



Bologna Promoters' Training Seminar on the Three-Cycle System

READER



Education and Culture

prepared with



INTRODUCTION

This Reader was prepared for the Bologna Promoters' Training Seminar on the Three-Cycle System (22-23 June 2006, Napier University, Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom). The training seminar is organised in the framework of the **Information Project on Higher Education Reform** managed by the European University Association (EUA) on behalf of the European Commission.

The Reader presents a collection of key texts adopted and agreements reached at the European level on the topic of the Three-Cycle System. It also includes reference to other relevant material available on the websites mentioned.

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- Tuning educational structures in Europe
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- European Commission's Staff Working Document: “*Towards a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning*”, 2005
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<http://www.eua.be>

I. Overarching Aims of the Three-Cycle System

- **Employability**
- **Mobility**
- **Social dimension**

The official Bologna Seminar on
Employability in the context of the Bologna process
Bled/Slovenia 21st-23rd of October 2004

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. General Conclusions

1.1 The seminar confirmed that *the objective of employability of graduates is one of the main cornerstones of the Bologna process*. Employability is a major objective on the way towards the establishment of a common European Higher Education Area, yet not the only one. It is also the context where a wide variety of stakeholders can work together on an aspect of the process.

1.2 As the term 'employability' itself is still a bit vague and sometimes even controversial the participants focused – in close connection to the various objectives of the Bologna Process – to its clarification. At this stage of discussions, they found as particularly comprehensive the following interpretation from the Enhancing Student Employability Co-ordination Team (ESECT) in England, presented at the seminar: *a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy*. Employability takes different emphasis in different programmes.

1.3 Society, the labour market and individuals demand from higher education to make a significant contribution in order to help achieving *sustainable employability*, including continuous self-development. Sustainable employability should not be regarded in opposition to life long learning, but life long learning should be understood as a meaningful way of enhancing one's employability.

1.4 *Bridging of academic studies and professional activities* and making firm links between them is beneficial for achieving an enhanced employability. Development of an Overarching Framework of Qualifications, covering higher education and vocational education and training in all countries – members to the Bologna process, is welcomed and should contribute to this end. In principle, internships are a recommended element of degree programmes. Employers and higher education institutions should give possibilities for internships in such a way that programme relevance is ensured.

1.5 Providing *broad possibilities and flexibility in terms of structure, content, orientation and profile of study as well as allowing for various pathways* should be understood as a strong contribution to employability. The one-fits-all, prescriptive and normative interpretation of employability and rigorous regulations hamper the development of personal and institutional profile and restrict programme flexibility. In this context, full advantage should be taken of the flexibility provided through the new two-cycle structure.

1.6 *High quality education is a key to achieving employability*. The main responsibility for the assurance of high quality education lies with institutions. Involvement of employers (public and private), trade unions and professional associations contributes to achieving the goal of employability. Feedback and advice from actors of the labour market on new curricula and Bologna-related reforms is considered by the participants as beneficial.

1.7 As the *acceptance and relevance of first cycle degrees* is partially lacking on the labour market, a concrete effort of all stakeholders is needed to raise awareness for them and their acceptance as meaningful, varied degrees in their own right. They either lead to the labour market or provide the ground for second cycle studies. This presupposes a variety of knowledge and skills, ranging from specific disciplinary understanding to broad personal and social competences to be developed. Higher education institutions should develop curricula in the way to enable students to make a real choice.

1.8 A serious caution over the distinction made between *academic and professional study programmes* is expressed as these concepts *are not mutually exclusive*. There is a much better way of distinguishing various studies if the distinction is made between *the research based* and *the research driven* types of higher education curricula.

1.9 From the *employability perspective* the seminar participants also suggest that

- *first cycle degrees* should encompass general and specific disciplinary knowledge as well as development of personal qualities including the one of the autonomous learner, the capacity to approach new issues, communication skills and other transferable skills;
- *second cycle degrees* should either encompass specialized disciplinary knowledge or offer cross-disciplinary knowledge from different academic fields, as well as higher level cognitive and communication abilities.

1.10 Further efforts should be also made towards *wider and more effective use of recognition tools in the promotion of mobility and employability* on the national, European and global level. All stakeholders are encouraged to take advantage of the common goals and purposes of recognition tools in various modes of academic and professional mobility and to promote the added value of mobility both in personal as well as societal and economic growth.

2. Recommendations to the Bologna Follow-up Group

2.1 The seminar participants recommend to the BFUG that the notion of employability and general conclusions as developed above are included as reference points in further Bologna seminars and other activities, in particular those dealing with learning outcomes and an Overarching Framework of Qualification for EHEA.

2.2 The seminar participants recommend to the BFUG strengthening active participation of employers' and trade unions' organizations as well as professional associations at various levels and fostering a debate on their systemic integration into formulation of higher education policies.

**Bologna Seminar on “Student Mobility in the European Higher Education Area 2010”
Bad Honnef, 17/18 March 2005**

Executive summary of Bad Honnef observations and recommendations¹

Within the framework of a SOCRATES/TEMPUS project, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) organised a Bologna seminar on “Student Mobility in the European Higher Education Area 2010”, co-funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. Approximately 200 representatives of the European Commission, ministries, national SOCRATES and TEMPUS agencies, higher education institutions and student organisations from 34 Bologna (potential) signatory countries gathered on 17/18 March 2005 in Bad Honnef/Germany to discuss the future development of European student mobility under the conditions of the Bologna Process.

The conference participants hold the following observations and recommendations to be key for increasing the number of mobile students and improving the process:

1. Student mobility remains one of the most important factors in the Bologna Process. In addition to being a value in and of itself, it also serves as a comprehensive quality assurance measure for new and newly restructured study programmes.
2. Student mobility must be understood as also encompassing programmes above and beyond the ERASMUS network.
3. Related to this, we must accept that mobility numbers should include other schemes and free-mover programmes in order to fully determine trends in mobility.
4. Conference participants agreed that there are four main obstacles to increasing mobility:
 - Lack of transparency and compatibility between higher education systems
 - Financial and technical problems (lack of scholarships and grants, insufficient accommodation, inadequate infrastructure)
 - Language problem. For better or worse, English will continue to play an important role as lingua franca in international programmes.
 - Lack of national and institutional mobility strategies. The “culture of mobility” has not yet been fully established in some countries and institutions.
5. The importance of employability and its relationship to mobility was repeatedly emphasised. In some countries this new approach must be established.
6. Participants noted that two models prevail in terms of two-tiered study systems:
 - Country-wide model (3+2 or 4+1 or other)
 - Institution model (institution chooses model, not country).
7. **In the opinion of many participants, 3-year Bachelor and 1-year Master programmes pose a threat to increasing student mobility.** The shorter study period and the emphasis on continuous assessment appear to discourage longer and free-mover mobility units.

¹ The executive summary is based on the Bad Honnef report „10 Observations and Recommendations“ by Jochen Hellmann and Courtney Peltzer-Hönicke, University of Hamburg

8. To counteract this problem, several possible solutions were presented:

- Improvement of academic recognition
- Development of more Joint Degree programmes
- Development of international degree programmes with mobility components (compulsory in some subject areas) when a Joint Degree is not possible
- Introduction of shorter study abroad periods (summer schools, integrated internships, etc.)
- Bachelor programmes should be viewed as 180-credit programmes rather than as 3-year programmes in order to better accommodate individual mobility periods and plans.

9. The opportunity to implement mobility components is NOW as a dynamic curricular reform such as Bologna will not come again for some time.

10. Finally, emphasis must be placed on flexibility and individuality in achieving the shared Bologna goals.

Conclusions for the Bergen Communiqué

The conference participants recommend to the European ministers responsible for higher education to stress the importance of transnational student mobility in the Bergen Communiqué and to urge higher education institutions to consider study abroad periods when developing Bachelor and Master programmes.

**EU/Bologna Conference 'designing policies for mobile students'
Noordwijk, 10-12 October 2004**

General conclusions

The participants of the conference conclude that structural cross-border cooperation between educational institutions and high-quality international mobility of pupils, students and teaching staff at all levels, make an indispensable contribution to creating a well-educated and internationally oriented workforce and strengthen the intellectual, cultural, social, scientific and technological dimensions of the aspired European knowledge based society. When designing policies to facilitate and further mobility this is to be taken into account. Two challenges in designing policies were dealt with at this conference: transparency and student support. It was also expressed by the participants in the conferences that a sustained and continued attention for the actual implementation of already agreed upon policies and policy principles in the field of student mobility (e.g. ECTS, mutual recognition, housing, administrative requirement) is required.

Conclusions on transparency

The workshop on quality assurance and joint degrees made us aware of and showed the elaborated internal quality assurance procedures and practice needed and developed by the various institutions involved in the joint programme presented.

Regarding the external quality assurance and requirements by national governments the workshop appeals to national authorities

- to standardize criteria or
- mutually recognize each others accreditation decisions
- and organize trust.

The workshop "creating transparency in the European Higher Education Landscape" took up one the Presidency conclusions of the informal EU ministers meeting in Rotterdam: It looked into the possibility of developing a European typology to increase the transparency of Europe's more than 3000 institutions of higher education. Participants stressed the importance of implementing and furthering existing instruments and expressed both scepticism and support for the exploration. A major role in developing of such a typology should be played by the educational sector itself. A pilot has started, subsidized by the Socrates programme, in which criteria for such a typology are explored and a draft typology is tried out. The pilot should take into consideration work carried out by UNESCO-CEPES on methodologies used in ranking and league tables and by the UNESCO-OECD activity on Guidelines on Quality Provisions in Cross Border Higher Education. The results of this pilot study could be reported to the Bologna process.

General Conclusion related to the topic 'student support'

The portability of student loans and grants is an important instrument in the promotion of mobility. In the Berlin communiqué, the Ministers responsible for higher education declared that with a view to promoting student mobility, Ministers would take the necessary steps to enable the portability of national loans and grants.

At the Informal Meeting of the EU-Ministers of Education in Rotterdam on July 12 2004, the presidency concluded that portability of grants and loans should be possible. They also stated that the problem of portability of student grants ought to be studied more closely within a EU-context. This should be done in relation to, amongst others, fees and maintenance costs. As a follow up there should be reflection on solutions to the various problems identified.

In the workshop on EU legislation, it was shown that in practice, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) interprets EU legislation in a way that national students and students from another EU-member state are treated more and more on an equal footing. The ECJ has held that EU-citizenship is destined to be the fundamental status of all nationals of the member states of the EU. As a result, entitlements to student support in other EU-member states (the host countries) have been considerably stretched.

At this conference, the study of the CHEPS ¹, commissioned by the Bologna working group on the international aspects of loans and grants, was presented. This study shows that the various systems of student support are basically designed for the students that study in their country of origin. If mobile EU-students want to claim student support in another member state, they often have to meet extensive demands (most often residency demands). In the workshop it was concluded that in the long run, a European solution to deal with the differences is desirable.

In the workshop on portability of loans and grants it was concluded that a tension arises between portability of student support and the decisions of the European Court of Justice that stretch the equal treatment principle to broader groups of students in the host country. This approach may prevent EU-member states to make their own systems of student support portable. Under current conditions, the home country principle is preferred by the member states. The problem is not just a problem of some countries, but a threat to mobility as such. The idea was raised that a European fund for student support could reduce some obstacles for mobility. A network of student support experts from the member states should be founded. They should address the issue of portability of student support in a broader economic, social and cultural perspective.

Altogether, the participants of the conference affirm that issues relating to the portability of student support show that this is a complex area, where education policy as well as income politics and social welfare are intertwined, and with national and supra-national interests at stake.

The participants at this conference agree that in light of the wishes to increase mobility, student support is an important subject to be taken up in the context of the European Union, because of the tension between national policies and EU-jurisprudence. The need for cooperation and coordination in this area is felt. We welcome the plan of the European Commission to install a working group that deals with legal issues. The participants of the conference stress that these legal issues are to be linked with political, social and administrative issues. The participants call on all parties involved to take the necessary steps to reach a satisfactory solution for the problems identified.

¹ Vossensteyn, J.J. Portability of Student Support: An Inventory of 23 European Countries. Enschede: June 2004.

ESIB Policy paper on mobility

Preamble

ESIB the National Unions of Students in Europe was founded in 1982 to promote the educational, economic, cultural, social and political interests of students in Europe. ESIB, through its 50 members from 37 countries, currently represents more than 11 million students in Europe.

Introduction

This policy paper deals with mobility, including academic and social aspects. Mobility here refers to a study period taken mainly abroad and returning home afterwards. When talking about student mobility, cultural experiences and individual growth have traditionally been emphasised and these are still among the most important skills to be gained from a study period abroad. However, ESIB feels that the academic value of a study period abroad has for a long time been neglected. Issues such as recognition, comparability and language tuition must be determinedly addressed in order to make the exchange period genuinely meaningful for both the individual and the institution.

There are still many problems in access to mobility, such as financial difficulties, administrative obstacles and lack of clear information. Social services are not accessible to all mobile students. Sufficient language tuition and relevant integrative measures coordinated by various actors are key to full academic and social integration.

Challenges to free movers, horizontal and vertical mobility are diverse and require special attention. Free movers here refer to mobile students not taking part in an organised mobility programme like e.g. Erasmus. Horizontal mobility here refers to non-degree mobility: studying for a short period as an exchange student mainly abroad. Vertical mobility here refers to degree mobility: studying mainly abroad for a full degree.

This policy paper should be taken into consideration when developing or creating new international mobility policies, schemes and programmes.

Background

Mobility is in the strong interest of students. Changes in the operational environment, in all fields of society and also in the labour market mean that students also need to obtain new skills to be able to successfully participate in today's society after graduation. These new skills can only be achieved in a learning environment, where teachers, students and administrative staff are aware of the international developments and are prepared to take in new information and have academic discussions also in international forums. Presence of foreign teachers, students and staff supports the international atmosphere of higher education institutions (HEI) in a natural way and gives students possibilities to learn to act in a multicultural environment. With the above-mentioned positive developments we refer to the process of internationalisation of higher education. Internationalisation of higher education in this paper does not refer to commodification of education or phenomena connected to it.

Students want skills necessary in living and working in international surroundings, but also a possibility for an academically and culturally meaningful period abroad. This process should be made flexible in such a way that a student could make genuine choices: whether to study abroad or to find the desirable international skills from the home institution. Thus internationalisation of higher education is very much linked to the quality of higher education.

So far mobility has been one of the most visible and central elements of internationalisation of higher education. Mobility should not be restricted to mean the mobility of an individual student. The concept of mobility should encompass incoming and outgoing exchange students, degree students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff: components that are needed for the internationalisation of higher education. Gaining most advantages from mobility should be on the agenda of both the mobile person and the institution; mobility should be seen as a positive academic resource for the institution.

With the development of new information and communication technologies, new terms such as e- learning and e-mobility have started to be used in HE community. Even though international experience can, to a certain extent, be created virtually, real (physical) contacts cannot be replaced by virtual interaction. Physical mobility as such has an irreplaceable value. Although ESIB does see different ways in which student can be mobile, it does not consider e-mobility to be mobility. The very definition of mobility implies movement of person from one place to another, thus e-mobility does not exist.

Access to mobility and information

As recent research shows, access to mobility is in most countries more a question of social and educational background than access to higher education. The richer and better educated parents the student has, the higher are chances for that student to be mobile. Furthermore, chances for getting mobile depend strongly on the economic situation and distribution of wealth in each country. ESIB demands equal chances and equal access to knowledge and education for all, based on personal interest and capacity, including student mobility. Mobile students should be a mirror of the student body, additional effort should be made to increase the participation of the non-mobile group. ESIB notes that Europe and the World are far behind this goal. Taking into account the economic growth of the last decades and today's society's need for highly educated, democratically and socially skilled citizens, we believe the solution for this goal to be a question of political will to ensure equal access to mobility, regardless of differences in wealth between the nations.

In order to reach genuine mobility and increase the options available for possible programme students and, even more, free movers, the quality, quantity and availability of information for potentially mobile students needs to be enhanced. This concerns especially four areas: non-academic administrative information (e.g. Visa and residence permit regulations), academic information, student welfare information, and information on social life and culture. It must be assured that information from all relevant sources (e.g. governments, Higher Education Institutions, Quality Assurance Agencies, Student Unions) is freely available and easily accessible also to students without regular access to the Internet and students with disabilities. For students with disabilities, it must be assured that full and reliable information is available on the studying and living conditions taking into account groups with different needs (e.g. blind students, students in wheelchairs etc.).

Academic value of the study period abroad

Not to undermine the cultural experiences and individual growth often connected to student mobility, students have clear academic goals concerning their study periods abroad. Students aim at gaining international aspects to their own field of study and research, which will enrich the studying and teaching in the home institution. One can also attend courses that are simply not available in the home institution.

It is of utmost importance that full recognition of study periods taken abroad are secured in order to make the study period academically meaningful. Information-sharing and trust, course descriptions, quality assurance and transparency are essential when trying to resolve problems of recognition. Recognition should be based on learning outcomes. Institutional commitment in forms of contracts between institutions is nowadays perhaps the best way of dealing with the complex issues related to recognition. Nevertheless, in the long run this is not an ideal solution. ESIB demands that governments sign and ratify the Lisbon convention of recognition. Furthermore, better tools and solutions for recognition problems have to be found. Contacts between institutions need to be close, not only to ensure the quality of the education but also to reduce problems of recognition. Adequate and understandable information about the courses should be available to students.

Diploma Supplement (DS)[1] is an instrument for creating transparency, support mobility and promote employability in Europe. ESIB insists for an enhanced DS and urges all HEIs to introduce it. DS could also serve for improved recognition of qualifications to promote vertical mobility by assisting universities in comparing the previous studies of the student. Creating a system of an ECTS-based[2] study points gives ample chances for institutions to review and rearrange the contents of degrees.

The internationalisation of education should not be based solely on student mobility but teacher mobility should also have influence on it. In some countries teacher mobility still needs to be promoted. In all mobility, further growth in numbers should always mean further progress in quality. Participation of students should be guaranteed regarding mobility programmes. Students should be included in the administration of mobility programmes as well as in designing new programmes and development of existing programmes. ESIB also speaks strongly for the possibility of students to build up their degree independently. The needs of foreign students should be taken into consideration when developing curricula. Foreign students have an equal right to participate in the development of their own curricula like other student groups.

In Europe there must not be a situation where second-cycle degrees completed in some European countries are academically less respected. Access to high quality education in all levels must be an option for all regardless of their country or area of birth. It needs to be stressed that the elitism of universities is unacceptable. Development of the quality of national education should be of more importance to all countries than using a majority of their scarce resources for developing second cycle programmes taught in English. If education is of high quality, there will be enough students on all levels. Development of the European Higher Education Area must not mean mono-lingualism of the world of higher education.[3]

Reduction of economic and administrative obstacles

One of the core reasons for low mobility rates is the insufficient funding for students. Students who are not sure they will be able to fund their living expenses and extra costs caused by their stay abroad are likely not to be mobile. As recent studies verify, students from poorer or less educated family backgrounds are even more deterred by financial insecurities. Financial assistance schemes almost all over Europe are still insufficient to meet the needs. In some European countries and regions, there are no relevant grant/loan-schemes at all.

ESIB stresses that students must have the opportunity to study abroad independent of family income. Thus, financial support including support for mobility should be family independent. This financial support should be sufficient to cover living costs and additional costs caused by academic and mobility-related needs. These include, but are not limited to costs of accommodation, food, study material, cultural and social participation and travelling costs. Grants and loans must be fully transferable for studies abroad, for both vertical and horizontal mobility. Transferability of grants and loans must be guaranteed from the very start of studies in order not to hinder mobility. Additional grants for mobile students are necessary in order to even out longer study times and starting problems due to getting familiar with language, culture and academic system of the host country.

ESIB calls upon governments, non-governmental and supranational organisations offering financial support also for mobility to move from loan-schemes to grants and reject introducing new loan schemes. Even if there were chances for students to easily pay back loans after the completion of studies, loans deter students from poorer and less educated family backgrounds due to risks and future burdens. Furthermore, in the mobility context, loans intended to reduce financial gaps due to economic differences that may stipulate brain drain: students returning to economically weaker areas may not be able to pay back loans due to lower wages and thus decide to stay at their host country due to economic reasons.

Additional financial support for mobile students is therefore urgently needed in situations in which students want to study in states or regions with visibly higher costs of living than in their place of origin. New forms of support measures for mobility in circumstances of substantial economic differences between home and host country must be developed and tested, taking into account the experiences of innovative approaches such as CEEPUS[4]. ESIB urgently calls upon the signatory states and parties of the Bologna Process to discuss and implement a European mobility fund or mobility system designed to fill the financial gaps caused by differences in living costs and economic capacities in different countries and regions of Europe. All countries party to the Bologna Process should participate in and contribute to this system on a fair basis. It needs to be stressed that when more and equal mobility is wanted, commitments must be made: there is a great need for visible and sustainable investments and support measures by the societies concerned.

ESIB calls upon governments to introduce measures ensuring that no student needs to work in order to finance his/her studies. Nevertheless, in the short run a virtually cost-less method of enabling foreign students to finance living and academic costs is to grant all mobile students the full right to work equal to domestic students. Student unions, HEI's or other institutions concerned can help mobile students with finding jobs as well as offering counselling and advice on job possibilities, legal rights and duties. Taking into account that supposedly more than 50% of students in

Europe do need to work beside their studies and that mobile students usually face additional financial hardship, working rights and possibilities play a crucial role in fostering access to mobility and successful completion of studies. ESIB still sees substantial obstacles to mobility in excessive, inadequate and unnecessary administrative rules. These include Visa and residence permit regulations for students, restrictions on the right and possibility to work and inadequate admission policies. ESIB calls upon the European Commission, European Council, Council of Europe and governments and Higher Education Institutions to take measures in order to reduce these obstacles and guarantee fair and equal treatment of mobile students compared to domestic students. Special attention needs to be brought to students with partners and students with children.

Access to social services

ESIB reiterates the need to guarantee equal access for foreign students to all social services offered to domestic students. Furthermore, the special needs of foreign students need to be taken into account, offering special treatment where necessary. Social services include, among others, adequate and low-cost accommodation, health care, psychological advice and childcare. Specific information and counselling on social services for foreign students, e.g. offered by information centers in different languages, is much needed. The specific needs of students with disabilities must be taken into account by governments, HEI's and student unions.

There is no mobility without accommodation. Governments, HEIs and communities must take specific measures in order to guarantee low-cost, quality accommodation for incoming foreign students. Enlarging the amount of available student housing must not lead to "ghettoisation" of foreign students. As experience shows, integrated living with domestic students and/or other citizens is a prerequisite for integration. Sometimes students encounter unexpected financial difficulties during their stay abroad. These may be caused by circumstances in their family, health problems, psychological difficulties and other usually unforeseen reasons. In order to prevent interruptions or premature ends of mobility terms as well as serious damage to the academic progress of the studies and further difficulties for the individuals, there need to be emergency funds, offering short time grants or loans, depending on the individual situation of the student. The general existence of these funds must be guaranteed by the governments. Administration and distribution of these funds can be taken care of by different organisations including student unions.

Language barriers must be overcome

Language tuition is key to ensuring greater internationalisation of higher education. The process of internationalisation requires components such as cultural experience and individual growth, but even more is achieved by removing language barriers.

Language courses should be provided at the home institution before the student leaves for the study period abroad. However, language tuition should be available throughout the whole study period abroad and it should be seen as an essential element of the study period. In order to avoid selectivity in access to mobility and promote successful integration, language tuition in all periods of study must be free of charge. Moreover, language proficiency tests must also be free of charge. Language courses should include information or be accompanied by courses on the cultural and historical situation of the country concerned.

Greater use of e.g. English as teaching language might increase horizontal mobility in countries which are situated in small language areas. In the ideal situation studies are provided and taken in the language of the respective country, and this is possible when ample language tuition is provided.

Full academic and social integration

Integration in student, academic and local community is necessary in order to take full advantage of foreign studies. HEI's and faculties as well as student representatives in general, student unions and other student organisations[5] are the ones responsible for ensuring the integration. Integration is a two-sided process and requires activity both on the side of the domestic institutions and students and of the mobile students. It is in the responsibility of the mobile students not only to form groups of foreign students but to become members of the student society as a whole. Integration must not be confused with assimilation. Social integration can be reached through measures like counselling, peer mentoring, social events and inclusion in orientation measures for new students. Student unions that offer these integration mechanisms need financial support from society. Academic integration includes taking into account knowledge, experience and methods foreign students are familiar with also in study programmes and classes. Furthermore, sufficient information offered on the academic system and requirements as well as local student culture and activities is necessary. This information e.g. can be offered in multi-language student handbooks produced by student unions in cooperation with the respective HEI.

There cannot be integration of foreign students and a functioning internationalisation of HEI's if mobile students are not considered full members of the Higher Education Community. Measures must be taken to ensure the participation of foreign students in student and HEI self-governance and decision-making. This must especially be ensured in all measures specifically concerning mobile students. In order to reach this goal, comparisons of policies concerning foreign student participation and an exchange of good practice should be made. Furthermore, pilot projects in HEI's and student unions should be made and financially supported, taking into account the different situations and needs of horizontally and vertically mobile students.

Integration can be hampered by a lack of respect for other cultures or worse, xenophobia and racism. Governments, HEI's and student unions must address this issue and take all measures possible to create a tolerant and inclusive academic community and introduce means to reduce xenophobia and fight racism. Best practice of dealing with discrimination must be discussed within the community of the HEI as well as between institutions and student unions. Foreign students subject to racist attacks and isolation must be offered institutional help and advice. Information on the socio-political, cultural and academic background of the different groups of foreign students should be made available in order to realize a mutual understanding and learning experience within the student, Higher Education and local community. Governmental subsidies to support these measures are necessary.

Measures must be taken to guarantee a reintegration of students returning from a stay abroad. Many returning students are faced with financial hardship, accommodation and psychological problems. Some of these problems can be avoided by supportive measures taken prior to the mobility phase. In mobility programmes these issues must be taken into account, e.g. concerning accommodation guarantees. For free movers, special help and advice needs to be designed.

Challenges to horizontal mobility

So far horizontal mobility has been the major mean of mobility for a large number of students all around Europe, and it has clearly been more popular than vertical, so called degree-mobility. After the currently ongoing introduction of the two-tier degree structure within the Bologna-process, the emphasis between these two modes may change. The influence of two-tier degree system on horizontal mobility has to be monitored, and if horizontal mobility becomes greatly hindered, efficient solutions have to be found. Increasing mobility – inside one's own higher education institution, nationally and internationally – is one of the central possibilities offered by the Bologna-process. In order to make full use of this possibility the problems of recognition must be solved.

The most visible threat concerning horizontal mobility and the introduction of the two-tier structure is the timing of a short study period abroad. ESIB demands that possibilities for mobility should be offered during both first and second cycle. This is clearly the responsibility of governments and the higher education institutions. The study period should not automatically lengthen the duration of studies, but as this still seems to be the situation, students should not face the negative consequences because of this. It should not be possible for a student to study abroad only between degrees. Study periods abroad could offer general academic competencies but also strengthen the specialisation of the student in one's own field of study.

Degree structures should be flexible enough to encompass different skills learnt through different methods as long as they are relevant to the field of study. By bringing new theories and new knowledge back home and by asking questions we also give input to the subject.

The development of the two-tier degree structure should, at its best, create enhanced possibilities for mobility after the completion of the first cycle. However, mobility should be regarded as an opportunity, not as a requirement in order to get a high-quality degree. According to ESIB a major function of joint degrees should be to stimulate student and teacher mobility. The risk of European master and joint degrees taking a lion's share from the institutions' resources must be prevented.

In some fields of study structural changes are needed in order to increase flexibility and making horizontal mobility generally possible. Programmes providing possibilities for horizontal mobility can serve as a valuable tool to increase possibilities for free movers.

Challenges to vertical mobility

The Bologna-process offers a possibility for flexible choices, where in an ideal situation a student can easily – with minimal administrative obstacles – build an individually and socially meaningful degree from available, versatile pieces. Vertical mobility can also be a mode of the so called free- mover mobility where students individually move from one higher education institution to another, completing the first cycle in one institution and continuing to the second cycle[6] or further in another institution and country, making their own arrangements.

The popularity of vertical mobility is expected to increase after the introduction of the two-tier degree system. The new degree system will also initiate an even stronger development of various second cycle programmes and joint/double degree

programmes. ESIB feels that even though some of the obstacles and problems traditionally connected with mobility might be somewhat solved by the introduction of various second cycle programmes, the ideal of free mobility should be maintained. However, two-tier degree system does not solve the problems in all fields of higher education.

Geographical coverage

For a number of developing countries and some countries within Europe the very basics needed to develop the higher education are still not fulfilled, and this decreases the possibility for mobility. It is very important to encourage national governments to invest into their higher education since it is through creation of knowledge-based society that these countries will successfully finish the transition and reach stability in both economical and political sense.

ESIB strongly believes that the decision of where to study for the study period abroad must be an independent decision of the individual student, however ESIB is very concerned with high differentiation in the number of mobile students between different countries. This differentiation is most obvious between the East and West Europe and South and North European countries. More effort should be made to ensure that the present mobility programmes are truly about equality with members participating on a balanced basis as much as possible. Prejudice concerning quality and recognition in South East Europe still exists and should be efficiently addressed by a better information flow and finding an in depth answer to what the East offers in an academic sense.

Countries in South East Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States should be promoted regionally rather than individually. This should be on higher education institutions and national unions of students to coordinate rather than solely the governments. There is a need for more mobility programmes for South East and Eastern Europe, which allow a greater access to mobility from these countries. Genuine equality amongst the members of present mobility programmes must be promoted.

Main principles for any kind of mobility cooperation with developing countries should be solidarity and reciprocity. Programmes with developing countries and some European countries are highly selective, one-way-oriented and limited to second cycle programmes. ESIB stresses the importance of institutional cooperation and infrastructural support to compose programmes in a way to entice two-way student and teacher mobility. There should be a sufficient number of programmes to increase mobility between developing countries and Europe. A way of recognizing the study period spent in third countries has to be found in order to foster mobility to these countries.

Policy monitoring, benchmarking and comparative studies

In order to achieve progress in the area of mobility, policy monitoring, benchmarking[7] and comparative studies on mobility as such, the academic and social situation of students are necessary. Governments, HEI's and student unions must exchange information on introduction and success of measures taken and set benchmarks. Comparative studies on student welfare and mobility arrangements must be made on a regular level. Comparative empirical data and analysis on the social situation of students must be produced and made available to all relevant

actors and the public on a regular basis. The qualitative improvement and extension of the Euro Student Report to all Bologna-signatory countries is an important measure to be taken. A European database must be produced containing easily accessible information on the policies and conditions of all individual HEI's concerning the different groups of students with disabilities.

Conclusions

The academic value of a study period abroad must be one of the most significant incentives for deciding to study abroad. Full recognition of study periods taken abroad must be secured in order to make the study period academically meaningful. ESIB demands that governments sign and ratify the Lisbon convention of recognition. Furthermore, better tools and solutions for recognition problems have to be found. ESIB speaks strongly for the possibility of students to build up their degree independently. Access to high quality education in all levels must be an option for all regardless of their citizenship, country or area of birth.

One of the core reasons for low mobility rates is the insufficient funding for students and this needs to be seriously addressed. ESIB sees substantial obstacles to mobility on one hand in the influence of economic and educational background of a student and on the other hand in excessive and unnecessary administrative rules. Thus ESIB urgently calls upon the signatory states and parties of the Bologna Process to discuss and implement a European mobility fund or mobility system. ESIB reiterates the need to guarantee equal access for foreign students to all social services offered to domestic students.

Problems of recognition, financing, information-sharing and language barriers must be determinedly addressed in the context of both horizontal and vertical mobility. The introduction of the two-tier degree structure must not hinder horizontal mobility. Mobility must be a genuine option, not a requirement, and degree structures must allow students to be able to choose when to study abroad. Students should not face the negative consequences if a study period abroad prolongs studies. Development of the quality of national education should be of more importance to all countries than using a majority of their scarce resources to developing second cycle programmes taught in English.

Participation of students especially in the design of new programmes and development of existing programmes must be secured. The needs of foreign students should also be taken into consideration when developing curricula. There cannot be integration of foreign students and a functioning internationalisation of HEI's if mobile students are not considered full members of the Higher Education Community. Sufficient language tuition is another key to integration.

In some countries the foundations for development of the higher education system are almost non-existent and thus decrease the possibility for mobility. Because of this, it is of utmost importance to encourage governments to invest into their higher education. Selectivity in the programmes with the developing and some European countries has to be minimised. Main principles for any kind of mobility cooperation with developing countries should be solidarity and reciprocity. ESIB stresses the importance of institutional cooperation and infrastructural support to develop balanced two-way mobility between all regions. Monitoring and comparative studies on mobility, academic and social situation of students are necessary.

[1] See also ESIB policy paper on Diploma Supplement

[2] See also ESIB policy paper on ECTS

[3] See also ESIB Policy Paper on languages

[4] Central European Exchange Program for University Studies, see <http://www.adis.at/ceepus>

[5] student organisations here refers to representative organisations not necessarily called student unions, and also culture, sports etc. clubs run by students

[6] second cycle degree/programme here refers to master's degree/programmes and other comparable studies completed after the first cycle

[7] The setting of specific goals and regular evaluation of progress

**'The social dimension of the European higher education area
and world-wide competition'**

- Recommendations from the Paris seminar -

Ministers in charge of higher education meeting in Berlin on September 18th and 19th 2003 stressed the importance of social dimension in the building up of the European higher education area (EHEA) :

'Ministers reaffirm the importance of the social dimension in the Bologna Process. The need to increase competitiveness must be balanced with the objective of improving the social characteristics of the European Higher Education Area, aiming at strengthening social cohesion and reducing social inequalities both at national and at European level. Ministers reaffirm their position that higher education is a public good and a public responsibility.'

'Ministers take into due consideration the conclusions of the European Councils in Lisbon (2000) and Barcelona (2002) aimed at making Europe 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion' and calling for further action and closer cooperation in the context of the Bologna Process.'

'Ministers agree that the attractiveness and openness of the European higher education should be reinforced. They confirm their readiness to further develop scholarship programmes for students from third countries.'

'Ministers declare that transnational exchanges in higher education should be governed on the basis of academic quality and academic values, and agree to work in all appropriate fora to that end.'

'Ministers stress the need for appropriate studying and living conditions for the students, so that they can successfully complete their studies within an appropriate period of time without obstacles related to their social and economic background. They also stress the need for more comparable data on the social and economic situation of students.'

Meant by Ministers to be a counterbalance to the need to increase Europe's competitiveness, the social dimension proves to be, at the end of the seminar, a constituent element of the EHEA and a necessary condition of its attractiveness in world-wide competition.

So our seminar considered the social dimension of the EHEA as the whole set of mechanisms aiming to ensure equality of opportunities and social cohesion in order to lead the great majority of young people to the best possible level and to the best fulfilment of their potential. The social dimension of the EHEA therefore integrates the processes of access to higher education but also counselling policies in view of the students' success, financial and material support and information and guidance policies as well.

Making real the knowledge society, aimed at by the Lisbon strategy, requires an increase, in each country, of a same age group having access to higher education. It will be possible only with a meaningful and appropriate counselling of students. In that sense, economic competition and social dimension go hand in hand.

The requirement for quality of higher education institutions in Europe is one of the cornerstones of an efficient EHEA, attractive to the rest of the world, that Ministers committed themselves to build by 2010. This attractiveness must be based on the highest academic level as well as on the quality of services students are provided with, in particular in terms of information, guidance and advice, housing and integration into the labour market.

Taking into account the social dimension implies to care for reducing failure rates to the maximum and by doing so for ensuring the best possible training level for the great majority of people.

A genuine mobility culture must be developed. In this perspective, the policy for the international opening up of institutions must care for integrating mobility in a successful learning path of every student and sees to develop a mobility of quality, notably with the development of appropriate linguistic preparations, counselling geared to student academic and social needs, financial support in order to allow mobility including post-graduates. Within Europe and towards third countries, the development of mobility which is a key principle of the EHEA must be done on the basis of balanced exchanges aiming to strengthen higher education and economic growth in the countries mobile students and researchers come from.

ON THE BASIS OF THESE CONSIDERATIONS,

PARTICIPANTS TO THE SEMINAR ADMIT THAT:

- strengthening the social dimension of higher education is one of the conditions for making real a knowledge society, a core objective of the Lisbon strategy, which implies increasing the number of graduates from higher education through lifelong learning ;
- social and economic background should not be a barrier to access to higher education, successful completion of studies and meaningful employment after graduation ;
- taking into account the social dimension in the EHEA both at the national level and the European level contributes to the creation of a coherent, balanced and competitive European higher education area.

CONSEQUENTLY,

PARTICIPANTS TO THE SEMINAR RECOMMEND THAT:

- the process of building the European higher education area improve its social dimension and set it as a priority ;
- in that perspective, a specific analytical survey, built on existing initiatives and under the authority of the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG), focused on the social and economic situation of students, including obstacles to access and mobility and taking into account the lifelong learning objectives, should be carried out by 2007 in all Bologna member States ;
- decisions for financing in the European higher education area take into account social cohesion objectives regarding access to higher education, living and studying conditions, financial and material support, services for students such as information, guidance and advice, and also mobility support at the European level and the national level alike ;
- quality assurance mechanisms which are developing both internally and externally integrate as a must the social dimension in all aspects dealing with living and studying conditions and relate it to the multiple purposes of higher education and long-term results ;
- beyond Bergen, in order to make the social dimension of the EHEA a reality, it is vital to secure the full involvement and the working together of national authorities, higher education institutions and students, which is the only guarantee for effectiveness.



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
MINISTRY OF NATIONAL
EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS
AFFAIRS

EDUCATION RESEARCH
CENTER



Greek Presidency
of the European Union



Education and Culture

Socrates

BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP SEMINAR

“EXPLORING THE SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA”

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

CONCLUSIONS

**BOLOGNA FOLLOW-UP SEMINAR
“EXPLORING THE SOCIAL DIMENSIONS
OF THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA”
ATHENS, GREECE, 19-20 FEBRUARY 2003**

Conclusions

A. The issues of the “social dimension” and the “public good”

1. In the Berlin Communiqué, the Ministers should explicitly reaffirm the importance of the social dimension of the Bologna Process towards the construction of the European Higher Education Area. They should also reaffirm their position that higher education should be considered a public good and a public responsibility. Moreover, the Ministers should specify the social aspects of the European Higher Education Area, taking also stock of the outcomes of the official Bologna Seminar held in Athens and of the European Student Convention.
2. Improving the social characteristics of the European Higher Education Area should counterbalance the need for competitiveness and be seen as a value in itself as well as one of the conditions of competitiveness, and should aim at reducing the social gap and strengthening social cohesion, both at national and at European level. In the knowledge-based society and economy, the social component should be given considerable concern with regards to research as well.
3. Higher education as a public good cannot only be interpreted as an economic issue but also as a social and political one. In that context, higher education should be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction and the defence of free education.
4. Under conditions of wide access to higher education, the need for quality and accountability becomes predominant, and should be realised through the establishment of appropriate quality assurance procedures. At the same time, the maintenance of public support on the one hand and the efficient use of the available resources on the other are of special importance as well.
5. Appropriate studying and living conditions should be ensured for the students so that they can finalise successfully their studies in time without being prevented by obstacles related to their social and economic background. In this context, it is necessary to introduce and maintain social support schemes for the students, including grants, portable as far as possible, loan schemes, health care and insurance, housing and academic and social counselling.
6. Removing the obstacles to the free movement of students should be considered a prerequisite for provision of equal mobility opportunities to all students irrespective of their social and economic background, thus providing for a genuine mobility.
7. Participants underlined the need for on-going research at European level, including comparative analyses and best practices, so that the social dimension of the Bologna Process and the consideration of higher education as public good and public responsibility to be further improved.

B. The issue of the GATS negotiations

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

II. The Three-Cycle System

- **Ministerial Declarations & Communiqués**
- **Conclusions & Recommendations of European Conferences & Seminars**
- **Learning Outcomes in the Three-Cycle System**
- **Reference Material and Electronic Sources**

The Three Cycles in the Ministerial Declarations and Communiqués

➤ Sorbonne Declaration - 1998

“The international recognition and attractive potential of our systems are directly related to their external and internal readabilities. **A system, in which two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate, should be recognized for international comparison and equivalence, seems to emerge.**”

[...] “International recognition of **the first cycle degree as an appropriate level of qualification** is important for the success of this endeavour, in which we wish to make our higher education schemes clear to all. In the graduate cycle there would be a choice between a shorter master’s degree and a longer doctor’s degree, with possibilities to transfer from one to the other. In both graduate degrees, appropriate emphasis would be placed on research and autonomous work.”

➤ Bologna Declaration - 1999

“Adoption of **a system essentially based on two main cycles**, undergraduate and graduate. Access to the second cycle shall require successful completion of first cycle studies, lasting a minimum of three years. The degree awarded after the first cycle shall also **be relevant to the European labour market** as an appropriate level of qualification. The second cycle should lead to the master and/or doctorate degree as in many European countries.”

➤ Prague Communiqué - 2001

“Ministers noted with satisfaction that the objective of a **degree structure based on two main cycles, articulating higher education in undergraduate and graduate studies**, has been tackled and discussed. Some countries have already adopted this structure and several others are considering it with great interest. It is important to note that in many countries bachelor’s and master’s degrees, or comparable two cycle degrees, can be obtained at universities as well as at other higher education institutions. Programmes leading to a degree may, and indeed should, have **different orientations and various profiles** in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs as concluded at the Helsinki seminar on bachelor level degrees (February 2001).”

➤ Berlin Communiqué - 2003

“Ministers are pleased to note that, following their commitment in the Bologna Declaration to the two-cycle system, a comprehensive restructuring of the European landscape of higher education is now under way. All Ministers commit themselves to having started the implementation of the two cycle system by 2005.

Ministers underline the importance of consolidating the progress made, and of improving understanding and acceptance of the new qualifications through **reinforcing dialogue** within institutions and between institutions and employers.”

[...] “First and second cycle degrees should **have different orientations and various profiles** in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs. First cycle degrees should give access, in the sense of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, to second cycle programmes. Second cycle degrees should give access to doctoral studies.

Ministers invite the Follow-up Group to explore whether and how **shorter higher education** may be linked to the first cycle of a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area.”

[...] “Conscious of the need to promote closer links between the EHEA and the ERA in a Europe of Knowledge, and of the importance of research as an integral part of higher education across Europe, Ministers consider it necessary to go beyond the present focus on two main cycles of higher education to **include the doctoral level as the third cycle in the Bologna Process**. They emphasise the importance of research and research training and the promotion of interdisciplinarity in maintaining and improving the quality of higher education and in enhancing the competitiveness of European higher education more generally. Ministers call for increased mobility at the doctoral and postdoctoral levels and encourage the institutions concerned to increase their cooperation in doctoral studies and the training of young researchers.”

➤ **Bergen Communiqué - 2005**

“We note with satisfaction that the two-cycle degree system is being implemented on a large scale, with more than half of the students being enrolled in it in most countries. However, there are still some **obstacles to access between cycles**. Furthermore, there is **a need for greater dialogue**, involving Governments, institutions and social partners, to **increase the employability of graduates with bachelor qualifications**, including in appropriate posts within the public service.”

[...] “**The European Higher Education Area is structured around three cycles**, where each level has the function of preparing the student for the labour market, for further competence building and for active citizenship.”

**Bologna Follow-up Seminar
Bachelor's Degree : What Is It?**

***St. Petersburg State University, Russia
25-26 November 2004***

Report by the Rapporteur

Senior Adviser Sverre Rustad, Secretariat of the Bologna Follow-up Group

1. Background

1.1 *The bachelor's degree in the context of the Bologna Process*

1.1.1 The Bologna Declaration, 1999

Adoption of a degree structure essentially based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate, has been one of the action lines of the Bologna Process from the very beginning. It is closely linked to the objective of making higher education degrees more easily readable and comparable across national borders, which in turn is a necessary condition for mobility.

The Bologna Declaration specifies that the first cycle should last a minimum of three years. The degree awarded should both give access to second cycle studies and at the same time “be relevant to the European labour market as an appropriate level of qualification”. In many countries, this degree is called “bachelor” (in Russian *bakalavr*).

1.1.2 The Helsinki seminar on Bachelor-level Degrees, 2001

Bachelor-level degrees were the theme of a Bologna seminar in Helsinki, Finland on 16-17 February 2001. The seminar highlighted the fact that long first study cycles, high drop-out rates and the lengthening of university studies were problems shared by many European countries, and argued that a bachelor-master structure may offer several advantages in comparison with long programmes leading directly to the master's degree (or a comparable degree depending on the national system). It is more flexible, promoting mobility; it allows more interaction between studies and working life; it may help answer the need of the labour market for more people with higher education qualifications; and not least, its adoption will facilitate better recognition of European degrees both within Europe and in the rest of the world, and will thus also make European higher education more attractive for international students.

In order to help achieve these goals, the seminar proposed a set of criteria for the definition of European bachelor-level degrees:

- *Bachelor-level degree is a higher education qualification the extent of which is 180 to 240 credits (ECTS). It normally takes three to four years of full-time study to complete the degree. Bachelor-level degrees play an important role in the life-long learning paradigm and learning to learn skills should be an essential part of any bachelor-level degree.*
- *It is important to note that the bachelor-level degrees, often referred to as first degrees can be taken at either traditional universities or at professionally-oriented higher education institutions. Programmes leading to the degree may, and indeed should have different orientations and various profiles in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs.*
- *In order to increase transparency it is important that the specific orientation and profile and learning outcomes of a given qualification are included in its title and*

explained on the Diploma Supplement issued to the student. Information on different study programmes should be transparent to enable the students make informed choices.

- *Even bachelor degrees which serve as an intermediate qualification preparing students for further study should be based on a proper curriculum. They should not only be seen as a part of a longer curriculum, as some students may wish to change direction or to choose a graduate programme or specialisation offered at another institution.*¹

The conclusions from the seminar emphasise the interaction between higher education and society at large, arguing that all bachelor-level curricula should include transversal or generic skills and competences. They recognise that in some fields which involve professional accreditation, bachelor-level degrees will not always serve as independent qualifications leading to full professional competence. However, even in such fields an intermediate qualification may be worth developing to take advantage of the possibilities offered by a bachelor-level degree. Finally, higher education institutions and their networks of stakeholders were encouraged to develop descriptions of the core competences expected from graduates of bachelor and master programmes in broad subject areas as a means of enhancing transparency and comparability. This call has since been answered through the *Tuning* project.²

1.1.3 The Prague Communiqué, 2001

The Ministers meeting in Prague noted with satisfaction that the objective of a degree structure based on two main cycles had been tackled and discussed since Bologna, and that some countries had already adopted such a structure while others were considering it. Referring to the Helsinki Seminar, they further noted that in many countries bachelor's and master's (or comparable) degrees can be obtained at both universities and other higher education institutions, and that programmes leading to a degree may, and indeed should, have different orientations and various profiles in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs.

1.1.4 From Prague to Berlin

In February 2002 an informal group known as the Joint Quality Initiative (JQI) met in Dublin to draft *descriptors* for bachelor's and master's degrees that might be shared within the European Higher Education Area.³ While the Helsinki seminar indicated a scope for bachelor's degrees measured in years or ECTS, the JQI sought to identify the academic and other requirements that, as outcomes, characterise and distinguish between bachelors and masters. The descriptors were designed to indicate an overarching summary of the outcomes of a programme of study in terms of the abilities and attributes that a student must have to be

¹ Quoted from the General Report of professor Pedro Lourtie to the Prague Ministerial Conference, see http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/0105Lourtie_report.pdf.

² *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe*. More information about the project can be found on the Europa Internet server: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/Tuning.html>; or on the servers of the coordinating institutions:

University of Deusto, Bilbao, Spain (www.relint.deusto.es/TuningProject/index.htm) or

University of Groningen, The Netherlands (www.let.rug.nl/TuningProject/index.htm).

³ The JQI has since also developed descriptors for the doctoral level (March 2004) and for short-cycle programmes within the bachelor level (October 2004). See www.jointquality.org.

awarded the qualification in question. They would describe *all* bachelor's and *all* master's degrees within the EHEA, and would thus be generic. The group agreed that the value of the generic descriptors would be substantially enhanced by cross-referencing to more detailed programme profiles or specifications developed in national, regional or institutional contexts.

The descriptor for the bachelor's degree specifies that the degree is awarded to students who

- *have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon and supersedes their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study;*
- *can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional⁴ approach to their work or vocation, and have competences⁵ typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study;*
- *have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues;*
- *can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences;*
- *have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy.*

The Joint Quality Initiative is not formally part of the Bologna Process, but the working group set down by the Bologna Follow-up Group to elaborate an overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area has since decided to use the Dublin descriptors as an element in the framework.

In March 2003, a Bologna seminar was held in Helsinki to examine the characteristics of *master-level degrees*, following the conference on bachelor-level degrees two years earlier. Partly building on the Dublin descriptor, the seminar drew up a set of recommendations for master's degrees in the European Higher Education Area. Some of the recommendations also concerned the bachelor's degree. Underlining that bachelor's and master's degrees should have different defined outcomes and be awarded at different levels, the seminar recommended that *all* bachelor degrees should open access to master studies. The observation from the previous Helsinki seminar that integrated one-tier programmes might continue to exist in certain fields was repeated, as was the recommendation that opportunities for access to intermediate qualifications and transfer to other programmes should be encouraged even in such cases.

Later the same month, another seminar in Copenhagen discussed qualifications structures in higher education in Europe. The seminar recommended that *qualifications frameworks* should be developed both at the national and the European level as a means of promoting transparency, comparability, quality and recognition of higher education qualifications. Such

⁴ “The word ‘professional’ is used in the descriptors in its broadest sense, relating to those attributes relevant to undertaking work or a vocation and that involves the application of some aspects of advanced learning. It is not used with regard to those specific requirements related to regulated professions. The latter may be identified with the profile/specification.” (JQI footnote)

⁵ “The word ‘competence’ is used in the descriptors in its broadest sense, allowing for gradation of abilities or skills. It is not used in the narrower sense identified solely on the basis of a ‘yes/no’ assessment.” (JQI footnote)

frameworks should seek to describe qualifications at each appropriate level in terms of workload, level, quality, learning outcomes and profile.

In 2003 Eurydice, the EU information network on education in Europe, published its study *Focus on the Structure of Higher Education in Europe 2003/2004*, giving an overview of “Bologna” reforms in 29 countries. The study showed that a bachelor-master structure had been implemented in most of the countries, and was perhaps the Bologna action line where most progress had been made. However, the two-cycle structure was found to be uncommon at ISCED level 5B. The *Trends 2003* report prepared by the EUA at the same time corroborates this description, but points out that all the different aspects of the Bologna Process are closely interrelated and that introducing a two-tier degree structure is in itself not enough to achieve transparency. Most bachelor’s degrees charted by *Trends 2003* were found to have a scope of 180 ECTS credits, but first degrees of 210 and 240 credits were also found.

Trends 2003 also charted the penetration of the two-cycle structure at the institutional level, as well as attitudes to the new degrees. A majority of higher education institutions had introduced the two-tier degree system, confirming the situation described by ministries. Employability was stressed as an important factor in the accompanying curricular reforms. On the other hand, in a number of countries the bachelor’s degree was still seen mainly as a stepping-stone to further studies at the time when the report was prepared.⁶

1.1.5 The Berlin Communiqué, 2003

The section on implementation of a two-cycle degree structure in the Berlin Communiqué sums up preceding developments and sets the political priorities for the present period. The full text reads:

Degree structure: Adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles

Ministers are pleased to note that, following their commitment in the Bologna Declaration to the two-cycle system, a comprehensive restructuring of the European landscape of higher education is now under way. All Ministers commit themselves to having started the implementation of the two cycle system by 2005.

Ministers underline the importance of consolidating the progress made, and of improving understanding and acceptance of the new qualifications through reinforcing dialogue within institutions and between institutions and employers.

Ministers encourage the member States to elaborate a framework of comparable and compatible qualifications for their higher education systems, which should seek to describe qualifications in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile. They also undertake to elaborate an overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area.

Within such frameworks, degrees should have different defined outcomes. First and second cycle degrees should have different orientations and various profiles in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs. First cycle

⁶ Reichert, Sybille and Christian Tauch, *Trends 2003: Progress towards the European Higher Education Area*, European University Association 2003, pp. 45-55.

degrees should give access, in the sense of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, to second cycle programmes. Second cycle degrees should give access to doctoral studies.

Ministers invite the Follow-up Group to explore whether and how shorter higher education may be linked to the first cycle of a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area.

1.2 The bachelor's degree in Russia

Russia was accepted as a member of the Bologna Process at the ministerial conference in Berlin in September 2003, and is thus not included in either of the studies referred to above. Bachelor's degrees were introduced at the Peoples' Friendship University in Moscow as early as 1989, and on a broader basis from 1992. Legislation adopted from 1992 to 1996 establishes bachelor-level programmes as a possible basis for enrolment to specialist's or master's degree programmes, specifying their respective total duration to 4 (bachelor), 5 (specialist) and 6 (master) years. The bachelor/master structure is not applied to ISCED 5B programmes.

Implementation of the two-cycle degree structure is optional for the higher education institutions. At some institutions the decision is delegated to the faculties. Whereas bachelor programmes exist at 50.7 % of the institutions, only 7.2 % of the students are enrolled in such programmes. The overwhelming majority are still enrolled in traditional 5-year specialist diploma studies.⁷ At St. Petersburg State University, on the other hand, 25-30 % of the students are in two-cycle programmes. In all, Russia has about 6 million students.

Russia is, of course, a vast country. In addition to national Bologna events like the present seminar, a series of regional seminars is therefore planned in order to assist higher education institutions all over the country in implementing the necessary reforms at the institutional level.

2. The Seminar

2.1 General

The seminar was jointly organised by the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, the Committee for Education and Science of the State Duma, St. Petersburg State University and the Council of Europe. It was well attended from the Russian side, with around 150 participants. Participation from other Bologna member states was more limited, with around 30 participants from 13 countries. The working languages were English and Russian, with simultaneous translation in the plenary sessions and in three of four working groups.

Discussions took place on the basis of thematic introductions as well as presentations of experiences from other countries. The seminar may be said to have had a double focus, in that part of the discussion was concerned with general characteristics of the bachelor's degree and the benefits and possible disadvantages of a two- (three-) cycle structure, whereas another part was concerned more particularly with the situation in Russia. With regard to the latter, the

⁷ Figures provided by the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation

focus was on the extent and pace of change and how to preserve valuable features of the old degree system. Special attention was paid to the structure of Russian postgraduate degrees, with a presentation devoted to this theme.

Professor Vadim Kasevich, Vice Rector of the University, gave an introduction to the problems under discussion against the background outlined in section 1. Since 1999 many new countries have become members of the Bologna Process, including countries without a two-cycle structure. Different understandings of the bachelor's degree exist between and even within countries, and transparency objectives are not always observed.

Professor Kasevich pointed to a number of reasons behind the introduction of a two-cycle system, including the needs both of mass education and of the labour market. Knowledge becomes obsolete very quickly; at the same time higher education has become more competitive, and a flexible system helps. The bachelor's degree gives a broad grounding. Creative thinking and problem-solving abilities are necessary and must be stimulated from the beginning. In Russia as well as in other countries each level of education should be designed both to serve as a basis for further studies and to meet the needs of the labour market.

Discussing the role of credits, learning outcomes, qualifications frameworks and descriptors in defining the bachelor's degree, and citing examples from other countries, professor Kasevich argued that splitting traditional degrees into two levels makes little sense if the first does not lead to an independent qualification. In Russia the reform of the degree structure is still not completed, and competing proposals exist. Four preliminary conclusions were suggested:

- The bachelor's degree must become the basic type of higher education. Exceptions in the form of integrated long programmes must be well justified in each case.
- The main characteristic must not be the time of learning, but the outcomes and the number of credits.
- Working on generic attributes is useful, but special descriptors must be worked out by the specialist community.
- The creative development of the student should be stimulated. Therefore, the bachelor's degree should involve the student in research. This is not sufficiently emphasised at present.

2.2 Experiences from other countries

Presentations were given by Gerhard Duda (Germany), Sirkka-Leena Hörkkö (Finland) and Florent Stora (France). In addition a paper on joint study programmes for the bachelor's level was presented by professor Kasevich. Finland and Germany both have binary institutional systems. Both countries have introduced legislation to establish a new degree structure with the bachelor's degree as the standard qualification, but whereas in Germany there will only be one type of bachelor, in Finland the degree will have a different profile in universities and polytechnics. In Germany the bachelor can have a duration of 3 or 4 years, but 82.8 % of bachelor programmes are 180 ECTS. Around 10 % of students are currently in bachelor programmes, and studies indicate that the degree is accepted in the labour market. Problems with the old degree system, in the form of long duration of studies, inflexible programmes, high dropout rates and difficulties with recognition, were cited as a major motivation for the reform. France, which is also introducing a three-tier degree system, similarly pointed to

reduced failure rates as an important objective. Here the bachelor-level degree is called “licence”. Finland cited internationalisation as a motive behind the reforms, and stressed the importance of involving the institutions, as did France. The Finnish government had introduced earmarked funding to aid the transition.

2.3 Aspects of the debate

2.3.1 General characteristics of the bachelor’s degree

As already mentioned, in his general introduction professor Vadim Kasevich stressed the importance of stimulating creative thinking in bachelor programmes, arguing that this aspect is not sufficiently emphasised either in the Dublin descriptors or available literature. In some cases the programmes seem to be conceived as concerned with typical problems only, designed to educate candidates who can implement ideas, but not generate them.

Nicolaas Heerens from ESIB gave an introduction to the bachelor’s degree from a students’ perspective. In his view, all bachelor programmes should address all the four main purposes of higher education:

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

The programmes should have a balance between broad and specialist knowledge, emphasising transversal skills and “sustainable employability”/learning to learn. Curricula should be flexible and based on learning outcomes, allowing for individual learning paths. Students should play a central role in curriculum development. Employability should be a core concern, and relations with the labour market strengthened. The restructuring of old curricula should not be conceived of as a means of shortening total study time, but of achieving flexibility. Generic skills should be emphasised.

Several speakers stressed the importance of flexibility, both in a lifelong learning perspective and in relation to a rapidly changing labour market, and the advantages of the bachelor’s degree in this respect compared with longer, integrated first degrees. Also, the need for generic skills and a balance between generic and specialist knowledge was a recurring theme.

A special feature of Russian bachelor programmes is a specified minimum of humanities subjects prescribed by state standards. This creates difficulties in relation to joint degrees and other forms of cooperation with foreign institutions. On the other hand it was pointed out that such elements exist in other countries as well, and that humanities are not the same as soft skills, but serve to help the students learn to reflect critically. Working group 1 was also devoted to this theme. Here it was argued by some that the uniform “block” of humanities should not be kept, as there is no direct link between the object of studies and the qualities produced. International cooperation requires comparable degrees described in terms of learning outcomes and competences. As there were different views, the group recommended that a working group should be established to further elaborate the role of humanities in the bachelor’s degree.

The theme of Working group 2 was learning outcomes, competence and overarching criteria for bachelor-level qualifications. Here it was argued that a certain core of key competences

could be defined for all bachelor's degrees, whether they lead directly to a profession or are of a more general nature. The *Tuning* approach to learning outcomes corresponds well with Russian traditions and may serve as a bridge between European and Russian degrees, taking into account both the teachers' and the employers' point of view. Institutions tend to put in everything that they think is necessary; therefore a clearer focus on objectives and outcomes is needed. It was argued that the bachelor's degree does not give scope for a proper thesis. In Russia, the degree is not well known or accepted in the labour market in spite of nationwide standards. A less rigid system is therefore needed. The group concluded that taking into account the wide differences in bachelor training, it is important to pay attention to generic competences and to describe programmes in terms of learning outcomes including both generic and specific competences.

Working group 4 was devoted to requirements for access to master-level studies, with participants referring to the systems in their respective countries, including selection procedures, as a basis for discussion. The Bologna Declaration and later communiqués stipulate that the bachelor's degree shall give access to the second cycle, i.e. a right to be considered for admission, but the group concluded that the final decision on admission should rest with the institution, especially for interdisciplinary master's programmes. Again it was recommended that a working group should be set up to study special features of national variations and make recommendations to the BFUG.

2.3.2 The bachelor's degree and the labour market

This was the theme both of a presentation by professor Gennady Lukichev and of the fourth working group. Professor Lukichev started by pointing to some of the motivations for introducing the bachelor's degree: efficiency, compatibility, competitiveness and the idea of the knowledge-based society, which requires flexibility. A system with long, monolithic first degrees is not sufficiently adaptable to technological progress. The requirements formulated by society and by the Bologna process thus coincide, and an approach is adopted where educational programmes become more oriented towards the labour market. This will require both improved dialogue with employers and a cultural change at the higher education institutions. Employers should take part in the planning of programmes on a permanent basis.

Bachelors will form a large part of the workforce in future. They must therefore meet the needs of the labour market, with a balance of specialist knowledge and generic skills. The professional elements (both specific and broader) in the bachelor programmes should be strengthened, combining the best from the old and new degree systems. An educational environment must be created which allows bachelors to continue their education in a lifelong perspective. Independent candidates means participating students. The working environment itself must be conducive to learning.

Referring to the Bologna seminar on employability in Bled, Slovenia in October 2004, professor Lukichev drew the following conclusions:

- There is a need for closer cooperation between higher education and the labour market
- There should be a balance in bachelor programmes between specialist knowledge and generic skills, with an emphasis on "learning to learn"
- New quality criteria should be introduced with an emphasis on final competences
- Students should be involved in the planning of study programmes

- There should be no division between academic and professional bachelors; all should be research-based and research-driven

In the ensuing debate there was some discussion about the nature of higher education as a public good in relation to the labour market with its short-term economic goals. In this context it was pointed out that an increasing number of students in Russia pay fees, and that in this sense the public good is influenced by market relations. There nevertheless seemed to be general agreement that relations between higher education and the labour market need to be strengthened. At present there is a mismatch between candidates' specialisations and labour market needs, which may be reduced with closer contacts. One of the benefits of the two-cycle structure is that candidates can get labour market experience in-between the cycles. In Russia, however, this kind of mobility is hampered by financial problems and a lack of internal infrastructure.

The bachelor's degree is not well known or accepted by employers in Russia. Employers tend to want to keep the traditional integrated programmes, and are not well informed about ongoing processes and reforms. This must be rectified. In return employers should be asked what qualifications they require the candidates to have.

Employability for bachelors was also the theme of Working group 3. Here some incongruities were pointed out, e.g. that teachers in Russia are required to have a five-year degree, with the result that bachelors go on to do a fifth year to qualify as specialists. On the other hand it was pointed out that the two-tier system gives the advantage of allowing students to choose their structure of education after 3-4 years, and of selecting only the best students for master programmes. It was emphasised that bachelor's degrees should not be introduced for the purpose of saving money, risking a lowering of standards. The group concluded that improved mechanisms for interaction between higher education and the labour market need to be devised so as to ensure that the bachelor's degree is known among employers and meets labour market needs.

2.3.3 Future degree structure in Russia

Professor Vladimir Troyan gave a presentation on the relationship between the bachelor's degree and postgraduate studies in Russia. Giving an overview of the existing situation, he noted a varying degree of readiness among Russian higher education institutions to change to a two-cycle structure, with a view in some quarters that a master's degree might be awarded after 5 or 6 years without a preceding bachelor's degree. The relevant legislation speaks of "integration of the system of higher and post-university education of the Russian Federation into the world system of higher education, maintaining and developing the achievements and traditions of the higher education of Russia".

Professor Troyan discussed two possible alternatives for postgraduate studies, both building on a 4-year bachelor: either a two-year master's degree (2 ½ years for experimental subjects) followed by a three-year doctorate, or a five-year integrated doctoral programme. The latter would be the exception and would only be for training especially talented students to become researchers. In either case the doctoral degree ("kandidat nauk") should be awarded by a university, which would also be responsible for developing the programme and should have full authority over standards and assessment. Bachelors should not be admitted directly to existing, three-year doctoral studies. The existing "second doctorate" (doktor nauk) would be preserved unchanged.

The proposals would necessitate changes in current legislation. At present all higher education programmes are regulated by state standards, and assessment is carried out by central degree commissions.

From the floor it was argued that there should be no exceptions, meaning that admission to doctoral studies should require a master's degree in all cases. It was further suggested that this might be one of the recommendations from the seminar. Similarly, it was argued that integrated master programmes should only exist as exceptions, with the two-tier structure as the main model. Otherwise there would be a danger that no real changes were made. There seemed to be a general consensus that the bachelor's degree in Russia should have a duration of 4 years due to the low entry level (11 years of school) compared with many other countries.

Another part of the discussion concerned the pace of change and whether the two-cycle structure should be obligatory for the institutions. Several speakers underlined the danger of moving too quickly and thus throwing over board valuable elements of the existing system. Standards should not be reduced. It was also argued that students should have a choice between different types of degrees and that the bachelor/master structure should therefore not be obligatory. On the other hand the system needs to be promoted to make it better known.

Finally there was some discussion about the strong links between the higher education institutions and the state, with several speakers arguing in favour of increased institutional autonomy as a prerequisite both for realising the potential of the new degree system and more generally for integration in the Bologna Process.

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

On the basis of the discussions at the seminar, the organisers have submitted the following conclusions and recommendations to the Bologna Follow-up Group for consideration:

- 1. Taking into account the significant role played by humanities and social sciences in curricula in terms of ensuring generic competences, and at the same time widely divergent views and practices concerning the number of credits allocated to the humanities in different study programmes, the seminar recommends to set up a special working group for the study of the role to be played by humanities in higher education.*
- 2. Proceeding from the general agreement that bachelor-level programmes are meant to ensure sufficiently broad competences, programme designers are recommended to pay special attention to interdisciplinary and field-specific modules. Based on existing descriptors the structure of competences would then be as follows: generic competences, interdisciplinary competences, field-specific competences and subject-specific competences.*
- 3. In designing bachelor-level study programmes for higher education, the designers should pay more attention to labour-market requirements and challenges.*
- 4. It is recommended to amend the position taken by the Bologna Declaration to make it clear that access to doctoral studies shall require a completed master's degree.*

4. Presentations

The presentations from the seminar are available on the Bologna-Bergen web page at

www.bologna-bergen2005.no.

Conclusions and Recommendations of the Seminar to the Prague Higher Education Summit

Benefits of developing bachelor-level degrees

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

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

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

The bachelor-master (two-tier) structure offers several advantages in comparison with the long, often rather inflexible curricula leading straight up to the master level which have been traditional in many countries. A main benefit is that students can be offered programmes which allow more easily individual flexibility, which also promotes mobility. The two-tier structure makes room for national and international mobility by contributing to the modularisation of study programmes. In the age of life-long learning one of the

most significant factors speaking in favour of a two-tier structure is that it allows interaction between studies and working life.

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

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

Framework for bachelor-level degrees in Europe

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

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

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

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

In order to increase transparency it is important that the specific orientation and profile and learning outcomes of a given qualification are included in its title and explained on the Diploma Supplement issued to the student. In-

formation on different study programmes should be transparent to enable the students make informed choices.

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

Labour market relevance

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

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

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

Disciplinary issues

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

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

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

Recommendations Amsterdam EURASHE seminar on HESC

On the 24th of January EURASHE organised a seminar on the inclusion of HESC in the first cycle degree, in cooperation with DASHE (the Dutch Association of Shorter Higher Education). The purpose of the seminar was to make a state of the art of the progress made in the recognition of HESC in the Bologna-countries. This one-day seminar was held at the Amsterdam School of Business (HES), in Amsterdam (NL).

The seminar was part of a series of initiatives undertaken by EURASHE to secure a position for Higher Education Short Cycle in the EHEA, after the Ministers mandate to the BFUG, to explore “whether and how short higher Education may be linked to the first cycle of a qualifications network for the European higher Education Area”.

The seminar started with a plenary session during which a number of presentations were held on the concept of HESC in Europe and the integration of HESC in a European Qualifications framework.

The afternoon session was dedicated to a number of Work-Shops. Central themes were on the one hand the (trans)national cooperation with universities & the situation of HESC in the Bologna Member countries, and on the other hand the Qualifications Framework & Quality assurance.

11 nationalities were represented and this contributed to dynamic and intercultural working sessions. Examples of good practice, among others from France, Denmark, the Netherlands, the UK, Ireland, and Romania were introduced and discussed

Conclusions:

- The influx of students from Short Cycle Education is necessary to keep the student number in the 2 Cycles of HE on the same level.
- Every Bologna Country has its specific educational structure which brings about peculiar problems when it comes to integrating Short Cycle Education in the HE system. Although there is a National Qualifications Framework in place in some countries (Denmark), it does not necessarily mean that there is a seamless transition from Short Cycle Education to the Bachelor level. Whereas in other countries where there is no official legislation available yet, agreements exist between HEI’s organising Short Cycle Education and Universities (France). Finally, in still other countries where post-secondary education does exist (Romania), it is still not officially recognised as Higher Education.

Recommendations to the BFUG:

- Ensure the HE quality of all post-secondary and Short Cycle programmes.
- Urge governments to fully include HESC in the Bologna 3-Cycle structure.
- Remove all legislative obstacles to the unabated access for the HESC candidates to continue their studies to the highest obtainable level.
- Remove all financial barriers for underprivileged students.
- Provide means for counselling and information campaigns to reach the above target group.

- Encourage the creation of further HESC programmes in order to meet the rapidly changing demands of the labour market.
- Recognise the important role of HESC in the social and cultural integration process in Europe.
- Secure the actual implementation of the National Qualifications Framework legislation which has already been introduced in some countries.
- Create also extra opportunities for the mature student by accepting prior work experience as well as informal and non-formal abilities.
- Short Cycle Education in Europe should be seen as an opportunity to attract new groups of learners.

Conclusions and Recommendations of the Conference

Different dimensions of master degrees

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

European higher education - a hallmark of excellence

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

Joint master degrees at the European level should become an important feature of European higher education both to promote intra-European cooperation and in order to attract talented students and researchers from other continents to study and work in

Europe. Particular attention needs to be paid to introducing quality assurance mechanisms and to solving the specific recognition issues raised by joint degrees.

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

Two-tier degree structure: implications for mobility

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

Intra-European mobility: Further growth in intra-European mobility (exchanges) presupposes a strong effort by governments and higher education institutions to consolidate and extend inter-institutional arrangements of a high quality, which will assure full recognition of periods studied and credits earned abroad. This also entails a coherent application of ECTS across the entire EHEA, as laid down in the recent "Key Features" document and the recommendations of the Zürich Conference on ECTS. National support schemes should be made portable.

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

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

third-country nationals in Europe, work permits and student services, must be improved to facilitate access to European higher education.

Framework of reference for master degrees in Europe

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

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

1. A master degree is a second-cycle higher education qualification. The entry to a master's programme usually requires a completed bachelor degree at a recognised higher education institution. Bachelor and master degrees should have different defined outcomes and should be awarded at different levels.

2. Students awarded a master degree must have achieved the level of knowledge and understanding, or high level in artistic competence when appropriate, which allows them to integrate knowledge, and handle complexity, formulate judgements and communicate their conclusions to an expert and to a non-expert audience.

Students with a master degree will have the learning skills needed to pursue further studies or research in a largely self-directed, autonomous manner.

3. All bachelor degrees should open access to master studies and all master degrees should give access to doctoral studies. A transition from master level to doctoral studies without the formal award of a master's degree should be considered possible if the student demonstrates that he/she has the necessary abilities.

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

4. Bachelor and master programmes should be described on the basis of content, quality and learning outcomes, not only according to the duration of programmes or other formal characteristics.
5. There are several ongoing international projects related to developing coherent quality assurance mechanisms in the EHEA. This work should be continued, and international aspects of national and regional quality assurance systems should be further developed.
6. Joint master programmes at the European level should be developed to promote intra-European cooperation and attract talented students and researchers from other continents to study and work in Europe. Particular attention must be paid to solving recognition problems related to joint degrees.
7. While master degree programmes normally carry 90 - 120 ECTS credits, the minimum requirements should amount to 60 ECTS credits at master level. As the length and the content of bachelor degrees vary, there is a need to have similar flexibility at the master level. Credits awarded should be of the appropriate profile.
8. In certain fields, there may continue to exist integrated one-tier programmes leading to master degrees. Yet, opportunities for access to intermediate qualifications and transfer to other programmes should be encouraged.
9. Programmes leading to a master degree may have different orientations and various profiles in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs. Master degrees can be taken at universities and in some countries, in other higher education institutions.
10. In order to increase transparency it is important that the specific orientation and profile of a given qualification is explained in the Diploma Supplement issued to the student.



Bologna Seminar on “Doctoral Programmes for the European Knowledge Society”

(Salzburg, 3-5 February 2005)

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ministers meeting in Berlin in September 2003 added an Action Line to the Bologna process entitled “*European Higher Education Area and European Research Area – two pillars of the knowledge based society*” that underlines the key role of doctoral programmes and research training in this context.

“Conscious of the need to promote closer links between the EHEA and the ERA in a Europe of Knowledge, and of the importance of research as an integral part of higher education across Europe, Ministers consider it necessary to go beyond the present focus on two main cycles of higher education to include the doctoral level as the third cycle in the Bologna Process. They emphasise the importance of research and research training and the promotion of interdisciplinarity in maintaining and improving the quality of higher education and in enhancing the competitiveness of European higher education more generally. Ministers call for increased mobility at the doctoral and postdoctoral levels and encourage the institutions concerned to increase their cooperation in doctoral studies and the training of young researchers.”

2. Research training and research career development - and the need to increase the number of highly qualified graduates and well trained researchers – are also becoming increasingly important in the debate on strengthening Europe’s research capacity and in the discussions on FP7.

3. In order to raise awareness of the issues and provide a solid basis for the discussions the EUA launched in 2004 a Socrates funded Doctoral Programmes Project to analyse key issues related to structure and organisation, financing, quality and innovative practice in doctoral programmes. 49 Universities from 25 countries are involved in this project that demonstrates the commitment of the universities and their desire to contribute directly to the wider policy debate on this important issue.

4. Aware of the importance of this topic for both governments and universities and bearing in mind that research training forms a core mission of universities across Europe, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the European University Association have taken the initiative to organise a ‘Bologna Seminar’ in Salzburg on doctoral programmes in order to reach a set of conclusions, identify key challenges and make recommendations for action to be undertaken (in the period 2005-2007).

5. The enormous interest in and presence at the Seminar of the academic community further demonstrates the ownership felt by universities across the continent for the organisation of doctoral programmes and research training.

6. Furthermore, participants welcomed the initiative of the European Commission to draft a 'European Charter for Researchers'/Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers'.

7. From the discussions in Salzburg a consensus emerged on **a set of ten basic principles** as follows:

- i. **The core component of doctoral training is the advancement of knowledge through original research.** At the same time it is recognised that doctoral training must increasingly meet the needs of an employment market that is wider than academia.
- ii. **Embedding in institutional strategies and policies:** universities as institutions need to assume responsibility for ensuring that the doctoral programmes and research training they offer are designed to meet new challenges and include appropriate professional career development opportunities.
- iii. **The importance of diversity:** the rich diversity of doctoral programmes in Europe - including joint doctorates - is a strength which has to be underpinned by quality and sound practice.
- iv. **Doctoral candidates as early stage researchers:** should be recognized as professionals – with commensurate rights - who make a key contribution to the creation of new knowledge.
- v. **The crucial role of supervision and assessment:** in respect of individual doctoral candidates, arrangements for supervision and assessment should be based on a transparent contractual framework of shared responsibilities between doctoral candidates, supervisors and the institution (and where appropriate including other partners).
- vi. **Achieving critical mass:** Doctoral programmes should seek to achieve critical mass and should draw on different types of innovative practice being introduced in universities across Europe, bearing in mind that different solutions may be appropriate to different contexts and in particular across larger and smaller European countries. These range from graduate schools in major universities to international, national and regional collaboration between universities.
- vii. **Duration:** doctoral programmes should operate within an appropriate time duration (three to four years full-time as a rule).
- viii. **The promotion of innovative structures:** to meet the challenge of interdisciplinary training and the development of transferable skills
- ix. **Increasing mobility:** Doctoral programmes should seek to offer geographical as well as interdisciplinary and intersectoral mobility and international collaboration within an integrated framework of cooperation between universities and other partners.
- x. **Ensuring appropriate funding:** the development of quality doctoral programmes and the successful completion by doctoral candidates requires appropriate and sustainable funding.

Recommendations

Participants recommend to the BFUG:

- That the ten principles outlined above provide the basis for the further work of the BFUG and thus feed into the drafting of the Bergen Communiqué
- That the Ministers in Bergen then call on EUA **through its members** to prepare a report under the responsibility of the BFUG on the further development of these principles to be presented to Ministers in 2007.

February 2005

UK BOLOGNA SEMINAR: USING LEARNING OUTCOMES EDINBURGH, 1-2 JULY 2004

REPORT FOR BFUG

Introduction

1. The UK Bologna seminar on using learning outcomes took place at Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh on 1-2 July. Twenty six of the Bologna countries were represented at the seminar (listed at Annex A). It was attended by some 150 delegates, including policy makers and practitioners drawn from higher education institutions, government ministries, staff, students and representative bodies responsible for developing the European Higher Education Area.

2. This paper provides a short report for BFUG on the background to and the key conclusions of the seminar.

Using learning outcomes in the UK

3. Learning outcomes focus on the student's experience and achievements and thus more accurately reflect the value of a qualification for students, teachers and employers. There is a general consensus in the UK that the time taken to reach a qualification is not the most appropriate criterion to describe the value of a qualification.

4. The UK first started to develop the use of learning outcomes in curriculum design some 10-15 years ago. This development was associated with the need to assure standards during a period of considerable expansion in the UK higher education sector.

5. The whole UK system represents a complex outcomes-based approach, with learning outcomes having direct links to standards, national mechanisms for quality assurance and the enhancement of teaching, learning and assessment. Subject benchmark statements set out expectations about standards of degrees and define what can be expected of a graduate in terms of the subject techniques, skills, intellectual demand and challenge. Programme specifications are written by institutions to clarify the knowledge, critical understanding, skills and other attributes a student will have on successful completion of a specific programme.

6. Using a learning outcomes approach therefore supports student-centred learning and flexible provision. It can facilitate the identification of clear entry and exit points within an education system and has been used as the basis of the comprehensive qualifications frameworks developed in Scotland and in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

7. In light of the potential for learning outcomes to act as a useful tool to promote transparency and articulation across the diverse range of qualifications available in the European Higher Education Area, the UK offered to host a Bologna seminar on using learning outcomes.

Objectives of the seminar

8. The main focus of the seminar was to provide a platform to exchange ideas and information about learning outcomes and to consider how they might be applied in the Bologna context. This educational theme was underpinned by the objectives set for the seminar. They were:

- To explore the meaning of the term ‘learning outcomes’ and illustrate how this approach is being used within HE systems across Europe.
- To discuss how the learning outcomes approach links with Bologna action lines.
- To provide participants with an opportunity to consider how the learning outcomes approach could be applied to best effect within their own HE systems.
- To create an opportunity for discussion, debate and sharing of applications and good practice in this important area amongst interested stakeholders.

Background paper

9. To inform discussion, the UK Seminar Organising Committee commissioned a background paper from Stephen Adam from the University of Westminster, on the use of learning outcomes across Europe and their role in the development of the European Higher Education Area by 2010. Stephen Adam has wide ranging European expertise as an ECTS/Diploma Supplement Counsellor and extensive experience of both the use of learning outcomes and the Bologna process.

10. His informal survey found that there was considerable activity on the use of learning outcomes across Europe. Some of this activity was taking place on a bottom-up basis (c 35%), with just over half taking place on a top-down basis. This activity was linked to the Bologna process in about 20% of countries.

11. The report identifies a number of positive and negative issues relating to the use of the learning outcomes approach, as well as alternative approaches. Learning outcomes can be seen as constraining the learning process. They are also technically difficult and can be expensive to produce. Positive aspects include using learning outcomes to support student-centred learning and inform student choice. Learning outcomes also highlight the relationship between teaching, learning and assessment. Particularly important in the context of the European Higher Education Area, learning outcomes were found to support improved international recognition and transparency of qualifications. However, many countries continue to express their curricula in terms of course content and the time taken to complete qualifications.

12. The report also outlines the contribution the learning outcomes approach can make to the 10 Bologna action lines and to other associated initiatives, including:

- promoting transparency and mobility
- mutual recognition of degrees
- development of ECTS
- co-operation on quality assurance

- elaboration of an overarching European qualifications framework.

13. The report concludes by highlighting a range of issues for consideration at institutional, national and international level, relating to curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment, qualifications frameworks and quality assurance regimes.

14. Stephen Adam presented the findings of his report at the seminar and a copy was issued to all seminar delegates. The report is being published by the Scottish Executive and will be available shortly at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/publications/recent.aspx>

Key conclusions

15. The key conclusions of the seminar are listed below, under three broad themes:

- engagement
- alignment
- implications

16. These conclusions are a synthesis of the wide ranging discussions that took place at the event. They are intended as guiding principles and key issues to consider in the future development of the Bologna agenda, at European, national and regional level. These points have been endorsed by participants.

- **Engagement**

- There is general acceptance of the value of the learning outcomes approach within the context of the European Higher Education Area: they improve transparency and choice for students and encourage mobility.
- Learning outcomes support the development of student-centred learning and the employability agenda.
- Students as well as academic staff must be involved in the development of learning outcomes.
- There is a need for leadership by Ministers, heads of European, national and regional agencies, Rectors and all key staff in higher education institutions to drive progress on the Bologna agenda.

- **Alignment**

- Learning outcomes are a useful tool which can help to facilitate recognition and transfer, between higher education systems and between VET and higher education.
- Learning outcomes support flexibility and diversity, because they help recognition and mobility across sectors and within Europe, and because they can act as reference points across higher education systems.

- This type of approach is not a ‘quick fix’, nor a panacea, but is an important tool in the ‘transparency tool-box’ which can assist the development of Diploma Supplements, ECTS and qualifications frameworks.
 - Learning outcomes are not static and will evolve over time.
 - There is a need to ensure coherence across the different strands affected by the learning outcomes approach: ECTS, qualifications frameworks, Tuning, Diploma Supplements, and quality assurance.
 - There is a need to ensure synergy and broad coherence between the Bologna and Copenhagen processes.
- **Implications**
 - Applying the learning outcomes approach has implications for the development of ECTS for the curriculum, assessment, quality assurance, qualifications frameworks and institutional quality culture.
 - The deadline of creating the European Higher Education Area by 2010 is approaching fast. There is a need to accept that the pace and nature of change will not be uniform across all countries or all disciplines. Such flexibility will protect the diversity inherent in the European Higher Education Area and lead to greater ownership of the final outcome.
 - There is a need for continuing dialogue. While it is accepted that there is a need for a common language and a need for a shared understanding of that language, there is also recognition that this will take time to achieve.

Full seminar report

17. A copy of the full seminar report, together with all the slides, handouts and associated papers used at the event, will be made available shortly on the Berlin to Bergen website at <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/>

Points for consideration by BFUG

18. The main conclusions of the seminar suggest that BFUG could:
- Take a lead role in ensuring coherence across the different strands affected by learning outcomes: in particular the relationship between ECTS and qualifications frameworks, Tuning, Diploma Supplements, and quality assurance, and more broadly between the Bologna and Copenhagen processes.
 - Consider reflecting the following themes in the draft Bergen Ministerial communiqué
 - The importance of learning outcomes for the future development of Diploma Supplements, ECTS and qualifications frameworks, as a tool to promote transparency and mobility, while supporting flexibility and diversity across the European Higher Education Area.

- The need to accept that the pace and nature of change will not be uniform across all countries or all disciplines. Such flexibility will protect the diversity inherent in the European Higher Education Area and lead to greater ownership of the final outcome.
- The need for continuing dialogue to achieve a common language and a shared understanding of that language.

19. BFUG members organising future Bologna seminars may also wish to take note of comments made about the structure and organisation of the UK event in the summary evaluation feedback attached at Annex B.

Ann McVie
On behalf of the UK Seminar Organising Committee
September 2004

Reference material and electronic sources

- **“Using Learning Outcomes: A Consideration of the Nature, Role, Application and Implications for European Education of Employing Learning Outcomes at the Local, National and International Levels”** by Stephen Adam, University of Westminster, June 2004, for the UK Bologna Seminar on Learning Outcomes, July 2004, Edinburgh, Scotland
<http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no>
- **Tuning educational structures in Europe**
University of Deusto, Bilbao (Spain):
www.relint.deusto.es/TuningProject/index.htm
University of Groningen (The Netherlands):
www.let.rug.nl/TuningProject/index.htm
- **Dublin Descriptors**
<http://www.jointquality.org>
- **EUA Trends IV Report: European Universities Implementing Bologna**, by Sybille Reichert and Christian Tauch, 2005
<http://www.eua.be>

III. Qualifications Frameworks

- **Ministerial Declarations & Communiqués**
- **Conclusions & Recommendations of European Conferences & Seminars**
- **Policy Positions**
- **Reference Material and Electronic Sources**

Qualifications Frameworks in the Ministerial Communiqués

➤ Prague Communiqué - 2001

“Ministers agreed on the importance of enhancing attractiveness of European higher education to students from Europe and other parts of the world. The readability and comparability of European higher education degrees world-wide should be enhanced by the **development of a common framework of qualifications**, as well as by coherent quality assurance and accreditation/certification mechanisms and by increased information efforts.”

➤ Berlin Communiqué - 2003

“Ministers encourage the member States to elaborate a **framework of comparable and compatible qualifications** for their higher education systems, which should seek to describe qualifications in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile. They also undertake to elaborate an **overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area**.

Within such frameworks, degrees should have different defined outcomes. First and second cycle degrees should have different orientations and various profiles in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs. First cycle degrees should give access, in the sense of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, to second cycle programmes. Second cycle degrees should give access to doctoral studies.

Ministers invite the Follow-up Group to explore whether and how **shorter higher education** may be linked to the first cycle of a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area.”

[...] “Ministers furthermore call those working on qualifications frameworks for the European Higher Education Area to **encompass the wide range of flexible learning paths**, opportunities and techniques and to make appropriate use of the ECTS credits. They stress the need to improve opportunities for all citizens, in accordance with their aspirations and abilities, to follow the lifelong learning paths into and within higher education.”

➤ Bergen Communiqué - 2005

“We adopt the **overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA, comprising three cycles** (including, within national contexts, the possibility of intermediate qualifications), **generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences, and credit ranges in the first and second cycles**. We commit ourselves to elaborating national frameworks for qualifications compatible with the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA by 2010, and to having started work on this by 2007. We ask the Follow-up Group to report on the implementation and further development of the overarching framework.

We underline the importance of **ensuring complementarity between the overarching framework for the EHEA and the proposed broader framework for qualifications for lifelong learning** encompassing general education as well as vocational education and training as now being developed within the European Union as well as among participating countries. We ask the European Commission fully to consult all parties to the Bologna Process as work progresses.”

[...] “We see the **development of national and European frameworks for qualifications as an opportunity to further embed lifelong learning in higher education**. We will work with higher education institutions and others to improve recognition of prior learning including, where possible, non-formal and informal learning for access to, and as elements in, higher education programmes.”

[...] “...**doctoral level qualifications need to be fully aligned with the EHEA overarching framework for qualifications using the outcomes-based approach.** The core component of doctoral training is the advancement of knowledge through original research.”

[...] “**The overarching framework for qualifications,** the agreed set of European standards and guidelines for quality assurance and the recognition of degrees and periods of study are also key characteristics of the structure of the EHEA.”

The framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area

The Bergen Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education 19-20 May 2005 adopted the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA, comprising three cycles (including, within national contexts, the possibility of intermediate qualifications), generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences, and credit ranges in the first and second cycles. Ministers committed themselves to elaborating national frameworks for qualifications compatible with the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA by 2010, and to having started work on this by 2007.

	Outcomes	ECTS Credits
First cycle qualification	<p>Qualifications that signify completion of the first cycle are awarded to students who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study; • can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study; • have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgments that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues; • can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences; • have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy. 	Typically include 180-240 ECTS credits

<p>Second cycle qualification</p>	<p>Qualifications that signify completion of the second cycle are awarded to students who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with the first cycle, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context; • can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study; • have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgments with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgments; • can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously; • have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous. 	<p>Typically include 90-120 ECTS credits, with a minimum of 60 credits at the level of the 2nd cycle</p>
<p>Third cycle qualification</p>	<p>Qualifications that signify completion of the third cycle are awarded to students who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field; • have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity; • have made a contribution through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication; • are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas; • can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general about their areas of expertise; • can be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge based society. 	<p>Not specified</p>

Recommendations from the Bologna seminar on Qualifications Frameworks, København, January 13 – 14, 2005

The participants in the conference on Qualification Frameworks, organized by the Danish authorities in København on January 13 – 14, 2005, recommend:

that the Ministers meeting in Bergen on May 19 – 20, 2005

- adopt the overarching framework for qualifications of the European Higher Education Area as proposed by the BFUG Working Group;
- mandate the BFUG to elaborate criteria and procedures for a self-certification system for national framework of qualifications where quality assurance is included and to submit it for final adoption to the Ministerial meeting in 2007;
- delegate responsibility for the maintenance and development of the overarching framework to the Bologna Follow Up Group and any successor executive structure;
- commit to elaborating national framework of qualifications compatible with the overarching framework for qualifications of the European Higher Education Area by 2010;
- commit to taking adequate account of the overarching framework for qualifications of the European Higher Education Area, as well as to consulting all parties to the Bologna Process, in any future development of frameworks for other parts of the education system

that public authorities responsible for national education systems

- in elaborating and maintaining their respective national qualifications be guided by and ensure compatibility with the overarching framework for qualifications of the European Higher Education Area;
- involve all relevant stakeholders both within and outside of higher education;
- identify a clear and nationally agreed set of purposes for their national qualification framework;
- ensure that their national framework of qualifications explicitly link academic standards, national and institutional quality assurance systems and public understanding of the place and level of nationally recognized qualifications;
- ensure that the description of each qualification within their national framework of qualifications explicitly state:
 - to which further qualification(s) that particular qualification gives access;
 - the relationship of the qualification in question to the three generic cycles of the overarching framework;

- ensure that their national framework of qualifications associate the relevant transparency instruments, such as the Diploma Supplement, ECTS and Europass.
- ensure that their national framework facilitate learning paths that integrate non-formal and informal learning as well as various entry and exit points.

that higher education institutions as well as students and their organizations

- continue to contribute, as active stakeholders, to the development and maintenance of national framework of qualifications as well as the overarching framework for qualifications of the European Higher Education Area;
- ensure that the national framework of qualifications, and any alignment with the overarching framework for the EHEA, be referenced in all Diploma Supplements;
- make use of learning outcomes at the level of modules or units as well as at the level of qualifications.

that the ENIC and NARIC Networks and individual recognition centers

- provide clear and adequate information on the overarching framework for qualifications of the European Higher Education Area as well as on national frameworks to recognition networks and centers as well as higher education institutions in other parts of the world;
- consider a pilot project on using qualifications frameworks, in particular the overarching framework for qualifications of the European Higher Education Area, to facilitate the recognition of qualifications from other regions.

that the appropriate international institutions, organizations and bodies

- offer assistance to countries that may require advice or the participation of foreign experts in the elaboration and/or implementation of their national framework of qualifications, and that request such assistance;
- review current transparency instruments, such as the ECTS, the Diploma Supplement as well as other elements of Europass, in the light of the development of qualifications frameworks.

EUA's Position on the Development of a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning¹

1. EUA welcomes the development of an overarching qualifications framework aimed at promoting transparency, mobility and flexibility of learning paths to allow for more permeability and a better articulation between vocational education and training and higher education.
2. However, as the representative body of Europe's universities, EUA has some concerns in relation to the compatibility of the proposed EQF for Lifelong Learning and the Framework for Qualifications that Europe's Education Ministers adopted for the 45 countries of the European Higher Education Area at their May 2005 meeting in Bergen.
3. EUA considers the Framework for Qualifications for the EHEA as a valuable structuring element of the EHEA as:
 - it encompasses the varied and diverse landscape of HEIs in Europe and can serve as an 'umbrella' for this variety;
 - it makes use of the instruments which have already been established to reach the aims mentioned above (i.e. transparency, mobility and flexibility), such as ECTS and learning outcomes as stated in the Dublin Descriptors;
 - it builds on existing elements and patterns but also allows for new developments;
 - it provides points of reference for HEIs in situating their degrees and qualifications.
4. The adoption of the Framework for Qualifications for the EHEA thus represents progress in the concrete implementation of the EHEA and will play an important role in the next phase of the Bologna Process in informing and facilitating debates at national level, and thus in underpinning the introduction of national qualifications frameworks across Europe.
5. Both for these reasons and to avoid confusion EUA believes that it would be important to build on the work done already in reaching consensus across 45 different HE systems in constructing the broader LLL framework. In the interests of compatibility it would be particularly important to ensure:
 - a clear statement of levels and/or cycles building on the cycles described in the Framework for Qualifications for the EHEA;
 - inclusion of a credit system which fosters mobility and which – as a minimum requirement – needs to be compatible with ECTS;²

¹ Consultation on the European Commission Staff Working Document 'Towards a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning'.

² As HEIs have collected significant experience with ECTS as a credit system, EUA would give clear preference to ECTS as a common credit system. A working group of experts from the VET and HE sector should further explore this possibility.

- reference to learning outcomes which are sufficiently general to encompass the results of learning processes in institutions in an increasingly differentiated European higher education landscape;
 - that European Qualifications Frameworks remain simple and overarching in nature avoiding over-prescription that could hinder countries in the development of their own frameworks.
6. For these reasons EUA considers that it would be important in the further development of an EQF for LLL to:
- include reference to a credit system from the outset, as incorporating a credit system at a later stage could make it more difficult to ensure compatibility with ECTS, the European Credit Transfer System long championed by the Commission. ECTS has now become the reference system for European higher education, anchored in national legislation, and also piloted for use in relation to vocational training and continuing education;
 - use learning outcomes that are compatible and thus based on the same approach as adopted by the Framework for Qualifications for the EHEA, thus avoiding any potential confusion.
7. EUA hopes that these differences will be addressed. It would not be helpful to have two differently formulated and thus potentially confusing European qualifications frameworks that relate to European higher education institutions at a time when national stakeholder consultations are taking place across Europe on the development of national frameworks in the context of the Framework for Qualifications for the EHEA.
8. Furthermore, the consultation document does not specifically address questions related to
- the future status of two overarching qualification frameworks in the 25 EU countries;
 - potential duplication of work (e.g. in terms of the self-certification process);
 - how, if at all, the EQF for LLL would apply to those 20 Bologna signatory countries that are not EU members;
 - potential ambiguities related to having two sets of learning outcomes which are to some extent similar but not identical and which might lead to problems in the application at institutional level, thus hindering rather than promoting transparency, flexibility and mobility.
9. *Summary:* European universities welcome the initiative to create an overarching qualifications framework to promote transparency and trust, and reflect the diversity of LLL. Any such framework should, however, avoid confusion and overlap, in relation to the existing Framework for Qualifications for the EHEA that was formally adopted by Education Ministers in Bergen, on the basis of which ongoing efforts to develop national frameworks have been redoubled in partnership and consultation with institutions. For long term success this process requires discussion using agreed concepts and vocabulary and clarity on the purposes and status of the framework in which qualifications should be placed.

Brussels, 16 December 2005



The National Unions of Students in Europe

Policy paper

Qualifications Frameworks

*Adopted at the 47th Board Meeting
Tallinn, Estonia, November 2004*

Preamble

ESIB – The National Unions of Students in Europe has existed since 1982 to promote the educational, social, economic and cultural interests of students at the European level, and towards all relevant organisations and institutions. ESIB currently has 50 member organisations from 37 countries.

I. Introduction

ESIB in principle welcomes the idea of developing national qualifications frameworks as well as a European qualifications framework in the course of the Bologna Process. The biggest advantage that ESIB sees at the moment is the achievement of greater social cohesion and the support such frameworks can provide towards a system that is based on learning outcomes and the implied shift from a teaching based system to a learning based system. ESIB does not regard qualifications frameworks as the only means to achieve this shift of paradigms but also considers other tools such as ECTS as tools to achieve that end. However, ESIB considers the use of learning outcomes in qualifications frameworks as a *conditio sine qua non* for their development and implementation. It is essential that learning outcomes are set in such a way that they reflect all major purposes of education. These major purposes are (without any priorities implied by the order):

- Personal development
- Preparation for a life as an active, constructive and critical citizen in a democratic society
- Maintenance and improvement of an advanced knowledge base
- Preparation for the labour market with a sustainable, long-term perspective

ESIB does not regard qualifications frameworks as the universal panacea for all problems that still exist in relation to making degrees more readable, comparable and compatible within the EHEA. Qualifications frameworks have to be seen as an additional element to all the other tools that need to be put in place according to the objectives set in the Bologna process. Qualifications frameworks will only provide an added value if these other tools are implemented properly, in particular ECTS, the Diploma Supplement, systems for quality assurance and the necessary elements required through the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

II. Student participation

Students need to be involved in all activities (inter alia policy making, implementation and evaluation) at all levels relevant to higher education. Therefore students also have to be a full partner in all activities relating to the development, review, maintenance and further improvement of qualifications frameworks. ESIB stresses that only qualifications frameworks that put students in the centre and their interests as the central element will provide a positive impact on the establishment of the EHEA. ESIB has been following all developments regarding qualifications framework at European level, closely and actively. Not least because of this ESIB is represented in all relevant groups at European level that deal with qualifications frameworks. This involvement needs to be maintained and ESIB calls upon all relevant actors to ensure this. Furthermore ESIB calls on all governments and stakeholders at national level to involve student representatives in setting up and maintaining their national qualifications frameworks. ESIB also stresses that students have to be involved in establishing learning outcomes, be they of generic or subject specific nature.

ESIB stresses that in addition to the involvement of students also the involvement of HEIs is necessary. Only if the entire academic community is involved in the development of a qualifications framework and thus a bottom-up approach is applied, their full acceptance can be ensured. A rigid top-down approach hampers the feeling of ownership and will consequently lead to opposition in applying elements of the qualifications framework at institutional level or their improper implementation.

III. Aims and purposes of qualifications frameworks

Qualifications frameworks can fulfil a variety of purposes and aims. These can be of more structural nature, i.e. facilitating the compatibility and comparability of degrees. But they can also be used in such a way that they support transition in and access to various fields of education and learning. ESIB calls on those developing qualifications frameworks to consider carefully what they want to use the qualifications framework for and to make full use of the benefits qualifications frameworks can bring. ESIB sees a major benefit of qualifications frameworks in providing a bridging element between traditional HE and lifelong learning (LLL). In this way qualifications frameworks can foster social cohesion and ease access to HE for non-traditional learners. ESIB also sees a major advantage of qualifications frameworks in facilitating mobility between different sectors of education. This both applies to facilitating transition from and access to polytechnic to university education and vice versa as well as from vocational education and training (VET) to HE and vice versa. It finally is the combination of the impacts on structures and pathways that make qualifications frameworks worthwhile. ESIB stresses that the development of national qualifications frameworks must not be used to incorporate regulatory aspects that have not been in place before, especially with regards to admission criteria for a higher level of education. Such an approach would only undermine the acceptance and thus the envisaged benefits of qualifications frameworks.

IV. Cycles, levels and credits

ESIB considers the use of cycles in qualifications frameworks as a necessary element to make the European degree structures more comparable and compatible. Therefore ESIB stresses that qualifications frameworks need to include a cycle for the first, second and third cycle. These cycles can be understood as levels within the qualifications frameworks. Another level that needs to be included is in relation to tertiary short-cycle qualifications. Millions of students are enrolled in these kind of programmes and the inclusion of a separate level for this type of education will provide for better possibilities to progress further in the educational systems.

ESIB also stresses that it is important to include at least one level before the entrance to HE both for recognition and mobility purposes and in order to facilitate access to HE for people without the final school leaving certificate. Whilst it might not be necessary at the national level, it is crucial for the European level, as it will foster mobility already for the first cycle. Despite the regulations of the Lisbon Recognition Convention the recognition of school leaving qualifications currently remains problematic, just as much as for the other cycles. By including this level in qualifications frameworks also the access to HE of learners without the highest school leaving certificate can be improved.

ESIB does not see any need for further distinctions regarding HE and LLL at European level and therefore is in favour of 5 levels for the overarching qualifications framework for the EHEA. Further distinctions can be done at national level. However, ESIB stresses that linking levels to years of study does not provide any benefit, but rather hampers flexibility.

Credits have to be part of qualifications frameworks. As ECTS is the credit system that is being used in the majority of European countries, ESIB is in favour of an ECTS based European qualifications framework as well as ECTS based national qualifications frameworks. ECTS needs to be applied using learning outcomes and workload. ESIB stresses that there is no contradiction in using ECTS based on workload and applying the concept of learning outcomes at the same time. The use of workload is crucial for students and can also be understood as a tool for assuring quality by preventing overloaded curricula.

ESIB does not see any advantage in linking credits to levels. Strictly linking credits to levels will rather decrease the flexibility a credit system can actually provide. ESIB however reiterates that the use of ECTS as an accumulation system does of course not mean that a complete supermarket or a la carte approach is advisable. There are various other ways than linking credits to levels in order to ensure that study programmes are meaningful. The use of subject benchmarks can be seen as one option. ECTS is merely a system for quantitative measuring and must not evolve in a system that also makes qualitative distinctions.

In the development of the qualifications framework for HE the developments in the VET sector have to be taken into account and vice versa. This especially refers to the alignment of the cycles / levels with the reference levels developed in VET for the purposes of the comprehensive framework covering both VET and HE, as well as the issue of credits.

V. Qualifications frameworks, transparency instruments and recognition

ESIB stresses that qualifications frameworks cannot cater for all the purposes of transparency and recognition instruments and therefore cannot replace them. Qualifications framework only provide an added value in addition to them. ESIB stresses furthermore that currently the various transparency and recognition tools such as ECTS, the Diploma Supplement, and means to ensure the application of the Lisbon Recognition Convention etc. are still weakly and/or improperly implemented at a wide scale of HEIs and countries in Europe. This situation must be resolved and the development of qualifications frameworks must not lead to neglecting the poor status of implementation of the other tools. ESIB therefore calls on governments and HEIs to finalise the implementation of these other tools in a proper way and not to put them aside because the use of qualifications frameworks would not demand it any more. ESIB also considers the Diploma Supplement as a much better tool to describe the profile of a qualification than it can be done with qualifications frameworks.

ESIB stresses that competences are not only acquired in formal education. In order to achieve a system in which the competences of students are seen as the central element it is therefore crucial to provide for possibilities to recognise learning outcomes in the form of competences that were obtained in other areas than formal HE. Qualifications frameworks must take this into account and therefore especially a system for the accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) needs to be put in place. ESIB however believes that the recognition of competences from outside of HE does not necessarily lead to the award of a degree even in cases where all learning outcomes of a study programme were obtained. The sum of learning outcomes is not necessarily also identical with the overall programme outcomes. The relevant awarding body has to take account of this.

The French system of “validation des acquis de l’ expériences” (VAE)¹ provides in the view of ESIB fair opportunities for recognising competences obtained in the workplace and outside formal education. Therefore ESIB considers VAE as a good starting point for APEL. However, it is important that such a system needs to be applicable for all cycles and also recognises competences that have been acquired in different countries.

VI. Alignment of national qualifications frameworks to the European qualifications framework

The use of qualifications frameworks throughout Europe implies that some degree of coherence is vital. This coherence needs to be assured by using the elements that were agreed to be used, namely learning outcomes and competences, workload, profile and levels in every national qualifications framework. This coherence must not reduce the diversity and pluralism of disciplines and delivery. The European qualifications framework needs to be seen as a framework of frameworks and is merely descriptive. Therefore

¹ A good overview of the system can be found at:
<http://www.centre-info.fr/maq100901/anglais/system/systemVae.htm>

national qualifications frameworks need to be in line with the European one. However, this does not imply that national qualifications frameworks that are being developed after the European qualifications frameworks will have been set up must limit themselves to be coherent to the European one. The European qualifications framework only had a basis of a few national frameworks and is being developed according to their characteristics. Qualifications frameworks as such must not be static but rather continuously adjusted and improved. This also applies to the European qualifications framework.

VII. Ownership and further development of the European qualifications framework

ESIB considers the European qualifications framework not as the property of governments of signatory countries of the Bologna Process. Such a view would juxtapose the underlying partnership attitude of the Bologna Process. However, ESIB does not consider the question of formal ownership as important but rather the question of who is going to take care of its further refinements and adjustments. ESIB stresses that it is crucial that students as well as HEIs are going to be part of any such work, whether it will be under the auspices of the Bologna Follow-Up Group and its potential successor, an expert advisory body or even a special body created for these purposes.

VIII. Qualifications frameworks in Bologna, Copenhagen and Lisbon processes

ESIB regards the establishment of qualifications frameworks for the EHEA (Bologna Process) and the one for VET (Copenhagen Process) as complementary and believes that these have to be linked in order to achieve a greater added value. Bringing the two frameworks together will help in overcoming the traditional and artificial believe that HE is superior to VET. Only through the merger of these two frameworks it will be possible to achieve a greater level of social cohesion and facilitate access for non-traditional learners to HE. Therefore ESIB generally welcomes the initiative of the European Commission to bring them together as part of the Lisbon strategy. However, ESIB reiterates that the objectives of the Lisbon strategy are not identical with those of the Bologna and Copenhagen processes. Especially the Bologna Process has a much wider geographical and political scope than the Lisbon strategy. Not least because of this, ESIB also expresses its concern that the European Commission considers the Lisbon strategy as the umbrella of the Bologna and Copenhagen processes. Whilst it might be more the case with the Copenhagen Process, given its geographical coverage and also regarding the legal competences of the European Commission, it is not the case with the Bologna Process. Nevertheless, ESIB calls on the European Commission, as it views the Bologna Process as part of the Lisbon strategy to also incorporate the underlying principles of the Bologna Process in its work with the Lisbon objectives. In particular, ESIB call for an increase of student participation and demands that this is being reflected in the work of the European Commission. Students have to be represented in all initiatives and working groups that have an effect on students. ESIB also stresses that more transparency is needed in the European Commission's work on the Lisbon strategy. ESIB stresses that the comprehensive European qualifications framework needs to be useful for all signatory

countries of the Bologna Process. Therefore it must not be limited to EU and associated countries, despite it is part of the European Commission's work under the Lisbon strategy.

ESIB emphasises that the creation of comprehensive national qualifications frameworks takes more time than only developing one for HE. However, in the long run, it is easier than bringing two frameworks together. It is much more likely that such an approach will gain the acceptance of both sectors. ESIB also stresses that the underlying principle in the creation of such frameworks is an equal representation of stakeholders from both VET and HE.

IX. Conclusion

ESIB welcomes the creation of a comprehensive ECTS based qualifications framework covering both HE and VET and the entry qualifications for the two sectors. Any efforts in this direction must put the students' interests in the centre. Only such an approach will provide an added value for the EHEA. ESIB stresses that the work on qualifications frameworks must not be limited to discussion of a small circle of experts. Much greater efforts are needed to allow all stakeholders in all signatory countries of the Bologna Process to contribute to the discussions and to shape qualifications frameworks in such a way that they reflect the interests of all of them and not just the privileged few that have been dealing with the issue for a longer time. European initiatives must also have a European basis of discussion and work. The creation of a comprehensive European qualifications framework takes time and it should take time, as it is a complex endeavour. Comprehensive qualifications frameworks can help in achieving the objectives of almost all Bologna action lines. However, they are not the universal panacea. The creation of qualifications frameworks is an additional task and must not lead to lowering efforts regarding any of the other objectives, aims and tools of the Bologna Process. The creation of qualifications frameworks also requires additional money that governments must be willing to invest. Students have to be a full partner in all activities connected to the creation of both national qualifications frameworks and the European qualifications framework, just like with any initiative regarding education. ESIB also emphasises again that students are willing and capable to contribute significantly to any work that leads to the EHEA. ESIB stresses again that the EHEA must be developed for and with students.

Reference material and electronic sources

- **European Commission's Staff Working Document:** "*Towards a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning*", 2005
http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/doc/consultation_eqf_en.pdf
- **A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area**
Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks, 2005
http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/050218_QF_EHEA.pdf

IV. Joint Programmes and Degrees

- **Ministerial Declarations & Communiqués**
- **Conclusions & Recommendations of European Conferences & Seminars**
- **Reference Material and Electronic Sources**

Joint Degrees in the Ministerial Declarations and Communiqués

➤ Sorbonne Declaration - 1998

“Our governments, nevertheless, continue to have a significant role to play to these ends, by encouraging ways in which acquired knowledge can be validated and respective degrees can be better recognised. We expect this to promote further inter-university agreements. Progressive harmonisation of the overall framework of our degrees and cycles can be achieved through strengthening of already existing experience, **joint diplomas**, pilot initiatives, and dialogue with all concerned.”

➤ Prague Communiqué - 2001

“In order to further strengthen the important European dimensions of higher education and graduate employability Ministers called upon the higher education sector to increase the development of modules, courses and curricula at all levels with "European" content, orientation or organisation. This concerns particularly modules, **courses and degree curricula offered in partnership by institutions from different countries and leading to a recognized joint degree.**”

➤ Berlin Communiqué - 2003

“Ministers note that, following their call in Prague, additional modules, courses and curricula with European content, orientation or organisation are being developed. They note that initiatives have been taken by Higher Education Institutions in various European countries to pool their academic resources and cultural traditions in order to **promote the development of integrated study programmes and joint degrees at first, second and third level.**”

Moreover, they stress the necessity of ensuring a **substantial period of study abroad in joint degree programmes** as well as proper provision for linguistic diversity and language learning, so that students may achieve their full potential for European identity, citizenship and employability.

Ministers agree to engage at the national level to remove legal obstacles to the establishment and recognition of such degrees and to actively support the **development and adequate quality assurance of integrated curricula leading to joint degrees.**”

➤ Bergen Communiqué - 2005

“We note that 36 of the 45 participating countries have now ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention. We urge those that have not already done so to ratify the Convention without delay. We commit ourselves to ensuring the full implementation of its principles, and to incorporating them in national legislation as appropriate. We call on all participating countries to address recognition problems identified by the ENIC/NARIC networks. We will draw up national action plans to improve the quality of the process associated with the recognition of foreign qualifications. These plans will form part of each country's national report for the next Ministerial Conference. We express support for the subsidiary texts to the Lisbon Recognition Convention and call upon all national authorities and other stakeholders to recognise **joint degrees awarded in two or more countries in the EHEA.**”

[...] “In particular, we shall look for progress in:

- implementation of the standards and guidelines for quality assurance as proposed in the ENQA report;
- implementation of the national frameworks for qualifications;
- **the awarding and recognition of joint degrees, including at the doctorate level;**
- creating opportunities for flexible learning paths in higher education, including procedures for the recognition of prior learning.”



The Committee of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region

RECOMMENDATION ON THE RECOGNITION OF JOINT DEGREES

Adopted on 9 June 2004

Preamble

The Committee of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region,

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe and UNESCO is to achieve greater unity between their members, and that this aim can be pursued notably by common action in cultural matters;

Having regard to the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (ETS no. 165);

Having regard to the European Cultural Convention (ETS no. 18);

Having regard to the process towards the establishment of a European higher Education Area, and in particular to the Declaration of the European Ministers of Education adopted in Bologna on 19 June 1999 as well as to their Communiqués adopted in Prague on 19 May 2001 and Berlin on 19 September 2003;

Having regard to the Diploma Supplement elaborated jointly by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO, to the UNESCO/Council of Europe Code of Good Practice in the provision of transnational education, to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and to the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications;

Having regard to the practical action in favour of improving the recognition of qualifications concerning higher education carried out by the Council of Europe/UNESCO European Network of national information centres on academic recognition and mobility ("the ENIC Network");

Considering that the Council of Europe and UNESCO have always encouraged academic mobility as a means for better understanding of the various cultures and languages, and without any form of racial, religious, political or sexual discrimination;

Considering that studying or working in a foreign country is likely to contribute to an individual's cultural and academic enrichment, as well as to improve the individual's career prospects;

Considering that the recognition of qualifications is an essential precondition for both academic and professional mobility;

Convinced that the joint development of curricula between higher education institutions in different countries and the award of joint degrees contribute to academic and professional mobility and to the creation of a European Higher Education Area;

Convinced that the development and improved recognition of joint degrees will contribute to developing the European dimension of higher education and entail important benefits for individuals as well as for European society as a whole;

Aware that the recognition of qualifications originating in such joint arrangements is currently encountering difficulties of a legal as well as of a practical nature;

Conscious of the need to facilitate the recognition of joint degrees;

Recommends the governments of States party to the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (hereinafter referred to as “the Lisbon Recognition Convention”):

- i. to take into account, in the establishment of their recognition policies, the principles set out in the appendix hereto which forms part of this Recommendation;
- ii. to draw these principles to the attention of the competent bodies concerned, so that they can be considered and taken into account;
- iii. to promote implementation of these principles by government agencies and local and regional authorities, and by higher education institutions within the limits imposed by the autonomy of higher education institutions;
- iv. to ensure that this Recommendation is distributed as widely as possible among all persons and bodies concerned with the recognition of qualifications concerning higher education;

Invites the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the Director-General of UNESCO, as appropriate, to transmit this Recommendation to the governments of those States which were invited to the Diplomatic Conference entrusted with the adoption of the Lisbon Recognition Convention but which have not become parties to that Convention.

APPENDIX TO THE [DRAFT] RECOMMENDATION ON THE RECOGNITION OF JOINT DEGREES

General considerations

1. The present Recommendation is adopted within the framework of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and applies to the Parties to this Convention. The principles and practices described in this Recommendation can, however, equally well be applied to the recognition of qualifications in countries other than those party to the Lisbon Recognition Convention or to qualifications issued between or among national education systems.
2. The purpose of the present Recommendation is to improve the recognition of joint degrees. While degrees that are considered as belonging to the education system of a Party to the Lisbon Recognition Convention even where parts of the degree have been earned in other education systems fall under the provisions of the Convention, the present Recommendation concerns joint degrees.
3. While the scope of the Lisbon Recognition Convention as well as of subsidiary texts adopted under the provisions of Article X.2.5 of the Convention concern the recognition of qualifications in countries other than that in which they have been earned, the provisions of the present recommendation may equally well be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to joint degrees issued by two or more institutions belonging to the same national higher education system.

Definitions

4. Terms defined in the Lisbon Recognition Convention are used in the same sense in the present Recommendation, and reference is made to the definition of these terms in Section I of the Convention.
5. A joint degree should, for the purposes of this Recommendation, be understood as referring 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. A joint degree may be issued as
 - a. a joint diploma in addition to one or more national diplomas,
 - b. a joint diploma issued by the institutions offering the study programme in question without being accompanied by any national diploma
 - c. one or more national diplomas issued officially as the only attestation of the joint qualification in question.

General principles

6. Holders of joint degrees should have adequate access, upon request, to a fair assessment of their qualifications
7. Competent recognition authorities should recognize foreign joint degrees unless they can demonstrate that there is a substantial difference between the joint degree for which recognition is sought and the comparable qualification within their own national higher education system. Competent recognition authorities of Parties whose higher education institutions confer joint degrees should recognize these degrees with the greatest flexibility possible.

Legislation

8. Governments of States party to the Lisbon Recognition Convention should, where appropriate, therefore review their legislation with a view to removing any legal obstacles to the recognition of joint degrees and introduce legal provisions that would facilitate such recognition.

Quality assurance and institutional recognition

9. Competent recognition authorities may make the recognition of joint degrees conditional on all parts of the study programme leading to the degree and/or the institutions providing the programme being subject to transparent quality assessment or being considered as belonging to the education system of one or more Parties to the Lisbon Recognition Convention.
10. Where the joint degree is issued on the basis of a curriculum developed by a group or consortium consisting of a number of recognized higher education institutions, recognition of the degree may be made contingent on all member institutions or programmes of the group or consortium being subject to transparent quality assessment, or being considered as belonging to the education system of one or more Parties to the Lisbon Recognition Convention, even if only some of these institutions provide courses for any given degree.

Information

11. Institutions providing joint degrees should be encouraged to inform the competent recognition authorities of programmes giving rise to such degrees.
12. As appropriate, in order to facilitate recognition, candidates earning joint degrees should be provided with a Diploma Supplement, and study programmes leading to joint degrees should make use of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).
13. The Diploma Supplement issued with a joint degree should clearly describe all parts of the degree, and it should clearly indicate the institutions and/or

study programmes at which the different parts of the degree have been earned.



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THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

Seminar on "Integrated curricula – Implications and Prospects"

Mantova, 11th and 12th April 2003

FINAL REPORT

1. Preamble

The European summit of education ministers held in Prague on 19 May 2001 drew attention to joint programmes and degrees. The final communiqué expressly calls upon the higher education sector "to increase the development of modules, courses and curricula at all levels with 'European' content, orientation or organisation. This concerns particularly modules, courses and curricula offered in partnership by institutions from different countries and leading to a recognised joint degree".

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

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

2. Main features of joint study programmes

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

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

2.1. Objectives of the programme

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



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2.2. Design of the Curriculum

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

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

2.3. Organisation of Studies

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

2.4. Type of Qualifications Awarded

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

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

3.1. The Stockholm conclusions

The seminar on the development of joint degrees, that took place in Stockholm in May 2002 within the framework of the Bologna process, explored the theme mainly from a



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legal point of view. In the conclusions and recommendations of the seminar *the following criteria have been identified as common denominators for European joint degrees:*

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

3. 2. The EUA Survey on Master and Joint Degrees in Europe

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

The study offers a definition for joint degrees proposing that they should be awarded on completion of joint study programmes *that share at least some of the following characteristics:*

- curricula are developed or approved jointly by two or more institutions;
- students from each participating institution study parts of the programme at other partner institutions;
- the students' stays at the partner institutions are of comparable length;
- periods of study and exams passed at the partner institutions are recognised fully and automatically;
- professors of each participating institution also teach at the other partner institutions, work out the curricula jointly and form joint commissions to decide about admission and the awarding of the degrees;
- after completion of each individual programme, students are conferred the national degrees of each participating institution or just one degree jointly agreed upon by them all.

The survey confirmed the Stockholm conclusions.



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4. *The Mantova conclusions and recommendations*

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

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

4. 1. *Shared vision*

- Joint degree programmes based on integrated curricula are one of the major priorities for the building of a European “identity” within the common European Higher Education Area, as they provide the learners in all cycles – including doctoral studies - with a coherent, recognisable and challenging experience of European diversity. This is also an obvious added value to national HE systems.
- Joint degree programmes based on integrated curricula are valuable instruments for developing European “citizenship” and “employability”. These terms are used in a broad sense and from the point of view of students and citizens. That is, “citizenship” means having the cultural, linguistic and social experience necessary to live knowledgeably and responsibly in the multinational/multilingual framework of the broader Europe; “employability” means not only being able to find employment or have the attributes that industry or other employers desire, but also having the knowledge and competences necessary to have a satisfactory and fulfilling professional life in a global society.
- Joint doctoral programmes educating for research professions in Europe are a cornerstone for greater co-operation between the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area. Synergy between the two areas is viewed as an essential prerequisite for the creation of a Europe of Knowledge.

4. 2. *Recommendations to the education ministers meeting in Berlin*

- Legal obstacles to the awarding and recognition of joint degrees should be removed in all countries.
- Additional funds should be provided to cover the higher costs of joint degree programmes, keeping in mind particularly the need to create equal opportunities for



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student participation. Besides national and regional governments, which will normally bear the costs, HE institutions - in the framework of their autonomy -, international bodies and other actors should be invited to provide special support for these programmes.

- Involvement of institutions in joint degree programmes should be encouraged and supported in all Bologna signatory countries, particularly in those which are not yet participating actively.
- Public awareness of the high value of joint degree programmes based on integrated curricula, in terms of European identity, citizenship and employability, should be increased, also by guaranteeing adequate visibility to existing examples of good practice.

4. 3. Recommendations to HE institutions

- The development of European joint degree programmes should be based on the criteria identified in the Stockholm conclusions. Moreover, a clear distinction should be made between joint and double degree programmes, in terms of their curricular objectives and organizational models, also with a view to protecting the learners/users. A complete glossary of terms should be drawn.
- Joint degree programmes based on integrated curricula should be developed to address identified needs of European and global society that cannot be adequately addressed through national programmes, both in educating new professional figures and identifying new research areas.
- Students, graduates, employers and other relevant actors should be consulted about the areas in which the implementation of joint degree programmes would be most appropriate. However, it is recommended that HE institutions use to full potential their role as proactive planners for long range societal needs. Students should also be involved in planning and evaluation activities.
- Institutions that develop joint programmes should fully integrate and support them as a core function of their mission.
- Partners for a joint degree programme should be chosen on the basis of shared mission and commitment, as well as their capacity to develop and sustain such a programme in academic, organisational and financial terms. Thematic networks could provide experience for identifying suitable partners in any European country.
- Full consensus should be reached with partners regarding the model and the methodology to be used, as well as the elements of innovation and academic interest.



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- Learning outcomes and competencies, as well as student workload described in ECTS credits, should be viewed as crucial elements in constructing any joint programme.
- Adequate quality assurance procedures should be jointly developed and activated by partners in a joint programme, and made explicit to learners/users.
- Proper provision for linguistic diversity and language learning should be ensured all through joint degree programmes. These programmes should also promote European identity, citizenship and employability.

May 12, 2003



31 May 2002

Ministry of Education and Science
Stockholm, Sweden

**The Stockholm Conclusions -
Conclusions and recommendations of the Seminar on
Joint Degrees within the framework of the Bologna
Process**

The Bologna objectives

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

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

Framework

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

A common framework for joint degrees must be flexible in order to allow for and reflect national differences, but it must also include a definition of a joint degree, which will serve as a basis for a legal framework at the national level. The national, legal base must be clear on the conditions for awarding a joint degree and must not limit co-operation between institutions.

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

In most countries a jointly awarded degree would require amendments to the national higher education legislation. In various countries higher education institutions are increasingly developing bilateral or multilateral degrees (Dutch-Flemish Hogeschool, French-German University, Italian-French University,

Danish-Swedish Öresund University, for example). There is, however, reluctance towards and no legal foundation for establishing joint degrees at the supranational level.

General and professional degrees

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

Quality assurance

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

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

Structure

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

Criteria

The following criteria could be useful common denominators for European joint degrees:

- Two or more participating institutions in two or more countries.
- The duration of study outside the home institution should be substantial and continuous, e.g. 1 year at bachelor level.
- Joint degrees should require a joint study programme settled on by co-operation, confirmed in a written agreement, between institutions.
- Joint degrees should be based on bilateral or multilateral agreements on jointly arranged and approved programmes, with no restrictions concerning study fields or subjects.
- Full use should be made of the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS in order to ensure comparability of qualifications.
- A joint degree should preferably be documented in a single document issued by the participating institutions in accordance with national regulations.
- Joint degrees and study programmes should require student and staff/teacher mobility.
- Linguistic diversity in a European perspective should be ensured.

- Joint study programmes should have a European dimension, whether physical mobility or intercultural competence in the curriculum.

Students

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

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

Funding

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

The ERASMUS programme should be drawn upon.

Labour market

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

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

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

Reference material and electronic sources

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