that "the involvement of undergraduate students in research activities as a normal part of their curriculum is still very exceptional."⁶ Nevertheless, while a majority of institutions confirmed that students are exposed to research, half said that this exposure is often quite limited at Bachelor level. Most often such early research exposure involves introduction to research methodology and research skills as well as seminars or course papers where students are introduced to independent research activity. In the social and natural sciences, students are occasionally exposed to research through project work. Generally, at all of the institutions, different groups reported that research exposure depended greatly on the subject area and faculty.

A critical point mentioned at many institutions with respect to the implications of the Bologna reforms on research training relates to the fact that research exposure was often concentrated on the last year of the programme. In those countries where this last year does not refer to the last year of the Bachelor but to the last year of the previous longer degree, this implies that such research work corresponds and hence will most often be shifted to the Master level. Similarly, there were apprehensions that the research skills of the labour force would become insufficient if the Bachelor degree were to become the final degree for a majority of university graduates. It was often felt that there was too little time in the three years leading to the Bachelor degree, in which other skills also had to be conveyed, to make the Bachelor graduate employable to approach research activity appropriately. Moreover, academics and students often reported that time for independent research or study, critical reflection, fostering of an independent mind had been reduced in the new, significantly more compressed programmes in which the new form of continuous assessment was reported to develop greater efficiency and delivery. The additional teaching and exam burden that often accompanies the new curricular regime also leaves less time for teachers to look after small research projects (since most institutions had no additional resources to hire new staff). Only a handful of institutions mentioned an explicit policy to actually emphasise research and independent study at Bachelor level.

At all the universities which were visited in the context of this study, the Master level is defined as the first level at which research should be practiced in action, be it through research projects or a Master's

⁶ Increasing Human resources for Science and Technology in Europe. Report presented at the EC Conference *Europe needs more scientists* (April 2004), High Level Group under the chairmanship of José Mariano Gago, Brussels April 2004, p. 8.

thesis. Nevertheless, at about a third of the institutions, two types of Masters degrees were offered or being developed, with one geared to research and the other aimed at professional specialisation; the latter do not necessarily exclude research activities but rather situate the research within a professionally relevant environment.

Generally speaking, it could be observed that the Bologna reforms initiated a shift in research exposure at some institutions, often intensifying research at the second cycle. At a considerable number of institutions there seemed to be a clear shift of research exposure away from the first cycle to the second (mentioned for example at several Italian, German, French institutions). Often academics wished for more research exposure in the first cycle but pointed to limited human and financial resources.

Research training at doctoral level

Concerning national level debates, all but one of the 29 countries included in this study responded that research training constituted an important reform issue. Furthermore, all countries reported discussions at national level to encourage the private sector to support training and be more involved in university research and research training. About one-fifth of the national research training debates concentrate on quality enhancement of PhD training and the introduction of more structured curricular elements in PhD training (Austria, Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Switzerland). In some countries, the status, contractual conditions, recruitment and career development of researchers also constitute a main focus of national debates (Austria, Germany, Italy). In others (Denmark, Latvia, Estonia) there is a political focus on the need for more researchers, especially in the natural and technical sciences.

During the visits, questions were asked about the impact of Bologna reforms on the doctoral level within the institution, to which there were conflicting responses. Generally, institutional representatives found it too early to judge whether the doctoral level would be affected by the two-tier reforms, although at the same time a majority of institutions were either conducting some reforms in their doctoral level training or planning to do so. These widespread reform plans seem to be a combined result of heightened quality awareness with respect to the quality of teaching - which was reported to have been brought to the fore in the context of the Bologna reforms at some institutions - and a perception of competing institutions having already begun to improve doctoral training, as mentioned by some institutions.

What are the aims of these reform plans? Across most of Europe, doctoral training has mainly been based on independent research undertaken by the doctoral candidate who draws upon the advice and guidance of one individual – the doctoral supervisor – supposedly on the model of a master/apprentice relationship. One of the central reform issues related to this model concerns the degree to which the independent research of the doctoral candidate should be complemented by taught elements and embedded in supporting structures. Only in some countries is the core research activity complemented by other forms of training and taught elements, with positive experiences reported in most cases. This was the case in some institutions in the Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Spain. In a vast majority of countries in which independent research and bilateral supervision were traditionally the only ingredients, new elements such as taught modules on research methodology or content were frequently mentioned. While the introduction of taught modules seems to be appreciated by the majority of PhD candidates, the candidates also emphasised that such taught elements are only helpful if they are targeted to their scientific or professional needs. At some institutions the academics regretted the introduction of taught elements due to the resultant loss of time for doctoral research, and others felt that it may be better to include the bulk of content-related courses from the doctoral programmes in the Master programme so that doctoral students can start their PhD more quickly (with only some additional skills training conducted at the doctoral level). Many academics and doctoral students underline “the best education to research is still carrying out research, not attending lectures.” It should be noted that many academics and PhD students emphasise two **important factors which influence the quality**

of doctoral studies and research, namely flexibility and a focus on the individual candidate's interests and needs.⁷

Another major reform element at a third of the institutions is the **development of graduate or doctoral schools to ensure better networking and exchange between different faculties and research groups**. Where doctoral schools exist, institutions are sometimes optimising these further, for example by integrating several such programmes into larger schools to optimise the common offer (taught modules) and foster interdisciplinary exchange.

The issue of employability, which is a key concern in the context of establishing new Bachelor programmes, is also beginning to be considered more attentively at the doctoral level. It should be noted that there was widespread pessimism among doctoral candidates concerning careers outside academia. Only in very few countries does career counselling and support for young researchers exist, and these are countries in which research careers have become a national issue with national incentives to improve research career development (for example, in the UK). Otherwise the doctoral candidate depends on the contacts and initiative of his or her supervisor, often leading to a lack of exploration in non-academic sectors.

In contrast, career relevance is increasingly addressed through **skills training** which is clearly on the rise in many parts of Europe. Such initiatives are based on the perception that, if more research, more innovation and more researchers are needed to make Europe thrive, the careers of such researchers do not necessarily follow traditional academic lines, in the spirit of the Ministers' concern that "*Higher Education Institutions [should] increase the role and relevance of research to technological, social and cultural evolution and to the needs of society*" (*Berlin Communiqué*). But even for a traditional academic career, new challenges of facing an increasingly interdisciplinary research environment and an extremely competitive research market will have to be met, requiring certain professional skills from the researchers. Especially private employers of researchers often point to an array of important transferable skills which contribute to the success of their research, beyond the actual scientific expertise and know-how.⁸

Skills training was found to be rarely systematically organised across a given institution but most often depends on the initiatives and demands of the faculties or departments/doctoral programmes. For example, in some cases, skills training was only provided in the existing doctoral schools while other PhD students outside such structures did not benefit from the offer. In other cases, it was partly integrated into the continuing education offer, and not necessarily targeted at researchers. Most often skills training is offered on a voluntary basis and addresses the following skills: teaching (didactic seminars), presentation, communication and team work, foreign languages (especially academic writing in English), project and time management, applying for research grants. Occasionally, patenting and entrepreneurial skills, science ethics, and writing about science for the general public are also taught. PhD candidates mention quite often that they appreciate the idea of skills training and some report positive experiences, but views differ on whether this should be done at PhD level or rather earlier.

In addition to skills training, other mechanisms are mentioned which reflect the concern with the individual doctoral student's development: an education or study plan for PhD students to improve their performance is being introduced in a few institutions (mentioned in the Netherlands and the Slovak Republic), or a student log book as a new tool for keeping track of aims and progress (UK).

⁷ Cf. Also the Conclusions of the Salzburg Seminar on Doctoral Programmes: http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/EN/Bol_sem/Seminars/050203-05Salzburg/050203-05_Conclusions.pdf

⁸ Cf. the contributions of representatives of multinational technology based corporations, such as Philips and Robert Bosch at the EUA Conference in Maastricht, October 2004, http://www.eua.be/eua/en/Maastricht_Presentations.aspx. Such emphases were also made at the Liège Conference *The Europe of Knowledge 2020: A Vision for University-based Research and Innovation*, organised by the European Commission in April 2004, http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/conferences/index_en.cfm.

Some mention institutional “agreements” between doctoral candidates and advisors in order to detail work relations and expectations with respect to time planning, teaching, funding, publication of papers, intellectual property rights, and counselling (mentioned for example in Germany, Norway, Finland). At a few institutions, doctoral committees or teams of supervisors have been introduced to ensure that doctoral research is reviewed by more than one person, with the aim of softening the dependency of the doctoral candidate on his or her supervisor.

Generally speaking, the common characteristics of ongoing reforms concerning doctoral provision seem to **focus on more orientation, more guidance, more integration, more training of professionally relevant skills as well as clearer institutional structures to allow for more exchange and critical mass**. These concerns seem remarkably akin to the spirit of the Bologna reforms as implemented by many institutions and thus form an integral part of the heightened awareness of the quality of teaching at many institutions in all parts of Europe.

5.3. Impact of Bologna reforms on research within HEIs

Strengthening the institutional approach to research

Given the overarching nature of the Bologna reforms, quite a number of institutions reported that the reforms have had the effect of strengthening the institutional level, as well as intra-institutional communication and coordination. New bodies or coordination groups had been formed or existing ones met frequently to work out the details of the curricular reforms. Some institutions reported that this intensified communication resulted in unintended benefits for research cooperation, enabling academics to follow new links between education and research on the basis of recent research developments. The most frequently mentioned benefit of such horizontal communication was the creation of new interdisciplinary programmes, currently a major organisational challenge for research-intensive institutions and an important added value to the curricular reforms. Conversely, institutions which were not able to establish such coordination and communication across faculty lines complained about the difficulty to develop such programmes because of the vertical organisation of the institution.

The Bologna reforms seemed to have little effect, if any, on the strategic positioning of the institution in relation to research. While a majority of institutions reported that the Bologna reforms were integrated into their strategic plans, the link to overarching research aims was noticeably absent. This may well have to do with the fact that only a third of the visited institutions reported actually having a research strategy at institutional level – if one applies a generous notion of the term “strategy” which is not just restricted to setting priority research areas but comprises all attempts to link overarching institutional goals with some methods of realising such goals. Half of these (i.e. one sixth of the institutions in the study) have defined research areas in which they want to concentrate institutional efforts in order to strengthen international visibility. Of course, international research orientation was mentioned at many other institutions, but only a few institutions (predominantly in the northern and north-western Europe) made references to an international research market in their own strategic development of which the new curricular were to form a part. It should also be noted that very few institutions mentioned international partnerships in their strategic reflections, neither with respect to educational nor to research objectives. In contrast, there were a few cases where there were very concrete ideas about intensified regional partnerships intended to benefit both educational development and research cooperation.

In addition to establishing or extending support services for researchers’ grant acquisition or technology transfer activities, some institutions had also defined incentives to promote excellence in research and reward high performance among researchers or in research training. Most institutions seemed to be chiefly concerned with maintaining research capacity in times of worsening budgets rather than being expanding existing strengths or competitive advantages. While research was regarded as an internationally relevant part of the institution and the Bologna reforms were usually seen as part of the internationalisation of the institution, **only a small minority of institutions seemed to take the Bologna reforms as an opportunity to link the positioning of the new educational programmes with the positioning of its research strengths**.

Generally, it should be noted that research and education are separately managed at most institutions with very little organisational interface above departmental level so that the institutional development of education and research is only likely to be linked if the institutional leadership makes a conscious and targeted effort to pursue these links with and across the faculties.

Resources for education versus resources for research: the limits of time and funding

“Ministers will make the necessary effort to make European Higher Education Institutions an even more attractive and efficient partner. [...] Ministers understand that there are obstacles inhibiting the achievement of these goals and these cannot be resolved by Higher Education Institutions alone. It requires strong support, including financial, and appropriate decisions from national Governments and European Bodies.” (Berlin Communiqué, 2003)

The implementation of the Bologna process has been an enormous time contribution from academics and administrators all over Europe. Given the fact that very few institutions received additional support for the process or increased teaching or counselling tasks, this time was and is being spent at the expense of research, as reported by practically all universities during the site visits. Accordingly, most academics urgently hope that they will not be subjected to another wave of such fundamental reforms again soon. But what worries many academics even more is the fact that the ingredients of the reforms that are meant to contribute to the quality enhancement of European higher education, such as greater attention to learners’ needs, more flexible learning paths and regular assessment, which many institutions have implemented with full conviction, are going to negatively affect research since less time is available for the latter. As long as there are no additional resources provided by governments or other sources, no additional staff can be hired to help with the increased teaching, counselling and exam load. In some institutions the regular administrative load also seems to have increased. Most groups emphasised that this matter will have to be urgently addressed in order to prevent competition between the EHEA and the ERA which, in turn, would eventually also undermine the quality of university education. **An increase with the quality of teaching in Europe should not have to be paid with a decrease in the quality of research.**

Limited resources for research seem to be a major problem which many European countries are currently facing. Particularly in many eastern European countries but also in France and Italy the urgency of this problem was mentioned quite frequently without people even having been asked to address the issue. Given that some other countries (such as Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Ireland, Norway) have realised the crucial role that research plays for their future well-being and have developed policies and increased funds to serve those goals, there is a danger that the differences in research intensity and research competitiveness of the EHEA will increase rather than diminish, resulting in further intra-European brain drain and lessening quality of higher education in some regions of Europe -- quite contrary to the overall aims of a common EHEA.

5.4 Challenges for the future

- While focussing on matters of education, the Bologna reforms also bring opportunities and bear risks with respect to the quality of research and research training. Institutions and governments will have to mobilise ideas and resources to **make sure the quality of education is not being developed to the detriment of the quality of research** but rather in a mutually reinforcing manner.
- To exploit the potential of the curricular reforms and new interdisciplinary approaches which universities have identified, institutions are facing the challenge of **strengthening inter-faculty communication, coordination and overarching institutional approaches** to the design of new programmes and research emphases. To position themselves in their relevant competitive contexts, many institutions may benefit from developing a more strategic

approach to their overall profile, relating their research strengths more clearly to their teaching offer.

- Universities and other HEIs face the challenge of working together to exploit **their strengths most effectively in addressing Europe's professional and academic research** needs.
- Institutions and governments are facing the challenge of **paying more attention to fostering career prospects and development of young researchers** and taking account of the diverse research careers for which master and doctoral graduates are heading.
- Institutions are by and large facing the challenge of developing appropriate and sufficiently targeted **skills training** which is relevant for research-based careers, **without undermining the space for independent research**.
- Governments and national authorities are facing the **challenge of supporting institutions financially in order to meet these new and additional tasks** which will require additional staff and additional time and competences in the part of the institutions.

6. Implementing Bologna at Higher Education Institutions: Success Factors and Systemic Challenges - Sybille Reichert

6.1. Implementing Bologna: The success factors

For the EHEA to become a reality it takes governments to set the right conditions and HEIs to convert the possible into the real. The *Trends IV* site visits revealed that appropriate legislation is a good starting point for the reform issues to take shape. However, other factors, both national and institutional, play an important role in the success of the reforms. The visits to several institutions in one country showed that the same national conditions could result in very different institutional actions. Some institutions chose to use the opportunity which the Bologna process presented in a very proactive manner, trying to optimise the institution's position with the help of the new framework for structural changes, while others refrained from reviewing their teaching and learning processes until it could no longer be avoided. But the *Trends IV* visits also revealed that different national methods of dealing with the Bologna opportunity can considerably affect institutional attitudes and actions.

If success is defined in terms of the realisation of the aims of the Bologna reforms, one can distinguish different factors which have had significant impact: at institutional level, the nature and content of other major reforms that were simultaneously underway also had an effect on institutional readiness to adopt the Bologna agenda as their own. Furthermore, the strength of internal horizontal communication made a noticeable difference, as did the quality of the leadership exercised by the institutional managers of such a complex overarching reform process. Regarding the national context, the quality of information, guidance and financial support which national actors have provided, significantly affected institutional capacity to act. Very importantly, the degree of autonomy defined the *marge de manoeuvre* and therefore the motivation with which institutions approached the reforms, depending on whether or not they felt they could forge their own future. These factors each deserve analysis.

Success Factor 1: The relation to other higher education reforms

The Bologna reforms were the dominant reform issue for HEIs in an overwhelming number of the countries visited in the context of this study. Most of these higher education systems have put in place a Bologna framework through legislation to which institutions are now adapting. Hungary and Spain were just passing such legislation around the time of the site visits; in Portugal legislation was just passed in February 2005 that specifies the use of ECTS as the future national credit system. Only in England and Turkey are the Bologna reforms deemed to be merely partially relevant to the national situation. (Scotland saw more relevance of the Bologna process to its own reform developments.)

The reform wave in European higher education seems to go even further and deeper than the Bologna reforms themselves: in a third of the countries visited, the rectors' conferences asserted that the comprehensive implementation of the Bologna reforms formed an integral aspect of a wider review of the entire higher education systems (Flemish Community of Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Norway, Poland and Switzerland). Our data shows that European higher education is undergoing fundamental reforms often well beyond the already large scope of the Bologna reforms. The reform issues mentioned cover the whole spectrum of issues which define HEIs, including steering and funding mechanisms (e.g. through the introduction of performance based funding), governance structures, distribution of competences between different levels of a federal structure, differentiation of and articulation between institutional types, and academic career conditions. All of these may go hand in hand with the Bologna reforms and are often triggered or accelerated by the Bologna process (for a full overview see Table 1).

The relation of these reforms to the Bologna agenda is perceived quite differently in the different national contexts. In Austria, for example, the fundamental reform of governance structures and introduction of university autonomy with corresponding management and funding mechanisms is keeping the institutions fully occupied so that institutions have to push the Bologna reforms to the background at the moment. Even though the University Act of 2002 supports the implementation of several Bologna objectives, problems arise due to the two overlapping complex reform processes, resulting in the concentration of the university members on national and internal matters. In contrast, in Norway, the Bologna reforms have been integrated into the so-called “quality reform” which affect all dimensions of higher education but are perceived to be complementary to and thus reinforcing the Bologna aims.

In a few countries, institutional representatives feel that the label “Bologna reform” is used to introduce reforms which are actually not part of the Bologna agenda. Restructuring the relationship between HEIs, reducing the number of study programmes, and introducing elements of competitiveness are all examples of reforms introduced in some countries as part of the Bologna package.

While many institutional representatives observed that Bologna had triggered reforms that had often already ripened internally, it should also be noted that there were comments that the Bologna reforms had sometimes delayed other internal changes, either because it was decided to delay their implementation in order to have them coincide with the full implementation of the Bologna reforms, or because it was felt that only one major reform should be pursued at a time.

Success Factor 2: Institutional problem awareness: top-down directives as an opportunity for bottom-up review and reform

Of the 62 institutions visited in the framework of this study, two-thirds have decided to adopt and internalise the Bologna reforms, integrating them into their own institutional development and thus transforming an essentially top down agenda into their own bottom-up interpretation of desirable change. Given the criticisms in the initial years after the Bologna Declaration, this result seems rather remarkable. Not only is the awareness of the Bologna reforms - still found to be low among academics just two years ago - now reported to be high at most institutions, but the acceptance of the overall aims and added value of the Bologna reforms is also wide-spread within institutions across Europe. Indeed, many academics seem to agree that some reforms of teaching and learning structures and approaches are needed.

While some criticisms regarding the process of implementation or individual aspects of the reforms were voiced at most institutions, there was only one institution that attributed no added value to the Bologna reforms and in which the overall Bologna reform agenda was actually rejected. Even taking account of the possibility of a slight positive bias in the institutional sample, this widespread acceptance of the fundamental Bologna agenda should be particularly stressed.

The added values which institutions associated with the Bologna reforms cover quite a wide spectrum of issues (see appendix 6), revealing a wide variety of reasons for integrating Bologna reforms into institutional strategic plans. Only a few institutions in Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Portugal and Spain found it too early to tell whether any added value could be attributed to Bologna (nevertheless expecting the internationalisation and mobility of their institution to be furthered by the reforms).

The main reason why so many institutions transformed the Bologna reforms into their own institutional agenda seems to lie in the perceived **need to review and reform curricula**. At about a quarter of the institutions, different groups commented that the Bologna reforms had a “trigger effect”, hastening the implementation of reforms that had already been prepared by many internal discussions beforehand. Sometimes, there were comments that the external pressure made it easier to focus on a set of reforms, to prune the existing offer of superfluous or outdated elements and to push a reform agenda forward that could have been more easily held up by disagreements if it had been a purely internally generated agenda.

Most often, it was appreciated that the Bologna reforms offered the opportunity to concentrate more on students’ needs and on competences (see details in chapter 2) and to establish greater

transparency inside the institution regarding the teaching offer, content, methodology, expected learning outcomes and workload. The Bologna reforms were also often appreciated as an opportunity to introduce more interdisciplinary programmes. Some institutions in Finland, France, Denmark and Switzerland also reported that Bologna had provided an opportunity to increase inter-university cooperation at regional level.

Success Factor 3: Strong communication across the institution and consultative but determined leadership

The implementation of the Bologna reforms clearly affects most groups within a given institution. This pervasiveness of the reforms does not just require a considerable additional time investment on the part of many institutional actors but also demands well-functioning horizontal communication inside the institution. Conversely, at some institutions with decentralised internal organisation, it was observed that the institution lacked the capacity to coordinate. Interestingly, many institutions noted that the **Bologna reform process had served as a special opportunity for strengthening institutional coherence, enhancing institutional transparency and coordination, and reinforcing horizontal communication channels**, resulting in different combinations of the following features:

- strengthened leadership;
- better distribution of work and resources;
- reduction in the number of faculties;
- organisational reforms driven by improved inter-faculty cooperation;
- more coherent post-graduate programmes across the university;
- better integration of administrators.

The institutional organisation of successful implementation revealed a common element across Europe: one member of the institutional leadership assumes the overall responsibility for the implementation process. Most often this is the vice rector for teaching/ education or academic affairs, in a few cases the vice rector for international relations. In addition, most institutions have either formed a new coordinating group or used an existing institutional committee to coordinate the processes at faculty level, with a view to developing overarching guidelines and oversee the whole implementation process. It is safe to say that in the advanced stage of implementation, the most intense time investment happened at faculty level where the deans or vice-deans played the leading coordinating and managerial role. Many faculties also nominated a Bologna coordinator and either established faculty networks or committees for coordination at faculty level or used existing bodies to implement the new curricular structures and credit system. In a few countries, especially in northern and western Europe, the student unions or representatives played an active role in the implementation process.

Given the complexity of the institutional relations, many groups within the institution commented that the implementation process was strongly affected both by the leadership's readiness to engage in genuine dialogue (i.e. to inform and listen to different positions), as well as by their capacity to define some overarching directions or guidelines early in the process. The challenge remains for the leadership to put in place a framework for high-level management balanced with space for bottom-up initiatives within departments and faculties.

While our data does not enable this question to be pursued in detail, there were a few institutions that particularly stood out because of their proactive attitude to the reforms, reflecting successful institutional leadership. Particularly in countries where several institutions were visited it was interesting to see how the same national constraints could result in very different institutional behaviour. It seems that the institutional leadership (be it one person or the leadership team) had a far-reaching effect on the institutional capacity for change, on the readiness to translate national conditions to an institutional plan, and to reconcile conflicting attitudes.

Interesting examples of proactive behaviour can be found, for example, in countries where the national level regulations or directives still remain to be defined. Thus, in Estonia, according to institutional representatives, the Bologna reforms were pushed forward by the university while the

ministry then caught up. In Portugal, while waiting for the new government to take office before the relevant legislation could be passed, one university progressed as far as it could with internal deliberations about the new structures, exploring the best ways to reform current curricula. In Spain, one university, while waiting for state legislation and framework to change, was preparing the implementation of the reforms by assessing the inherent potential for educational innovation. Other institutions, for example in the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany and Switzerland, used the Bologna reforms to push their own reform agenda forward quickly in order to enhance their positions. Very noticeably, all of the leaders from the seven non-university institutions in this study made strong and proactive use of the Bologna reforms to enhance their position in the national dual systems and to strengthen their master level and applied research.

Success Factor 4: The right balance between national level regulation and coordination and institutional autonomy

The site visit interviews showed that the internal implementation processes were greatly affected, helped or hindered, by the **guidance, support and regulations at national level. The latter affected the readiness with which the Bologna reforms were accepted as a meaningful agenda for institutional change but also the extent to which they were used to enhance institutional quality.**

There were some countries in which the interplay between institutions and national authorities worked well and to the apparent satisfaction of most representatives at the institutions we visited. While there were individual points of criticism, there was an assumption that both levels tried to understand each other's positions and regarded the dialogue as an engagement in a complex but ultimately common cause. This seemed to be the case in Finland, Norway, Denmark, Ireland, Switzerland, and to a large extent (depending on the region) in Germany, for example. Here, the institutions reported and expressed appreciation for the considerable time that had been allocated to informing the institutions and inviting them to contribute to the deliberations on the contours of the national legislation or regulations. Bringing together a national reform agenda with institutional development agendas seemed to be feasible and mutually reinforcing. In Finland, the subject-based frameworks of the curricular reforms were regarded as particularly helpful and were felt to enhance inter-institutional cooperation considerably. In Switzerland, it was appreciated that the national political level did not jump into rash legislation but instead built strongly on the coordination by the national rectors' conference which helped to prepare the national directives, safeguarding institutional autonomy as much as possible. (Only on the point of nationally imposed admission rules, it was felt that the national level had infringed on institutional profiling capacity and institutional autonomy.) At an institution in the French Community of Belgium, where institutional autonomy was generally felt to be rather limited, this limited autonomy was found to be alleviated by the intensity with which the HEIs had been included in the deliberation on the national legislation.

More frequently, in most other national contexts, there were criticisms of the role of the ministry. In particular, there were complaints about the unsupportive mix between on the one hand too much and too hurried prescriptive legislation produced after too little consultation, and on the other too few incentives for action. Laws were felt not to be thought through, sometimes even inconsistent, and often insufficiently informed of the European debates. They often had to be revised later, implying some waste of time for all parties involved. In particular, frequent criticisms were voiced concerning the often rigid and sometimes uninformed interpretation of the Bologna reforms within the ministries' service units which were deemed much more problematic and less in the spirit of the Bologna reforms than the high-level declarations and intentions.

Many university representatives said they needed more information and guidance but found that civil servants were usually less informed than the university representatives about European developments. In the most extreme examples, legislation even imposed that ECTS credits be related to contact hours and a minimum of contact hours, resulting in inconsistencies and an overcharging of the new programmes which both academics and students felt to be detrimental to the quality of the teaching offer. Complaints were also frequently voiced about either **premature or unnecessary administrative overregulation which interfered with institutional autonomy.** The exception was

in the UK, where a lack of ministerial interest regarding the Bologna reforms was criticised, rather than any interference.

A serious problem also arises at institutional level when there is a **mismatch between national or regional provisions for some subjects (like teacher training) and the new Bologna degree structures**. Such inconsistent structures were said to prevent efficiencies of scale at institutional level which had been possible before when programmes leading to different degrees in the same subject could be combined and interlaced. Thus additional human resources were being used for no net benefit.

Institutions were also **significantly affected by the speed prescribed by national actors for the full implementation**. A rushed process was reported to take away room for “creative manoeuvre” or a more fundamental redesign of some programmes. Not only were the most innovative ideas felt to need more deliberation time, it was also observed that some processes like the calculation of credits for individual courses or modules were done more superficially due to time pressure. With more time, the workload of the courses could be better checked and weighting attributed more appropriately. Conversely, it is also worth noting that the institutions which reported a particularly positive and deep institutional reform in the framework of the Bologna were those that, for internal reasons and proactive attitudes, had started their implementation process early and had invested a lot of time into a pervasive deliberation and well-prepared decision-making process. This transformed the Bologna reforms into a genuine institutional reform agenda, integrated into the strategic plan, and supported by incentives and financial decisions.

In some countries, the institutional implementation strongly depends on the national level guidelines from agencies such as accreditation bodies, as is the case in many eastern European countries, Germany, and the UK. For example, in Germany, the Accreditation Council holds a key position in the process as it is entrusted to supervise closely the implementation of the provisions for the accreditation of Bachelor and Master Study Courses⁹. Such accreditation guidelines exert a straight-jacket influence, and institutions in Poland, as well as the Czech and Slovak Republics reported difficulties with introducing interdisciplinary curricula. As a result, rather than encouraging creativity and innovation through inter-disciplinary development, academics are constrained by guidelines encouraging traditional programmes and minimal standards. In some cases a register of permitted courses also prevents the definition of new programmes around disciplinary interfaces, for example in Greece and the French Community of Belgium.

With respect to course offer, further restrictions to institutional autonomy concerning the language of instruction were also noted in the Belgium (FI) and Greece. In Belgium (FI), the new ministry prescription that only 10% of the courses could be offered in English presented a serious problem to the more internationally oriented institutions wanting to position their competitive English language master programmes in an international market. However, apart from these restrictions of autonomy regarding curricular content, the majority of European institutions felt they had full autonomy with respect to the contents and design of their teaching offer.

University autonomy is much more restricted with respect to other dimensions of higher education. In this context the Ministers' conviction expressed in the Berlin Communiqué should be recalled: *“Aware of the contribution strong institutions can make to economic and societal development, Ministers accept that institutions need to be empowered to take decisions on their internal organisation and administration. Ministers further call upon institutions to ensure that the reforms become fully integrated into core institutional functions and processes”*. Integration of reforms into the core institutional development is naturally more difficult to achieve if core elements cannot be shaped by

⁹ As stipulated in the “Resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the FRG” (2003), and in the “Common Structural Guidelines of the Länder”. Each dean of a faculty must elaborate a self-evaluation report on the ways these guidelines are to be implemented for the organisation of study programmes along the Bologna reform requirements, to be submitted to the process of external reviewing organised by the corresponding accreditation commissions.

the institution itself. Such **lack of autonomy was noted most often with respect to staff management and recruitment, as well as to student selection.**

With regard to staff recruitment and promotion, the impossibility for many institutions to introduce differentiated conditions and incentives in terms of staff salaries and other resources make the institutions less competitive on the international market. Even more frequent than complaints about lack of autonomy regarding human resource management were the concerns that institutions could not select the most suitable students for their institutional profile, but in many cases simply had to accept those with the nationally-defined qualifications. For the second cycle, Bachelor degrees from the same country were often supposed to be admitted without further selection criteria (however, this seemed to pose less of a problem to most institutions). University representatives felt that their capacity to define the appropriate qualification profiles for their programmes was seriously undermined by such nationally imposed admission rules. Especially with respect to internationally competitive programmes it was emphasised that standards of excellence should also be reflected in the selective nature of the programme which should bring the best qualified students together. The more autonomous institutions in the UK and Ireland openly commiserated with their European partners for such nationally imposed constraints.

National or regional prescriptions were also mentioned regarding teaching hours. For example, one university had to ensure that all staff taught the same number of hours. No variation was allowed on the basis, for example, of research performance. This meant that competitiveness on the international market of scientists was reduced since the particular ministry had just increased the already comparatively high number of teaching hours a professor had to teach. As a consequence, the best qualified applicants were reported to have lost interest in the positions.

All the above-mentioned restrictions of institutional autonomy were felt to undermine institutional flexibility, efficiency and motivation to institutional development.

In some countries, the perceived lack of autonomy had been addressed in recent legislation. In Austria and Denmark, for example, university autonomy has increased with the recent governance reforms. In Denmark representatives observed that “the governance reform which introduced a professionally appointed rector and an external board improved the university’s independence.” In Austria, a university rector reported that he “suddenly found himself in the position of really running the institution. A new organisational plan had to be drafted, strategic aims defined, and legal changes, study regulations, personnel status and financing defined.” In spite of all the additional work which had to be invested in implementing the new governance structures, this new situation was greatly appreciated. One tangible benefit was that it was now felt to be easier, for example, to create new study programmes.

Generally, the **trend towards more autonomy seems slowly to be gaining ground in Europe.** Only in one country (Lithuania), was it reported that previously introduced autonomy seems to be decreasing with the Bologna reforms. In Estonia, Latvia, Ireland and the UK, in particular, HEIs greatly appreciated their institutional autonomy, and were fully prepared to accept the need for additional accountability measures in return.

Success Factor 5: Time to adjust and fine-tune

Across Europe, even in the most positively disposed institutional environments, there is a growing sense of reform fatigue. Regardless of the added values and benefits which are attributed to the Bologna reforms, deans and academics express their concern at the enormous time investment which they had to subtract from other projects and functions.

There is a strong consensus at the institutions in this sample, from rectors and administrators to academics and students, that such far-reaching reforms as the complete restructuring of curricula, the change to credit accumulation systems and new assessment procedures engendered by the Bologna reforms, require considerable time not just for deliberation but also for subsequent adjustments and improvement. The many open questions and the frequently noted high speed of implementation led a

large majority of institutional actors to emphasise that time was needed for fine-tuning of the reforms. Many were concerned that politicians may want to design another major reform to enhance their own profile or visibility rather than letting these major reforms settle, allowing them to develop and produce the best possible benefits. Hence there was a frequent plea from institutions to governments not to impose yet another wave of reform on them too soon before the full potential of the Bologna reforms can be realised. As one student phrased it, "Tell the ministers that it takes a lot longer to implement a reform than it does to conceive it."

Success Factor 6: National financial support

During the site visits, it was often observed that there was a **considerable gap between the aims of the Bologna reforms as stated in political declarations by the ministers, on the one hand, and the means and support given by the state to the institutions to realise these aims, on the other.** Unfortunately, the impressive consensus and commitment which the Ministers of Education of Europe have found and confirmed every two years after the Bologna declaration has remained a cost-neutral proposition in most European countries. Most Bologna signatory countries expressed their ministerial commitment only by setting the legislative framework which institutions should conform to, but have not supported the Bologna reforms with additional financial means, neither for the considerable implementation costs nor for the higher staff costs which many institutions find to be associated with the Bologna structures.

Many HEIs emphasised that the introduction of the new degree structures and more flexible student-centred learning and teaching imply considerable time investments not just for information, discussion, decisions, staff training and development when introducing the changes, but also for the extra provision offered through such restructured teaching and assessment, which involves more counselling, and more contact with students. Only a few governments, such as Norway, Finland, Ireland, Netherlands, and Switzerland have attempted to meet the costs incurred, in the light of the profound upheaval and potential that the Bologna reforms imply. Yet even in these countries, the extra costs of the Bologna reforms at institutional level are far from being covered. Indeed as **most of the costs of Bologna reforms have to be borne by the institutions themselves, in times of restricted institutional budgets this means that resources are being taken away from other essential functions of higher education, such as research.**

Many comments could be quoted to show how the lack of government funding is presenting a serious problem for universities all over Europe, and preventing them from realising the full potential of Bologna reforms (see Appendix 7). It was frequently emphasised that financial strain on the part of universities will inhibit reform and undermine the EHEA project. Institutions felt that governments should demonstrate their commitment to the quality dimension of reforms by supporting them with sufficient funds.

6.2. Bologna reforms as systemic challenges

In 2005, there is enough evidence to judge that, as the most wide-reaching reforms in European higher education in recent decades, the Bologna reforms have not only contributed to laying a common ground for the different national systems of higher education but have also had profound effects on the individual national systems themselves, and these main systemic shifts deserve concluding attention.

The move to student-centred learning

Apart from the intended effects of building more compatible degree structures and common transparency instruments such as ECTS and the Diploma Supplement, far-reaching changes are taking place in approaches to learning, with many traditionally teacher-centred systems reflecting upon ways to place the students' needs at the centre of their attention. Such a change of focus is also making itself felt in the internal quality culture regarding teaching, with heightened attention to teaching performance, and feedback being sought from students on teaching and learning processes.

The development of adequate student support services is also an increasing concern as expansion of systems and institutions continues.

There is considerable divergence in Europe regarding teaching approaches and the degree to which student-centred learning can be said to define the everyday life at universities, with a clear northern/north-western European dominance in student-centred learning environments and some scepticism in other parts of Europe towards the idea of competence-based learning and flexible learning paths. Nonetheless, there seems to be a growing number of institutions across Europe that are beginning to move in the same direction. These changes do not only demand rethinking curricula and staff development but also result in a considerable demand for additional guidance and counselling services, as well as for new forms of tutoring and assessment. This presents a major challenge to institutions as well as to the governments supporting them.

The move toward more compact programmes

Whether student- or teacher-centred, one frequently mentioned trend should be highlighted, although it may be transitional in nature: the move from longer to shorter first cycle programmes often results in too much content being pressed into too little time. Sometimes this trend is motivated by the fear of losing essential disciplinary knowledge, i.e. the inclination to regard too many course units as being fundamental. Sometimes the nationally prescribed number of required student contact hours contributes to the problem. Whatever the cause, some academics and students fear that the compressed nature of new programmes does not allow enough time to develop a critical and reflective approach to the materials presented and generally does not foster an independent mind. There were frequent comments that efficiency, time management and completion in due time are now playing a greater role than before, while academic curiosity and intellectual development have become less important. Some were also worried that part time studies, which is a mode of study required by many contemporary students, was being made significantly more difficult to manage in the new regime (see chapter 2).

The blurring differentiation between universities and other higher education institutions

A particularly striking outcome of this study's field research was that the broad differentiation between the two predominant "types" of European higher education institutions, the universities and other higher education institutions, seems to have become blurred by the introduction of the new degree systems. It seems that the differentiation is not only reduced by virtue of introducing the same titles for qualifications from both types of institutions – in most systems giving access to the same subsequent stage of progression – but also because of the importance now attached to the idea of employability which used to be the main competitive advantage of the non-university higher education institution.

While universities are often struggling with the idea of what an "academic Bachelor" could actually offer to the labour market and how labour markets will accept students with such qualifications, other higher education institutions are often expanding their teaching offer to the master level and expanding their (applied) research capacity along with it. These experiences were reported in Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Ireland and the Netherlands. Meanwhile, Lithuania and the Slovak Republic have newly introduced a non-university sector. Some systems already foresee applied professional and academic research degrees existing side by side within the same institutions (Hungary, Latvia, Portugal). Whatever the national situation, all systems share the belief that greater permeability between the sectors should bring added value for students and graduates.

Retreating state funding of higher education

There is a frequently voiced fear that the Bologna reforms will exacerbate the wide-spread under-funding of higher education.

Firstly, these fears are fed by the perception that most governments have not supported the most fundamental overhaul of higher education in Europe in recent decades with financial support. In spite

of ministerial commitments to the Bologna reforms, only few governments were committed enough to help the institutions with covering huge additional staff time invested. Thus many institutions have to stop short of the desired aims of quality enhancement which often involve additional staff time and competences, or subtract the needed resources from other essential university functions such as research. There is wide-spread concern that the prospected increase of the quality of teaching in Europe which the Bologna reforms helped to bring about will have to be paid with a decrease in the quality of research. Moreover, the widely appreciated idea of linking the quest for a European Higher Education Area with that of creating a more competitive European Research Area would obviously be lost if such constraints were to continue.

Secondly, many institutions fear that Bologna is being used as part of an agenda for the state to retreat from funding higher education. According to this thesis, state support of higher education will recede further by restricting full state funding to the first cycle degree, and keeping the Master level for a more select group of best qualified and/ or fee-paying students. The Master level would be restricted to an elite who manage to obtain a stipend granted on the basis of their earlier performance and to those who can afford the tuition imposed. Such a scheme would likely reduce the number of students able to carry their studies beyond the three or four years commonly associated with the Bachelor degree. This raises questions about having different public/private funding models at different levels of higher education, and may also raise questions about the financial incentives of the state to further reduce the length of 4-year Bachelors to 3 years.

In a large number of national contexts, HEIs are wondering about the future scope of state funding and the extent to which such funding will allow them to maintain or expand their competitiveness. While many are extending their private partnerships, they feel that the advantages of a largely state funded system of higher education regarding its long-term orientation, critical distance and innovative potential should not be underestimated.

Stronger higher education institutions for Europe

Implementing Bologna in Europe's HEIs has not just involved many different groups tackling a common agenda, but also heightened awareness of, and in some cases identification with the overarching institutional perspective, beyond the concerns of particular departments, programmes or individuals. The Bologna process has challenged institutions to reinforce their internal communication, coordination and decision-making processes. It has also made them more aware of the limits of their autonomy, and of their legal and financial leeway. Many institutions see clearly where they should be heading in order to become stronger and more competitive, but are still wondering where they will mobilise the goodwill and resources to support this movement. The Bologna reforms have strengthened and confirmed institutional capacity to change. The future European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area depends on strong HEIs which are able to pursue excellence in regard of their respective missions.

6.3. Challenges for the future

- Most HEIs would benefit from **strengthening further their internal communication and institutional coordination** in order to allow for coherent implementation and optimal use of the innovative potential of the Bologna reforms.
- Institutions and governments should allow for **enough time for adjustments** and further optimisation of the Bologna reforms.
- **Institutional autonomy** of HEIs **should be expanded** where it is still restricted to increase their motivation and capacity to change.
- In order to allow the Bologna reforms to lead to overall quality enhancement at HEIs, **governments should express their commitment to the Bologna process through financial support**. Otherwise institutions and higher education systems may run the risk of enhancing the quality of their teaching to the detriment of the quality of their research which in turn would harm the quality of teaching sooner or later.

- Governments are facing the challenge of meeting increasing demand for higher education and providing adequate **state funding** in order to maintain a high level of qualifications among university graduates.
- **HEIs would benefit from (re)defining their institutional profile to allow cooperation and creative interfaces for the future.** They will also have to work out the best possible progression of students between institutions, maximising flexibility but also doing justice to their different profiles. Governments should create the right conditions to allow for permeability, flexibility and differentiation between institutions.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1: List of participating institutions

Institutions participating in *Trends IV* site visits

- University of Salzburg, Austria
- Fachhochschule Vorarlberg, Austria
- Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium
- HEC Liège, Belgium
- University of Ghent, Belgium
- University of Veliko Turnovo, Bulgaria
- University of Split, Croatia
- Brno University of Technology, Czech Republic
- University of Copenhagen, Denmark
- University of Tartu, Estonia
- University of Helsinki, Finland
- Helsinki Polytechnic Stadia, Finland
- Université de Lyon 1, France
- Université d'Aix Marseille 3, France
- University of Konstanz, Germany
- University of Bremen, Germany
- FHOldenburg/Ostfriesland/Wilhelmshaven, Germany
- University of Ioannina, Greece
- Debrecen University, Hungary
- Budapest Business School, Hungary
- NUI Galway, Ireland
- Università degli Studi di TRIESTE, Italy
- Università degli Studi Federico II di NAPOLI, Italy
- University of Latvia, Latvia
- Kaunas Technological University, Lithuania
- Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania
- University of Amsterdam, Netherlands
- Fontys Hogescholen, Netherlands
- University of Bergen, Norway
- Jagiellonian University, Poland
- Wrocław University of Technology, Poland
- University of Algarve, Portugal
- University of Aveiro, Portugal
- Babes-Bolyai University, Romania
- Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia
- University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
- Universidad de Barcelona, Spain
- Universidad de Cantabria, Spain
- Umeå University, Sweden
- University of Stockholm, Sweden
- Universität St. Gallen, Switzerland
- Université de Fribourg, Switzerland
- Istanbul Technical University, Turkey
- Sakarya University, Turkey
- York St. John, United Kingdom
- University of Strathclyde, United Kingdom
- University College London, United Kingdom
- University of Cardiff, United Kingdom

Contributing Coimbra Group Network institutions

- Karl Franzens Universität Graz, Austria
- Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium
- Turun Yliopisto (Turku), Finland
- Åbo Akademi University, Finland,
- Eötvös Loránd University (Budapest), Hungary
- Trinity College Dublin, Ireland
- Università Degli Studi di Bologna, Italy
- Università Degli Studi di Padova, Italy
- Università Degli Studi di Siena, Italy
- Universiteit Groningen, Netherlands
- Universidade de Coimbra, Portugal
- Universidad de Salamanca, Spain
- Université de Genève, Switzerland
- University of Bristol, United Kingdom

Appendix 2: Trends IV team members

Trends IV Researchers : International

- Andrée Sursock, EUA Secretariat
- Andrejs Rauhvargers, Latvian Rectors' Conference
- Antoinette Charon, Université de Lausanne
- Bernadette Conraths, EUA Consultant
- Christian Tauch, German Rectors' Conference (HRK)
- David Crosier, EUA Secretariat
- Dionnysis Kladis, University of Peloponnese
- Hanne Smidt, EUA Consultant
- Howard Davies, London Metropolitan University
- Karel Van Liempt, Universiteit Antwerpen
- Kate Geddie, EUA Secretariat
- Lars Ekholm, formerly of the Association of Swedish Higher Education
- Lazăr Vlăsceanu, UNESCO-CEPES
- Lewis Purser, EUA Secretariat
- Sandra Bitusikova, EUA Secretariat
- Sybille Reichert, ETH Zürich

Trends IV Researchers : National

- Andrea Frank, German Rectors' Conference (HRK)
- Andrejs Rauhvargers, Latvian Rectors' Conference
- Andrzej Krasniewski, Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland
- Anne-Marie de Jonghe, Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad
- Bengt Karlsson, Association of Swedish Higher Education
- Claire Sourbès, Conférence des Présidents d'Université
- David Bohmert, Association of Universities in the Netherlands
- Carla Salvaterre, Università degli Studi di Bologna
- Egbert de Vries, HBO-Raad
- Ellen Hansen, Rektorkollegiet
- Freddy Coignoul, Université de Liège
- Gerard Madill, Universities Scotland
- Istvan Bilik, Confederation of Hungarian Conferences on Higher Education
- Ivan Leban, Univerza v Ljubljani
- Ivan Vickovic, University of Zagreb
- Julia Gonzalez, Universidad de la Iglesia de Deusto
- Karin Riegler, Austrian Rectors' Conference
- Katerina Galanki, Athens University of Economics & Business
- Kestutis Krisciunas, Lithuanian Universities Rectors' Conference
- Maria Cikesova, Slovak Rectors' Conference
- Mart Laidmets, Estonian Rectors' Conference
- Nicole Nicolas, Conférence des Présidents d'Université
- Öktem Vardar, Isik University
- Ola Stave, Norwegian Council for Higher Education
- Patricia Ambrose, Standing Conference of Principals
- Constantin Bratianu, Bucharest University of Technology
- Jan M. Honzik, Brno University of Technology
- Raffaella Pagani, Universidad Complutense
- Susanne Obermayer, Conférence des recteurs des universités suisses
- Tapio Markkanen, Finnish Council of University Rectors
- Tish Bourke, Universities UK

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- Paolo Monari, Università Degli Studi di Bologna
- Carla Salvaterre, Università Degli Studi di Bologna
- Giovanna Filippini, Università Degli Studi di Bologna
- Carmela Tanzillo, Università Degli Studi di Bologna
- Marco Gori, Università Degli Studi di Siena
- Jan Kok, Universiteit Groningen
- Rafael Bonete Perales, Universidad de Salamanca
- Cristina Robalo Cordeiro, Universidade de Coimbra
- Olivier Vincent, Université de Genève
- Guido Langouche, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
- Ulrike Krawagna, Karl Franzens Universität Graz
- Sabine Pendl, Karl Franzens Universität Graz

Coimbra Contribution : External Experts

- Zdzislaw Mach, Jagiellonian University
- Carla Salvaterre, Università Degli Studi di Bologna
- Carmela Tanzillo, Università Degli Studi di Bologna
- Luigi F Donà dalle Rose, Università Degli Studi di Padova
- Emanuela Pavia, Università Degli Studi di Padova
- Roberta Rasa, Università Degli Studi di Padova
- Giovanna Filippini, Università Degli Studi di Bologna

Appendix 3: National Rectors' Conferences that completed questionnaires

- Austria, Austrian Rectors' Conference
- Belgium NL, Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad
- Bulgaria, Bulgarian Rectors' Conference
- Croatia, Croatian Rectors' Conference
- Czech Republic, Czech Rectors' Conference
- Denmark, Rektorkollegiet
- Estonia, Estonian Rectors' Conference
- Finland, Finnish Council of University Rectors
- France, Conférence des Présidents d'Université (CPU)
- Germany, German Rectors' Conference (HRK)
- Greece, Greek Rectors' Conference
- Hungary, Confederation of Hungarian Conferences on Higher Education
- Italy, Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università Italiane (CRUI)
- Latvia, Latvian Rectors' Conference
- Lithuania, Lithuanian Universities Rectors' Conference
- Netherlands, Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) and Association of Universities of Professional Education (HBO-Raad)
- Norway, Norwegian Council for Higher Education
- Poland, Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland
- Slovakia, Slovak Rectors' Conference
- Slovenia, Association of Rectors of Slovenia
- Spain, Conferencia de Rectores de las Universidades Espanolas (CRUE)
- Sweden, Association of Swedish Higher Education
- Switzerland, Conférence des recteurs des universités suisses
- Turkey, Turkish University Rectors' Conference
- UK, Universities UK

Appendix 4: Questionnaire sent to National Rectors' Conferences

EUA Trends IV Report National Rectors' Conference Questionnaire

*This questionnaire has been formulated to gather national level data that is readily available within your office. Should you not have the information available, please **do not search extensively** for the information among your members institutions. Rather, we prefer to be told that the data is not readily accessible.*

Please submit completed questionnaires to TrendsIV@eua.be by October 15, 2004.

I. General

1. Number of higher education institutions (HEIs) in your country:
 - a. Number of universities?
 - b. Number of polytechnics or specialised colleges?
 - c. Other?
2. Number of post-secondary students (including first year to doctoral degree):
 - a. 1999: Total number of students:
 - i. Percentage of students in universities:
 - ii. Percentage of students in other HEIs:
 - b. 2003: Total number of students:
 - i. Percentage of students in universities:
 - ii. Percentage of students in other HEIs:
3. Student continuation rates in 2003:
 - a. Number of students to enter first-year of higher education studies:
 - b. Number of students to complete a first-cycle study programme:
 - c. Number of students to enter a second-cycle study programme:
 - d. Number of students to enter a PhD programme:
4. If any, what recent changes to national legislation have been made related to the Bologna Process?

II. Awareness / attitudes regarding Bologna

5. How comprehensively are the Bologna Reforms being implemented in your country? (*please circle the most appropriate statement*):
 - a. The Bologna Reforms are being comprehensively implemented, and the entire system of higher education is under re-examination and reform.
 - b. Legislation has changed to provide a Bologna framework but not all action lines have yet been tackled. Changes are expected to be made by 2010.
 - c. Many elements of the Bologna Process are currently being concentrated upon. Full implementation will be made as time and national circumstances permit.
 - d. Only some action lines are deemed to be relevant in our national situation and we are making the relevant changes.
 - e. We believe that no changes need to be made.
6. Is specific funding provided for the implementation of Bologna reforms? Y /N
 - a. If so, is this funding sufficient?

7. Are other national reform processes with an impact on higher education occurring at the same time as the Bologna reforms? Y /N
- a. If yes, what are the main aspects of these reform processes?

II. Structural and Curricular Reform and Qualifications Framework

8. Please explain the definitions used at national level for the following terms:
- a. First-cycle degrees?
- b. Second-cycle degrees?
9. Is there a fixed national deadline for institutional implementation of a two-cycle system? Y /N
- a. If yes, when is the deadline?:
10. To your knowledge, what percentage of HEIs in your country have *completely* implemented a two-cycle system?
11. Are there nationally-defined requirements for obtaining a PhD degree? Y /N
- a. If yes, what are the main aspects of these requirements?
12. Are doctoral degrees currently included in structural reform discussions? Y /N
13. Please describe what impact you foresee on the doctoral level from your two-cycle reform?
14. Master degrees:
- a. Do different "kinds" of master degrees exist? Y /N
- b. If yes, please explain the main differences:
- c. Does there exist professionally-oriented master degrees that do not give access to PhD programmes? Y /N

III. Credit Systems

15. Is ECTS used in your national system for the following purposes:
- a. to facilitate credit student transfer/mobility periods? Y /N
- b. for measuring all students' progress within a programme/institution? Y /N
16. Is there a credit system that differs from ECTS in your country?
17. Is ECTS used as a tool for curricular reform? (*please circle the most appropriate statement*)
- a. The implementation of ECTS has initiated complete curricular rethinking and restructuring in *all* institutions.
- b. In some institutions and some departments discussions of ECTS have initiated complete curricular reform, whereas in others "ECTS credits" are simply super-imposed on traditional curricula.
- c. Little curricular reform has yet occurred in most institutions.
- d. ECTS is used only for student transfer/mobility periods.
- e. Neither ECTS nor another credit system is used.

IV. Quality

18. If the system of national quality assurance has changed in the past five years, please explain the main elements of the change:
19. If evaluations are done at the level of the institution, what areas are addressed (ex. teaching, research, internal management, etc.)?

V. Mobility

20. From what source do you obtain information on student mobility in your country?
21. Number of foreign students in an HEI:
 - a. in 1999:
 - i. Number of foreign European students:
 - ii. Number of foreign non-European students:
 - b. in 2003:
 - i. Number of foreign European students:
 - ii. Number of foreign non-European students:
22. Foreign academic staff:
 - a. in 1999:
 - i. Percentage of foreign European academic staff members:
 - ii. Percentage of non-European academic staff members:
 - b. in 2003:
 - i. Percentage of foreign European academic staff members:
 - ii. Percentage of non-European academic staff members:
23. Please explain what national financial support is available to promote student and staff mobility?
24. What do you consider to be the main obstacles to mobility for staff and students?

VII. Joint degrees

25. What is the national legislation situation regarding the permissibility of an institution to award a joint degree?
26. In Trends III, the interest among the majority of RCs and Ministries for joint degrees was ranked "medium to low importance." Has this changed in the past two years? (*please circle the most appropriate statement*)
 - a. Yes, the level interest has increased
 - b. Yes, the level interest has further decreased
 - c. No, the level of interest has not noticeably changed
27. Is there information available on the number of joint programmes involving institutions from your country exist? On the number of students that participate?

VI. Employability

28. Is the employment of higher education graduates monitored either nationally, institutionally, or neither to your knowledge?
- What is the percentage of first-cycle graduates who enter the national labour market within six months of completing their degree?
 - What kind of information is gathered on the destination of second-cycle graduates?
 - What kind of information is gathered on the destination of PhD graduates?
29. How would you describe the level of awareness and/or acceptance among employers concerning the employability of "new" first-cycle degrees?

VIII. Research careers

30. In national discussions of higher education reform and development, is particular attention paid to research training and research careers? Y /N
- If yes, please explain what are the main issues under discussion:
31. What, if any, have been the main changes in public support for research training?
32. Is there any discussion at national level to encourage private sector employers to support and be more closely involved in university research or research training? Y /N
- If yes, please elaborate:
33. Within the context of Bologna reforms, have there been any national developments to promote research at the first- or second-cycle degree levels?

IX. Bologna Priority

34. In your opinion, what is the single most important issue with regard to the Bologna process in your country?

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your assistance in the Trends IV project is invaluable.

Please send completed questionnaires to TrendsIV@eua.be.

Appendix 5: Interview questionnaire framework used during institutional site visits

EUA Trends IV Report Issues to be addressed during site visits

Introduction:

*explanation of objectives of Trends IV and the aims of the meeting
use of these questions: not for distribution - to guide discussions*

I. Attitude and general assessment of Bologna reforms

Objective: *gain overall impression of awareness of/support for Bologna Reforms*

1. How would you describe the current level of awareness of the Bologna Reforms?
2. How is your institution responding? (how is the Bologna Reform process organised in your institution and who are the primary actors?)
3. Have the Bologna reforms brought any added value to the institution or to the education it offers so far?

FOR RECTOR, DEANS, PROFS, and ADMIN only:

4. Are there other reform processes at your institution?
5. What is the relation of these other institutional reforms to the Bologna Reforms?
6. How does the Bologna Reform process fit into the institution's strategic plan?
7. Funding of Bologna Reforms? allocation of additional internal funds? outside funds? Have financial incentives been used by the state?
8. How "autonomous" do you feel your institution is with respect to implementation of the Bologna Reforms (decision making, financing mechanisms, timing)?

II. Curricular Reforms/Introduction of the 2 cycle structure

Objective: *ascertain the scope of the implementation of 2 cycles (Bachelor/Master) and their impact*

1. New structures
 - a. Are there differences among the disciplines in terms of implementation of the structures?
 - b. What % of students are enrolled in "new" (2 cycle or Bachelor/Master) study programmes?
 - c. What is the significance of the Bachelor-level? What do students do upon completion (continue their studies, enter specific professions etc.)?
 - d. Masters courses: what types of "master" courses are offered in your institution? (and who do you target?)
 - e. Do you foresee an impact on the doctoral level of your two cycle reforms?
 - f. Have structural changes had an impact on student mobility patterns?
2. Teaching/learning and assessment
 - a. What does the concept of "learning outcomes" mean to you?
 - b. Are you considering defining learning outcomes for each course/study/degree programme?
 - c. How have courses been "restructured"? Are courses "modularised" or divided into units?
 - d. Are (ECTS) credits used for transfer and/or accumulation?
 - e. What difficulties have you experienced in the restructuring of curricula?
3. Progression through the system:
 - a. Can you select students for entry into programmes? What are the differences at each level (e.g. Bachelor, Master or PhD)?

III. Recognition of Degrees and Periods of Study

Objective: *ascertain the transfer and recognition procedures and define the related challenges.*

1. Are difficulties encountered in the recognition of students' exchange/mobility periods? (especially for students)
2. Are ECTS/other credits used for transfer purposes? Are there difficulties that differ among disciplines?
3. Do you recognise non-academic/ non-formal qualifications? (inclusion of adult learning) If so, how? Have limits been set to the number of non-academic credits permitted?
4. Is a Diploma Supplement issued to all graduates? Are there issues of cost/language involved?
5. What are the institution's procedures for recognising other diplomas from your country?
6. What are the institution's procedures for recognising foreign diplomas?

IV. Quality

Objective: *ascertain what institutions do for internal quality procedures and how useful it is - or if the concept of internal quality culture is known at all.*

1. Internal quality monitoring mechanisms: What mechanisms exist with respect to:
 - a. Teaching activities
 - b. Research activities
 - c. Student performance
 - d. Administrative processes
 - e. Entrepreneurial activities
 - f. External relations (local, regional, national and international)
2. What are the responsibilities for internal quality monitoring across institution?
3. How regularly are activities monitored and to what extent are the outcomes effective for the institution?
4. Define the link between internal/ institutional procedures and external/ national quality assurance procedures?
5. (if time permits): Is there a budget provision for internal quality processes? How are activities financed?
6. (if time permits): What are the advantages/disadvantages of the internal procedures for quality enhancement?

V. Link between Teaching and Research

Objective: *ascertain the extent to which there are links between different institutional reform processes, i.e. between the Bologna Reforms and the institution's research strategy.*

1. The research strategy of the Institution
 - a. To what extent does the institution have a clearly defined research policy/strategy?
 - b. How is research managed in the institution and who is responsible, in particular for doctoral programmes?
2. Organisation of the link between teaching and research?

- a. Are undergraduates involved in research activities?
 - b. How are Masters students involved in research?
 - c. What is the balance between research and taught-courses at doctoral level?
3. Major new developments in terms of the training of researchers
 - a. Are there specific structures for the training of young researchers, e.g. the organisation of graduate/doctoral schools?
 - b. In addition to carrying out independent research are young researchers learning other skills?
 - c. Is thought being given to the development of career paths for young researchers - inside and outside academia? If so, how is such support organised?

Appendix 6: Table 1 - Other ongoing national level reforms

<i>COUNTRY</i>	<i>REFORMS</i>
Austria	The University Act of 2002 has brought significant changes in the legal status, organisational and governance structures and funding of public universities. Some organisational changes are also expected for the teacher training colleges by 2007.
Belgium (FI)	Finance system for higher education will be reviewed, new context of associations (cooperatives between hogescholen and universities).
Bulgaria	(Legislative changes, mostly related to BP.)
Czech Republic	Change of the system of financing which should enable structural changes in the system of higher education and more efficiency in using state funds at HEIs
Denmark	Management reform at the universities. Political focus on research and on the idea of the Barcelona target of using 3% of GDP used for research.
Finland	Discussion on two-tier degrees in a university – polytechnic HE system
Germany	Reform of the salary scheme of professors, Reform of the qualifications period of young scientists (Junior professor), essential decrease of funding for higher education, reform of the regulation of the student recruitment and selection process.
Greece	Re-examination of the national examination system for entrance into higher education.
Hungary	a completely new steering system of Institutions, more autonomy, instead of the former binary system a new linear system will be introduced, the differences among Universities and Colleges/Polytechnics will be diminished
Italy	The area of arts and music is currently undergoing a process of significant reform that began in 1999 with law no. 508 to create a system of higher advanced education and specialisation in the arts and music " <i>Sistema dell'alta formazione e specializzazione artistica e musicale</i> " or AFAM system.
Latvia	Changing selection principles at admission to HEIs – selection has to be carried out according to candidates' results at centralised school-leaving examinations. Stricter rules and higher requirements to staff qualification at opening new HEIs.
Lithuania	Modernisation of secondary education
Netherlands	New Dutch law for Higher Education in 2007.
Norway	National Quality Reform Project: a new result-based funding system and "contract" defined between the student and the institution for the whole study period. There is also a new law for HEIs since March 2005 for both public and private institutions with a main focus on institutional management.
Poland	Act on the Rules of Financing Science: strengthening of the Minister's impact on scientific policy and promotion of innovation, encourage support for research from private (also foreign) sources
Slovak Republic	Reform in the area of science and technology
Slovenia	The ministry already substantially changed the primary education system (from 8-years to 9-years scheme) and also the reform on the secondary education system is foreseen. In 2004 the "lump sum" of the financing of the HEIs was introduced based partially on the numbers of enrolled students and graduates with the different ranks of the faculties.
Spain	Professional careers in academia. Habilitation and accreditation of professors and lecturers. Creation of Quality Assurance Agencies both at national and regional levels.

Sweden	Discussion in various areas: principles for allocating resources to the institutions, monitoring the match between the professional (market) needs of society and the offered programmes, qualifications needed to enter HE-institutions, curricula of upper secondary school
Switzerland	Discussions on how to simplify the complex distribution of competences and to create the legal basis for better cooperation between the parties responsible for higher education (federal government and cantons).
United Kingdom	Higher Education Act (introduction of variable tuition fees), Government Decision on University Title (change to the basis on which the university title is accorded)

Appendix 7: Table 2- Added value of the Bologna reforms

- presented in decreasing order of frequency of response

Opportunity for and contribution to process of self-reflection for review of teaching and curricula either leading to a complete redesign of curricula or accelerating long needed reforms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>rationalisation of the old course offer</i> ○ <i>introduction of competence based teaching and learning</i> ○ <i>more flexible learning paths and student choices, more student-oriented approach</i>
Internationalisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Internationalisation of study programmes</i> ● <i>Increased mobility</i> ● <i>Improvement of international communication</i>
Opportunity for institutional positioning
Fostering interdisciplinarity and encouragement for discussing, comparing and implementing measures across faculty borders
Greater competition between different types of institutions
Enhancing research orientation and cooperation
Increase quality culture, increased awareness of the need to increase institutional autonomy
Better understanding of the university as a whole
Better involvement of the teaching staff in the institutional life
Opportunity for more intra-institutional exchange
Improved intra-institutional transparency
Improving orientation process of new students and student services
More cooperation between universities nationally or regionally
Reduction of drop-out rates, analysis on every level on how the "flow through" of students could get more efficient
Chance for graduates who wish to return to the university after work experiences, LLL provision easier
Earlier and more distributed assessment accompanying the studies rather than one big exam at the very end
More transparency, also as a result of the implementation of ECTS and Diploma Supplement
Improved employability and international employability of students
Possibility to continue second cycles at another university
Implementation of Joint Degree Programmes
More intensive discussion about quality issues on faculty level

(Source: Trends IV data)

Appendix 8: Table 3 - External state funding for the Bologna reforms according to institutions and national rectors' conferences

<i>COUNTRY</i>	<i>FUNDING PROVIDED FOR BOLOGNA REFORMS, ACCORDING TO INSTITUTION AND NRCs</i>
Austria	None
Belgium (Fl)	Yes, some (but not sufficient) i.e. three-year government funding for the implementation of the educational development plan (2003-2006)
Belgium (Fr)	None (according to the institutions/ no information available from the NRCs)
Bulgaria	None
Croatia	None
Czech Republic	None according to the institution. According to the NRC some funding is provided under the Programmes of Development (introduced in 2000) but there is still need for more funds.
Denmark	None
Estonia	Yes but not sufficient, (despite the initial plans)
Finland	Yes some, for the university sector. No additional funding for the polytechnic sector
France	None (even cutbacks in core funding)
Germany	Yes some support measures (i.e. government funding for the establishment of the Bologna Competence Centre for the period 2004-2007/ funding of projects relevant to the BP)
Greece	None according to the institution. According to the NRC some funding is provided but it is not sufficient
Hungary	None (even cutbacks in core funding)
Ireland	Yes, through the Higher Education Authority. Also, funding of projects relevant to the BP at national level (no information available from NRC)
Italy	No government funding for the implementation of the reforms. Some government funding for related projects (for a three-year period) Other funding sources: the European Social Funds and the Region
Latvia	Yes some funding through structural funds, but not sufficient
Lithuania	None
Netherlands	Yes some funding for the university sector (for the implementation of the Bachelor-Master structure) No additional funding for the Institutions of professional education
Norway	Yes sufficient (the government promised to fully finance the reforms)
Poland	None
Portugal	None (according to the institution/ no information available from the NRCs)
Slovakia	None
Slovenia	None
Spain	No funding from the central government. Some limited financial support from the regional government.
Sweden	None
Switzerland	Yes some (federal government funding), but not sufficient
UK	None

(Source: Trends IV data)



Trends V: Universities shaping the European Higher Education Area

AN EUA REPORT

**WRITTEN BY DAVID CROSIER, LEWIS PURSER &
HANNE SMIDT**



Education and Culture

Socrates

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Foreword

Trends V is perhaps the most ambitious project yet completed by EUA. This report provides the most comprehensive view available of the state of European higher education - as seen by higher education institutions themselves. Indeed, more than 900 European higher education institutions contributed to this report, either by responding to a wide-ranging questionnaire, or by hosting visits of research teams, or through providing input in other meetings. EUA is deeply grateful to everyone in the higher education community who has contributed to this common endeavour.

The report shows the progress made by Europe's universities in implementing the Bologna reforms, and outlines the main challenges ahead. It is thus a significant publication for all those concerned with European higher education, whether universities and students, or governments, business and industry, or other stakeholders.

Trends V is also the European universities' report to the Conference of Ministers of Education meeting in London on 17/18 May 2007 to discuss the culmination of the Bologna process by 2010. It thus mirrors issues addressed by the stocktaking exercise of the Bologna governments - degree structures, Bologna tools, quality and recognition. In addition *Trends V* also examines the response of higher education to lifelong learning, pays attention to the services in place to support students, and looks at the particular challenges being faced in the countries that are recent entrants to the Bologna process.

As the 2010 deadline set for the realisation of the European Higher Education Area approaches, the report demonstrates that there has been extraordinary change in European higher education, and that institutions are engaging seriously with the implementation of these reforms. Yet the report also points out that the cultural impact of the Bologna process has often been under-estimated, that there remains much work to be done throughout society, and that the European Higher Education Area will continue to be "work in progress" well beyond 2010.

The findings in this report will do much to shape the European Higher Education Area, and in turn the European Higher Education Area will be central to Europe's future. *Trends V* thus adds credence to EUA's central conviction that Europe needs strong universities for a prosperous future.



Professor Georg Winckler
EUA President

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This study would not have been possible without the support of the European higher education community as a whole. EUA is deeply grateful for the trust invested by these numerous member and partner institutions to reflect the information they have provided well.

In many countries, the high response rates to the Trends V questionnaire would not have been achieved without encouragement from National Rectors Conferences. The National Rectors Conferences have also provided invaluable information themselves to help situate national developments accurately, as well as assisting in the organisation of the fifteen site visits which have provided crucial qualitative information for the report.

The authors acknowledge that not only has the research for this project been a collective effort, but so too has the writing of the report. Professor Sir Roderick Floud, EUA Vice President deserves particular thanks for his insightful comments on different drafts. Lesley Wilson, EUA Secretary General, and Andrée Sursock, EUA Deputy Secretary General, have also given continual advice, support and good guidance.

Bogdan Voicu from the Romanian Institute for Quality of Life in Bucharest, has been responsible for the statistical analysis of the questionnaires. Without his tremendous commitment and great expertise, this report simply would not exist.

The research team (see Appendix 3b) who undertook site visits for the report are responsible for the important insights in the report. They did great work, under considerable time pressure, and have also contributed valuable comments as the drafting of the report has progressed. Their work was also made possible by the group of national experts (see Appendix 3b) who accompanied them on the site visits and provided essential information on the national context.

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Finally, EUA is grateful to the European Commission for the financial support granted to this project which has helped to ensure the necessary conditions to undertake this project successfully.

David Crosier, Lewis Purser, Hanne Smidt

Executive summary

1. Trends V

For the first time in the series, this Trends report is based on both quantitative and qualitative research, while previous Trends reports relied on one or other of these two methodologies. Trends V analyses the nature and extent of implementation of the Bologna reforms, and attempts to assess the impact that changes are having on a wider range of institutional development processes. Through comparison with the outcomes of earlier Trends projects, and in particular the Trends III results (2003) that to a large degree addressed the same questions, the report is able to measure the progress that has taken place in implementing higher education reforms. It also points to the challenges that institutions face at a time when they are being asked to respond to multiple societal demands. Bologna can increasingly be seen as a reform of structures that allows a wide range of other institutional development challenges to be addressed.

2. The European Higher Education Area – a shared objective for Universities

Trends V confirms that higher education institutions (universities in the broad sense of the term) are increasingly taking responsibility for the emerging European Higher Education Area. The focus has shifted from governmental actions, including legislation, to implementation of reforms within institutions, with broad support for the underlying idea of more student-centred and problem based learning. This confirms initial findings from Trends IV. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, Trends V shows that the general attitude displayed by institutions has also changed considerably in the past four years, with the vast majority of the 908 institutions involved stating that they consider it vital to move rapidly towards a European Higher Education Area.

3. Degree structures

Trends V gives clear evidence of dramatic progress in relation to the implementation of structural reform, with 82% of institutions answering that they have the three cycles in place compared to 53% in 2003. Across Europe, there is no longer any question of whether or not reform of degree structures will take place, but rather a shift to considering whether the conditions and support are adequate to enable the process to be successful. In this respect the national understanding of reforms becomes crucial, and important questions remain with regard to different national interpretations of the nature and purposes of the three cycles, and whether these different national interpretations will prove to be compatible. Trends V identifies, among other substantial issues to be addressed, the articulation between the cycles, admission to the first cycle, the different types of bachelors and masters being developed (for example, academic versus professional qualifications), while also pointing out the particular problems posed by the continued co-existence in some countries of old and new structures.

4. Employability

Trends V suggests that employability is a high priority in the reform of curricula in all cycles. This concern transcends national boundaries and implementation priorities. However, the results also reveal that there is still much to be done to translate this priority into institutional practice. This is a paradox for a reform process inspired, at

least in part, by a concern that higher education should be more responsive to the needs of a changing society and labour market. It indicates that one of the main challenges for the future is to strengthen dialogue with employers and other external stakeholders. For many institutions this requires a change in culture that will take time. It is essential that both governments and higher education institutions increase their efforts to communicate to the rest of society the reasons why the reforms are taking place, as a shared responsibility. It is also important for all governments to ensure that their own public sector employment structures adapt to take account of the new degree structures – an issue pointed out in Trends IV, but not yet entirely resolved.

5. Student centred learning

Although new degree structures are still commonly perceived as the main Bologna goal, there is increasing awareness that the most significant legacy of the process will be a change of educational paradigm across the continent. Institutions are slowly moving away from a system of teacher-driven provision, and towards a student-centred concept of higher education. Thus the reforms are laying the foundations for a system adapted to respond to a growing variety of student needs. Institutions and their staff are still at the early stages of realising the potential of reforms for these purposes. Understanding and integrating the use of a learning outcomes based approach remains a key medium-term challenge. When achieved, it will enable students to become the engaged subjects of their own learning process, and also contribute to improving many issues of progression between cycles, institutions, sectors, the labour market and countries.

6. Bologna tools: ECTS, Diploma Supplement and Qualifications Frameworks

The use of *ECTS as both a credit accumulation and credit transfer system* continues to become more widespread across Europe, with almost 75% of institutions reporting use of ECTS as a transfer system and over 66% as an accumulation system. Yet while a vast majority of institutions are now using ECTS, there remains much work to be done to ensure that they use it correctly. Incorrect or superficial use of ECTS is currently still widespread. Such usage hinders the re-structuring of curricula, and the development of flexible learning paths for students, while also making both mobility and recognition more difficult. Institutions have to take responsibility for driving the development of ECTS in a way which enables them to respond effectively to the challenges of an open and truly European higher education area.

Slightly less than half of Trends V respondents confirmed that they issue a *Diploma Supplement* to all graduating students. This is disappointing – even if a further 38% say that they have plans to use the DS – given the 2003 Berlin Communiqué commitment that all students would be issued a Diploma Supplement free of charge by 2005, and suggests that some national systems are lagging behind. Efforts to promote and publicise the Diploma Supplement also need to be renewed in order to enhance its usefulness to students and employers.

Although following the adoption in Bergen of the *Qualifications Framework* for the European Higher Education Area, qualifications frameworks are a topic of considerable policy debate, Trends V shows that there is much work to be done in informing higher education institutions and involving them in development at national level. Currently institutions – with the exception of those in Ireland – are generally

confused as to whether or not their national system has such a qualifications framework, as well as to the purposes that it serves. There is a danger that without proper understanding of the reasons for the development of qualifications frameworks, the result may be that they remain little known in institutions, thus seriously limiting their impact.

7. Student services

Trends V shows a growth in the provision of student services over the last four years. However, the results of the qualitative research undertaken indicate that while it appears that many institutions and systems offer a wide range of services, these may not be sufficiently developed or adapted to the growing needs of a diverse student body. Guidance and counselling services in particular merit greater attention, on the part of both institutions and governments. Professional staffing and adequate resourcing are key challenges, as is the monitoring of the quality of provision. Involving students – as users and beneficiaries – is sound practice and should be seen as a principle for further development.

8. Quality

The focus on quality in the Bologna process has certainly raised awareness within higher education institutions of the potential benefits and challenges of effective quality assurance and enhancement activities. More constructive discussion between institutions, quality assurance agencies, stakeholders and public authorities appears to be taking place, and the involvement of students in quality assurance activities also seems to be gaining ground. Indeed in some parts of Europe, quality assurance seems to be replacing degree structure reform as the main topic of interest in the Bologna process.

The results of the questionnaire (based on the criteria set out in the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) adopted by Ministers in Bergen) demonstrate that much work has been done to develop internal quality processes in institutions; student services, nonetheless, being one area that is still not widely evaluated. However, relatively few institutions seem to take a holistic approach to quality improvement. In this respect Trends V confirms the findings of Trends IV and the EUA quality culture project, that extensive internal quality processes are correlated with a higher degree of institutional autonomy.

External quality assurance systems also need to demonstrate that they actually produce an improvement in quality. Considerable concern still remains about the increasing bureaucratic burden on institutions. Meanwhile institutions need to continue to embed a responsible and responsive quality culture as a means of enhancing creativity and innovation in fulfilling their missions.

9. Mobility

The Trends V questionnaire data indicates that, although there are still major deficits in capturing reliable information on mobility, many institutions have a general perception that student mobility is increasing. It is important, however, to distinguish between different forms of mobility – within countries and between countries, within degree cycles and between degree cycles, and within organised mobility programmes or as “free movers”.

With regard to mobility between countries it seems that “free mover” mobility could be on the increase in some parts of Europe. However, another explanation of institutions’ perception of increased mobility is that greater attention is being given to international student mobility, largely as a result of the additional revenue streams that can be provided through international education. In terms of mobility flows, there is evidence that, as in the past, many central and eastern European institutions are exporting more students and staff than they are importing, while certain western European countries are clearly strong importers.

Mobility flows seem to be closely related to funding policy and socio-economic issues, while the changes in degree structures so far seem to have had only a marginal impact. Indeed, the potential for greater mobility between cycles is not greatly exploited at this stage, and is rarely an element of national or institutional policy. Indeed many national funding systems currently act as a disincentive to mobility, rewarding institutions that retain students, but not providing incentives to mobility.

Recognition of student learning also remains an important challenge, with considerable difficulties still existing in relation to the recognition of learning that has taken place outside a national environment. Because of the importance attached to mobility as an essential characteristic of the European Higher Education Area, an increased effort needs to be made to encourage academics to accept the long established principle of “mutual trust and confidence” in the recognition of learning and qualifications offered by others. Fine tuning in the use of learning agreements is also essential.

10. Lifelong Learning

“Lifelong learning” is a term used, confusingly, to cover both continuing education and training for well-qualified graduates and initial education for disadvantaged groups, possibly through part-time higher education. While many institutions perceive lifelong learning as an emerging priority, Trends V provides little evidence that they have taken strategic action to consider their missions in one or other of these endeavours or to anticipate the challenges ahead. Thus no coherent picture of the understanding and implementation of lifelong learning emerges from the report, although there are indications that this is an area where diversified funding sources exist and where there is considerable scope for cooperation with local partners. Once again, questions arise regarding the recognition of prior learning which need to be addressed. Some institutions suggested that the implementation of Bologna reforms has taken priority over developing lifelong learning strategies, but now consider that the conditions have been created for a more adequate response to be developed.

In relation to access in particular, while almost all institutions consider widening participation to be important, their expectations of being able to contribute to this development are rather low. This demonstrates the importance of government policy in this area and the need for incentives, all the more so given the obligation felt by many institutions to improve competitiveness by attracting the best students; they sometimes falsely believe that this precludes improving the diversity of the student base.

11. New member countries

The Trends V report has looked at the situation of some of the new member Bologna countries separately, discovering as much diversity within and between these countries as across the rest of Europe. The addition of Russia to the Bologna process in 2003 added a vast new territory and enormous number of institutions to the potential European higher education area. While there is a significant vanguard of institutions pushing forward reforms, the Bologna process nevertheless encapsulates both ideological and geographical issues, and it is not yet clear if a unified national strategy to implement reforms will emerge. There remains much to be done to support the work of the reform-minded academic community.

Institutions in South East Europe clearly perceive the Bologna process as providing a direction that is essential for societal development. Among the many challenges being faced, the step to move away from a culture of self-managed faculty independence is still the key issue if reforms are to prove sustainable and effective.

Georgia offers a case study of how the Bologna process can be used effectively to support a profound reform of higher education, with extraordinary change taking place in very little time. A key element to success has been the effort made to provide basic information on European texts in the national language.

12. International attractiveness

The reforms across Europe are also taking place in a context of increasing global interaction. The Trends survey shows that institutions are receptive to developments outside as well as inside Europe, and there is also increasing evidence of institutions in other world regions responding strategically to European developments. The responses of higher education institutions show interestingly and very clearly that as in 2003 inter-European cooperation remains the highest priority. However, relationships with higher education institutions and systems in Asia have become vastly more important in the past four years. There is also some evidence that attention is also focusing more than in the past on cooperation with the Arab world and Africa. It is difficult, however, to evaluate whether these institutional perceptions will prove to be ephemeral or part of a sustained trend. Nevertheless, higher education reforms in Europe are no longer a matter of interest only to Europeans, but also have an impact in the global arena.

13. Future Challenges

All of the issues addressed in Trends V have implications for the development of the European Higher Education Area, but three key challenges for the future can be highlighted:

1) **Strengthening the relationship between governments, higher education institutions and other societal stakeholders** is essential to anchor and sustain the goals of the Bologna process. One major priority must be to broaden debate with employers, students, parents and other stakeholders, and thus enhance trust and confidence in the quality and relevance of institutional engagement. In addition, institutions and governments need to join forces not only in implementing reforms, but in communicating widely the results and implications of the structural and curricular reforms which are taking place.

2) **Institutions need to develop their capacity to respond strategically to the lifelong learning agenda**, taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the structural changes and tools that have been developed through the Bologna process. This means that institutions must use these tools correctly, and develop them further to enhance student-centred and flexible learning, as well as greater mobility. Increasing dialogue with employers is again required if university courses, at all levels, are to meet the needs of a society and economy in which knowledge becomes rapidly out-of-date and in which, therefore, constant training and retraining is required. Through addressing these lifelong learning challenges, institutions can also tackle the social objective of ensuring equality of access to higher education for all those qualified and able to benefit from it.

3) **Finally, institutions must begin to think through the implications of the existence of the European Higher Education Area after 2010.** Some aspects of Bologna are likely still to require implementation or reconsideration, and it will be particularly important to do this with greater European vision to overcome some of the local and national obstacles that currently prevail. The European Higher Education Area is also being developed in an increasingly inter-connected global context, and its international reception is therefore of the utmost importance. Once again the responsibility lies with governments and institutions to explain reforms, and to support these major cultural processes that have now been set in motion.

List of Acronyms

ACA	Academic Co-operation Association
APCL	Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning
APEL	Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning
APL	Accreditation of Prior Learning
DAAD	German Academic Exchange Service
DS	Diploma Supplement
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENIC	European Network of Information Centres
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
EUA	European University Association
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HRK	German Rectors' Conferences
LLL	Lifelong Learning
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centres
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
QA	Quality Assurance
SME	Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WBL	Work-Based Learning

Methodology

This Trends V report has been produced through an analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. The primary data source for the project is a survey of higher education institutions undertaken between November 2005 and March 2006. The Trends V questionnaire was sent by email to all EUA member institutions, as well as to many other higher education institutions in the Bologna countries. It is impossible to quantify the precise number of institutions who received the questionnaire, as the survey was sent not only from EUA's office in Brussels, but also by National Rectors' Conferences to their members, and in addition a hyperlink to the questionnaire was placed on the EUA website. A number of other partner organisations also informed institutions of the survey.

908 individual institutional questionnaires are included in the analysis for this report. Part of the analysis involves a comparison with the Trends III institutional findings, based upon a similar questionnaire sent to institutions in 2002. The Trends V questionnaire maintained as many questions as possible from the Trends III survey, so that assessment of change during this four year period would be possible.

In order to have a comparable analysis of the two institutional samples, some of the responses to the Trends V survey have been treated separately when specific points of comparison over time are sought. This relates in particular to countries where no or very few institutional questionnaires were received in 2002. Mostly these are countries which joined the Bologna process either in 2003 or in 2005. It should also be noted that Serbia and Montenegro was a single state at the time of the survey, and is considered thus in any national analysis.

When national information is displayed regarding the Trends V questionnaire analysis, several countries have been excluded as too few institutions responded to give a reliable picture of national trends. This is the case for Albania (no responses) Armenia (no responses) Azerbaijan (1 response), Belarus (1 response), Holy See (2 responses), Moldova (2 responses).

Institutional questionnaires were also complemented by updates of questionnaires completed for the Trends IV project by National Rectors Conferences. These provided background information on recent national legislation and developments along the various Bologna action lines.

In addition to questionnaires, this report also draws upon qualitative research from site visits to 15 higher education institutions in 10 countries, undertaken between October and December 2006. A list of the institutions visited can be found in Appendix 3. The visits lasted 1.5 days in each institution and were conducted by a research team consisting of two international researchers and one national expert. The two international researchers were responsible for leading the discussions and reporting from the institution. The national expert, recommended by the relevant National Rectors' Conference, supported the international researchers by providing

contextual information on the national situation, and by clarifying any general questions that arose during discussions.

All site visits followed the same pattern of small group interviews with different actors within the institution: institutional leadership (rector, vice-rectors, deans); academics; junior lecturers/early-stage researchers; students from all cycles; administrative staff. Researchers were asked to consider the main issues under the Trends V institutional questionnaire themes, but not necessarily to report on every aspect. Reports from the site visits aimed to reflect the importance attached to different issues in the particular institutions.

The decision to limit the number of institutions and countries visited was taken because the primary source of information – the Trends V questionnaire – already covered the entire geographical area of the Bologna process. It was therefore felt more appropriate to concentrate efforts on a few institutions in as much depth as possible. The sample was not intended to be representative of institutions in Europe, but rather to provide an insight into some of the challenges being faced on the ground. It was felt important to visit both university and other higher education institutions, to include more comprehensive and more specialised institutions, and to have a balance of institutions in large cities and in regions.

As well as questionnaires and site visits, the report has also drawn upon information gathered from focus group discussions. These discussions took place during regular meetings held by groups of universities or partner organisations that generously allowed EUA researchers a space to bring questions to the table in the context of the Trends V project. This also includes meetings organised by EUA in the context of its own project on doctoral programmes – the primary source for information on this topic. A list of the focus group meetings which took place can be found in Appendix 4.

1: STRUCTURAL REFORM: IMPLEMENTING THE THREE CYCLES

Introduction

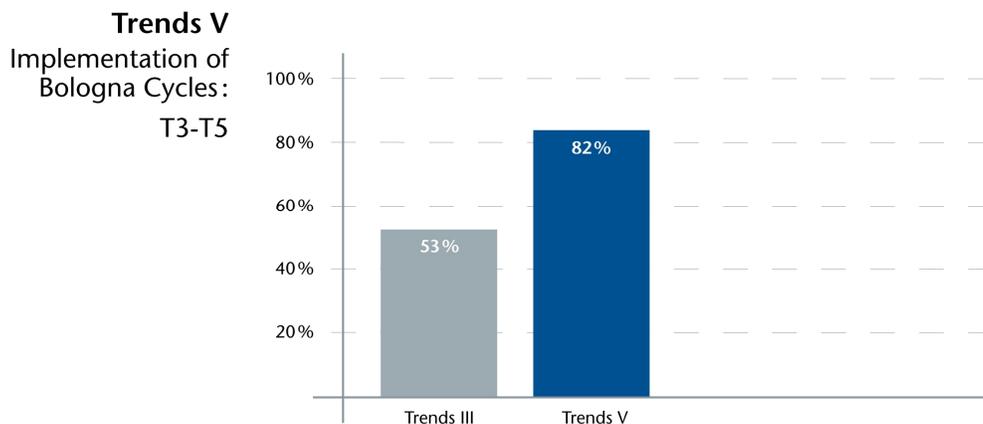
For many in Europe, the Bologna process has become synonymous with the reform of degree structures. The years following the signing of the Bologna Declaration stimulated widespread and ongoing debate, particularly in countries which had a long first cycle, regarding the quality of higher education systems. Many felt that there was nothing to be gained by reforming degree structures, and in a number of disciplines the view was often expressed that it was impossible to provide any meaningful higher education in a shorter first cycle.

This initial phase of the Bologna process can be seen to have culminated in important changes in national legislation, setting the framework for new degree structures. While some higher education institutions had been very much encouraging and anticipating these developments, others had been waiting to see whether movement for reform would be sustained. Once legislation was in place, however, even sceptical institutions began, albeit reluctantly, to engage with the reform process. The Trends III survey, undertaken in 2002/3, indicated that many institutions were then in a process of considering the implications of change, but were not fully committed to all aspects of it.

These findings were developed in greater depth in Trends IV in 2004/5. This major qualitative research project revealed that reforms were a highly complex affair for institutions, with societal demands increasing, but with policy messages often conflicting with each other, and priorities difficult to establish.

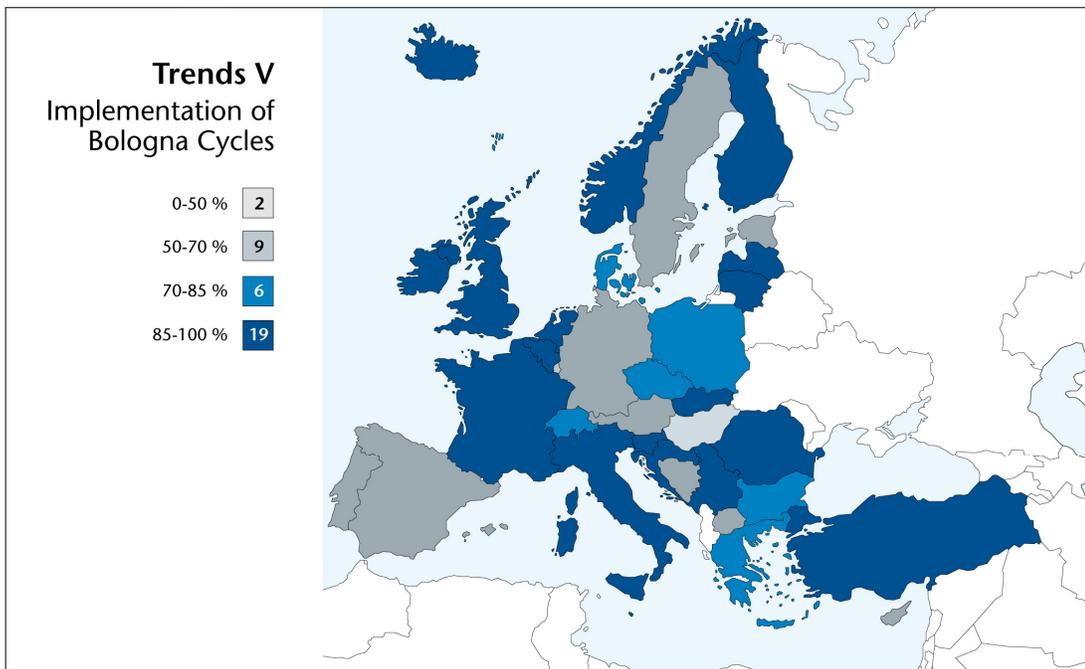
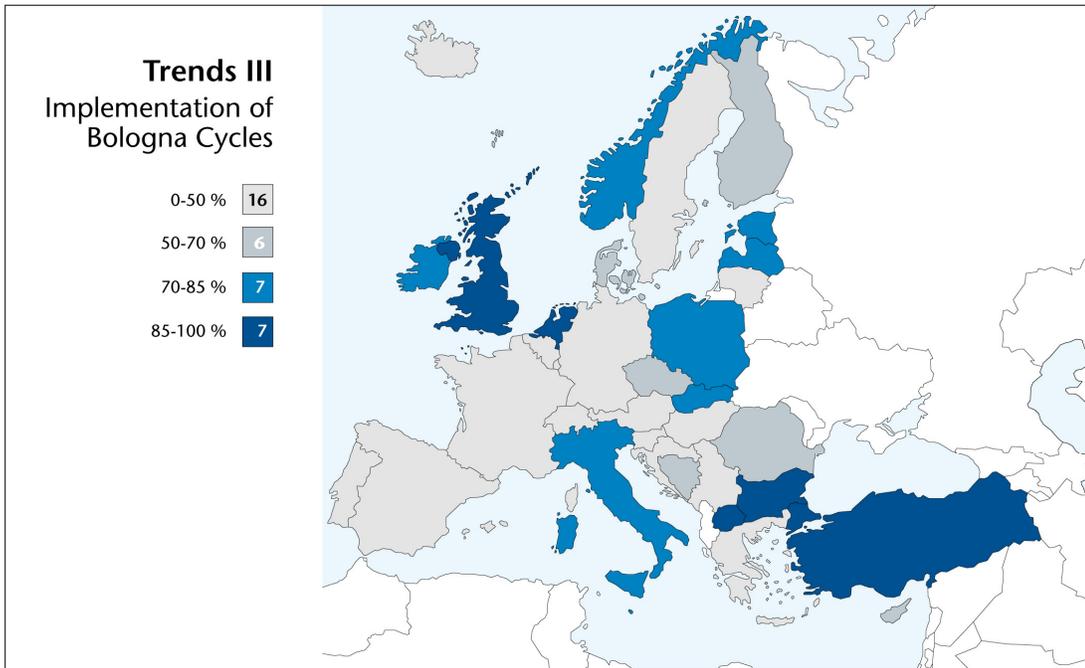
Two years later, the situation has moved on, and this Trends V report contains significant findings not only on the implementation of new Bologna degree cycles but also on the attitudinal shift that seems to have taken place across the higher education sector. The findings for this chapter are drawn both from the analysis of institutional questionnaires, and from qualitative research from the institutional site visits, while the section on developments in the third cycle (1.5) also uses information gained through EUA's project on the development of doctoral programmes in the context of the Bologna process as a primary source.

1.1 Implementation of degree structures



The evidence from the Trends V questionnaire responses on reform of degree structures is striking. All across Europe, institutions report that they have been changing to the Bologna degree structures, with only a small minority of institutions still in the process of preparing to do so. Compared to four years ago, the situation has changed dramatically, to the point where now it no longer seems relevant to question whether or not structural reforms will take place, but rather to examine in greater depth how these reforms are being implemented.

As far as the Bologna three cycle structure is concerned, 82% of institutions replying to the questionnaire stated that the three cycles are in place. This compares to a figure of 53% from the Trends III survey four years earlier, and is evidence that the situation around Europe is moving extremely fast. Moreover, less than 2% of the institutions stated that they do not plan to have a Bologna degree structure. Four years previously this figure was 7.5%. Only 15.4% stated that the three cycles are being planned rather than being implemented.



Comparing the Trends III and Trends V European maps of this situation, it is also clear that progress is taking place across the entire European continent. Indeed although some countries may be moving faster than others, all are moving. The responses also indicate that there are no significant differences when the sample is divided into university and other higher education institutions, nor when looked at

from the perspective of the mission of institutions (regional, national, European, worldwide). The phenomenon of structural reform is quite clearly having an impact on the entire higher education sector.

From the survey answers, the new structures also appear in some ways to be posing fewer problems than many had foreseen. Only 2% of respondents to the questionnaire consider that the Bologna degree cycles are not functioning very well, while 85% consider that they function either extremely well (24%) or reasonably well (61%). It is also interesting to note that the general attitude towards the idea of the European Higher Education Area is very positive. Indeed in institutions in all countries with the exception of the United Kingdom, the response “it is essential to make rapid progress towards the European Higher Education Area” was most often given. In the UK, the majority response was “the European Higher Education Area is a good idea, but the time is not yet ripe.”

As some of the most significant debates regarding Bologna concern why and whether radical change is necessary to move towards a coherent system of degree structures across Europe, these findings have to be considered as a signal of the major impact that the Bologna process is having on European higher education. It is unlikely that even the most far-sighted or optimistic of Education Ministers expected, when signing the Bologna Declaration in 1999, that seven years later, higher education institutions across Europe would have moved so far towards a common three cycle degree system. However, the qualitative research for the Trends V project, examined in greater depth in the next section, revealed that there are many complex issues to be addressed in moving towards three cycles, and that national or local interpretations of concepts and goals have a critical influence. Thus if the European Higher Education Area is to become a reality that really meets the objectives of the Bologna process, there are still many issues to consider and much work to be done.

Key Finding

- *Across Europe, there is no longer any question of whether or not Bologna reforms will be implemented, but rather a shift to considering the conditions in which implementation is taking place.*

1.2 Institutional attitudes

While the questionnaire findings offer impressive evidence of wide-reaching change, the picture is of course far more diverse and complex than statistics alone can reflect. This report examines many issues being faced by institutions regarding implementation, but it is important to state at the outset that the picture of change was largely confirmed in the institutional site visits. The general attitude encountered in institutions towards reform was positive, with more students, academic and administrative staff and institutional leaders emphasising the opportunities that they perceive through reform rather than highlighting obstacles and drawbacks. It also appeared that where institutions have had more time to adapt to change, and where the Bologna reforms have already had more time to mature, there is a tendency for their impact to be viewed more positively.

Indeed, only in very few institutions was a predominantly negative attitude to reform encountered. In such institutions many academics complained that they did not see the value of reforms and tended to feel that the Bologna process was being imposed on them – either by the institutional hierarchy and/or by the ministry. In some institutions, students also linked reform with greater risk to their study conditions, and considered that the learning process was being disrupted with few visible benefits.

The site visits also had the effect of confirming many of the findings made two years earlier in the Trends IV report. Importantly, and in a totally different sample of institutions, one of the key findings of Trends IV, that there is widespread support for “the underlying ideas of a student-centred approach and problem-based learning, even if staff were critical of various features of the implementation process”, remains valid two years later.

1.3 Issues regarding implementation of the three cycles

Relationship between national authorities and institutions

The overall positive impression should not detract from the major challenges that institutions are facing, and many concerns were explored during the site visits. The majority of the problems concerning implementation which were raised in institutions reflect difficulties in institutional relationships with national authorities. The issues most often identified here concern insufficient institutional autonomy to implement reforms in the way in which they would be most effective, and insufficient government support for reform. In one institution, in response to a question on the motivation for engaging in reform, the leadership team answered spontaneously “because we have to, and we have no choice”. Yet even in this institution, the same people stated that the reforms have reached a tipping point where nobody would now choose to go back to the old system.

Institutions were often critical of governments with regard to support for reform. This was most often mentioned in relation to lack of financial support to reform, reinforcing the finding of the Trends V questionnaire where two thirds of respondents stated that they had not received any additional financing to implement reforms. However, comments were not limited to financial matters. In many instances, institutions reported that dialogue with government over the policy objectives for higher education was insufficient, and that legislative changes had not been made with adequate involvement of the key stakeholders in society. This was not a feature limited to the Bologna process – more a reflection of “normal” societal practices. Yet as many legislative measures have been explained by governments in terms of necessary system adjustments to meet Bologna objectives, the Bologna process has sometimes become a focus of tension, with institutions perceiving their government as being more interested in the rhetoric of reform than in providing genuine support to institutions. Many academics questioned how they could be expected to make a radical change to their thinking about curriculum, at the same time as adapting to more rigorous quality demands, while receiving no incentives for additional work, and while the overall level of financial support from government was decreasing.

Divorcing structural reform from its objectives

While governments need to be confronted with these questions regarding the nature of their support to institutions in implementing reforms, there are also important questions to be asked within institutions about their motivation for undertaking reform. In this respect there was considerable diversity in site visits and focus groups, and a clear distinction can be highlighted between those institutions which have so far engaged in more cosmetic and superficial implementation – often to meet the basic requirements of compliance with new legislation – and those where reform has been appropriated and is being implemented intelligently, as part of an institutionally driven strategy.

It would be wildly unrealistic to expect complete coherence in implementation from all institutions when government support is often lacking and other stakeholders are not involved in broad societal discussion. Nevertheless the site visits revealed that the spirit and attitude towards reforms clearly have a strong correlation with their impact. In some institutions the researchers observed that the shift to a three-cycle system seems to have taken place largely in isolation from a debate on the reasons for doing it. It was noteworthy that where negative views on implementation were expressed, these were almost always made by people who made no connection between structural reform and the development of student-centred learning as a new paradigm for higher education, and who did not perceive any strong necessity for the institution to re-think its role in society. Conversely, where attitudes were positive, they were nearly always connected to the view that reforms were enabling a better-suited, more flexible educational offer to be made by institutions to students.

In some institutions and parts of Europe, implementation of the three cycles seems to have become a task which is considered as a goal in itself, rather than a means to achieve other objectives. The focus has been on changing structures before attention is paid to the real substance of reform. On occasions, questions that addressed perceptions of the underlying forces driving reforms at institutions were met with reactions of surprise, as if the fact of structural reform were self-sufficient and self-evident. One university leader responded thus to the question of why his institution was engaging in reforms: “for the past six years, we have been trying to implement Bologna reforms: and now you come and ask us why we’re doing it?”

Lack of attention to student-centred learning

Although progress in implementing new Bologna degree structures is clear, student-centred learning was mentioned surprisingly infrequently during the site visits as a guiding principle of curriculum reform. Paradoxically, however, this does not necessarily imply the absence of a move towards more student-centred learning, but rather that the shift in thinking may follow instead of precede a reform of structures. Indeed it was found that in many cases, reforming degree structures and curricula has obliged reflection on student needs. Thus, even where institutions had by their own admission initially engaged “reluctantly” in reforms, many now perceive benefits in terms of greater flexibility and variety of course offer for students.

It is important to highlight, however, that the mention of much of the terminology of the Bologna process – whether qualifications frameworks and learning outcomes, or to a lesser extent diploma supplements and ECTS – often met rather blank reactions. In many cases, further exploration revealed that a considerable amount of the content of reform takes place but using different local terminology. Meanwhile, the opposite phenomenon may also arise, as “Bologna” terminology is applied locally in a manner which may not be immediately understood from outside the particular system. Implementation of what appears to be a single European process is thus altered by the variety of national contexts in which the reforms are taking place. An additional cause of this problem is no doubt that the “Bologna language” that is spreading across Europe is developed within an overly restricted circle of “European specialists”, with not enough attention being paid to the process of dissemination of ideas. As one of the purposes of common terminology is to increase understanding and transparency, this is a serious issue in looking at how institutions and systems relate to each other, and one which has perhaps been underestimated.

Introducing change while maintaining elements of the previous system

One important issue picked up in the site visits is that, while the overall statistics regarding degree structures are impressive, they may in some instances not tell the whole story. For while the Trends V questionnaire asks about the new Bologna degree structures, it does not specifically ask whether in introducing a new system the old system has been replaced. And in some parts of Europe, the old system appears to be taking longer to disappear than in others. This can be the result of deliberate national policy and strategy. For example in Germany the new system has been introduced in parallel to the old, and while new degree structures are offered, many institutions still continue to enrol students into the old degree programmes.

This approach to reform is clearly having consequences which will continue for a considerable amount of time into the future. It can certainly be argued that a process of gradual reform gives both institutions and societies more time to adapt to change, thus becoming more evolutionary than revolutionary. Moreover, in countries where such an approach has been adopted, researchers in several site visits learned of some significant shifts in attitude among academic groups that were initially sceptical towards reform, but now are convinced of its necessity and have become champions of the process.

Yet fears were also expressed that failure to suppress the “former” degree programmes may create problems for citizens embarking on both old and new degree programmes alike. It can also be highly confusing both within the country and outside it to have two systems in coexistence.

This issue should be recognised as a widespread phenomenon. While Germany, as a larger country, is perhaps the most noticeable example of this general approach, in other parts of Europe, close examination of institutional practice and behaviour reveals that there are still very strong remnants of the old system persisting in many countries. This is perhaps part of the way an unregulated European process is adopted and appropriated by national systems, and it can create a misleading impression of

similarity and convergence. Very few of the institutions visited considered the reforms that were taking place to be a central element of a European process: rather their perception tended to be much more guided by local and national developments.

Practices from the previous system which continue into the new often cause confusion about such basic matters as naming cycles and qualifications, or specifying the purposes of different cycles and qualifications. If all these national particularities are cumulated, rather than presenting a picture of more convergent national systems in Europe, the picture is rather one of greater similarity at a superficial level, but significant diversity within and between national systems in all manner of details.

While diversity in thinking and culture is a great strength of European higher education, diversity in understanding and implementation of structures is likely to prove an obstacle to an effective European Higher Education Area. It seems as difficult in 2007 as in 1999 to find evidence that the “European dimension” of higher education is becoming a tangible aspect of institutional reality. While the process may seem to be providing the same structural conditions for all, closer inspection reveals that some “little differences” may confuse the picture.

There is therefore still considerable work to be undertaken to examine the relationships between institutions and systems, and to coordinate the implementation of common structures. The first step towards this is to examine some of the main developments in each of the three cycles.

Key Findings

- *Important questions at this stage of the Bologna process concern the national understanding of reforms, and whether the processes are being adequately supported.*
- *“Little differences” in national implementation of Bologna degree structures are creating problems of articulation between institutions and systems.*
- *In many cases, reform of structures seems to be taking place in advance of reform of substance and content, and without an explicit link being made to institutional strategic objectives.*

1.4 The Three Cycles

Re-thinking the role of the first cycle

Although it is clear that most countries and institutions have now embraced the three cycle system, the site visits revealed that it would be unrealistic to suggest that there is a shared vision and philosophy of the first cycle underpinning the reform process across Europe.

In the process of creating the first cycle degree – particularly where one long cycle previously existed – evidence from the site visits suggests that many institutions pass through a series of similar phases in the reform process. Often processes are initially driven not by responses to perceived challenges on the horizon but by more prosaic

concerns and obligations. Many institutions stated that national requirements had obliged them to introduce a first cycle or bachelor qualification, but that they had been involved in little consultation, and received scant guidance or support. Hence the early stages of development within these institutions have been characterised by a mixture of reluctant compliance coupled with a search to find institutional advantage and meaning from these obliged reforms.

Unsurprisingly, when starting in this mode, the process has sometimes been implemented rather superficially. Rather than thinking in terms of new educational paradigms and re-considering curricula on the basis of learning outcomes, the first reflex has been to make a cut in the old long cycle and thus immediately create two cycles where previously one existed. With minimal effort, the onerous task of “reform” is thus seemingly achieved. However, this approach inevitably has few positive consequences, and often has a counter-productive impact.

One common problem mentioned is that the length of studies for many students may actually increase rather than decrease as a consequence of reform. For example, a programme which theoretically lasted for a period of 4 years becomes adjusted as a combination of first and second cycle programmes of 180 plus 120 ECTS, or in years 3 + 2, thus adding a year to the point of exit for the majority of students.

In such cases, it is also common to hear claims that the space for student mobility periods has been squeezed, as there is a concentration of content loaded into the first cycle, while during the second cycle there is apparently insufficient time to undertake a mobility period. Thus there is apparently a lack of time for mobility periods, and only if it is planned as part of the curriculum does it appear possible.

The argument is often also made that the reform has not encouraged greater exit to the labour market at the end of the first cycle. This was the case in several institutions when responding to the question of what students could do, and what they actually do with their first cycle qualification. In several institutions the most common response was that nearly all students continue to the second cycle. Yet if first cycle programmes have not been designed as a self-standing entity, and if little effort has been made to consider whether or not the contents of the new first cycle are relevant for the labour market, it is not surprising that students will normally see little option but to continue to a second cycle programme.

The advisory role of trusted academic staff is also critical in this respect, and there is little evidence that there has been a major shift in mentality at this level. Instead, students continue to be advised to remain at the same institution for the second cycle, rather than to move to a different institution or enter the labour market. The institutional expectation is that students will continue to the second cycle, and as parents and other stakeholders often tend to be uninformed about new first cycle qualifications, there is a coalition of factors leading to a state of inertia.

While these phenomena are rather typical in many countries, it would be unrealistic to expect institutions to behave differently, given the fragmentation of policy thinking and action in many national contexts. Indeed, one of the major influences on institutional behaviour clearly appears to be government funding policy. Researchers noted that in several systems, universities are financed to a large extent on the basis of

either numbers of enrolled students or numbers of successful graduates – in the second as well as the first cycle. Such a funding system acts as a clear financial incentive for institutions to encourage their students to continue to the second cycle rather than to explore other options. It also acts as a brake to any development of vertical mobility between the cycles. Thus, from a student perspective, the first cycle qualification is seen more as a “staging post” than a real qualification in its own right. Academics and parents alike will often advise that the “real degree” is obtained at the master level, and in the absence of effective measures to promote the societal recognition of first cycle degrees, many students will inevitably continue to study in the same institution.

Moreover in several institutions visited, the link between first and second cycle was extremely strong, with a direct path from a first cycle programme to a particular programme in the second cycle, coupled with a lack of consideration of alternative routes for first cycle graduates. If the two cycles are to be used as a means of creating more flexibility in learning paths, these practices will have to be reconsidered.

It is also important to look at the effect that the new first cycle is having on the articulation with the rest of the educational world, and especially with the school system. In some institutions visited, this seemed to be a rather neglected aspect of reform. Neither secondary school professionals nor parents had been engaged in discussion on the nature of reforms taking place in higher education, and hence were often advising potential students on the basis of outdated information. Moreover, there is little evidence that re-thinking higher education cycles has led to any reassessment of higher education admission procedures. Yet if the purposes of the cycles are changing, and institutions aim to attract a more diverse student population, surely there is a need to consider which kinds of admission processes would be appropriate. These questions are all linked to the problem that guidance and counselling services are often woefully inadequate for a more diversified higher education population, an issue explored in greater depth in Chapter 3.

In some countries visited, particular issues were raised regarding coherence between first and second cycle programmes, and in particular regarding professional and academic tracks. In Italy, for example, many degree qualifications are issued as a state certificate with a “legal value” that has consequences for public employment. University professional or vocationally-focused bachelor programmes are, however, seldom recognised with this legal value. This causes confusion because many “non-legally validated” qualifications are being developed by universities in response to labour market demands. To add to the confusion, such “non-legally validated” programmes are often called “masters,” even though little attempt is made to ensure coherence with the European understanding of master programmes. For example, such “professional” master programmes can be found after the first or the second cycle, and do not necessarily give access to further academic studies. This muddled state of affairs obviously runs counter to the Bologna reforms.

Although the Trends V research has paid more attention to institutional implementation rather than subject-specific issues, it was interesting to find some examples in site visits of disciplines, which have often been rather uniformly considered as exceptions to the reform process, now also changing. Notably, examples of introducing cycles to medicine were identified, and this was perceived

within the discipline as having achieved positive outcomes. To those who do not see the utility of a first cycle medical degree, the employment market apparently reacts differently – at least in the countries where such qualifications exist. Indeed the opportunities for graduates who may combine a good basic knowledge of medicine through a first cycle programme with other skills and competences obtained through a second cycle programme in another field can be extremely attractive.

Despite the many challenges that remain, there are good reasons to be optimistic. Even in the institutions where initially debate on the purpose of structural reform was insufficient, it is impossible to travel too far down the road of reform without raising the question of why it is being done. Hence, the process cannot be considered as a one-off reform, but rather the manifestation of a shift towards an attitude where the concept of change becomes a permanent feature of educational thinking. Hence academics who a few years ago had perhaps never considered whether students would or would not be able to achieve a qualification in the notional timeframe of a programme are now addressing the relationship between content and time seriously. Moreover, the discussion on the purposes of the first cycle is leading to interesting debates within institutions about understanding of terms such as “employability”, and this in turn is leading to a reflection on curriculum. Questions of broadening access to higher education, and creating a better educated society are also undoubtedly growing, and higher education institutions are at the heart of these crucial societal discussions.

The amount of time needed to embed such radical reform to educational thinking has undoubtedly often been underestimated. While the 2010 deadline for implementation of the Bologna action lines is necessary to encourage developments, there is no doubt that it will take considerably more time to reap the benefits of long-term cultural change.

Reforming the Second Cycle

Although institutions have achieved significant reform of the cycles, the manner in which countries and institutions have appropriated and adapted the concepts to their own system has seemingly led to considerable diversification of the second cycle degree across Europe. Indeed the nature of programmes considered to be part of the second cycle would certainly merit a study of its own. In many ways, it is at the second cycle level that institutions are becoming most innovative and creative, and the rise of new types of master programmes should therefore be seen as a basis on which to build specific institutional strengths in Europe. While it may be necessary to assess whether qualifications are actually becoming more transparent and understandable, and to consider ways in which more coherent developments can evolve, societies also need to be able to cope with a certain amount of flexibility and uncertainty with regard to qualifications.

There are now examples of master programmes tied strongly to first cycle programmes, and also master programmes developed as preparatory qualifications for the third cycle. During the site visits, the Trends researchers came across a considerable number of “national peculiarities” which affected the implementation of the three cycles, but were predominantly related to the second cycle. For example,

there are several systems in Europe where it is common for institutions to offer both a master programme and a “post-master” master programme. While this is once again a continuation of previous systems – and many of the anomalies found across Europe can be explained by the introduction of a new system without completely letting go of the past system – it is a strange phenomenon to grasp for countries that have not had such a tradition. Meanwhile institutions were even found where a master qualification is offered within the third cycle – a practice difficult to understand from outside the system. It is also difficult to understand how such qualifications could be compatible with the European Qualifications Framework for higher education adopted in Bergen.

The site visits also revealed that terminology such as “professional master” can also cover a wide variety of realities. In some systems, the term may designate a specific qualification with a different legal and/or cultural value than an “academic master”. It may be common for such qualifications to be offered by more professionally-oriented higher education institutions, although this is one area where distinctions between institutional types are becoming increasingly blurred. In other countries, however, a programme may have a specific professional orientation but would not be considered as different in nature to any other master qualification. It is perhaps a similar distinction that can be drawn between countries that distinguish institutional types in terms of a binary divide, and those that have a unitary system with a range of institutions with diverse missions.

Another issue that is important to highlight is that in certain systems second cycle programmes are considered to carry greater academic prestige than first cycle programmes, and hence there are some consequences of reform that were not anticipated. Indeed, in certain academic cultures there seems to be a proliferation of new second cycle programmes, often driven by academic staff seeking greater professional and peer recognition. While to some extent this may result in greater innovation and a wider educational offer, the disadvantage is that such developments may also be contributing to fragmentation within the system, as well as to an uneconomic use of financial resources.

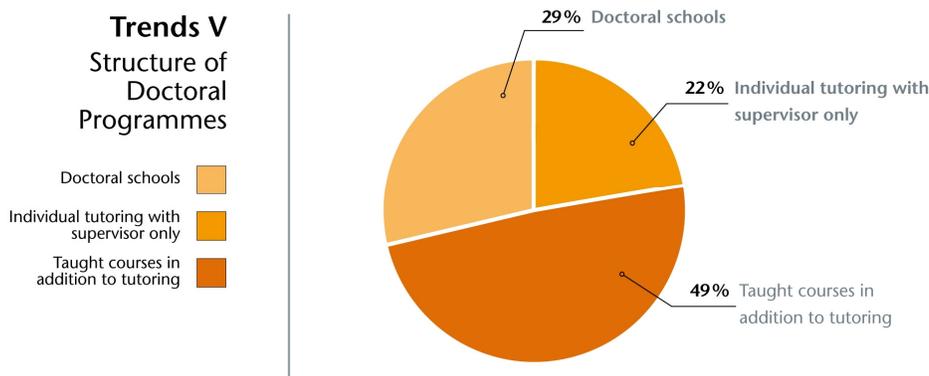
It is also not a trivial consideration, although one that is often overlooked, that the age of entry of post-secondary students varies considerably across Europe. While in some countries, such as the UK, a typical first year student may be eighteen or nineteen years old, her or his counterpart in Sweden or Finland would be three to five years older. Such considerations can have a major impact on the way in which programmes are developed, and the expectations that societies may have of students in terms of their personal development. This becomes a matter that is of particular relevance in the second cycle, as many more programmes appear to be consciously developed with a clear intention to be more internationally attractive. Yet the “typical” student for whom such courses are developed may be rather different from one national context to another, and these issues are likely to become more complex as lifelong learning becomes more of a reality across the continent. Although these phenomena are not new, the profile of students may often be taken for granted in national discussions, and hence their impact may be underestimated in terms of an emerging European Higher Education Area.

Reshaping the third cycle

Doctoral programmes are not only the third cycle of higher education, but also constitute the first phase of a young researcher's career. The core component of the third cycle is the advancement of knowledge through original research, and this makes the third cycle unique and different from the first and second cycles. The doctoral training phase constitutes the main link between the European higher education and research areas, and high quality doctoral programmes are therefore crucial in achieving Europe's research goals.

While the specific character of the third cycle needs to be taken into consideration, this does not mean that doctoral programmes should be seen in isolation, but rather as part of a continuum of implementation of the three cycles. It is important for all institutions offering research-based higher education to ensure that a research component is included and developed in all cycles thus allowing students to acquire research experience and encouraging an interest in research as a possible career.

The Bologna process was late in considering the impact of reform on the third cycle, and indeed only in the Berlin Communiqué in 2003 was the doctoral cycle brought into the reform of degree structures. It is evident, however, that many of the questions which have arisen with regard to first and second cycles are now being posed increasingly with regard to the third cycle. What are the purposes of the cycle? Is there a need for better, or at least clearer structures? What should be the conditions for access? How can funding be used most effectively? How can inter-disciplinary collaboration be strengthened? How can mobility be improved and increased? Should the third cycle be made more relevant for the labour market, and if so, how? How is the labour market for third cycle graduates changing? What is the role of doctoral candidates in the reforms? How can the primary emphasis on research be kept as other demands are considered? Are credits necessary and helpful? Are the changes that are taking place all coherent?



The Trends V questionnaire and site visits yielded fascinating results and an insight into a fast-changing situation that has also been confirmed through the findings of EUA's project on doctoral education. Institutions were asked whether taught courses are offered as part of the third cycle, and 49% of the sample answered that indeed

they are. Institutions were also asked if their third cycle programmes are based exclusively on the model of supervisor tutoring, and here 22% responded that this was the case. 29% of the sample answered positively to the question of whether a part of their doctoral programmes are offered in doctoral schools. In addition, 27% of institutions said that they use credits within the third cycle.

Taken together these findings indicate a quite astonishing development taking place across the continent. Even if nothing else were happening in European higher education, the speed of change within doctoral education would amount to a mini revolution.

Questions on the structure of doctoral programmes were also asked to Ministries in the survey of Bologna process member countries carried out for the EUA doctoral project. Out of the 36 countries that responded, 16 countries reported that their institutions have introduced doctoral, graduate or research schools, alongside existing models such as traditional individual training or 'stand alone' structured doctoral programmes.

Organisation of doctoral education

Organisation of doctoral education	Number of countries	Countries
Individual education only (1)	5	Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus, Georgia, Malta, Montenegro
Structured programmes only (2)	4	Croatia, Estonia, Lithuania, Spain
Doctoral/graduate research schools only (3)	3	France, Liechtenstein, Turkey
Mixed (1) and (2)	11	Andorra, Austria, Belgium-Flanders, Czech Republic, Greece, Iceland, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovak Republic
Mixed (2) and (3)	2	Italy, Norway
Mixed (1) and (3)	2	Belgium-Wallonia, Netherlands
Mixed (1), (2) and (3)	9	Albania, Armenia, Germany, Denmark, Finland, Scotland, Sweden, Switzerland, UK

New organisational models

Different structural solutions are appropriate to different contexts, and the choice should be a matter for each institution, based upon the specific institutional aims which these structures are designed to meet. Two main organisational models are emerging as vehicles for promoting high quality, internationally oriented and networked doctoral programmes:

- **Graduate school** – an organisational structure that includes doctoral candidates and often also master students. It provides administrative, development and transferable skills development support, organises admission, courses and seminars, and takes responsibility for quality assurance.

- **Doctoral/ Research school** – an organisational structure that includes only doctoral students. It may be organised around a particular discipline, research theme or a cross-disciplinary research area and/ or it is focused on creating a research group/ network and is project-driven. It may involve one institution only or several institutions in a network.

These models are not mutually exclusive and often have shared characteristics. Countries and even individual institutions may also adopt both models. The advantages and added value of such schools may be summarised as follows:

- Offer a framework for a shared mission or vision that facilitates the process of turning doctoral candidates into excellent researchers
- Provide a stimulating research environment and cooperation across disciplines
- Facilitate clear administrative structure for doctoral programmes, candidates and supervisors, and clear profile and status for doctoral candidates
- Ensure critical mass and help to overcome the isolation of young researchers
- Bring junior and senior researchers together
- Support and facilitate the task of supervising candidates and the role of supervisors
- Organise admission with transparent rules and regulations
- Provide an environment conducive to transferable skills training
- Enhance career development opportunities, including advice on funding opportunities (scholarships, projects)
- Guarantee quality assurance and monitoring
- Provide a framework for the development of codes of practice, procedures and mechanisms within the university structure and acting as an independent arbitrator or ombudsman where necessary
- Enhance opportunities for mobility, international collaboration and inter-institutional cooperation

While these advantages are apparent to different degrees in different institutions, the site visits emphasised that the reality within institutions is extremely diverse, and it will take time to integrate and consolidate these newly emerging structures.

New types of doctoral programme

As well as new structural models, a range of innovative doctorate programmes are also emerging to respond to the changing demands of a fast-evolving labour market. Employability of doctoral candidates within and outside academic institutions, as well as individual and societal needs for lifelong education and training, have acted as a catalyst to the development of new programmes, including professional doctorates, more university – industrial collaboration based doctorates and increased European and international cooperation, often leading to joint or European doctorates.

Programmes known as “Professional doctorates” or practice-related doctorates merit particular attention. They focus on embedding research in a reflective manner into professional practice. In order to develop a broad discussion on this topic it will be important to ensure the dissemination of information from those European countries that have experience in this area, and particularly the UK, where the number of professional doctorates is growing rapidly. While they must meet the same core standards as “traditional” doctorates to ensure the same high level of quality, institutions involved in the EUA doctoral programmes project felt that it may be

appropriate to consider using different titles to distinguish between this type of professional doctorates and PhDs. *In the future, qualifications frameworks may help to clarify the relationship*

Diversity of doctoral programmes reflects the increasing diversity of the European Higher Education landscape in which higher education institutions have the autonomy to develop their own missions and profiles and thus their own priorities in terms of programmes and research priorities. Nevertheless, the discussion on new developments has led to the consensus that there should be no doctorate without original research - the main component of all doctorates - and that all awards described as doctorates (no matter what their type or form) should be based on core processes and outcomes.

Access to doctoral programmes

There is evidence from the site visits that many institutions are opening up their admission to doctoral programmes more broadly than in the past. In a fast-changing environment, it is essential to maintain flexibility in admissions to doctoral programmes. The diversity of institutional missions and context, and the growing importance of lifelong learning mean that there are good reasons for different access requirements in different institutions and for different programmes provided fairness, transparency and objectivity are ensured.

Particular attention is also being paid to the articulation between the second and third cycles. In general, institutions have few problems with access from the second cycle, but there is a considerable variety of practice with regard to other forms of admission. This is a matter for institutional and academic autonomy, and it is entirely in keeping with policy goals at national and European level that candidates with the potential to benefit from a third cycle degree should be encouraged.

One emerging concern with regard to the third cycle, however, is the socio-economic status of potential candidates. While much of the discussion with regard to the social dimension has, until now, focused on the first and second cycles, it is equally important that higher education institutions and national systems pay attention to the third cycle. Many graduates will have acquired considerable levels of debt by the end of the first and second cycles, and a hidden trend could be developing whereby access to the third cycle is determined in part by the ability of candidates to afford a further period of study with little income.

Mobility and internationalisation

Doctoral programmes are a key component of institutions' international strategy – whether this focuses on attracting the best doctoral candidates from all over the world, encouraging mobility within doctoral programmes, or supporting European and international joint doctoral programmes and co-tutelle arrangements. For some institutions and indeed, some smaller countries, mobility may be the only means of training their own young researchers in disciplines and transdisciplinary research areas where a critical mass of doctoral candidates or infrastructure does not exist at home.

It was noted in several institutions that there is a lack of financial support at European level for the type of mobility that doctoral candidates would appreciate. Hence although shared supervision or co-tutelle arrangements may suit some, there is a bigger unsatisfied need to cover shorter term mobility, and to use money flexibly during the course of a doctoral programme. Candidates often find themselves at the whim of their faculty and departments with regard to mobility arrangements. Moreover there is insufficient recognition of the added value of mobility for the career development of early stage researchers. Funding instruments are therefore needed to facilitate the mobility of doctoral candidates from all 46 Bologna countries. Legal, administrative and social obstacles, for example concerning visas, work permits and social security issues also need to be addressed by all partners in the process.

Finally increasing internationalisation inside universities, especially at doctoral level, should not be forgotten. Doctoral training is *per se* international in nature and sufficient opportunities should be provided for doctoral candidates to engage internationally. This can be done, for example, through the recruitment of more international staff; the organisation of international workshops, conferences and summer schools; the development of more European and international joint doctoral programmes and co-tutelle arrangements. The use of new technologies, such as using teleconferences, e-learning etc. should also foster the internationalisation of doctoral programmes.

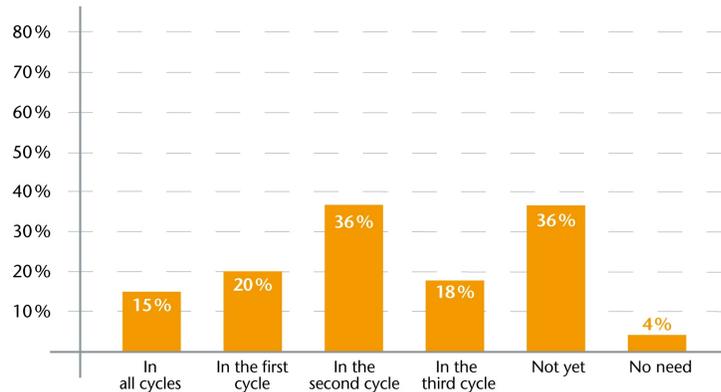
Key Findings

- *While considerable change is taking place in the first cycle, employers are rarely involved in these curriculum reform processes, and many other stakeholders are equally unaware of the nature of reforms.*
- *The level of diversification in second cycle programmes is particularly significant. While implementation of reforms here gives space for creativity and innovation, attention also needs to be paid to the overall system-level goals.*
- While the third cycle came late to the Bologna process (or vice versa), the speed of change now revealed is quite extraordinary. Institutions need to take responsibility for the further developments in this crucial cycle to sustain and enhance Europe's research and innovation capacity.

1.5 Joint programmes and degrees

Joint programmes and degrees have been given considerable attention as the Bologna process has developed. As early as the Prague Communiqué in 2001, Ministers were encouraging joint programmes as a major feature of attraction of the European Higher Education Area. At this time joint programmes were an interesting, but very marginal, phenomenon in Europe. Political rhetoric was given additional substance through the launch of the Erasmus Mundus programme, which has acted as a catalyst for institutions to develop new joint master programmes, and as an additional stimulus to governments to review legislation to ensure that joint degrees can be awarded.

Trends V
Joint Programmes
in Bologna Cycles



The findings of the Trends V questionnaire suggest that many institutions in Europe have now experimented with the development of joint programmes, or that if they have not yet done so, they intend to. 60% of institutions state that they have joint programmes in at least one of the three cycles, while only 4% answered that they do not see the need for joint programmes. The majority of joint programmes are in the second cycle, although the number of institutions that claim to have joint programmes in all three cycles is close to 15%.

When these statistics are examined in terms of countries, there are certain countries that seem to have more joint programme activity than others. These include Germany, Spain (which has a large concentration in the third cycle), France, Italy, UK, and the Netherlands.

Although the percentages of institutions with joint programmes are high, the statistic may give a slightly distorted image of reality. For although a large number of programmes may have been developed, there may be few examples in many institutions, and they may still represent a very small number in comparison to the overall programme offer. More importantly, in terms of students participating in such programmes the numbers may be even less significant. A recent study by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the German Rectors Conference (HRK) of joint programmes in Germany and other European countries identified a large number of programmes, mostly created since 2003, but where the average number of students participating was only 24. If this experience is representative – and as the study reached 33 of the 45 Bologna countries, there is good reason to consider that it is – it suggests that it may be premature to assess the potential impact of joint programmes.

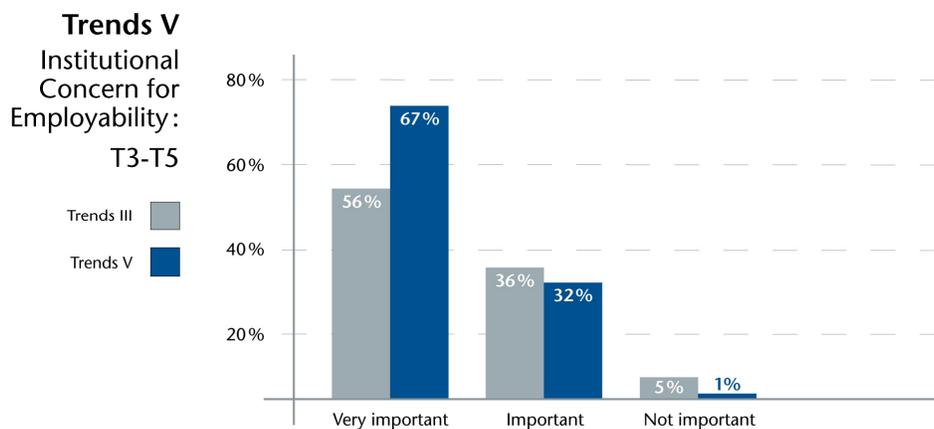
Nevertheless the site visits confirmed that undoubtedly joint programmes are an important aspect of the learning process for European higher education institutions in a phase of engaging in and constructing the European Higher Education Area. Indeed, they are one of the main ways of understanding how other institutions are adapting to a changing environment, and of developing trust across national frontiers through facing certain challenges together.

Yet joint programmes also require significant additional resources, and in an era where financing is being squeezed and institutions are required to be increasingly accountable for expenditure, it is difficult to imagine that in the future a significant

percentage of students will be experiencing higher education through such programmes. Indeed, given the additional costs involved, and with no sustainable funding source on the horizon, it is likely that many programmes that are in an early start-up phase may be difficult for institutions to prioritise, unless a specific funding source is identified. It is also unlikely that joint programmes will be able to deliver the significant increase in international mobility that was perhaps expected by Bologna reforms, but has so far yet to be realised.

At this stage, it would seem reasonable to suggest that joint programmes are playing a significant role in constructing the European Higher Education Area, by giving institutions opportunities to work together and learn from each other. However, whether in a decade's time there will be a significant increase in joint programmes, and whether more than an elite of European and global citizens will have any practical experience of such programmes, remains a matter of speculation.

1.6 Employability issues in a changing European higher education landscape



The responses to the Trends V questionnaire suggest that employability has grown in importance as a driver of change. 67% of institutions consider the concern for employability of graduates as “very important”. This figure has risen by 11% when compared to Trends III. A further 32% consider the issue “important”. Conversely, the number of respondents who answered that the concern for employability is “not important” is now less than 1% of the sample, whereas in Trends III it was 5%. Hence, the perceived importance of employability is certainly significantly greater in 2007 than it was in 2003.

Yet these data should not be considered in isolation from other responses. When asked if professional associations and employers are involved in the design of curricula, 29% responded that there is close involvement. This figure is very similar, and actually slightly less than the corresponding figure in Trends III (31%). While the number of institutions that answered that employers and professional associations are rarely if ever involved in curriculum design has dropped slightly, (from 25% to 20%) this particular question reveals a fairly static situation.

The Trends V questionnaire also asks institutions about their expectations for student choices after the first cycle degree. Here, only 22% report that most will enter the labour market.

Lack of employer awareness of reforms appears to be a key issue in this respect. Many institutions, particularly in systems where re-structuring has been recently undertaken, reported that employers are on the whole unsure what to expect from a university bachelor graduate. As the phenomenon of bachelor graduates is new, and there are relatively few examples, it will require time for the cultural change to take root. Moreover, in many countries, there has been little effort made either by governments or by institutions to involve employers in debate on the reforms. This issue, raised already in Trends IV, needs to be urgently addressed if the Bologna process is to be a sustainable success.

The issue of institutional differentiation also has an important impact on employability, and institutional attitudes had significant common features, particularly in countries where there is a clear differentiation between universities and other professional higher education institutions. In such cases, many within universities consider it a reasonable division of labour that other institutions concentrate on professionally relevant first cycle degrees, or on the question of first cycle employability. Meanwhile the typical profile of a university graduate will be a graduate at the master level. While there may be an element of institutional wishful thinking that this situation will continue, nevertheless it is a strong feature of reality in many countries at the moment.

It is also clear that, although employability of graduates is a general topic of discussion, there has so far been a lack of attention to relating this to the policy agenda linked to lifelong learning. Indeed, although lifelong learning is a rhetorical priority of higher education policy in most countries in Europe, there is little evidence that institutions have considered lifelong learning challenges as a priority during the process of reforming curricula. Again this may signal that structural change is preparing the way for further changes to come. From this perspective, it can be anticipated that the Bologna process will come to be perceived as a radical reform of structures that enables a wide range of other higher education challenges to be addressed.

Key issue

- Although the momentum of reform has clearly been gaining pace as the Bologna process advances, the greatest challenge is to communicate far more broadly the nature of these structural and curricular reforms. Without attention to this societal dialogue - involving institutions, public authorities, employers and citizen - the impact of the reforms risks being diminished, and qualifications misunderstood.

2. Bologna tools for mobility and recognition

Introduction

The main European tools that have been developed to help in the process of curriculum reform and recognition of learning outcomes are the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), the Diploma Supplement (DS), and more recently, qualifications frameworks.

ECTS is a credit transfer and accumulation system that is at the heart of the reforms taking place in higher education institutions. Previous Trends studies have reported the continual rise of ECTS as *the* credit system for the European Higher Education Area. However, the Trends IV report already noted that many institutions called for “a more European implementation of ECTS that would preclude inconsistencies caused by national or institutional approaches”, indicating their concern that ECTS was still not always being used correctly. The extent and quality of the use of ECTS has thus become a matter of key importance to Europe’s higher education institutions and students.

The Diploma Supplement is an instrument to improve transparency - developed to describe the nature, context, content and status of the studies successfully completed - and which all Bologna governments pledged to provide to all students free of charge by 2005.

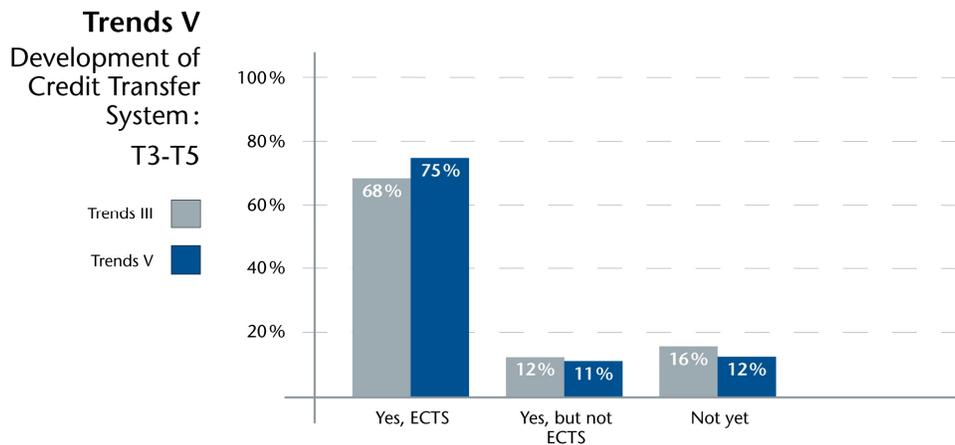
The idea of qualifications frameworks is to provide the overarching system-level architecture into which individual qualifications fit. Their purpose is to enhance transparency, and to make it understandable to citizens how qualifications can be used in a variety of ways – whether for further study or for the labour market. The Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (also known as the Bologna Framework) was adopted by Ministers of Education in Bergen in 2005 as an overarching framework with which national frameworks can relate. In Denmark, Ireland, and the UK, qualifications frameworks have also been established, while a number of other national qualifications frameworks are currently under construction – or at least under discussion. At this stage in the Bologna process, however, most institutions are unaware of these developments.

To assess progress with ECTS and the Diploma Supplement since Trends III, questionnaire responses on this topic have been compared both across the sample as a whole and by country. In addition, issues on the usage of ECTS and the Diploma Supplement were addressed specifically in all the institutional site visits. This chapter also considers developments in institutional approaches to internationalisation over the past four years. As qualifications frameworks were clearly not well known in most institutions, questions on their development have been considered mostly in the context of lifelong learning (see Chapter 5).

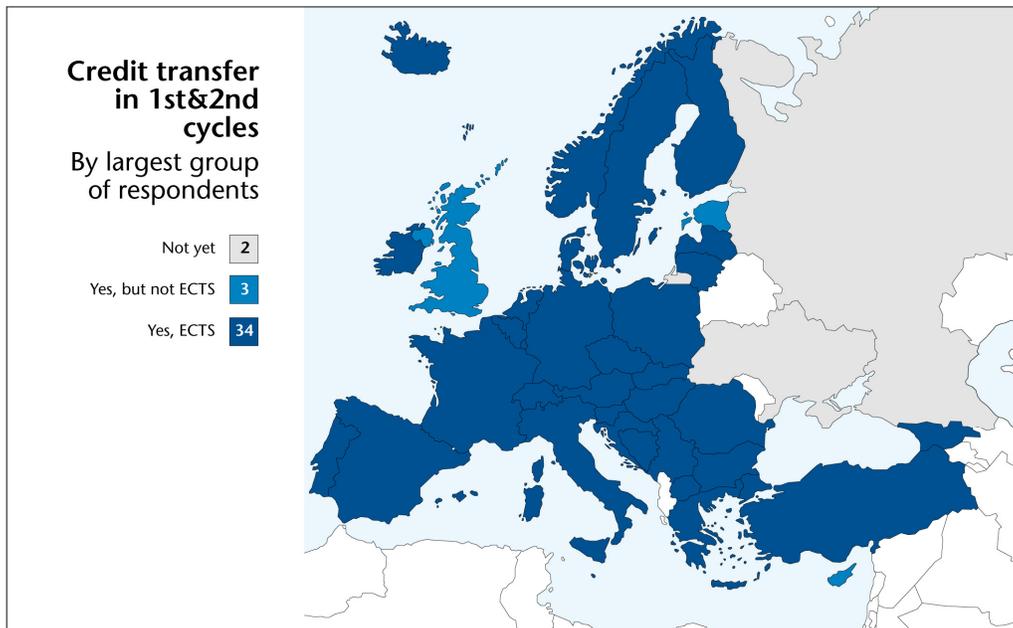
2.1 Credit Systems

Originally conceived twenty years ago as a credit transfer system to structure and improve the quality and recognition of student mobility in the ERASMUS programme, ECTS has been given additional significance since the goal of creating a European Higher Education Area was formulated. Indeed the Bologna process has acted as a catalyst for the development of ECTS, not only as a European credit transfer system, but also as a European credit accumulation system.

Credit Transfer System



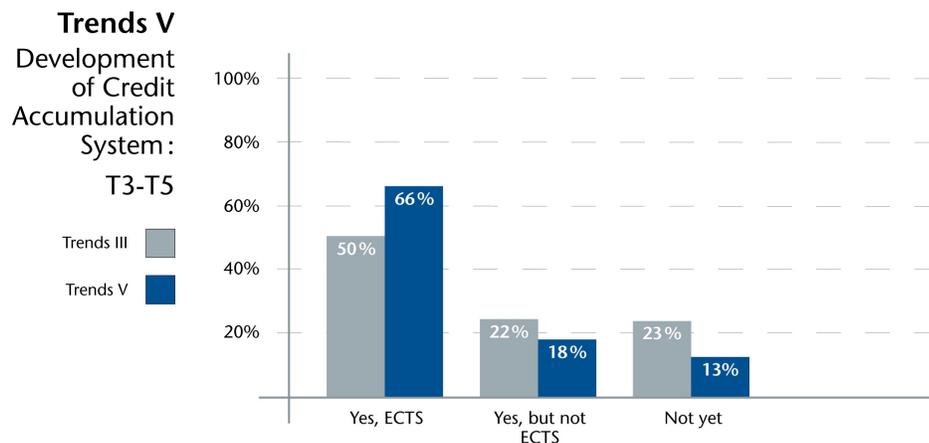
Three quarters of institutions responding to the Trends V questionnaire reported using ECTS for credit transfer in all Bachelor and Master programmes, compared to 68% in 2003, and the number of those intending to use a credit transfer system in the future dropped from 16% to 12% over the four year period. In both cases, the numbers of those not intending to use a credit accumulation or transfer system, or not responding, were negligible.



Geographically, the distribution across countries for Trends V also reflects significant swings towards the use of ECTS as a credit transfer system for all 1st and 2nd cycle degree programmes. 34 countries now have a majority of institutions reporting the use of ECTS for credit transfer, and only 3 countries have an overall majority of respondents saying that they use a different credit transfer system.

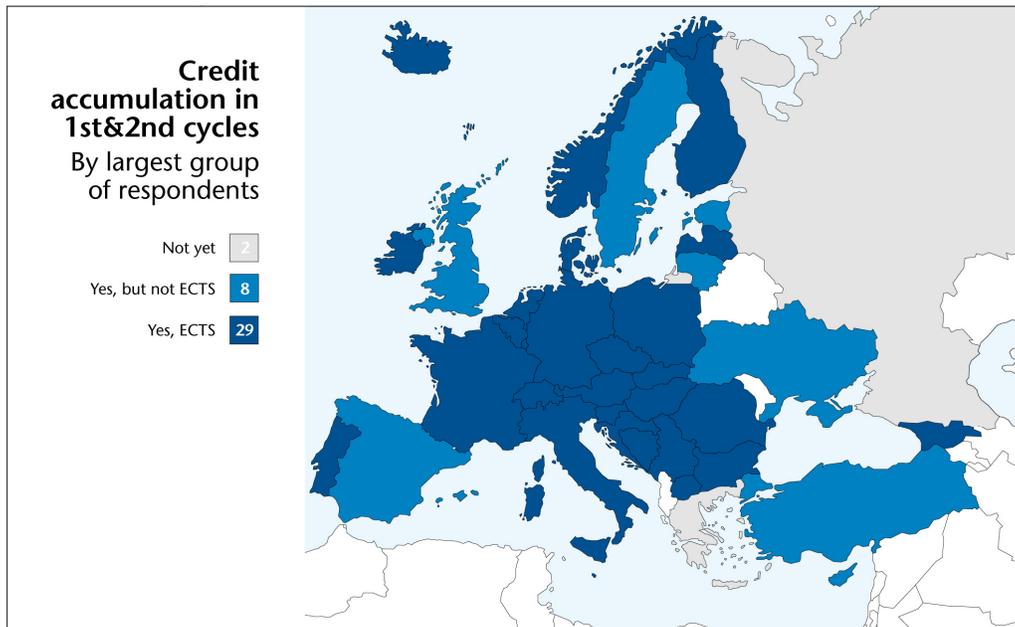
Credit Accumulation System

As a credit accumulation system, ECTS is able to support curricular reform and facilitate flexible learning paths within institutions and national systems, as well as internationally. Similar trends can be observed regarding the increasing use of ECTS for credit accumulation as for credit transfer.



Two-thirds of responding institutions report that they now use ECTS in this way, compared to 50% who responded positively to this same question in 2003. The

number of institutions reporting the use of a credit accumulation system other than ECTS dropped from 22% to 18%, while the number intending to use a credit accumulation system in the future dropped from 23% to 12%.



The geographical distribution shows that a majority of institutions in 31 countries now use ECTS as a credit accumulation system for all their 1st and 2nd cycle programmes. In 8 countries another credit system is used. These are the same countries as in 2003, with the exception of Finland, which has left the group by moving to ECTS in the intervening period, and Spain which has joined this group and is now implementing a national system. Greece and Russia are the only countries where the majority of institutions report that no credit accumulation system is in place.

Assessment of Learning Outcomes

Despite the findings on increased use of ECTS, a majority of institutions continue to rely on traditional end-of-year examinations to assess student knowledge. As the assessment of learning outcomes is required for credits to be awarded, this raises questions about how profoundly programmes have been restructured when introducing ECTS. Only 34% of Trends V respondents stated that the award of degrees/diplomas is made in all subjects on the basis of accumulated credits only, while 42% replied that awards are made on the basis of accumulated credits plus traditional exams. The comparative Trends III figures were 20% on the basis of accumulated credits only, and 46% on the basis of accumulated credits plus traditional exams.

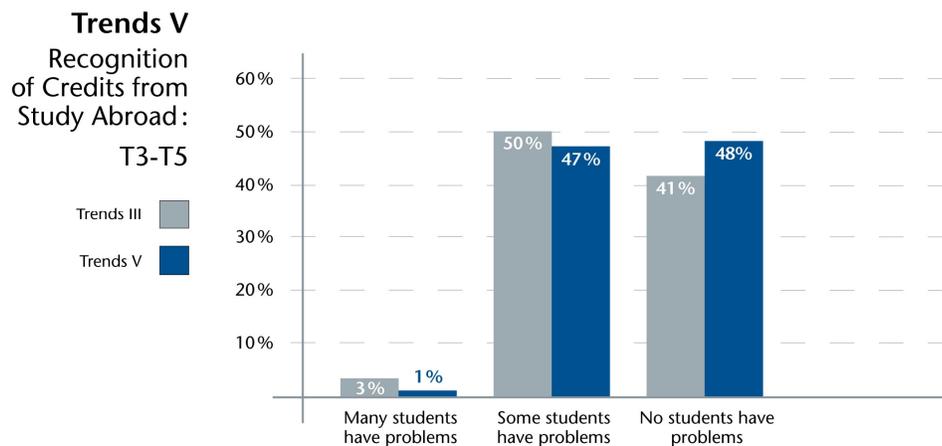
While some institutions may have found questions on this issue confusing, the responses indicate clear national differentiation. A significant majority of institutions in Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Macedonia, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Sweden, Turkey, as well institutions in Andorra and Malta, report that they award

degrees/diplomas in all subjects on the basis of accumulated credits only. At the other end of the scale, a third or fewer respondents say that they make their awards on the basis of accumulated credits in Austria, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, and the Ukraine. In these countries in particular, therefore, it would be important to examine further how the process of programme reform is taking place. Are new programmes, modules and student-centred learning paths being introduced within an organisational model that still includes traditional end of year examinations? Are learning outcomes being assessed more than once? Are reforms staying at the surface rather than dealing with the substance of curricula?

Although ECTS is already being used for a variety of purposes, and this process needs to be consolidated, further demands on the system can and should be anticipated. The recognition of informal, non-formal and work-based learning remains a key challenge to institutions in the context of lifelong learning, and ECTS now needs to be developed more holistically in order to ensure that learning outcomes are recognised appropriately in all institutions and for all types of learning. Moving to another level of ECTS development should not, however, deflect attention away from the crucial task of ensuring that the fundamental elements of the system – learning outcomes and student workload – are well understood and implemented.

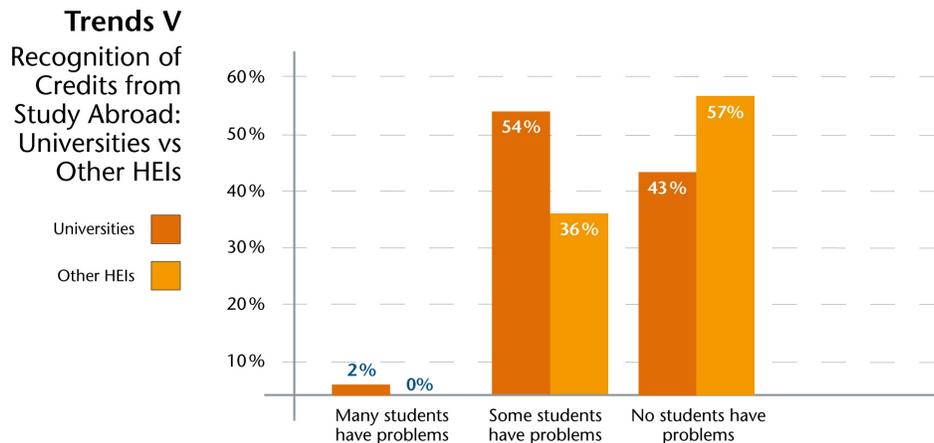
2.2 Recognition

The level of problems associated with the recognition of credits for students returning from a period of study abroad remains stubbornly high. 47% of institutions admit that some students have problems with the recognition of their credits gained abroad, an insignificant decrease since 2003. 48% venture to state that none of their students have such problems, which is likewise only a small improvement from the Trends III response.



In those countries where a majority of institutions state that no returning students have problems with the recognition of their credits, this majority is only a small one, and

only in Denmark, Portugal and Serbia and Montenegro does it exceed 60% of respondents. Countries where less than a third of responding institutions venture to claim that none of their students encounter such problems include Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Macedonia, Slovenia, Switzerland, and the Ukraine.



Differences between universities and other higher education institutions can also be observed, with the level of problems reported by universities being significantly higher than in other higher education institutions. This may be linked to greater student mobility between universities, but nevertheless the finding is striking.

These continued high levels of non-recognition have two possible implications: that institutional recognition procedures are not working optimally; and/or that ECTS is not being used properly. The evidence gained during the site visits would suggest that while the former is prevalent, the latter is also frequent.

The responses to the Trends V question on institution-wide recognition procedures back this up – since there is little change in the percentages of institutions with established recognition procedures since 2003. However, universities, particularly those founded pre-1900, are more likely than other higher education institutions to have such procedures, particularly for the recognition of foreign degrees (67% of universities, 51% of other higher education institutions).

The site visits confirmed the Trends III and IV data findings that although ECTS has emerged as *the* European credit system, familiar problems regarding recognition of credits still remain, albeit at a slightly lesser scale in some institutions. ECTS was used in all institutions visited, and the increased experience in the use of learning agreements for mobile students has led in many cases to some improvement in recognition processes. However, problems continue to be encountered, with mobile students often finding on arrival that courses are no longer available or that they do not correspond to the initial description, thus causing difficulties for the learning agreement. Flexible approaches to this problem have been developed in a number of cases, allowing for the learning agreement to be modified with a minimum of disruption for the student. A number of calls were made for the introduction of an

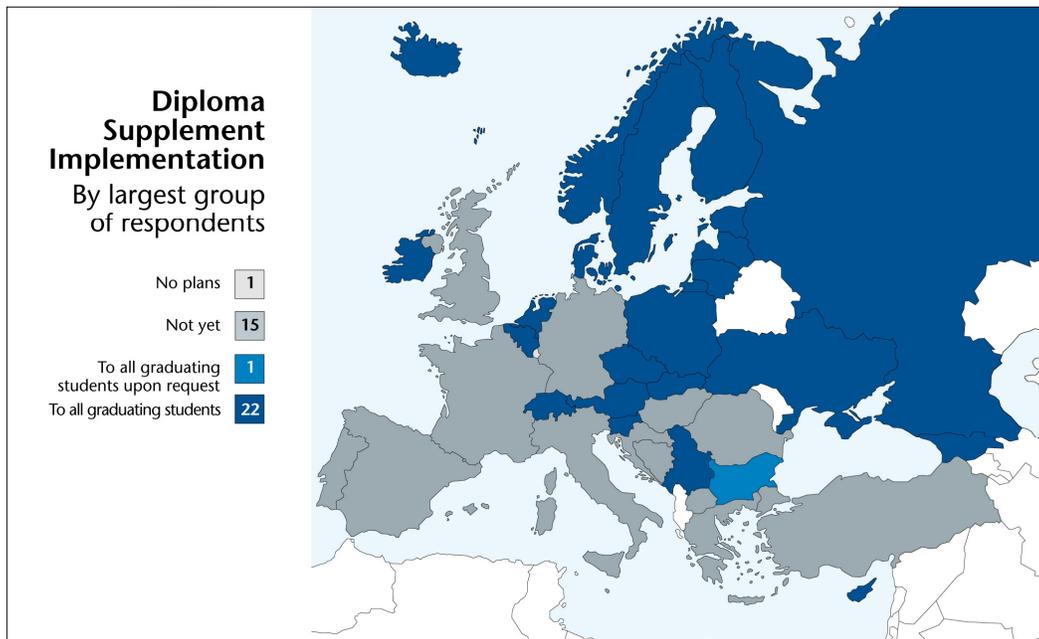
electronic tool to facilitate these administrative processes surrounding the management of learning agreements.

Although familiar problems persist, statements were made during a number of site visits to the effect that Bologna has made recognition within Europe much easier. There is certainly increased awareness of recognition issues, and in some countries evidence of increasing levels of cooperation with ENIC/NARIC structures.

2.3 Diploma Supplement (DS)

At the Berlin conference in 2003, Ministers set an objective that every student graduating from 2005 onwards should receive the Diploma Supplement automatically and free of charge, in a widely spoken European language. Data on this topic was not gathered in the Trends III survey, since the survey was undertaken prior to the Berlin conference. Disappointingly, in view of the Ministerial commitment, slightly less than half of the Trends V respondents confirmed that they issued the DS to all graduating students, with a further 11% saying they issued it to all graduating students who request it. A further 38% of higher education institutions say, however, that they plan to use the DS.

Within these overall figures, there are interesting variations between types and focus of institution. In general, universities are 10% less likely than other higher education institutions to issue the DS to all graduating students. 62% of those institutions who see themselves primarily as serving a European community state that they issue the DS to all graduating students, while only 41% of institutions serving a regional community say they do so, suggesting that perhaps the DS is perceived as a valuable tool for international mobility or the international labour market, but with less relevance locally.



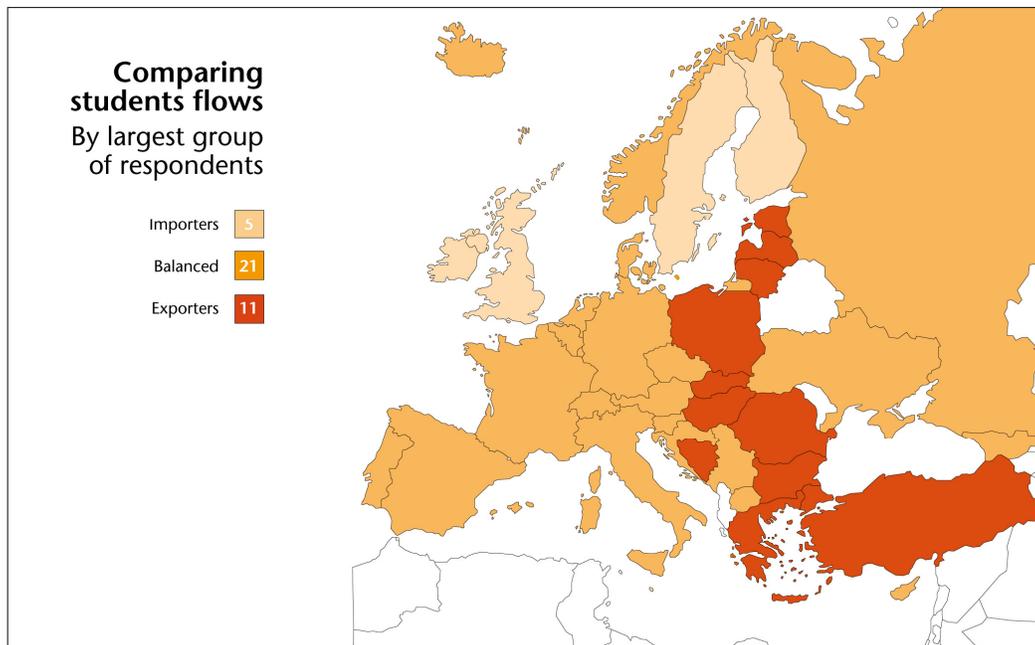
National analysis reveals that Europe divides very clearly between countries that have introduced the DS and those that are yet to do so. Three-quarters or more of respondents in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Georgia, Iceland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden and Switzerland say that they issue the DS to all graduating students. However, 20% or less are able to make this claim in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, and the UK. Interestingly, a third or more respondents in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania say they deliver the DS to all graduating students who request it. This no doubt indicates that the cost of producing the DS for all students is leading some institutions and national systems to a pragmatic approach of delivering the DS only when they perceive a genuine need.

The implementation of the DS is well under way in almost all visited institutions, despite technical difficulties linked with student records and, as noted in some cases, a lack of understanding regarding learning outcomes. However, introducing the DS has been and continues to be a costly exercise in administrative terms, and many universities report that employers are not using the DS, or if they are it is only in the case of the first employment after graduation. This should provide a clear message to Ministries and other authorities, as well as to higher education institutions themselves, regarding the need for greater communication and links with the labour market.

2.4 Mobility

In Bergen 2005, Ministers acknowledged the difficulties experienced over many years in obtaining reliable and comparable data regarding student and staff mobility, and charged the Bologna Follow-up Group to address this issue. In parallel, the Trends III and Trends V surveys asked higher education institutions to record the relative increases/decreases in student mobility, both incoming and outgoing, over the previous three years. The results reported by institutions show further increases in mobility in both directions. This growth is of course relative to previous levels, and in many cases may be from a very low basis, but if institutional perceptions are accurate it nevertheless represents sustained and cumulative year-on-year growth, stretching back to the year 2000.

However, this finding does not sit neatly with other studies, such as the 2006 ACA Eurodata study on Student Mobility in European Higher Education, which in addition to highlighting the fact that reliable data is not obtainable, does not offer evidence of a dramatic improvement in student mobility.



Mobility flows across Europe continue to be quite variable and the same strong East-West imbalances appear as in Trends III. This time, Sweden and Finland join Ireland and the UK, along with Malta, in the list of countries where at least 80% of institutions report significantly more incoming than outgoing students. At the other end of the scale, at least 75% of institutions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Poland and Turkey report significantly more outgoing than incoming students. Greece and Hungary join the list of exporters when compared to Trends III, while Slovenia now joins the larger group of countries where most institutions report similar levels of incoming and outgoing students. It should, however, be remembered that these data refer to perceptions of student mobility between institutions, and do not therefore include students who may leave countries to study abroad as “free movers”.

Many voices within the institutions visited considered that the introduction of the Bologna first and second cycle degrees have had, and will continue to have, a negative effect on mobility, through shortening the overall length of studies and therefore reducing options for student mobility. However, these claims in many cases do not appear to be supported by the Trends V findings – even though the lack of concrete data should lead to rather cautious interpretation of any information in this field. Incoming and outgoing student mobility is reported to have risen over the last three years in over 70% of Trends V respondents, and evidence from the site visits also points to student mobility holding up well and even improving under the new Bologna system. In institutions that pointed to an adverse effect of reforms, there was usually also an obvious explanation. Often a decline in mobility could be directly attributed to the inflexible nature of some programmes, for example all modules being made compulsory, and/or rules being implemented stating that thesis work must be done at the home university. Such measures effectively leave little room for students to consider a semester or year in a partner university abroad.

In terms of responses to the need for increased mobility, there is widespread evidence from the site visits that the institutional focus is in many cases on international rather than EU students. Partly this is due to the need to balance incoming and outgoing numbers of Erasmus students. However, there is also a growing attention in some countries on the recruitment of non-EU fee-paying students. As well as furthering academic and research links with other regions of the world, these students provide an independent funding stream for the institution, which in some cases is used to make up part of the shortfall in national funding to meet the full economic cost of EU students.

The site visits also revealed rapid advancements in the provision of programmes through English, especially at Master and PhD levels. The introduction of these “Bologna” 2nd and 3rd cycle programmes has certainly boosted the international attractiveness of many universities. However, some systems do not allow teaching in the first cycle through English, but insist on the national language. Some universities offer parallel first-cycle programmes through English for international students – but staff and students often do not consider these courses to be of the same quality as the “national language” programmes. Language barriers therefore continue to pose major obstacles to mobility, even where programmes are now offered through English.

In larger countries with diversified higher education systems, the introduction of Bologna reforms is sometimes leading to greater student mobility between institutions in the same region, as institutional collaboration is developing more systematically in teaching, research and other activities. This regional collaboration would appear to be strongest at postgraduate levels and is often linked to institutional research strategy. These initiatives also have an international dimension, as one of the goals of such enhanced cooperation is in many cases to strengthen the collective international presence and competitiveness of the institutions and regions concerned.

Overall levels of student mobility are certainly affected by the fact that in almost all countries, a majority of students work on a part-time basis during their student years, and either cannot afford, or do not wish to lose this income. It was also pointed out in some institutions in Central and Eastern Europe that improving conditions at home universities and in the national environment generally meant that students are less likely to participate in mobility programmes. As seen from the Trends V data, however, many of these countries are still overall net exporters of students, as they have not yet become popular destinations for large numbers of students from other European countries.

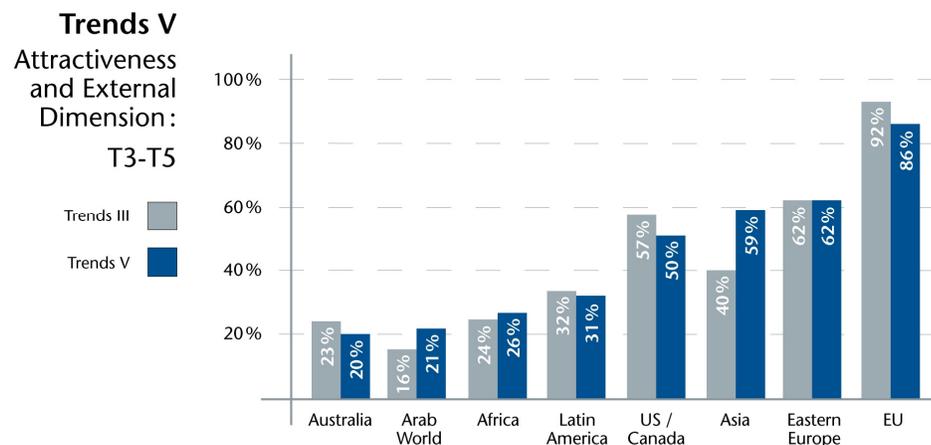
Information was also gathered from the site visits regarding staff mobility, although hard evidence here is even more difficult to discern than for students. Physical mobility for academic staff appears to be far more often linked to research than to teaching. Indeed, the new Bologna curricula combined with traditional academic structures and cultures often provides an array of difficulties for those who aspire to organising regular staff mobility programmes for teaching purposes. No obvious incentives currently exist for institutions to develop such mobility, and individual efforts will often be countered by arguments of insufficient teaching and administrative backup to cover colleagues who are abroad. As such mobility is usually neither recognised nor rewarded by the employer institution; the staff member may also face a backlog of additional work on returning home.

The lack of physical mobility does not necessarily mean that institutions are becoming more isolated. As international cooperation can be developed and maintained through the use of the internet and associated information and communication technologies, this is more often the preferred approach. Nevertheless, opportunities for relatively large numbers of students to benefit from academic mobility for teaching purposes are not currently being exploited to any significant degree.

2.5 Internationalisation

Increasing the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area for the rest of the world has been a driving force of the Bologna Process since its inception, and is one of the main goals which many of the action lines are intended to support. Both the Trends III and Trends V questionnaires therefore gathered data on this topic, in order to gauge the evolving positions and opinions of higher education institutions.

In terms of the geographical areas in which institutions would most like to enhance their international attractiveness, the EU remains the first choice by a margin of 25%. The small drop since 2003 can be attributed to EU enlargement and the fact that many Trends III respondents for whom the EU was a priority are now EU members themselves. Eastern Europe remains the second priority for enhancing attractiveness, with institutions in Spain, Sweden and Switzerland mentioning it least. Asia overtakes North America as the third priority, with an important increase since 2003, and over 70% of institutions in Finland, France, Hungary, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and the UK citing it as a priority. The US and Canada drop to fourth place, with Latin America remaining in fifth. Australia, the Arab world, despite some increase in attention, and Africa remain the lowest priority areas for higher education institutions across Europe.



Universities are considerably more likely than other types of higher education institution to list the US/Canada, Asia, Latin America and the Arab world in Trends V as priority areas for increasing their attractiveness. Not surprisingly, institutions which see themselves with primarily a European focus also see the EU and Eastern Europe as higher priorities. Likewise, institutions with a world-wide focus are more likely to

list all other continents and world regions as priorities than institutions with a regional, national or European focus.

In what could be interpreted as a vote of confidence in the Bologna process so far, Trends V respondents remain faithful to their Trends III predecessors, with a small but similar majority still considering that the European Higher Education Area will provide better opportunities for all students in their institutions, and for all participating institutions. However, an increasing number of institutions answer that mainly mobile students (incoming, outgoing or non European) will be the greatest beneficiaries, indicating that there is a lack of consideration of the benefits to all students of an international environment. Meanwhile, there has been a significant increase in the number of institutions that consider that the competitive institutions will benefit from the Bologna process, thus indicating that competition is more firmly a part of institutional reality than four years previously.

Key Findings

- *ECTS continues to gain ground as the credit system for the European Higher Education Area. Yet attention to correct understanding of the two key elements of the system – student workload and learning outcomes – is still imperative.*
- *The Diploma Supplement is being widely issued in many countries, with others still in a preparation phase. Dialogue with employers is again needed to ensure the utility of the tool.*
- *Although the perception of mobility is increasing, there remain many barriers to address. Institutions could and should do more to ease problems with recognition of qualifications and periods of study abroad.*
- *Internationalisation is an increasing priority for institutions, with Asia having become a major region of interest to European higher education institutions in the past four years.*

Key issue

- The tools developed to assist the Bologna process (ECTS, DS) are not always being exploited to their full potential. The challenge is therefore to ensure that tools are well understood and properly implemented so that everyone can benefit. It is particularly important for staff and students to think in terms of learning outcomes to ensure that curricula are re-considered in appropriate depth.

3. Student Support Services and Student Participation

Introduction

The topic of student support services has been largely neglected in European policy debates. The Trends IV report, however, noted that, “*in re-designing more student-centred curricula, institutions must foresee that students will need more guidance and counselling to find their individual academic pathways in a more flexible learning environment*” (Trends IV, p.20). This was followed by the first explicit mention of the topic in a Bologna Ministerial communiqué in Bergen 2005, where Ministers recognised that, “*The social dimension includes measures taken by governments to help students, especially from socially disadvantaged groups, in financial and economic aspects and to provide them with guidance and counselling services with a view to widening access*”.

The Trends IV study also found that institutions where student participation is active and encouraged were in general more positive about the implementation of reforms than those where students were very little involved.

It was therefore considered essential to pay strong attention in the Trends V project both to student support services and to developments in student participation. This has been done through analysis of specific questions in the Trends V survey, and also by greater focus on these issues during the site visits. The research team has also benefited from in-depth focus group discussions with professionals in various aspects of guidance and counselling provision during the 2006 annual conference of the European Forum for Student Guidance (FEDORA) network.

3.1 Student support services

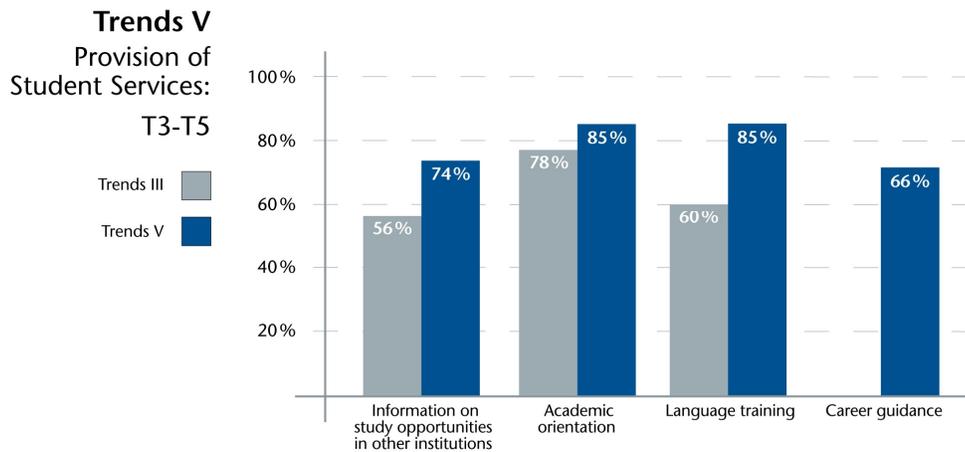
Student support services are necessarily wide-ranging, and should be adapted to the needs of the student body. As the Bologna reforms begin to take root within higher education institutions, students across Europe are experiencing important changes in matters such as degree structures, study programmes, teaching and learning methodologies, as well as the range of academic choices and progression routes open to them. Students should be, and hopefully are, the primary beneficiaries of these reforms, but if failures occur, they will also be the first affected. Any change process brings uncertainty, and it can be anticipated that students will routinely need explanation and advice in such a context – hence the need for effective services. It is also an aspect of democratic society that those who are the users of services should provide feedback on their quality and have a stake in their development. This is particularly the case when the shift in educational paradigm is from teacher to student-centred learning.

Student services such as academic guidance, career services, accommodation, psychological counselling and welfare services, play an increasingly important role when it comes to enhancing the attractiveness and the competitiveness of the European Higher Education Area. They provide national and international students

with the infrastructure to assist each individual student to navigate through higher education in the best possible way, and ideally should be adapted to each student's goals, objectives and personal circumstances.

Such services are also crucial in realising the aspiration of widening access to higher education to more diverse groups of learners, especially those currently under-represented in the student population who may need greater levels of support. Student services therefore form a vital part of the infrastructure required to support the lifelong learning mission of institutions, and are also crucial when attracting international students.

The Trends V survey indicates a growth in the provision of student services during the four-year period from Trends III to Trends V. The areas included in the survey were: information on study opportunities in other institutions (56% to 74%), academic orientation services (increase from 78% to 85%), language training (60% to 85%), career guidance services (new - 66%),



The results from the Trends V site visits indicate, however, that the questions on student services may have been answered by some institutions more in the context of mobility rather than with the whole student body in mind. Indeed the Trends III questions of 2003 in this area were explicitly set in the context of student mobility, and this assumption may have continued in the Trends V responses.

The sample of universities participating in the Trends V site visits all provided language training, guidance and counselling and accommodation as part of their service towards international students. This increase in the provision of services for international students also matches the Trends V findings regarding increases in student mobility, outlined in Chapter 2.

While the statistics from the Trends V institutional questionnaire indicate that many higher education institutions offer a considerable range of student services to at least a part of their student body, what is not captured in the data are the key issues of how

these services are staffed, the level to which they are funded, and whether or not there is any evidence that they are delivered effectively.

Language training

One example that indicates that answers have often been considered in the context of mobility is the provision of language training, which takes place in 85% of all institutions - an increase of 25% since Trends III. The site-visits found no evidence supporting such an increase in language training for the whole student body, but did find that in all institutions visited the provision of language training for outgoing and incoming students had increased. These interpretations are given further validity by the responses to the Trends V question regarding language and cultural support to incoming international students, to which 67% stated that they provided such services to incoming students, but only 18% provided them to all students at the institution. A further 13% admitted that they did not have any such support services.

Information on study opportunities in other institutions

73% of all participating institutions answered that they provide information on study opportunities in other institutions. However, the site-visits and focus groups would suggest that this answer was also made with consideration to information on institutions in other countries. Indeed, very few institutions visited, apart from in Romania, appeared to have any significant mobility between national institutions from bachelor to masters level. On the other hand, all the institutions visited provide information on their international partner institutions within mobility schemes during particular cycles.

Guidance and counselling

Attention to a supportive environment for learning has been growing throughout the Bologna process. The Berlin Communiqué highlighted “*the need for appropriate studying and living conditions for the students, so that they can successfully complete their studies within an appropriate period of time without obstacles related to their social and economic background*”. The Bergen Communiqué also further emphasised the need for governments to support students from socially disadvantaged groups both financially, and through providing guidance and counselling services. In addition to broadening participation, an underlying goal in many countries is to improve the student completion rate.

It is clear from the site visits and focus group discussions, that there is great diversity across Europe regarding guidance and counselling provision. Whereas diversity is often strength of European higher education, with regard to guidance and counselling services it should perhaps be recognised as a weakness.

One aspect of this diversity is in terms of where responsibility for guidance and counselling lies: with the state, with local public authorities, with public or private agencies, or with the higher education institutions themselves. The services themselves are defined in different ways, fulfilling different missions in different institutions and countries across Europe. The key services can be divided into academic orientation and career guidance on the one hand, and professional psychological counselling on the other.

There is diversity in terms of the value and support given to these services. Overall, there is insufficient recognition that in order to meet the ambitions set for higher education by the Bologna process and the Lisbon Strategy, and ease the pathways between secondary education, higher education, and the labour market, more solid guidance and counselling services are essential. These services are needed to support students in making choices linked to their academic studies and professional careers, and overcoming difficulties along the way, whether the students are local or international, and engaged in formal, non-formal or informal education. Guidance is especially important in institutions with a strong focus on lifelong learning, and which are working to attract a diversified student population. It is essential as part of an institutional approach to improving student retention, and should also be seen as a tool to support employability.

However, as discussed in Chapter 4, the Trends V data shows that student learning services – including guidance and counselling services – are rarely included in internal quality assurance. This was supported by the findings from the site visits. It would therefore appear crucial to start evaluating whatever services do exist in this field, and to build on these evaluations to expand provision and possibly to develop norms, whether at institutional or national level, to ensure the quality of these services. Such steps have already taken place in some systems, and are reported to have helped to develop sustainable and professional services for students.

Career guidance services

The Trends V survey shows that 66% of European HEIs provide career guidance services for their students. This data cannot be compared with 2003 since the question was not included in the Trends III questionnaire. However, it is possible that career guidance provision at institutions is increasing with the introduction of the three-cycle system. This would be coherent, since institutions say that they are concerned with employability, and increasing numbers of new bachelor degree holders will graduate and wish to enter the job market. The site-visits also showed some developments in the areas of tracking graduates and in improving contacts with the labour market, not least through the development of specific lifelong learning programmes, such as professional masters or other courses aimed at the regional labour market.

While career guidance has been carried out for a long time in some countries, it is clear that this is a service that needs to be expanded as the Bologna bachelors start to enter the labour market. Large numbers of these bachelor graduates can be expected from the academic year 2006-07 onwards. In some countries, universities have begun to evaluate the impact of the new degrees on the labour market so far through the tracking of graduates. However, the site visits indicated that there did not appear to be much feedback yet from employers, nor of their expectations.

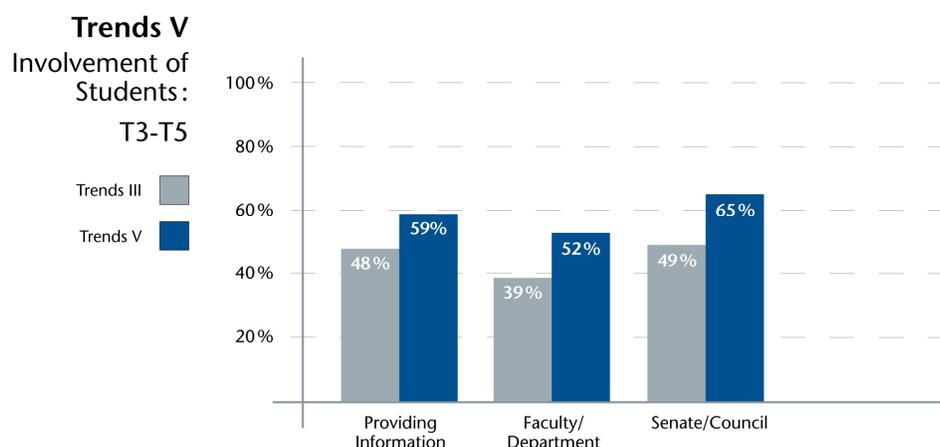
Part-time and double degree students

Echoing the findings reported in Trends III and IV, the Trends V site visits showed that significant proportions of students in many institutions across all countries of Europe are working part-time to support themselves, alongside their “full-time” studies. In many countries, a majority of students are *de facto* part-time due to their work commitments, but not registered as such. In other countries, it is common practice for students to register for two degrees in parallel, in areas that might support their research interests, or to improve their employability. The result is that the

student is only part-time in each of the degree programmes. Such double registration is especially common in countries where interdisciplinary degrees are not well developed, or where the introduction of the new degree structure has not led to more flexible practice in the choice of elective modules, or in the choice of subject when moving from the bachelor to the master level.

These phenomena are not new, but have received insufficient attention at European level. National systems and institutions plan and behave as if most students study full time, whereas all must be aware that this is less and less the case. This is a sensitive issue, as it is linked to the question of financial support for students and pressure on the public purse, as well as to the question of access for those facing socio-economic disadvantage. While part-time working may be a positive and complementary element of the higher education experience for some students, it can become an obstacle to success for others, and solutions therefore need to be found by increasing flexibility of educational programmes in response to the needs of learners.

3.2 Student participation

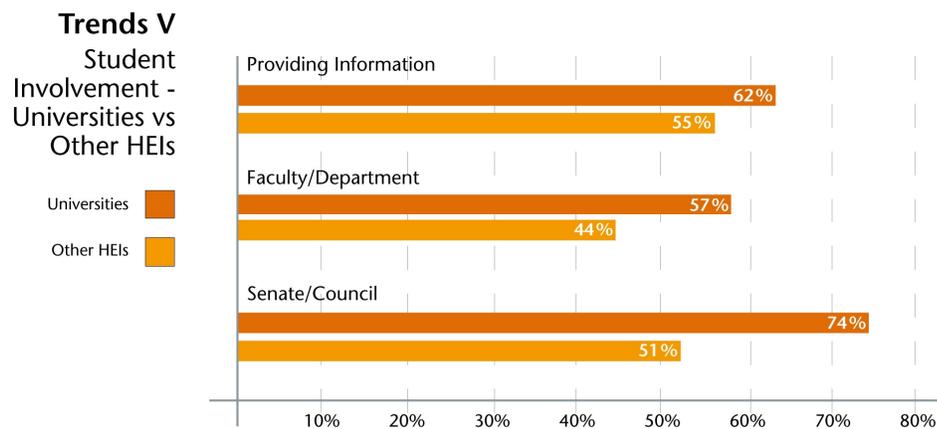


There has been a positive development since 2003 in the involvement of students in the implementation of reforms at institutional level. An increase in student participation of more than 10% overall has taken place, the most significant change being a 16% increase in central level participation. The Nordic countries tend to report very high levels of participation, as do Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Macedonia and Romania. The site-visits support these trends, with students better involved both formally and informally than in the Trends IV site visits in 2005. The general level of knowledge of the aim of the Bologna process has improved among student representatives and, perhaps to a lesser extent, among “ordinary” students also.

A future challenge outlined in the Trends III report referred to the need for improved involvement of students at institutional and particularly at departmental level in the reform process. While improvement has taken place since then, this remains weakest at faculty/departmental level, as the aggregate Trends V data shows, with only just over half of responding institutions involving students at this level. A third or fewer of institutions responding from Austria, Hungary, Iceland, Portugal and the UK

responded positively in this respect. Evidence emerged from the site-visits that student knowledge at faculty/departmental level varied considerably, as a consequence of different levels of involvement and reflecting the prevailing attitudes of staff within those units to the Bologna process. The site visits also raised questions about the level of involvement of students. While they may be involved formally in decision-making bodies, many pointed out that they are not involved in discussion to prepare key decisions, and it is at this stage that their input could be most effective.

Regarding the other challenge in this area highlighted in Trends III, the site-visits showed that overall student information regarding the Bologna process has improved, and that discussions now focus on the implementation of the various action lines and objectives, rather than just on the overarching goals. In only a very limited number of cases was there an ideological discussion on the perceived relationship between Bologna and a purely economic agenda.



Interestingly, the survey found significant differences between the student involvement in universities and other higher education institutions, especially at the more formal levels of the faculty/department and senate/council. The difference may often be explained by the fact that, within universities, students in most European countries have formal participation at the different levels of governance, while this is not true for all other higher education institutions. However, there is no reason, for instance, why there should be a difference of 7% between the numbers of universities and other higher education institutions that provide information to their students on Bologna issues.

Key findings

- *Guidance and counselling provision for students differs greatly across European higher education institutions, and in most systems these essential services are neither given sufficient priority, nor are monitored in quality assurance activities.*

- *Large numbers of full-time students across the whole of Europe are working part-time to support themselves during their studies, or indeed are undertaking two study programmes in parallel.*
- *Overall levels of student participation in the implementation of reforms at institutional level have increased since 2003, although increases are not spread evenly across all countries, and institutional types.*

Key issue

- The value of student support services needs to be better recognised, supported and developed in the interests of all students. In particular guidance and counselling services play a key role in widening access, improving completion rates and in preparing students for the labour market.

4. Quality assurance

Introduction

The context affecting quality assurance in the emerging European Higher Education Area has evolved significantly since 2003. Increasingly there is an awareness that concern for quality must be at the heart of the system, as exemplified by the Norwegian example, where the Bologna process has been assimilated into the national system, and is now referred to nationally as “the Quality Reform”.

A significant impulse for new developments took place at the Berlin Ministerial meeting in 2003 when Ministers declared that, “the primary responsibility for quality assurance lies with each institution itself and this provides the basis for real accountability of the academic system within the national quality framework.” Although this was the basis on which a number of national systems had already been operating, and was the concept which EUA had been promoting since the mid 1990s, the explicit statement by Ministers from 39 countries can now be seen to have sparked a significant change in attitude and perception in many countries across Europe, as well as in many academic and institutional European networks.

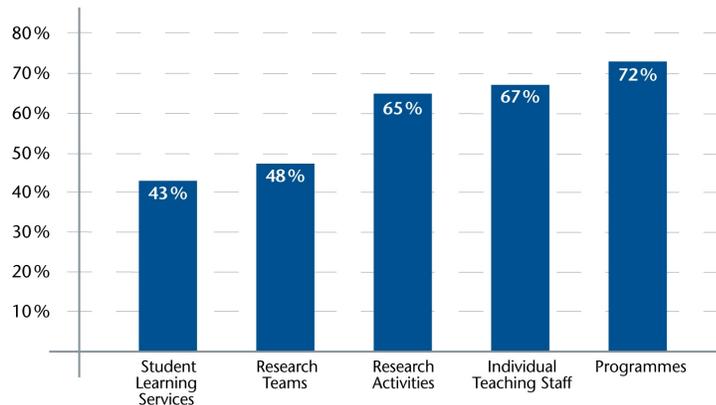
These changes in turn provided the basis for agreement on European standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance, which were the result of intensive work between quality assurance agencies, higher education institutions, and student representatives during the two years following Berlin. These standards and guidelines were formally adopted by Ministers in Bergen in 2005 and have since been widely disseminated, discussed and promoted.

The questions which have been asked of institutions in the Trends V questionnaire - on the different objects of internal evaluation - as well as the themes pursued in the site visits, are all based on the European Standards and Guidelines. Further information on national developments has been provided by National Rectors Conferences.

4.1 Internal Evaluation: questionnaire findings

Given the major policy changes in the field of quality assurance which have taken place on a European scale since 2003, the objective of the Trends V questionnaire in this field was to ascertain to what extent higher education institutions were taking a pro-active approach to internal quality assurance, and whether or not this was supported by external quality assurance processes. The aim was to explore the frequency of evaluations for programmes, student services and research teams. The institutions were also asked to indicate the character (obligatory or voluntary) of processes evaluating the individual teaching staff.

Trends V
Regular Internal
Evaluation by HEIs

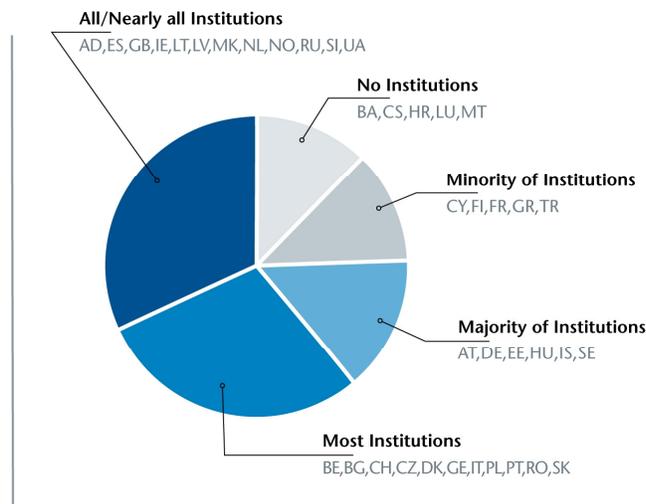


When comparing the relative reported levels of internal quality assurance activity, it can be seen that programmes are evaluated most regularly, while student learning services and research teams much less so. While the questionnaires did not explore the extent or consequences of these internal evaluations, nevertheless the responses provide a clear signal that most higher education institutions do undertake various forms of internal quality assurance. Furthermore, although Trends V and Trends III data are not directly comparable, it can be observed that considerably greater proportions of higher education institutions are now undertaking activities key to developing an active internal quality assurance system than in 2003.

Internal Evaluation of Programmes

Over 95% of responding higher education institutions stated that they conduct internal evaluations of their programmes, of which over 70% do so on a regular basis, while 24% do so “sometimes”. This compares favourably with the Trends III findings, where 82% answered that they had some form of internal mechanisms for monitoring the quality of teaching.

Trends V
Regular Internal
Evaluation of
Programmes



When examined nationally, it is clear that there are strong system trends underlying these responses, with 12 countries clustered in the category of all/nearly all institutions conducting regular evaluations, and a further 11 countries where most institutions undertake these processes. At the other end of the spectrum, it is not surprising to find that some of the institutions where none or only a minority of higher education institutions conduct such evaluations can be found in countries where there is not yet an operational quality assurance system.

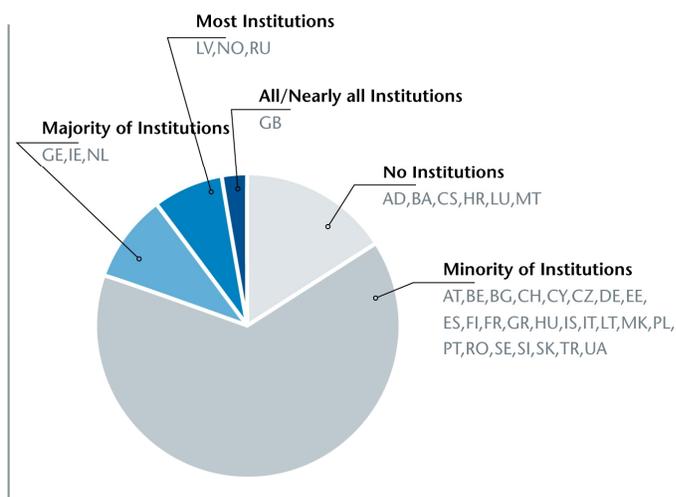
Linguistic confusion regarding the wording of this question is possible. In particular, the concept of “internal evaluation” may have been confused with “self-evaluation” as a preparatory phase for external quality assurance. Higher education institutions in those countries which have recently introduced new “Bologna” programmes, and where the QA mechanisms are so far linked to an external accreditation process, may also have responded with this in mind. Nevertheless, the overall responses give a clear indication of the extent of the regular use of internal QA mechanisms for academic programmes across Europe.

Evaluation of student learning services

The overall response is far less affirmative regarding the evaluation of student learning services, such as libraries, academic orientation/advisory services, etc. Only 43% of higher education institutions respond that they regularly evaluate such services, with a further 36% stating that they do so “sometimes”. 20% of responding institutions do not evaluate these services at all.

These rather low figures compare favourably, however, with the Trends III findings, where 26% stated in 2003 that they had internal mechanisms to monitor the quality of activities other than teaching and research.

Trends V
Regular Internal
Evaluation of
Student Learning
Services



The geographical variations in these Trends V responses are striking. In only a handful of countries do a majority of higher education institutions include such vital services as libraries and student advisory offices in their regular quality assurance procedures. These figures are also disturbing when viewed in relation to the provision of student services (see Chapter 3), where 85% of institutions report that they offer academic orientation services, a significant increase from 2003. Most of these services must either be so new that they have not yet been evaluated, or alternatively there are no plans to evaluate them on a regular basis.

There is a clear need for a more concerted approach to improving quality of these key elements of the teaching and learning environment. Effective quality culture is difficult to envisage if these services are neglected.

Evaluation of research teams

In the research field, slightly less than half of the higher education institutions stated that they regularly evaluate their research teams, while a quarter replied that they “sometimes” do so, and a further quarter responded “no”. However, nearly two-thirds of higher education institutions stated that they collected quantitative data systematically on all research activities, with a further quarter answering that they did so for some activities. Again, these figures are improvements on the Trends III data from 2003, where 53% of institutions stated they had some form of internal mechanism for monitoring the quality of research.

Evaluation of Individual Teaching Staff

Regarding the evaluation of individual teaching staff, two-thirds of responding higher education institutions stated that they had obligatory procedures, while a further 17% stated that voluntary procedures were in place. 16% stated that they did not have such procedures.

While these trends in increasing internal evaluation are evident, the main challenge appears to be to broaden the scope of institutional quality assurance activities. Extending quality assurance to the provision of vital student services, especially those related to guidance and counselling and thus to supporting students with the greatest needs, remains a particular challenge.

4.2 The rise of Quality Culture

A significant development in the quality assurance arena, supported by these findings on internal evaluation, has been a growing focus on quality culture, essential for institutions striving for excellence in their various fields of activity. This has been accompanied by a perceptible change in vocabulary since 2002, both on the part of QA agencies and higher education institutions, as the concept of quality culture has become assimilated. The rise to prominence of this concept can be attributed mainly

to the EUA quality culture project, which ran from 2002 to 2006 and involved 134 higher education institutions grouped in eighteen networks. The work of this project can be seen as one tangible response to the call from Ministers in Prague in 2001 for collaboration and dissemination of best practice between higher education institutions.

The institutional site visits provided considerable supplementary information to back up the questionnaire data and assess the development of quality culture. In all the institutions visited, it was apparent that a significantly increased emphasis is now being placed on internal QA mechanisms. This is a major development, all the more so since it is taking place across such a variety of institutions and range of countries. At the heart of these internal mechanisms lie a greater use of student and graduate feedback, and increasingly sophisticated uses of information platforms, which provide comparative internal data regarding student and staff performances, based on a wide range of criteria linked to the effectiveness and efficiency of teaching, learning, research and other activities.

Many institutions appear to have taken the opportunity offered by Bologna and the various structural reforms underway to introduce new systems for management of information, performance management and resource allocation. The administrative support system needed for ECTS, modularisation and the Diploma Supplement likewise provides relevant and up-to-date data which can support a pro-active internal quality assurance process. Once these administrative developments are fully operational, they will have the potential to provide far-reaching benefits for the strategic management and daily operations of the institution.

Another significant finding from the site visits was that students are increasingly present in the QA process within institutions. In many cases this is due directly to Bologna and the introduction of new degree structures, new academic programmes, and indeed to new concepts in quality assurance. This increased student “presence” at all levels of the institution, but particularly in terms of feedback mechanisms on the teaching and learning process, is in turn stimulating greater awareness of QA issues among staff. The EUA research teams heard on a number of occasions that this increased student involvement was in fact a driver of QA within the institutions concerned. In one case, the introduction of student fees was seen as driving the new focus on QA. In institutions with more experience of internal QA and in the more mature external quality assurance systems, high levels of student involvement were taken for granted and regarded as highly beneficial by both students and institutional leaders alike.

The site visits also provided evidence of the increasing use of external experts in various aspects of quality assurance across many types of academic activities. These included experts from other universities in the same country, or from abroad. Many of the activities were of an informal nature – such as bringing together groups of experts to advise on curriculum reform and new types of learning. Academic networks, both national and European, played an important role in such activities. Other more formal examples included the participation of international experts in external evaluation processes. The increasing importance attached by institutions to internationalisation (see Chapter 2) has resulted in some cases in the deliberate use of international experts in the quality assurance process.

4.3 Autonomy

In 2003, when institutions were asked to state whether the legal framework supported or undermined autonomous institutional decision-making in their countries, just over 50% of respondents responded that the framework supported or significantly supported such autonomy, while a further 40% stated that the framework both supported and undermined to varying degrees. Two years later, Trends IV site visits clearly found “that the institutions with the most systematic approach to quality are also those that benefit from the greatest institutional autonomy. Conversely, the institutions with the lowest degree of autonomy have not started to develop a systematic approach to quality.” (Trends IV, p.32)

The Trends V data show that over three-quarters of all institutions now state that their institution has sufficient autonomy to make decisions and manage its affairs in the best interests of students and society. Although this topic would need considerably more detailed exploration, it may be a preliminary indication that the many legislative and procedural reforms which have been taken place across most European higher education systems are in fact devolving greater autonomy to institutions. Difficulties obviously still remain, particularly in the area of financing, but the general direction would appear to be the right one, supporting the overall drive through the Bologna process to ensure greater autonomy for institutions, and thus encouraging them to become more responsive and accountable.

Major problems were however encountered in a number of cases when trying to match the need for a forward-looking innovative internal quality assurance system and a standardised accreditation procedure. The EUA research teams heard on several occasions how some accreditation procedures stand in the way of curricular innovation and reforms, for example preventing interdisciplinary programmes and inhibiting experimentation within new Bologna programmes. In countries where the national accreditation system is based at programme rather than institutional level, there is frequent tension with emerging institutional quality improvement strategies and procedures. It would also appear that in some cases, the accreditation objectives are not always in line with Bologna objectives.

A further problem linked to the accreditation procedures and the introduction of new Bologna programmes was widely reported. Given the number of new programmes in preparation, and the limited capacity of many accreditation bodies, higher education institutions were having to wait considerable lengths of time before a programme could actually go through the accreditation procedures and then be offered to students. Although essentially a logistical problem, it was causing important problems for a number of higher education institutions, at both first and second cycle levels, and highlights some of the disadvantages of such *ex-ante* accreditation procedures.

The influence of external QA procedures could also be observed in other ways during the site visits. Where, for example, the QA agency is moving towards an institutional audit approach to quality, institutions are focusing very much on their own internal processes in preparation for the external audit. Some of the same logistical problems were also being encountered in these cases, with institutions disappointed that they were being asked to wait several years before such an audit could take place. The difference in these cases is, however, that in the meantime the institution can

implement the programmes and take full responsibility, and the audit process will later examine whether the higher education institution was using suitably rigorous internal QA mechanisms to ensure the quality of its programmes.

One outcome of these various developments in the fields of both internal and external quality assurance is that there is a growing quality assurance community within higher education institutions, with emerging practitioner networks across Europe. Linked to this, and encouraged by these emerging networks and by the shift in focus of national quality assurance systems, considerably greater understanding and acceptance now exists within higher education institutions of the need for internal quality assurance policies and practices. The link between institutional responsibility, accountability and autonomy, on the one hand, and the need for reliable and transparent quality assurance mechanisms, on the other, would now appear to be firmly established and understood. The tendency seems to be that as institutions become more responsible and accountable, external quality assurance evolves to become less intrusive. This is reflected by the number of mature quality assurance systems which have moved away from a system of programme accreditation, replacing it with a focus on institutional evaluation or audit.

This emerging consensus across the higher education community, bringing the agencies, the institutions and the students closer together around overall goals and methodologies for quality assurance, has been accompanied by the continued growth and development in national and regional quality assurance systems across Europe. This growth and change, together with the increasing awareness within higher education institutions themselves of the benefits and challenges of effective quality assurance and enhancement activities, have paved the way for a considerably more constructive approach to quality assurance in general.

Key Findings

- *Progress in developing internal quality culture, and in improving the relationship with external QA agencies, is very encouraging.*
- *Essential student support services are often neglected in both internal and external QA processes.*
- *Many institutions and agencies currently consider only local or national dimensions to quality assurance and enhancement. Greater communication about developments across Europe in the QA field is vital.*

Key issue

- Many higher education systems are currently being held back from Bologna implementation – and thus from offering improved services to students and society - by national QA systems that are costly, offer no evidence of overall quality improvement, and stifle institutions' capacity to respond creatively to the demands of evolving European knowledge society.

5 Lifelong learning and widening access



The Bologna Process in the context of Lifelong Learning

Introduction

Lifelong learning offers ways to rethink approaches to higher education, as well as for institutions to develop relationships with other formal and informal education providers and the rest of society. However, the term “lifelong learning” is itself the subject of conceptual misunderstanding, used confusingly both to cover continuing education and training for qualified graduates, and initial education for disadvantaged groups often through part-time education. Although it may have been expected at the beginning of the decade that lifelong learning would be central to institutional reform processes, this has so far failed to happen, with issues of structural reform taking precedence over these challenges. Lifelong learning has thus been developed more on the periphery of institutional strategy, rather than as a driving element of it.

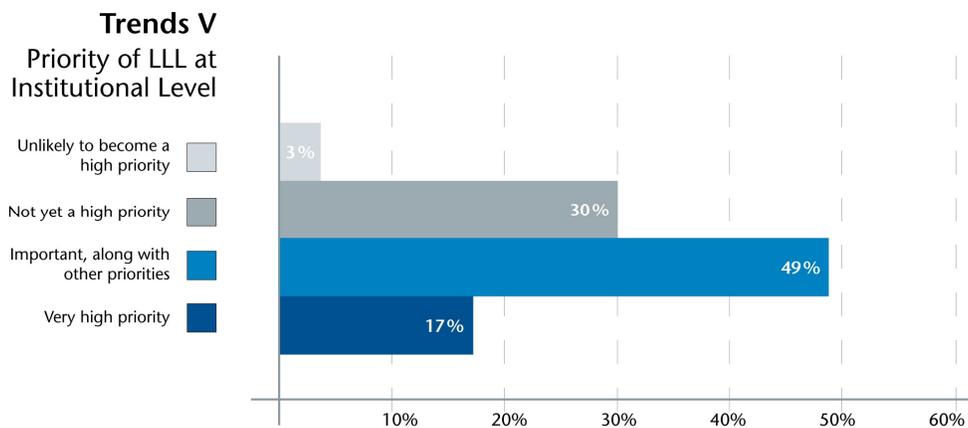
Yet economic imperatives seem to be bringing the agenda once again to the forefront of attention, as national and European policy discussions focus on the development of a more effective workforce for the knowledge society. Europe’s changing

demography, with ageing societies, declining younger generations, and the dramatic increase in representation of women in the student population, is inevitably set to have a major impact. In some countries, institutions may merge or close, but many can also be expected to diversify their educational offer and target different profiles of students.

The lifelong learning agenda challenges institutions to reorient provision to enable a broader range of individuals to fulfil their potential. Widening access is therefore a central element of the lifelong learning agenda. These issues have therefore been given considerable attention in the Trends V project, to find out to what extent the renewed political focus is mirrored in institutional reality. Questions posed in the Trends V questionnaire are not, however, directly comparable to the information gathered in 2003. At that time, the focus was on the strategic development of lifelong learning, whereas Trends V has concentrated on the activity that institutions are pursuing, and on the utility or otherwise of tools such as qualifications frameworks in this context.

5.1 The priority of lifelong learning in European higher education institutions

The Trends V questionnaire responses indicate that lifelong learning is a part of the educational landscape for the large majority of higher education institutions. The questionnaire looked at what priority European higher education institutions give to lifelong learning. Two thirds of the institutions (66%) answered that it either had high priority or had priority along with other priorities. However, only 17% indicated that it had very high priority for their institution.



Only in five countries (Croatia, Georgia, Greece, Italy and Serbia and Montenegro) did over 50% of the responding universities indicate that it is not yet a priority, but it may become one. The countries where over 30% of the responding institutions considered it to be a high priority were Austria, Denmark, Ireland and Russia. Interestingly, there is no notable difference in the distribution between universities

and other higher education institutions, nor if the sample is divided by the way they define their communities: regional, national, European or worldwide.

Although these findings are not directly comparable with Trends III, it is interesting to note that in 2003, 35% of institutions indicated that they had developed an overall strategy for lifelong learning and 31% that they were in the initial stages of doing so. Thus in 2003 66% of institutions were engaged in strategy discussions on lifelong learning, while exactly the same percentage of institutions today consider that lifelong learning has high or very high priority.

Although these statistics suggest uncanny coherence in the development of lifelong learning, little or no evidence was found from questionnaires or site visits of comprehensive national debates on lifelong learning strategies. Indeed no institution mentioned that it had taken part in a consultation process on the development of a national strategy despite the fact that the Trends III survey had pointed out that:

“a majority of countries have the intention or are in the process of developing a LLL strategy. Such policies already exist in one third of Bologna signatory countries, namely in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Sweden and the UK. (Trends III p.91)

National Rectors’ Conferences also reported as part of the Trends V exercise that institutions have yet to consider lifelong learning as providing an overall framework for education in a cradle-to-grave perspective. Thus, it seems that while rhetoric on lifelong learning has been a constant feature of policy discussion throughout the Bologna period, action has still to follow.

5.2 Lifelong learning practices at European higher education institutions

The reports from the diverse sample of European institutions reveal no coherent picture of the understanding and implementation of lifelong learning, although a number of institutions indicated that lifelong learning is an area of growth, an area where diversified funding sources can become more dominant, and an area of great possibilities for regional cooperation and development. The regional stakeholders ranged from other higher education institutions to local or regional SMEs and public employers who through lifelong learning can update their staff and act as sounding boards for other full-time programmes.

The site-visit teams encountered a number of different examples of how the provision of specialised courses had improved cooperation between higher education institutions and local or regional industry - often as a result of partnership with the innovation office of the university. One example was found in Romania where EC Structural Funds financed the provision of professional up-dating for civil servants by the university in co-operation with the public authorities.

Although no institution visited defined its mission in a comprehensive lifelong learning perspective, the site visits revealed that universities have a variety of offers under the heading of non-formal or informal education together with offers of

professional education. Definition of educational offers and practices vary between countries and include education for:

- full-time mature students
- liberal adult education
- part-time degrees
- diplomas for those in work (post-experience)
- continuing professional development and training courses
- staff development
- open access courses
- regional development through open and distance learning, and networks of partnerships and collaboration with local stakeholders

A range of innovative practice was also identified in a variety of institutions. “Junior” university courses is a term used in some places for courses that prepare or motivate young people to take an interest in higher education. Some institutions were targeting specific secondary schools in order to attract the best students through this type of outreach activity. However, during the course of these site-visits no examples were found of access courses directed specifically towards socially disadvantaged students.

At the other end of the age spectrum, “senior” university courses also illustrated the diversification of the educational offer. Many of these courses are of a “self-improvement” character and are targeted specifically at the over 55 year old or retired population. Such senior university courses were found in several countries, but the course structure was different in each. In Portugal the “University studies for Seniors” (started in 2006) were intended for graduates over 55 years and, according to the course description, would give them:

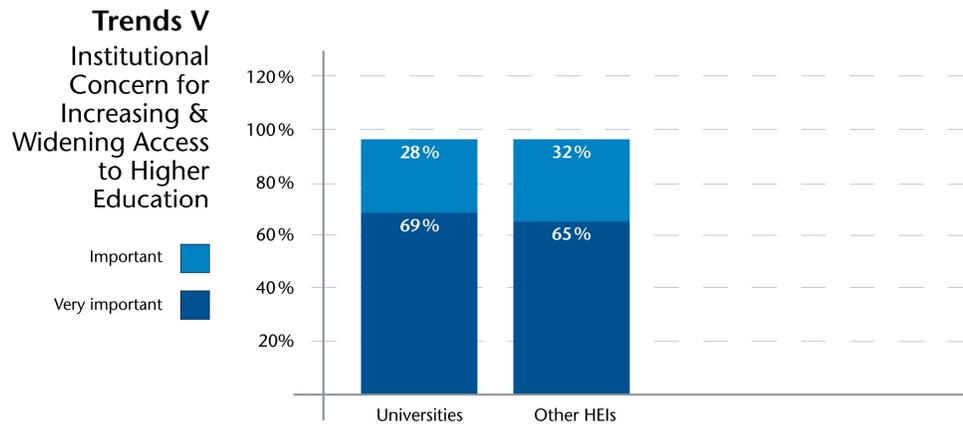
“an opportunity to re-evaluate the knowledge acquired both theoretically and through professional practice. Even though this kind of course falls neatly into one of the traditional university tasks, i.e. service to the community, it may also be seen as being part of teaching and research activities, since the programme aims at developing a self-questioning and research attitude”.

Part-time or open university students also play an increasingly important role in a large number of universities in Europe. Such students should not be confused with the large number of full-time students who are in fact only studying part time (see chapter 3). In some countries this profile of student is regarded as an important possibility for institutions to diversify both access and funding as typically such students will pay for their study programme or the costs are paid, at least in part, by employers. In the UK, for example 40% of all students are part-time and, according to a report by Brian Ramsden for Universities UK, the UK government is currently considering measures for funding this student category.

5.3 Lifelong learning, widening access and the social dimension

The Trends V data shows that 97% of all European higher education institutions find the widening of participation to be either very important or important, with very little

distinction to be made between universities and other higher education institutions. Indeed, if the sample is divided into universities and other higher education institutions, 69% of universities find it very important to increase and widen access to higher education while the corresponding figure for other higher education institutions is 65%.



Curiously, although 97% of European higher education institutions support widening participation, only 17% of all European higher education institutions expect socio-economically disadvantaged students to have better opportunity to access higher education in the future, while 69% think that opportunities will improve a little or stay about the same.

This lack of optimism for improving access for disadvantaged students is even more difficult to understand given the finding that institutions tend to consider that autonomy is improving. One explanation could be that access to higher education is only partially affected by institutions themselves, and to a large extent is a function of government policy and the prior educational system. This is perhaps also the reason why, when asked specifically on the need to take action in their institution more than 50% consider that their institution is already taking sufficient action to improve access for socio-economically disadvantaged students. Meanwhile 40% of all higher education institutions find that there is insufficient action taken at their institution.

Broken down by country, only in Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Georgia, Greece, Ireland, Macedonia, Poland, Romania and the UK did more than 25% of all institutions expect better opportunities for access of socially and economically disadvantaged students. In Finland, Hungary, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland and the Ukraine more than 50% of all institutions expect the possibilities to remain the same and in Croatia, Germany and Russia more than 20% expect less opportunities. In Germany, where institutions are seemingly the most pessimistic, as many as 35% of the sample expect fewer opportunities for the disadvantaged in the future.

On the question of the need for further action to improve access by the higher education institutions themselves, more than 60% of respondents in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia,

Switzerland, Russia, and the UK consider that sufficient action is being taken. On the other hand, in Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Macedonia and Spain 60% or more of the respondents considered that they could improve the access of disadvantaged students to their institution, while in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia, Germany, Iceland, Lithuania and Ukraine more than 20% of the institutions did not think that it was part of their responsibility.

The survey thus found no consistency between the overwhelming consensus (97%) on the importance of widening access and the low expectation that European institutions have on their own possibilities of further assisting in the widening of access.

The site visits tended to confirm the impression that improving the diversity of the student profile is often not a major concern for institutions. On the contrary, there are few or no incentives to take action in favour of widening participation, while future funding seems increasingly dependent on demonstrable “academic quality”. In such a climate many institutions are therefore focusing on improving their competitiveness by trying to attract the best students possible rather than by aiming consciously to improve the diversity of the student base.

The social agenda of lifelong learning is a complex societal issue, and does not only involve the widening of access, but also the diversification of the educational offer and the funding of wider opportunities with the goal of improving employability. The site visits revealed an ongoing debate on the relationship between quality and diversification, with many considering the idea of diversifying the student body as being equated with lowering quality. The prevalence of this perception in the European academic community suggests that serious and broad debate on these issues is overdue.

While quality of education will increasingly be perceived in relation to institutions’ capacity to respond to the diversity of citizen needs, perceptions of academic quality and associated institutional behaviour merit attention. If widening participation is to be a goal for higher education institutions, action will need to be taken on matters such as career structures, so that not only excellent research is rewarded in academic careers, but also excellent teaching, and student success. Such debates are yet to take place in many institutions and countries, but unless they do, it is difficult to see why individuals and institutions would alter their behaviour.

Trends V shows that there is still much work to be done to address this agenda, and that it is closely related to national policies, culture and attitudes to retention and employability of students. The site visits did not indicate widening of participation through non formal or informal programmes as an important issue, yet both increasing and widening participation in higher education are key elements for the creation of a European knowledge society. There remains much work to be done to open up access to learning opportunities for citizens throughout their lives.

5.4 Lifelong learning and the qualifications framework for the European higher education area

“New style” qualifications frameworks are tools that are designed with the goals of making qualifications more transparent and learning paths more flexible. They build on the Bologna tools for creating the European Higher Education Area, including ECTS and the DS. Yet the results of the Trends V survey and the reports from Rectors’ Conferences show that, so far, national qualification frameworks have not been adopted or implemented except in a very few countries, and even when they exist, many institutions as well as citizens are unaware of them.

Implemented national qualification frameworks exist at the moment only in Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom, while a number of other countries have adopted legislation, but have yet to proceed with implementation. Yet the main finding in the survey is that institutions are currently either unaware of this issue or confused by it. European higher education institutions do not at the moment have any clear conception of national qualification frameworks, and indeed many institutions are unaware of whether or not there is a qualifications framework in their country.

Part of this confusion can perhaps be explained by the fact that the majority of European countries have some system of classification of qualifications, albeit one that has tended to act as a barrier between different levels or types of learning. Thus institutions may consider that a qualifications framework is in place if there is a system that specifies that an individual would have to complete one level in order to access the next level – from primary to secondary and from secondary to tertiary. Such existing systems may be confused with NQFs, even though the purpose of the new-type qualifications frameworks is to overcome barriers rather than to underline them.

Only Irish institutions appear to have a coherent understanding on this topic, since none responded that there is no NQF and 56% find the NQF useful when developing LLL. This is no doubt related to the fact that, since before the Irish framework was put in place in 2003, extensive consultation and communication activities were undertaken with all stakeholders, including the higher education institutions. The key to establishing a qualifications framework successfully therefore appears to be this element of broad societal dialogue, ensuring that all potential beneficiaries are involved in the process of development. The policy goals of increasing flexibility in learning paths between different educational sectors also need to be stated explicitly

5.5 Lifelong learning and recognition of prior learning

While the vast majority of European institutions support the concept of lifelong learning, its implementation is hugely complex. Institutions in the process of reconsidering their traditional curriculum in the light of current needs should acknowledge that learning takes place in many contexts and this has implications for the design of study programmes in terms of structure, delivery and assessment. Flexible learning paths, and the accreditation of work placements, blended learning, company in-house training, distance education, e-learning and learning through work

schemes all need to be increased and formally integrated within mainstream higher education provision.

These are issues that as yet seem to have been considered only on the margins of institutional strategic development. Yet the introduction of flexible learning paths is pivotal to the European Higher Education Area, and combining the different tools developed through the Bologna process gives the potential for major innovation and transformation. If implemented in a flexible way these tools have the potential to enhance the provision of education to a diverse population, but it is essential that they are developed and implemented simply, and that work is undertaken to ensure they are understood by all stakeholders. As Stephen Adam points out in his introduction to the Bologna Process seminar on recognition in Riga, 2007:

“When developments in qualifications frameworks, cycles, learning outcomes, quality assurance, credits, recognition and lifelong learning are put together something new and powerful will be created. The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) will provide immense opportunities for countries and institutions providing they fully embrace the changes inherent within the new architecture for higher education that is emerging... However, it must be remembered that for most countries the difficult task of producing and implementing qualifications frameworks and learning outcomes is just commencing.”

Among the instruments to support flexibility, transparency, mobility and academic quality are a range of tools and processes to recognise prior learning, including Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL), Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL), and Work-Based Learning (WBL). In the future, these will surely be combined with ECTS to express learning outcomes of prior learning through credits, and then also linked to the different levels of qualification frameworks. However, such processes are currently only in their early infancy, and institutions need to take responsibility to ensure positive developments. Particular care should be taken not to develop overcomplicated, time-consuming, bureaucratic and expensive systems which deter academics as well as citizens seeking recognition of their skills and abilities.

The Trends V survey, the site visits and the focus group meetings all show that European universities are working with a broader range of issues related to higher education and lifelong learning than is generally recognised. Each individual university is at the centre of a growing number of processes and demands, and effort must be made to connect processes that sometimes appear to have different drivers, but which all rely on well-functioning institutions for coherence and sense.

Key Findings:

- *Dialogue on lifelong learning provision with employers and other societal stakeholders is currently lacking.*
- *Excellence in all higher education missions needs to be rewarded, as institutions require greater incentives to respond to the challenges of broadening their educational offer to “non traditional” students.*
- *National qualification frameworks are currently an aspirational rather than an actual tool for most systems. To be effective, they should be designed*

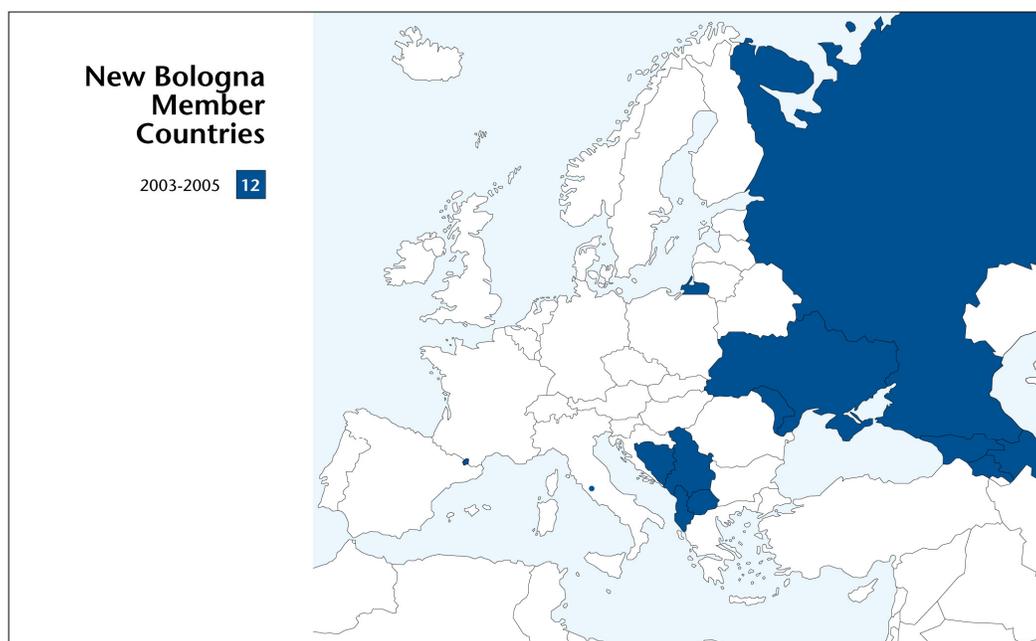
coherently with broad societal consultation and strong involvement of higher education institutions.

Key issue

- Institutions in the process of reconsidering their traditional curriculum need to give a higher priority to lifelong learning, and to consider this agenda as a central element of institutional strategic development.

6. New member Countries: implementing Bologna

Introduction



Since 2003 the Bologna process membership has swelled to 45 countries, dramatically affecting the conception of the European Higher Education Area. These additional countries comprise Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Holy See, Russia, Serbia and Montenegro, and “the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” who all joined the process at the Berlin Ministerial conference in 2003, and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine who in 2005 became the latest countries to be welcomed to the Bologna process.

The scope of information gathered from the Trends V institutional questionnaire has also broadened considerably compared to Trends III, in particular by gathering responses from more institutions in these new member countries. Comparative analysis of how the situation has developed over the period between the two surveys is, however, not possible, as few institutions from some of these countries responded to the Trends III questionnaire.

For this reason it was felt important to consider the situation of at least some of the new member Bologna countries through separate analysis of the Trends V questionnaire, and also to use other methods to learn about developments. EUA has therefore taken the opportunity of undertaking more qualitative research, including a focus group meeting with universities in South East Europe that was held on 2/3 March 2006 in Vienna during a conference on higher education in South East Europe under the Austrian Presidency of the European Union. In addition, Trends researchers participated in a conference on Russian higher education organised by the Council of

Europe in Moscow in May 2006, and were able to gain further understanding of developments in the Russian Federation. EUA also organised a well-attended meeting on the Bologna process for Georgian universities at Tbilisi State University in December 2006, and this provided an opportunity to explore developments in Georgia.

The first, and perhaps obvious point to make, is that there is as much diversity in and between the new member countries as there is among the rest of the countries in Europe. While this is a rather banal observation, it is important to bear in mind. Often it can be rather convenient to imagine that “new member states” may all be addressing similar challenges in a similar way. In reality there is considerable diversity of challenges, responses and priorities, and therefore no easy solutions can be offered as to how best to support positive developments.

6.1 The impact of the Bologna process in the Russian Federation

Consideration of the Russian Federation illustrates that there is not only diversity between new member states but also within them. The scale of the country and of the higher education system is the first element to grasp, as the addition of Russia to the Bologna process dramatically expanded the geographical scope of the European Higher Education Area, as well as adding a vast number of new higher education institutions. EUA was delighted that, thanks to help with publicising the survey within the country – particularly by the Russian ENIC member – 50 institutional responses were received to the Trends V questionnaire. This is a significant number, particularly as EUA has only 19 member universities in the country, and provides interesting data about the perceptions of the Bologna process. However, these 50 responses represent only a small proportion of the total number of higher education institutions in the country, as there are 1146 accredited higher education institutions in the Russian Federation, according to the 2007 National Report to the Bologna process by the Russian Ministry. Moreover this Trends V sample may well be a biased one as it is a reasonable assumption that institutions that are not interested in the Bologna process may be less likely to answer than those that are. It is therefore impossible to draw any definite conclusions about the influence of the Bologna process in this huge country from an analysis of this sample of responses.

There are, however, many interesting points revealed from the Russian Trends V responses. Firstly, the sample of institutions reveals a very positive attitude towards the European Higher Education Area. 33 institutions consider that “it is essential to make rapid progress towards the EHEA”, 15 institutions answer that, “the EHEA is a good idea, but the time is not yet ripe”, and only one institution agrees with the statement, “I do not trust the idea of the EHEA”.

When visiting the country, however, Trends researchers learned that there are clearly distinct camps in Russian higher education – those for and against the Bologna process, or those for and against “westernising” higher education. Not only does this division encompass ideological differences, but it is also linked to geographical regions. It is mostly in the western parts of Russia that there is a strong interest among higher education institutions in adapting to the approach taken by the rest of Europe.

In the central and eastern regions of the country, institutions tend to consider cooperation in Asia as the primary objective, with important attention also paid to the relationship with the US system.

Analysis of the questionnaire responses indicates that there seems to be some confusion about the nature of the Bologna three cycles. 30 of the institutions felt that they already had the three cycle system before the Bologna process, while 12 answered that the three cycle structure was introduced as a result of Bologna, and 8 said that they do not yet have a three cycle system but that this is planned. It would appear that some institutions may consider the number of cycles to be the focus of the question, rather than the fact that cycles are constructed along Bologna lines. Whatever the reason for this confusion, the Trends researchers who visited the country were informed that only a small percentage of the student body actually follow programmes within a Bologna degree system. This is also confirmed in the 2007 Russian National Report to the Bologna process, which indicates that of the more than 7 million students currently enrolled in higher education, only 7% are in a bachelor programme and 0.6% in a master programme, while 92.4% are in programmes described as “specialist”, which correspond to the “former” 5 year first cycle programmes. Meanwhile doctoral programmes continue to be divided into two cycles – leading firstly to a “candidate” qualification, and then to a doctorate.

With regard to implementation, some issues also seem to be more advanced than others. Only 7 of the 50 institutions state that curricula have been re-considered in connection with the Bologna process in all departments, while 34 state that this is the case in some departments. A further 8 institutions say that curriculum reform has not yet happened. ECTS is not used, and it is unlikely that the discussion on “learning outcomes” has been influential. Indeed, although in many respects the questionnaire sample gives a very positive impression towards some aspects of Bologna reforms, on the ground it was found that there is now considerable discussion on Bologna, but concrete measures seem to be few.

The Ministry of Education clearly has a very significant impact on how the situation will develop. Although many institutions answered that they have enough autonomy, in conversation, institutions give little sense of autonomous decision-making, and point to the Ministry’s decision-making role in many areas. For example, it is currently stipulated in law that 85 % of the curriculum must be decided by the Ministry, although a forthcoming law will change this percentage – but not the practice - to 50 %. Centralisation therefore seems still to be the prevailing principle for governing this enormous system, and there is no doubt a particular concern to “control” quality. The approach towards quality assurance has been particularly developed as a response to the phenomenon of the emergence of many new and mostly private institutions established in recent years. One university commented in the Trends V questionnaire that, “Participation of Russian universities in the EHEA depends on the policy of the Russian ministry of higher education”, and this indeed seems to sum up the situation.

Nevertheless, there very clearly *are* networks and universities that are engaging with Bologna, that have thought through implementation measures effectively, and that have a thirst for greater European cooperation and discussion. It will be important to build sustainable relationships on these significant foundations in the future.

6.2 South East Europe

For the new independent states that emerged from former Yugoslavia, the Bologna process has been perceived as a key driver for rebuilding and reinvigorating higher education systems that all share a common heritage from their Yugoslav past. International support has also focused on the Bologna process, as this provides a European direction that is essential for the integration of these new nation states. Yet despite this, progress has been slow and difficult to sustain. While particular reasons vary from country to country, one of the main issues constantly pointed out is the legacy of Yugoslav self-management, and its embodiment in the notion of faculty independence. Despite the efforts that have been put into reform, the fundamental step of integrating universities into a coherent and manageable structure has only been achieved in very few instances.

This feature of former Yugoslav states was again a central consideration during the focus group discussion that took place on 3 March 2006 in Vienna, and that involved representatives of most of the universities in the region. As faculties rather than institutions still enjoy high levels of legal, functional and academic autonomy, it is extremely difficult to introduce coherent reforms even in one university, let alone across a national system. The structure of academic programmes and examinations makes it almost impossible for students to study and graduate within the normal timeframe. Curricula tend to be overloaded and over-specialised, with theoretical knowledge predominating over practical learning. There is a general and urgent need for a learning-oriented approach.

Universities all stated, however, that they had introduced the ECTS system, which is a significant change across the entire region compared to the Trends III responses. Yet when asked if this means that students are able to study a degree programme by selecting some modules from different faculties within their institution, the reply was that this would be very exceptional. Indeed, further exploration of the issue revealed that ECTS had been superimposed on a model of teaching and learning in place, rather than being used to re-think and re-organise teaching and learning through a more deep-rooted reform. Given the low levels of student mobility, and the lack of will or ability to address more profound questions of curriculum reform, it is difficult to see what potential benefits are to be derived from ECTS in this context, unless there is a serious attempt to make the fundamental change that is necessary for Bologna reforms to be effective.

Effective quality assurance is also proving to be an extremely difficult challenge to address. The responses across the SEE region to the Trends questions regarding internal quality procedures reveal little activity in this area, and with little or no change from Trends III to Trends V, with the exception of Macedonia. Many explanations were offered for this, but one significant aspect is that the basic tools for quality assurance are often lacking. University-wide data is rarely available in a coherent form when faculties are independent, and equally the lack of effective central management and administrative systems means that data gathering and analysis is time consuming and unreliable. Feedback and monitoring mechanisms are weak and inconsistent across institutions, and the institutional and governmental resources to provide incentives to implement change are often missing.

A further issue is that the expert pool in any single country that could be used to evaluate the quality of programmes is extremely limited, and this is clearly an issue where regional cooperation would seem to offer a solution. Yet, despite some notable disciplinary exceptions, regional cooperation in the context of countries that have emerged through conflict is unlikely to meet great enthusiasm at this stage of societal development.

A final and crucial issue that emerged in discussions is that student involvement is less evident in many South Eastern European countries than elsewhere in Europe. To many, this may be surprising as at European level, students from countries emerging from the former Yugoslavia have had a major impact through ESIB. Formally, many SEE institutions do involve students at institutional and faculty levels, yet in the national and institutional contexts, it is evidently a great challenge for student voices not only to be heard, but for what they say to be taken into account and acted upon. Of course, a non-integrated institution means that the student presence and voice is often fractured, along with the voices of other important players, adding to the overall incoherence and disparities across many institutions in the region, including in their approach to the Bologna reforms.

It is therefore important to underline the main message that was sent from the meeting of South East European universities in Vienna: *“governments in the region should continue to amend higher education legislation to integrate universities into one legal entity in order to accelerate the coherent implementation of the Bologna and European research agendas.”*

6.3 Georgia

Despite joining the Bologna process only in Bergen in 2005, the status enjoyed by the Bologna process in Georgia is particularly elevated. Indeed, the Trends researchers who attended a national seminar on Bologna implementation in December 2006 were astounded at the overall level of awareness of the Bologna process in the academic community. Not only is this noticeably higher than in many countries – including some that have been a part of the process since the beginning - but the enthusiasm for engagement with the main objectives of the process, and the sophisticated adaptation of the instruments and action lines to the local environment are quite exemplary. Indeed, the Bologna process has been grasped as a way of tackling problems inherent in the national system. It is now the central pillar of a new vision, inspired by the “rose revolution” of November 2003, that is transforming the higher education landscape.

Moreover, although some very strong measures have been taken by government to address problems of corruption and inefficiency in the university system, this has resulted in a generally very positive working relationship between the Ministry of Education and the higher education institutions. This can no doubt be explained by the shared feeling that the system had reached a point of near disintegration, and drastic measures were needed. Students and staff alike explained that their main concerns in the recent past have been of such a basic level that it is difficult to find common ground for any discussion with representatives from outside the country. Official staff salaries were set at a level that would make it impossible even to survive, yet alone to

live reasonably – and hence also contributed to the endemic corruption. Meanwhile, lack of money to maintain even a minimum infrastructure meant that many teaching and learning processes simply had to be abandoned for several months of the year. These issues, fundamental to any higher education system, have all been addressed by government reforms, and although the legacy of neglect to buildings, and the inadequacy of libraries and other facilities is evident, the benefits of new policy are also very clear for all.

It became clear that enormous progress had been made in re-shaping the higher education system through Bologna reforms. The three cycle structure is not only in place, but this has been done with a considerable amount of reflection and debate about what the goals of higher education should be. Thus the three cycles reflect an agreed response to dealing with the challenges of employability in society, and with a common desire to align to Europe. Evidence of this can be seen in the answers of the Georgian universities to the Trends V question on the importance of employability. Of the 14 institutions that responded, 10 institutions consider the issue as being very important, and the other 4 consider it to be important. These proportions are also mirrored in the answers on the attitude to the European Higher Education Area, with 10 institutions answering that it is essential to make rapid progress towards the EHEA, and the other 4 considering that the “EHEA is a good idea, but the time is not yet ripe.”

Not only has there been rapid progress in implementing the three cycles, but curriculum reform is taking place throughout the system, and ECTS is widely used and seemingly well understood. This no doubt has much to do with the fact that the main texts explaining the Bologna process, including the ECTS User’s Guide, have been translated into Georgian, and are not only disseminated in the institutions, but also available to download from the Ministry website. Over two-thirds of institutions responding to the Trends V questionnaire stated that they used ECTS for both accumulation and transfer, 50% claimed that none of their students have problems with the recognition of credits when returning from study abroad, and over 80% said they issued the Diploma Supplement to all graduating students. However, as in all other countries, these reforms are very much still work in progress, and everyone recognises that there is much more to be done.

The step which seemed most urgent to the Georgian academic representatives was the development of reliable quality assurance. The legislative base for reform has now been achieved, and some key measures have been taken with regard to university governance, including introducing a separation of powers regarding academic and financial matters, and giving a strong voice to students. A number of key questions are now, however, being faced in establishing a quality assurance system: the law stipulates that there should be accreditation of both institutions and programmes, but who should be responsible for what in practice? There is an awareness that a system requiring external evaluation of every programme would produce an enormous effort that would remove attention from other matters of institutional strategic development, and would lead to stifling bureaucracy. Thus the Georgian system is now seeking advice to identify the best way to support institutions in becoming responsible for the quality of their activities. As regards current practice, over two-thirds of responding institutions stated that they conducted regular internal evaluations of programmes, that they had obligatory processes for evaluating individual teaching staff, and that

they also had processes for regularly evaluating student learning services: when seen across all Bologna participating countries, these responses are above average.

Quality has also been considered in a broad framework, and although there has not been a great deal of attention to lifelong learning goals, the researchers had the impression that the Georgian academic community was aware of these challenges.

For any countries in need of renewed vigour in their approach to reform, Georgia would stand as an inspirational case study, illustrating how Bologna reforms can really be used effectively to respond to societal challenges.

Key Findings

- *Bologna new member states cannot be considered as a homogeneous group, as there is enormous diversity within and between them.*
- *In Russia, although it is difficult to develop a coherent national Bologna strategy, a significant proportion of the academic community is interested in Bologna as a means to transform the higher education system in line with the rest of Europe.*
- *Institutions in South East Europe clearly perceive the Bologna process as providing a direction that is essential for societal development, but the culture of independent faculties is holding back effective implementation.*
- *Georgia offers a case study of how the Bologna process can be used effectively to support a profound reform of higher education, and a key element to success has been the effort made to provide basic information on European texts in the national language.*

Key issue

- European countries could do more to support each other in implementing higher education reforms. While challenges may vary, all countries could benefit from increased cooperation.

7. Future Challenges

Although this report confirms the ongoing momentum of an extraordinary and wide-ranging process of higher education reform across the European continent, the findings also point to significant lack of information about the nature and value of this reform throughout society. This suggests that the greatest current challenge facing both institutions and governments is to communicate the results and implications of the structural and curricular reforms which are being implemented as a result of the Bologna process.

It is particularly important for institutions to work closely with employers, and their representative organisations, to spread knowledge of the new degree structures and their learning outcomes in different academic disciplines. There is otherwise a danger that the new degrees, particularly at the first cycle, will be misunderstood or mistrusted within the labour market.

Another neglected group in need of information on reforms are the parents of Europe's potential students. They exert enormous influence on the choices made by their children, and also need to be inspired, rather than discouraged, by reforms.

A second and related challenge is to develop further the processes of quality assessment and enhancement in institutions. The trends in this respect are positive, with institutions taking greater responsibility for the quality of their provision. Nevertheless, there remains considerable progress still to be made, and no institution can afford to be complacent about quality in an increasingly competitive environment. Governments, who normally sponsor or control quality assurance agencies, have a responsibility to ensure that systems are neither overly bureaucratic nor excessively costly or burdensome on institutions. After a first quality assurance cycle, agencies should adopt a risk-based approach, recognising that most assessment regimes have concluded that quality is generally satisfactory or better, even if continued vigilance is required both of academics and regulators. In this, as in many other aspects of Bologna reforms, the best guarantee of success is the efforts of autonomous and properly funded institutions that have well developed internal quality processes.

Trust in quality is the fundamental prerequisite of mobility and of systems of credit transfer and accumulation. ECTS, the Diploma Supplement, national and since 2005 the overarching European qualifications framework have provided the building blocks towards such mutual trust, but this report suggests that there is still much to do to ensure that academics, administrators, employers and governments fully understand these instruments and will encourage their rapid adoption in practice. Ensuring the participation of all stakeholders in discussions on the development of national qualifications frameworks is one important element, while there is also a need for institutions to take forward the adaptation of ECTS in the context of a fast-evolving environment.

Trends V suggests that institutions have a need to develop further their strategies and activities in the field of lifelong learning, and to think of lifelong learning as a core mission. Once again, an increasing dialogue with employers is required if university

courses, at all levels, are to meet the needs of a changing society and economy in which knowledge becomes rapidly out-of-date and in which, therefore, constant training and retraining is required. Higher education institutions have a major role to play in giving substance to the rhetoric of lifelong learning, and need to recognise that their own role is changing within this new paradigm. Higher education demands the same level of service no matter how it is delivered, and attention to the quality of lifelong learning provision is therefore essential.

The “social objective” of the Bologna process is to ensure equality of access to higher education for all those qualified and able to benefit from it. Once again, institutions need further to develop their strategies for making this aspiration a reality, working in collaboration with governments who are responsible for the earlier years of schooling and with employers who have an interest in part-time education for those who have been unsuccessful in education at earlier periods of their lives. Universities and their leaders have a responsibility to stress that widening access does not imply any reduction in quality. On the contrary, the quality of education systems needs to be evaluated in terms of how successfully the diverse educational needs of all citizens are met throughout their lives.

The international reception of the Bologna process is of great importance in a world of increasing student and employment mobility. Once again, governments and universities share responsibility for enhancing knowledge of the reforms which have taken place. They also share responsibility for assisting the more recent entrants to the Bologna process to implement the reforms, learning from all aspects of their experience.

Institutions must begin to think through the implications of the existence of the European Higher Education Area after 2010. Some aspects of Bologna are still likely to require implementation or reconsideration, and it will be particularly important to do this with greater European vision, moving away from local and national interpretations which, although seemingly coherent in a specific context, make interaction throughout the EHEA more difficult to realise.

There will also remain a need to pay attention to various impediments to student and staff mobility, as well as to continue to ensure the link to research and innovation through continuing to develop doctoral programmes and career opportunities for young researchers. Institutions also have to consider the future needs of society and the labour market, together with the implications for mobility, quality and access of the different methods of funding higher education which are, or are likely to be, adopted in the many countries of the EHEA.

Many have begun to question the timeline provided by Bologna. 2010 has clearly served as a significant and meaningful deadline, and one that has been used not only in the context of establishing a European Higher Education Area, but also as a target for the European Union’s Lisbon strategy, including the European Research Area and the Copenhagen process in vocational education. Yet the closer 2010 becomes, the stronger the realisation that the processes set in motion will neither be fully achieved nor come to a sudden end. Indeed these processes represent major cultural shifts that have been under-estimated in many ways, and will take more time to be fully integrated into societal reality. Far from reform coming to an end in 2010, the

likelihood is that Europe has only begun to lay the initial foundations for a more permanent process of societal innovation and change, in which the role of higher education is fundamental.

Strengthening the relationships between governments, higher education institutions and other societal stakeholders is essential to anchor and sustain the goals of the Bologna process. No institution can claim to be offering high quality education if it lacks adequate funding, good governance, research-based teaching, broad access, guidance and counselling services, and attention to employability. Governments need to examine whether they are really providing the support that institutions need, as well as ensuring that institutions have the necessary autonomy required to fulfil their missions. Broad stakeholder dialogue is also needed to raise awareness of how institutions can and do contribute to societal challenges and to ensure that incentives are put in place to encourage action on priority issues.

Whereas many doubts were cast in the early years of the Bologna process, it is now clear that institutions have appropriated the concept of a European Higher Education Area and are taking action to move forward as quickly as possible. It is noteworthy that this has happened without any central driving force or legally binding steering mechanisms. There has been no single “Bologna coordination centre” with the solutions to what to do and how to do it, nor any central monitoring system. Some have pointed to this as a weakness of the process, yet given the extent to which reforms have been made in a sector often perceived as resistant to change and development, it would perhaps be wise to revise this view. As they have done throughout their long history, universities and other higher education institutions are again showing that not only are they capable of adapting to meet the needs of a changing society, but that their role is fundamental if progress is to be sustained.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Trends V Questionnaire: TRENDS in European higher education (V)

I. General Questions

Q1. How many academic staff are employed at your institution?
(Please give an approximate figure)

Q2. a) How many full time students are enrolled at your institution?
(Please give an approximate figure)

b) How many part time students are enrolled at your institution?
(Please give an approximate figure)

Q3. When was your HEI founded? Please mention the (approximate) year:

Q4. What is the highest level (or equivalent) to which your institution trains students?

1. Bachelor (first cycle)
2. Master (second cycle)
3. Doctorate (third cycle)

Your answer:
please choose one

Q5. Which community do you see your institution primarily as serving?

1. Regional
2. National
3. European
4. World-wide

Your answer:
please choose one

Q6. How would you describe the profile of your institution?

1. Primarily research-based	
2. Primarily teaching-oriented	Your answer:
3. Both research-based and teaching-oriented	please choose one

Q7. In the medium-term, does your institution plan to:

1. increase its share of teaching activities	
2. increase its share of research activities	Your answer:
3. maintain the existing situation	please choose one

Q8. How important for your institution is the concern in society to increase and widen access to higher education?

1 Very important
2 Important
3 Not very important

Your answer:
please choose one

Q9. Does your institution have a Bologna coordinator?

1. Yes
2. No

Your answer:
please choose one

Q10. Would you say that your institution has sufficient autonomy to make decisions and manage its affairs in the best interests of students and society?

1. Yes
2. No

Your answer:
please choose one

Q11. Has your institution received additional financing to support the implementation of the Bologna Process?

1. Yes, we have received sufficient additional financing	
2. Yes, but additional financing has not been sufficient	<u>Your answer:</u>
3. No	please choose one

Q12. Which statement best represents your opinion regarding the creation of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA)?

1. It is essential to make rapid progress towards the EHEA	
2. The EHEA is a good idea, but the time is not yet ripe	
3. I do not trust the idea of the EHEA	<u>Your answer:</u>
4. I do not have an opinion on the EHEA	please choose one

II. Degree structures and curricula

Q13. Does your institution have a degree structure based on either two or three main cycles (Bachelor, Master, PhD) in most academic fields?

1. Yes, we already had it before the Bologna process	
2. Yes, we introduced it as a result of the Bologna process	
3. Not yet, but this is planned	<u>Your answer:</u>
4. No, we do not plan to do this	please choose one

Q14. If yes, would you consider that the two/three-cycle structure functions

1. Extremely well
2. Reasonably well
3. Not very well
4. Not at all well

Your answer:
please choose one

Q15. Has your institution recently re-considered curricula in connection with the Bologna process, particularly with regard to adapting programmes to the new degrees structure?

1. Yes, in all departments
2. Yes, in some departments
3. Not yet, but we will do so in the near future
4. No, we do not see the need for this

Your answer:
please choose one

Q16. Does your institution offer any **joint programmes** with other **institutions in a different country**? (*several answers allowed; please mark the selected choices in the second column*)

1 Yes, there are examples of joint programmes in all cycles	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Yes, there are examples of joint programmes in the first cycle (bachelor)	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Yes, there are examples of joint programmes in the second cycle (master)	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Yes, there are examples of joint programmes in the third cycle (doctorate)	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Not yet, but some departments are planning joint programmes	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. No, we do not see the need for joint programmes	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q17. When designing or restructuring curricula in your institution, how important is the concern with the future "employability" of graduates?

1 Very important
2 Important
3 Not important

Your answer:
please choose one

Q18. Are professional associations and employers involved in designing and restructuring curricula with the relevant faculties and departments?

1. Yes, they are closely involved
2. Yes, they are occasionally involved
3. No, they are rarely if ever involved

Your answer:
please choose one

Q19. What do you expect your students to do after the first cycle (Bachelor) degree?

1. Most will enter the labour market, while a minority will continue to study at Master level
2. Some will enter the labour market, and some will continue to study at Master level
3. A minority will enter the labour market, but most will continue to study at Master level
4. Difficult to say at this stage

Your answer:
please choose one

Q20. If your institution awards doctoral degrees, what structure of doctoral degree studies exists at your institution? (*several answers allowed; please mark the selected choices in the second column*)

1. Individual tutoring with supervisor only
2. Taught courses in addition to tutoring
3. Doctoral schools

Your answer:
please choose one

Q21. Does your institution systematically track the employment of graduates?

1. Yes, we track the employment of all recent graduates
2. Yes, we track some graduates
3. No, there is no system

Your answer:
please choose one

III. Credit systems and recognition

Q22. Does your institution use a **credit accumulation** system for all BA and MA programmes?

1. Yes, ECTS
2. Yes, but not ECTS
3. Not yet, but we intend to develop one in the future
4. We do not intend to implement one

Your answer:
please choose one

Q23. Does your institution have a **credit transfer** system for all BA and MA programmes?

1. Yes, ECTS
2. Yes, but not ECTS
3. Not yet, but we intend to develop one in the future
4. We do not intend to implement one

Your answer:
please choose one

Q24. If your institution uses a credit system, is it used for the award of degrees/diplomas?
(several answers allowed; please mark the selected choices in the second column)

1. Yes, in all subjects on the basis of accumulated credits only	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Yes, in all subjects on the basis of accumulated credits plus traditional end of year exams	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Yes, in some subjects on the basis of accumulated credits only	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Yes, in some subjects on the basis of accumulated credits plus traditional end of year exams	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. No	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q25. If your institution has a credit system, is it also used at doctoral level?

1. Yes
2. Yes, only for taught courses in doctoral programmes
3. No, we do not intend to apply credits at the doctoral level

Your answer:
please choose one

Q26. Do students returning to your institution from study abroad encounter problems with the recognition of their credits?

1. Many have problems
2. Some have problems
3. None have problems

Your answer:
please choose one

Q27. Does your institution issue a Diploma Supplement to graduating students?

1 Yes, to all graduating students
2 Yes, to all graduating students who request it
3 Not yet, but this is planned
4 No, there are no plans to do this

Your answer:
please choose one

Q28. Does your institution have institution-wide recognition procedures?
(several answers allowed; please mark the selected choices in the second column)

Q28_1 Yes, for the recognition of foreign degrees	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q28_2 Yes, for the recognition of periods of study abroad	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q28_3 Yes, for the recognition of degrees from other institutions in our country	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q28_4 Yes, for the recognition of periods of study in other institutions in our country	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q28_5 No	<input type="checkbox"/>

IV. Mobility

Q29. Does your institution keep central records of students who come to study from abroad, and who leave to study abroad?

1. Yes, central records are kept of all these students
2. Yes, but only for students on official study exchange programmes (Erasmus, Tempus etc)
3. No, information is kept only by faculties, schools or departments

Your answer:
please choose one

Q30. If your institution keeps central records, has incoming student mobility increased at your institution over the last three years?

1. Yes, significantly
2. Yes, slightly
3. No change
4. No, it has decreased
5. No information available

Your answer:
please choose one

Q31. If your institution keeps central records, has outgoing student mobility increased at your institution over the last three years?

1. Yes, significantly
2. Yes, slightly
3. No change
4. No, it has decreased
5. No information available

Your answer:
please choose one

Q32. Comparing incoming and outgoing student mobility, what is the balance?

1. Significantly more incoming than outgoing students
2. Similar levels of incoming and outgoing students
3. Significantly more outgoing than incoming students

Your answer:
please choose one

Q33. Does your institution provide language and cultural support to incoming international students?

1. Yes, we offer special support services to incoming international students
2. Yes, we offer such support services to all students
3. No, we don't have any such support services

Your answer:
please choose one

Q34. Has teaching staff mobility increased at your institution over the last three years?

1. Yes, significantly
2. Yes, slightly
3. No change
4. No, it has decreased
5. No information available

Your answer:
please choose one

V. Student Services & Student involvement

Q35. Which of these services does your institution provide for its students? (*several answers allowed; please mark the selected choices in the second column*)

Q35_1 Academic orientation services	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q35_2 Accommodation facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q35_3 Career guidance services	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q35_4 Psychological counseling services	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q35_5 Sports facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q35_6 Information on study opportunities in other institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q35_7 Language training	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q35_8 Social and cultural activities (bars, cinema clubs, theatre, music etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q36. How have you involved your students in the implementation of the Bologna Process at your institution? (*several answers allowed; please mark the selected choices in the second column*)

Q36_1 Formally, through participation in senate/council	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q36_2 Formally, through faculty/department level	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q36_3 By providing information on the issues involved	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q36_4 By supporting our students to attend national discussions on the issues	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q36_5 Other (<i>please specify:</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q36_6 Not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>

VI. Quality Issues

Q37. Does your Institution conduct internal evaluations of its programmes?

1 Yes, regularly
2 Yes, sometimes
3 No

Your answer:
please choose one

Q38. Does your Institution have regulations for student examination and assessment?

1. Yes
2. No

Your answer:
please choose one

Q39. Does your Institution have processes for evaluating individual teaching staff?

1. Yes, they are obligatory
2. Yes, they are voluntary (each teacher decides whether or not to participate)
3. No

Your answer:
please choose one

Q40. Does your Institution have processes for evaluating student learning services (e.g. libraries; student orientation/advice services etc.)?

1 Yes, regularly
2 Yes, sometimes
3 No

Your answer:
please choose one

Q41. Does your Institution have processes for evaluating research teams?

1 Yes, regularly
2 Yes, sometimes
3 No

Your answer:
please choose one

Q42. Does your Institution collect quantitative data systematically on its research activities?

1. Yes, on all activities
2. Yes, on some activities
3. No

Your answer:
please choose one

Q43. Do your external quality processes (Quality Assurance / Accreditation Agency) include an evaluation of the internal quality processes of your Institution?

1. Yes
2. No

Your answer:
please choose one

VII. Lifelong Learning and qualifications framework

Q44. What priority does Life-Long Learning (LLL) have at your institution?

1. It has a very high priority
2. It is important, along with other priorities
3. It is not yet a high priority but may become one
4. It is unlikely to become a high priority

Your answer:
please choose one

Q45. If there is a National Qualifications Framework, is it useful when developing LLL programmes?

1. Yes
2. Sometimes
3. No
4. Too early to say
5. There is no National Qualifications Framework in our country

Your answer:
please choose one

Q46. If there is a National Qualifications Framework, is it useful when developing curricula corresponding to the (new) Bologna degree system?

1. Yes
2. Sometimes
3. No
4. Too early to say
5. There is no National Qualifications Framework in our country

Your answer:
please choose one

Q47. How useful do you consider an overarching European Qualifications Framework will be in developing programmes and understanding qualifications from other countries in Europe?

1. Very useful
2. Quite useful
3. Not useful
4. We don't know what a European Qualifications Framework is

Your answer:
please choose one

VIII. Social dimension

Q48. Do you think that in the future socio-economically disadvantaged potential students will have

1. much more opportunity to access higher education than today
2. a little more opportunity to access higher education than today
3. about the same opportunity to access higher education as today
4. a little less opportunity to access higher education than today
5. much less opportunity to access higher education than today

Your answer:
please choose one

Q49. Do you consider that there is a need for action at your institution to improve access for disadvantaged students?

1. yes, there is insufficient action taken in our institution	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. no, there is sufficient action already in our institution	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. no, our institution considers that this is not part of its responsibility	<input type="checkbox"/>

IX. Attractiveness and the External Dimension of European Higher Education

Q50. Do you expect that the emerging European Higher Education Area (EHEA) will provide better opportunities for:

Q50_1. Students: *(several answers allowed; please mark the selected choices in the second column)*

1. All students at your institution	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Most out-going students from your institution	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Most in-coming students to your institution	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Mainly the more affluent students at your institution	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Non-European students considering higher education in your country	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. None	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q50_2. Higher education institutions: *(several answers allowed; please mark the selected choices in the second column)*

1. All institutions part of the EHEA	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Mainly the institutions most competitive on the European higher education market	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Mainly the most prestigious institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Mainly trans-national providers	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Mainly postgraduate institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Mainly institutions within the larger countries in the EHEA	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. None	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q51. In which geographical areas would your institution most like to enhance its international attractiveness?

(several answers allowed; please mark the selected choices in the second column)

Q51_1 EU	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q51_2 Eastern Europe	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q51_3 US /Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q51_4 Australia	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q51_5 Arab World	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q51_6 Asia	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q51_7 Latin America	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q51_8 Africa	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q51_9 None	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMMENTS

Please use the space below to share with us some of your hopes and fears regarding the European Higher Education Area. Please add any comments and reactions to this questionnaire as well.

Appendix 2: Country distribution of received filled-in questionnaires

	Country	Trends III	Trends V
AL	Albania	2	2
AD	Andorra	1	1
AM	Armenia	1	0
AT	Austria	32	30
AZ	Azerbaijan		2
BY	Belarus		1
BE	Belgium	31	32
BA	Bosnia Herzegovina	4	4
BG	Bulgaria	13	12
HR	Croatia	5	5
CY	Cyprus	5	4
CZ	Czech Republic	29	24
DK	Denmark	45	38
EE	Estonia	7	11
FI	Finland	27	18
MK	Former Republic of Macedonia	2	3
FR	France	78	88
GE	Georgia		14
DE	Germany	58	52
GR	Greece	20	17
VA	Holy See	3	2
HU	Hungary	39	15
IS	Iceland	2	6
IE	Ireland	15	16
IT	Italy	27	63
LV	Latvia	29	21
LT	Lithuania	16	14
LU	Luxemburg	1	1
MT	Malta	1	1
MD	Moldova		2
NL	Netherlands	12	22
NO	Norway	29	22
PL	Poland	38	99
PT	Portugal	32	20
RO	Romania	15	15
RU	Russia	1	50
CS	Serbia & Montenegro	6	2
SK	Slovakia	9	11
SI	Slovenia	3	3
ES	Spain	28	32
SE	Sweden	15	22
CH	Switzerland	14	16
TR	Turkey	19	30
UA	Ukraine		8
GB	United Kingdom	44	56
	Other (Eastern-Mediterranean University)	0	1
	Total	758	908

Appendix 3 : Trends V Site Visits

a) Institutions participating in Trends V site visits:

Masaryk University, Czech Republic
University of Vaasa, Finland
Université Nancy 2, France
Aachen University of Applied Sciences, Germany
German Sport University, Germany
Politecnico di Milano, Italy
Libera Università di Lingue e Comunicazione, Italy
Leiden University, Netherlands
Norwegian University for Life Sciences, Norway
Warsaw Agricultural University, Poland
Poznan University of Technology, Poland
University of Oporto, Portugal
Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, Romania
University of Aberdeen, United Kingdom
University of Sheffield, United Kingdom

b) Trends V Team Members

Research Team

Antoinette Charon Wauters, University of Lausanne
Filomena Chirico, Tilburg University
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Lars Ekholm, former Secretary General of Association of Swedish Higher Education
Viera Farkasova, Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation
Michael Gaebel, EUA
Ruth Keeling, Cambridge University
Dionnysis Kladis, University of Peloponnese
Ewa Krzaklewska, Erasmus Student Network
Tapio Markkanen, former Secretary General of Finnish Rectors' Conference
Vicky Petrounakou, University of Peloponnese
Lewis Purser, Irish Universities Association (IUA)/EUA
Cornelia Racke, University of Maastricht
Hanne Smidt, EUA
Athanassia Spyropoulou, University of Peloponnese
Charoula Tzanakou, EUA
Annamaria Trusso, EUA
Lazar Vlasceanu, UNESCO - CEPES

National Experts

Christian van den Berg, Association of Universities in the Netherlands

Stefan Bienefeld, German Rectors' Conference (HRK)
Antonio Brito Ferrari, Universidade de Aveiro
Jan Honzik, Brno University of Technology
Andrzej Krasniewski, Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland
Pascal Level, Conférence des Présidents d'Universités
Roberto Moscati, University of Milano Bicocca
Jessica Olley, Universities UK
Alan Runcie, QAA Scotland /Universities Scotland
Liisa Savunen, Finnish Rectors' Conference
Ola Stave, Norwegian Association for Higher Education
Peter Zervakis, German Rectors' Conference (HRK)

Appendix 4: National Rectors' Conferences that completed questionnaires

- Austria, Austrian Rectors' Conference
- Austria, Association of Universities of Applied Sciences
- Belgium NL, Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad
- Bulgaria, Bulgarian Rectors' Conference
- Czech Republic, Czech Rectors' Conference
- Denmark, Rektorkollegiet
- Estonia, Estonian Rectors' Conference
- Finland, Finnish Council of University Rectors
- France, Conférence des Présidents d'Université
- Germany, German Rectors' Conference
- Greece, Greek Rectors' Conference
- Hungary, Confederation of Hungarian Conferences on Higher Education
- Italy, Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università Italiane
- Latvia, Latvian Rectors' Conference
- Netherlands, Association of Universities in the Netherlands
- Norway, Norwegian Council for Higher Education
- Poland, Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland
- Slovakia, Slovak Rectors' Conference
- Slovenia, Association of Rectors of Slovenia
- Spain, Conferencia de Rectores de las Universidades Espanolas
- Sweden, Association of Swedish Higher Education
- Switzerland, Conférence des recteurs des universités suisses
- Turkey, Turkish University Rectors' Conference
- United Kingdom, Universities UK

Appendix 5: Focus Group Meetings

- 15th EAN Annual Conference, “The Social Role of Universities: Reaching out to the Community”, The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, 30th August - 2nd September 2006
- 16th EURASHE Annual Conference, "The Dynamics of University Colleges" University of Dubrovnik, Dubrovnik, Croatia, 27-28 April 2006.
- Coimbra Group Annual Meeting, University of Tartu, Estonia, 17-19 May 2006
- EUA Bologna Seminar in Tbilisi State University, Georgia, 18-21 December 2006
- EUA Seminar on Higher Education and Research in South East Europe "Strengthening Higher Education in South East Europe: Priorities for Regional and European Cooperation" University of Vienna, Austria, 2-3 March 2006 see also: <http://www.eua.be/index.php?id=174>
- International Seminar co-organised by the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia together with the Council of Europe within the framework of the Russian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, “ Making the European Higher Education Area a Reality: The Role of Students”, Moscow, Russia, 2-3 November 2006
- IXth FEDORA Congress, “Guidance and Counselling within the European Higher Education Area”/ “L’orientation et le Conseil dans l’Espace Européen de l’Enseignement Supérieur” Vilnius/Lithuania 22-25th October 2006