THE BOLOGNA PROCESS: MEMBER STATES' ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

CULTURE AND EDUCATION

April 2008
NOTE

Content: The purpose of this note is to provide Members of the Committee on Culture and Education with an update on the achievements of EU Member States towards the implementation of the Bologna Process. This is an initiative for the modernisation and reform of the higher education sector in Europe, involving 46 countries, leading to the creation of a European Higher Education Area by 2010.
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1. Introduction: Background and Aims of the Bologna Process

"Let us understand our diversity, but also modernise"¹

1.1. Purpose of the Note

Policy Department B - Structural and Cohesion Policies prepared this note on request of the Committee on Culture and Education, which is due to draw up a report on the Bologna Process in the spring of 2008. It aims to provide Members of the committee, and of Parliament as a whole, with an assessment of Member States' progress towards implementing the Bologna Process. In particular, we have been asked to consider issues relating to the impact of the Bologna Process on student mobility and its added value.

Firstly, the note will present the general context and highlight the main issues currently under discussion, such as the impact of Bologna Process on the mobility of students and questions related to funding. Secondly, it will look at the degree of the implementation of Bologna objectives, via the introduction of legislation to bring about structural reforms in the different Member States, on a country-by-country basis. The note will then present general concluding remarks, putting the stress on the recent trends and likely future developments.

1.2. Background

The Bologna Process is the name given to the ongoing process of modernisation and reform of European higher education (HE), which commenced at a ministerial meeting held in Paris in early 1998. This meeting marked the beginning of a commitment by national governments to the improved international mobility of university students. Central to the process is the structural reform of academic programmes and their delivery, in order to facilitate student mobility in tertiary-level education. At the heart of the Bologna reforms lies a mutual interest, sometimes pursued by what has been called "a multi-speed Europe", in producing better qualifications, via structural and curricula reforms across the higher education institutions (HEIs) of participant countries. Put more crudely, the active and enthusiastic pursuit of the Bologna Process aims reflects the fact that the countries of Europe were not sufficiently competitive vis-à-vis the HE sectors of other continents, and it therefore became a matter of good sense for Europe's HE sectors to work together towards the achievement of shared goals.

A principal goal of the Bologna Process is to achieve a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010. It commenced with the above-mentioned meeting of the Education Ministers of four EU Member States in Paris, May 1998, which resulted in the signature of the Sorbonne Joint Declaration on Harmonisation of the Architecture of the European Higher Education System. The signatories were France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom (UK). Thus, from an early stage, the reforms were intergovernmentally-led.

A year later, 29 European countries, meeting in Italy, became signatories to a further declaration, the Bologna Declaration on the European Higher Education Area. The reform process itself came to be known as the Bologna Process. Not only was it intended that there would be a positive impact upon mobility of students across the borders of the signatories, but it

was also foreseen that there would be an impact upon incoming mobility from other parts of the world.

Since the Sorbonne and Bologna ministerial meetings, Education Ministers have also met in Prague, Berlin, Bergen and London. In London, in May 2007, a European Commission paper outlined that the Bologna Process was over half-way to being implemented, with reforms being enshrined within national laws.

1.3. Bologna Process Aims

To date, the Bologna Process has focused heavily on the achievement of the ten following objectives; most of these were originally set out in the Bologna Declaration, whilst others were added in more recent declarations.

The following were established in the Bologna Declaration of 1999:

1. Adoption of a system of easily understandable and comparable degrees
2. Adoption of a system essentially based on two HE cycles, at undergraduate and postgraduate levels
3. Establishment of a system of credits
4. Promotion of mobility among students and researchers
5. Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance
6. Promotion of the European dimension in higher education

Added after the Prague Ministerial summit of 2001:

7. Focus on lifelong learning
8. Inclusion of higher education institutions and students2
9. Promotion of the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area

Added after the Berlin Ministerial summit of 2003:

10. Doctoral studies and the synergy between the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area

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2 In the Prague Communiqué the Ministers considered the involvement of universities and other higher education institutions and of students, as competent, active and constructive partners in the establishment and shaping of a European Higher Education Area, as a necessary and welcome step forward.
2. The Bologna Process and Key Issues under Discussion

2.1. The Bologna Process and Mobility

This Section will analyse the state of affairs regarding the mobility of students and teaching staff and the impact of the Bologna Process. While, in general, it appears that student mobility is said to be encouraged by Bologna, there are clear indications that students and staff are discouraged for reasons which may relate to both continuing academic incompatibility between countries' HE systems and to practical constraints relating to the cost of studying or, in the case of staff, to the lack of transferability of pension rights.

Mobility was designated as one of the main objectives in the Bologna Process Declaration. In London in May 2007, staff and student mobility was redefined as one of the key priorities for the Bologna Process until 2009. To date, the EU has played an important role in increasing the levels of mobility, administering a series of mobility programmes to encourage students and researchers from all participating members to study or work abroad, in the HEIs of other member countries.

Mobility is considered to produce graduates who are not only equipped with knowledge and skills but who are, by dint of having lived overseas, flexible and adaptable - competences required of the European workforce if Europe is to compete effectively in the knowledge-based global economy.

Generally, a recent report from EUA (European University Association), *Trends V*, indicates that in spite of lack of comparable data on the mobility across Europe, HEIs have a general perception that the mobility flows are constantly increasing. It is perhaps worthy of note that the gap between those countries that traditionally import, and those that traditionally export, students, appears to persist. Overall, though, the findings of *Trends V* show that in fact mobility flows have risen over the last three years at least among 70% of its respondents. Moreover, site visits suggested that student mobility was holding up well and, in places, improving under the new Bologna system.

It should also be noted that a number of institutions, particularly in countries where the first cycle of HE studies has traditionally been long, consider that Bologna Process has a potential negative impact on student mobility. This is explored later in this note and relates to the introduction of two-cycle degree system and a reduction in the overall duration of studies. Because student mobility is a key element in the establishment of the EHEA, a renewed effort is perhaps needed to encourage more HEIs to recognise the learning and qualifications outcomes offered by overseas institutions.

The authors of the *Trends V* report also underline that currently, recognition of overseas study periods and of degrees, designated as a key element of the Bologna Process remains a great challenge.

On the other hand, a 2005 study for the Culture and Education Committee found that in tertiary education "there (were) no significant obstacles with respect to the recognition of study

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4 *Student Mobility in Secondary and Tertiary-Level Education and In Vocational Training*, Landzendorf, U and Teichler, U, PE 361.212.
achievements abroad and foreign degrees for students who want to go on studying at a university in the EU. Obstacles remained, however, in the area of recognition of HE for regulated activities (as for example medicine, engineering).

From a practitioner point of view, a Belgian expert interviewed by the note's authors, underlined that besides formal recognition (objective criteria), which is working quite well, the reputation of the university is also considered (subjective criteria). Thus, in his view, experience shows that for the same level of degree, diplomas issued by Northern universities are, in general terms, better-regarded than those delivered by the universities of Southern Europe. This is due to the fact that curricula of the Northern universities are generally perceived by both public opinion and experts as more intense and demanding, compared to their Southern equivalents.

The introduction of second and third cycle programmes (often offered in English language) in universities also appears to be contributing to increasing international student mobility, even if in some cases language barriers persist.

As for the mobility of HE staff, the existing information is often based on anecdotal evidence. Recent trends show that the mobility of academic personnel is more often linked to research activities than to teaching. According to the findings of the Trends V report, Bologna curricula combined with traditional academic structures and cultures often create a series of difficulties for those who seek to organise regular staff mobility programmes for teaching purposes. Moreover, this kind of mobility is not always encouraged at the appropriate institutional level while individual incentives remain minor and difficult to implement.

In March 2005, the European Commission adopted a European Charter for researchers and a code of conduct for the recruitment of researchers that aims to increase the attractiveness of research careers and improving mobility and working conditions of researchers across Europe.

Evidence is thus somewhat mixed as to whether student and staff mobility in Europe is increasing as a result of the Bologna Process. Even if there are positive factors increasing mobility, partly due to the introduction of Bologna patterns, the mobility flows seems to be variable from country to country and many obstacles remain as regards formal recognition of periods of studies and also financial/social issues. In all, it seems that there is some way to go.

2.2. The Bologna Process and Funding

To meet the future challenges in European Higher Education, a 2007 study urges reforms based on more autonomy for universities, more private funding, more income-based loans, more competition and internationalisation.

A 2007 study entitled "Bologna with Student Eyes" also indicates that not all obstacles to student mobility have been surmounted. It emphasises the need for accessible loans and grants, identified as a priority in 2003 in the Berlin Communiqué. Although existing financial instruments are regarded as providing valuable financial support, they are not considered sufficient to overcome the financial obstacles students can face in undertaking study in a foreign country. This report makes clear the need for additional financial support for mobile students.

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such as the creation of a European Mobility Fund or a different financial support structure similar to Central European Exchange Program for University Studies (CEEPUS). Therefore, it is clear that concerns exist related to the financial support to both students and teachers in achieving the EHEA. For students, as well as tuition fees in some countries, there are accommodation costs to be met. For teachers, incompatibilities between social security and pension regimes might discourage mobility, a point raised by Dr Vasile Isan, Rector at the University of Iasi in Romania, at the previously mentioned European Parliament hearing (6th March 2008).

At a presentation in Cardiff (UK) last year, the speaker from Leuven University, Professor Guido Langouche, noted that Trends V had highlighted a growing focus among UK HEIs on the recruitment of non-EU fee-paying students, a lucrative source of independent funding for the HEIs and one which can then be used to make up any shortfalls in national funding towards meeting the full economic costs of hosting the studies of EU students. At the hearing in Brussels already cited Dr Vasile Isan, raised the question of the potential for what he termed "educational dumping", if the fact that HEIs in some of the new EU Member States do not charge tuition fees, while in Member States such as the UK, tuition fees are becoming markedly higher than in the past. Such differentiated systems may, unless mitigating financial support is available, constrain less well-off students to a more limited range of options than those whose private means, or whose access to grants or loans, is more extensive.

Individual Member States are responsible for meeting the costs of measures to implement the Bologna reforms. In some Member States, national targets and deadlines have been set for the achievement of common objectives, while in others HEIs have been left to set their own targets and timetables for change. It seems that HEIs might have to employ one or two extra staff for planning and implementation of Bologna, as is the case at the University of Leuven7.

2.2.1. Private Funding

In the EU, HE is mostly funded publicly. The State is seen as the provider of education services as public goods which are mostly ‘free’, or charged modestly. Private funding through foundations and donations is lower in Europe than elsewhere. Compared to the US (0.8% of GDP according to the OECD), in the EU private spending on HE represents on average 0.1% of its GDP (2001). The percentage of funding for tertiary education coming from private sources varies widely across countries, from less than 4% in Denmark, Finland, Greece, Norway to more than 50% in Australia, Japan and the United States. In some countries, tertiary institutions are now relying more heavily on private sources of funding than they did in the past.

The idea of encouraging private financing of mobility is seen as attractive by some academics, such as French and Belgian experts consulted informally. Nevertheless, the experts wondered if there would be sufficient motivation for private companies to participate in such projects. Furthermore, private financing could lead to strong discriminations between different disciplines if it were to focus on vocational or professional training courses. It might be easier to imagine a private company supporting mobility projects in marketing or other professional fields, than in more classical fields of study.

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7 Figure quoted during a presentation by Professor Guido Langouche of the University of Leuven in Cardiff, Wales, November 2007.
8 Informal exchange was conducted with Prof Renaud Dehousse, Jean Monnet professor at "Sciences Po" (Institut d'Études Politiques) in Paris and the head of the Centre d'Études Européennes; and Dr François Forêt, Director of political research at the Institute of European Studies in Brussels.
The French expert considered that in order to encourage private investment for student mobility, the HE sector and EU might wish to formulate recommendations regarding the implementation of fiscal incentives for private companies.

2.2.2. EU Funding

Currently, the funding available directly at the EU level for education and research at universities is insignificant compared to funding from Member States. Nevertheless, the EU could play a catalyzing role for increasing the use of national resources and stimulating the quality of HE in the EU. The mechanisms within the Financial Perspectives 2007-2013 include not only the Funds for “Competitiveness for Growth & Employment” programmes (the 7th EU Framework Programme for R&D, Lifelong Learning Programmes & Erasmus, Competitiveness and Innovation Programme), but also the Structural & Cohesion Funds.

The European Investment Bank (EIB) may also provide an important financial impetus for HE in Europe.
3. The Bologna Process and the Main Achievements of Every Member State

According to the recent EUA *Trends V* report, analysing the nature and extent of implementation of the Bologna reforms, the countries and their HEIs are gradually taking responsibility for the emerging EHEA and taking actions directed towards a better implementation of the process (both at the governmental and HEI levels).

To picture the most recent developments in the implementation of Bologna Process in the different EU Member States we will firstly present a comparative overview of the main results from several prospective (implementation of three-cycle degree structure, use of ECTS and Diploma Supplement, Quality assurance, National Framework of Qualifications) and secondly will describe the degree of Member State commitment through the changes in legislation and governance on a country-by-country basis.

3.1. General Overview of the Implementation of the Bologna Process

3.1.1. The Three-Cycle Structure for Higher Education

The creation of a three-cycle degree system is among the earliest lines of action fixed by the Bologna Declaration. It consists of reshaping the national HE system in order to establish three separate cycles leading to a diploma. The first cycle leads to the Bachelor degree and lasts from 3 to 4 years; the second one corresponds to the Masters degree and lasts 1 to 3 years; the third cycle corresponds to a Doctorate and its minimum duration is 3 years.

For most signatory countries, a three-cycle structure, based on Bachelor/Masters/Doctorate existed before the Bologna Process, but the latter has established duration limits for each cycle, intended to lead to greater uniformity. In the 2006/2007 year, according to the Eurydice report, the three-cycle structure was established virtually in all signatory countries. Only the German-speaking Community of Belgium encountered difficulties in the implementation of the new system due to the limited provision of tertiary education in that region.

Many countries which have introduced the three-cycle system are in a transitional period and are still making several adjustments. The "new" Member States, in particular, have only introduced changes in their legislation very recently. For example, in Romania, all HE institutions have been legally obliged to establish the three-cycle structure since the start of the 2005/06 academic year and in Hungary the new structure was introduced in 2006/07.

Certain Member States introduced deadlines for the phasing out of the old system and the implementation of the Bologna Process model. In France, the full implementation of the three-cycle degree structure is planned by 2010 (some fields are still under long-cycle programmes). Portugal fixed the time limit for 2009.

It has to be underlined that studies in medicine and related fields are organised in a single cycle in more than half of the signatory countries. Among the EU Member States two or three-cycle studies for medicine are offered in Greece, Ireland, Malta, and the United Kingdom. However, the first cycle for medical programmes in these countries lasts a minimum of five years.

Otherwise, the EUA report reveals that the implementation of the Bologna reforms has allowed for innovation and diversification of second-cycle programmes.
In 2005, Lanzendorf and Teichler (op. cit.) found that there was a lack of agreement about the future role of doctoral training and whether this was to be considered as a third cycle in HE. At recent Ministerial summits, emphasis has been placed on the third cycle, doctoral studies, being of 3-4 years full-time duration, with appropriate research training included. This is in line with a principle of achieving greater alignment between the EHEA and the European Research Area (ERA).

Access to the third cycle is often limited to holders of a second-cycle Master's programme at ISCED level 5A, or an equivalent qualification. Nevertheless, in some Member States there are special admission conditions defined at the national level or by the HEIs. These requirements vary from discipline-focused tests, interviews to special proficiency testifying knowledge of a foreign language (for example in Hungary).

In certain EU countries admission to a Doctorate is also possible after a successful completion of a first-cycle degree diploma. This is the case in Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, and United Kingdom. The access is not automatic but submitted to special conditions.

Alongside consideration of the doctoral level of studies, there also continues to be a lively debate about the move towards shorter periods of study during the first cycle. Speaking at the 6th March EP hearing, Dr Ute Lanzendorf raised the question of when students could most benefit from a period of study abroad, arguing that it was at the bachelor degree level that mobility was most likely to benefit the student, owing to the less concentrated nature of curricula at that level of the three-cycle structure. A survey of 11 Bologna countries quoted by Dr Lanzendorf suggested that the question of trying to include overseas study during a shorter and more concentrated period of bachelors study was an issue of specific concern, because of the additional demands it would place on students.

The findings of a National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB) survey draws attention to the fact that in many countries no significant reforms of the content of curricula are taking place alongside the introduction of the three-cycle structure that makes qualifications sometimes not very clear for employers and thus endangers the employability of graduates.

From the point of view of the HEIs, the Trends V report found that many steps were accomplished but institutions are still facing major challenges. Issues concern the national perception of the reforms, the relationship between HEIs and authorities, and the setting up of appropriate support. This report also reiterates the problem of absence of articulation between structural reforms and the reform of curricular content.

Generally, the speed of change engendered by the Bologna Process is quite impressive. However governments, in close cooperation with HEIs, need to take responsibility for intensifying these reforms in order to enhance Europe’s research and innovation capacity.

3.1.2. The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)

The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, commonly called ECTS is not new, having been used since the late 1980s to promote student mobility in the Erasmus programme. The purpose of the ECTS is to make the structure of HE in Europe more consistent. At their
meeting in Berlin in September 2003, education ministers were urged to use ECTS as both a credit transfer, and a credit accumulation, system. Lanzendorf and Teichler (op. cit.) found the ECTS to be effective as an instrument for targeting traditionally non-mobile students.

The Bergen Communiqué underlined the importance to use the ECTS in the first and second study cycles, especially regarding the introduction of an overarching framework for qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) adopted at the conference.

According to the Eurydice report, the ECTS is considered fully implemented in line with Bologna patterns if it is specified in the legislation in force, concerns almost all programmes offered by almost all HEIs, and satisfies the requirements of 60 credit points based on student workload and is used for both credit transfer and accumulation. Thus, the above mentioned report indicates that the majority of the signatory countries (non-EU countries included) have already fully implemented the ECTS system. In many cases the use of ECTS is defined as compulsory in national legislation.

However, there are also countries where the use of ECTS is not mandatory and where the public authorities adopt or use existing compatible national credit systems (for example UK) or limit the use of ECTS to European mobility programmes.

Furthermore, the ESIB report considers the ECTS system as fully implemented in the EU Member States only if the country also respects the requirements related learning outcomes, which are part of the ECTS system. According to Adam the term does not have a common definition, but in practice means what a student is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate at the end of a period or a process of learning.

Having considered this important element of learning outcomes, the ESIB report results presented demonstrate that in the EU there are no countries having fully implemented the ECTS system, but the system is in place only superficially.

### 3.1.3. The Diploma Supplement

The 2003 Berlin Communiqué provided for all graduating students in Bologna countries to receive a free document, known as the "Diploma Supplement" (DS), intended to assist in the transferability of their knowledge and ability. Most signatory countries had approved legislation to introduce the DS as a mandatory requirement, by the 2006-07 academic year. Countries yet to implement the DS fully are Croatia, Russia and France, which will do so in 2009.

The European Commission introduced a DS quality award, though this has so far only been awarded to a number of HEIs in Turkey.

The DS is generally provided in English or both in the language of teaching and in English (more than half of the signatory countries). Among EU Member States Cyprus, Germany, Ireland, Malta, the Nordic countries and the United Kingdom issue the DS only in English.

Although the Diploma Supplement is now widely issued in Europe, there seems to be an important lack of awareness about this instrument. In this respect, the Trends report underlines
the need to publicise and to promote the utility and advantages of such a document among students, employers and the general public.

3.1.4. Quality Assurance and National Framework of Qualifications

Quality assurance is also one of the Bologna tools introduced to enhance recognition and foster mobility. In recent years, different HEIs and other institutional and non-institutional actors seem to have become more aware of the implementation of efficient quality assurance systems. The Eurydice report shows that to date many countries have an independent quality assurance body in line with the recommendations made in the Berlin Communiqué.

Austria, the Flemish Community of Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, have more than one independent body for quality assurance. These bodies are often in charge of one region within a particular country, or there are separate bodies for different kinds of institution or programme. There also exist supranational bodies of quality control. This is the case of the Flemish Community of Belgium and the Netherlands which have established a joint organisation which is responsible for accreditation and for licensing evaluation agencies.

On the other hand, in some regions and namely in the German-speaking Community of Belgium, Cyprus (in the case of public HE institutions), Luxembourg and Malta, no national body for quality assurance exists. The reason is simply that they do not provide higher education on an extensive scale given their small geographical size.

The European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) was initially established in 2000 in order to encourage the setting up of national quality assessment systems but also promote European cooperation in the field of HE quality. Currently, half of the EU Member States are full members of ENQA.

Student participation in quality assessment was defined as an important aspect in the Bergen Communiqué. Nearly all EU Member States involve students in the governance of the corresponding national bodies. Representatives are chosen either from a list of candidates selected in accordance with predetermined criteria, or from among members of student unions.

Currently, less than one-third of the Member States' independent national bodies for quality assurance are subject to peer review on a national basis as recommended in the Bergen Communiqué.

Generally, under the Bologna Process quality assurance has gained importance at EU and national levels, even if according to ESIB report there seems to be a lack of coherent frameworks for internal quality assurance mechanisms, which are often completely left under the responsibility of institution.

At the Bergen Conference, the European ministers of higher education adopted an overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). This comprises reference to the three-cycle study structure and makes use of generic descriptors for each cycle (based on learning outcomes, competences and credits for the first and second cycles). The ministers agreed to prepare national frameworks compatible with the EHEA overarching framework by 2010 and to have begun this task by 2007.
Qualification frameworks (QF) have become more than a Bologna Process issue, since the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF-LLL) was also developed in the framework of Lisbon Strategy of the European Union.

Up until the beginning of the 2007 nine countries or regions had adopted (but not always fully implemented) a National Qualifications Framework, defined as an instrument for describing formal qualifications and other learning outcomes at all levels of education. France and the United Kingdom did so in 2002 and 2001 respectively; most other countries in this group have done so since 2003. Since 2007 other Member States have actively worked on the adoption of such a framework.

However the ESIB report points to a very unbalanced implementation of qualifications frameworks, with a small number of countries having established national qualifications frameworks (whether for all levels, only for HE, or for other sectors of education but not yet for higher education).

3.2. The Implementation of the Bologna Process in the Member States

The following section presents the synthesis of the main findings published in the Eurydice report\textsuperscript{11}, focusing primarily on the implementation of structural reforms and main tools of the Bologna Process.

3.2.1. Austria

Since 1999, Austrian universities have offered a two-cycle education system (Bachelor/Master). The HEI teaching applied science has been involved since 2002. To date, the three-cycle system is applicable to all the HE ISCED level 5A programmes, except for traditional long studies (for example medicine).

In fact, the Eurydice report shows that in Austria, stakeholders are free to implement or not implement the three-cycle system as no time limits and no sanctions are foreseen.

Doctoral programmes last three academic years, and require a Masters as an entrance criterion. Joint programmes are being increasingly introduced and offer students the possibility to obtain a doctorate awarded by a partner foreign university.

The Austrian government made the commitment to adopt a National Framework of Qualifications and in 2007 started its consultation process involving the main stakeholders.

Regarding the credit system, it has to be noted that the ECTS implementation in Austria started in 1999 and to date is completely implemented both at universities and universities of applied sciences. Since July 2005, the Diploma supplement has been free of charge and delivered automatically to all graduates in two languages (German and English).

Many administrative and advice incentives, such as seminars were introduced by the Austrian government in addition to the legal measures. Moreover, Austria confirms its commitment to the Bologna Process principles by publishing regular monitoring reports (the last one was published in 2007).

As for quality assurance, the Austrian government developed a global national approach by creating the Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance. Its main objective is to provide stakeholders with quality expertise and help them to develop quality management systems.

3.2.2. Belgium

Flemish Community

The legal framework required for the Bologna Process reforms was established by the Higher Education Act of 4 April 2003.

The key element of the Act is the introduction of the three-cycle education system. To date, in Flanders all programmes function on that basis, apart from longer programmes, like Medicine, which will probably be phased out in 2010.

Due to the introduction of a mechanism of bridging courses, today even graduates of professional Bachelor's degrees may have the access to Master programmes, which is an advantage. For Doctoral studies, the minimum and maximum duration are not specified, even if normally a PhD lasts 4 years. Access is offered to persons having a relevant Master degree and in some cases after an admission test. In 2003, the Flemish government adopted an act related to the Joint degree or Double degree.

Furthermore, the Eurydice report underlines the fact that Flemish universities are very active in implementing Erasmus Mundus Programme.

A general Qualifications framework and level descriptors for HE have already been enshrined in legislation. The ECTS credits are fully implemented since 1994 (both for the university and non-university higher education).

The Diploma Supplement has been provided in Flemish Universities free of charge and has been provided automatically in Dutch and English at students' request since 1991 (for non-university HE since 1994).

The Flemish Government introduced an enhanced quality control system. Only programmes in full compliance with the 2003 Higher Education Act can be accredited by the independent Dutch-Flemish Accreditation Body. Regarding accreditation, it has to be noted that the Flemish Agency closely cooperates with the Netherlands.

French community

The French Community HE structure (both university and non-university, but also higher social advancement courses) is governed by the Decree of 31st March 2004. All aspects of the Bologna Process, all programmes, and all the fields of studies are covered by this act (including medicine studies).

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12 A joint degree refers to a higher education qualification issued jointly by at least two or more higher education institutions or jointly by one or more higher education institutions and other awarding bodies, on the basis of a study programme developed and/or provided jointly by the higher education institutions, possibly also in cooperation with other institutions.
Master holders have access to the third cycle, i.e. **doctoral studies** (offered only at universities). The doctoral programmes often include academic courses (optional), individual research and training on the basis of doctoral schools. The average duration of the programmes is 4 years.

Unlike its Flemish neighbour, the French Community has not yet adopted the **National framework of Qualifications** but this is being prepared by a special working group.

The **ECTS** is almost fully implemented in all types of education establishments. As the use of ECTS has been compulsory since 2005, HEIs are highly encouraged to apply them.

As for the **Diploma supplement**, it is free of charge and is automatically provided in French and in English on request. The Eurydice analysis shows that Belgium is still applying several **incentives** to promote ECTS and DS implementation, for example, grants to new academies and involvement of "Bologna promoters". However, there have not been any financial incentives for the implementation of ECTS and DS.

Although there are no special measures to control the implementation of the three-cycle system, meetings are organised on a regular basis between different institutions in order to foster cooperation in this area.

In 2004 (following the 2002 decree) the French community equipped itself with an **Agency for Higher Education Quality Evaluation** which provides the community with independent quality expertise on HE and aims to facilitate collaboration between educational establishments.

**German-speaking Community**

Due to the small size of the German Community in Belgium, there is no provision of a complete three-cycle education structure.

The first cycle of higher education is provided by the only German-language higher education institution, called the Autonome Hochschule and set up by 2005 decrees. The institution offers short three-year programmes in a limited number of disciplines, offering a direct access route to the labour market. For students wishing to follow university education, or other forms of higher education, involving longer-term studies there is the possibility to study in the French or Flemish Community HEIs. This is the option chosen by the majority of students.

The decrees establishing the Autonome Hochschule are in line with the Bologna Process objectives that are being progressively implemented as regards the **ECTS** system and the **Diploma supplement**.

Since the Bologna Process is being implemented in the only existing institution providing Bachelor level decree, the authorities have not found it necessary to offer any special incentives. To date, the Autonome Hochschule is not part of ENQA, and the possibility of creating an independent quality assurance agency for German language higher education has not been considered.

**3.2.3. Bulgaria**

The main developments related to the adaptation of the Bulgarian HE system are specified in the amendments to the 1995 Higher Education Act. The already existing national **three-cycle degree** structure was reformed after the adoption of the Bologna Declaration in 1999. Currently,
Bulgaria complies with the main Bologna patterns, but an exception is made for vocationally oriented curricula (3 years) and long integrated programmes (5 years). These degrees are fully recognised.

Only holders of a Master degree have the right to enrol in doctoral studies lasting from 3 to 4 years (depending on whether it is a full or part-time programme).

Although there are no legal provisions for joint degrees or double diplomas, Bulgarian universities issue such documents on the basis of bilateral agreements established with foreign universities according to the regulations of the Higher Education Act.

The National Qualification Framework is at the preparatory stage. The requirements on the DS issue were fully implemented. The document is provided for free in Bulgarian and in English to all graduates. DS implementation has been promoted by the public authorities through seminars, information documents and meetings.

In recent years the Bulgarian accreditation system has been subject to change and innovations. In 2003-2004, the body responsible for accreditation, the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency, made further steps to improve the evaluation methods in order to make the Bulgarian system more transparent and comparable with the HE systems of other countries. Thus, by 2006 Bulgaria had fully applied the criteria complying with the Standards for Quality Assurance in Education in the European Higher Education Area. The Agency has also introduced since 2005 a post-accreditation monitoring which is an innovation in Bulgaria. The National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency has applied for membership of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

3.2.4. Cyprus

The HE system is limited in Cyprus to three public universities, which the government is taking steps to expand and improve. A three-cycle degree structure has been used on the island since 1989, and it is mandatory for all programmes in all HEIs. To date, first cycle programmes last 4 years, and those leading to a Master degree from 1 to 2 years.

Access to doctoral studies, provided only at the University of Cyprus, is available to Master's graduates and to Bachelor holders, after the completion of a special preparatory course. Cypriot public authorities created a legal provision for joint degrees and programmes. Two programmes of this type are operational to date. The National Qualification Framework is in preparation.

HEI are encouraged especially by the Bologna promoters to apply the ECTS system for transfer and accumulation. The implementation of ECTS credits is complete at the University of Cyprus, which decided in 2003 to use the system for all its programmes. In addition, since the 2006-2007 academic years, a number of private institutions have followed the Bologna line.

As the implementation of DS is not regulated by law, it is applied on a voluntary basis. In Cyprus only the University of Cyprus makes full use of the DS, providing the document to all graduates in English for free. In other public HEIs or private institutions, the DS is delivered on request in English and is still free.
Given the fact that to date Cyprus has not a National Agency for Quality Assurance, the Council of Educational Evaluation-Accreditation (CEEA) assures the external quality evaluations. There are no legal provisions for the students' participation in the process. Through CEEA Cyprus has been member of ENQA since 2003.

3.2.5. Czech Republic

The Bologna Process arrangements are part of a specific strategy directed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MEYS) and form part of several long-term national programmes funded by the Government.

The adaptation of the Czech Republic Higher Education to the Bologna objectives started with the adoption of the Act on Higher Education in 1998 and amendments (especially those of 2001 and 2006). The new legal framework established puts in place the three-cycle degree structure (Bachelor, Master, Doctorate). According to the Eurydice report, the first cycle lasts 3-4 years; the second cycle corresponds to 1-3 years of studies and the doctoral programmes last 3-4 years. This is not the case for longer or so-called integrated programmes: medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, architecture.

**Doctoral studies** consisting of academic courses and individual research are offered in the framework of structured programmes or as individual education. Only university type HEI can provide doctoral studies. There is a legal basis (2005 amendment to the HE Act) for joint and double degrees concerning all three cycles.

The Qualification Framework for Higher Education entered into force in 2007 covering the first cycle of education. Other cycles are expected to be integrated in the near future. Furthermore, Czech HEIs have partially introduced the new **ECTS** system or an ECTS-compatible credit system. Although international transfer of credits is widely used and is quite successful, some compatibility problems may occur when there is a transfer between institutions of different types, study programmes or faculties. The accumulative function of ECTS is being progressively used by a wide range of university-type HEIs.

The **DS** is also fully implemented, being provided automatically and free of charge. The languages are defined by the HEI itself, but usually the DS is issued in Czech and English.

The established **quality assurance system** consists of self-evaluation, external assessment, peer review and accreditation. The Accreditation Commission set up in 1991 is responsible for external evaluation and has been a member of ENQA since May 2005. The internal **accreditation** system is being reviewed in the framework of a pilot project launched by MEYS and the Centre for Higher Education and the Czech and Slovak ACs.

3.2.6. Denmark

The Order of May 2004 of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation established the most recent legal framework on university Bachelor’s and Master’s programmes in Denmark.

The two-cycle system existed in Denmark for a long time before the beginning of the Bologna Process. Thus, for this country, to be in line with Bologna requirements was a question of progressive adjustments and not radical changes.
The third cycle is regulated in Denmark by the legislation of 2002 and corresponds to 3 years of full time studies including research work, academic courses and teaching experience. A particular stress is put on the mobility of young researchers who are encouraged to visit and to share the experience with foreign education/research institutions. There is no special mention in the legislation regarding the issue of joint or double degrees.

The National Qualification Framework has been already adopted and provides institutions with an exhaustive description of levels and types of qualification for higher education.

Denmark managed to fully implement the use of ECTS (both for transferring and accumulation), and the issue of the Diploma Supplement is automatically provided in English, free of charge.

The quality assurance of HE in Denmark is regulated by the Danish Institute of Evaluation specified in the act of September 2000. The activities of the Institute are mainly centred on the quality assessment of HEIs requested by different level public stakeholders.

3.2.7. Estonia

Since the 2002-2003 academic years, Estonian higher education has been reshaped into the three-cycle degree system. The new structure applies to most programmes with the exception of integrated studies (medicine, engineering, architecture). The doctoral studies which have an average duration of three years are open to holders of Master (or equivalent) degrees. In line with Bologna requirements, new doctoral programmes will focus on research methodology, philosophy of science etc.

Although international cooperation is established between Estonian HEI and especially Nordic and Baltic Universities, to date the issue of joint degrees or double degrees is not yet possible.

To date the application of ECTS credits is still partial. From the 2008-2009 academic years, the new system is expected to be implemented in all the HEI. The implementation of DS is complete. As recommended in the Berlin communiqué, the DS is edited automatically and is free of charge; the languages used are English and Estonian. The Bachelor holders are provided with the DS on their request.

In 2003 public HEI and two private institutions concluded the Quality Assurance Agreement which entered into force in the 2004-2005 academic years.

The Higher Quality Assessment Council (established in 1995) supervises the whole accreditation process. Students are also involved in the activities of this organisation. The Higher Education Accreditation Centre set up in 1997 is responsible for practical work linked to the accreditation. It has been full member of ENQA since 2002.

3.2.8. Finland

In Finland, the August 2004 Act reforms the structure of the national HE system and introduces the three-cycle structure. The legislation concerns all types of studies, except medicine and dentistry (the two-cycle system is still applied).
The old system will be in force until autumn 2008 for students who started their studies before
the beginning of the reform, and will phase out in 2010 for medicine, dentistry, veterinary
medicine, engineering and architecture students.

According to the recent Eurydice report, doctoral studies are open to students having a Masters
degree or a foreign equivalent. The overall duration of postgraduate studies is 4 years which
includes not only individual research work but also academic courses. The doctoral studies are
also offered by graduate schools established in close cooperation with universities and research
institutions.

There is a special recommendation regarding the introduction of joint and double degrees that
concerns all diplomas and certain cooperation projects between HEIs. As the international status
of joint degrees remains somewhat ambiguous, the Finnish Ministry emphasised the importance
of ensuring that each diploma is affiliated to at least one country’s official degree system.

For the moment, there is no National Qualification Framework as the Finnish Ministry of
education decided to await a European Commission proposal on this.

Concerning the use of ECTS, Finland fully replaced the national credit system by the European
one. Even if the use of credit system for the third-cycle diplomas is not specified in the
legislation, the majority of universities adopted the new system. The DS are free of charge and
are automatically issued in English language.

In Finland there are some special financial incentives for the introduction of three-cycle system
and DS. Between 2004 and 2007 many universities implementing new degree structure received
extra funding. According to the Eurydice figures, the total amount is Euro 5 million per year.
The Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council is in charge of supervising the whole process
of reforms and will report on it in 2009 after a detailed external evaluation. This body is also
responsible for the quality assurance. Its main role is to assist the HEI and the Ministry of
Education to carry out assessments of the HEIs' activities and educational policies.

3.2.9. France

The three-cycle degree structure has been progressively introduced in France since the adoption
in 2002 of a series of relevant regulations. The degree structure reform was called LMD
(Licence-Master-Doctorat or Bachelor-Master-Doctorate). Concerning the Master degrees, the
new structure applies both to universities and grandes écoles.

The LMD reform, having taken effect in 2006, is expected to be applied to all HEIs and most of
their programmes (exceptions are made for long studies as medicine or engineering) by 2010.

The third cycle corresponds to 3 years doctoral studies accessible to students after a Master’s
degree or foreign degrees recognised as equivalent.

The ECTS is fully implemented for all programmes related to the LMD structure. France has
also introduced a modular system in order to offer more flexibility and better gradual study
guidance.
In France, the **quality** of HE is evaluated by a newly created Agency for the Evaluation of Higher Education which started its activities in 2007. Its main goal is to evaluate the HEI in order to guarantee that they meet the highest quality standards.

As for the **Diploma Supplement**, it is being progressively introduced in all the HEI and delivered free in French and the language chosen by the establishment.

In order to encourage the extension and the implementation of the Bologna Process, the HEI may benefit from the assistance of institutional or education advisers. The Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research established with the HEI an evaluation/negotiation/contract system that also serves as a means of control and follow-up.

### 3.2.10. Germany

In Germany, the three-cycle system is being implemented gradually since the creation in 2002 of an appropriate legal basis. The new structure is expected to be fully implemented in all the German HEIs by 2010.

The Eurydice work found that although initially omitted courses of studies in arts and music colleges are now also included, only long programmes are offered in medicine, veterinary medicine and dental studies.

**Doctoral studies, defined as third cycle**, consist of individual research work and final examinations. The resolution Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (Kultusministerkonferenz, or KMK) of 2002 on "Access to the doctorate for graduates of Master's and Bachelor's study courses", introduced a subject-oriented test in order to select the best students going on the third cycle.

Germany has applied for many years the issue of **joint and double diplomas** specified in Land legislation. This practice is also relevant for Doctoral degrees.

Concerning the **ECTS**, the legal basis exists since 2000, and applies to three main cycles. Otherwise, the introduction of the ECTS is also recommended for the long cycles.

With regard to the **DS**, this is issued automatically in English and has been free since 2005. The Eurydice report underlines the fact that there are no specific **incentives** needed, as the implementation of the three-cycle structure is nearly achieved.

The **accreditation** procedures and the general monitoring of the Bologna Process implementation are ensured by Foundation for the Accreditation of Study Courses in Germany (Stiftung zur Akkreditierung von Studiengängen in Deutschland).

However, it is interesting to mention the initiative to establish a Bologna Information Centre providing online services to support HEIs in implementing the Bologna Process.

**Quality assessment** is guaranteed by the national procedures introduced in 1995. The **accreditation** system based on a new legal basis dated from 2005 consists of external quality assurance and includes the principle of peer review.
3.2.11. Greece

Greece has been transforming and adapting its national education system since 2004. Reshaping and modernising the Greek HE system in line with the Bologna criteria is considered a key priority. The reform process involving different stakeholders and interested sides has led to the adoption of a new legal framework.

The three-cycle degree structure has existed since the 1980s. It has to be noted that the second cycle programmes exist only on the University basis. Longer single-cycle (5-6 years) programmes are still used for so-called regulated professions (medicine, veterinary studies, agriculture and some others). Doctoral studies have a minimum duration of three years and consist of individual research and theoretical courses.

The doctoral studies are open to students who have obtained a second-cycle degree. However, faculties where a second cycle degree is not provided will accept students without Master level diploma. In Greece, the law of 2004 gives provisions for joint Master degrees. Furthermore, the establishment of joint doctoral programmes became possible under this new legislation.

Work on the establishment of National Qualification Framework is in progress. To date, the ECTS system has been fully implemented, but the old national credit system is still also in use. The provision of the DS has been compulsory since 2006.

In 2005 Greece established its National Quality Assurance Agency that is responsible both for internal quality evaluation and the external performance assessment. The guidelines, procedures and standards established by the Agency are in line with the requirements of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

3.2.12. Hungary

In Hungary, the three-cycle degree was adopted in 2004 and almost all programmes in all fields of studies are implemented in line with this new structure. A long single-structure is maintained for medicine, veterinary studies and some other integrated programmes. Doctoral studies (3 years) are organised in structured programmes and are open to Master's holders or equivalent degrees.

The provision of joint or double degrees is specified in the 2005 Act of Higher Education. The National Qualification Framework proposal was submitted to the government in autumn 2007.

The ECTS credit system has been introduced by law since 2000 and was implemented in 2003. The DS has been mandatory since 2003. All HEIs must issue the DS automatically and free of charge. The languages used are Hungarian and English and, upon request, an ethnic minority language, if courses were taught in this language.

Financial, administrative and advisory incentives and control measures are available in order to encourage and supervise the implementation of third-cycle degree system, ECTS and DS.

In accordance with the 2005 Higher Education Act, quality assurance is overseen by the Higher Accreditation Committee, which is an independent organism. It has to be noted that students participate actively in the evaluation process. The HAC has been a full member of the ENQA since 2000.
3.2.13. Ireland

The main adjustments to the Bologna requirements are specified in the Universities Act and the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act adopted in 1997 and 1999 respectively. In Ireland the three-cycle system existed before the introduction of the Bologna Process. The duration of the cycles is in line with the Bologna patterns.

Moreover, the above mentioned 1999 Act offers the legal framework for agreements on joint degrees. In 2005 the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) issued general guidelines and accreditation criteria for this type of joint programmes. While the Dublin Institute of Technology has passed such agreements for some of its study programmes, it has to be noted that to date joint programmes are not offered elsewhere in the university sector.

The National Qualification Framework has been introduced in Ireland since 2003 for all levels of education and is fully in line with the Bologna framework.

Ireland has introduced the ECTS transfer and accumulation system since 1989. The use of the system is not compulsory, but all the HEIs accredited by HETAC use them. As for the postgraduate level, the ECTS is being introduced, albeit in a less detailed way than for undergraduate studies.

The Diploma Supplement introduced on national basis in 2005, is free of charge and issued automatically in English language in all but two Irish universities, where the DS is delivered on students' request only.

According to the Eurydice report, there are no incentives to implement the three-cycle system as it is already accomplished. However, some facilitating measures are in place. Notably, there is a new specific software system for the ECTS. The DS use is still promoted and encouraged on the one side by the National Steering Group composed of all stakeholders in higher education and on the other side by the Europass centre.

3.2.14. Italy

Regarding the introduction of the three-cycle structure in Italy, it is regulated by 1999 and 2004 decrees regulating university autonomy and new diploma structures. The implementation of the above-mentioned legislation is compulsory for all the HEIs.

The reform concerns also the third cycle, i.e. doctoral studies. These studies aim at providing students with deeper academic knowledge and are based on individual research and theoretical courses. Curricula are managed by the universities and are not specified in the legislation. Students have access to the Doctorate after the second-cycle.

A National Qualifications Framework has not yet been adopted and is now in preparation. Its adoption is foreseen within the deadline fixed by the Bergen Communiqué.

The National Committee for the Evaluation of the University System (Comitato nazionale per la valutazione del sistema universitario, CNVSU) is in charge of quality assurance for higher

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13 Europass is an EU initiative designed to encourage mobility and lifelong learning in an enlarged Europe introducing five documents available in all official EU languages: Europass CV, Europass Mobility, Europass Diploma Supplement, Europass Certificate Supplement, Europass Language Portfolio.
education institutes including the high-level Art and Music institutes (Alta Formazione Artistica e Musicale, AFAM).

Italy has participated as full member in the European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA) through the CNVSU since 1998.

In Italy there are two linked procedures for accreditation with the formal approval of a new curricula and the accreditation of study programmes themselves.

3.2.15. Latvia

The most recent developments linked to the Bologna Process correspond to the introduction in 2000 of the three-cycle structure, integrating doctoral studies as part of the education curricular. The 3-4 years doctoral programmes are open to Master's degree holders. The law on Higher Education adopted in 2007 provides HEIs with a framework for international joint and double degrees. The establishment of a National Qualification Framework is foreseen by this Act.

To date, the national ECTS compatible system is being applied by different institutions. The European ECTS credit system is also applied but only partially (especially for international credit transfer in the framework of European exchange programmes). The provision of the DS has become mandatory since 2004. The document is free of charge and issued automatically to all graduates in Latvian and English.

No special incentives are mentioned regarding the implementation of a new degree structure, DS and ECTS. The national Higher Education Quality Evaluation Centre (HEQEC), created in 1994, is the independent body responsible for organising expertise and quality evaluation, and also accreditation. Students take an active part in the decision-making process and evaluation procedures but do not participate in the governing board. HEQEC has been full member of ENQA since 2003.

3.2.16. Lithuania

The arrangements linked to the Bologna Process developments were integrated in the new law on Higher Education adopted in 2000. This act has legally introduced the three-cycle degree structure. The duration of the first university cycle is 4 years, while the Master diploma requires between 1.5-2 years of study.

The former long single-cycle structure is still valid for so-called integrated curricula, such as medicine, pharmacy, and engineering. A legal basis was created for joint degrees and double diplomas applicable only to the first and the second cycle.

The model for a National Qualification Framework is under discussion. To date, the national ECTS-compatible credit system has been reinforced and fully applied. A proposal is being under elaboration to replace the national system by the ECTS.

Since 2006 the DS has been provided automatically and free of charge to all graduates of all the three-cycle degree programmes, in English and Lithuanian.
Among the incentives and follow-up measures one may cite additional financial support for the implementation of DS (for example purchase of printers).

The quality assurance body has been in existence in Lithuania since 1995 and is responsible for external evaluation of HEI. The accreditation system existing only for study programmes was amended in 2004. The decision on accreditation is formally taken by the Ministry of Education and Science following the recommendations of the Centre for quality assessment. Currently, this latter is preparing its membership for ENQA.

3.2.17. Luxembourg

The University of Luxembourg was established by law of 2003, before which time, Luxembourg had not university. Its first year of activity was the 2003-2004 academic year. In line with Bologna principles, the University of Grand-Ducal has a three-cycle degree structure. The provision of Bachelor's and Master's courses and doctoral courses is governed by the Grand-Ducal regulation of 22 May 2006.

Mobility is highly encouraged and even compulsory for first cycle study programmes. Only students who have completed a study period abroad can obtain the Bachelor degree.

The ECTS credit system is fully used for all kinds of programmes both for transfer and accumulation.

Luxembourg started to issue the DS in 2007, but there is no mention in the legislation about languages used. The current legal basis does not make any provision for joint or double degrees.

The National Qualification Framework has not been yet adopted and it is not planned in the near future. As for the special incentives to apply the Bologna requirements, they do not exist in Luxembourg. The internal and external teaching and research quality control is assured by agencies or recognised experts. However, Luxembourg does not dispose of agency member of ENQA.

3.2.18. Malta

The degree structure of the University of Malta corresponds to the Bologna requirements on three-cycle system even if there are no legal provisions for mandatory application of these principles. Doctoral studies lasting between 3 and 5 years are available on a full and part time basis.

The issue of joint degrees was approved by the University of Malta in 2005 and gives students the opportunity to receive a diploma of overseas HEI.

ECTS is the only credit system used. It is applied to transfer and accumulation of credits in first and second cycle degree programmes (except integrated programmes). The DS (delivered for the first time in 2006) is automatically issued in English and is free of charge.

It has to be noted, that the University of Malta followed the Bologna recommendations on a voluntary and own imitative basis especially regarding the implementation of the ECTS. Thus, no specific government incentives are to be mentioned.
Since 2007 Malta has its own national Qualification framework in line with the European Qualification Framework.

The University of Malta has the legal power to award degrees, diplomas, and accreditations.

Although Malta has not yet an independent quality assurance agency, it participates in the ENQA through the University of Malta Quality assurance committee.

3.2.19. The Netherlands


The first amendment in 2002 led to the introduction of Bachelor/Master system implemented for almost all types of university programmes in 2002-2003 academic years. An exception is made for medical, pharmacologic and veterinary studies, for which the single cycle structure was used until now but is being phased out this year.

The third cycle corresponding to the doctoral studies lasts 4 years (minimum) and is open to students having a Master's degree. In some very rare cases, Bachelor graduates could also be admitted to doctorate training. The doctoral programme usually comprises individual research work and research training. The doctorate is provided on the basis of research schools embedded at Universities or Open Universities.

The issue of joint or double degrees is part of a newly proposed law (sent to the Parliament in 2006).

In the Netherlands, the National Qualification Framework was adopted in 2007. The 2002 amendment also introduced the ECTS credit system that came into force in the 2002-2003 academic years. The ECTS notation system works both for transfer and for accumulation. The law specifies that 60 credits, corresponding to 1680 study hours, must be obtained.

The quality assessment of Higher education is guaranteed by the Netherlands accreditation organisation (NAO) set up by the law of 2002. Following the signature of the agreement with the Flemish government, this supranational organisation realising quality controls both in Netherlands and in the Flemish community of Belgium, received the name of Netherlands-Vlaamse (NVAO) accreditation organisation. Since 2002 the NVAO is also in charge of external evaluation, task accomplished previously by the Inspectorate.

It has to be noticed that the students opinion is taken into account, thus there are represented in the advisory council of the NVAO, and one student is member of the evaluation board appointed by the governments of two countries.

The NVAO is also entrusted by law to give accreditation to existing and new higher education programmes. NVAO gives it final judgement after external evaluation made by different independent evaluation bodies.

Netherlands uses a quite transparent system of evaluation publishing the results in form of reports online (made compulsory by law).
Universities have huge degree of autonomy to evaluate their own teaching and research quality. Students are very involved in the process, as it is mandatory to participate in assessment committees.

Netherlands has three quality evaluation bodies which are full members of ENQA since 2000 (they are Quality Assurance Netherlands University QANU, Netherlands quality agency NQA, and the Inspectorate). The NVAO became member of ENQA in 2003.

3.2.20. Poland

Poland participates actively in the implementation of Bologna principles. There is a legal basis (2005 law on Higher Education) for the three-cycle structure although the HEIs are not obliged to apply it. The two-cycle system is already in place and coexists with longer integrated programmes.

In line with Bologna principles, the doctoral studies last from 3 to 4 years and access to the programmes is open only to Master’s Degree holders. Joint diplomas exist for the Bachelor and Master’s degrees but not for the Doctorate level.

The National Qualifications Framework is being prepared by a special taskforce. The 2007 Regulation makes the use ECTS credits mandatory for all public HEIs, both for transfer and accumulation of students' achievements.

The DS is issued automatically in Polish and, upon request, in English (also until 2007 in French, German, Spanish, Russian), and is free of charge. No legal obligation exists for the provision of DS at the doctoral level.

In Poland the system of quality assurance comprises internal evaluations and external assessment of HEIs. The external quality and the accreditation procedures are ensured by the State Accreditation Committee which reapplyed to the ENQA for membership in 2007.

3.2.21. Portugal

The legal basis for the higher education system in Portugal is set up in the recent laws of 2004 and 2005. This new legislation aimed to adapt the Portuguese education system to the Bologna requirements: three-cycle degree structure, ECTS, DS, accreditation rules. The new structure corresponding to the Bologna principles entered into force in the 2006-2007 academic years. Though, to date the old system still exists, it will be completely phased out in the 2008-2009 academic year. The process is expected to be fully achieved in 2009. Exception is made for traditionally long studies like medicine veterinary courses, pharmacy, architecture and a few others.

The third cycle corresponds to the doctoral studies as recommended in the Bergen communiqué. The third cycle programmes which duration is 3 years are accessible on a case by case basis for students having a first cycle degree. But normally, the Master’s is required.

Portuguese HE system now allows the transition between professional studies and theoretical courses giving access to some university programmes. The 2006 decree foresees also the issue of joint degrees and diplomas to students undertaking a study period abroad.
The National framework of qualifications adopted in and in line with the EHEA, would be fully implemented to all cycles in 2009. Concerning the introduction of ECTS, this is mandatory for all institutions (February 2005 decree-law). The ECTS is the only system existing at the national level. It will be implemented for all three cycles of studies.

The DS is in line with the European requirements and has been issued both in Portuguese and English automatically to all students since 2007. Portugal introduced consultancy and service incentives in order to help the institutions in the implementations of Bologna lines. No financial incentives have been offered.

The evaluation of HE in Portugal comprises two different stages: internal and external assessment. The first evaluation body National Higher education evaluation Council established in 1998 and was full member of ENQA. However, it was replaced by the new accreditation agency, a scientifically and technically independent body. Until the agency become operational, during the transitional period all the programmes should line with the Bologna requirements. The process is expected to be finished in 2009.

3.2.22. Romania

In order to comply with the most of the Bologna requirements Romania has undertaken a series of structural reforms since 1998. The law of 2004 made the application of the new three-cycle degree compulsory for all the public and private HEI. The duration of the first cycle correspond to 3 academic years, the second cycle varying between 1.5-2 years of study.

Regarding doctoral programmes, their provision is currently regulated by the 2005 government decision. Doctoral studies are available on a university or research institutes basis. As consequence of Bologna developments, the duration of the third cycle is 3 years.

The National Qualification framework was adopted in 2007. The ECTS, the only existing credit system, has been fully implemented since the 2005-2006 academic year. As for the DS, it was introduced in the HEI following a ministerial decision of April 2000.

In 2005 the Government decided to create a new Agency for Quality Assurance, established as an independent evaluation body also responsible for accreditations. ARACIS will be periodically evaluated by similar agencies, also members of ENQA. Membership application to ENQA is currently in preparation.

3.2.23. Slovakia

The main adjustments associated to the implementation of Bologna Process are specified in the 2002 (amended in 2003) Higher Education Act. Slovakia has been introducing the three-cycle degree structure since 1996, progressively integrating even traditionally long studies to the Master level programmes (exceptions are made for medicine, theology, veterinary and pharmaceutical studies).

The duration of the doctoral programmes goes from 3 to 4 years, meeting the Bologna requirements.

The National Qualification Framework has not yet been adopted but work is in progress and its implementation is planned by Slovakia in 2009. The use of ECTS credit system is mandatory
and has been fully implemented since the 2005-2006 academic year at Bachelor and Master levels.

The DS is provided for the three levels of degrees; the document is issued automatically in Slovak and in English, on students' request.

The Ministry of Education launched several initiatives in order to foster the Bologna Process implementation. For example there was a project entitled the National Team of Bologna Promoters, involving different stakeholders, including students.

In Slovakia, quality assurance is based on external evaluation that is also part of the accreditation system. The Accreditation Commission, created by the Slovak government as an advisory body in 1990, is in charge of evaluating the performance of HEI and making proposals to the Ministry of Education that takes the final decisions. Currently, the Slovak Accreditation Commission is a full member of ENQA.

3.2.24. Slovenia

According to the Constitution, the Slovenian Universities have the right to act autonomously within a framework defined by the legislation on Higher Education (1993 HE Act and its subsequent amendments). The adaptation of the Slovenian HE system to the Bologna criteria became possible in the framework of the 2002 Master Plan for Higher Education. A series of measures was adopted in order to facilitate the compliance of the education institutions with Bologna patterns (ECTS, quality assurance).

Even if the two-cycle system had been already in place since the 1960s, the new Bologna degree structure has been implemented progressively to all fields of studies and all programmes. The third cycle is open to holders of second-cycle degrees. As a consequence of Bologna reforms, the length of doctoral programmes has been reduced to 3 years. The current Slovenian legislation offers a legal basis for joint degrees.

The ECTS credit system application has became mandatory for all HEI and all programmes as specified in the 2004 Amendments and Supplements to the Higher Education Act.

The DS has been fully implemented since the 2000-2001 academic years. The introduction of the DS was actively encouraged by the Ministry of Higher Education upon a proposal of the Council of Higher Education. The Ministry assured financial and advisory support organising workshops and seminars. A Bologna promoters' team is also highly involved in the implementation of ECTS and three-cycle degree structure. The Ministry organises special information seminars together with Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Mobility and European Educational and Training Programmes.

The National Qualification Framework has not yet been adopted by the Slovenian institutions.

In Slovenia, the quality assurance system includes internal evaluations, external assessment and also accreditations. The Council for Higher Education established by the Slovenian government in 1994 is the body in charge of accreditation procedures. Acting independently, the CHE provides HEIs with criteria for accreditation of new national or joint programmes and re-accreditation of existing curricula, proposes guidelines for the application of principles for establishing a European Higher Education Space. The National Higher Education Quality
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Assessment Commission, composed of HE experts and students, assists universities for **internal quality assessment**. The Commission takes part in the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) sessions.

### 3.2.25. Spain

The main developments linked to the reorganisation of the HE system in Spain are specified in the Universities Act, modified and adopted in 2007. Spain adapted its already existing three-cycle structure in line with Bologna Process requirements, introducing the first cycle for the professional and university programmes (duration 4 years). The implementation of these new programmes giving access to Master and doctoral degrees started in 2006-2007 academic years. Until it is fully established, the Master is considered the third cycle.

According to Eurydice data, the full implementation of the Bologna principles is expected only in 2012. The Ministry of education and science, together with the University Coordination Council, will study a proposal concerning the drawing of new regulated profession list. The new structure will not apply to the traditionally long studies of medicine, veterinary practice, and pharmacy.

The doctoral studies introduced by 2005 Royal decree consist of two years of research and two years of academic training. The access to the doctorate is offered to students who have a Master’s degree. The admission of students is regulated by the Universities themselves. Universities also provide doctorate students with social security, grants and in certain cases employment contracts.

The Universities will be also responsible to conclude agreements with other HEI in order to set up joint degree programmes. The Ministry of Science and Education will supervise the whole process and encourage the development of this kind of programmes.

Though the **National Framework of Qualifications** has not been adopted, the preliminary proposal was presented in 2007. The introduction of **ECTS** is regulated by the 2003 decree which stipulates that the new system must apply to all official titles approved by the government. The old Spanish credit system is still valid for degrees leading to recognised professional qualifications.

The full implementation of ECTS credits will occur as soon as the new programme structure has been established. The issue of a DS is specified in the 2003 Royal decree. To date the DS is provided on student request and is not free of charge (according to the regulations of the Autonomous communities of Spain). The DS is edited in Spanish and the second EU language defined by the University and in some case the language of the Autonomous community.

In order to adapt the Spanish HE system to the EHEA requirements, the central government and the authorities of autonomous regions have introduced financial incentives and encouraged the development of pilot projects. As for the implementation of ECTS credits or DS, no special control measures or incentives are foreseen.

Concerning quality assurance, Spanish Ministry of Science and Education created the National Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation (ANECA). Its main role is to evaluate the HEI performance and to facilitate their integration to the EHEA.
The ANECA has four main work directions: accreditation programmes, the Institutional Assessment programme for programmes leading to professional degrees, the Certification Programme for external assessments and the European convergence programme which aim is to adapt the Spanish HEI system to the European dimension.

3.2.26. Sweden

To meet the Bologna Process requirements, Sweden adopted in 2007 a new legal basis introducing the three-cycle degree structure.

Sweden has retained its traditionally long studies (minimum 4 years) in medicine, engineering, architecture, dentistry, law and some other specific programmes. It has to be noted that these extended courses are considered as part of one of the three cycles depending on the length of the programme.

The doctoral studies (duration 4 years) correspond to third cycle in the new structure. Sweden has changed its admission requirements: only students having a Master’s degree or its equivalent have may enrol in doctoral programmes. Moreover, universities have the right to introduce subsidiary requirements (admission tests for example).

Students preparing a PhD are often employed by the University for the whole period of their studies. In Sweden students also have the scope to apply for grants, scholarships, government support or external funding.

The issue of joint degrees is not specified in the Swedish legislation and is still not possible in practice. However, Universities are free to conclude agreements with other partner HEI in Sweden or abroad and to award double degrees after the completion of a joint study programme.

The new ECTS credit system is in place since July 2007 and is mandatory for all the Swedish HEI and all types of programmes. The DS is issued automatically in English only and is free of charge.

In order to encourage the implementation of the new Bologna requirements, the Swedish government introduced effective financial incentives. The Government distributed funds directly to the HEI and through the Swedish Agency for Networks and Cooperation for Higher Education.

External quality assurance has been delivered by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education since 1995. All the activities of this independent evaluation body are in line with the ENQA guidelines. The agency has been a full member of ENQA since March 2000.

Students are highly involved in the evaluation process as they are convened to participate in the governing board (two representatives: one from undergraduate level and one from postgraduate).

3.2.27. United Kingdom

In the UK, the universities and other HEI are allowed by a Royal Charter or Act of Parliament to award their own degrees and develop education programmes. The academic autonomy of HEIs facilitates institutions’ adaptation to the Bologna Process requirements.
The traditional structure of Higher education in the UK organised around three cycles meets the Bologna patterns. Generally, the first cycle lasts between three and four years, while longer programmes exist for medicine or dentistry. Students who have obtained the first cycle degree have the possibility to continue studies enrolling in second cycle (Master’s but also short-cycle qualifications at Master’s level).

In the UK, doctoral studies (third cycle) are open to students having a Master’s degree, or to Bachelor holders with excellent study results. Doctoral programmes are diversified, going from professionally oriented courses to more academic syllabus.

UK HEIs have a long-standing tradition of foreign exchanges and partnerships, which has permitted the development of joint and double degrees to become rapidly operational. Individual HEIs formulate their own terms and conditions for such programmes and degrees. The Framework for HE qualifications has been implemented since September 2003. The description of qualifications provides HEI with reliable information on levels and consistency of different education programmes.

Concerning the ECTS credits, the HEI are free to use them or not. Nevertheless, the new system is widely spread in the UK universities, especially for those participating in Erasmus-Socrates programmes (used for transfer). The national credit system is still used for academic planning, delivery and evaluation of students’ achievements.

In England, the national credit arrangements are compatible with the European ECTS system (following a decision of a Working group on the adaptation of the national credit system).

The DS has been implemented gradually since 1997. To date some institutions issue the Diploma supplements automatically and free of charge. The language used is English and, in Wales, Welsh is also automatically used.

In the UK there are no specific policies encouraging the compliance of the UK HEI structure with the three cycle system because the UK initially met most of the Bologna requirements in any case. Concerning the ECTS, the Measuring and Recording Student Achievement Group cooperating with UK HE Europe Unit (whose aim is to promote the UK HE position across the EU HE sector and Bologna Process policy-making forums), tries to ensure that UK HE arrangements are in line with ECTS system and other international transparency tools (also for DS).

The DS has been otherwise promoted by the National Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom. Furthermore, the UK has 14 Bologna promoters whose role is to encourage implementation of the Bologna Process.

The UK has established an integrated quality control system creating in 1997 the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). Although the QAA is not subject to a peer review, it involves time to time international colleagues, experts in HE. The findings and outcomes of QAA are published in reports. The governing board of the QAA includes one student representative. Furthermore, students play an active role in review procedures as meetings with students are part of every HE audit.

Although the accreditation system does not exist in the UK, the award of degrees and use of university titles is protected by the Government. In the UK there is a range of regulatory and
statutory bodies which have the right to accredit education programmes or individual graduates. The QAA has been member of ENQA since 2000 and is preparing a review in the 2008-2009 academic years.
The authors of this note met higher education policy experts from Wales, United Kingdom (UK), for an informal discussion about progress towards implementation of the Bologna Process at a sub-national level.

In the UK, there are said to be difficulties in achieving a good synergy between the UK HE system and the credit-based system. A particular difficulty is the second part of the three cycle system, where the UK is alone in resisting a two-year Master's training, preferring to retain its traditional, one-year, system. Within the UK, there is a tension between learning outcomes, which are the focus of British attention, and the time spent learning. The question of contact hours and personal study hours leaves some other Bologna members sceptical about the possibility of meshing UK HE systems with those of other members, where a far greater number of hours are expected to be spent in the lecture room.

In the recently-published "Trends V", the authors noted that the UK stood alone in that its HEIs feel that the time is not yet ripe for an EHEA, while other members feel that rapid progress is essential.

Traditionally, the UK focuses on international markets, rather than specifically European ones. The nations of the UK fail to reach their targets for sending UK nationals abroad under the ERASMUS programme. Thus, a perspective from a UK nation might be that Bologna must be more clearly seen to fit into the wider internationalisation agenda for HE if it is to appeal to the HE hierarchy and bring about a change in an HE culture that tends to be somewhat inward-looking.

Further, demographic fluctuations in the EU, where predictions are that the next 10 years will see a drop in the number of 18-20 year olds, will call upon all HEIs to deploy imaginative strategies to attract students of different ages and social backgrounds into HE.14

14 "The Future size and shape of the HE sector in the UK: Demographic Projections", Universities UK.
4. Conclusion: The Future, Towards Bologna II

The findings of this note suggest that there is a high level of commitment among all EU Member States to achieving progress towards the objectives of the Bologna Process. There is recognition among EU Members that they must do more if they are to remain attractive vis-à-vis the HE sectors of other continents in an increasingly competitive environment. The goals of the Lisbon Strategy make it imperative that the EU should be able to educate its workforce better.

If the goals of Bologna have not been fully achieved so far, it must be borne in mind that the agenda has widened considerably since the first intergovernmental meetings took place, that the original four participants have subsequently become nearly 50, that they were by no means starting from a level playing field, and that the academic independence of HEIs has meant that governments, in pursuing various Bologna goals, have needed to influence and inform, rather than impose, upon institutions.

The London Communiqué of 2007, issued at the most recent Bologna Process gathering of education ministers anticipated the need for participants to continue their collaboration beyond 2010. Indeed, 2010 should serve as an opportunity for a reformulation of the Bologna agenda, based upon a thorough review of achievements to date.

Constraints to rapid achievement of the Bologna Process relate in part to elements that are not, strictly speaking, in the domain of education ministers: the need for improved coordination of different social security regimes, for example, is pressing if academic staff mobility is to be more fully encouraged. Funding for students is also worthy of a great deal of attention, both in terms of the tuition fee regimes and issues relating to the cost of living in different countries; but also in terms of the possible financial assistance that might be made available through supranational organisations and in particular, the European Commission.

The question of funding is worthy of further exploration, since in various cases, national policies can also appear to promote student retention, rather than facilitating student mobility across the Bologna member countries.

The social dimension will become more and more important in the coming years. The Member States have to foster students' participation in the decision-making process, but also guarantee equal access of students to Higher Education providing adequate financial support (for learning, living costs, mobility).

Regarding mobility, it is considered crucial to increase the attractiveness of HEIs in the new Member States, as to date these countries are mostly net exporters of students.

Furthermore, the new Member States of Central and Eastern Europe are likely to encounter in the future different short-term and long-term challenges. Even if great steps were made in order to comply with Bologna principles, the new Member States should focus on the implementing of national frameworks compatible with the European framework of qualifications, and on introducing more flexible learning curricula. The one by one country analysis showed that only in some Member States is there an integrated quality assurance system; thus the challenge will be to establish a more global approach to quality assessment.

Stephen Adam notes the need for major cultural changes in European HEIs if the potential benefits of a learning outcomes-based régime are to be realised. He warns against rushing the
implementation of such changes, and stresses that learning outcomes will not, in isolation, achieve the Bologna reforms but are, rather, one element of a mix of interdependent initiatives that must be combined if the EHEA is to become a reality. Adam concludes that the EHEA will not be fully implemented by 2010.\textsuperscript{15}

*Trends V* highlights that there is still much to be done to raise awareness within the HE sector, and bring all HEIs into the development of national qualifications frameworks. Many universities appear to be confused about the purposes and targets of qualifications frameworks, while others have little or no awareness of its existence.

In recent years, many countries and institutions have made significant progress in the development of internal quality systems, though there is some way to go. External quality systems have also been taken forward in important ways, such as student inclusion in the assessment and review process. A challenge for future Bologna implementation is to facilitate its implementation across the EHEA without imposing overly administrative burdens upon Europe's universities.

The next meeting of education ministers will be hosted by the Benelux countries and held in Leuven, in April 2009. It is expected that discussions in 2009 will focus on a wide-ranging progress report to be prepared for 2010. To this end, calls have been made for improved data, particularly on mobility and on the social aspects implied by the achievement of the Bologna Process.