Official Bologna seminars:

Conclusions, Recommendations and Final Reports

Period – up to August 2004

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DEGREE STRUCTURES

Seminar on Bachelor-level Degrees
Helsinki, February 16-17, 2001

The Bologna Process
Seminar on Bachelor-level Degrees

Helsinki, Finland February 16-17, 2001

Conclusions and Recommendations of the Seminar
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Benefits of developing bachelor-level degrees

These conclusions concern first degrees or first cycle degrees commonly referred to as bachelor-level degrees. For the sake of clarity, the term bachelor-level degree will be used in this document.

Most European countries have, are introducing or are planning to introduce a higher education degree structure based on a sequence of bachelor, master and doctoral degrees. Reforms in this direction have been carried out in countries with unitary higher education system as well as in countries with binary or dual higher education systems.

Long first study cycles, high drop-out rates and the lengthening of university studies are problems shared by many European countries. Well-planned and efficiently real-ised bachelor degree programmes help reduce the number of students discontinu-ing their studies without any qualification and thus facilitates their placement in the labour market while possibly contributing to shortening overall study times. There is a considerable lack of comparability in the European degree structures which is an impediment to mobility.

The bachelor-master (two-tier) structure offers several advantages in comparison with the long, often rather inflexible curricula leading straight up to the master level which have been traditional in many countries. A main benefit is that students can be offered programmes which allow more easily individual flexibility, which also pro-motes mobility. The two-tier structure makes room for national and international mo-bility by contributing to the modularisation of study programmes. In the age of life-long learning one of the most significant factors speaking in favour of a two-tier structure is that it allows interaction between studies and working life.

Most of the professionally oriented higher education institutions offer at the moment bachelor-level degrees, and in many countries master-level degrees are being intro-duced to these institutions. This development may serve the purpose of diversifica-tion of higher education provision. It may also contribute to the efficient use of re-sources because students do not need to change their orientation at the transition point.

The bachelor/master structure has become a world standard. Its adoption will facili-tate better recognition of European degrees both within Europe and in the world and will make it more attractive for international students to consider studying in Europe.

Framework for bachelor-level degrees in Europe

The promotion of mobility in Europe requires increased transparency and compara-bility of European higher education qualifications. In order to achieve this need some common criteria for the definition of bachelor degrees are needed. This framework should be flexible enough to allow national variations, but at the same time clear enough to serve as a definition. These broad definitions should be achieved already in the Prague Summit of Higher Education.

The following factors could be seen as useful common denominators for a European bachelor-level degree:

Bachelor-level degree is a higher education qualification the extent of which is 180 to 240 credits (ECTS). It normally takes three to four years of full-time study to complete the degree. Bachelor-level degrees play an important role in the life-long learning paradigm and learning to learn skills should be an essential part of any bachelor-level degree.

It is important to note that the bachelor-level degrees, often referred to as first degrees can be taken at either traditional universities or at profes-sionally-oriented higher education institutions. Programmes leading to the degree may, and indeed should have different orientations and vari-ous profiles in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs.

In order to increase transparency it is important that the specific orienta-tion and profile and learning outcomes of a given qualification are in-cluded in its title and explained on the Diploma Supplement issued to the student. Information on different study programmes should be trans-parent to enable the students make informed choices.

Even bachelor degrees which serve as an intermediate qualification preparing students for further study should be based on a proper cur-riculum. They should not only be seen as a part of a longer curriculum, as some students may wish to change direction or to choose a graduate programme or specialisation offered at another institution.

Labour market relevance

In the European tradition higher education has never been an island. There is a strong need for close interaction between higher education and society at large. La-bour market relevance should not undermine higher education's cultural value.

There are many different ways in which bachelor-type degrees can be relevant to the common European labour market. While many curricula ought to be geared towards specific professions and immediate entrance onto the labour market, others need to prepare students for further studies and a later entrance. All curricula should include transversal skills and competencies required from all active citizens in Europe. This entails long-term development of educational contents.

In European countries labour markets expect higher education qualifications from more and more young people. This is likely to be more difficult in countries offering only long one-tier qualifications. The higher education system is expected to offer independent, shorter degrees of the bachelor type geared specifically for labour mar-ket needs. At the same time there are needs for updating and upgrading qualifica-tions and skills of the present labour force.

Disciplinary issues

Different disciplines have characters of their own and they have to be taken into consideration when developing degree structures. It should be clear that in some fields which involve professional accreditation bachelor-level degrees will not always serve as independent qualifications leading to full labour market relevant professional competence. However, in those fields too an intermediate qualification may be worth developing for the reasons mentioned above.

In all fields, reasonable transition mechanisms between bachelor and master programmes should be established, both within the same higher education sector and between different higher education sectors. These transition mechanisms should enhance also interdisciplinarity.

Reforming structures only is not enough. Transparency and comparability of transfer-able core competencies expected from graduates of bachelor and master pro-grammes in broad subject areas are needed at the European level. Higher education institutions and their European networks involving professional bodies and other stakeholders should develop these common guidelines.

Conference on Master-level Degrees, Helsinki, March 14 - 15, 2003

The Bologna Process
Conference on Master-level Degrees
Helsinki, Finland
March 14 - 15, 2003

Conclusions and Recommendations
of the Conference

Different dimensions of master degrees
(In this document the term master degree is used to describe all second-cycle higher education degrees at master level irrespective of their different national titles)

As the study made by European University Association shows most European countries have introduced or are about to introduce a higher education degree structure based on a sequence of bachelor, master and doctoral degrees.

According to this report, there is still some variety in the length of the study programmes leading to the master's degree, but there seems to be a trend towards master degrees the total extent of which is 300 ECTS credits. In practice, this usually means five years of full-time studies.

The degree structures still vary considerably between the countries taking part in the Bologna Process. In addition, the two-tier structure is still perceived differently in our respective countries. In some higher education systems, bachelor's and master's degrees are seen as clearly self-supporting entities, whereas in others, the two cycles form rather a cumulative sequence of knowledge, skills and competencies in more or less the same disciplinary area. These differences can be accommodated within the European Higher Education Area if reconciled with its objective of creating more flexibility and individual choice in higher education qualifications.

Traditionally, most higher education institutions not included in the university sector in Europe have offered bachelor degrees, and only recently have they introduced master degrees in some countries. This development serves the purpose of diversification of higher education, which is called for by European labour market needs and the increasingly heterogeneous student population.

In order to increase the transparency of qualifications earned at different types of institutions or with different profiles, all higher education institutions should make use of the Diploma Supplement. Governments should make every effort to ensure that qualifications at the same level earned in different types of institutions enjoy, where appropriate, the same civil effect in professional life and in the pursuit of further studies.

The diversification of contents and profile of degree programmes calls for a common framework of reference of European higher education qualifications in order to increase transparency and thus to facilitate both national and international student mobility. Increasing student and teacher/staff mobility adds to cultural understanding and appreciation and promotes innovation in European higher education. Readable and comparable degree structures facilitate the professional recognition of qualifications and the mobility of labour force thus contributing to making the European labour market more dynamic for employers and graduates.

European higher education - a hallmark of excellence

Many European higher education institutions offer degree programmes designed for and marketed to international students. To serve this purpose, many institutions have chosen to develop education through widely-used foreign languages. This approach is understandable and welcome, as it increases the global attractiveness and competitiveness of higher education institutions in smaller linguistic areas. Development of the EHEA must not, however, lead to a mono-linguistic world of higher education. Within the EHEA governments and higher education institutions should make every effort to ensure teaching of the national languages to foreign students, even if the degree programme itself is in another language and proficiency in the language of the host country is not a prerequisite for admission. Multiculturalism, pluralism and linguistic skills are to remain the intrinsic values of European higher education.

Joint master degrees at the European level should become an important feature of European higher education both to promote intra-European cooperation and in order to attract talented students and researchers from other continents to study and work in Europe. Particular attention needs to be paid to introducing quality assurance mechanisms and to solving the specific recognition issues raised by joint degrees.

To serve a wider range of international students and contribute to capacity building in developing countries, the possibility of delivering European higher education through branch campuses operated by consortia of European universities should be explored and encouraged, especially at the master's level.

Two-tier degree structure: implications for mobility

General: Steps must be taken to consolidate and increase the present volume of mobility, also for longer periods of time. In order to be able to monitor in any precise way the volumes and flows in mobility, reliable statistical data not available at present need to be produced on a regular basis. The ratification of the Lisbon Recognition Convention in all EHEA countries would be desirable to increase mobility.

Intra-European mobility: Further growth in intra-European mobility (exchanges) presupposes a strong effort by governments and higher education institutions to consolidate and extend inter-institutional arrangements of a high quality, which will assure full recognition of periods studied and credits earned abroad. This also entails a

coherent application of ECTS across the entire EHEA, as laid down in the recent "Key Features" document and the recommendations of the Zürich Conference on ECTS. National support schemes should be made portable.

With reference to intra-European degree (vertical) mobility, a strong plea is made to governments and institutions to ensure equal treatment of bachelor degrees between EHEA countries as a formal requirement for admission to master programmes.

Mobility between Europe and the world: In order to attract more students and young researchers from outside of Europe, supportive action is necessary. One such activity is the marketing of European higher education on other continents. Another is the creation of internationally attractive programmes taught in major world languages. Europe's offer of this type of education must be considerably stepped up, beyond its present modest level. Framework conditions, such as conditions for entry and residence of third-country nationals in Europe, work permits and student services, must be improved to facilitate access to European higher education.

Framework of reference for master degrees in Europe

There are various European initiatives underway today that aim at defining learning outcomes and skills and competencies both at the bachelor and master level. This will allow capitalising on the richness of European higher education traditions and creating European profiles in the various disciplines. At the same time, the promotion of mobility in Europe requires increased transparency and comparability of European higher education qualifications. Some common criteria for the structural definition of master's degrees - in their various national names - are needed. This framework of reference should be flexible enough to allow national and institutional variations, but at the same time clear enough to serve as a definition.

The following recommendations adopted by the participants in the conference could be seen as useful common denominators for a master degree in the EHEA:

1. A master degree is a second-cycle higher education qualification. The entry to a master's 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.
2. 2. Students awarded a master degree must have achieved the level of knowledge and understanding, or high level in artistic competence when appropriate, which allows them to integrate knowledge, and handle complexity, formulate judgements and communicate their conclusions to an expert and to a non-expert audience.
   Students with a master degree will have the learning skills needed to pursue further studies or research in a largely self-directed, autonomous manner.
3. 3. All bachelor degrees should open access to master studies and all master degrees should give access to doctoral studies. A transition from master level to doctoral studies without the formal award of a master's degree should be

considered possible if the student demonstrates that he/she has the necessary abilities.

Differences in orientation or profile of programmes should not affect the civil effect of the master degrees.

4. Bachelor and master programmes should be described on the basis of content, quality and learning outcomes, not only according to the duration of programmes or other formal characteristics.

5. There are several ongoing international projects related to developing coherent quality assurance mechanisms in the EHEA. This work should be continued, and international aspects of national and regional quality assurance systems should be further developed.

6. Joint master programmes at the European level should be developed to promote intra-European cooperation and attract talented students and researchers from other continents to study and work in Europe. Particular attention must be paid to solving recognition problems related to joint degrees.

7. 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. Credits awarded should be of the appropriate profile.

8. In certain fields, there may continue to exist integrated one-tier programmes leading to master degrees. Yet, opportunities for access to intermediate qualifications and transfer to other programmes should be encouraged.

9. Programmes leading to a master degree may have different orientations and various profiles in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs. Master degrees can be taken at universities and in some countries, in other higher education institutions.

10. In order to increase transparency it is important that the specific orientation and profile of a given qualification is explained in the Diploma Supplement issued to the student.

Conference on Qualification Structures in European Higher Education, København, March 27 – 28, 2003

Recommendations

of the conference on Qualification Structures in European Higher Education, København, March 27 – 28, 2003

The participants in the conference on Qualification Structures in European Higher Education, organized by the Danish authorities in København on March 27 – 28, 2003 recommend:

1. The Ministers meeting in Berlin in September 2003 should encourage the competent public authorities responsible for higher education to elaborate national qualifications frameworks for their respective higher education systems with due consideration to the qualifications framework to be elaborated for the European Higher Education Area.

2. The Ministers' meeting should also be invited to launch work on an overarching qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area, with a view to providing a structural framework against which individual national frameworks could articulate with due regard to the institutional, historical and national context.

3. 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. An EHEA framework should seek to describe qualifications in generic terms (e.g. as first or second cycle degrees) rather than in terms specific to one or more national systems (e.g. Bachelor or Master)

4. Qualifications frameworks should also seek to describe these qualifications with reference to the objectives or purposes for higher education, in particular with regard to four major purposes of higher education:
    (i)   preparation for the labor market;
    (ii)   preparation for life as active citizens in democratic society;
    (iii)   personal development;
    (iv)   development and maintenance an advanced knowledge base.

1. While at national level, qualifications frameworks should as far as possible encompass qualifications at all levels, it is recommended that, at least as a first step, a framework for the European Higher Education Area focus on higher education qualifications as well as on all qualifications giving access to higher education.   As far as possible, an EHEA framework should also include qualifications below first-degree level.

2. Within the overall rules of the qualifications frameworks, individual institutions should have considerable freedom in the design of their programs. National qualifications frameworks, as well as an EHEA framework, should be designed so as to assist higher education institutions in their curriculum development and design of study programs. Qualifications frameworks should facilitate the inclusion of interdisciplinary higher education study programs.

3. Quality assurance agencies should take the aims of the qualifications frameworks into account in their assessment of higher education institutions

and/or programs and make the extent to which institutions and/or programs implement and meet the goals of the qualifications framework of the country concerned, as well as an EHEA framework, an important element in the overall outcome of the assessment exercise. Higher education institutions should also take account of the qualifications frameworks in their internal quality assurance processes. At the same time, the qualifications frameworks should define their quality goals in such a way as to be of relevance to quality assessment.

4. While an EHEA qualifications framework should considerably simplify the process of recognition of qualifications within the Area, such recognition should still follow the provisions of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention. The Ministers meeting in Berlin in September 2003 should therefore invite all states party to the Bologna Process to ratify this Convention as soon as possible.

5. The main stakeholders in higher education within the EHEA should be invited to contribute to a dialogue on a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area as well as give consideration to how such a framework could simplify the process of recognition of qualifications within the framework. Considerations of national frameworks could benefit from taking into account experience with other frameworks.

6. Transparency instruments such as the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS should be reviewed to make sure that the information provided is clearly related to the EHEA framework.

7. Whether at national level or at the level of the European Higher Education Area, qualifications frameworks should make provision for the inclusion of joint degrees and other forms of combination of credits earned at the home institution and other institutions as well as credits earned through other relevant programs or experiences.

8. Qualifications frameworks, at national level as well as at the level of the European Higher Education Area, should assist transparency and should assist the continuous improvement and development of higher education in Europe.

Final report

of the conference on Qualification Structures in European Higher Education, København, March 27 – 28, 2003

By Sjur Bergan, Council of Europe

INTRODUCTION

Franz Schubert is reputed often to have asked about people he did not know well: "*Kann er was?*". In discussing higher education qualifications, we have moved a step further and would tend to invert this basic question: "*Was kann er*?"

Unfortunately, the pun is lost in the English translation, but it may be worth emphasizing the shift from a concern with whether a person knows *anything* to a concern with *what* he knows and can do. It may also be worth underlining that today, we would not restrict ourselves to the masculine personal pronoun.

My task as Rapporteur to this conference on Qualification Structures in European Higher Education could be seen simply as providing a synopsis of our discussions during this day and a half. However, I will not simply push the replay button, and I have my reasons. Firstly, the background report by Professor Stephen Adam is both as comprehensive and as readable as those who know him well have come to expect, and I would not be able to do him justice by attempting to produce an "executive summary", all the more so as Stephen has provided such a summary himself.

Secondly, the other presentations as well as the discussions have been rich and stand on their own merit, and the reports from the discussion groups give an overview of the main points in these. So, I am also indebted to Seán Ó Foghlú's presentation on the way ahead; to Julia Gonzalez, Nick Harris and Andrejs Rauhvargers for their introductions on curriculum planning, quality assurance and recognition, respectively; to the panel of "end users": Bastian Baumann on behalf of the students, Stina Vrang Elias on behalf of the employers, Maria Sticchi Damiani on behalf of the institutions and Peter van der Hijden, speaking for the European Commission; and not least to the rapporteurs of the discussion groups: Maria Sticchi Damiani, Dorthe Kristoffersen and Helle Otte. The latter played a particularly important role in helping me elaborate a set of recommendations that were submitted to and adopted by the participants at the end of the conference. These recommendations are reproduced in a separate document and will be submitted to the Bologna Follow Up Group as well as to the Berlin Higher Education Summit.

Allow me, therefore, to choose a different strategy. Allow me, rather than reproducing extensively from what has been said during this conference, to offer my own reflections on the discussions. It goes without saying that such an approach is as indebted to

Stephen Adam's background report, the other presentations and the discussions as a more traditional approach would have been.

I also hope I can take this more analytical approach without practicing what I have come to call Sir Humphrey's Theory of Minutes. Those of you familiar with the British TV series *Yes, Minister* and, after Jim Hacker's principled fight against the Euro-sausage, *Yes, Prime Minister*, may remember the scheming senior civil servant Sir Humphrey lecturing his apprentice Bernard on how to write meeting reports. Minutes, according to Sir Humphrey, are not there to show what *happened* in a meeting, but what *should* have happened.

This, however, is not my intention. Rather, I will attempt to combine an analysis of what has been discussed at this seminar with some thoughts on what needs to be discussed in the time to come.

One additional point may be in order by way of introduction. In the same way as qualifications is used as a generic term covering a whole range of outcomes of higher education programs[1], I would much prefer to use generic terms also when describing qualification structures or frameworks. This point was also strongly made by Maria Sticchi Damiani. Therefore, unless referring to activities organized and named by others, such as the Helsinki seminar on Bachelor degrees, I will refer to first and second tier systems or first tier and second degrees rather than "Bachelor" and "Master's". This, incidentally, is in keeping with the principles of the Diploma Supplement, and the reason is that by translating the name of a qualification, one also gives a hint of the recognition of that qualification. A Russian *bakalavr* may well be recognized on the same level as an Irish Bachelor, but that decision is for a competent recognition authority to make and not for a translator.

QUALIFICATION STRUCTURES AND INITIATIVES

The Bologna structure

The København seminar focuses on qualification structures, a topic that is of course at the heart of the Bologna Process. As Director General Jens Peter Jacobsen of the Danish Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation said in his opening remarks: We are here at this seminar to develop the Bologna Process. One of the stated goals of the European Higher Education Area is to establish a qualification structure consisting of a first degree of at least three years' duration (today, we would probably have said of at least 180 ECTS credits), of a second degree and of a doctoral degree. The Bologna Ministers also explicitly said that the first degree should be relevant to the labor market. Since this is at least an implicit goal of both the second degree and the doctoral degree, we may safely assume that all parts of the "Bologna" degree structure should be relevant

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[1] Cf. Article I.1 of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention, which defines a higher education qualification as "Any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a higher education programme".

to the labor market as well as serve as a basis for further studies (with the exception, of course, of the doctoral degree, which will not lead to a further formal qualification, but which will nonetheless serve as the basis for further development of real competence through research).

That is, however, about as much as the documents of the Bologna Process so far say about the qualification structure, and that is one reason why I believe the København seminar is an important contribution to the elaboration of the European Higher Education Area. We have a skeleton of a Bologna qualification structure, and I believe what we already have has the potential to be helpful because it provides the beginning of a framework within which we can locate higher education qualifications from various European countries. However, like Stephen Adam, who spoke of this framework as something of an empty shell, I also believe that this qualification structure needs to be developed further for the European Higher Education Area to become a reality, and that the main contribution of the København seminar to the Bologna Process will be to launch a debate on how this could be done as well as to make some proposals. Hopefully, some will emerge at the end of this report. To quote the Danish Qualifications Framework: "Locating the degrees in the context of the terms used in the Bologna Declaration only provides limited additional value unless supplemented with a description of the individual degrees"[2].

In developing a qualification structure for the European Higher Education Area, it will be helpful to take account of developments at various levels in Europe, and Stephen Adam's report provides an excellent overview of a good number of initiatives and developments.

These come in several categories, and I will list them briefly for reference and recapitualtion. The first set concerns international attempts at describing qualifications.

Joint Quality Initiative

The *Joint Quality Initiative* (JQI) is an informal network for quality assurance and the accreditation of first and second tier degrees, and it has elaborated what has come to be known as the Dublin Descriptors as well as the Amsterdam Consensus. The JQI, consisting of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain (specifically represented by Catalunya), Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, has sought to establish generic descriptions for first and second degrees.

Bologna seminars

Two official Bologna seminars, both held in Helsinki in February 2001 and March 2003, respectively, have attempted to describe first and second degrees[3]. These descriptions include workload expressed in terms of ECTS credits and level, and they underline the need to provide a description of the orientation and profile of the qualification in the

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[2] Towards a Danish "Qualifications Framework" for higher education (final report of January 15, 2003), p. 13.
[3] The two seminars were referred to as being on Bachelor and Master's degrees, respectively.

accompanying Diploma Supplement. The consideration of second degrees was much helped by a recent EUA study[4].

A Bologna seminar on recognition issues in the Bologna Process, organized by the Council of Europe and the Portuguese authorities in April 2002 addressed a set of recommendations to various actors in higher education, including to the Berlin Summit to be held in September 2003. In particular, this seminar emphasized the importance of moving toward recognizing qualifications on the basis of learning outcomes and competences rather than on the formal characteristics of the study programs leading to the qualification, such as length of study. The seminar also underlined the role of the ENIC and NARIC Networks[5] in this respect, recommended that all countries party to the Bologna Process ratify the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention and underlined the importance of providing adequate and relevant information on qualifications.

Another Bologna seminar, focusing on credit transfer and accumulation and organized by the European University Association and the Swiss authorities in October 2002, emphasized the importance of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) as a credit *transfer* system and also its potential as a credit *accumulation* system.

The Tuning Project

The Tuning Project, coordinated by the universities of Deusto and Groningen and financed by the European Commission, has sought to establish learning outcomes at first and second degree level in a number of academic disciplines[6]. A particularly interesting feature of the Tuning Project, presented at the conference by Julia Gonzalez, is that it drew a distinction between generic and subject specific competences. The former include the capacity for analysis and synthesis, the capacity to learn, problem solving, capacity for applying knowledge in practice, concern for quality and information management skills. The Tuning Project is important because it is, to my knowledge, the first attempt to establish learning outcomes on such a wide basis, and also because it shows how difficult this is. However, the inherent difficulty in establishing learning outcomes should be taken as an encouragement to undertake further work, and not as an indication that it may not be worth the effort, because this undertaking is crucial to the definition of a qualification structure as well as to the recognition of the qualifications that emanate from this structure.

Transnational European Evaluation Project

Last, but not least, the Transnational European Evaluation Project (TEEP), which was launched in 2002 and is currently under way and coordinated by the European Network

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[4] Andrejs Rauhvargers and Christian Tauch: *Survey on Masters Degrees and Joint Degrees in Europe* (Bruxelles 2002: European University Association).
[5] http://www.enic-naric.net
[6] Business, education science, geology, history, mathematics; "synergy groups" have been established in physics, chemistry, languages, humanitarian development, law, medicine, mechanical engineering and veterinary science.

of Quality Assurance (ENQA), seeks to develop a European methodology for the use of common criteria for quality assurance. In this, it builds on initiatives like the Tuning Project and the descriptors for first and second degrees developed by the Joint Quality Initiative.

QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS

At national level, some attempts have been made to define qualification frameworks, and Stephen Adam refers extensively to the Danish, Irish, United Kingdom[7] and Scottish frameworks. It may be worth making the point that all higher education systems have a qualifications framework. What distinguishes the frameworks surveyed for this conference, however, is that they have gone a good step beyond the traditional frameworks in emphasizing not only input factors and formal characteristics but also output factors such as learning outcomes, and that they are explicit about some elements that have traditionally been assumed or understood.

There is perhaps no agreed definition of a qualifications framework, but it is worth bearing in mind what Stephen Adam says in his report:

> *A national qualifications framework is simply a systematic description of an education system's qualifications where all learning achievements are measured and related to each other. A European qualifications framework would amount to an agreement about a common structure or architecture within which different national qualifications could be located. It is essential to stress that this should not entail the creation of identical qualifications in terms of delivery, content or approach.[8]*

Stephen Adam goes on to outline some of the possible functions of a qualifications framework, which include:

- make explicit the purposes of qualifications;

- raise the awareness of citizens/employers about qualifications;

- improve access and social inclusion;

- delineate points of access and overlap;

- facilitate recognition and mobility;

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[7] In this context, covering England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
[8] Stephen Adam: *Qualifications Structures in European Higher Education: To Consider Alternative Approaches for Clarifying the Cycles and Levels in European Higher Education Qualifications*, section 1.2.

- identify alternative routes;

- position qualifications in relation to one another;

- show routes for progression as well as barriers[9].

Not all qualifications frameworks will fulfill all of these functions, but Stephen Adam's list is still a very useful guide.

The aims stipulated for the Scottish framework are also worth quoting:

> *"The general aims of the SCQF are to:*
>
> - *help people of all ages and circumstances to access appropriate education and training over their lifetime to fulfill their personal, social and economic potential*
>
> - *enable employers, learners and the public in general to understand the full range of Scottish qualifications, how the qualifications relate to each other, and how different types of qualifications can contribute to improving the skills of the workforce.*
>
> *The SCQF will provide a national vocabulary for describing learning opportunities and make the relationships between qualifications clearer. It will also clarify entry and exit points, and routes for progression within and across education and training sectors and increase the opportunities for credit transfer. In these ways it will assist learners to plan their progress and minimise duplication of learning.[10]"*

Thus, a qualifications framework is concerned with describing each qualification as well as with how the various qualifications interrelate and how students can progress from one qualification to another. Qualifications frameworks, at least the ones covered by Stephen Adam's reports, are not concerned with higher education alone, rather they cover the whole range of qualifications, both theoretically and practically oriented, from beginning level to research qualifications.

The common point of the qualifications frameworks covered by the report is that they seek to define levels in terms of learning outcomes and competencies. As Stephen Adam says about the Irish framework: "The approach is to build from the bottom up in terms of how outcomes should be expressed in awards". The concrete make up of the national qualifications frameworks vary, thus the United Kingdom framework distinguishes between 9 levels, whereas the Irish has 10 and the Scottish 12. The frameworks tend to emphasize operational skills, in the broad sense of what one can do with a given qualification, rather than the attitudes or values the qualifications convey, but it is worth noting that the Danish framework explicitly mentions "democratic competence" as a

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[9] This list is taken from Stephen Adam's Power Point presentation at the seminar.
[10] An Introduction to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (September 2001), Executive summary, p. vii

general goal at all levels and also stipulates "responsibility in relation to own research (research ethics)" [11] as a goal for doctoral qualifications.

Some reflections

Clearly, the developments, initiatives and frameworks described by Stephen Adam and discussed at this conference are very valuable, and their importance is not limited to the framework within which they were designed. On this basis, then, I would like to take this opportunity to offer some reflections on where we are and where we might go from here.

A qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area?

The starting point for my reflections is two seemingly contradictory tendencies at work today. On the one hand, there is a tendency to define study programs in more flexible ways, so that students may combine elements and disciplines in ways that suit them, whether out of personal interest, to improve employment opportunities or for other reasons. This is positive in that it allows individuals to tailor make their studies and thus increase their relevance.   However, this development also presents a formidable challenge, and this is the other tendency: this individualization of study programs may easily lead to confusion, and confusion may easily lead to lack of recognition of the qualification.   Therefore, we have to develop systems that allow us to describe this diverse reality within an understandable framework - in fact, within a clear qualifications framework or structure.   What the Danish Qualifications Framework says about the needs of employers for an "academic system that is simple, with as few levels as possible, and coherent, so similarities and differences clearly stand out" is undoubtedly true, and I believe this need is not limited to employers.

Therefore, establishing a transparent qualifications framework or structure should be a high priority for national education authorities, but saying this begs a question that is also raised by Stephen Adam: what is the relationship between national qualifications frameworks and a similar framework for the European Higher Education Area?

Again, allow me to make a point about terminology that is considerably more than a digression from the main line of argument: I prefer to refer to a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) rather than a "European" framework for at least two reasons. Firstly, the adjective "European" has become imprecise through overuse and is now applied to a variety of geographical and political constellations far short of its real meaning[12], and it is also used as a very imprecise quality label to describe any number of networks, diplomas and products. As one small illustration, it may be recalled that in the 1780s, the quality of Ottoman produced gunpowder had declined so dramatically that gunpowder was imported from abroad. New factories were built to

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[11] Towards a Danish "Qualifications Framework" for higher education (final report of January 15, 2003), pp. 14 and 26, respectively.
[12] See, for example, the European Commission's Communication on the role of universities in the Europe of knowledge, which defines "Europe as a whole" as the countries of the European Union, "the other Western European countries" and the candidate countries, cf. section 3.2 of the Communication.

relaunch Ottoman gunpowder production, and the aim was to reach what was commonly referred to as "European standards"[13], which in this context were neither a law nor an ISO type industry standard, but simply an aspiration for high or at least improved quality.

Secondly, the name given to a qualifications framework also indicates the authority with which this framework has been established. In the case of national education systems, this authority is clear, and it is safe to refer to a Danish, Irish, United Kingdom or Scottish qualifications framework. The authority is less clear at supranational level, but if the European Higher Education Area is to be come a reality, some kind of agreement on a qualification structure or framework as well as on its relationship to the frameworks of individual higher education systems is needed. An EHEA reference will therefore hopefully make sense, whereas an imprecise reference to "European" will not, I am afraid.

One could, of course, see the EHEA framework as a synthesis or a lowest common denominator of the frameworks of its constituent higher education systems. However, a more proactive approach would seem preferable. As Jens Peter Jacobsen said, we need to do more than develop some 30 different national frameworks. Even if some "Bologna" countries have established well-conceived national qualifications frameworks of the kind described in Stephen Adam's report, most have not, and this would be an opportunity to outline an EHEA qualifications framework before most countries start elaborating their own. While this work should of course draw on the experience of those that have a qualifications framework, work on an EHEA framework could be very helpful to the majority of countries that have yet to establish their own frameworks. What Julia Gonzalez said about the Tuning Project being an experience of joint learning could hopefully also be applied to the development of a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area. At the same time, this would provide an opportunity to develop a common understanding of the key concepts and parameters of a qualifications framework that should also serve as a basis for qualifications frameworks of the higher education systems that make up the European Higher Education Area. Peter van der Hijden in his introductory remarks referred to the need to bring together the various national experiences and experiences in different European context, ranging from the Tuning Project and ENQA to the ENIC and NARIC Networks and the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention.

Of course, many issues remain to be addressed, and these include what we should aim at. Nick Harris defined this clearly by asking whether a qualifications framework for the EHEA should aim at information or regulation, and whether it should describe "typical" qualifications or define the absolute minimum standards or threshold. He may well have answered his own question by hinting that an EHEA framework might have to address all of these aspects. Certainly, one should be careful not to be too directive at the level of EHEA, as national authorities in cooperation higher education institutions, students and other stakeholders should have a key role in defining qualifications frameworks for their

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[13] Philip Mansel: *Constantinople - City of the World's Desire 1453 - 1924* (London 1997: Penguin), p. 254.

own systems. The goal should not be to arrive at identical frameworks, and the reasons for this also includes one mentioned specifically by Stephen Adam: qualifications frameworks are also about the ways in which we define and transmit our culture. Nevertheless, it is difficult to imagine an EHEA framework totally devoid of prescriptive elements. Again, I think of an EHEA framework as an image of Europe: a unique balance of unity and diversity, where considerable variety is found within a recognizable overarching frameworks. Cars, buses and trucks come in many different shapes, sizes and colors, but it helps if they all drive on the same side of the road. If the cars drive on the right, the trucks on the left and the buses in the shade, the system will quickly reveal its limitations.

Workload, level, quality, learning outcomes and profile

Qualifications are generally described in terms of their workload and level, as is indicated by the frequent reference to Bachelor and Master's degrees or, for that matter, to one and two tier higher education systems, as well as to the number of years of study required. Luckily, the latter is now increasingly being replaced by a reference to the number of (ECTS) credits required, so that we are no more likely to speak about a qualification requiring 180 ECTS credits than one requiring three years of study. Level is, of course, one important parameter in describing qualifications, and it is a prominent feature of the frameworks described in Stephen Adam's report. Thus, the Danish framework, at least in its English version, refers to Bachelor, Candidate, Master and PhD levels at higher education level, whereas the United Kingdom, Irish and Scottish frameworks outline 9, 10 and 12 levels. Workload is also an important parameter, and it is particularly interesting to see that some qualifications frameworks combine these two requirements, so that any given qualification is described in terms of both workload and level. To take just two examples, a Scottish Master's degree is described as being of level 11 in the Scottish Qualifications Framework, and it consists of at least 180 SCOTCAT points of which a minimum of 150 should be at level 11. Similarly, a United Kingdom Master's degree is classified as level 7 in the UK framework, it consists of a minimum of 180 credits, and of these at least 150 must be taken at level 7, and none of the remaining must be at a lower level than 6.

While level is an indispensable part of the description of a qualification, it is not sufficient. If it were, what the Bologna Declaration has to say about a two-tier system might have been enough to establish an EHEA framework. Whether you were to describe your own qualifications framework or to recognize a qualification from a foreign framework, it would be difficult to do so without referring to quality. This is, in fact, an area in which developments have been quite rapid, in that we have moved from implicit assumptions of quality in education systems that have essentially been state run to explicit provision for quality assurance in more diverse systems. As late as 1997, when the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention was adopted, there was still discussion of whether a formal quality assurance system was necessary or not, but today, the discussion focuses on what such a system should look like.

For good reason, quality assurance is one of the action lines of the Bologna Process. Provision for quality assurance is a part of the public responsibility for the higher

education framework[14], which implies that public authorities are responsible for defining and establishing this provision, but they do not have to carry it out themselves. So as to avoid misunderstandings, I would also like to make it clear that I consider quality assurance to be a part of national higher education systems, and that I am not in favor of any kind of European quality assurance agency. However, I believe criteria and procedures for quality assurance should be agreed through a European network. As Nick Harris said, there should be an overarching Code of Good Practice for the management of quality and standards.

As several speakers mentioned, there is an increasing emphasis on learning outcomes or, to put it crudely, on what you can do with a qualification rather than on how it has been earned. This is a challenge, and a project like Tuning has shown both how important this is and how difficult it is. Still, challenges are there to be met and not to be run away from, and defining learning outcomes in such a way that they can be an important factor in describing qualifications frameworks is a challenge to all major stakeholders in higher education in Europe and another reason for them to intensify their dialogue and cooperation.

Thus, we see that workload, level and quality are all given due consideration and that we at least bring up learning outcomes quite frequently in discussion, even if these considerations are not always explicitly placed in the context of a qualification structure or framework. A fifth factor is given far less consideration, and I am referring to the profile of a qualification. There are, of course, limits to what a national qualifications framework – and probably more so for a framework for the European Higher Education Area – can say about the profile of qualifications, since these may differ considerably from one academic discipline to another, since some of the requirements may be highly specific to one discipline and since national traditions may also vary. However, the ways in which you can combine credits to give your qualification an appropriate profile is crucial in making sure, to use Nick Harris' phrase, that a degree is something more than the sum of its component courses.

Nevertheless, there is implicit agreement on some important points. While a first degree may be specified as being of 180 or 240 ECTS credits of the appropriate level, there is also an unstated agreement that there should be some kind of coherence to the qualification. Students who earned 10 credits in history, 10 in each of two foreign languages, 10 in mathematics and so on with no further concentration in any area may have had a taste of higher education, but they would hardly have earned a higher education degree even if the total amount of credits thus earned were to add up to 180 or more. In practice, such an eclectic menu would at least be discouraged by higher education institutions, but it may be useful to give some thought to whether a qualifications framework for the EHEA should not give some indication as to profile and concentration. In particular at first degree level, traditions may vary considerably from one country to another, so that it may be difficult to reach firm agreement, but at the very

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[14] A thorough discussion of the public responsibility for higher education will be found in the proceedings of the Bologna seminar on the Social Dimension of Higher Education, organized by the Greek Ministry of Education in Athenai on February 19 – 20, 2003. The proceedings are under publication.

least, the issue deserves to be explored. At second degree and doctoral degree level, it may be easier to reach agreement, and maybe one should start here.

However, even if agreement on the details may be difficult, it may also be worth pointing out that discussions are likely to focus on the right balance between specialization or concentration on the one hand and a broader orientation on the other, and not on the principle of either. Essentially, three types of courses are all seen as legitimate within a given study program:

(i)   those that contribute directly to the student's specialization or main area of competence;

(ii)   those that are in other academic areas but that underpin this specialization;

(iii)   those that are in distinct academic areas and do not contribute to or underpin the student's specialization, but that give his or her qualification an added dimension by broadening the student's horizon or by providing a basic competence in a second academic area.

Admittedly, these may seem like abstract speculations, so let us take an example, at the risk of falling into some of the many pits such an exercise seems to offer.

A student whose academic specialty is history should probably earn a considerable part of his or her credits from history courses, the level of which should be appropriate to the level of the qualification. However, such a student would most likely also need some knowledge of relevant areas – we may perhaps call these "supporting disciplines"[15]. According to the student's specialization within the quite broad discipline of history, these "supporting disciplines" could be economics, statistics, a foreign language or a whole range of other disciplines, and the courses may not necessarily be of the same level as the qualification the student is working toward. A history student at second degree level may well need a basic introduction to statistics, but there should also be a limit on how many introductory courses in "supporting disciplines" may count toward the degree. Finally, the same student may wish to broaden his or her horizon or add a second area of competence by taking a number of credits not related to the relevant specialization within history. That credits outside of a student's academic specialization are important to his or her overall competence on the labor market was strongly emphasized by Stina Vrang Elias.

The distinction between "supporting disciplines" and non-related credits may sometimes be difficult to draw and may depend on the precise specialization the student chooses, in our case within the field of history. This freedom to choose some credits that do not seem immediately "relevant" from the strict point of view of the main discipline is also important in avoiding that the boundaries of academic disciplines be "fossilized" and to

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[15] May I be forgiven for calquing this term on the one my native language, at least in a previous system, used to describe such disciplines: *støttefag* or *redskapsfag*.

encourage a measure of transdisciplinarity. A student of Latin American history can hardly do without Spanish and Portuguese, while for a student of economic history, Spanish and Portuguese may provide an added qualification and broaden his or her horizon. The example also illustrates the limits of a qualifications framework: it should stipulate the main outlines and principles but it should not attempt to regulate all details.

We have, then, examples of national qualifications frameworks that make explicit stipulations concerning workload and level, that operate within higher education systems with adequate provision for quality assurance and that increasingly seek to define learning outcomes. Could we take this as a model also for an EHEA qualifications framework and add considerations on the profile of qualifications? This will not be easy, but it is a challenge to which I believe we should rise. Expressing this in clear and simple terms will not be less of a challenge. As Stina Vrang Elias said: "Industry needs something much simpler than you have ever imagined". While those of us in higher education may be forgiven for questioning whether reality can be made quite that simple, or indeed if employers are not in actual fact guided by a slightly more complex view of reality, the injunction to avoid undue complexity is well taken and should be translated into practice.

Stina Vrang Elias' comment also points to the importance of involving a broad range of stakeholders in the elaboration of qualifications frameworks, whether at national level or for the European Higher Education Area. These include the social partners, and higher education institutions should play a very important role. The same is true of students, and I was amazed that in the very broad range of stakeholders contributing to the Scottish framework, unless I have misread the information, students seem to be absent. I also believe that no national framework should be elaborated without reference to relevant developments elsewhere.

What do we measure?

The national frameworks covered by Stephen Adam's report are mainly focused on measurable skills and competencies, and this is by no way an unnatural bias, both because what is measurable is more easily described in terms of a framework and because one of the main purposes of education is to develop and convey skills useful to the labor market. Nevertheless, a qualifications framework based exclusively on such skills and competencies would miss some important dimensions that distinguish education from training and, in a more profound sense, makes human existence worth the effort. It is therefore important to note that the qualifications frameworks surveyed include references to intellectual competencies[16]; generic cognitive skills, such as evaluation and critical analysis[17] or critically evaluate new concepts and evidence[18]. As already mentioned, the Danish framework is also explicit about developing values and attitudes, even if it assumes that this factor is present to the same degree at all levels of the

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[16] The Danish framework
[17] The Scottish framework
[18] The UK framework

framework and therefore does not specify or describe the degree of attainment at each level.

Developing qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area could be a welcome opportunity to think more systematically about the purpose of higher education, since the qualification framework should presumably be defined with reference to these objectives. I believe higher education has at least four fundamental objectives:

(i)   preparation for the labor market;

(ii)   preparation for life as active citizens in democratic society;

(iii)   personal development;

(iv)   development and maintenance an advanced knowledge base.

This point was also made by Bastian Baumann, even if his list differed slightly from mine.

Ideally, a qualifications framework should take account of all these elements, even if I realize that developing adequate descriptors will be a tall order. However, I believe the Bologna Process would be well advised to pay greater attention to its vision for higher education, both in terms of a qualifications framework and in the broader discussion leading us toward 2010.

The range of qualifications

All the national frameworks surveyed for the København conference are comprehensive in that they span the full range of qualifications from basic education[19] to doctoral degrees. This is, in my view, highly commendable, and I would encourage other countries to do the same. In his presentation, Seán Ó Foghlú outlined a number of other initiatives that ago in the direction of defining competencies and qualifications in other areas of education, such as the København Declaration for vocational education and training, European lifelong learning policies, EU policies and Directives on recognition for professional purposes[20] and the OECD frameworks of qualifications review. He also emphasized the need for links to schooling.

These initiatives and links are important, and when the time comes to start work on a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area, they should be taken into consideration as concerns content as well as methodology. For example, the extended use of working groups with clearly defined areas of work used in some of the other context may, as emphasized by both Seán Ó Foghlú and Peter van der Hijden, be a good model for work on an EHEA framework.

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[19] In the case of the Scottish framework, there is explicit mention of a level describing outcomes for learners with severe and profound learning difficulties.
[20] Meaning, in general, qualifications giving access to regulated professions, typical examples of which are medicine, dentistry, and architecture.

The question is, however, whether close structural links to other sectors of education or a comprehensive qualifications framework are a realistic goal for a framework above the national level, at least in the near future. With some regret, I would think, as Nick Harris also said in his presentation, that we would do better to focus on elaborating a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area that would focus on higher education qualifications, but preferably also including considerations on qualifications giving access to higher education. If we stick to the terms of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention, such a framework would be for "qualifications concerning higher education".

One specific issue is whether an EHEA framework should include qualifications situated between entry level and the first degree, something akin to the UK Foundation Degree or the Danish Vocational Academy Degree (AK). Strictly speaking, these qualifications are not covered by current Bologna policies, but they are a reality in many systems. Should not the EHEA framework take account of this reality? I believe that if it does not, we will have a weakened and less useful framework.

Another issue, raised by Stephen Adam, concerns the place and role of what in shorthand is called "lifelong learning qualifications". These will be the topic of a Bologna seminar to be organized by the Czech authorities in Praha on June 5 – 7, so it may be premature to address this issue in detail, but Stephen Adam is right in pointing out that some of these qualifications belong in a framework of higher education qualifications. However, I think we also need to ask whether the shorthand is really correct rather than misleading. The term "lifelong learning qualifications" would seem to indicate that we are talking about a separate set of qualifications for those who come to higher education late in life or through alternative routes, and I am not at all sure that this is the right approach. Rather, I would prefer to think in terms of alternative learning paths that more often than not lead to the same qualifications earned by those following more classical learning paths.

What use for higher education institutions?

Even though the Bologna Process was launched by Ministers responsible for higher education, the European Higher Education Area cannot become a reality without the active contributions of higher education institutions, students and staff, the large majority of whom have to identify with the goals for the Area. An important question is therefore what use institutions can make of a national qualifications framework as well as one for the EHEA.

A qualifications framework should guide and be of help to institutions in designing their higher educations programs and curricula. Admittedly, a qualifications framework could be seen as a restraint, but only if it is overly detailed and directive. It should lay down certain ground rules to be followed, but its main function should be that of providing guidance and assistance – along with improved acceptance of the study programs outside of the institution. It should also be emphasized that within the overall rules of the qualifications framework, the individual institution will have considerable freedom in the design of its programs.

By stipulating broad requirements as to the workload, level, quality and profile of qualifications, the framework will offer basic guidance that must, however, be implemented at institutional level. Within these basic outlines, a framework will also offer institutions for creative curriculum development and creative ways of complementing competence in a core area with competence in other academic fields that will strengthen students' position on the labor market as well as contribute to their personal development. While a strong competence in a given field will continue to be of paramount importance, academic disciplines are no longer separated by impenetrable walls. Rather, interdisciplinary approaches add new dimensions to academic programs, and the qualifications frameworks must make such approaches possible.

Quality assurance and the qualifications framework

As we have already seen, quality is an important element in the make-up of a qualification. Making provision for quality assurance is increasingly seen as one of the basic responsibilities of public authorities for higher education, and this is an important development in attitudes in European higher education over the past 5 years or so. Public authorities may choose to carry out quality assurance themselves or leave this task to others, but the responsibility for the framework for quality assurance will and should remain with public authorities.

It may also be worth underlining that, in my view, quality assurance is the responsibility of the individual higher education system and thus, in the majority of cases, a national responsibility. There should be European cooperation, and cooperation within the EHEA, as concerns methodology, criteria and procedures, and there should be transparency about the results of the quality assurance exercise, but I am not in favor of a European quality assurance agency, nor even one for the EHEA.

Hence, it is important that quality assurance agencies take the aims of the qualifications frameworks into account in their assessment of higher education institutions and/or programs and make the extent to which institutions and/or programs implement and meet the goals of the qualifications framework of the country concerned, as well as an EHEA framework, an important element in the overall outcome of the assessment exercise. Higher education institutions should also take account of the qualifications frameworks in their internal quality assurance processes. At the same time, the qualifications frameworks should define its quality goals in such a way as to be of relevance to quality assessment.

Recognition

A qualifications framework would be an important contribution to facilitating the recognition of qualifications within the European Higher Education Area. As Bente Kristensen, speaking on behalf of the Danish Rectors' Conference, said in her introductory remarks: a more systematically defined degree system will facilitate recognition. I also very much agree with the point made by Andrejs Rauhvargers underlining that with the Bologna Process, recognition has developed from being a technical issue for specialists to one of the main concerns of higher education policy in

Europe. However, it is important not to create expectations about "automatic recognition", as recognition depends on the purpose of the application and as, even in seemingly obvious cases, a minimum of assessment is needed. Recognition, as Andrejs Rauhvargers pointed out, is about assessing a foreign qualification with a view to finding a correct place and path in another country's education or employment system. A qualifications framework for the EHEA will greatly facilitate the evaluation, but the evaluation will still have to be done.

An EHEA framework would allow us to relate the variety of higher education qualifications within the Area to a commonly understood qualifications framework, and this would be a significant step forward. In particular, it should facilitate the most basic form of recognition: that ascribing a level within one's own higher education system to a foreign qualification, and for many purposes, including many kinds of recognition for the labor market, this would be sufficient. For example, in several countries, candidates for employment in the civil service need a higher education degree at either first or second level, but the specialization and profile of the qualification may in many cases not be important. I believe that our goal should be to elaborate an EHEA qualifications framework where any first degree within the Area is recognized as a first degree within any other part of the Area, and the same should of course be true for second degrees and doctoral degrees. Thus, we would have "EHEA degrees", in the sense of easier recognition, if not in the sense of a common education system.

For other purposes, however, recognition is somewhat more complex and must take account of factors other than level, e.g. profile. Even these more complex cases, however, would be much helped by an EHEA framework, and they should otherwise follow the provisions of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention, which all states party to the Bologna Process should be invited to ratify as soon as possible. I am, incidentally, pleased to note that our host country, Denmark, deposited its instrument of ratification on March 20, 2003[21]. The ENIC and NARIC Networks should be invited to contribute to a debate on a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area as well as give consideration to how such a framework could simplify the recognition of qualifications within the framework.

However, as was emphasized by Bastian Baumann as well as by several participants in the debates, an overarching qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area should not only facilitate recognition within the EHEA; it should also facilitate the process of recognition of qualifications emanating from higher education systems that are a part of the Area and other parts of the world, and *vice versa*. Therefore, a qualifications framework for the EHEA is also important for what is commonly referred to as the external dimension of Bologna.

Recognition is also much helped by what we have come to refer to as transparency instruments, above all the Diploma Supplement and the European Credit Transfer System. These instruments describe a qualification in terms of the system within which it

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[21] An updated overview of ratifications and signatures may be found at http://conventions.coe.int, search for ETS 165.

is issued. National qualifications framework will be valuable elements in describing qualifications, but an EHEA framework would be an even more important guide in hat we would then be able to relate all qualifications issued within any system of the European Higher Education Area to a commonly understood framework. When we will have progressed on the development of an EHEA framework, transparency instruments such as the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS should be reviewed to make sure that the information provided is clearly related to the EHEA framework.

Mobility

Increased academic mobility both within the European Higher Education Area and between the Area and the rest of the world is another key goal of the Bologna Process, and an EHEA qualifications framework would be an important contribution to this goal.

So far, I have not drawn any clear distinction between the terms framework and structure, and I am not aware that any meaningful distinction actually exists. Reverting to the concept of structure does, however, allow me to make what I think is a valid point. Essentially, structures come in two varieties: those that are closed and would tend to lock people in and those that are open and help people move. An EHEA qualifications framework must be an open structure that helps mobility - it must be a bridge and not a fortress. A qualifications framework should be an essential part of the infrastructure of the European Higher Education Area and help students and graduates move between its constituent systems.

Therefore, qualifications frameworks have to be constructed in such a way that some of the elements of the construction can be foreign made and still be immediately usable in the structure. This is a principle of major organized exchange programs such as ERASMUS, NORDPLUS or CEEPUS, but we also know that there are a number of problems with the recognition of study periods taken abroad.

Another example is joint degrees[22], which is a potentially powerful instrument in encouraging academic mobility, but which also suffer from recognition problems, to the extent that we are now preparing a draft Recommendation on the recognition of joint degrees to be submitted to the Lisboa Recognition Convention Committee. Since qualifications frameworks lay down the ground rules for how qualifications may be made up, it is worth asking whether they should not explicitly allow for joint degrees or other forms of combination of credits earned at the home institution and other institutions as well as credits earned through other relevant programs or experiences.

FINAL THOUGHTS

I admit that some of the preceding paragraphs have been complex and that they may have tried to express in too compressed a form what I consider as important considerations in

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[22] See Andrejs Rauhvargers' article in Andrejs Rauhvargers and Christian Tauch: *Survey on Masters Degrees and Joint Degrees in Europe* (Bruxelles 2002: European University Association).

the construction of the European Higher Education Area. The reader will therefore be forgiven for letting escape a sigh of relief when seeing the subtitle of this final part of the report.

I have sought to outline some key elements and proposals for further action, and these are admittedly relatively ambitious. Much remains to be doen, and much remains unclear. Even the vision for the Euroeapn Higher Education Area to be established in 2010 is not completely clear. Maybe we can take comfort in Seán Ó Foghlú's comparison with the Peace Process of Northern Ireland, where some lack of clarity was necessary to bring all concerned parties on board, and where the initial years of the Peace Process relied on space for the different sides to have their own interpretation. However, ultimately, these interpretations must to a large extent converge.

The idea of setting up a European Higher Education Area in little more than a decade is in itself an ambitious undertaking and cannot be realized without ambitious proposals. To those who worry that we may be describing a Utopia, I would be tempted to borrow my answer from the Spanish philosopher Fernando Savater: in that case, there is little reason to worry. The dangerous Utopias are not those that remain Utopia, but those that may actually materialize[23]. Granted, Savater is describing 1984 and the like, but the point may be worth keeping in mind even for a less dramatic field such as higher education, all the more so as, even if the damage caused by a bad education may not be immediate, it may be devastating.

In my view, the answer has to be that the European Higher Education Area is not Utopia, but reality in the making, and it depends on our clarifying and agreeing on concepts and priorities in a range of higher education policy areas. If we want the Bologna Process to end up in a European Higher Education Area by 2010, we have to be more explicit about its goals as well as about its structure, and an EHEA qualifications framework will be an important contribution to in this sense. It is worth bearing in mind Peter van der Hijden's two conditions for a qualifications framework to be useful:

(i) it must in fact be what it claims to be: a framework – nothing less, but also nothing more;

(ii) it must be well known and accepted.

I would go as far as to say that an overarching qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area is a *conditio sine qua non* to the setting up of a European Higher Education Area that is broad in terms of geography and firm in terms of the implementation of higher education policies, that addresses the whole range of purposes of higher education, that is useful to the labor market, society in a broader sense and the individual, and that ultimately furthers education as defined by Ambrose Bierce:

> *Education, n. That which discloses to the wise and disguises*
> *from the foolish their lack of understanding[24].*

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[23] Fernando Savater : *El contenido de la felicidad* (Madrid 2002: Aguilar), pp. 50 – 53.
[24] Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary*

RECOGNITION, QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ECTS

Recognition issues in the Bologna Process, Lisbon, 11-12 April 2002

Recognition issues in the Bologna Process

International seminar, Lisbon, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian
11-12 April 2002

A Council of Europe contribution to the European Higher Education Area, in co-operation with the Ministry of Education in Portugal

Recommendations

To the higher education institutions

- Develop discussion on learning outcomes and competences, in order to help move recognition procedures away from formal issues such as length of study and names of courses, and towards procedures based on the results of student learning
- Continue to develop cooperation between institutions leading to joint degrees and other forms of automatic recognition, as confidence building measures leading to more widespread acceptance of mutual recognition
- Examine what information is provided regarding recognition procedures at the institution, to ensure students and other stakeholders are correctly informed
- Examine how this information is provided, to ensure that it is easily accessible in a transparent and effective way
- Ensure adequate internal structures, to ensure that recognition procedures are carried out in an efficient and transparent manner
- Develop appropriate human resources and staff policies to meet the challenges, especially to ensure that all staff (academic and administrative) are fully aware of European best practice in the field
- Include recognition issues and procedures in your internal quality assurance procedures, to continue to develop these fields for the benefit of the institution, its staff and students.

To academic networks, including student organisations:

- Ensure your members are fully aware of recognition issues and practices, in order to develop a more coherent approach to these issues across Europe

- Monitor recognition issues affecting your members, in order to take action where necessary and to provide feedback to the European higher education community on areas of best practice or concern
- Develop consensus on learning outcomes and competences, in order to promote a European approach in these fields.

To ENIC and NARIC networks

- Examine ways in which a European virtual recognition platform could be developed, making accumulated existing knowledge and experience more visible and accessible, in order to promote existing good practice and to ensure widespread European visibility and awareness
- Develop cooperation and exchange with national and European quality assurance bodies, to ensure that recognition issues are also covered by quality assurance procedures
- Examine the feasibility of supplying standard guidance to prospective students (e.g. in the form of a fact sheet on recognition issues and a list of basic questions which they should take into consideration), to assist students regarding what to look for and which questions to ask when choosing institutions and dealing with recognition issues
- Assist the relevant academic and other partners in developing frameworks for the description of learning outcomes
- Examine the feasibility of creating an international working group to develop a European code of good practice for the provision of recognition information

To governments

- Provide incentives for the reform of institutional management practice in the field of recognition, to encourage higher education institutions to develop effective and efficient institutional procedures when dealing with recognition issues
- Ensure legislation is adequate and forward looking, to ensure that higher education institutions and recognition bodies are in a position to apply best European practice
- Ensure adequate human and financial resources at Ministry, ENIC/NARIC and institutional level to meet the new challenges of recognition
- Ensure an integrated national system for recognition is available via the ENIC/NARIC, to provide a clearly visible one-stop-shop for students and other stakeholders in each country
- Include recognition issues in the remit of appropriate quality assurance bodies.

To the Council of Europe, possibly in partnership with UNESCO, the European Commission and other international governmental and non-governmental organisations

- Monitor the implementation of the Lisbon Convention and how measures are applied in individual countries, including any gaps between implementation and the legal provisions, in order to provide feedback to the Bologna Process, national governments, the European academic community, including students and other stakeholders
- Examine the feasibility of developing a tool for use by citizens to gauge their own competences, as a contribution to the discussion on learning outcomes and competences, and as a way to encourage access to higher education and/or the labour market

To Ministers responsible for Higher Education, who will meet in Berlin in 2003

- In response to concerns expressed by a part of the higher education community, including some students, make clear that new degree structures should continue to ensure that higher education promotes three main qualities in its graduates:
  - Preparation for the labour market
  - Preparation for active citizenship
  - Preparation for continued personal development
- Encourage further work at national and European levels on the issue of learning outcomes
- Encourage the development of a stronger European awareness of recognition issues, by strengthening existing networks and promoting more open access to relevant information
- Invite all European States of the Bologna Process to ratify the Lisbon Convention, as a major element to facilitate the creation of the European Higher Education Area.

General Rapporteur

Lewis Purser
EUA - European University Association

Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research (CD-ESR)

RECOGNITION ISSUES IN THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

International seminar, Lisboa, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian 11 – 12 April 2002

A Council of Europe contribution to the European Higher Education Area, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education of Portugal

Report by the general rapporteur

Directorate General IV: Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport (Directorate of School, Out-of-School and Higher Education/Higher Education and Research Division)

Recognition in the European Higher Education Area

Report by Lewis Purser, European University Association General Rapporteur

INTRODUCTION

This international seminar highlighted the crucial role which recognition issues will play in the ongoing development of the European Higher Education Area.

It took place on the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Council of Europe / UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (the "Lisbon Recognition Convention"). The seminar therefore considered issues relating to the implementation of the Convention, now signed by 40 countries and ratified by 28 of these.

The seminar also thoroughly considered specific issues arising from the Council of Europe/ENIC report on Recognition Issues in the Bologna Process, including:

- the assessment of learning outcomes and non-traditional qualifications;
- the recognition of qualifications from transnational education arrangements including the implementation of the UNESCO / Council of Europe Code of Good Practice;
- recognition for the labour market, and the respective roles of higher education institutions, the ENIC (European Network of Information Centres) / NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centres) and employers;

the need to promote transparency by ensuring an improved quality of information on recognition issues and procedures.

The seminar was attended by approximately 130 representatives of Ministries, including members of the Bologna follow-up group, higher education institutions, networks and student organisations, as well as recognition specialists from countries party to the Bologna Process and from other countries party to the European Cultural Convention.

As well as addressing the above issues, the seminar was also specifically designed to link closely with the European University Association / Swiss Confederation conference on the European Credit Transfer System, to be held on 11-12 October 2002 in Zürich, likewise in the framework of the Bologna Process.

BACKGROUND

The seminar served to remind participants and indeed all players in the Bologna Process of the primary purposes of recognition:

- to encourage and facilitate mobility between higher education systems and institutions, whether these be in the same or different countries;
- to encourage and facilitate access to further education;
- to encourage and facilitate access to the labour market;
- to allow for and ensure the correct use of academic titles.

The lack of fair and effective recognition procedures can likewise endanger mobility and access, to the detriment of the individuals directly concerned, but also of the academic or professional communities where those individuals will study and work, and to which individuals may also return after their period of mobility.

At a time when Europe is rapidly developing towards the goals of a knowledge society and more specifically towards the goals of the European Higher Education Area, it is crucial that recognition issues are given sufficient attention to ensure that their primary purposes are fulfilled.

Links between recognition issues and the Bologna Process

Recognition issues are also important in working towards a majority of the specific goals expressed in the Bologna Declaration and the Prague Communiqué. These goals include the:

- Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees. Without improved recognition procedures, citizens will not be able to use their qualifications, competencies and skills throughout the European Higher Education Area, and such a system will not bring the benefits which are expected;
- Adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles. Given the diversity of the academic offer currently available across Europe, recognition issues will be essential in helping clarify the adaptation of undergraduate/postgraduate structures, and in facilitating different orientations and profiles of study programmes;
- Promotion of mobility. This goal is considered by Ministers to be of utmost importance, and the full application of the provisions of the Lisbon Recognition Convention would be a significant step forward in pursuing the removal of all obstacles to the free movement of students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff;
- Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance. The seminar underlined to necessary links between quality assurance and recognition, and the need for closer co-operation between actors in these two fields, at institutional, national and European levels;
- Promotion of the European dimensions in higher education. The correct application of recognition issues can play an important facilitating role in development of partnerships and joint degrees between institutions in different countries;
- Lifelong learning. Prior learning assessment and recognition and the assessment of non-traditional qualifications are essential in facilitating lifelong learning opportunities and strategies;
- Promotion of the attractiveness of the European higher education area. Recognition issues are an integral element of ensuring the enhanced attractiveness of European higher education to students from Europe and other parts of the world.

From the presentations and discussions at the seminar, it was clear that recognition issues are now moving centre stage, having remained for some time in relative obscurity.

Without clearer, more transparent and more forward-looking recognition procedures, none of the goals mentioned above will be fully achievable.

GENERAL ISSUES

Information

Two separate surveys were undertaken in advance of the seminar – one through the Council of Europe's Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research and the members of the Bologna follow-up group, the other through the ENIC / NARIC networks. Both of these surveys touched on the topic of information currently available on recognition issues. The results of both surveys showed that the problem is not so much the lack of information *per se,* but rather the lack of targeted and transparent information and in particular information on specific education systems and qualifications. Relevant information, even within one country, is often spread over several non-linked and sometimes contradictory sources.

The flow of information to (prospective) students, graduates, employers, as well as to credential evaluators in other countries, is organised in very different ways across Europe, at both national and institutional levels. It is not clear that these main target audiences are aware of the existence of such information, or where to look for it and how to obtain it.

There is a clear need for a more pro-active approach to the flow of information, for ensuring clearer and more coherent structures at national level, and for developing European good practice in this field. A more systematic exchange of practice could lead to the development of a "virtual European platform", building on accumulated knowledge and experience. It would also be interesting to examine the usefulness of supplying standard guidance to students in the form of essential questions which they should ask when looking at potential institutions and considering recognition issues.

Recognition and Quality Assurance

As called for in the Prague Communiqué, there is a need for closer links between recognition and quality assurance at all levels.

Higher education institutions should examine closely how they treat recognition issues, and their own internal quality assurance mechanisms should also cover recognition procedures.

At national level, recognition and quality assurance procedures and practice in each country need to be linked in a much more explicit and effective way.

At European level, first contacts have been made between the ENIC / NARIC networks and the European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA). However, this co-operation needs considerable strengthening as well as extension to cover all countries of Europe.

Learning outcomes

There is general agreement on the need for a framework in which learning outcomes can be described and assessed. Such a framework will need to take account of the different contexts of learning – both academic and professional, both national and international. The different purposes for which the assessment will be used are also of importance.

Learning outcomes are important for recognition, since the basis for recognition procedures is in the process of shifting from quantitative criteria such as the length and type of courses studied, to the outcomes reached and competencies obtained during these studies. The principle question asked of the student or graduate will therefore no longer be "what did you do to obtain your degree?" but rather "what can you do now that you have obtained your degree?". This approach is of more relevance to the labour market, and is certainly more flexible when taking into account issues of lifelong learning, non-traditional learning, and other forms of non-formal educational experiences.

There is considerable scope for co-operation at European level in developing a framework for the recognition of learning outcomes and competencies. The development of this framework could be a European joint venture between the higher education institutions, employers and professional organisations, student bodies and the recognition networks. It should ensure a correct balance in order to take account of the varied intended purposes of learning, as chosen by the student, and to ensure the interests of the various groups of stakeholders. Such a framework could then be used by the higher education institutions themselves when ensuring the supply of teaching and learning.

A number of tools for documenting leaning outcomes already exist, such as the diploma supplement, the "computer driving licence", the European language portfolio, the "EuroCV", and others. However, few of these are widely known. If these are to be used as reference tools across Europe on a systematic basis, much greater awareness is needed of their existence and their potential use and benefits. The idea was launched of developing a "European competencies book", as a further tool to help citizens gauge their own levels of skills based on their own various learning experiences. Such a tool might be useful in helping people to return to education and lifelong learning or to the labour market.

Standard setting mechanisms

The future will certainly bring more cases of foreign providers (European and others) operating in individual countries of Europe, or supplying education services across Europe, without necessarily having any physical presence in those countries. There will therefore be a continued need for norms and frameworks for setting and maintaining standards. The UNESCO / Council of Europe Code of Good Practice on transnational education should be given greater prominence in this respect.

The Lisbon Recognition Convention as a legal framework could prove a key mechanism to ensure the fair recognition for students wishing to use such programmes, while also maintaining the same quality assurance procedures and standards as for domestic providers.

There is also however a need for the informal development of a common understanding in addressing such issues. The advantages of the current discussions surrounding the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) negotiations is that this informal co-operation is developing very quickly between a variety of actors.

External dimensions

The current developments towards a European Higher Education Area also have external dimensions which we sometimes ignore. In fact, many of the key issues of the Bologna Process are also of direct relevance for other regions of the world. The UNESCO Global Forum is an excellent venue for developing such inter-regional dialogue. Recent EU initiatives with third countries and plans to extend the Tempus programme to the Mediterranean region also provide scope for action.

The progress achieved in five years towards the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention was cited during the seminar as an example of good practice for other regions which also have their regional agreements on recognition issues. In the context of the GATS discussions and negotiations, the Lisbon Recognition Convention also has the potential to serve as a positive way to promote mobility and exchange while maintaining the transparence and quality of higher education.

RECOMMENDATIONS (see above)

**Towards Accreditation Schemes
for Higher Education in Europe? – Lisbon, 8 - 9 February 2001**

Towards Accreditation Schemes for Higher Education in Europe?

CRE project, July 2000 - May 2001

co-funded by SOCRATES programme

Validation seminar, 8 - 9 February 2001

Universidade Técnica de Lisboa, Oeiras

Conclusions

The following conclusions were conveyed to the Salamanca Convention of European Higher Education Institutions. They do not represent any formal decision but rather the synthesis of very lively and rich discussions held in plenary and working group sessions.

During the Lisbon/Oeiras seminar organised by CRE in collaboration with the Universidade Técnica de Lisboa, representatives of higher education institutions, as well as student organisations, quality assurance agencies, national higher education authorities and intergovernmental bodies discussed accreditation as a possible option for higher education in Europe, particularly as a contribution to the completion of the European higher education area called for in the Bologna Declaration.

The meeting showed converging views on the usefulness and the necessity of effective and compatible quality assurance mechanisms within Europe. It was acknowledged that there are several quality assurance systems already in existence, mainly at national level, but that there was a need for a trans-European quality assurance framework which would ensure the international visibility, compatibility and credibility of European higher education degrees.

It was felt that such an explicit and agreed framework in Europe organised by the universities in co-operation with other stakeholders would promote the transparency, the visibility and the ongoing quality enhancement of European higher education, thus contributing to a more compatible and comparable qualification framework and to the employability of European graduates. Internationalisation of quality assurance was seen as a necessary and logical response of European higher education to current globalisation trends as well as to the challenges of building a European higher education area.

The discussion in Lisbon/Oeiras focused on how far accreditation could represent a substantial option for achieving an effective and transparent European co-operation in quality assurance. In operational terms, this could mean a European validation scheme for quality assurance and accreditation procedures, rather than a European accreditation system as such.

It was stressed that accreditation was not an end in itself, but rather represented an important component of quality assurance. When examining accreditation for Europe, the participants debated such issues as: accreditation of degrees/programmes and/or of whole institutions, accreditation as a minimal quality filter or as promotion of excellence, the possible division of tasks, etc. Approaches based on the promotion of mutual recognition of existing national or regional quality assurance and accreditation outcomes, as well as those based on close inter-institutional co-operation, were also considered. The relationship and balance between national, regional and European quality assurance activities has to be clarified.

The higher education leaders present in Lisbon/Oeiras wished to advance the discussion on the design of viable schemes of quality assurance for Europe, including validation of accreditation procedures, along the following lines:

- add value for institutions of higher education to existing schemes, especially in terms of an "International dimension", with a view to the emerging European higher education area,
- base new developments on voluntary participation and on the self-regulation of the higher education community,
- co-operate closely with partners such as students and academics, quality assurance and accreditation agencies and networks, professional organisations, recognition centres, as well as with national and regional higher education authorities,
- give due regard to academic values, to diversity and to institutional autonomy,
- build, as far as possible, on existing mechanisms and experiences, and illuminate examples of good practise,
- stress the supportive elements of evaluation and accreditation,
- cover all modes and types of higher education,
- keep to reasonable deadlines in moving forward towards operational models.

Participants emphasised the needs to define criteria and mechanisms in a careful fashion and to identify good practice at European level, while using available and additional analysis. To this end, it was recommended that a common working platform of higher education institutions be established in Europe, involving also the above-mentioned partners. This platform would clarify the concepts, perform a more systematic and

explicit analysis of the needs, and test the feasibility of possible approaches and mechanisms - for instance to European validation of accreditation and quality assurance procedures - possibly through pilot projects.

It was emphasised that activities fostering the convergence of practices and procedures in Europe should avoid at all costs the establishment of a new and unnecessary layer of bureaucratic control across the European higher education domain.

Lisbon - Oeiras, 09/02/2001
CRE-Paris, 28/02/2001

'Working on the European Dimension of Quality', Amsterdam 12–13.3.2002

The European Dimension of Quality Assurance

Report

of the Conference 'Working on the European Dimension of Quality' of the Joint Quality Initiative, Amsterdam 12–13.3.2002

Marijk van der Wende & Don Westerheijden

Introduction
1. The following text describes main issues that arose during the conference 'Working on the European Dimension of Quality', held in Amsterdam, 12-13.3.2002, organised by CHEPS on the initiative of the Ministries of Education of the Netherlands and Flanders. The conference was attended by over a hundred participants from most of the countries involved in the Bologna process, representing ministries of education, quality assessment and accreditation agencies, other buffer bodies, higher education institutions and students. Descriptors of Bachelor and Master Programmes at Different Levels
2. There is a widely-shared consensus that the 'Dublin Descriptors', defining key outcomes for Bachelors and Masters programmes in general (paper Towards shared descriptors for bachelors and Masters) are useful. They are complementary to the outcomes of the Tuning project, which are being developed at the level of areas of knowledge ('disciplines').
3. 3. From the discussions it appeared, however, thatthe 'Dublin Descriptors' need to be 'tuned', and the Tuning project outcomes are not to be taken as prescriptive. In that respect, it should be remembered that outcomes do not define curricula
4. Gains from the Tuning project include that there is a broader than expected consensus among European higher education institutions on descriptors of their programmes, starting from outcomes rather than starting from curriculum inputs and elements. At the same time, there is less than expected diversity regarding length/credits of programmes
5. Complementarity means a combination of generic elements (from the 'Dublin Descriptors') and specific elements (from outcomes of the Tuning project).
6. The approach to quality building on such a combination of the 'Dublin Descriptors' and Tuning project outcomes apply to 'traditional' delivery of higher education as well as to transnational education, distance education, etc.
7. A discussion arose on the relative value of programme vs. institutional approaches to quality assurance. Both are important, was the general view. The 'Dublin Descriptors' as well as the Tuning project outcomes are directed primarily at programme level approaches. Many, including expressly the student representatives, gave programme level quality assessment the priority for public policy, inter alia because this gives more direct assurance of quality ('consumer protection'). Institutional quality assurance was mostly seen as a responsibility of autonomous, well-managed higher education institutions, even though some

participants voiced the opinion that with 'mass' or 'universal' higher education, and in the emerging network society, such coherent higher education institutions will become ever rarer.

Questions: What needs to be addressed in next steps?

8. Capitalising on the broad consensus among the conference participants, next steps could be proposed, during which the following issues will need to be addressed.

Application question

9. What is the right balance between generic and specific for accreditation frameworks and criteria?

10. Cross-border quality assessment projects will play a role in the learning process to develop a common understanding at a European level.

Ownership and participation questions

11. Who is involved in developing criteria for accreditation/quality assessment?

1. 12.. Who is involved in updating criteria for accreditation/quality assessment?

12. Who is involved in applying criteria in actual accreditation/quality assessment?

13. What are the implications of answers to the previous questions for acceptance of consequences of (non-)accreditation?

Implications for higher education institutions?

14. They have to develop their 'accreditation capacity': how to elicit all information necessary for different quality assessment or accreditation agencies?

15. How to maintain quality improvement?

16. What is/should be their involvement in the current quality initiatives? Involvement of the higher education institutions is needed on the one hand in developing curricula responding to the frameworks as part of their institutional autonomy, because frameworks couched in terms of outcomes do not define curricula in terms of content and instructional design.

17. An associated question of involvement regards the input higher education institutions can give into frameworks or criteria defined or handled by quality assessment agencies or accreditation agencies.

Transnational education

18. The specific issue of quality assurance of transnational education, especially in the form of collaborative frameworks (commonly known as 'franchising' arrangements, but actually broader than that) was introduced into the JQI discussions at this conference.

19. The main question in this respect is that of the balance between responsibility for quality by 'sender' and by 'receiver'. Participants broadly agreed that the Code of Practice (Unesco/Council of Europe) with its principle that both 'sender' and 'receiver' take responsibility is indeed a good practice.

Credit Transfer and Accumulation – the Challenge for Institutions and Students, Zürich, 11/12 October 2002

Credit Transfer and Accumulation ─ the Challenge for Institutions and Students

EUA/Swiss Confederation Conference ETH Zü rich, 11/12 October 2002

Conclusions and Recommendations for Action

I. CONTEXT

The Salamanca Convention of Higher Education Institutions held in March 2001 defined the goal for European higher education of "organising diversity" of institutions and systems in terms of "… sufficient self regulation to ensure minimum level of cohesion" and ensuring that "efforts towards compatibility should not be undermined by too much variance in the definition and implementation of credits"

Both the Salamanca Convention and the Prague Conference of Education Ministers agreed on the importance of credit systems for both transfer and accumulation, and on the need for progress on these issues.

In Zürich, the 330 participants from European universities, student bodies, national ministries and international organisations agreed on a number of key features of credit transfer and accumulation and on the importance of introducing widely ECTS as the only tried and tested credit system in Europe. At the same time, a number of open issues for further reflection were identified as we move forward towards Graz and Berlin.

II. ECTS:A CREDIT SYSTEM FOR EUROPE

Over the last decade, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) has been successfully introduced in Socrates ERASMUS. Primarily for facilitating European mobility, ECTS has therefore been used on a small scale as a credit transfer system, impacting upon a relatively small number of students. The further development of ECTS into a credit accumulation system at national level, speeded up by the Bologna process, effectively means mainstreaming ECTS as a generalised credit system for the emerging European Higher Education Area, and thus is of key importance for Europe's higher education institutions and students.

III. OBJECTIVES

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[1] 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

IV. KEY FEATURES

- o The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is a student-centred system based on the *student workload* required to achieve the objectives of a programme, objectives preferably specified in terms of *learning outcomes.*
- o ECTS is based on the convention that 60 credits measure the notional workload of an average full time student during one academic year. This includes the time spent in attending lectures, seminars, independent study, preparation for and taking of examinations, etc

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[1] cf the *Memorandum on Higher Education in the European Community, 1991:* this refers to student mobility; cooperation between institutions; Europe in the curriculum; the central importance of language; the training of

teachers; recognition of qualifications and periods of study; the international role of higher education; information and policy analysis; dialogue with the higher education sector.

- Credits are allocated to all educational and training components of a study programme (such as modules, courses, placements, dissertation work, etc.) and reflect the quantity of work each component requires in relation to the total quantity of work necessary to complete a full year of study in the programme considered.
- Credits can be obtained only after completion of the work required and appropriate assessment of the learning outcomes achieved.
- ECTS presupposes use of a minimum number of essential tools, first and foremost respect for the *Learning Agreement* which in terms of student mobility and credit transfer has to be concluded, before departure, between the student and the responsible academic bodies of the two institutions concerned. The use of Learning Agreements should also be extended to home students for registering study options and programmes.[2]
- As an accumulation system, ECTS credits are used to describe entire study programmes. The basis for the allocation of credits is the official length of the study programme. There is broad agreement that first cycle degrees lasting three to four years require 180-240 credit points.
- Credits are not interchangeable automatically from one context to another and can only be applied to the completion of a recognised qualification when they constitute an approved part of a study programme.
- The Diploma Supplement and ECTS are complementary tools for enhancing transparency, and facilitating recognition.

V. TOWARDS GRAZ AND BERLIN: NEXT STEPS

Europe's Universities

The Zürich Conference demonstrated that Europe's universities recognise the importance of credit transfer and accumulation for the future development of the EHEA and accept their own responsibilities in this process. This means that on the basis of the key features agreed in Zürich institutions need to be able to apply ECTS in a transparent but flexible way taking into account their own specific mission and priorities.

This in turn requires:

- Institutional commitment ensuring that especially the institutional leadership is informed of the objectives and key features of ECTS and its full potential for supporting curricular reform, and not just as a support for international cooperation
- Assessing the cost and benefits of developing and expanding ECTS and allocating sufficient human and financial resources for its implementation and proper use
- Developing appropriate instruments to ensure adequate monitoring and evaluation

[2] other essential ECTS tools are the Course Catalogue and the Transcript of Records

The European University Association (EUA)

EUA will:

- Encourage and support its members in the implementation of the Zürich recommendations at institutional level;
- Through its Socrates supported ECTS monitoring and institutional visit programme follow-up the following open questions identified during discussions in Zürich:
    o The role of ECTS in the development of joint degrees
    o The introduction and use of ECTS at doctoral level
    o The ECTS grading scale and national credit systems
    o Linking credits and different levels of study
    o ECTS and quality: as an instrument for promoting transparency ECTS facilitates the dialogue on quality in a comparative perspective
- Take forward the outcomes of the Zürich Conference to the Graz Convention of European Higher Education Institutions (May 2003);
- Present the recommendations formally to the Bologna Follow-Up Group for inclusion in the preparation of the Berlin Ministers' meeting (September 2003)

EUA Brussels, 12.11.2002

JOINT DEGREES

Seminar on Joint Degrees within the framework of the Bologna Process, Stockholm 31 May 2002

REGERINGSKANSLIET <u>**Memorandum**</u>

Ministry of Education and Science
Stockholm, Sweden

Seminar on Joint Degrees within the framework of the Bologna Process, Stockholm 31 May 2002

Conclusions and recommendations

The Bologna objectives
Joint degrees are important instruments for implementing the objectives set out in the Bologna Declaration and the Prague Communiqué: promoting student and teacher mobility, employability, quality, the European dimension and the attractiveness and competitiveness of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Joint study programmes could provide an instrument for giving students the chance to gain academic and cultural experience abroad and institutions of higher education an opportunity to co-operate. Such co-operation could exploit wider competences and resources than those available at any single institution.

These conclusions concern joint degrees in a system of higher education essentially based on two main cycles.

Framework
The basis for joint degrees in the EHEA is established in the Bologna Declaration and the Prague Communiqué, which stress the importance of transparency and compatibility.

A common framework for joint degrees must be flexible in order to allow for and reflect national differences, but it must also include a definition of a joint degree, which will serve as a basis for a legal framework at the national level. The national, legal base must

be clear on the conditions for awarding a joint degree and must not limit co-operation between institutions.

The national authorities should also be reminded of the contents of the Lisbon Convention.

In most countries a jointly awarded degree would require amendments to the national higher education legislation. In various countries higher education institutions are increasingly developing bilateral or multilateral degrees (Dutch-Flemish Hogeschool, French-German University, Italian-French University, Danish-Swedish Öresund University, for example). There is, however, reluctance towards and no legal foundation for establishing joint degrees at the supranational level.

General and professional degrees
Most countries consider joint degrees possible in both general and professional degree fields but expect difficulties in establishing joint degrees in regulated professions. Attempts should, however, be made and the density of regulations should be reduced.

Quality assurance
Documented quality assurance is necessary to guarantee the international acceptance and competitiveness of joint degrees on the world education and employment markets. On the basis of mutual trust and general acceptance of national assurance systems, principles and general standards for quality assurance and accreditation should be developed. Joint study programmes which adhere to these principles and standards could use an EHEA label, which could be established within the framework of the Bologna Process and supervised by the national authorities.

It is essential that the national quality assurance agencies co-operate within the European Network of Quality Assurance (ENQA), in accordance with the Prague Communiqué.

Structure
It should be possible to award joint degrees in each cycle, including doctoral studies.

Criteria
The following criteria could be useful common denominators for European joint degrees:
> -Two or more participating institutions in two or more countries.
> -The duration of study outside the home institution should be substantial and continuous, e.g. 1 year at bachelor level.
> -Joint degrees should require a joint study programme settled on by cooperation, confirmed in a written agreement, between institutions.

-Joint degrees should be based on bilateral or multilateral agreements on jointly arranged and approved programmes, with no restrictions concerning study fields or subjects.
-Full use should be made of the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS in order to ensure comparability of qualifications.
-A joint degree should preferably be documented in a single document issued by the participating institutions in accordance with national regulations.
-Joint degrees and study programmes should require student and staff/teacher mobility.
-Linguistic diversity in a European perspective should be ensured.
-Joint study programmes should have a European dimension, whether physical mobility or intercultural competence in the curriculum.

Students
Students have a role as one of the main actors in higher education institutions and will use their power to choose courses of their own preference.

The social dimension should be taken into account by the member states and the students' social conditions should be guaranteed. Foreign students should have the same benefits as regular, national students.

Funding
Additional funding is needed to develop joint study programmes. Member states are encouraged to ensure that students following a joint study programme in a foreign country can transfer their national study allowances abroad.

The ERASMUS programme should be drawn upon.

Labour market
Education is an important factor for mobility on the labour market. Consultation with the social partners could be considered when establishing joint degrees.

Monitoring of the system of joint degrees should be included in the course of the Bologna-Prague-Berlin process up to 2003.

In order to facilitate an exchange of information and experience on the development of joint degrees the member states are kindly invited to report to the Bologna Follow-up Group at regular intervals on the joint degrees their higher education institutions are taking part in.

Integrated Curricula- Implications and Prosopects, Mantova, 11-12 Apr 2003

Integrated Curricula- Implications and Prosopects, Mantova, 11-12 Apr 2003

Final report

1. Preamble

The European summit of education ministers held in Prague on 19 May 2001 drew attention to joint programmes and degrees. The final communiqué expressly calls 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 curricula offered in partnership by institutions from different countries and leading to a recognised joint degree".

This commitment had already been highlighted in the Bologna Declaration which explicitly set as an objective the "promotion of the necessary European dimension in higher education, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research".

Nevertheless, still today restrictive national legislations make joint degrees impossible to award and recognise in most European countries.

2. Main features of joint study programmes

Co-operation between HE institutions of different countries in specific disciplines has generated common education and training activities, generally under the heading of joint study programmes, which are characterised by a common assumption of responsibility by the participating institutions as regards:

- the definition of the objectives of the programme
- the design of the curriculum;
- the organisation of the studies;
- the type of qualifications awarded.

2.1. Objectives of the programme

The objectives of a programme are jointly defined by partner institutions with a view to giving graduates an added value when they enter the European/international job market. This requires the identification of professional profiles that will be needed, as well as a search for coherence between the objectives pursued and the curriculum developed.

2.2. Design of the Curriculum

Cooperation in curriculum design means drawing up of a common study path aimed at reaching the educational goals that have been jointly defined.

In these schemes the partners offer specific segments which complement the overall curriculum designed, thus making it necessary for students to spend time at each or several of the participating institutions. In some instances, joint programmes based on the combination of segments identify some existing components of each participating institutions' study programmes - be they basic parts of the curriculum or specialist areas - and then proceed to put together a programme which utilises those components to the maximum. In other cases, new segments are developed by the institutions involved. Overall, it is the organic combination of diverse approaches, in terms of contents, conceptualisation and teaching methods, that should form the key feature of an integrated curriculum. Accordingly, in this context student mobility is seen not only as a cross-cultural experience - that has a value in itself - but also as a means of acquiring knowledge and skills not available at the home institution and which complement and integrate the activities carried out at the home institution.

2.3. Organisation of Studies

The organisation or management of studies mainly concerns decisions on logistical and financial aspects of the programme, the selection of students and the choosing of the teaching staff. In joint programmes there are different approaches to these organisational issues. Students from various institutions may, for example, rotate systematically among different institutions or be able to choose the partner institution where certain modules can be taken. They may be subject to the same selection procedures or be selected by each institution in accordance with different criteria. The contributions of teachers from partner institutions may be organised in different ways.

2.4. Type of Qualifications Awarded

The type of qualifications awarded by partners depends on the characteristics of the programme in terms of curriculum design and programme organisation. A programme that is jointly designed and implemented, on the basis of bilateral or multilateral agreements also including a common definition of the required learning outcomes, should naturally lead to a single qualification awarded jointly by all participating institutions. At present, however, in many cases national legal constraints make it impossible, to award fully recognised joint degrees. Very often, therefore, two national degrees have been awarded instead, even when they do not reflect/represent accurately the joint design and implementation of the programme.

3. Contributions already made on joint study programmes and joint degrees

3. 1. The Stockholm conclusions

The seminar on the development of joint degrees, that took place in Stockholm in May 2002 within the framework of the Bologna process, explored the theme mainly from a legal point of view. In the conclusions and recommendations of the seminar *the following criteria have been identified as common denominators for European joint degrees:*

- two or more participating institutions in two or more countries;
- the duration of study outside the home institution should be substantial and continuous (e.g., one year at bachelor level);
- joint degrees should require a joint study programme established by cooperation, confirmed in a written agreement, between institutions;
- joint degrees should be based on bilateral or multilateral agreements on jointly arranged and approved programmes, with no restrictions concerning study fields or subjects;
- full use should be made of the Diploma Supplement and ECTS in order to ensure comparability of qualifications;
- a joint degree should preferably be documented in a single document issued by the participating institutions in accordance with national regulations;
- joint degrees and study programmes should require student and staff/teacher mobility;
- linguistic diversity in a European perspective should be ensured;
- joint study programmes should have a European dimension, whether physical mobility or intercultural competence in the curriculum.

3. 2. *The EUA Survey on Master and Joint Degrees in Europe*
The survey, presented in September 2002, was commissioned by the European University Association (EUA) with the support of the European Commission. It is an attempt to describe and analyse the state of the art with reference to master level programmes and joint degrees offered across Europe. The analysis of joint degrees in the European Higher Education Area was undertaken by Andrejs Rauhvargers .

The study offers a definition for joint degrees proposing that they should be awarded on completion of joint study programmes *that share at least some of the following characteristics:*
- curricula are developed or approved jointly by two or more institutions;
- students from each participating institution study parts of the programme at other partner institutions;
- the students' stays at the partner institutions are of comparable length;
- periods of study and exams passed at the partner institutions are recognised fully and automatically;
- professors of each participating institution also teach at the other partner institutions, work out the curricula jointly and form joint commissions to decide about admission and the awarding of the degrees;
- after completion of each individual programme, students are conferred the national degrees of each participating institution or just one degree jointly agreed upon by them all.

The survey confirmed the Stockholm conclusions.

4.   *The Mantova conclusions and recommendations*

This seminar focused on the curricular component of joint degree programmes, on the assumption that curricular integration - intended as joint curriculum design and implementation – is a necessary condition for awarding joint degrees.

A report on   "Joint Degrees: the Italian Experience in the European Context" – distributed to all participants – provided some background information on the Italian case. During the seminar the theme was approached at three levels, the country, the institutions and the learners/users. Special emphasis was placed on the institutional perspective, exploring why institutions might get engaged in developing integrated curricula, what methods they could use and what models they could adopt. The reflections presented by three panels of experienced speakers were discussed in the working groups. Both presentations and group discussions contributed first to the development of a shared vision and then to the formulation of a set of recommendations.

4. 1. *Shared vision*
- Joint degree programmes based on integrated curricula are one of the major priorities for the building of a European "identity" within the   common European Higher Education Area, as they provide the learners in all cycles – including doctoral studies - with a coherent, recognisable and challenging experience of European diversity. This is also an obvious added value to national HE systems.

- Joint degree programmes based on integrated curricula are valuable instruments for developing European "citizenship" and "employability". These terms are used in a broad sense and from the point of view of students and citizens. That is, "citizenship" means having the cultural, linguistic and social experience necessary to live knowledgeably and responsibly in the multinational/multilingual framework of the broader Europe; "employability" means not only being able to find employment or have the attributes that industry or other employers desire, but also having the knowledge and competences necessary to have a satisfactory and fulfilling professional life in a global society.

- Joint doctoral programmes educating for research professions in Europe are a cornerstone for greater co-operation between the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area. Synergy between the two areas is viewed as an essential prerequisite for the creation of a Europe of Knowledge.

4. 2. *Recommendations to the education ministers meeting in Berlin*
- Legal obstacles to the awarding and recognition of joint degrees should be removed in all countries.

- Additional funds should be provided to cover the higher costs of joint degree programmes, keeping in mind particularly the need to create equal opportunities for student participation. Besides national and regional governments, which will normally bear the costs, HE institutions - in the framework of their autonomy -,

international bodies and other actors should be invited to provide special support for these programmes.

- Involvement of institutions in joint degree programmes should be encouraged and supported in all Bologna signatory countries, particularly in those which are not yet participating actively.

- Public awareness of the high value of joint degree programmes based on integrated curricula, in terms of European identity, citizenship and employability, should be increased, also by guaranteeing adequate visibility to existing examples of good practice.

4. 3. *Recommendations to HE institutions*

- The development of European joint degree programmes should be based on the criteria identified in the Stockholm conclusions. Moreover, a clear distinction should be made between joint and double degree programmes, in terms of their curricular objectives and organizational models, also with a view to protecting the learners/users. A complete glossary of terms should be drawn.

- Joint degree programmes based on integrated curricula should be developed to address identified needs of European and global society that cannot be adequately addressed through national programmes, both in educating new professional figures and identifying new research areas.

- Students, graduates, employers and other relevant actors should be consulted about the areas in which the implementation of joint degree programmes would be most appropriate. However, it is recommended that HE institutions use to full potential their role as proactive planners for long range societal needs. Students should also be involved in planning and evaluation activities.

- Institutions that develop joint programmes should fully integrate and support them as a core function of their mission.

- Partners for a joint degree programme should be chosen on the basis of shared mission and commitment, as well as their capacity to develop and sustain such a programme in academic, organisational and financial terms. Thematic networks could provide experience for identifying suitable partners in any European country.

- Full consensus should be reached with partners regarding the model and the methodology to be used, as well as the elements of innovation and academic interest.

- Learning outcomes and competencies, as well as student workload described in ECTS credits, should be viewed as crucial elements in constructing any joint programme.

- Adequate quality assurance procedures should be jointly developed and activated by partners in a joint programme, and made explicit to learners/users.

- Proper provision for linguistic diversity and language learning should be ensured all through joint degree programmes. These programmes should also promote European identity, citizenship and employability.

May 12, 2003

Workshop "Joint Degrees – Further Development"
Stockholm, May 6-7, 2004

Workshop "Joint Degrees – Further Development" Stockholm, May 6-7, 2004

General Conclusions from the Workshop

1. In most Bologna countries higher education degrees are regulated in national legislation. In some countries, higher education programmes have to be nationally approved. Many higher education institutions in the Bologna countries cooperate to deliver joint study programmes but few countries have a legal framework that explicitly allows the award of joint degrees. In some cases, double degrees are awarded.

The workshop participants agree that:

2. Joint study programmes and joint degree awards are important instruments to achieve the Bologna objectives. The process of developing and offering joint study programmes, at the initiative of higher education institutions and in the interest of students, is the core activity; the long-term vision, however, is to build sustainable collaborations between higher education institutions and to award joint degrees.

3. Joint study programmes and joint degree awards enhance quality, efficiency, mutual recognition, employability and linguistic and cultural diversity. The Diploma Supplement and the use of ECTS are important instruments which can help to demonstrate the cooperation between institutions and the added value of the joint study programme and/or award.

4. Lifelong learning and the possibilities for all types of students to participate should be taken into account when developing joint study programmes and joint degrees. Quality assurance procedures in accordance with national systems should be provided for within joint study programmes.

Recommendations to the Bologna Follow-Up Group

5. The Bologna Follow-Up Group should map the experience of higher education institutions and students regarding: a, the concepts and formats of joint study programmes and joint degrees valid for the emerging European Higher Education Area, b, arrangements and agreements for cooperation between the partner institutions, and c, agreements between the partner institutions and the student safeguarding the rights of the student. If possible conclusions and recommendations should be reported to the Bergen ministerial meeting.

6. Each country should report on the progress made in removing legal obstacles as agreed in the Berlin communiqué to the Bergen ministerial meeting in 2005.

Recommendations to the Bergen Ministerial Meeting

7. The possibility of awarding joint degrees with national and foreign higher education institutions should be clearly referred to in national legislation. Every country should report on the progress of their work in time for the ministerial meeting in 2007.

8. The format of the Diploma Supplement should be adapted to facilitate the description of joint degrees. The Diploma Supplement should include a cross-reference when double

degrees are issued.

9. Ministers should encourage the development of incentives for higher education institutions to participate in joint study programmes leading to joint degrees. Higher education institutions should give proper recognition to students and staff who participate in joint degree programmes.

Bologna follow-up seminar joint degrees – further development
Ministry of Education and Science,
Sweden Stockholm, May 06 – 07, 2004

Report by the Rapporteur

Prof. Pavel Zgaga, University of Ljubljana

Final version

Stockholm / Ljubljana, May 2004

(1) **General data.** The seminar on "*Joint Degrees – Further Development*" was organized by the Ministry of Education and Science of Sweden and took place in Stockholm, 06-07 May 2004; almost exactly two years after the first Bologna Follow-up seminar on the development of Joint Degrees and in the same city. The seminar – the first in the line of fourteen 2004-2005 Bologna Follow-up Seminars – focused along the *Bologna action line 6: Promotion of the European Dimension in Higher Education*, with a special focus on *Joint Master Degrees*.

The seminar was organized in two morning plenary sessions and in afternoon workshops. Seven presentations and case studies were given and discussed during the plenary session of the first day while in the afternoon, participants divided into four smaller working groups and took active part in discussions. Altogether, there were 51 participants from 20 "Bologna" countries as well representatives from European Commission, Council of Europe, EUA and ESIB at the seminar.

(2) **The point of departure.** The point of departure were the conclusions from the previous Stockholm seminar (May 2002) on joint degrees and the Mantova seminar (April 2003) on integrated curricula as well as surveys and publications which have appeared in the last two years, mostly as a result of the Bologna process.[1] A short overview of previous discussions and developments on this issue was given at the opening of the seminar by Ms. Kerstin Eliasson, State Secretary, and Ms Karin Röding,

Director General for Higher Education, from the Swedish Ministry of Education and Science.

Joint Degrees were a rather obscure theme few years ago. The *Bologna Declaration* -in is sixth objective - briefly mentioned "integrated programmes of study, training and research" only. The *Prague Communiqué* went further and under a special paragraph on promotion of the European dimension in higher education "called upon the higher education sector to increase the development of modules, courses and curricula at all levels" and to offer them "in partnership by institutions from different countries and leading to a recognized joint degree". Again two years later, ministers noted in the *Berlin Communiqué* that many new initiatives had been taken "to promote the development of integrated study programmes and joint degrees at first, second and third level" and agreed "to engage at the national level to remove legal obstacles to the establishment and recognition of such degrees and to actively support the development and adequate quality assurance of integrated curricula leading to joint degrees". This has become one of most important issues to be discussed until Bergen conference; and the Stockholm Follow-up Seminar (2004) took it seriously.

[1] See Bibliography at the end of the Report.

Parallel to the political development - reflected also in the main Bologna documents - a progress has been made also in understanding and promoting Joint Degrees. Before 2002, very little research on actual joint programmes and masters degrees in Europe has been made. After Prague, follow-up seminars in Stockholm in 2002 and in Mantova in 2003 produced important conclusions and recommendations; they also initiated systemic surveys and presentation of good practices. Last but not least, the Lisbon Recognition Convention has been also reflected in this progress. The EUA's *Survey on Master Degrees and Joint Degrees in Europe* (September 2002), followed by the ENIC and NARIC *Draft Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees* (May 2003) and the results of the 5th EUA Conference *"Joint Degrees: Institutions working together in Europe"* (October 2003) are probably most important steps on this way.

(3) **Today, we are at a stage when learning from pilot projects experience and from some national environment is already possible.** Final results of the EUA's pilot project (Joint Masters Project, March 2003-January 2004, presented by Ms. Kate Geddie from EUA) that has examined 11 established joint masters programmes, supported by the EC Socrates programme, *confirm their importance for interuniversity and European cooperation* but also *show in more clear light than before the key unresolved issues*: definitions and structures need to be "tuned", funding seems to be a particularly important question (Joint Degrees exist among incompatible national funding frameworks and differing socio-economic contexts), legal recognition obstacles continue to exist, external quality assurance mechanisms are still designed to satisfy only one national system, etc.

On the other hand, two national case studies from Italy and Flanders (presented by Ms. Germana Verri from Italian Ministry for Education, University and Research, and Mr. Erwin Malfroy from the Ministry of the Flemish Community, Dept. of Education; Ms. Maria Stichi Damiani as the author of a third presentation was unfortunately absent) encourage and show that *changes in national legislation combined with deliberate*

political and financial incentives aimed at autonomous higher education institutions bring productive results. This has been done in a particularly interesting way with the Italian internationalization programme; it is based on previously adopted legislative provision which made Join Degrees legally possible. Recent changes in Flemish legislation as well as international agreement between Flanders and Netherlands and the newly established "transnationale Universiteit Limburg" prove again that important steps could be done in this area.

(4) **The next step to eliminating obstacles to the development of Joint Degrees and their recognition.** All discussions and surveys up to the present show that the main obstacle to the development of Joint Degrees is still *the question of their recognition.* It is far from being "a mere formal issue"; it should be noted again that the issue of recognition was the trigger – or at least one of them – which caused, in last instance, the very process of establishing a common European Higher Education Area.

Parties of the Lisbon Recognition Convention of 1997 agreed to recognize each others' national qualifications; however, it is difficult to say that Joint Degrees are covered in the Convention as "national qualifications". Therefore, the proposed Council of Europe and Unesco *Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees* which is expected to be approved in June 2004 and amended to the Lisbon Recognition Convention will be another important push forward. The work on the Recommendation and the proposed solutions (presented by Prof. Andrejs Rauhvargers, the President of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee) were strongly supported in the discussion; however, the discussion also stressed that this document will not replace the need of amending national legislation in order to make Joint Degrees possible or, better to say, "recognized". On the contrary, this is obviously one of main tasks to be fulfilled on the way towards Bergen.

(5) **The development of transnational degrees needs transnational support as well as transnational objectives.** The Lisbon Recognition Convention made clear that mutual recognition of various national qualifications is possible only with a help of transnational means - international law. If we wish to enjoy mutually the advantages and richness of our particular *national* environments, e.g. in higher education and research, we have to establish structures of *trans-national* support and agree on *trans-national* objectives. It is clear that Joint Degrees are the vulnerable point in national higher education systems which could not be reached if this principle is not taken into account seriously. It is also clear that the inner "anatomy" of Join Degrees needs further consideration and careful definitions to eliminate potential ambiguity and to make Joint Degrees really important in the European Higher Education Area.
From this point, the contribution of the European Commission (presented by Mr. David Coyne from EC – DG Education and Culture) are as appreciated as inevitable. The ERASMUS support to the development and delivery of Joint Degrees in combination with the support to "tuning exercises" in various thematic networks, to quality as a transnational issue, etc. have positive effects in national developments of higher education. *The new incentive which can foster and speed up these processes very much - at the national and institutional level - is now presented through ERASMUS MUNDUS.*

(6) **Joint Degrees are made for students.** The development of Joint Degrees is an important mechanism of opening national higher education systems and adapting them to the internationalization, promoting quality assessment in a broader environment, developing European citizenship etc. However, Joint Degrees are not (only) tools of system modernization; they are made for students and students express high expectations in this regard (as presented by Mr. Predrag Lazetić from ESIB).

Certainly, Joint Degrees could bring many new chances to future graduates: gaining from different academic and research environments, learning different cultural paradigms, languages, developing professional and research ties in an international context, getting broader work experience and better chances on a global labour market. However, student organizations also call for attention not to forget the social dimension of the emerging Join Degrees: there is a potential danger to remain elitist and not open to majority of students; they shouldn't be developed only in a limited set of study fields; their recognition should be automatic and prior to enrolment of candidates. In particular, problems caused by different study financing systems should find proper solutions.

(7) **Discussions in workshops proved that at this stage Integrated Curricula and Joint Degrees need a broader reflection in order to make further steps.** Only now when the first concrete steps have been made it became really clear how important it is to use *precise definitions*. Many problems seem to be simply a result of inaccurate (everyday) language. Mobility of students and staff is extremely precious, it even promotes "joint activities" – but as such it shouldn't be mixed with *genuine joint programmes or degrees*. Similarly, the two terms Double Degrees and Joint Degrees sometimes make problems even to those who are familiar with higher education. There is a clear need for a "joint action" in the terminology.

Joint Degrees also shouldn't be mixed with joint study programmes; better to say, discussions should not focus only on the issue of degrees. The real process of establishing Joint Degrees starts from *curriculum design*: this is the point where institutions can distinguish best between academic advantages and/or potentialities
(e.g. specialization through co-operation) of their co-operation from a mere popular wish "to develop a Joint Degrees also with us".

Many dilemmas are connected to these issues. Often, they provoke discussions on the foundations of Joint Degrees.

(8) **Why Joint Degrees – views from an institutional angle.** Joint Degrees should be regarded as *a systemic possibility* on the national scale and as *an option* for institutions and students. Developing Joint Degrees "for any prise", to a broad extent, massively, would be absurd and counterproductive.

Students' point of view was briefly presented above (see 6); now, we try to list some possible – and diverse – answers to the question: *Why Joint Degrees – from the institutional point of view*:
- to better position our institution in an internationalised higher education;
- to foster specialization and to promote academic division of labour;
- to attract (more) international students;
- to get additional value of the existing international co-operation;
- to promote a particular (new) study area in (inter)national context;

- for "degree laundry" purposes at some institutions that might not have the right to award a certain degree or might not be a recognized institution;
- no reason; the institution continues with its own provision.

It is clear: arguments could be very different, even disputable; therefore, they should be a matter of broad discussion in institutional bodies and deliberate institutional decision.
(9) **Why Joint Degrees – views from a national angle.** In a similar way, we have also to ask *why to support developing Joint Degrees – from the national point of view.* Again, different positions and arguments could be possible:
- to better position national higher education in an internationalised context;
- to promote special disciplines taken as a national priority or national pride;
- to promote national economy and culture abroad (e.g. international students);
- to develop new disciplines important for the future of a country;
- to give new incentives to cross-border and/or regional cooperation;
- to support home institutions to compete successfully for EC grants;

-not to lag behind;
-no reason.
As in the former case, arguments could be very different and disputable; therefore, they should be a matter of broad policy discussion – with involvement of institutions, students and employers – and deliberate decision.
(10) **Examples of problems to be considered and tasks to be addressed in near future.** A set of questions and tasks has been established in discussions in the different working groups at the seminar which call for joint European co-operation when searching and developing possible solutions.

(a.) Joint Study Programmes and Join Degrees should be considered in the light of the already proposed *European framework of higher education qualifications.*

(b.) Even when the *Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees* (Lisbon Convention) will be approved and formal obstacles removed from national legislation, some *potential collisions* among national regulation from different countries (e.g. accreditation and/or quality assessment procedures, degree titles, financial provisions, relationship between higher education and research, etc.) are possible; constant measures should be taken to detect such potential collisions and find appropriate solutions – on the national as well as on the European level.

(c.) *Diploma Supplement should be adapted* from its existing "national application" to the (transnational) nature of future Joint Study Programmes, including their definition in the Bologna sense.

(d.) With regard to genuine Joint Degrees to be developed in the near future a need has been expressed *to agree upon* a *common label (prefix)*; however, higher education qualifications remain nationally based. After an exchange of arguments participants of the seminar agreed that in this context the term "European" shouldn't be used.

(e.) A broad set of *financial questions and consequences* has been established; these issues are linked to *the social dimension* of the Bologna process, but not only. Special consideration should be put to the question of *different systems of financing* and different

positions of the co-operating institutions (e.g. with regard to relationship between higher education and research). There are open questions also from the point of view of *organization of studies*, e.g. different definition of semester in different national environments, which should be addressed as well.

(f.) *Students* in Joint Study Programmes should have the same (or similar) status as Erasmus students. Access to Joint Study Programmes can be much more difficult for (postgraduate) *part-time students*; therefore, special support measures should be available for these students. Finally, *language courses* should be of special concern also here.

(g.) The further development of Joint Study Programmes and Joint Degrees depends very much on *systematic and careful monitoring*.

(11) A need for a systemic follow-up. In this sense, *a proposal for a special working group on Joint Degrees* to be appointed by the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) which was disputed at this seminar, prove that there is *a lack of reflected and/or organized good practice* and *that unclear definitions of* Joint Degrees *hinder faster developments*. A handbook of good practice and/or recommended guidelines could have positive effects but they should not be a top down commandment. The workshop participants, however, in their conclusions agreed not to recommend the BFUG to appoint a special working group, but to – in the way the BFUG chooses – map the experience of higher education institutions and students regarding joint study programmes and joint degrees.

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LIFELONG LEARNING, DISTANCE EDUCATION, E-LEARNING

Bologna seminar on recognition and credit systems in the context of lifelong learning

Seminar on recognition and credit systems in the context of lifelong learning

BOLOGNA SEMINAR ON RECOGNITION AND CREDIT SYSTEMS IN THE CONTEXT OF LIFELONG LEARNING

Praha, June 5 – 7, 2003

Recommendations

To higher education institutions and others

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 programs;
- 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.

To public authorities responsible for higher education

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.
- encourage higher education institutions to develop and implement lifelong learning policies and measures the measures and support them in their endeavors;
- apply appropriate methods for the evaluation and, where appropriate, accreditation of various forms of lifelong learning.

To international institutions and organizations

International institutions and organizations should:

- through the ENIC and NARIC Networks, seek to develop international good practice to promote the recognition of qualifications earned through lifelong learning paths, as far as possible using the provisions and principles of the Lisboa Recognition Convention;
- where appropriate and needed, develop international instruments to facilitate such recognition;
- bring together existing experience with national qualifications frameworks with a view to facilitating the development of further national frameworks as well as a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area that would encompass lifelong learning paths.
- support and develop projects furthering the integration of lifelong learning paths within qualifications frameworks, improved description of lifelong learning paths and improving the opportunity of learners to follow the paths thus established;
- stimulate networks working in this area.

To the Berlin Higher Education Summit

The Ministers of the Bologna Process, meeting for the Berlin Higher Education Summit on September 18 – 19, 2003 may be invited to:

- launch work involving all appropriate stakeholders on a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area encompassing the wide range of lifelong learning paths, opportunities and techniques and making appropriate use of the ECTS credits. In entrusting the Bologna Follow Up Group with the organization of this endeavor, they should encourage cooperation between the development of

this framework and the work of the Brugge-København Process in vocational education and training;

- underline the importance of improving the possibilities of all citizens to follow the lifelong learning paths established within qualifications frameworks in accordance with their aspirations and abilities and entrust the Bologna Follow Up Group, in time for the 2005 Ministerial Conference, with exploring how this goal may be achieved.

BOLOGNA SEMINAR ON RECOGNITION AND CREDIT SYSTEMS IN THE CONTEXT OF LIFELONG LEARNING

Praha, June 5 – 7, 2003

Report by the general rapporteur

Sjur Bergan, Council of Europe

Let us make a golden rule: to show everything to all the senses as far as possible. In other words, to show visible things to the eyes and audible things to the ears. And if something can be perceived by other senses, then it should also be presented to those senses.

(Comenius' Golden Rule, displayed outside of the room in which the seminar was held)

INTRODUCTION

The starting point for the Bologna Seminar on Recognition and Credit Systems in the Context of Lifelong Learning organized by the Czech authorities in cooperation with the Czech Technical University is that higher education is no longer a once in a lifetime experience, if it ever was.

While this may seem obvious, it is worth underlining the fact, since our everyday language abounds with expressions and images that point in the opposite direction. Graduation may not be a part of everyday vocabulary, but the much more definite (and definitive) sounding "finish university" and "finish school" are. If people finish their education at age 25 or even 18, what do they do for the rest of their lives? Certainly, imagining that at 18, people will have all the knowledge or skill they will need until the end of their existence is wildly optimistic. I would even be tempted to say it is wildly pessimistic, if we consider what such a view implies in terms of lack of development and intellectual stimulation.

Yet, expressions like these are found in many languages. In my native language we talk about a person who is *ferdig utdannet* or *utlært*, and both expressions imply that there is no need for further education. As often when trying to translate from Norwegian, the German equivalent comes most readily to mind, in this case as *fertig ausgebildet* or *ausgelehrt*. In Spanish, someone who *ha terminado la carrera* is not ready for retirement, but rather for starting his or her professional career, the idea being that the person in question has – once again – completed his or her education. So as not to leave out the third large European branch of the Indo-European language family, the Slavic, the Russian *Я кончил(а) школу* also does not exactly leave the doors of learning wide open , as it were.

AIM OF THIS REPORT

The program of the Bologna seminar organized by the Czech authorities in cooperation with the Czech Technical University is a complete one, and it covers the main issues

relating to recognition and credit systems in the context of lifelong learning. Sessions focusing on transferability in the tertiary sphere, qualifications frameworks in the context of lifelong learning, transparency instruments, validation of prior learning and the recognition of non-traditional qualifications bear witness to the complexity of the seminar and the variety of issues addressed. Add to this intensive group discussions as well as plenary presentations and comments by stakeholders representing students (ESIB), higher education institutions (the European University Association), a higher education institution with very close links to an employer (Škoda Auto College), the Czech Council of Higher Education Institutions, the Czech Accreditation Commission and networks and projects working in the field (ENIC and NARIC Networks[25], TELL, Transfine[26]), and the reader will further appreciate the complexity of the discussion, which was completed by the presentation of national case studies.

The complexity of the issue, which was so well reflected in the conference program, has in a sense also structured the ambitions and scope of this report. Providing anything close to a thorough and faithful synthesis of the various presentations would not only be verging on *hubris* – and we know what happened to those who, in Greek mythology, overstepped this line - but it would also in a sense be superfluous. Conference participants heard the original presentations, which are of an infinitely higher quality than any attempt to summarize them in a late hour of the night could possibly be, and those who were not at the conference, will have an opportunity to read the various contributions in the publication to be prepared by our Czech hosts.

I see my function as Rapporteur, therefore, rather to attempt an analysis of the issues that have been raised, to try to put the various bits and pieces together in something like a coherent whole and, not least, on the basis of the presentations and the discussion at the seminar, to seek to identify some issues that warrant further consideration. It is also my belief that addressing the various issues raised at the seminar will be of importance in establishing a European Higher Education Area that by 2010 will encompass all kinds of higher education.

An analytical report is as much indebted to the presentations and discussions at the conference as a synthesis report would have been. This report therefore relies on the presentations and prepared comments of Ivan Wilhelm, Josef Beneš, Věra Šťastná, Stephen Adam, Peter van der Hijden, Volker Gemlich, Michel Feutrie, Jindra Divis, Štěpánka Skuhrová, Birgit Lao, Sylvie Brochu, Eva Münsterová, Milan Sojka, Alena Chromcová, Hana Slámová, Elisabeth Tosti, Andrew Cubie and Pavel Zgaga, as well as on the opening remarks of the Vice-Minister for research and higher education, Petr Kolář and Professor Miroslav Vlček, Vice Rector of the Czech Technical University.

SOME REFLECTIONS ON LIFELONG LEARNING

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[25] http://www.enic-naric.net
[26] http://www.transfine.net

It is difficult to provide a short and snappy definition of lifelong learning that would meet with the approval of most of those directly concerned or who have otherwise given some thought to the issue. As the Trends III report[27] shows, definitions vary greatly throughout Europe. Lifelong learning may simply be another one of those ubiquitous relatives of the duck, whose common denominator is that we cannot provide an adequate definition, but we instantly recognize them when we see them.

Nevertheless, Josef Beneš and Věra Šťastná in their presentation not only reminded us that lifelong learning is an essential element of the European Higher Education Area; but also that it can be defined as a concept and as a "continuous learning process enabling individuals to acquire and update knowledge, skills and competencies at different stages of their lives and in a variety of learning environments, both formal and informal". This definition follows the one given in the Council of Europe's recommendation on lifelong learning in higher education[28], arising from the project on Lifelong Learning for Equity and Social Cohesion: a Challenge to Universities. Stephen Adam referred to the definition offered by the European Commission where lifelong learning is seen as "all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence, within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective". However, one of the participants, in a comment from the floor, felt that a working definition rather than a political definition was needed. There is also considerable truth in Andrew Cubie's definition of learning as being about not reinventing the wheel.

On this background, it may be worth exploring some characteristics of lifelong learning. The one that first comes to mind, simply because it is the one emphasized by the term itself, is that lifelong learning is situated in a different timeframe than traditional learning. One could perhaps paraphrase Henry David Thoreau and say that lifelong learners march to the beat of a different drummer. Given the brevity of human life, saying that lifelong learning, unlike the traditional concept of "standard learning", is indefinite and therefore has no beginning and no end, is perhaps something of an exaggeration. However, within the time frame of the life of an individual, lifelong learning emphasizes that one is never done with absorbing new knowledge, skills and competence. Nobody can talk about lifelong learning with the authority of someone who has completed it all. In this sense, lifelong learning should be a model for all learning, at whatever level, and indeed for all human existence. As Volker Gemlich rightly said, lifelong learning can also be described as a culture, and Elisabeth Tosti argued the importance of life experience..

Often, though, discussions of lifelong learning betray an assumption – implicit as often as explicit – of alternative learning paths and contents. More often than not, lifelong learners are thought of not as persons undergoing traditional education at a more mature age than the classical student population, but as mature learners learning in different ways and perhaps also acquiring alternative knowledge and skills.

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[27] Sybille Reichert and Christian Tauch: *Trends in Learning Structures in European Higher Education III. Bologna four years after: Steps towards sustainable reform of higher education in Europe.* Draft summary – EUA Graz Convention 29 – 31 May 2003

[28] Recommendation R (2002) 6 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on higher education policies in lifelong learning.

Such implicit assumptions have an impact on the topic of this seminar, in that if learning paths and contents differ from those of classical students, one may ask whether lifelong learners should not also be guided toward alternative qualifications.

It is worth dwelling on the assumption that lifelong learning should lead to alternative qualifications, not because it is universally held, but because those that hold it may not make the assumption explicit.

Lifelong learners have a variety of motives, ranging from personal fulfillment to earning qualifications that are immediately tradable on the labor market. In the words of Andrew Cubie, a key goal of the Scottish Qualifications Framework is to "help people of all ages and circumstances access appropriate education and training over their lifetime to fulfill their personal, social and economic potential".

These motivations and potentials are of course not mutually exclusive; rather, they very often reinforce each other and a learning path that will increase a person's value on the labor market may equally provide him or her with deep personal satisfaction. In this, lifelong learning may well contribute to all the major functions of higher education:

- preparation for the labor market;
- life as an active citizen in democratic society;
- personal development;
- the development and maintenance of an advanced knowledge base.

Underlining that lifelong learners often follow other learning paths than "traditional" learners is certainly a valid point. This almost always applies to the aspect of time, and it often applies to the contents and combinations of study programs as well as the way in which qualifications are earned.

WHAT IS IN A QUALIFICATION?

Nevertheless, it is worth asking whether lifelong learning paths necessarily have to lead to non-traditional qualifications. In a deeper sense, this amounts to arguing that we should review the ways in which we define and measure educational achievements. Where traditionally we have been concerned with the formal ways in which a given qualifications could be achieved and how long it would take to earn it, there is now much discussion of whether it would not be better to seek to assess what a person has learned; what he or she knows and is able to do with a given qualification. In the words of Volker Gemlich, we need to identify the "can do levels".

This emphasis on learning outcomes is not unproblematic, but it has been put on the agenda both of the recognition community, through the ENIC and NARIC Networks and their individual member centers, and of universities. A university driven project, the

TUNING project coordinated by the Universities of Deusto and Groningen[29] and covering a variety of subject areas, has done pioneering work in this area, showing how difficult it is to define learning outcomes that go beyond stating the obvious but also that this can actually be done. In particular, the TUNING project makes a highly useful distinction between subject specific and transversal competence, reminding us that higher education is not just a question of learning facts but also of developing a number of skills like the ability to reason in abstract terms, capacity for analysis and synthesis, problem solving, adaptability, leadership, ability to work autonomously as well as part of a team[30].

Thus, lifelong learning is one of several elements that should lead us to reexamine what we mean by qualifications. Here, Sylvie Brochu emphasized the paradigm shift from teaching to learning, while Volker Gemlich underlined the need to look at lifelong learning provision from the learner's perspective. In this way, the issue of lifelong learning links directly with another issue that has been pioneered in a few countries like the United Kingdom[31], Ireland and Denmark, namely that of defining a qualifications framework. In commenting on this, I draw not only on the present seminar, but also on the Bologna seminar on Qualifications Structures in European Higher Education organized by the Danish authorities in København on March 27 – 28, 2003[32]. Not least, I draw on Stephen Adam's presentations to both seminars.

Essentially, a qualifications framework is a system for describing all qualifications offered within a given education system and how they relate to each other. Not least, elaborating a qualifications framework helps us refine our concept of a qualification, and here much has happened lately. As described by Andrew Cubie, a key function of qualifications frameworks is to guide individuals and help them reach their educational goals with as few complications as possible. The traditional concepts of workload and level have been refined and are no longer expressed only in terms of "years of study". Rather, ECTS credits have largely won acceptance as units measuring the workload required to earn a specific qualification, and these can be earned fast or slowly, depending on the learner. If the ECTS is developed into a credit accumulation and not only a credit transfer system, this would also help with the definition of level.

The concept of level is, however, being refined beyond the insistence of the Bologna Declaration on a two-tier system consisting of a first and a second degree, and the existing national qualifications frameworks are relatively explicit in their level descriptors.

However, when assessing a qualification, we not only need to know something about its workload and level. We also need to know something about the quality of the qualification. While the concern for quality is not new, the widespread acceptance of the need for formal systems assessing the quality of higher education is a fairly recent

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[29] Cf. http://www.relint.deusto.es/TuningProject/
[30] The list has essentially been taken from the TUNING project.
[31] Where the qualifications framework for Scotland is distinct from that for England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
[32] Cf. . http://www.vtu.dk/fsk/div/bologna/Koebenhavn_Bologna_Reprot_final.pdf

development. It may be worth recalling that as late as 1997, when the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention was adopted, there was still discussion of whether a formal quality assurance system was necessary or not. Today, the discussion focuses on what such a system should look like.

Learning outcomes, referred to above, are also an integral part of the discussion of qualifications frameworks. Less discussed is the issue of the profile of a qualification, even though it will often not be sufficient for someone assessing a qualification to know that it is of adequate level. Whether assessing a qualification for employment purposes or for the purpose of further study, an evaluator will often need to know the specific profile of a qualification. While all second degrees will probably provide the learner with a good number of transversal competences, the subject specific competences will also be of importance for someone looking to hire a historian with good knowledge of Czech or considering applications for admission to a doctoral program in information science.

LIFELONG LEARNING - SEPARATE BUT EQUAL?

If we develop a more sophisticated view of what qualifications actually constitute and how different qualifications relate to each other, a safe assumption would also be that we would more readily accept that different learning paths may lead to the same qualification. This is of immediate relevance to the discussion of qualifications, recognition and credit systems in the context of lifelong learning.

One may of course take the view that earning one's qualifications off the beaten track, as it were, constitutes an additional value that should be recognized through a separate qualification. However, the opposite view is equally plausible: that any qualification deviating from the traditional ones may easily be considered second rate, even if the justification for reaching such a conclusion may be entirely lacking. An additional consideration is that, in the interest of transparency, which is another major concern of the European Higher Education Area, a balance has to be struck between allowing learners to define study programs that fit their own profiles and interests and providing a framework for describing the qualifications earned through these programs in a way that is understandable to informed outsiders. Variety has many advantages, but increased transparency is not one of them.

I would therefore argue that lifelong learning should primarily be seen as alternative learning paths toward qualifications described in the qualifications framework of a given education system. This is not to say that all lifelong learning experiences have to end up with a traditional qualifications, but I would be even more concerned if they *a priori* had to end up with a qualification marked "LLL", say a Master of Science LLL. Separate learning paths may be seen as equal, but the chances of gaining acceptance for separate but equal lifelong learning qualifications is not something I would put a lot of money on

if I were a gambler. There is even historical precedent for considering that "separate but equal" will easily end up as anything but[33].

Saying that there should be room for earning traditional qualifications through lifelong learning experiences does, however, amount to saying that we must take a broader view of how qualifications may be earned and which elements may go into any given qualification. This is no small challenge for a qualifications framework.

LIFELONG LEARNING IN THE CONTEXT OF QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS

Josef Beneš and Věra Šťastná remind us that an important part of the background for the discussion about lifelong learning is an increased demand for qualifications at all levels combined with an increasingly diverse student population. This is matched by a diversity of provision, including post-secondary or tertiary programs not considered a part of higher education, at least not in all countries, as well as different kinds and levels of higher education programs and a diversity of study forms, ranging from the classical full time student in his or her early 20's through the increasingly common part time student, encompassing a considerably broader age group, to distance learners.

All of this implies that qualifications may be obtained in different ways, at different speeds and at different ages. We may refer to different learning paths leading to the same qualifications, and in some countries, public authorities responsible for the higher education framework have begun to see the various qualifications of their higher education system as a coherent whole. Therefore, they have set out to describe these qualifications, the way they relate to each other, and the competencies, knowledge and skills they certify in terms of what is often referred to as "new style" qualifications frameworks[34]. This concept was explored in detail at the Bologna seminar organized by the Danish authorities in København on March 27 - 28 this year, and I will therefore not attempt to give anything like a full description of the concept.

Nevertheless, as Stephen Adam demonstrated in his presentation, the concept of qualifications frameworks is highly relevant also to lifelong learning. Indeed, one could say the concept helps "demystify" lifelong learning by showing that various learning paths may lead to the same goal. Lifelong learning is one among several possible paths,

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[33] In 1896, a US Supreme Court decision, known as *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, approved segregation in schools by accepting the formula "separate but equal". This decision was not overturned until 1954, when the Supreme Court, in *Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, ordered the integration of American schools. The implementation of this decision was a central element of the Civil Rights struggle of the 1950s and early 1960s.
[34] The point being that all education systems by definition have a qualifications framework but that, traditionally, the description of the qualifications and not least the relationship and interaction between them leaves much to be desired. The "new style" framework therefore represent a significant step forward.

it is as valuable as the more classical paths. Most likely, a given qualification can be earned by several lifelong learning paths as well as several more traditional paths.

It may be worth recalling the functions of national qualifications frameworks, as outlined in Stephen Adam's presentation. These include:

- making explicit the purposes of qualifications;
- delineate points of access and overlap;
- identify alternative routes;
- position qualifications in relation to one another;
- show routes for progression as well as barriers.

Stephen Adam underlined that lifelong learning is an all-inclusive concept in need of deconstruction. Indeed, he jokingly referred to lifelong learning as suffering from a multiple personality disorder. I think he is right in his assertion, and it may be that lifelong learning is not sufficiently well integrated into higher education policies in part because it has been thought of as something entirely different from standard higher education policies and therefore something to be left to those with a special interest in the issue. The not uncommon assumption that there are separate "lifelong learning qualifications" may also in part arise from this. In my view, the focus on qualifications frameworks and the place of lifelong learning paths within them will help deconstruct lifelong learning and put it in its proper context as an important part of overall higher education policies.

By showing how different qualifications relate to each other, qualifications frameworks should also facilitate the transfer of qualifications between different parts of the system. The need for facilitating such transfer was underlined by several speakers. It is also worth bearing in mind the timely reminder by Josef Beneš and Věra Šťastná: broad transferability does not mean automatic transferability. Therefore, systems and methods must be developed to facilitate transfer, and one example from the Czech Republic is the transfer between the higher professional and university sectors described by Hana Slámová.

DESCRIPTION OF QUALIFICATIONS EARNED THROUGH LIFELONG LEARNING ARRANGEMENTS AND EXPERIENCES

As the variety of qualifications and learning paths increases, developing tools to describe these qualifications and learning paths in a way that makes them understandable to informed - and, sometimes, less informed - outsiders is of great importance. Two such tools have been developed and are in quite wide use today, and both have their place within the Bologna Process.

The Diploma Supplement, developed jointly by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO, aims at describing a qualification in terms of the education system within which it was earned. The Diploma Supplement can also be adapted to qualifications - such as joint degrees - earned within two or more higher education systems. The Diploma Supplement, which is an addition to and not a substitute for the original diploma, contains information on the student, the institution and program, the competencies earned and the higher education system. In many countries, institutions are now obliged by law to issue Diploma Supplements to their students once these earn their degrees.

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), developed by the European Commission, facilitates the transfer of competence earned at one institution or within one higher education system to another institution and/or system. It has achieved this by developing a standard unit expressing workload - the ECTS credit, 60 of which constitute an average workload for an academic year - as well as a standardized grading scheme. There is also discussion of broadening the ECTS to a credit accumulation as well as a credit transfer system. As emphasized by the Bologna seminar on credit transfer, organized by the EUA and the Swiss authorities in Zürich in October 2002, the ECTS must be developed to include the concept of level.

Peter van der Hijden raised the issue of whether credits have absolute or relative value, i.e. whether the value of credits may depend in part on the use to which they will be put. His question was perhaps not quite answered by the participants in the seminar, but a reasonable assumption seems to be that while for many purposes, a credit is a credit is a credit, some study programs will have limits on the amount of credits that can be earned in a given area. Whether this is assigning relative value to credits or emphasizing the profile of a given qualification is perhaps a debate worth pursuing.

The two transparency instruments are complementary, and an ECTS transcript can easily be incorporated into a Diploma Supplement. In this context, it is well worth remembering Michel Feutrie´s reference to ECTS as a transferable model combining

- formal learning in higher and vocational education, for the purpose of certification;
- non-formal learning in companies or organizations, for the purpose of employability;
- informal learning in the voluntary sector, for the purpose of professionalization.

To the extent that the various kinds of educational experiences could not be readily described through the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS, these transparency instruments could be brought together with the remaining elements in a portfolio, describing all the relevant experience, skills and competencies that constitute the person's overall achievements. One possible model could be the European Language Portfolio, developed by the Council of Europe's Language Policy Division to describe a person's competencies in foreign languages, whether formally certified or not, according to a list

of well established criteria of fluency. In the case of computing skills, the EU has developed a European Driving License. In the case of many lifelong learning experiences, it is an important part that candidates are closely involved in constituting their own portfolios, as underlined by Jindra Divis.

The point was made by several speakers that recognition, quality assurance, certification and documentation procedures must be kept as "light" as possible. They specifically warned against creating too heavy a bureaucracy. It is easy to agree with this view in general terms, but since "bureaucracy" has become a catchword for all that is wrong with public administration, it may be worth recalling that a key characteristic of bureaucracy is that it provides for predictable decisions based on the merits of the case and taken by professional employees in the sense that they derive their income from their administrative post[35]. Therefore, decisions are not based on arbitrary factors such as who examines the files, at what time of day this happens or on the payment of direct fees or provision of other services to the individual bureaucrat, commonly referred to as corruption. Bureaucracy should be kept at a reasonable level, but it is as much of an illusion to believe that modern, complex societies can function without an element of public administration as to believe they can be governed without politics.

LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE LISBOA RECOGNITION CONVENTION

The Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, adopted in Lisboa in April 1997 and hence referred to as the Lisboa Recognition Convention, provides the legal framework for the recognition of foreign qualifications in Europe. At the time of writing, it has been ratified by 31 states and signed by a further 12[36]. The main point of the Lisboa Recognition Convention will be found in Appendix 1, suffice it here to underline the following aspects:

Among the main points of the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention are the following:

- Adequate access to an assessment of foreign qualifications.

- Non-discrimination.

- The responsibility to demonstrate that an application does not fulfill the relevant requirements lies with the body undertaking the assessment.

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[35] Cf. Max Weber: *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (1922); the reference here is to a Norwegian edition of Weber's writings: *Makt og byråkrati* (Oslo 1982: Gyldendals Studiefakler), pp. 105 - 157).

[36] An updated list of ratifications and signatures, as well as the text of the Convention and its Explanatory Report, may be found at http://conventions.coe.int, search for ETS 165.

- Recognition unless the competent authority can demonstrate a substantial difference.

- All parties shall provide information on the institutions and programs they consider as belonging to their higher education systems.

In a legal sense, the Convention is only applicable to the parties, i.e. the countries that have ratified the Convention or otherwise declared themselves bound by it, and for qualifications belonging to their higher education systems. However, the Convention also has a second function: that of serving as a guide to good practice. In this sense, its provisions can equally well be applied in other contexts and to other kinds of qualifications.

If national qualifications frameworks – and possibly a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area – are construed so as to include different learning paths to the same educational achievements and qualifications, there should be no formal reason why the provisions of the Lisboa Recognition Convention could not be applied to qualifications earned through a lifelong learning path. If these paths were not to be recognized as belonging to the higher education qualifications of a Party, the Convention could still be applied *de facto* and its principles be applied to lifelong learning at higher education level.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

If recognition aims at taking due account of a person's competence, skills and knowledge without regard to how these have been attained, the question of recognition of non-traditional qualifications - or at least of qualifications earned in non-traditional ways - arises. Again, it is good to keep in mind the context of diversification of higher education, including the development of transnational education and virtual learning, in which this discussion takes place. This is not a concern only for lifelong learners, but since they tend to follow more varied paths than traditional higher education graduates, the issue of recognition of prior learning takes on a special importance in discussions of lifelong learning.

As presented by Jindra Divis and Štěpanká Skuhrová, a project on prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR)[37], carried out by the ENICs/NARICs of the Czech Republic, Germany and Sweden and led by the Dutch ENIC/NARIC, has sought to develop a methodology for the recognition of non-formal or informal learning or, in broader terms, any kind of competence at higher education level that cannot be documented by traditional means. Through different forms of assessment, including interviews, simulations and tests as well as the candidate's portfolio, the PLAR

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[37] http://ice-plar.net

methodology seeks to establish the candidate's actual competencies, whether for the purpose of access to higher education (at whatever level appropriate) or for employment. In the Netherlands, which has pioneered this form of assessment, the PLAR methodology has not least played an important role in assessing immigrants' teacher qualifications.

LIFELONG LEARNING AS A PART OF THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

Lifelong learning policies, as well as the broader issue of the European Higher Education Area, are discussed in a context marked by globalization, massification of higher education, decreasing demographic curves, an increasingly heterogenous student body, an emphasis on the need for quality education and increasing pressures as concerns employability and the competitiveness of students on the labor market, as Josef Beneš and Věra Šťastná so usefully reminded us. Sylvie Brochu as well as one of the working groups usefully emphasized that higher education institutions have to satisfy a double agenda: one the one hand, they have to be competitive economically, while on the other hand they also have to fulfill their social responsibility. She also reminded us that in addition, higher education institutions have to reconcile the need for a market orientation with the need to keep a certain distance in order to discern longer term trends.   The classical university model was of course not devoid of market orientation, but the shape of the market has changed quite dramatically since the day of the Medieval university. As we have put it in another context, one of the dilemmas facing modern universities is how, in the age of the sound bite, one can develop an understanding of the importance of an institution that by its nature takes the longer view[38].

As Stephen Adam emphasized, this context also includes the fact that only half of the EU member states have strategies for lifelong learning, even if the recently published Trends III report indicates that most Bologna countries are now planning to develop lifelong learning strategies or already in the process of doing so. Of the 11 Bologna countries that already have established such policies, north western Europe is clearly overrepresented[39].

In reflecting on the role and place of lifelong learning within the Bologna Process, it may be worth emphasizing that lifelong learning should be considered a part of overall higher education policies rather than as a separate strand. The same would be true for policies directed at other levels or profiles of education, and Stephen Adam very usefully reminded us that the Bologna Process should interact with initiatives in other areas of education, such the Brugge-København Process. However, to borrow from Josef Beneš and Věra Šťastná again, higher education is our "playground".

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[38] For these and related issues, see Nuria Sanz and Sjur Bergan: *The Heritage of European Universities* (Strasbourg 2002: Council of Europe Publishing).
[39] Cf. *Trends III*, pp. 12 - 13.

The current work program of the Bologna Process, covering the period 2001 – 2003, is divided into 5 or 6 categories. However, it is also possible to read it differently. In my reading, this program consists of two broad areas, the first of which focuses on qualifications and degree structures, while the second has to do with the social dimension of higher education, which was in particular emphasized by Birgit Lao, but also by several other speakers like Sylvie Brochu and Stephen Adam. In my view, lifelong learning touches on both of these aspects within the Bologna Process. In his closing remarks, Pavel Zgaga also touched on this, and he emphasized that lifelong learning is such a general idea that it could be left happily to live its life in theories, but considerable effort is needed to translate these theories into practical policies and action.

As concerns the first, I believe the main issue for the further progress toward the European Higher Education Area is how lifelong learning can be integrated into qualifications frameworks at both national level and for the European Higher Education Area as entirely valid paths leading to the various qualifications making up these frameworks. In the terms of the Lisboa Recognition Convention, lifelong learning paths would then be a part of the higher education systems of States party, which also means that the qualifications thus earned would be considered for recognition on a par with the same qualifications earned through more traditional higher education learning paths. A second issue is how these learning paths could then be adequately described through transparency instruments like the Diploma Supplement, the ECTS and possibly a lifelong learning portfolio.

As concerns lifelong learning as a part of the social dimension of higher education, the issue is probably considerably easier to phrase than to solve: if lifelong learning paths are integrated into accepted qualifications frameworks, how can authorities and higher education institutions encourage people to actually follow those paths. This was not one of the main issues for the present conference, which focused on qualifications and credits, but it is worth underlining that it touches on issues like equitable access, student finance, motivating members of new or underrepresented groups to pursue higher education, adapting learning methods and institutional working schedules and certainly a host of other issues. Trends III also emphasizes that 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", something that would be detrimental to the goal of an inclusive European Higher Education Area and that would not help us achieve the goal stipulated by the Ministers in their Praha Communiqué:

> *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.*

Personally, I cannot conceive of quality of life without an opportunity to learn and broaden horizons, as I fully share Pavel Zgaga's desire to "live a long life in learning". I also cannot conceive of a developed society that would not offer its citizens an opportunity to develop their competencies, skills and knowledge. The choice in favor of lifelong learning should not be all that difficult if one contemplates the alternatives – is one of them lifelong ignorance? However, reaching a goal is generally more difficult than imagining it, so we still have work to do before this part of the Bologna Process will meet the two criteria for success defined by Ivan Wilhelm in his presentation:

 (1) making the right decisions;
 (2)   convincing the majority of people that your decision is right.

Hopefully, the recommendations from this conference will help persuade higher education institutions, public authorities responsible for higher education, international organizations and institutions and the Ministers of the Bologna Process set out to consider lifelong learning as an integral part of higher education policies, as learning paths within higher education qualifications framework that will help broaden access to higher education and further equity and social cohesion. If so, the seminar will have been a successful one.

Lifelong learning, as life itself, is sometimes difficult. However, the alternatives are unappealing, and this should in itself constitute a strong incentive to success.

APPENDIX 1 MAIN POINTS OF THE LISBOA RECOGNITION CONVENTION

- Holders of qualifications issued in one party shall have adequate access to an assessment of these qualifications in another party.

- No discrimination shall be made in this respect on any ground such as the applicant's gender, race, color, disability, language, religion, political opinion, national, ethnic or social origin.

- The responsibility to demonstrate that an application does not fulfill the relevant requirements lies with the body undertaking the assessment.

- Each party shall recognize qualifications – whether for access to higher education, for periods of study or for higher education degrees – as similar to the corresponding qualifications in its own system unless it can show that there are substantial differences between its own qualifications and the qualifications for which recognition is sought.

- Recognition of a higher education qualification issued in another party shall have one or both of the following consequences:
  a.   access to further higher education studies, including relevant examinations and preparations for the doctorate, on the same conditions as candidates from the country in which recognition is sought;
  b.   the use of an academic title, subject to the laws and regulations of the country in which recognition is sought.
In addition, recognition may facilitate access to the labor market.

- All parties shall develop procedures to assess whether refugees and displaced persons fulfill the relevant requirements for access to higher education or to employment activities, even in cases in which the qualifications cannot be proven through documentary evidence.

- All parties shall provide information on the institutions and programs they consider as belonging to their higher education systems.

- All parties shall appoint a national information center, one important task of which is to offer advice on the recognition of foreign qualifications to students, graduates, employers, higher education institutions and other interested parties or persons.

- All parties shall encourage their higher education institutions to issue the Diploma Supplement to their students in order to facilitate recognition. The Diploma Supplement is an instrument developed jointly by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO that aims to describe the qualification in an easily understandable way and relating it to the higher education system within which it was issued.

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

Bologna and the challenges of e-learning and distance education, Ghent, 4-5 June 2004

Bologna and the challenges of e-learning and distance education, Ghent, 4-5 June 2004
THE CONTRIBUTION OF NON-CLASSICAL LEARNING AND TEACHING FORMS TO THE
EMERGING EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

Ghent, 4-5 June 2004

General conclusions and recommendations

Drivers for the EHEA are diverse. They include mobility, response to the rapidly changing knowledge society, attention for social inclusion and equity, and efficient investment in human capital.
The Seminar demonstrated that e-learning and distance education are to be considered an integrated part of the regular activities alongside mainstream higher education. E-Learning as part of a well balanced blend, is not only instrumental for this purpose but a necessity to bring lifelong learning to its full potential: it facilitates self-directed learning, can easily match individual needs and provides sufficient flexibility.
Without such flexibility, the integration of the lifelong learning perspective will remain a empty concept; and the EHEA will remain socially exclusive instead of inclusive.

Collaborative networking between institutions, both conventional and dedicated distance teaching ones, and even including the corporate world i.a. through private-public partnerships, will help to meet these needs in a timely, high quality, efficient and effective way.
On the basis of these observations, we make the following recommendations for the further development of the Bologna process:

③ To open up the EHEA to an *Open* Higher Education Area by fully integrating the

   dimension of flexible learning paths supported by e-learning and other non-classical

   learning and teaching forms.

③ To extend quality assurance, accreditation and qualification frameworks to e-learning

   and other non classical modes of delivery in an integrated approach encompassing

   the full range of higher education.

③ In the context of widening access, to develop leadership in higher education
   institutions in order to integrate a lifelong learning-for-all strategy in joint

   responsibility with staff, students and the local and international community.

③ To explore how the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention could be used to

   establish common understanding and shared standards on the validation of prior

learning experiences in both formal and non-formal settings as a concrete step to the integration of the lifelong learning perspective in higher education.

③   To acknowledge the contribution of so-called "virtual mobility" to international academic exchange and joint curriculum development to take on board in the design of international mobility schemes.

③   To promote a broad approach to all "Bologna tools" (as for instance ECTS and Diploma Supplement) to include e-learning and non classical teaching and learning forms.

Final report

ON THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR BOLOGNA AND THE CHALLENGES OF E-LEARNING AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

THE CONTRIBUTION OF NON-CLASSICAL LEARNING AND TEACHING FORMS TO THE EMERGING EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

Ghent, 4-5 June 2004

The main focus of the seminar organised by the Ministry of the Flemish Community (Belgium) and the University of Ghent in cooperation with the Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation, the Ministry of Education of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the Institute of International Educational Programs of St Petersburg State Polytechnic University, was on the integration of the lifelong learning perspective in higher education, as was recommended by the ministerial Bologna follow-up meetings in Prague (2001) and more recently in Berlin (2003). In particular the seminar explored the issue of widening access to higher education, e.g. for a more mature student public that combines studies with other, for instance professional, responsibilities. This public not only needs more flexible programmes but also more appropriate teaching methods and modes of delivery of the courses. Moreover, large attention was paid to the issue of interaction, synergies and complementary interplay between so-called "virtual" and physical mobility. This seminar discussed how non-classical teaching and learning forms can be of use in an emerging European Higher Education Area of which quality assurance and recognition, as well as mobility and social issues are the corner stones. The challenges higher distance education poses in this perspective were explored accordingly. The seminar was attended by policy makers, representatives of the academic world and specialists both in international relations and in e-learning from a large variety of countries and organisations participating in the Bologna process.

PLENARY SESSIONS

Mr. Piet Henderikx, Secretary-General of European Association of Distance Teaching Universities and Mr. Bernd Wächter, Director of the Academic Cooperation Association agreed to chair the plenary sessions. These sessions were intended to give an overview of the topic seen from the point of view of different stakeholders and international organisations involved in the Bologna process. Contributions were made by Ms Maruja Gutierrez-Diaz (European Commision), Dr. Vera Stastna (Council of Europe), Ms Magda Kirsch (EURASHE), Ms Zeynep Varoglu (UNESCO) and Mr. Johan Almqvist (ESIB). The keynote speech was presented by Dr. Anne Wright (Department of Education and Skills, UK), who stressed the necessity of developing institutional leadership in order to integrate the lifelong learning perspective in the mission of higher education institutions and to develop an e-learning policy accordingly. Specific case studies were presented Ms Ingeborg Bö (Norwegian Association for distance Education), Ms Elena Nikonchuk (St

Petersburg State Polytechnic University) and Mr. Fillip Vervenne (KATHO Zuid-West-Vlaanderen).

<div align="center">CONCLUSIONS FROM THE WORKSHOPS</div>

Workshop 1- Lifelong learning and the Mainstream

Chair : Prof. Dirk Van Damme (Council for Flemish Community Education)
Facilitator : Dr. Bill Harvey (Scottish Funding Council for Further and Higher Education)

Key questions

- • *Is mainstream education fit to serve (all) lifelong learners, and serve them optimally?*
- • *What is (eventually) precisely missing at the level of:*
  - o *Access to higher education for lifelong learners;*
  - o *Attitudes from staff, conventional students and mature students;*
  - o *Teaching and learning materials (courses, programmes);*
  - o *Organisation of course delivery and learner support (technical, pedagogical, organisational);*
  - o *Legislation (e.g. modularisation, recognition, funding of lifelong learners);*
- • *What about networking between conventional higher education and dedicated distance education institutions in this perspective? Could private-public partnerships be helpful?*
- • *What recommendations can be made in addition to the ones that were already formulated earlier ?*

Lifelong learning is to a great extent a matter of access and equity, and the use of ICTs can contribute to these aims. The competitiveness of Europe relies heavily on the availability of a competent workforce. This does not only imply that people should be educated to sufficient competence levels, but also that the competences should be maintained throughout professional life. For that purpose, the *efficiency* of lifelong learning systems in this respect is highly crucial. In a way we have to redefine the idea of lifelong learning in higher education. It becomes more important from an efficiency point of view to tailor lifelong learning to the individual learning needs. Additionally, the access to lifelong learning for those who are traditionally underrepresented should get the attention that it deserves. E-learning can be instrumental to this purpose, if a specific approach is adopted to counselling and assessment of students.

Many students, especially mature students, do not study for a degree. However, the prospect of ending their studies without any qualification is bound to have a negative effect on their motivation. Some educational systems like the ones of Scotland and England created sub-degrees (e.g. two year foundation degree recently introduced in England). It should be questioned what the consequences of this reality are for the Bologna process, taking into account the recommendation from the Berlin Communiqué to include such sub-degrees in the qualification frameworks for higher education. We

should therefore opt for an integrated framework showing all kinds of learning qualifications and their upward and downward links. The essential elements of such framework are appropriate mechanisms for validation of all learning and "linkages" between qualifications.

From this perspective it is important to put stress on assessment and recognition of prior (formal and non-formal) learning, and to create flexible learning pathways, which can respond to the same requirements. Modularisation of higher education will support this flexibility and the creation of their connected individual learning paths. The use of lifelong learning portfolios can at the same time enhance the desired flexibility, provide support for the recognition of prior learning and contribute to attribution of credits and eventual awarding of degrees It was also observed that ECTS should not only focus on the workload, but also relate to the level of qualification.

Workshop 2 - Quality assurance

Chair : Prof. Jan Madey (General Council for Higher Education, Poland)
Facilitator : Mr Claudio Dondi (SEEQUEL project) and Prof. Annamaria De Rosa (C-EVU project)

<u>*Key questions*</u>

- *What are the challenges for international recognition? How can these challenges be tackled?*
- *Can the quality of e-learning and distance education be assured with the same frameworks, models, systems and standards that provide quality assurance and accreditation for conventional higher education?*
- *What pressure is put on quality assurance and accreditation models and systems by the international networks and their services in which higher education is increasingly engaging?*
- *What should/can be the effect of private-public partnerships on quality assurance and accreditation models for higher education?*
- *Are the models of quality assurance and accreditation that have been developed for higher education in the past few years adequate to face these new challenges? If these need adaptation, in what way?*
- *What recommendations can be made in addition to the ones that were already formulated earlier ?*

Quality of learning is always related to the subjective perception of the characteristics of a learning experience that includes the learning sources, learning processes and the learning context. Quality of (e-)learning is by consequence a complex issue that can and should be approached from different viewpoints. Therefore, a project like SEEQUEL uses various perspectives that must be put together to offer a complete view on quality:

the consideration of "stakeholders" (not only actors but also the variety of education and training at their various levels with inclusion of non-formal education), their specific involvement, an extensive conceptual framework, a forum with annexed documentation, and an action oriented environment aimed at the validation of quality assurance schemes and dissemination of good practice.

Recognition of degrees and prior learning experience on the one hand, and accreditation on the other cannot be disconnected from quality appreciation, as was illustrated in the example of a European Ph.D. programme.

Quality assurance systems are quite different in the various European countries, as was demonstrated by the participants of the workshop, describing their home systems. With respect to the specific quality assurance of e-learning, three possible situations are occurring:

> (1) e-learning is evaluated with the existing quality assurance systems for higher education; or
> (2) an adapted version of this existing quality assurance system is used; or
> (3) a specific system for e-learning has been developed.

When only limited experience/familiarity with e-learning is in place, the need for a specific quality assurance system for e-learning is considered superfluous; however the more experience with e-learning, the more the advantage and even necessity of specific standards is acknowledged.

This does of course not mean that quality standards for e-learning should be disconnected from the quality assurance system for higher education as a whole. Specific quality standards for e-learning will not be put in place, before policy makers are familiar with the impact of e-learning, and will be able to judge it accurately.

Anyhow, the quality assurance system should be more (learning) outcome and learning process directed, instead of merely focussing on input factors like structure and study duration. Student feedback must be part of the quality assurances procedures. Students should not be considered as consumers, they are full partners of the academic community and therefore should have a real impact on effective changes in teaching methods

One of the risks in the context of e-learning is the growing number of private initiatives (sometimes purely commercial) on the market. Some of these initiatives, however, have connections with public higher educational provision. They cooperate, for instance, with public institutions, or, in other cases public institutions put their e-learning provision (and/or distance education) also into private spin offs (involving eventually private companies). This kind of arrangements are usually not serving specific pedagogical concerns but are purely commercially inspired (as such these private higher education providers can freely fix the amounts of tuition), are no subject to public accredited and often escape to quality evaluation. Some are even direct "diploma mills". It would be wise to submit private higher education institutes and programmes to the national quality assurance and accreditation systems in order to eliminate this kind of abuse.

Finally, the working group stressed the fact that quality assurance should not be seen as a static

concept, but should above all include the dynamics of improvement.

Workshop 3: Opening higher education up to the larger society

Chair : Ms Aspasiya Hadzisce (TEMPUS Office, Former Yugoslavian Republic of

Macedonia)

Facilitator : Mr Serge Ravet (SEEL-project)

<u>*Key questions*</u>

- *How can e-learning and distance education be used to widen access and promote inclusion of underrepresented learner groups?*
- *Can we identify good practice in combining the objective of widening access to e-learning programmes with efficient cooperation with the business sector?*
- *(Higher) education plays/can play/should play an important role in regional development. How can e-learning and distance education contribute to this development?*
- *What does this mean in a context of the expanding EHEA with its heterogeneity of 40, soon 46 countries? Should an EvirtHEA be instrumental for this purpose? In what respect?*
- *Can we identify good practice of public-private partnerships for virtual instruction? What have turned out to be the concrete benefits? What were problematic areas in this cooperation?*
- *What recommendations can be made in addition to the ones that were already formulated earlier ?).*

The discussion focused on how higher education institutions could play an active role in developing learning communities in close cooperation with other stakeholders. The facilitator of the workshop stressed that *regions* have to develop coherent learning strategies (establishment of "learning regions"), making use of the assets and facilities available on local level. In this perspective, once again, a good framework of recognition of prior experience is vital.

The Bologna process is not only about teaching and research. The social aspect of the process should be widened to the interactions between higher education and society. Therefore, quality assurance frameworks for the evaluation of higher education institutions and staff should incorporate their contribution to society as a possible indicator. These contributions go further than the pure economical aspects, we should also consider links between higher education and culture (including cultural heritage, intercultural understanding,…) and the development of European citizenship.

Concerning access to ICT applications, the workshop participants observed that there is a need to address on European level the legal and technical obstacles to the free movement of knowledge in an educational context. However, it was mentioned that ICT applications

tend to be monopolized by multinational concerns, which has implications on pricing and the life cycle of products.

In this context it is regretted that the European Commission proposal on the new generation of Community Programmes on Education and Training does not provide a transversal ICT action for TEMPUS⁺, which could in a substantial way contribute to widening access to e-leaning in the TEMPUS beneficiary countries. This issue should therefore be reconsidered in the preparation of the final EU decision.

Most essential remains the development of a culture of lifelong learning, where citizens are encouraged to self-management of their learning and learning pathways, rather than following a standardised programme. Teacher training can contribute in an important way to the introduction of this new learning culture to which e-learning pathways can be of assistance.

Workshop 4 -"virtual" and physical mobility

Chair : Prof. Luc François (University of Ghent)
Facilitator : Prof. Herman van den Bosch (Open University the Netherlands) and Prof.
Peter Kosc (Technical University Kosice, Slovak Republic)

Key questions

- *How do we get the most out of virtual mobility as a support for physical mobility as well as a value in its own?*
    - o *Physical mobility became successful after structuring and funding it in the framework of the EC's Erasmus programme. Are similar actions needed for virtual mobility?*
    - o *Should virtual mobility be restricted to Europe or embedded in a kind of "Erasmus mundus 2" (enabling also virtual mobility of European citizens to higher education offers outside Europe), and if so, what would be consequences of such choice?*
    - o *How to structure virtual mobility in the institutions? Extend the tasks of Erasmus co-ordinators or create new co-ordinators for virtual Erasmus? What services should be put in place to support the co-ordinators?*
    - o *What special considerations have to be made to virtual mobility in the context of joint courses and degrees?*
- *What challenges does virtual mobility pose in terms of recognition and the application of the ECTS system? What about competences and a competence portfolio?*
- *What about a EvirtHEA? Is it necessary? Why, why not?*
- *What recommendations can be made in addition to the ones that were already formulated earlier?*

As a study of the Open Universities of the Netherlands, UK and Hagen pointed out, two objectives can be identified for students to study abroad: (1) to gain international experience and competence, (2) to approach other (often more specialised) study opportunities. In comparing physical and virtual mobility the study concludes that physical mobility is primarily aimed at the first objective, while the characteristics of virtual mobility lead rather to the second one. The term "virtual mobility" is somewhat confusing. It is clear that mobility as such has essential features which can only be found in a context of physical movement of students and teachers form one place to another. But on the other hand we cannot deny that there is a whole range of ICT supported activities that can complement international curriculum development to the same extent

as does mobility in a stricter sense. Various types of so-called "virtual mobility" can be identified:

- international learning experience
- courses taken from a foreign institution,
- joint courses/programmes/degrees
- continuing professional training.

It is typical that, although the same barriers to the development of virtual mobility exist in every type of "virtual mobility", each barrier affects other issues in the various types.

They can be overcome, but it should be done in a proper way, depending on the type of "virtual mobility".

Experiences with virtual mobility led to the conclusion that it should be a complement to Erasmus and other international mobility schemes. Distance teaching universities could take the initiative, but part-time students of conventional institutions should be involved also. ECTS is a good vehicle for recording "virtual mobility".

A case study of Kosice University described the necessity to first develop good e-learning tools and offers, before engaging in ICT supported international exchange. Opportunities and threads analysis of e-learning can be helpful to avoid pitfalls. Some considerations where that the use of too complicated technology applications should be avoided, that social skills education and personal development remains a priority in all education. User-friendly and open portals should be used. The working group voiced a preference for so-called "blended" concepts of learning, taking into account that human contact between teacher and student cannot simply be replaced by technology.

"Virtual mobility" must be used to enrich and support physical mobility by better preparing it, providing effective follow-up means for it, and offering the possibility to stay in contact with the home institution while abroad. It can also offer (at least part of) the benefits of physical mobility for those who are otherwise unable to attend the courses abroad.

"Virtual mobility" has however also attractive values that are not connected to this supportive function: it offers access to contents, approaches and expertise that are not available in local institutions; enables exchange and collaboration with people that have other linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and can thus provide pathways for learning that are more adapted to individual needs.

To release the full potential, some conditions have to be met. In "virtual mobility" students may take courses in various institutions at the same time. This requires the availability of good and well-maintained information in databases and information portals. As e-learning is often a part of blended learning, the uptake of education and training should be possible at module level.

In other words, a virtual (e-learning) component within the EHEA, is necessary to cope with all these particularities. However, it is important to locate this virtual mobility into the ERASMUS and other international mobility schemes, to avoid smooth linking of the virtual and physical mobility components, facilitate the decisions in institutions and keep administrative and managerial overhead within control. Its funding mechanisms and criteria should be adapted to meet the specific needs that are connected to virtual mobility; and funding should be following the student, not the institution. The ECTS system should be adapted by including competence based elements and take up aspects of qualification levels besides study load.

The attitude of many conventional higher education institutions of making a distinction between education and lifelong learning should be changed, and distance education should become a regular part of their mainstream offer. In a perspective of lifelong learning, the learner should be enabled to decide on the formats, places and time of study.

SOCIAL ISSUES AND GOVERNANCE

Seminar "Exploring the Social Dimensions of the European Higher Education Area," Athens, 19-20 February 2003

BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP SEMINAR

"EXPLORING THE SOCIAL DIMENSIONS
OF THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA"

**Athens, Greece
19-20 February 2003
Divani Caravel Hotel**

Conclusions

A. The issues of the "social dimension" and the "public good"

In the Berlin Communiqué, the Ministers should explicitly reaffirm the importance of the social dimension of the Bologna Process towards the construction of the European Higher Education Area. They should also reaffirm their position that higher education should be considered a public good and a public responsibility. Moreover, the Ministers should specify the social aspects of the European Higher Education Area, taking also stock of the outcomes of the official Bologna Seminar held in Athens and of the European Student Convention.

Improving the social characteristics of the European Higher Education Area should counterbalance the need for competitiveness and be seen as a value in itself as well as one of the conditions of competitiveness, and should aim at reducing the social gap and strengthening social cohesion, both at national and at European level. In the knowledge-based society and economy, the social component should be given considerable concern with regards to research as well.

Higher education as a public good cannot only be interpreted as an economic issue but also as a social and political one. In that context, higher education should be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction and the defence of free education.

Under conditions of wide access to higher education, the need for quality and accountability becomes predominant, and should be realised through the establishment of appropriate quality assurance procedures. At the same time, the maintenance of public support on the one hand and the efficient use of the available resources on the other are of special importance as well.

Appropriate studying and living conditions should be ensured for the students so that they can finalise successfully their studies in time without being prevented by obstacles related to their social and economic background. In this context, it is necessary to introduce and maintain social support schemes for the students, including grants, portable as far as possible, loan schemes, health care and insurance, housing and academic and social counselling.

Removing the obstacles to the free movement of students should be considered a prerequisite for provision of equal mobility opportunities to all students irrespective of their social and economic background, thus providing for a genuine mobility.

Participants underlined the need for on-going research at European level, including comparative analyses and best practices, so that the social dimension of the Bologna Process and the consideration of higher education as public good and public responsibility to be further improved.

B. The issue of the GATS negotiations

1. Participants took notice of the emerging global market for higher education services as well as developments in trading these services in the framework of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) within the World Trade Organisation (WTO).
2. **Participants also noted the increasing trend towards global competition in higher education. However, they reaffirmed that the main objective driving the creation of the EHEA and the internationalisation of HE on a global level, should first and foremost be based on academic values and co-operation between different countries and regions of the world.**
3. Participants welcomed the announcement of the European Commission not to include education in its negotiation proposal for the ongoing GATS negotiations as a positive development. The majority also welcomed the efforts of keeping the existing commitments of the EU limited entirely to for-profit privately funded education services.
4. Participants reaffirmed the commitment of the Prague Communiqué for considering higher education a public good and stressed that any negotiations about trade in education services must not jeopardise the responsibility of financing the public education sector. They further stressed, that recognition agreements and the right of countries to implement quality assurance mechanisms should not be put in question.
5. Generally, participants believe that the positions to develop future and maintain existing regulatory and funding frameworks on national and international level have to be guaranteed.
6. Participants also believe that it is necessary to continue to develop alternative frameworks for internationalisation within the Bologna Process and the international context based on academic co-operation, trust and respect for diversity.
7. Furthermore, it is necessary in each country to assess the possible impacts of GATS on education systems from a legal and practical perspective, also taking into account the role of higher education in society.
8. Participants expressed the need for transparency in the GATS negotiations and that GATS negotiators should consult closely the higher education stakeholders.
9. Participants stressed that in case of the necessity of dispute settlement under GATS procedures, experts from the higher education sector should be consulted.
10. It is asked from the Bologna Follow-Up Group to elaborate a text proposal on European higher education and GATS for inclusion in the Berlin Communiqué by the next meeting of the Bologna Follow-up Group in June 2003.

Bologna Follow-up Seminar
"Exploring the Social Dimensions of the European Higher Education Area"
Athens, Greece, 19-20 February 2003

General Report

1. Introduction

The seminar focused on three main issues and the challenges they pose for the construction of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). These three issues are: (1) the social dimension of the EHEA, (2) higher education as a public good and (3) higher education in the GATS negotiations. Each of these tree issues were dealt with in the answers to the questionnaire that was sent out by the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs before the seminar, were analysed by several speakers and were the topic of working group discussions. This draft report tries to put forward a generally acceptable synthesis of questionnaire answers, speakers' input and working group results for the three main issues. At the same time it makes some careful proposals of passages to be included in the communiqué that the European ministers of education will agree upon at their next ministerial summit in September 2003 in Berlin.

2. The social dimension of the EHEA

Starting points

The European ministers of education didn't mention the social dimension in their Bologna Declaration. In their Prague Communiqué on the contrary they stressed the social dimension several times. Firstly they mentioned it in a general way under the heading "Higher education institutions and students": "Ministers also reaffirmed the need, recalled by students, to take account of the social dimension in the Bologna Process." Secondly they referred to it on two specific occasions, on the one hand under the heading "Promotion of mobility": "Therefore, they (…) emphasized the social dimension of mobility.", on the other under the heading "Lifelong learning": "(…) lifelong learning strategies are necessary (…) to improve social cohesion, equal opportunities and quality of life." They encouraged the follow-up group to organise a seminar on the "social dimension, with specific attention to obstacles to mobility" to explore the topic further.

Furthermore it must be remembered that all the signatory countries of the Bologna Declaration have signed and ratified the "United Nations Covenant on Economical,

Social and Cultural Rights". Article 13 of this Covenant is directly relevant for the social dimension of the EHEA: "Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education."

One of the overall goals of higher education is to enhance social cohesion and equity. This goal should therefore also be central in the creation of the EHEA. To be able to achieve this goal it is essential to take into account the social dimension of higher education, to elaborate and implement appropriate policies and to agree upon and co-ordinate European-wide action lines.

Two policy levels can be discerned. Firstly all signatory countries should share some characteristics on social student policy. Secondly some specific European policy initiatives could be developed.

Shared characteristics

The social student policy of all the signatory countries should be aimed at allowing those persons who have the capacities and the will to study to actually access and finish higher education studies. To achieve this aim activities have to be deployed in two domains.

The first domain is that of access to higher education, meaning access to both the first cycle and the second cycle.
- Equal and free access should be guaranteed. This means that access policies can only be based on merit and capacities. Furthermore it is clear that tuition fees can form severe access thresholds. In correspondance with article 13 of the UN Covenant they should be eliminated or at least be reduced to as low an amount as possible. Equal and free access should not only be guaranteed for the traditional student but also for non-traditional students such as older and/or employed persons. For these the developments of flexible learning paths and the introduction of an ECTS compatible credit accumulation system are essential features. Also alternative delivery modes could prove to be very useful.
- Not only should equal and free access be guaranteed, participation of underrepresented or socially disadvantaged groups should also be enhanced. Special attention should be devoted to persons stemming from lower socio-economic classes, ethnic minorities, immigrants, disabled persons, etc. Their situation and background is very complex. Therefore structural policies are required which should at least contain special financial incentives and flexible learning paths.
- Essential in the access and participation debate are decent information campaigns. It is clear that co-ordination and co-operation between secondary and higher education are needed here.

The second domain is that of the social support for those students who are studying in higher education. Essential is that an adequate social student infrastructure is set up that will allow every student to finish his or her studies on time and with the biggest welfare possible. This social student infrastructure is amongst others made up of:

- a performative financial support system
- decent housing facilities
- encompassing social security coverage
- accessible health care
- relevant academic, social and legal guidance and counselling
- supportive job and career services.

Next to this a constant fight against drop-out rates should be waged. Appropriate counselling is important here. But as important is once more the introduction of flexible learning paths and an ECTS compatible credit accumulation system.

The development of a social student policy in these two domains is a joint responsability of governments and higher education institutions. In a higher education environment characterised by institutional autonomy the higher education institutions have to actively contribute to the enhancement of social cohesion and equity.

The European level

The Bologna Declaration contained action lines on the "promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance" and the "promotion of the European dimension in higher education". Likewise in the future development of the EHEA a European approach and European co-operation in the social dimension should be promoted.

It is clear that there is no need whatsoever for a common European social student support system. But there is a well-defined need for consultation and concertation within the EHEA on the aims and goals of the social student policy. The way each country implements the aims and goals agreed upon in this process of consultation and concertation is a matter of national sovereignty. The Bologna Process offers an ideal occasion for such a process of consultation and concertation.

In the EHEA there exists an enormous and rich diversity in access and social support policies. There is a clear need for more but above all more qualitative information on this diversity. Euro-Stud is for instance a good example of an attempt to offer such information. Nevertheless it should be enlarged to all Bologna signatory countries and the information provided should become more analytical and comparative. The collection and dissemination of best practices in access and social support policies should also be stimulated. Moreover there is also a clear need for more comparable policy criteria. Just as ENQA receives study assignments in the field of European co-operation in quality assurance it should be considered to give for instance ECSTA comparable study assignments which deal with the aforementioned topics.

In the Prague Communiqué the ministers of education specifically stressed the social dimension in relation to student mobility. Social aspects are indeed very often considerable thresholds to European student mobility. These threshold resulting from social aspects could be tackled by the following measures:
- clearer and more targeted information on student mobility opportunities
- portability of all financial student support albeit under certain conditions

- equal access for mobile students to the social support systems of the countries where they are studying
- specific measures to improve the participation of disadvantaged social groups, especially students originating from the lower socio-economic strata, to student mobility
- solidarity in the EHEA to fight the current disparity between European countries which very often hinders student mobility: this could be done by devising some sort of mechanism by which the wealthier countries in the EHEA assist the relatively less wealthy countries.

Conclusion

In the Prague Communiqué attention was drawn to the social dimension of the EHEA. The Berlin Communiqué must follow up this dimension and treat the different elements which make it up more intensively.

Therefore it is proposed to include the three following paragraphs in the Berlin Communiqué.

The preamble should state: "The Ministers reaffirm the importance of the social dimension of the process in the construction of a European Higher Education Area. They point towards the importance in this matter of article 13 of the UN Covenant on Economical, Social and Cultural Rights."

A specific paragraph should be added on the social dimension of the EHEA stating:
"A European approach and European co-operation in the social dimension

To be able to contribute to bigger social cohesion and equity the Ministers stress that higher education in the EHEA should be equally and freely accessible. Equally accessible means that everyone who has the capacities should be able to access higher education. Freely accessible means that higher education should be as free of cost as possible, tending towards gratuity. Moreover the Ministers state that participation of underrepresented and/or disadvantaged groups in higher education must be enlarged. Financial incentives, flexible learning paths and the introduction of an ECTS compatible credit accumulation system are useful measures to this end. Furthermore the Ministers emphasize the introduction and maintenance of a qualitative social student support policy consisting of performative financial support systems, decent housing facilities, encompassing social security coverage, accessible health care, relevant academic, social and legal guidance and counselling, supportive job and career services, etc. Finally the Ministers believe that a structural fight against drop out rates via flexible curricula and degree structures is of the utmost importance. The implementation of these policies is a shared responsibility of governments and institutions.

The Ministers also recognise the need for more but above all more qualitative information on the diversity of access and social student support policies in the EHEA. Furthermore they request the collection and dissemination of best practices in access and

social support policies. Moreover they recognise the clear need for more comparable policy criteria. By 2005 they would like to ask ECSTA to execute study assignments which deal with the aforementioned topics."

The paragraph on the promotion of mobility should contain the following sentences:
"To counter thresholds to European student mobility which result from the socio-economical background of students the Ministers propose the following measures: the portability of all financial student support albeit under certain conditions, equal access for mobile students to the social support systems of the countries where they are studying and the implementation of solidarity mechanisms in the EHEA to balance the effects on student mobility of the existing disparity between European countries."

3. Higher education as a public good

Starting points

In the Bologna Declaration the ministers of education did not explicitly express their view on the question if higher education has to be considered a public good. They did so in the Prague Communiqué where they stated in the introductory remarks: "They (the ministers) supported the idea that higher education should be considered a public good and is and will remain a public responsibility (regulations etc.) (…)."

Relevant here is also the fact that higher education can be considered to be a human right. This is made clear in the aforementioned article 13 of the "United Nations Covenant on Economical, Social and Cultural Rights".

Definitions

A main point of discussion has been the definition of higher education as public good. From an economical point of view a public good has the following characteristics: (1) it is available to all, (2) it is not subject to competition and (3) it is not subject to exclusion. As such it opposes a so-called commodity which has as defining characteristics: (1) it is only available to a limited number of persons and (2) it is subject to market laws. Throughout discussions it became clear that higher education cannot entirely be considered to be a public good in the economical sense of the word, neither is it entirely a commodity. It is probably a mixed good.

Nevertheless as some speakers stressed an economical point of view is only one way of approaching the reality of higher education as a public good. There is also a political-ideological approach to the question. Important elements of this approach are the conception of higher education as a fundamental human right and as a public service. This vision is a much more voluntaristic notion. It majorly depends on the consequences of higher education, on the societal aims, goals and functions we ascribe to higher education.

Tradition plays a big part here. Higher education institutions are traditionally places of knowledge transfer that form their students to become independent minds that look critically at the world and the society surrounding them. Higher education institutions are also centres of knowledge creation in a spirit of academic freedom with a special stress on independent fundamental research. This tradition, part of the university heritage, is worth preserving.

At the same time modernity determines the aims, goals and functions of higher education. In this view higher education can become through massification and participation a lever for social change, social mobility and social cohesion. Vis à vis a political understanding of higher education as a public good this modernist approach is still considered to be of extreme importance.

Consequences

One of the major consequences of considering higher education as a public good is that higher education becomes a public responsibility. It was agreed upon that this is probably a more important and fruitful approach than the definitional discussion about higher education as a public good. Higher education as a public responsibility clearly means that both the tasks of governments and higher education are determined by it.

One of the speakers nicely synthesized the meaning of public responsibility for the government. His interpretation finds support in the Prague Communiqué itself where the ministers of education mentioned one example of the public responsibility, *id est* the regulating of higher education. Governments have the sole responsibility for defining the framework of higher education. They have a main responsibility for assuring equal access to higher education. They have an important role to play in the provision of higher education and in the financing of higher education. Next to this they have a shared responsibility for assuring the quality of higher education. This is clearly considered to be the counterpart of equal access. Massified higher education needs to stay qualitative. Else it is a useless exercise.

Higher education institutions have to operate in an environment that is getting more globalised, commercialised and therefore competitive every day. It would be useless to deny this reality. When positioning themselves in this environment they have to keep in mind that also they, in a higher education area that is defined by relative autonomy, carry an important part of the public responsibility for higher education. Their policies have to be coherent with this responsibility. They also have to contribute to assure equal access to higher education. They have to take care of their fundamental research, *eg* via an overhead policy on contract research. They play an important part in quality assurance and they have to be accountable to government, parliament and society at large.

Conclusion

The Berlin Communiqué should stress once more the fact that higher education is a public good and stays a public responsibility. It should elaborate more on the roles that the different higher education actors play in realising these contentions in practice.

Finally it is very clear that everybody expects that the ministers of education will guarantee adequate public funding of higher education.

4. Higher education in the GATS negotiations

Considerations

Participants took notice of the emerging global market for higher education services as well as developments in trading these services in the framework of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) within the World Trade Organisation (WTO). **Participants also noted the increasing trend towards global competition in higher education. However, they reaffirmed that the main objective driving the creation of the EHEA and the internationalisation of HE on a global level, should first and foremost be based on academic values and co-operation between different countries and regions of the world.**
Several participants further stressed the announcement of the European Commission to not include (public) education in their negotiation proposal for the ongoing GATS negotiations as a positive development. The majority also welcomed the efforts of keeping the commitments of the EU limited to entirely privately funded and/or for-profit education services.

Principles

While there were different viewpoints expressed as to how GATS might affect the higher education sector, participants agreed on a number of principles which should be guidelines in discussing the ongoing WTO negotiations.
Considering the commitment to Higher Education as a public good and responsibility in the Prague Communique, also affirmed in various UN and UNESCO agreements, participants reaffirmed this commitment and stressed that any negotiations about trade in education services must not jeopardise the responsibility of financing the public education sector. They further stressed, that recognition agreements and the right of countries to implement quality assurance mechanisms should not be put in question by the GATS negotiations.
Generally, participants felt that the potentials to develop future and maintain existing regulatory and funding frameworks on national and international level have to be guaranteed in the light of the GATS negotiations.
Participants also felt that it is necessary to develop alternative frameworks for internationalisation within the Bologna Process and the international arena based on academic co-operation, trust and respect for diversity.
Furthermore, it seems necessary to assess the impact of GATS on education systems from a legal perspective, also taking into account the role of higher education in society.
Lastly, it was stressed, that the transparency of the negotiations needs to be increased and an inclusion of the stakeholders is necessary. *Per analogiam* if one day "trade" disputes concerning educational services would arise under the WTO dispute settlement procedure educational experts should be consulted and involved in settling these cases.

Conclusion

It is suggested that a text proposal on European higher education and GATS is elaborated for inclusion in the Berlin Communiqué by the next meeting of the Bologna Follow-up Group in June 2003 taking into account all the aforementioned considerations. In any case it is clear that the European ministers of education have to insert a joint statement on GATS in their next communiqué.

Stephan Neetens
20 February 2003, Athens (first draft)
25 February 2003, Leuven (final draft)

Seminar "Student Participation in Governance in Higher Education" Oslo, 12-14 of June 2003

Bologna Follow-Up Seminar
"Student Participation in Governance in Higher Education"
"Internasjonal konferanse om høyere utdanning"
Oslo, Norway – 12/14 of June 2003

Summary & Conclusions

1 – Summary

In the Prague Ministerial Summit student involvement was identified as one of the important topics for the future discussions within the Bologna Process and the call for a follow-up seminar on the topic was eagerly taken by the Norwegian Ministry. This is the reason why more than 100 representatives from the Ministries, institutions, European organisations and student organisations gathered between the 12th and the 14th of June 2003 in Oslo in a seminar hosted by the Norwegian Royal Ministry for Education and Research and where ESIB, the Norwegian national unions of students (NSU and STL) and the Council of Europe were valuable co-organisers.

The seminar's main theme was the role of student participation in institutional national and international processes of governance in higher education. There was a focus, from various perspectives on how legislation may include and regulate student's participation in governance of higher education institutions and on the students' participation in the academic life. The Seminar consisted of a series of panel interventions, case studies presentations and 4 workshops.

A survey about student participation was carried out and later on used as the fundamental background information for the success of this seminar. The report was commissioned from the Council of Europe by the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research. The survey focused on the issue of student participation in the *governance* of higher education. The survey shows that there is a wide and positive attitude towards increased student influence in higher education governance.

During the first two days of this seminar, students, institutions and ministries had the opportunity to present their national practices concerning student participation. This was an effective way to means test the previously known results of the survey on student participation.

The participants were generally critical of the fact that some levels of decision making are still not fully available to students and that sometimes the formal involvement is not a guarantee of actual participation as equal partners and members of the higher education community.

The workshops discussed the role of students being partners or Consumers; the impact of internationalisation on student participation, the degree of involvement of students in Higher Education governance and how they can be motivated to participation and also the support of the international community for student participation

2 – Seminar conclusions

1 - Further involvement of students is needed at all levels of decision making, this involvement should not only be legally permitted but effectively encouraged by providing the means necessary for active participation both in the formal and informal approaches.

2 - This encouragement could include mechanisms of recognition and certification of the experience and of the competences and skills acquired by being a student representative. It should also require effective involvement of other stakeholders in the motivation towards not only becoming a student representative but also towards participation in elections and on the decision making process

3 - Further involvement brings further responsibilities and demands. Mechanisms of assuring accountability, transparency and the flow on information to other students should be prioritized.

4 – There is an ethical obligation to hand over the knowledge acquired so that an effective student representation exists independently of the rotation of individual student representatives.

5 - Usually the higher the level of representation the higher the demand level also is. Students' Organizations should be supported on obtaining the financial, logistical and human resources necessary for creating a situation of equality in participation. Informed and motivated students are often the driving force behind beneficial reforms instead of being the grain of sand in the clock work.

6 - Universities that assure student participation and student organisations that organise this participation must definitely be seen as schools of citizenship and agents of development of society not only at the local level but also within an international responsibility of solidarity and co-operation.   With an effective work on this level it will be society that will emulate the Higher Educations Institutions environment and not the other way around. Having this in mind students cannot be considered simply consumers or clients.