

Trends IV (Draft report)

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This draft has been prepared to provide Glasgow Convention participants with up-to-date information on the ways in which many higher education institutions are responding to the implementation of the Bologna reforms to enable informed debate and discussion.

The report is structured to address each of the mid-term priorities as outlined in the Berlin Communiqué in separate "stand alone" chapters, namely new curricular structures (Chapter 2), recognition arrangements (Chapter 3), quality development and assurance (Chapter 4) as well as focusing on the link between teaching and research, in particular the issue of research training at doctoral level (Chapter 5). For readers looking for an overview of key findings and the success factors with respect to implementation, please refer to Chapter 6.

Comments on this draft are welcome from all who have been involved in providing information, and should be given to the authors during the Convention.

A final edited version will be produced for the Bergen Ministerial Conference in May 2005 and will be sent as a publication to all members.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

The Bologna Declaration of 1999 has initiated the widest sweeping reforms of European higher education in recent decades. The breadth of the process refers both to the extent of the reforms themselves at the European, national, and institutional level, and to the growing number of countries committed to creating a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010 – now involving 40 countries with more expected join at the next Ministerial meeting. At this five year mid-point in the process, the meeting of European Ministers of Education in Bergen offers an ideal opportunity to reflect on the ways in which Europe's higher education institutions (HEIs) are implementing the Bologna reforms, to see what progress has been made and what challenges remain.

Through the *Trends* reports prepared for the bi-annual Ministerial meetings, the European University Association (EUA) has been involved in “taking stock” of changes to the European higher education landscape every two years since the Bologna Process began. This is a major activity for EUA as part of its active involvement in shaping and developing the EHEA. EUA also continues to represent the academic community in the inter-governmental structures that manage the Bologna Process, taking forward policy positions that are informed through the *Trends* project as well as EUA's other project and policy work.

The approaches and scope of the *Trends* reports have changed over the years to respond to the evolution of the Bologna Process and the changing priority of issues. *Trends III*, written for the Berlin Ministerial meeting in September 2003, was the first report to introduce the perspective of HEIs into the analysis of Bologna reforms, and this was based upon a quantitative analysis of questionnaires. This *Trends IV* report is a natural sequel in this growing series of *Trends* reports, examining questions and challenges of institutional relevance raised in *Trends III*. In particular, *Trends IV* explores the ways in which institutions are responding to the Bologna Process, offers insight into the impact that the Process is having on overall institutional development, and looks at the levels of awareness and support for these changes among the various actors across Europe's HEIs.

Furthermore, *Trends IV* enables EUA members to have up-to-date information on changes taking place across Europe's HEIs in this collective process of reform and to guide EUA's future work plan in a way that addresses the most important members' needs.

1.2. Aims and Methodology

Trends IV aims to shed some light on the conditions, problems, challenges and achievements which are encountered by Europe's HEIs in implementing the Bologna reforms. It continues the institutional focus which the predecessor study, *Trends 2003: Progress towards the European Higher Education Area*, commonly known as “*Trends III*”, began two years ago. Taking up the thread from *Trends III* which was still chiefly concerned with identifying the expectations, judgements and main problems that HEIs associate with the different aims and action lines of the Bologna reforms, *Trends IV* is now proceeding into an in-depth analysis of these issues in an advanced stage of implementation. Whereas *Trends III* had sought to establish as much breadth of vision as possible on the basis of questionnaires sent to 1800 HEI, national rectors' conferences, ministries, student and employers' associations, *Trends IV* strives to obtain an understanding from multiple perspectives within the institutions. On the basis of interviews with different groups inside the institution, from the institution's leadership

(rector and vice-rectors), deans, academics, junior staff, to PhD students, students and administrators, *Trends IV* attempts to identify the different tasks and concerns encountered at the different levels of the institution.

The primary source of information for *Trends IV* was 62 site visits to HEIs in 29 European countries. The visits lasted 1 to 1.5 days and were conducted by a team of international experts (listed in appendix 7.3) well-versed with European policy and institutional developments, with appropriate language capabilities to conduct nearly all visits in the local language, and who collectively contributed to the development of the project methodology. The international expert was supported by a national expert nominated by the national rectors' conference of the country to provide details on national conditions and debates that contextualised the institutional implementation information. In addition, the institutional site visits were complemented by questionnaires from the respective national rectors' conferences that gave additional background information on recent national legislation and developments along the various Bologna action lines.

The site visits consisted of the researchers conducting small group interviews with the various institutional actors mentioned above asked questions along a common framework designed for all institutions. The questions addressed issues of general awareness and attitudes towards the Bologna process, the two-cycle structures, recognition arrangements, and quality assurance processes in line with "mid-term priorities" as outlined in the Berlin Communiqué. Furthermore, EUA chose to also address the issues of research and research training at the due to the recently introduced focus on the link between the EHEA and ERA to the Bologna Process. Each of these themes are addressed in this report in separate chapters, with a concluding chapter that identifies the key success factors for implementation as well as the systemic challenges which emerge in the process.

Each site visit concluded with an institutional report that compiled the answers provided orally from the different groups to enable comparison. The authors of this report conduct their analysis and draw findings from these reports. In addition to reading all 62 site visit reports, the main authors participated in seven visits each to ensure sufficient insight into the scope, depth and limits of the data. It should be noted that the institutional interviews were all confidential and that the interviewees were reported to have been very open and cooperative.

The decision concerning which countries to visit was governed by research and political imperatives. For EUA, there was a desire to cover as many as possible of the 40 countries that currently comprise the Bologna process. However, due to the financial limitations of the *Trends IV* budget, of which over half is covered by EUA itself, it was not possible to conduct multiple visits in all signatory countries, nor was it possible to cover all countries. Having to limit the overall number of countries, it was decided to exclude those where there is only one university, which was the case in Cyprus, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, and Malta because it was considered more valuable to spend travel resources to gain an understanding of the situation in a national context where several affected institutions could be compared. EUA also decided it was too early to assess progress made by institutions in countries that only recently signed the Bologna Declaration in Berlin, namely Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Holy See, Serbia and Montenegro, FYROM, and Russia.

It should also be noted that EUA has extensive information on many of the Balkan countries from conducting Institutional Evaluations over the past few years.¹ It is felt that the particular challenges facing the region merit specific attention to consider progress on the Bologna reforms in line with the political transformations and restructuring of higher education systems in these former Yugoslav states. EUA has therefore decided to pursue a these challenges and issues in the region outside this project.

¹ For example, country-wide reviews have been conducted in Serbia and Montenegro (2003/4), BiH (2004), and FYROM (2004/5).

The selection of the institutions for site visits was based upon creating a pool of different types of institutions across Europe (comprehensive and specialised, metropolitan and regional, research intensive and teaching-oriented) but that were roughly comparable concerning minimum student population size, profile, level to while degrees are offered. A pool of proposed institutions was developed based on Trends III questionnaire responses to be the above mentioned criteria, as well as for having a Bolonga coordinator the Bologna reforms. This pool of institutions was provided to EUA's member national rectors' conferences who were asked to assist with selecting from this list range of institutional types. In total 48 HEIs were involved through this process. The fact that participating institutions had to be willing to participate meant, of course, that some bias was introduced: the sample, on the average, is assumed to be more advanced and perhaps somewhat more positively disposed to the reforms than the average institution in each national context. This was judged to be a legitimate bias given that the aim of the study is see what challenges are being faced and to assess the nature and quality of the reforms undertaken in light of institutional development and self-improvement, and not to measure how far institutions have progressed overall in the implementation.

The Coimbra Group generously contributed to the *Trends IV* project by offering to interview member institutions of their network using the same methodology and questions of *Trends IV*. Coimbra Group institutions "paired up" to introduce an external perspective to the questioning, and contributed 14 of the institutional cases to the sample - thus bring the total number of institutional reports to 62. Given the fact that the Coimbra institutions which were visited were all multi-disciplinary research intense universities which are internationally oriented, this type of institution may be said to be overrepresented in the sample of institutions included in the study.

A last note should be made on the very limited time pressure of this project which started in June 2004 with research design and subsequent team induction and selection of institutions. EUA faced a challenge of finding available researchers with appropriate language capabilities and European experience to enter the selected institutions on short notice, which coupled with the academic calendars meant that the visits could not begin before October 2004. The site visit reports were only available toward the end of December, which left less than two months for reading, analysing the reports and pulling central findings together into one report. Given the political deadline of presenting a first draft for the Glasgow University Convention, this meant that this report presents main findings but cannot possibly do full justice to the wealth of the data collected. To make full and differentiated use of the many observations and perspectives gathered in the framework of this study's site visits, additional follow-up actions and more in-depth analyses on individual aspects will be pursued after this study.

1.3 Implementing Bologna and the institutional level

In 2003, three years after the launch of the creation of a common EHEA, the comparative study *Trends III* found that higher education authorities, rectors' conferences and leaders of most European HEIs had taken up the challenge by debating the implications at national and institutional level and preparing the implementation. However, in most places the implementation had not advanced enough to have reached the level of the academics in the faculties or departments or the administrators in the service units. A majority of academics was not yet very aware of the Bologna Declaration and its aims and actions lines.

In late 2004, only two years after the gathering of the *Trends III* data, 62 institutional site visits were undertaken in the framework this *Trends IV* project, to gain an in-depth insight into the implementation at institutional level. These visits showed that, at a vast majority of HEIs in Europe, the Bologna reforms have now been taken up at all institutional levels. Even more remarkably, the Bologna reforms, which have been met with so much scepticism by many

academics, have now been addressed not just with enormous dedication and time investment, but also with a genuine attempt to make sense of a reform that one did not design. Institutions all over Europe through their rectors, deans, and academics, have invested ideas, care and time into redesigning the entire course offer, rethinking its aims and overall coherence, adding elements, rationalising others, exploring new interfaces, and reflecting on new teaching approaches. Contrary to the many fears that restructuring could amount to a superficial exercise of simply regrouping existing courses, most institutions quickly became aware that new principles of coherence and aims were needed and have not spared time and resources to realise the core objectives of the Bologna aims. On the basis of their own already existing problem awareness and ideas for change, a majority of HEIs all over Europe have transformed the top-down Bologna reforms into their own institutional reform agenda.

In this phase of the implementation, the institutions involved in this study are mainly concerned with the introduction of the new degree structures and, in many cases, also of ECTS as a credit accumulation system. While many institutions are expanding their internal quality assurance, and reflecting on research training at doctoral level, these issues are usually not associated with the Bologna reforms which most institutional representatives equate to the introduction of a two-cycle system of degrees. But the links which the Bologna Declaration and the subsequent Communiqué make other dimensions of institutional development made within HEIs as well, only not under the heading of Bologna.

In this implementation process, which is animated by a remarkable degree of goodwill and, in many places, even more remarkable contributions of energy, institutions are encountering many problems. Institutions are continuously encountering hurdles and even brick walls which force them into unsatisfying compromises, restrict their institutional leeway and stand in the way of identified ideas for improvement. Such obstacles range from a lack of time to digest, deliberate and design the new structures in view of new aims and learning outcomes, against the backdrop of internal differences, to a lack of institutional autonomy and resources with which to make sure that the changes will not have to be made to the detriment of other important institutional functions and innovations, e.g. in research. Sometimes, the de-centralised structures or radical bottom-up, consensus-based cultures prevent more ambitious reforms; oftentimes lack of information on the European debates and trends or insufficient financial support offered by governments are preventing them from exploiting the potential which the Bologna reforms offer in terms of improving not just the readability but also the attractiveness of Higher Education.

European universities have done more than joining the Bologna Process. They have adopted it and, in the implementation phase, are now sharing the ownership. To create a common European Higher Education Area, it takes governments to create the right conditions and HEIs to convert the possible into the real. *Trends IV* shows that the EHEA is becoming a reality and has a good chance of becoming an attractive one. The challenge we are now facing is how everyone and every level engaged in building it can contribute their utmost to making it as attractive, sustainable and forward-looking as possible.

This study therefore tries to highlight the achievements, problems, constraints and opportunities which can be found within Europe's HEIs in the implementation of the Bologna reforms. All critical remarks of individual aspects of the implementation which are made or reported in this study are to be seen in the light of engaging in this common construction process that already seems to be based on a strong pillar: a large sense of a common cause and direction of all groups involved.

2. Two Cycle Degree Structure (Christian Tauch)

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

All Ministers commit themselves to having started the implementation of the two cycle system by 2005.(...)

Ministers encourage the member States to elaborate a framework of comparable and compatible qualifications for their higher education systems, which should seek to describe qualifications in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile. They also undertake to elaborate an overarching framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area. (...) First cycle degrees should give access, in the sense of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, to second cycle programmes. Second cycle degrees should give access to doctoral studies.(...)

Berlin Communiqué

Creating a system of easily readable and comparable degrees is a central - and to many even *the* essential - objective of the Bologna Process. Developments since 1999 have shown, however, that the introduction of two or three cycles leaves ample room for different and at times conflicting interpretations regarding the duration and orientation of programmes. Especially the matter of employability of 3 year Bachelor graduates continues to be an issue in many countries. On the other hand, the insight that the Bologna Process provides a unique opportunity to revise pedagogical concepts by introducing student-centred learning has gained ground in practically all countries. Modular structures and clearly defined learning outcomes for the various awards are being introduced almost all over Europe. A sincere determination to overhaul the entire approach to teaching and learning rather than simply comply with legal obligations at a formal level is expressed in a great number of HEIs. The fact that qualifications frameworks and their relevance for curricular development and recognition are not yet well-known in most HEIs can be explained by the rather scarce activities initiated in this field between Berlin and Bergen. The two topics of access to higher education and progression from one cycle to the next receive heightened attention in many countries as HEIs are under pressure to make optimal use of their resources, reduce the duration of studies and sharpen their institutional profiles. This chapter describes the wider setting of these curricular reforms.

2.1. Implementation of the two cycles at national level

Almost all countries have by now introduced the two-cycle system. Only in very few countries HEIs were still waiting for more detailed governmental regulations regarding the operational aspects of the system – the length of the cycles, ECTS, the Diploma Supplement etc. By the time the site visits took place in late 2004, this concerned only HEIs in Portugal, Spain and Sweden. Governmental decrees were passed, however, in Spain in January and in Portugal in February 2005.

There are various modes and speeds of introducing the new system. Thus in Hungary the introduction has just started in 2005 and will already become compulsory in 2006, and in Croatia time pressure is equally intense with radical change intended to take effect in the academic year 2005 - 2006. In Norway the first cycle will be fully implemented by 2005 and the second cycle by 2007, after a longer preparation phase. In Finland the new degree system will officially start in August 2005, after long deliberations at national and institutional levels. In a few countries where the reform has already been implemented, e.g. in Italy and the Netherlands, the government is making or considering some adjustments to the system (nomenclature etc.). Estonia is in the peculiar situation of changing from a two cycle-system to

another two cycle-system, namely from 4+2 to 3+2, with various problems of acceptance and confusion. HEIs in Denmark have introduced a 3+2+3 structure in 1993 but are taking a new approach to rethinking the content of programmes, especially at Bachelor level.

Numerous institutions confirmed that the need for and speed of reforms is perceived very differently in the various disciplines and faculties, but it is difficult to make generalised statements. In some universities the humanities seem to be the area of disciplines with the least problems with the two cycles, in others they find it almost impossible to do something meaningful at Bachelor level. The same is true for the regulated professions where professional bodies contribute significantly to helping or hindering the introduction of the new degree structures. In some countries, e.g. in Spain and Finland, HEIs referred to subject-specific coordination groups or pilot projects at national level that helped them considerably with the development of the new curricula.

Overall, however, **the situation is remarkably different from two or three years ago**, when not only medicine, but also teacher training, engineering, architecture, law, theology, fine arts, psychology and some other disciplines were excluded from the two cycle system in many countries. Today this restriction seems to apply only to medicine (and related fields) in most countries. Yet even in medicine, there is a clear trend towards inclusion in the reforms. Where medicine has been or will be included – e.g. in Flanders, Switzerland and Denmark - the duration of the Master degree amounts to 180 or even 240 ECTS credits, resulting in 360 – 440 ECTS for the Bachelor and Master combined. Teacher training and certain other disciplines still pose some problems, in some national contexts more than others, and here national systems are experimenting with a variety of solutions.

2.2. Attitudes in the HEIs towards Bachelor and Master degrees

Generally speaking, most HEIs today see the advantages of the two cycle system, even though they may be critical with regard to specific aspects of the implementation.

Especially in Northern Europe many institutions reported that there were few problems and that the dominant attitude was fairly positive across the institution. Sometimes the overhaul of study structures and programmes was and is embedded in a larger national reform effort, such as the Quality Reform Project in Norway.

In the large majority of HEIs visited for *Trends IV* staff supported the underlying ideas of problem-based learning and a student-centred approach, even if they were critical of various features of the implementation process. Some institutions self-critically acknowledged that the introduction of the two cycles, initiated some years ago, has so far led mainly to structural changes while the issue of quality is only now moving to the fore. Often, but not always, however, these institutions linked their observation to a complaint about time pressure imposed by legal regulations: too much reform in too little time.

A rather negative attitude could be found in only a few HEIs, with academics complaining that they didn't see the point of reforms and that Bologna was being imposed on them - by the institutional leadership and/or by the ministry.

In most cases criticism was directed not against the two cycles as such but against the conditions of implementation and the resulting extra work. Thus HEIs, for example in Italy and Hungary, were unhappy with the fact that they had been asked to devise Bachelor programmes without having received clear ministerial guidelines about what the Master programmes should look like. But even where the structural requirements for both cycles are clear, the task of meaningfully dividing teaching contents between Bachelor and Master levels remains difficult: how to balance general subjects vs. specialised subjects, theory vs. practical experience? Also teaching at Master rather than at Bachelor level sometimes seems to be

perceived as much more prestigious or relevant to research interests by certain professors, resulting in difficult negotiations within faculties.

Academics in many countries complain about the negative effects brought about by the focus on teaching (as opposed to student learning) in the Bologna Process, especially at the Bachelor level, and key words mentioned were “Verschulung”, “Didatticizzazione” etc. The main worries are firstly that curricula are becoming more rigid and compressed with less space for creativity and innovation, and in this respect there were frequent complaints that too many units of former longer degrees were being crammed into bachelor programmes. In addition, the enormous time invested in reform has forced many academics to reduce their research activities, which in turn is having negative repercussions on the quality of their teaching.

An important, albeit transitory problem for institutions, is coping with the students that are caught between the old and the new system, with old courses disappearing or being offered in a different order, and new ones emerging. HEIs try to cope with this situation by offering ad-hoc solutions, but these place additional strains on time and budget. Another transitory problem is the “generation gap” reported in some HEIs: while in general younger colleagues were very supportive, older ones often did not feel motivated to undertake major structural reforms. The exception to this trend was found in institutions in France, where reforms were generally being overseen and implemented by the more experienced academics.

The introduction of two cycles, normally linked to modularisation and ECTS, often implies a lot of extra work also for university administrations, for example in adapting electronic student services to the individualised learning paths. In some countries “Bologna” meant also the shift from one academic year to two semesters, with disruptive consequences upon examination schedules. As a result, **even academic and administrative staff that are fully supportive of the reforms point to the need for compensation, incentives, and extra funding** - otherwise frustration and the dragging of feet will be inevitable.

2.3. Degrees at Bachelor level

Discussions on both the duration and the meaning of programmes at Bachelor level continue. The misconception that the Bologna Process “prescribes” in any way the 3+2 structure is still widespread. 3+2 is indeed the dominant model across the European Higher Education Area, even in countries where HEIs have the choice between 3 and 4 years, as in Germany. In most countries 3 year Bachelors are the legal rule, and only few have a standard length of four years, e.g. Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Scotland and Turkey (and the non-university sector in some countries).

In many universities professors and, to a somewhat lesser degree, deans and sometimes the leadership still express profound doubts regarding the possibility to offer a degree after only three years that is both academically valid and relevant to the labour market: “Employability” to these critics often seems to be synonymous to a lowering of academic standards. Reservations about the validity of 3 year Bachelors are particularly strong in engineering, sciences and fine arts.

Three observations can be made with regard to the criticism of the 3 year Bachelor:

- Firstly, the 3 year model has been not only adopted, but also accepted in many countries and disciplines. It might be helpful for the critics to seek the advice of those institutions and faculties that showed that 3 year Bachelor programmes can indeed work.
- Secondly, in many universities the discussion still appears very much centred on the formal duration, with not much attention given to the intended outcomes. In these cases 3 year Bachelors can become a matter of academic reputation – universities do not want to be seen as awarding degrees at a level that is traditionally reserved for the

professional or vocational sector. The problem is compounded (and seemingly substantiated) in some universities by attempts to squeeze the content of traditional 4 (or even 5) year programmes into 3 year Bachelor programmes. As a result, students are unable to study the programmes in the foreseen time span and professors see themselves confirmed in their conviction that nothing academically viable can be achieved after three years. In reality these problems stem from a misunderstanding or non-observance of the intended pedagogical re-orientation underlying the Bologna reforms, characterised by the key words “outcome-orientation”, “student-centred learning”. The opportunity to review and “clear out” curricula is being missed in these institutions. Bachelor programmes are not supposed to provide the same level of knowledge and skills as traditional 5 year programmes – but this misunderstanding still can be encountered in discussions.

- Thirdly, there is also justified concern about the “one size fits all” approach taken by many national laws in imposing 3 year Bachelors: some disciplines argue quite convincingly that three years are too short to impart the knowledge and skills necessary for a meaningful first degree and they would like to see the straightjacket of the existing regulations replaced by more autonomy for the HEIs and faculties in designing their degree programmes. Three and a half years as well as four years would still be fully within the “Bologna consensus” – requiring, however, a shorter duration where there are consecutive Master programmes.

As to the question of whether Bachelor graduates are more likely to enter the labour market or go on for a Master programme, answers varied substantially from country to country. In the UK and Ireland most students leave with the Bachelor, many doing a Master degree later in life. But also HEIs in a few countries that have introduced degrees at Bachelor level some years ago, such as in Latvia and Lithuania, confirm that there are no major problems with employability. Also in Turkey Bachelors (of 4 years) seem to be well accepted by industry and other employers.

On the other hand, in many HEIs in countries where the two cycle structure is only now being introduced students declare themselves quite badly informed about the value and meaning of a Bachelor (“degree for the less able”) and generally plan to continue for a Master, “to be on the safe side”. Their professors often support and encourage this attitude. There are also frequent reports in these countries that employers are equally badly informed about the purpose and value of Bachelor degrees.

A very important impediment for a better acceptance of the Bachelor degrees is the **failure of many governments to set a clear example of the value of Bachelors with regard to public service employment**, through adjusting civil service grades, and demonstrating positively the career and salary prospects of Bachelor graduates.

Binary systems tend to throw up some specific issues with regard to the Bachelor: in some of these countries, like the Netherlands, Latvia and Finland, a distinction is made between professional and academic Bachelor degrees. Normally holders of a professional Bachelor are expected to enter the labour market, while the academic bachelors are more likely to continue for a Master programme. In these countries the professional Bachelor can take 4 years, while the academic Bachelor takes only 3 years. Universities in countries with binary systems are sometimes worried about the competition from the polytechnic sector: Bachelor-degree holders from the polytechnics, normally with compulsory practical elements in their programme, can be more attractive to employers than bachelor graduates from universities. Some of these universities currently draw the conclusion that their Bachelor degrees are more of a formal step, or at best a platform for re-orientation, and that all university Bachelors will go for a Master while only the polytechnic Bachelors will enter the labour market. The polytechnic-type institutions, on the other hand, are quite confident that their Bachelor graduates will be more than competitive on the labour market.

Career paths and employment of higher education graduates are being monitored in many countries at national level to varying degrees, but mostly this is not yet being undertaken specifically for Bachelors (in many countries it is too early for that). Meanwhile activities of HEIs themselves in this regard seem to be patchy at best.

Similarly, cooperation with the world of work in designing curricula – as called for in the Berlin Communiqué - still does not seem to be the rule. Academics often content themselves with simply assuming they know best what kind of knowledge and skills will help their graduates to find a job. The acceptance or non-acceptance of the Bachelor degree is often described in somewhat fatalistic terms, such as: *“time will show whether the labour market will receive the new degree well”*. Only a minority of HEIs carry out market research before the opening of a new programme and actively promote their new degrees among employers. Examples of successful dialogue between HEIs and employers’ associations, chambers of commerce, such as in Germany, could serve as an inspiration to others.

2.4. Degrees at Master level

Consensus on the length, functions and profiles of Master programmes in the European Higher Education Area has been reached at successive conferences and seminars between Bologna and Berlin, especially in Helsinki in 2003, and yet there is still an impressive variety of programme structures to be found.

Duration is still an issue in some countries. The most frequent type of Master programme is a postgraduate Master, building on a Bachelor programme and requiring between 60 and 120 ECTS credits. Universities in Belgium, the Netherlands and Sweden consider their 60 ECTS Masters, following a 180 ECTS Bachelor, as too short and not internationally competitive. Universities in the Anglo-Saxon countries, on the other hand, consider their one year Master programmes (often amounting to more than 60 ECTS) as a particularly attractive element of their study offers, especially to students from outside Europe.

Some exceptions to these reform trends can still be found. Long one-cycle programmes of 300+ ECTS credits at universities continue to exist and to be quite popular in some countries (eg Poland, Hungary,) and also in some disciplines (notably medicine and engineering). In Belgium there is also the phenomenon of post-Master Master programmes that require a first Master degree to be eligible for admission. In Ireland and Scotland a few examples of a move towards 5 year integrated Master programmes were also found, for example in nursing, midwifery, dentistry, medicine and in sciences and engineering while the model of a four-year “Integrated Masters” also exists in the UK. It is difficult to see how this model in its present form could be integrated as a *second* cycle qualification to the overarching European Qualifications Framework.

No European consensus exists with regard to the question of whether Master programmes should be differentiated systematically between more applied/professional on the one hand, and more research-oriented on the other. Institutions in several countries, including Latvia, France, Germany and the Netherlands find such a differentiation useful, while others in countries such as Austria, Belgium and Poland do not. Meanwhile in the UK and Ireland an important distinction is drawn between “taught” and “research” Masters.

The overwhelming majority of university Master degrees in the institutions visited give access to doctoral studies, as stipulated in the Berlin Communiqué.

In the non-university/polytechnic sector considerable differences between countries can be observed. In the Netherlands the Hogeschoolen may offer only professional Master programmes, and they receive no public funding for these. In Austria and Germany, on the

other hand, Fachhochschulen may offer both professional and research Masters, both giving access to doctoral studies at university level. In Finland no decision has been taken yet.

Where the reform is still in its early phase, Bachelor programmes are sometimes being developed without taking into account what should be taught and achieved at the Master level ("one step at a time"- approach). Some HEIs are fully aware that this approach is unsatisfactory and will have negative repercussions, yet they feel unable to develop Master programmes without the Ministry providing the necessary frameworks and guidelines for the framework at Master level.

In countries where second-cycle Master programmes have been introduced recently or are just being introduced there is often a tendency to create too many programmes, because "all professors want to have their own". Sometimes no institutional strategy is apparent and it is quite likely that there will be neither funding nor accreditation for all these programmes. Master programmes are often designed with a very narrow focus on the preceding Bachelor programme, i.e. Bachelor and Master are seen exclusively as one consecutive entity, for the same students. Consequently, vertical mobility may be perceived as a threat (brain drain) rather than an opportunity (brain gain).

This is confirmed by the fact that "stand-alone" Masters, sometimes designed explicitly to attract foreign students and possibly taught in English, are still the exception in most countries and are common only in the UK and Ireland. The majority of HEIs continue to target mainly their own Bachelor graduates.

Many institutions explicitly praise the new freedom to design interdisciplinary Master programmes, as well as programmes in emerging areas of science and knowledge.

There exists uncertainty regarding public funding for the Master level in some countries: students in Greece, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland expressed fear that the new postgraduate Master programmes will be too expensive for them, and governments have not succeeded, and sometimes not even tried, to dissipate these anxieties.

2.5. Joint Degrees

The situation regarding the legal possibility to award joint degrees is improving. In many countries they are now allowed, e.g. in Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia and Slovenia. British universities have the most far-reaching autonomy in deciding whether to set up Joint Degree Programmes and with whom. In Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland and Turkey HEIs can award Joint Degrees since the law does not mention them and therefore does not exclude them. Only in a relatively small group of countries Joint Degrees are still not possible, like in Estonia, Hungary, Norway and Sweden, but amendments to the legislation are being prepared.

The *Trends III* study of 2003 had revealed that the level of interest in Joint Degrees among Rectors' Conferences and Ministries was "medium to low". This has apparently changed for the better in most countries, sometimes under the influence of the ERASMUS Mundus programme: the level of interest has increased and a more rapid increase of Joint Degrees in the remaining years of the Bologna Process until 2010 seems likely. Italy for instance sees Joint Degrees as a particularly important tool in the internationalisation of its HE system. Only in half a dozen countries the level of interest remained unchanged or has even decreased in the last two years.

However, there is very little information about the number of existing programmes, with exact figures available only in a few countries, like France, Germany and Italy.

One of the biggest practical problems with Joint Degree programmes, referred to only by Slovenia, is quality assurance/accreditation. Transnational higher education programmes need special forms of quality assurance and it is to be hoped that the progress made at European level in agreeing on shared guidelines, standards and procedures will also facilitate appropriate accreditation mechanisms for Joint Degree programmes.

2.6. Curricular reform: Modules

A cautionary remark on the validity of the data gathered on modularisation seems appropriate: modularisation, unlike ECTS or the Diploma Supplement, is a concept for which no European reference documents (forms, “key features”, users’ guide, etc.) exist. Therefore **a huge variety of interpretations of the concept can be found, ranging from defining each single unit (lecture, seminar, etc.) as a module to full-fledged and very elaborate modular systems with interdisciplinary elements.** Consequently, the validity of the information provided by the institutions is also quite heterogeneous.

A large number of HEIs declare that their programmes have been or are presently being modularised, e.g. in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Sweden, Turkey. In France, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland HEIs reported that they had started the process by introducing semesters (with compulsory examinations at the end), thus replacing the academic year as the reference unit. Some HEIs are preparing modularisation by taking examples of good practice into account, notably from the TUNING project, and looking to good models of ECTS use.

However, the observation was made that modularisation especially at Bachelor level could be rather difficult, because curricula tend to be more rigidly structured than in the traditional one-tier system, and require a high number of compulsory subjects and contact hours. Reaching internal agreement (within the HEI or the department) on what modularisation is and what modules should look like seems to be a rather common challenge.

Central administration especially sometimes complains about the heavy additional workload caused by the “atomisation” of programmes. Some HEIs underlined that modularisation, if done properly, requires careful attention to be paid to the internal coherence of programmes through a meaningful grouping of courses, so as to maximise the spectrum of choices for the students. Otherwise the risk is that curricula are not really reviewed and adjusted, but simply cut and squeezed into fewer semesters, thus further increasing workload.

Students welcomed modularisation - where it works - as making the study programmes more manageable and flexible, but they also **underlined the need for more advice and counselling to profit from the sometimes confusing range of options.** Some complained that modularisation in their HEI had been superficial, and instead of encompassing entire programmes had only taken effect with regard to a few optional courses, while the bulk of the programme remained unmodularised and compulsory. As a result, the increased flexibility students expected from modularisation did not occur. Some institutions, for their part, reported that they could not introduce as much flexibility as they wanted due to limited resources and limited space. Many of these institutions pointed to the additional burden on human resources (staff time) incurred in introducing flexible learning paths.

2.7. Curricular reform: Learning outcomes

A significant group of HEIs in our sample from all parts of Europe declare themselves fully or largely familiar with the concept of learning outcomes (or competences), have implemented (or are implementing) them in all programmes and consider them a helpful tool. The TUNING project was mentioned by several groups in certain HEIs as one source of information and inspiration.

The Berlin Communiqué had called for the elaboration of national qualification frameworks but little seems to have happened in most countries since. The Anglo-Saxon countries and Denmark continued to develop their existing frameworks, while in Germany a framework for the higher education awards was written in 2003.

Explicit and very positive reference to the qualifications framework as a tool for curricular development and recognition was made in HEIs in Denmark, England and Scotland. Danish students declared they had been involved in the definition of learning outcomes, based on the qualifications framework, and that this has been a very positive experience indeed.

The absence of national qualifications frameworks, however, does not mean that there are no requirements and subject-specific standards for curricular development in the national contexts. These standards may assume the form of core curricula defined by the ministry, of accreditation requirements or of regulations issued by professional bodies (e.g. in engineering and health sciences). In some cases these approaches may still be rather input and teacher-oriented but this is nevertheless as close as some HEIs get to the concept of learning outcomes.

In a number of HEIs only vague notions of learning outcomes exist, and sometimes with only one group (for example, deans or central administration) showing some degree of familiarity, while others (often the students) have never heard of the concept.

In some HEIs in Austria, Germany, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and other countries where learning outcomes are not yet part of the institutional reality, the attitude is often rather positive and the wider implications of learning outcomes (need for an institutional approach, the link to ECTS and student-centred learning etc.) are well perceived.

Very few HEIs voiced explicit criticism or reservations against the concept of learning outcomes. On the other hand, the European dimension of the concept of learning outcomes was perceived only by those academics who had some knowledge of TUNING.

2.8. Access to higher education, progression through the system

The Berlin Communiqué states the commitment of Ministers to make higher education equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity. With reference to the last part of this phrase, many HEIs are increasingly developing an interest in selecting those students that correspond to their institutional profile and standards of quality.

Access to Bachelor programmes:

In a number of countries, e.g. Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands and Switzerland, HEIs reported that no real institutional selection at Bachelor level is possible: unless a *numerus clausus* applies for a specific discipline, all holders of the formal qualification (secondary schooling) whose grades are above a certain level have to be admitted – sometimes after successful participation in a national competitive exam.

In some of these HEIs a selection takes place after the first year of the Bachelor, on the basis of performance. In Austria, Belgium and the Netherlands worries were expressed that the obligation to accept all applicants will weaken the institutions' competitiveness at European level. In Germany the legal possibility for HEIs to select applicants has been considerably enlarged in 2004.

Many HEIs, for example those in the sample from Croatia, Finland, Ireland, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Slovakia, the UK, can select their students according to criteria set by the HEI or the department. In line with the Berlin Communiqué most awards at Bachelor level seem to make a graduate eligible for application to a Master programme.

Access to Master programmes:

At this level the majority of HEIs have the possibility to select candidates but even here some constraints can be found: In the Netherlands and Switzerland the regulations only allow selection of foreign students while national Bachelor holders in the same discipline have to be accepted, while equally in France and Belgium all Bachelor holders have guaranteed access to a Master programme in the same discipline. In Denmark a similar rule applies. France seems to be unique in having in place a selection mechanism at the end of the first year of 2 year Master programmes.

Where Master programmes have not yet been introduced, like in Finland, Sweden, Spain and Portugal, the modalities of transition from the Bachelor to the Master level are still under discussion.

Admission to doctoral level:

With regard to the doctoral level, most Master degrees allow the graduate to apply for admission to a doctoral project, and in the UK bachelor degrees are sufficient to give access to doctoral study. The selection process is in the large majority of HEIs left to the discretion of the faculty. However, in a small group of HEIs – in Austria and Belgium - no selection seems to be possible at any point, either at Master or at PhD level – as all candidates that satisfy the formal admission requirements have to be accepted.

2.9. Challenges for the Future

- **The implementation of the two cycles and reviewing of curricula** is well underway in most institutions, but often the reorientation and rationalisation of curricula, in the sense of alleviating and focussing contents, still has to be done or completed. Thus the relatively frequent misunderstanding that Bologna is about teaching the same subjects in less time needs clarification: a new 3 year programme cannot provide the same level of qualification as a traditional 4 year, let alone 5 year programme.
- There is a strong interest in many HEIs and many disciplines to learn from experiences elsewhere. **The setting-up of national coordination groups to develop new curricula at subject level** could serve as an example of good practice. This is particularly true for the “difficult” disciplines such as medicine, law, fine arts etc. where examples of good practice also at a European level should be collected and made available.
- HEIs may benefit from developing a more **strategic plan for curricular development** of new learner-oriented programmes, responding to different needs with different programme profiles, and embracing modularisation, learning outcomes and making use of the Bologna tools. Bachelor and Master programmes should be conceived as part of a whole system, even in those HEIs where Master programmes will start only when the first Bachelor cohort graduates.
- **Bachelor degrees** often still suffer from lack of credibility among students and employers. **Institutions and governments should therefore try to intensify the dialogue with employers.** It is vital that governments set a good example by declaring clearly their willingness to hire Bachelors for public service posts and under which conditions (career prospects, salaries). In many countries there is still a clear need for clarification of possible Bachelor profiles and of the meaning of employability. It could be helpful to draw on the experience of those countries where the Bachelor is or has become a degree that is fully accepted by the labour market. In any case, a systematic exchange with representatives of the world of work should take place.
- So far, it is rather exceptional for an HEI to trace the career paths of its graduates.

More studies on graduate employment, both at national and institutional level, and the feedback of the results into curriculum development could be helpful.

- Programmes leading to a **Master degree have a potential for the strategic positioning of the HEI** that has often not yet been realised. In developing their curricular planning, institutional leaders and deans might therefore want to put particular emphasis on the Master level, in particular focusing upon international and interdisciplinary aspects. Programmes taught in widely spoken languages should be part of such a strategy.
- The relatively large variety of Master profiles (long integrated vs. short programmes, professional vs. research orientation) makes **the need for qualifications frameworks and the Diploma Supplement** all the more obvious.
- **Joint Degrees** are increasingly recognised as a particularly attractive element of the European Higher Education Area. However, **amendments to the higher education laws are still needed** in some countries where Joint Degrees are either excluded or at least not explicitly mentioned and encouraged in the national legislation.
- **Modularisation** continues to be a difficult topic, often rather vaguely understood. To avoid inconsistencies within the institution but also at national and European level, **examples of good practice and information on developments at subject, national or European level** should be widely distributed and discussed. Each HEI would benefit from taking a coordinated approach to modularisation, defining the size and format of modules.
- **Learning outcomes have a central role to play** in the Bologna Process, and are vital if the system of easily readable and comparable degrees across Europe is to be based on more than an identical nomenclature for awards. However, learning outcomes are **still considered by many deans, professors and students as an accessory**, rather than an intrinsic element of the pedagogical shift intended by the Bologna Process.
- With regard to both modularisation and learning outcomes there is a – sometimes huge – **information gap**. The risk is that both tools are implemented haphazardly, to comply with existing requirements but without a deeper understanding of their pedagogical function. A **systematic approach through workshops and conferences** on the concepts of student-centred/problem-based learning, the meaning of learning outcomes and modularisation in curricular development and the link to ECTS and the Diploma Supplement is needed in many countries. This should be a joint task of ministries, professional networks, rectors' conferences and students' associations.
- In re-thinking and re-designing more student-centred curricula, institutions should not forget that **students will need more guidance and counselling** to find their individual academic pathways in a more flexible learning environment.
- **Qualifications frameworks** have been mentioned in the Berlin Communiqué as one of the next tools to develop, but little has happened outside those countries that already had a framework before Berlin. **All countries should now take a more systematic approach to this topic**, taking into account the model for a European qualifications framework endorsed by the Bologna Seminar in Copenhagen in January 2005.
- Questions of **access to HE and of progression through the system** are highly influenced by national traditions and priorities. However, the relative (if not complete) **lack of institutional autonomy** in these matters in many countries that the study revealed **is at odds with the general trend of reduced public funding and increased expectations regarding the institutional accountability**. The time might be right for a review of the legislation on access and selection (in the countries concerned) to enable HEIs to set priorities, develop a clear profile and be competitive at the regional, national or European level.

3. Recognition (Christian Tauch)

“Recognition of degrees: Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees

Ministers underline the importance of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, which should be ratified by all countries participating in the Bologna Process, and call on the ENIC and NARIC networks along with the competent National Authorities to further the implementation of the Convention.

They set the objective that every student graduating as from 2005 should receive the Diploma Supplement automatically and free of charge. It should be issued in a widely spoken European language.

They appeal to institutions and employers to make full use of the Diploma Supplement, so as to take advantage of the improved transparency and flexibility of the higher education degree systems, for fostering employability and facilitating academic recognition for further studies.

Promotion of mobility

Mobility of students and academic and administrative staff is the basis for establishing a European Higher Education Area. Ministers emphasise its importance for academic and cultural as well as political, social and economic spheres. They note with satisfaction that since their last meeting, mobility figures have increased, thanks also to the substantial support of the European Union programmes, and agree to undertake the necessary steps to improve the quality and coverage of statistical data on student mobility.

Establishment of a system of credits

Ministers stress the important role played by the ECTS in facilitating student mobility and international curriculum development. They note that ECTS is increasingly becoming a generalised basis for the national credit systems. They encourage further progress with the goal that the ECTS becomes not only a transfer but also an accumulation system, to be applied consistently as it develops within the emerging European Higher Education Area.

Ministers furthermore call those working on qualifications frameworks for the European Higher Education Area to encompass the wide range of flexible learning paths, opportunities and techniques and to make appropriate use of the ECTS credits.

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.”

Berlin Communiqué

The European Higher Education Area is – also - about the mobility of students, graduates and teachers/researchers. Smooth and effective recognition procedures are one important condition for mobility and ECTS and the Diploma Supplement are the tools to achieve it. While huge progress has been made in the implementation of both instruments, a number of typical problems can be identified that require joint efforts by institutional leaders, administrators, professors and students (and sometimes governments). Recognition is undergoing changes and facing new challenges as the new degrees and

programmes are implemented. The lack of autonomy that some institutions suffer in recognition matters is not in line with the spirit of the Bologna Process that puts HEIs at the heart of the reforms. This chapter briefly describes trends in mobility, the state of implementation of ECTS and the Diploma Supplement and some of the Bologna-related developments in recognition.

3.1. Mobility of students

Incoming mobility from countries within Europe (Socrates) has increased, sometimes greatly, in many countries between 1999 and 2003. Some HEIs in Ireland and the UK insist on a 1 : 1 ratio in exchange to avoid too huge an imbalance between incoming and outgoing students, but many other countries also saw a substantial increase in incoming mobility. Some HEIs, for example in South East Europe, declared their intention to increase the number of incoming students by capitalising more on their specific assets and advantages.

As for outgoing mobility, many HEIs, e.g. in Austria, France, Greece, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK, expressed their concern with a low or decreasing number of outgoing students. This can be due to students being more risk-conscious, wanting to finish on time or lacking the necessary foreign language skills. Many don't dispose of the financial means to cover the extra expenses incurred by a stay abroad and often students have jobs that they don't want to lose. A major obstacle to mobility continues to be the difference in academic calendars across Europe. Furthermore, problems of recognition and over-complicated application procedures for mobility programmes were referred to as impediments to mobility.

Regarding the impact of the introduction of the two cycle structure on mobility, some HEIs, notably in Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Switzerland and Sweden, fear that the introduction of very differentiated and relatively short programmes will lead to a more or less dramatic reduction of horizontal free mover mobility.

Other HEIs expect or hope that, on the contrary, mobility will increase through the two cycle degree structure, once the problems of transition to the new system are overcome. This view was expressed in Austria, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Spain, Turkey and the UK. Some HEIs favour the solution of using the stay abroad for practical assignments, because this poses less recognition problems, or of formally integrating it as an additional year in the curriculum. The Norwegian "Quality Reform" Project stipulates that all students are entitled to one semester abroad and to take their study grants with them.

A small number of HEIs, notably those in Spain, take the opportunities offered by vertical mobility - ie between first and second cycles, or between second and third cycles - explicitly into consideration. Some HEIs also referred to Erasmus Mundus as a tool for internationalisation. As for Joint Degree Programmes more widely, students confirmed that horizontal mobility - thin a programme -can be encouraged by double or joint degree programmes.

The Bologna Process aims at strengthening the European dimension in higher education. An essential element of this should be an increasing long-term mobility of academic teachers and researchers around Europe. It turned out to be very difficult, however, to obtain any data on this matter: the mobility of academic staff is barely monitored at all so far in Europe. Only very few countries, such as Hungary, collect data on the number of foreign staff working in their HEIs. In most countries this basic information is not available, let alone more detailed and sophisticated data like disciplines or country of origin.

3.2. ECTS

A majority of the HEIs visited declared that they have implemented ECTS and use it both for accumulation and transfer: in Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Switzerland. Others, for example in Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, Poland, Spain, are presently working on the implementation, some of them especially on the accumulation aspect as they used it for transfer before. HEIs in the UK use ECTS only for transfer, with their national system for accumulation. HEIs in Turkey are replacing their traditional credit system, modelled on the US, by ECTS. Portuguese HEIs were at the time of the site visits still waiting for national legislation.

Moving from contact hours to student workload is still an issue in a number of HEIs, reported in Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Switzerland. In one case ministerial regulations stand in the way of replacing the principle of contact hours with the workload concept. Occasionally reservations were also expressed regarding ECTS standards and levels and the ECTS grading scale, while some HEIs have not solved the problem of different numbers of credits being awarded to the same course, depending on the programme studied. One university told of a different problem linked to workload: reduced contact hours that should allow for more individual study had apparently led some students to neglecting their studies.

ECTS as a transfer instrument can cause problems with regard to regulated professions in some countries, because of the existing strict directives regarding the curriculum. On the other hand, some HEIs suggested that the definition of core subjects may be necessary to prevent students from becoming too exclusively oriented towards a mere accumulation of credits where it seems easiest.

3.3. Diploma Supplement

A majority of HEIs appears to be able to comply with the stipulation in the Berlin Communiqué that the DS should be issued to every graduate, starting in 2005. In HEIs in Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Norway and Switzerland it had already been introduced by the time of the *Trends IV* site visits in 2004.

HEIs in Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the UK, indicated that implementation will be completed in the course of 2005. In other HEIs, in Austria, Croatia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy and the UK, a more vague reply as to the planned date of introduction was given.

The most frequently reported difficulties concerned the following points:

- the student record system doesn't yet contain the necessary information;
- the national student data software has not yet been adjusted to Bologna requirements;
- the DS requires a big IT effort because of the complexity of study itineraries;
- high costs are involved, especially for translations.

In France the need to first harmonise the degree denominations at national level was pointed out, while in Greece legal changes regarding the national language requirements in documents are needed before the DS can be offered in a foreign language. In Italy problems are reported linked to the traditionally decentralised storing of student data in the faculties and the insufficient cooperation between academics and central administration, and it seems that similar problems occur in other countries.

Only one HEI mentioned a reluctance of professors to see their units described in the parameters required by the DS. This phenomenon is probably not so much linked to the DS proper but rather to reservations against the entire concept of defining learning outcomes and

competences, and in this sense it is not an isolated incidence at all. Only French HEIs mentioned the crucial problem of integrating learning outcomes into the DS. In relatively few HEIs students and/or academics were unaware of the DS.

All HEIs plan a Diploma Supplement in English, some also in the national language (in Austria, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden). One HEI plans to issue the DS in three languages and one, upon request, even in all official EU languages. Only one HEI of those visited plans to charge a fee for the Diploma Supplement.

3.4. Recognition of exchange mobility

Those HEIs that apply ECTS and in particular the learning agreement report few or no problems with the recognition of exchange mobility in Belgium, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey and the UK. In a small number of cases, however, this perception varies between the leadership and/or central administration who consider the system to work well, and students who report a variety of difficulties.

In ever fewer cases, HEIs do not seem to be taking their responsibility vis-à-vis students seriously enough, and consider it normal to occasionally refuse recognition - even if a learning agreement has been signed. In a similar vein, some HEIs report difficulties that are either linked to perception of superior quality of their own teaching as compared to that at their partner institutions, or to the poor administrative handling of the exchange at the partner institution: in either case recognition can be difficult, and even impossible.

Some HEIs, in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK, declare that they still encounter principal difficulties in the recognition of exchange mobility, the validation of courses taken abroad, the translation of marks and transfer of credits. Many called for a more "European" implementation of ECTS that would preclude inconsistencies caused by national or institutional approaches.

3.5. Recognition of non-formal/non-academic qualifications

Ministers in Berlin stressed that the recognition of prior learning must become an integral part of higher education activity. The topic is part of the wider theme of lifelong learning that has been very much neglected so far in the Bologna discussions. Many factors are presently combining to lend the matter of APL (accreditation of prior learning) and APEL (accreditation of prior experiential learning) more visibility than ever before, including: the intensifying debate on qualifications frameworks, the recent initiative of the EU Commission for a European qualifications framework for higher education and vocational training, the debate on the Lisbon agenda and demographic trends in Europe. Yet the *Trends IV* survey shows that it is still not perceived as an important topic in many institutions.

Several HEIs, notably in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain, declared that they have no provision at all for this kind of recognition. Others, e.g. in Austria, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Lithuania, Portugal, Spain, indicated that, while there are no provisions yet, discussions have started and/or future legislation will regulate this problem.

Only in a minority of countries and HEIs explicit strategies for the recognition of non-formal or non-academic recognition exist, notably in Belgium, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, the UK and Switzerland. Mostly these strategies are addressed to mature or disadvantaged students, to applicants with non-standard secondary education or with a defined minimum of professional education, e.g. in architecture, medicine, sports sciences and fine arts. Sometimes extracurricular activities like social engagement, language assistance, singing in the university choir were mentioned as examples.

Some HEIs explicitly welcomed the idea in the context of LLL. In Norway, for example, there is a tradition of accepting off-campus students who study on their own and come to the university only to pass exams.

However, the question on APL/APEL was often not clearly understood by the different groups, which shows the limited awareness that exists in many HEIs, although this kind of recognition clearly is part of the Bologna objectives of increased mobility and LLL. In some universities in binary HE systems this question was misunderstood as referring to the permeability between the university sector and the polytechnic/college sector. Only one HEI made the connection to qualifications frameworks by stating that a European qualifications framework would be helpful in this matter.

3.6. Recognition of national degrees

At a formal level, the recognition of national degrees is generally legally regulated and (more or less) automatic in most countries (sometimes requiring certain supplementary certifications or assessments), as in Belgium (Fr), Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and Slovenia.

It is, however, quite likely that most replies referred implicitly to the traditional degree system. Few HEIs seem to be aware that hitherto unknown difficulties might arise with the recognition of two cycle degrees, because of the greater variety of curricula. Some countries have already developed special regulations for the two cycle system: thus holders of a national Bachelor degree in Switzerland can automatically register for a Master programme in the same subject, while a change of subjects may involve additional selection criteria. In Ireland and Scotland the national qualifications framework was referred to as a (very) helpful tool in recognising national awards.

Sometimes recognition within the university sector appears to be easy, while problems are encountered with regard to mobility between the university sector and the non-university sector. Only one HEI reported big problems of compatibility with other national degrees, due to the high level of autonomy of faculties and the strongly teacher-centred style of education.

3.7. Recognition of foreign degrees

The variety of approaches in the recognition of foreign awards is wider than in the field of national awards. A surprisingly large number (compared to the findings of *Trends III*) of HEIs in this sample referred to their NARIC as a source of information and support, namely in Estonia, Germany, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey. Some HEIs, e.g. in Ireland, the UK and Turkey, also use lists of recognised and trustworthy foreign HEIs and/or qualifications (established either at the level of the HEI or centrally, at the Ministry or the NARIC).

In some countries, e.g. Croatia, France, Hungary and Spain, HEIs reported that the recognition of foreign degrees is still the responsibility of the ministry and is done through rather cumbersome procedures like naturalisation or homologation. Meanwhile other HEIs in Austria, Belgium (Fl. and Fr.), Germany, Poland, the UK, seem to have relative or full autonomy in their recognition decisions.

The Lisbon Recognition Convention was quoted several times as a frame of reference. Some HEIs think that instruments like ECTS, the DS or the Dublin descriptors will clearly facilitate recognition in the future.

Some HEIs, in Croatia, Belgium (Fr), Italy and Portugal, expressed their discontent with the effectiveness, duration and reliability of recognition procedures.

3.8. Challenges for the future

- **Horizontal mobility** (i.e. within a given programme) might become more difficult to arrange in Ba/Ma programmes than in the previous long one cycle programmes. More efforts will be needed, like a better preparation of stays abroad with guaranteed recognition (ECTS Learning Agreement), the formal integration of the stay abroad in the curriculum, or using the stay abroad for practical requirements of the programme.
- The same recommendations apply to those HEIs that already suffer from low outgoing mobility.
- The huge differences in the academic calendars across Europe are a major obstacle to mobility that require attention and action. A first step towards improving the situation could be a Europe-wide agreement on the date of the end of the first/ the beginning of the second semester.
- **Vertical mobility** (i.e. between Bachelor and Master or between Master and PhD) offers perspectives for attracting the best students from other HEIs and from abroad that have not yet been realised in most HEIs. Much remains to be done in this field, i.e. through the creation of Ma programmes targeted at specific audiences at national and international level.
- **ECTS** is well underway but problems remain, in particular the question of how to assign credits to courses by assessing student workload properly. More information on good practice is needed, for example through TUNING, Thematic Networks, and also through disseminating the results of pilot projects at national level.
- Quite a number of professors and students still seem to take it for granted that full recognition is not possible, even if a Learning Agreement has been signed. This is a clear violation of one basic ECTS principle and the topic has to remain on the Socrates agenda and addressed in ECTS site visits.
- The discussion and emerging consensus on **qualifications frameworks** should also help to find a more coherent approach to ECTS across Europe, in terms of workload and levels.
- The implementation of the **Diploma Supplement** is quite advanced in most HEIs but two main challenges persist: they concern the technical implementation (software programmes, data flow between faculties and central administration, etc.) and the formulation of the input (denominations of programmes and courses, translations, etc.)
- Most HEIs seem to be unaware of the area where the biggest efforts in implementing the Diploma Supplement possibly still lie ahead: the inclusion of learning outcomes in the DS to make it a truly informative document. Otherwise the DS may be technically correct but will fail in the essential regard, i.e. to provide information on the knowledge, skills and competences of an award-holder.
- The link between the DS and the correct implementation of ECTS, the modularisation of programmes and the emergence of qualifications frameworks has not always and everywhere been understood.
- **The recognition of exchange mobility** is greatly facilitated by ECTS and in particular by the learning agreement. This is confirmed by the majority of HEIs who already use the learning agreement – notwithstanding some exceptions, see above.
- The old ERASMUS principle of “mutual trust and confidence” is becoming more important than ever at a time when the content of programmes can become increasingly specialised. HEIs should firstly carefully select their international partners and secondly learn to compare the defined learning outcomes of a module or a course rather than look out for contents identical to their own.
- **The recognition of non-formal/non-academic qualifications (APL/APEL)**

needs to be put on the agenda of more HEIs as it will be an increasingly important topic in future national and European discussions on higher education and vocational training.

- **The recognition of national degrees** seems to be more or less automatic in many countries. However, many HEIs may not have realised that the Ba/Ma-structure may confront them with a kind of vertical mobility in their national system that did not exist in the past and that will require new solutions. The automatic recognition of nation-wide regulated degree programmes practiced in the past may not work any longer with specialised and diversified Bachelor and Master programmes.
- **The recognition of foreign degrees** is done through a variety of procedures – from full departmental autonomy to ministries being solely in charge of rather formal and bureaucratic schemes. This situation is barely a promising condition for smooth mobility within the European Higher Education Area.
- Ministries (in the countries concerned) should be prepared to relinquish the right to take recognition decisions and empower their HEIs to do that.
- Awareness of ENIC/NARIC and the Lisbon Convention seems to have increased in the past two years, but there is still a lot of work to do to convince all HEIs to cooperate more closely with their ENIC/NARIC and to apply the principles of the Lisbon Convention.

4. Quality Enhancement and Quality Assurance (Sybille Reichert)

In the Berlin Communiqué, the European Ministers of Education have clearly expressed their belief that *“the quality of higher education has proven to be at the heart of the setting up of a European Higher Education Area.”* They have also stressed that *“the primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution itself and this provides the basis for real accountability of the academic system within the national quality framework.”* A European Higher Education Area in which students and professors move around freely presupposes a basis of knowledge and trust concerning the different environments of learning, teaching or research with which individuals intend to associate themselves. In this study, we therefore focus on the efforts of higher education institutions to ensure and enhance quality within the institution.

4.1. Quality enhancement is more than optimised quality assurance

The Trends IV site visits showed very clearly that institutional efforts to develop the quality of education, research and services go far beyond the actual quality assurance processes and procedures. Many other institutional processes, such as recruitment of staff and students, internal resource allocation and incentives, staff development measures, well-planned and prioritised infrastructural development, have a major impact on the quality of core institutional functions. Indeed, the Bologna Reforms are a good case in point: Well beyond the actual quality assurance processes, the many and different added values which institutions attribute to the Bologna educational reforms already now (see Table 2) and the curricular review brought about by the Bologna Process have already contributed significantly to the enhancement of teaching quality and could contribute to such improvements even more strongly if the appropriate training and additional hiring of staff needed to reach the Bologna aims could actually be funded.

Indeed, it should be emphasised that a vast majority of institutions regarded the **Bologna reforms as an opportunity to reflect upon and review their own teaching offer and found that the reform had helped in catalysing and accelerating the internal reforms of their curricula and teaching approach, often leading to a rationalisation of the existing course offer, or even a complete redesign of curricula linked to the introduction of student-centred or competence based teaching and learning.** The following comment from a Finnish institution could also be heard in a wide range of different national and institutional contexts: “The major result so far is the ongoing work to analyse and restructure all curricula. A process of discussing, comparing and implementing measures across faculty borders has started. A key word for this process is reinforcement, that is, the Bologna process has been used as a vehicle to carry out reform work which has been motivated also without Bologna.” But there were also differences regarding the evaluation of the effect of Bologna reforms on quality: At some institutions, it was noted that the Bologna process, with its external pressures and benchmarks, helped to focus and push the ongoing reform plans into a concrete action plan with targets so that qualitative improvements could be reached more quickly. At other institutions, it was felt that the qualitative improvements had not been considered centrally enough but had been superseded by the structural discussions concerning which course units to offer at what level.

The interviews conducted during the site visit also showed forcefully that among a considerable number of HEIs, which had developed a reform agenda, the most limiting factors to their quality enhancement was not the nature of their internal quality processes but the limits of available resources and the scope of their autonomy, i.e., the extent to which they can decide and plan their own institutional future.

Limits to the institutional autonomy are still widespread in Europe and cover all institutional processes that greatly influence overall quality and profile, from student selection to staff recruitment and development (promotion, rewards), educational programme development, setting research priorities or internal resource allocation. The differences among individual European countries are enormous in this respect, with some countries such as the UK, Ireland, Finland, the Netherlands, recently also Denmark and Austria, granting wide-reaching autonomy to their universities within the bounds of accountability, while other countries such as the French Community of Belgium, Germany, Greece, the Czech and Slovak Republics imposing severe restrictions on the internal governance of their institutions. Sometimes autonomy is not limited by ministerial interventions but by accreditation bodies, e.g., restricting the types of courses that can be developed and offered (see also chapter 6, p. xx). With respect to institutional quality provisions, some form of interference by national level authorities was generally accepted by institutions as long as it did not result in a disproportionate amount of bureaucratic effort and was generally oriented toward quality development rather than mere control. Such accountability demands were accepted if they went hand in hand with wide-reaching institutional autonomy.

The visits revealed that limits to institutional autonomy do not just imply that certain dimensions of institutional development are excluded from regular internal quality development but also that the institution has much greater difficulties in developing a systematic approach to its internal quality and in bringing about improvements. Clearly, **Trends IV data show that the institutions with the most systematic approach to quality are also those that benefit from the greatest institutional autonomy.** Conversely, the institutions with the lowest degree of autonomy have not started to develop a systematic approach to quality. In a great majority of institutions internal quality assurance suffers from **lack of coherence**. Less than a quarter of the institutions actually address their internal quality arrangements in a systematic manner. Very often quality assurance can differ greatly from one faculty to the other. But there is a clear trend toward more institutional approaches to exploit synergies, economies of scale and spread models of good practice at institutions which do not suffer from low degrees of autonomy. More than a quarter of the institutions have established institutional structures to make their internal quality assurance processes more systematic, optimise feedback, exploit synergies and exchange models of good practice across the different parts of the institution.

All over Europe, institutional representatives express a growing discontent that **external quality assurance is running against a wall if weaknesses with known solutions are revealed but cannot be addressed for lack of funding.** Many representatives believed quality assurance should only be established and optimised further if there is a commitment to quality improvement once problems have been clearly identified. Limits to quality enhancement through restricted financial resources were reported at many institutions, most frequently in Eastern Europe, France and Italy. Thus different groups at a French university pointed out that the Bologna reforms discussions had already fostered interdisciplinary programme development, led to more group work and to a better understanding of the university as a whole. But while the fact that the Bologna emphasis on flexible learning paths and learning outcomes was widely appreciated (e.g., in particular the fact that it “assumes that students are adults capable of making choices), such flexible choices were made impossible because of lack of resources and classrooms. The goals of the reform were thus regarded as a great potential for quality improvement but as “*utopiques*”. Similar comments could be heard all over Europe, not just in relation to the Bologna reforms but also concerning other potentials for quality enhancement which could not be realised because of limited resources. From the establishment of appropriate student counselling and individualised attention to the recruitment of internationally outstanding professors and the updating of research infrastructure, many possible qualitative improvements were identified quite concretely with particular actions but could not be realised because of lack of governmental funds of other types of resources.

The essential aim of the Bologna reforms, namely to create a European Higher Education Area which is predicated on quality and therefore attractive to its members as well as the outside world, can only be achieved if the concern over quality is not reduced to the establishment or optimisation of external quality assurance processes alone but considers all processes of institutional development.

4.2. Internal quality assurance processes at European HEIs

All over Europe, higher education institutions are expanding their internal quality arrangements and are undergoing a growing number of external quality assurance procedures. But while the level of activity regarding internal quality processes at higher education institutions has clearly risen in all parts of Europe, the establishment or extension of such internal quality processes is largely restricted to teaching and learning processes. All institutions represented in the study sample have internal quality processes with respect to teaching. However, only one third has some form of internal quality assessment of research (external review of research being the more frequent quality assurance path). Quality review of administration and support services is even rarer and only restricted to less than a sixth of the institutions, mostly undertaken on an ad hoc basis when particular problems or targets have been identified. Only student services are reviewed more frequently, namely at about a sixth of the institutions.

Teaching

If one looks more closely at the way in which the **internal reviews of teaching** are conducted, they **differ widely in terms of organisation, feedback loops, student participation and effectiveness**. Thus student questionnaires are used everywhere, but at many institutions the faculty and even individual professors can decide whether they are actually handed out, analysed and taken into account for quality improvement. In contrast, at other institutions the use is obligatory across the whole institution and accompanied by systematic feedback loops, ensured by committees such as quality committees, or programme committees, at faculty, department level and institutional level. Such institutional committees, councils and quality units existed at a quarter of the institutions. In more than a quarter of the institutions, students did not only fill in questionnaires but were also actively involved in ensuring feedback, e.g., in regular student/staff meetings or in student/staff committees focused on teaching and learning. This was the case at institutions visited in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Switzerland, and the UK. At a Finnish institution, the students even underwent an induction to gain understanding of quality assurance and their own role in contributing to internal quality development in the institution. It should be noted that **in institutions with active student participation in quality development there were no reports of problems with the feedback of criticisms, complaints and recommendations into the improvement of teaching**, whereas the opposite was the case when students were not involved (a quarter of the other institutions in the sample).

In addition to teaching evaluation, a few institutions also systematically track the success-rates or drop-out rates of their students. Sometimes detailed data is gathered on the career choices of graduates. In other institutions such information is gathered by individual departments or faculties but not systematically across the whole institution.

In some institutions in Belgium, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the UK, **teaching and learning units are playing an important role in quality development**: they are often responsible for analysing the evaluation questionnaires, giving didactic continuing professional development and support to teachers, or helping with IT based teaching. Essentially such units function as quality development units in the area of teaching.

The separation of internal and external quality review of research poses some difficulties: The most central and frequent ingredient, the peer review, can be initiated by the institution or a national authority and most often involves both an external and an internal evaluation. Only the peer review associated with submission of articles to academic journals or grant applications involves no self-evaluation. The fact that peer reviews of research are most often initiated externally, by funding authorities (as is the case in the regular reviews by the research funding authorities in Portugal, Spain, and the UK), grant awarding agencies, or journals, does not prevent this process from being generally regarded as the best possible quality instrument for research by universities. A few institutions have even initiated such peer reviews themselves (e.g. in Denmark, Finland, Italy). According to universities, two problems can undermine the effectiveness of peer reviews. First, peer reviews can lose their legitimacy when the pool of available peers is too small to prevent “inbreeding” by way of quid pro quo exchanges of good will. Some smaller national systems are thus introducing more and more international participation although this is sometimes made difficult because of financial and language restrictions. Second, the success of peer review depends on the quality of the peers. If these are not regarded as up to the quality demands of the department which is to be evaluated, then their assessment will not be taken seriously. This is the prime reason why especially the most internationally competitive institutions sometimes mention a preference for an internally initiated external review, to safeguard the standards against which their performance will be judged.

While being the most dominant method of ensuring or enhancing quality of research, peer review of research projects and results is only one of many methods. The institutions visited in Trends IV highlighted a wide range of QA methods for research many of which depend on the internal quality culture of the institutions and can have a major impact on the qualitative improvement of research at the institution:

- Recruitment of professors and scientific staff is widely regarded as the most vital method to ensure and improve quality. However, it does not always lie within the scope of the institution’s autonomy and is greatly affected by the quality of the research environment, i.e., colleagues, resources and scientific infrastructure which can be offered to prospective researchers.
- Quite often quality assurance and incentives to improve are part of the re-election and promotion procedures of professors and research staff, i.e., including rewards or punitive measures. This is the case in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovak Republic and Spain, for example. Sometimes professors are not re-elected because of insufficient research output. Often a part of the salary or extent of internal research money depends on research performance. (In some other countries salaries cannot be modulated by the institutions but have fixed levels which are set in the legislation.)
- Internal distribution of research grants on the basis of performance and quality of the grant proposals was mentioned by a few institutions (in Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK). Such internal research funding allocation is similar to an external grant distribution (on the basis of peer review often with external peers) and serves primarily to jump-start new research directions or provides grants more flexibly and quickly than is the case with external funding authorities.
- Competitive resource allocation between departments, based on research performance, exists at some institutions (e.g., in the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, UK).
- Internal scrutiny of research performance indicators at institutional, faculty or departmental level seems to be a growing practice, in line with the frequent use of such quantitative indicators at national levels. There were a few institutions at which academics and junior staff mentioned that a new mentality of mutual scrutiny of performance was developing. This was mentioned in the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK.

Quality monitoring of research training at doctoral level is usually dealt with at programme, department and faculty level. At the institutions or faculties which had quality councils or committees these would also address the quality of research and doctoral provision.

Administration, Support Service, External and International Relations

While many institutions mention occasional ad hoc evaluations of particular administrative services, usually triggered by the perception of a particular reason for change or problem, only a sixth submit their administration and services to regular review. However, at another sixth of HEIs, representatives mention that they are beginning to address the quality of administration and support services more regularly and systematically. In a few institutions, such reviews were slated to begin the following year. Student services were more often reviewed than other services, often with the help of customer satisfaction questionnaires. At many institutions, technology transfer or entrepreneurial support services had only been established recently so that evaluation was felt to be premature. In a few cases, it was mentioned that customer satisfaction was being checked regularly.

The quality of international relations seemed to become an issue only with respect to the growing need to concentrate on trusted well known partners so that exchange and recognition procedures could be dealt with more smoothly and reliably.

4.3. The Relation between internal and external quality assurance

The relation between internal and external quality assurance was evaluated quite divergently across Europe. **Especially in systems where internal quality assurance was still in the process of being established, the relation between external and internal quality assurance seems to work well. In more established systems with intricate more institutionalised QA processes the external quality assurance tends to be seen as a bureaucratic burden of limited use for institutional development. Most importantly, institutions find that a well developed internal quality culture should be associated with a light external quality control. Generally, institutions had experienced internal quality processes to be more improvement oriented than external quality assurance processes, which were felt to be either more geared toward control and compliance or less attuned to the aims, priorities and conditions under which the institutions or evaluated unit was developing.**

Of course, there is an interface between internal and external quality assurance processes, namely the self-evaluation reports. Frequently, institutional representatives mentioned that these constitute the most useful part of any quality assurance process, but only if they also lead to follow up.

Many comments were made regarding the relative effectiveness of different external quality assurance measures, mostly with respect to teaching. The external evaluation of teaching is either examined indirectly through quality audits that review the internal quality processes or in the context of programme evaluation, as is the case in Finland, Ireland, in recent years also the UK, and most recently in Switzerland. While programme evaluation is always concerned with teaching outputs, programme accreditation is often reported to be predominantly more focussed on input and structure (e.g., in most Eastern European countries) although exceptions do exist. In the case of subject or programme evaluations, some positive examples of meaningful improvement-oriented processes and optimised processes were reported, especially concerning improved feed back if negative assessments were made. However, some institutions point out that the link to relevant research and support services is missing if the evaluation only focuses on teaching.

Institutions were more often critical of programme accreditations, in particular pointing to their rigidifying influence, e.g., when they prescribe the list of subjects in which programmes can be offered or prevent interdisciplinary programmes from being formed because of the disciplinary prejudices of the accreditation committees. Institutions see no difference whether such restrictions of their freedom to develop new programmes are set by the government or by an independent accreditation body. Often the accreditation was demanded and defined by professional bodies, with no consideration of other quality assurance processes at universities and thus no regard to possible synergies or overlap with institutional quality processes, which posed some bureaucratic problems to institutions.

Such problems were not reported with respect to institutional quality audits. However, these were seen to be useful only if they considered the aims and strategic priorities set by the institution and considered the links between teaching, research and support services. Otherwise audits were seen to run the risk of being too focussed on procedures and instruments and to pay too little attention to the most important quality concerns of the institution. This was reported as limiting their usefulness for the audited institution. Some institutional representatives also pointed to the danger of a community of quality assurance specialists justifying their existence by promoting the establishment of more and more quality assurance procedures with little regard to academic issues which should be central to the definition of quality in a given domain. Generally, while experiences with institutional audits were more positive than with accreditation, they also drew mixed reactions, from being seen as a welcome experience helping with the establishment and enhancement of internal quality development processes to being criticised for their narrow focus on procedures, stopping short of the real quality questions.

Thus, from the point of view of institutions, the debate between evaluation vs. accreditation and programme vs. institutional focus is still ongoing and is evolving into a more complex debate on the best desirable mix. At national level, mixed models are also gaining popularity, with agencies of quality assurance or accreditation conducting their reviews of institutions as well as programmes or organising different cycles that apply to both. Institutions see advantages and disadvantages to the two options, but a majority of institutions seems to prefer institutional audits in so far as they are usually lighter and more often attuned to institutional aims and strategies.

4.4. Challenges for the future

- Following on the positive example of a few institutions, HEIs may benefit from a more systematic approach to quality improvement across the institution, exploiting synergies between evaluation of teaching and evaluation of research and supporting services and administration. Governments and QA agencies should support such combined reviews, to ensure the link between research and teaching and the appropriateness of the existing services, as well as to enhance efficiency of evaluation procedures.
- HEIs and QA agencies should cooperate in optimising the relations and coordination between internal and external quality assurance processes, to alleviate the administrative burden on institutions without reducing the value for quality improvement. In particular, external quality assurance should be reduced in direct correlation to the evidence of robust internal QA.
- Governments should recognise that quality enhancement, as aimed for in the Bologna Process, is not only pursued through quality assurance measures and procedures but often introduced through other channels of institutional development.

5. The Relation of the Bologna Reforms to Research and Research Training (Sybille Reichert)

5.1. Implications of the Bologna reforms for research and research training

Our inquiries into the implementation process at 62 institutions across Europe confirm that the European ministers of education showed great wisdom in 2003 when taking account of the research dimension in the Bologna Process. In the Berlin Communiqué, the European ministers recognised “*the importance of research as an integral part of higher education across Europe [...] and emphasised “the importance of research and research training and the promotion of interdisciplinarity in maintaining and improving the quality of higher education and in enhancing the competitiveness of European higher education more generally.”* They therefore saw “*the need to promote closer links between the EHEA and the ERA in a Europe of Knowledge, to go beyond the present focus on two main cycles of higher education to include the doctoral level as the third cycle in the Bologna Process.*” Indeed, the data of this study shows that the Bologna reforms, while seemingly only addressing matters of education, also bring opportunities and bear risks with respect to the quality of research and research training. This study reveals that institutions are quite aware of the fact that the development of research and research training can positively affect the success of the Bologna reforms, i.e. that research development can and should contribute to the quality enhancement and attractiveness of the European HEIs and thus of the EHEA. They also note, however, that the Bologna reforms could also hurt research and research training if they are not underpinned by the right conditions and concern with quality improvement.

The obvious link between the quests for a European Higher Education Area and a common European Research Area consists in the area of research training for which universities bear the primary responsibility. As the primary provider of doctoral training and the only provider of research training at undergraduate and master level, HEIs are facing many new challenges with respect to research training:

- the awareness of the growing importance of research for a wider array of professions beyond academia is posing new questions to the scope and weight of research training, from early research project exposure to fostering transferable professionally relevant skills;
- fundamental and applied research in industry and academia is calling for increasing interdisciplinary perspectives already in research training;
- a growing sense of the importance of industry for the natural and technical sciences is leading to intensified cooperation with industry also in the area of research training, requiring new forms of communication and administrative support;
- an increased awareness of the importance of general public interest in and understanding of science is requiring more time investment on the part of researchers in the communication of research results and societal or economic implications, but also to new demands on the communicational skills of researchers.

Thus it may not be surprising that a considerable number of university representatives at our site visits mentioned research training, especially at doctoral level, to be the next major reform issue on their agenda. While most institutions are waiting to finish the implementation of the first and second cycle reforms before introducing another major construction site, others are trying to tackle research training reforms simultaneously with the ongoing educational reforms.

At national level, all but one of the 29 countries included in this study responded that research training constituted an important reform issue. All countries reported discussions at national level to encourage the private sector to support training and be more involved in university

research and research training. About one fifth of the national research training debates concentrate on quality enhancement of PhD training and the introduction of more structural and curricular elements in PhD training (Austria, Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland). In some countries, the status, contractual conditions, recruitment and career development of researchers also constitute a main focus of national debates (Austria, Germany, Italy). In others (Denmark, Latvia, Estonia, Poland) there is a political focus on the need for more researchers – especially in the natural and technical sciences.

Concentrating on the institutional implications of the Bologna reforms on research and research training, this study's site visit interviews revealed that four types of implications can be distinguished.

1. At most institutions, the link between research and teaching is a pressing issue in the design and implementation of the new curricula. The new curricula either strengthen or, more often, weaken research exposure of students at Bachelor level. In contrast, the new Master level is usually regarded as offering the opportunity to link education most intimately to the research conducted at the institution, a link which is assured by emphasising the students' research experience in the master programmes.
2. The doctoral level is affected in different ways by the Bologna reforms, either with respect to the transition from master to doctoral level, with respect to the desired length of doctoral training, or as part of an increased attention to mentoring and counselling, brought about by the Bologna curricular debates, which is now also beginning to affect the doctoral level.
3. The Bologna reforms encourage inter-institutional communication and decision-making which can positively influence research development. Most noticeably, interdisciplinary programmes which are being developed at a considerable number of institutions especially at master level, are bringing together teaching and research interests on the basis of strengthened and sometimes even new inter-faculty links. In a few cases, institutions explicitly develop such master programmes to position their research strengths nationally or internationally, as part of a research strategy.
4. The Bologna reforms are absorbing a considerable amount of time and resources which are taken away from research, not just in the implementation phase but also for the additional teaching and assessment time needed to run the new structures and approaches.

The following sections will describe these effects in more detail.

5.2. Research exposure and training at Bachelor and Master level

The site visits in the framework of this study do not confirm the High Level Group's Report's statement that "the involvement of undergraduate students in research activities as a normal part of their curriculum is still very exceptional."² Nevertheless, while a majority of institutions confirmed that students are exposed to research, half said that this exposure is often quite limited at Bachelor level. Most often such early research exposure involves introduction to research methodology and research skills as well as seminar or course papers where students are introduced to independent research activity. In the social and exact sciences, students are occasionally exposed to research through project work. Generally, at all institutions different groups reported that research exposure depended greatly on the subject area and faculty.

A critical point mentioned at many institutions with respect to the implications of the Bologna reforms on research training relates to the fact that research exposure often concentrated on the last year. In those countries where this last year does not refer to the last year of the

² High Level Group Report, xxxxxxxxxx Brussels 2004, p. xx.

Bachelor but to the last year of the previous longer degree, this implies that such research work corresponds and hence will most often be shifted to the Master level. Concurrently, there were apprehensions that the research skills of the labour force would become insufficient if the Bachelor degree were to become the final degree for a majority of university graduates. It was often felt that there was too little time in the three years leading to the Bachelor degree, in which also other skills had to be conveyed to make the Bachelor graduate employable, to actually approach research activity appropriately. Moreover, quite often academics and students reported that time for independent research or study and critical reflection had actually been reduced in the new, significantly more compressed programmes in which the new form of continuous assessment that had been introduced with ECTS as an accumulation system was reported to foster greater efficiency and delivery, but leave little room for independent learning, critical distance and the fostering of an independent mind. Also the additional teaching and exam burden that often accompanies the new curricular regime leaves less time for teachers to look after small research projects (since most institutions had no additional resources to hire new staff). Only a handful of institutions mentioned an explicit policy to actually emphasise research and independent study at Bachelor level.

At all the universities which were visited in the context of this study, the master level is defined as the primary level at which research should be practiced in action, be it through research projects or a master thesis. Nevertheless, at about a third of the institutions, two types of masters were offered or being developed, one which was more geared to research, another aimed at professional specialisation. It should be noted that the latter did not exclude research activities but rather placed them in a more immediate professionally relevant environment.

Generally speaking, it could be observed that the Bologna reforms produced some shifts with respect to research exposure at some institutions, often intensifying research at the second level. At a considerable number of institutions there seemed to be a clear shift of research exposure away from the first cycle to the second (mentioned for example at several Italian, German, French institutions). Often academics wished for more research exposure in the first cycle but pointed to limited human and financial resources.

5.3. Research training at doctoral level

During the visits, questions were asked about the impact of Bologna reforms on the doctoral level, to which there were conflicting responses. Generally, institutional representatives found it too early to judge whether the doctoral level would be affected by the two tier reforms, although at the same time a majority of institutions were either conducting some reforms in their doctoral level training or planning to do so. These wide-spread reform plans seem to be a combined effect of heightened quality awareness with respect to the quality of teaching which was reported to have been brought to the fore in the context of the Bologna reforms at some institutions, and a perception of competing institutions having already begun to improve doctoral training, as mentioned by some institutions.

What are these reform plans aiming? Across most of Europe doctoral training is based mainly on independent research undertaken by the doctoral candidate who draws upon the advice and guidance of one individual, the doctoral supervisor, supposedly on the model of a master/apprentice relationship. It should be noted that many academics and PhD students emphasise two **important factors which influence the quality of doctoral studies and research, namely flexibility and a focus on the individual candidate's interests and needs.**³ Only in some countries, the core research activity is complemented by other forms of training, taught elements and institutional structures like doctoral programmes and doctoral schools, with positive experiences reported in most cases. This is the case, e.g. in the Czech

³ Reference to Salzburg Conclusions

Republic, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. In a vast majority of countries in which independent research and bilateral supervision used to be the only ingredients to doctoral research training, national policy makers and institutions have been or are now introducing additional elements. **Generally, as a major reform element at a third of the institutions** (in Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK), **graduate or doctoral schools are being developed to ensure better networking and exchange between different faculties and research groups.** Where doctoral schools exist, institutions are sometimes optimising these further, e.g. by integrating several such programmes into larger schools to optimise the common offer (taught modules) and foster interdisciplinary exchange.

Another frequently mentioned reform issue for doctoral level provision concerns the introduction of taught modules on research methodology or content. While the introduction of taught modules seems to be appreciated by the majority of PhD candidates, they also emphasise that such taught elements are only helpful if they target doctoral students and their scientific or professional needs. At some institutions the academics fear a negative impact on the doctoral level with the introduction of taught elements because the time that can be spent on the doctoral research will be reduced. Some feel that it may be better to include the content-related courses of the doctoral programmes in the Master programme so that doctoral students can start their PhD faster, with only some skills training to be retained at the doctoral level. Both academics and doctoral students underline that “the best education to research is still carrying out research, not attending lectures.” Summer or winter schools and intensive programmes, more opportunities to participate in workshops and conferences and opportunities for interdisciplinary work are more welcome but often impossible because of lack of funds.

The issue of employability which is widely debated in the context of establishing new Bachelor programmes is also beginning to be considered more attentively for doctoral level students. In spite of the widespread pessimism which doctoral students expressed concerning their careers in most countries during the site visits and their dominant focus on academic career options, individual career development attention or institutionalised career counselling or support for young researchers only exists in very few countries, usually those in which research careers have become a national issue with incentives put in place to improve their career development (as is the case in the UK for example). Otherwise the doctoral candidate depends on the horizon, contacts and initiative of his or her doctoral advisor, leading to a wide range of different experience and often under-explored options in the non-academic sectors.

In contrast, career relevance is increasingly addressed through **skills training** which is clearly on the rise in many parts of Europe. Such initiatives are based on the perception that, if more research, more innovation and more researchers are needed to make Europe thrive, the careers of such researchers do not necessarily follow traditional academic lines, in the spirit of the Ministers’ concern that “*Higher Education Institutions [should] increase the role and relevance of research to technological, social and cultural evolution and to the needs of society.*” (*Berlin Communiqué*) But even for a traditional academic career, new challenges of facing an increasingly interdisciplinary research environment and an extremely competitive research market will have to be met, requiring certain professional skills from the researchers. Especially private employers of researchers are often pointing to an array of important transferable skills which contribute to the success of their research, beyond the actual scientific expertise and know-how.⁴

Skills training is rarely systematically organised across a given institution but most often depends on the initiatives and demands of the faculties or departments/doctoral programmes. In some cases, it was only provided in the existing doctoral schools while other PhD students

⁴ Reference to Maastricht

outside of such structures did not benefit from the offer. In other cases, it was partly integrated into the continuing education offer, and not necessarily targeted at researchers. Most often skills training is offered on a voluntary basis and most often addresses the following skills: teaching (didactic seminars), presentation, communication and team work, foreign languages (especially academic writing in English), project and time management, essentials for applying for research grants. Occasionally, patenting and entrepreneurial skills, science ethics, writing about science for the general public are trained. PhD candidates mention quite often that they appreciate the idea of skills training and some report positive experiences, but views differ whether this should be done at PhD level or rather earlier.

In addition to skills training, other mechanisms are mentioned which reflect the concern with the individual doctoral student's development: A few institutions are introducing an education or study plan for Ph D students to increase their performance (mentioned in the Netherlands and the Slovak Republic) or a student log book as an appreciated new tool for reflecting and keeping track of aims and progress (UK). Some mention institutional "agreements" between doctoral candidates and advisors in order to create mandatory modes of work and research with respect to time planning, teaching, funding, publication of papers, intellectual property rights, counselling, (mentioned e.g. in Germany, Norway, Finland). At a few institutions, doctoral committees or teams of supervisors have been introduced to make sure the doctoral research is reviewed by more than one person, softening the dependency of the doctoral candidate on his or her supervisor.

Generally speaking, the common characteristics of most on-going reforms concerning doctoral provision seem to **focus on more orientation, more guidance, more integration, more training of professionally relevant skills as well as more institutional structure to allow for more exchange and critical mass**. These concerns seem remarkably akin to the spirit of the Bologna reforms as implemented by many institutions and thus seem to form an integral part of the heightened awareness of the quality of teaching at many institutions in all parts of Europe.

5.4. Strengthening the institutional level approach to research

Given the overarching nature of the Bologna reforms, quite a number of institutions report that the Bologna reforms have had the effect of strengthening the institutional level action, as well as inter-institutional communication and coordination. New bodies or coordination groups were formed or existing ones met frequently to work out the details of the curricular reforms. At some institutions there were reports that this intensified communication also benefited research cooperation and enabled academics to follow new links between education and research on the basis of recent research developments. The most frequently mentioned benefit of such horizontal communication consisted in the design of new interdisciplinary programmes which was regarded as a major organisational challenge that research-intense institutions are currently facing and an important added value which the curricular reforms could bring. Concurrently, institutions which were not able to establish such coordination and communication across faculty lines complained about having missed some opportunities for such new programmes because of the vertical organisation of the institution.

The Bologna reforms seemed to have little effect, if any, on the strategic positioning of the institution in relation to research. While a majority of institutions reported that the Bologna reforms were integrated into their strategic plans, the link to overarching research aims was noticeably absent. This may well have to do with the fact that only a third of the visited institutions reported actually having a research strategy at institutional level (if one applies a generous notion of the term "strategy" which is not just restricted to setting priority research areas but comprises all attempts to link overarching institutional goals with some methods of realising such goals): Half of these, i.e. one sixth of the institutions have defined research areas in which they want to concentrate some institutional efforts in order to strengthen

international visibility. Of course, international research orientation was mentioned at many other institutions, but only a few institutions (predominantly in the northern and north-western quarter of Europe) made references to an international research market in their own strategic development of which the new curricular were to form part. It should also be noted that very few institutions mentioned international partnerships in their strategic reflections, neither with respect to educational nor to research objectives. In contrast, there were a few cases where there were very concrete ideas about intensified regional partnerships which were supposed to benefit both educational development and research cooperation.

Some institutions had defined incentives to promote excellence in research and reward high performance among researchers or in research training, in addition to establishing or extending support services for researchers' grant acquisition or technology transfer activities. Enhancing the quality of research training through new structures and reforming provision is also a priority for a few institutions. But most institutions seemed to be chiefly concerned with maintaining research capacity in times of worsening budgets rather than being expanding existing strengths or competitive advantages. While research was regarded as an internationally relevant part of the institution and the Bologna reforms were usually seen as part of the internationalisation of the institution, **only a small minority of institutions seemed to take the Bologna reforms as an opportunity to link the positioning of the new educational programmes with the positioning of its research strengths.**

Generally, it should be noted that research and education are separately organised at the management level at most institutions with very little organisational interface above departmental level so that the institutional development of education and research is only likely to be linked if the institutional leadership makes a conscious and targeted effort to pursue these links with and across the faculties.

5.5. Resources for education versus resources for research: the limits of time and funding

"Ministers will make the necessary effort to make European Higher Education Institutions an even more attractive and efficient partner. [...] Ministers understand that there are obstacles inhibiting the achievement of these goals and these cannot be resolved by Higher Education Institutions alone. It requires strong support, including financial, and appropriate decisions from national Governments and European Bodies." (Berlin Communiqué)

The implementation of the Bologna process has taken an enormous amount of time from a lot of academics and administrators all over Europe. Given the fact that very few institutions received additional support for the process or increased teaching or counselling tasks, this time was and is being spent at the expense of research, as practically all universities which had started the implementation of the Bologna reforms reported during the site visits. Accordingly, most academics urgently hope that they will not be subjected to another wave of such fundamental reforms again soon. But what worries many academics even more is the fact that those ingredients of the reforms which are meant to contribute to the quality enhancement of European higher education, such as the improvement of attention to learners needs, more flexible learning paths and regular assessment, which many institutions have implemented with full conviction, are going to negatively affect research since less time will be available for the latter. As long as there are no additional resources provided by governments or other sources, no additional staff can be hired to help with the increased teaching, counselling and exam load. In some institutions the regular administrative load also seems to have increased. Most groups emphasised that this matter will have to be urgently addressed in order to prevent competition between European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area which, in turn, would sooner or later also undermine the quality of university education. **An increase with the quality of teaching in Europe should not have to be paid with a decrease in the quality of research.**

Generally speaking, limited resources for research seem to be a major problem which many European countries are currently facing. Particularly in many eastern European countries but also in France and Italy the urgency of this problem was mentioned quite frequently without people even having been asked to address the issue. Given that some other countries (such as Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Ireland, Norway) have realised the crucial role which research will play for their future well-being and have developed policies as well as increased funds to serve those goals, there is a danger that the differences in research intensity and research competitiveness of the European Higher Education Area will increase rather than diminish, resulting in further intra-European brain drain and lessening quality of higher education in some regions of Europe -- quite contrary to the overall aims of a common European Higher Education Area.

5.6. Challenges for the future

- While focussing on matters of education, the Bologna reforms also bring opportunities and bear risks with respect to the quality of research and research training. Institutions and governments will have to mobilise ideas and resources to **make sure the quality of education is not being developed to the detriment of the quality of research** but rather in a mutually reinforcing manner.
- To exploit the potential of the curricular reforms and new interdisciplinary approaches which universities have identified, institutions are facing the challenge of **strengthening inter-faculty communication, coordination and overarching institutional approaches** to the design of new programmes and research emphases. To position themselves in their relevant competitive contexts, many institutions may benefit from developing a more strategic approach to their overall profile, relating their research strengths more clearly to their teaching offer.
- Universities and other HEIs are challenged to **define professionally and academically relevant research** and find ways to relate the one to the other.
- Institutions and governments are facing the challenge of **paying more attention to fostering career prospects and development of young researchers** and taking account of the diverse research careers for which master and doctoral graduates are heading.
- Institutions are by and large facing the challenge of developing appropriate and sufficiently targeted **skills training** which is relevant for research-based careers, **without undermining the space for independent research**.
- Governments and national authorities are facing the **challenge of supporting institutions financially in order to meet these new and additional tasks** which will require additional staff and additional time and competences in the part of the institutions.

6. Implementing Bologna at Higher Education Institutions: Success Factors and Systemic Challenges (Sybille Reichert)

6.1. Implementing Bologna: The success factors

For the European Higher Education Area to become a reality it takes governments to set the right conditions and HEIs to convert the possible into the real. The *Trends IV* site visits revealed that appropriate legislation is a good starting point for the reform issues to take shape. However, other factors, both national and institutional, play an important role in defining the success of the reforms. The visits to several institutions in one country showed that the same national conditions could result in very different institutional actions. Some institutions chose to use the opportunity which the Bologna process presented in a very proactive manner, trying to optimise the institution's position with the help of the new structural changes, while others refrained from action until it could no longer be avoided to undertake a deeper review of their teaching offer and learning processes. But the *Trends IV* visits also revealed that different national ways of dealing with the Bologna opportunity can considerably affect institutional propensities and actions.

If we define success in terms of the realisation of the aims of the Bologna reforms, one can distinguish different factors which have had significant effects on the success with which institutions have implemented the Bologna reforms: At institutional level, whether and what other major reforms were simultaneously underway also had an effect on institutional readiness to adopt the Bologna agenda as their own. Furthermore, the strength of internal horizontal communication made a noticeable difference, as did the quality of the leadership exercised by the institutional managers of such a complex overarching reform process. Regarding the national context, the quality of information, guidance and financial support which national actors have provided, significantly affected institutional capacity to act. Very importantly, the degree of autonomy defined the *marge de manoeuvre* and therefore the motivation with which institutions approached the reforms, depending on whether or not they felt they could forge their own future. These factors each deserve a short separate analysis.

Success Factor 1: The relation to other HE reforms

The Bologna reforms were the dominant reform issue for HE institutions in an overwhelming number of the countries visited in the context of this study. Most of these HE systems have seen legislative changes in the form of a Bologna framework to which HE institutions are now adapting. Hungary and Spain were just passing such legislation around the time of the site visits; in Portugal such legislation has just been passed in February 2005. Only in England and Turkey, the Bologna reforms are deemed to be only partially relevant to the national situation. (Scotland saw more relevance of the Bologna aims to their own reform developments.)

But the reform wave in European higher education seems to go even further and deeper than the Bologna reforms themselves: In a third the 28 countries, the rectors conferences asserted that the comprehensive implementation of the Bologna reforms formed an integral part of a wider review of the entire higher education systems (Flemish Community of Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Norway, Poland and Switzerland). Our data shows that European higher education is undergoing fundamental reforms often well beyond the already large scope of the Bologna reforms. The reform issues mentioned cover the whole spectrum of aspects which define HEIs: steering and funding mechanisms (e.g. introduction of performance based funding), governance structures,

distribution of competences between different level of a federal structure, differentiation of and articulation between institutional types, academic career conditions, quality assurance, as well as teaching and learning reforms which usually go hand in hand with the Bologna reforms and are often triggered or accelerated by the Bologna process (for a full overview see Table 1).

The relation of these reforms to the Bologna endeavour is perceived quite differently in the different national contexts. In Austria, for example, the fundamental reform of governance structures and introduction of university autonomy with according management and funding mechanisms is keeping the institutions fully occupied so that institutions have to push the Bologna reforms to the background at the moment. Even though the University Act of 2002 supports the implementation of several Bologna objectives, problems arise due to the two overlapping complex reform processes, resulting in the concentration of the university members on national and internal matters. In contrast, in Norway, the Bologna reforms have been integrated into the so-called “quality reform” which affect all dimensions of higher education but are perceived to be complementary to the Bologna aims and thus reinforcing.

In a few countries, such as Hungary and the French-speaking Community of Belgium, institutional representatives feel that the label “Bologna reform” is used to introduce reforms which are actually not part of the Bologna reforms. Thus, in Hungary a central focus on the reduction of the number of programmes has been introduced as part of the Bologna reforms. In French-speaking Belgium, the “Bologna Decree” is regarded as setting the priorities on the restructuring of relations between institutions and in the introduction of an element of competitiveness.

While many institutional representatives observed that Bologna had triggered reforms that had often already ripened internally, it should also be noted that there were comments that the Bologna reforms had sometimes delayed other internal changes, either because it was decided to wait with their implementation in order to have them coincide with the full implementation of the Bologna reforms or because it was felt that only one major reform should be pursued at a time.

Success Factor 2: Institutional problem awareness – taking top-down directives as an opportunity for bottom-up review and reform

Of the 60 institutions visited in the framework of this study, two thirds have decided to essentially adopt and internalise the Bologna reforms, integrating them into their own institutional development, thereby transforming an essentially top down agenda into their own bottom-up interpretation of desirable change. Given the criticisms in the initial years after the Bologna Declaration, this result seems rather remarkable. Not only is the awareness of the Bologna reforms -- still found to be low among academics just two years ago -- now reported to be high at most institutions. The acceptance of the overall aims and added value of the Bologna reforms is also fairly wide-spread across Europe and within institutions. Moreover, many academics seem to agree that some reforms of teaching and learning structures and approaches are needed. While some criticisms regarding the process of implementation or individual aspects of the reforms were voiced at most institutions, such as the fact that the Bachelor degrees seem to converge to only three years of study, there was only one institution that attributed no added value to the Bologna reforms and in which the overall Bologna reform agenda was actually rejected. This widespread acceptance of the fundamental Bologna agenda should be stressed, even if we accept that there may be a slight bias of our institutional sample since the institutions voluntarily agreed to host the site visits.

The main reason why so many institutions transformed the Bologna reforms into their own institutional agenda seems to lie in the fact that **most institutions saw the need to review and reform their curricula.** At about a quarter of the institutions, different groups commented that the Bologna reforms had a “trigger effect”, hastening the implementation of reforms that

had already been prepared by many internal discussions before. Sometimes, there were comments that the external pressure made it easier to focus on a set of reforms, to prune the existing offer of superfluous or outdated elements and to push a reform agenda forward that could have been more easily held up by internal disagreements if it had been a purely internally generated agenda.

Most often, it was appreciated that the Bologna reforms offered the opportunity to concentrate more on students' needs and on competences (ca. a third of the institutions visited, see details in chapter 2) and to establish greater transparency inside the institution regarding the teaching offer, content, methodology, expected learning outcomes and work load.

As previously mentioned, the Bologna reforms were also often appreciated as an opportunity to introduce more interdisciplinary programmes. Some institutions in Finland, France, Denmark and Switzerland, also reported that Bologna had offered or been used as an opportunity to increase inter-university cooperation at a regional level.

The added values which institutions associated with the Bologna reforms cover quite a wide spectrum (see Table 3), revealing a whole set of reasons why the Bologna reforms were usually fully integrated into the strategic plans of the institution. Only a few institutions in Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Portugal and Spain found it too early to tell whether any added value could be attributed to Bologna (nevertheless expecting the internationalisation and mobility of their institution to be furthered by the reforms).

Success Factor 3: Strong horizontal communication across the institution and consultative but determined leadership

The implementation of the Bologna reforms clearly affects most groups within a given institution. This pervasiveness of the reforms do not just require a considerable additional time investment on the part of many institutional actors but also demand well-functioning horizontal communication inside the institution. Conversely, at some institutions with decentralised internal organisation, it was observed that the institution lacked the capacity to coordinate. Interestingly, many institutions noted that the **Bologna reform process had served as a special opportunity for strengthening institutional coherence, enhancing institutional transparency and coordination, and reinforcing horizontal communication channels**, resulting, e.g. in:

1. a better distribution of work and resources,
2. more coherent post-graduate study programmes across the university,
3. strengthening the power of the presidents,
4. better integration of the administrators,
5. reduction of the number of faculties,
6. compelling faculties to think in broader terms, leading to organisational reforms.

The institutional set up of successful implementation revealed a common element across Europe: one member of the institutional leadership bears the overall responsibility for the implementation process. Most often this is the vice rector for teaching/ education or academic affairs, in a few cases the vice rector for international relations. In addition, most institutions have either formed a new coordinating group or used an existing institutional committee to coordinate the processes at faculty level, with a view to developing overarching guidelines and oversee the whole implementation process. It is safe to say that in the advanced stage of implementation, the most intense time investment happened at faculty level where the deans or vice-deans played the leading coordinating and managerial role. Many faculties also nominated a Bologna coordinator and either established faculty networks or committees for coordination at faculty level or used existing bodies such as curricular committees, curricular development councils, or programme committees to implement the new curricular structures

and credit system. In a few countries, especially in northern and western Europe, the student unions or representatives played an active role in the implementation process.

Given the complexity of the institutional relations, many groups within the institution commented that the implementation process was strongly affected both by the leadership's readiness to engage in genuine dialogue (i.e. to inform and listen to different positions), as well as by their capacity to define some overarching directions or guidelines early in the process. The challenge remains for the leadership to put a framework in place for high-level management balanced with space for bottom-up initiatives within departments and faculties.

While our data does not enable this question to be pursued in detail, there were a few institutions that particularly stood out because of their proactive attitude to the reforms, reflecting successful institutional leadership. Particularly in countries where several institutions were visited it was interesting to see how the same national constraints could result in very different institutional behaviours. It seems that the institutional leadership (be it one person or the leadership team) had a far-reaching effect on the institutional capacity for change, on the readiness to define the national level conditions, the art of bringing conflicting attitudes to a common sustainable decision, and in transforming an external given into an institutional plan. Interesting examples of proactive behaviour can be found, for example, in countries where the national level regulations or directives still remain to be defined. Thus, in Estonia, according to institutional representatives, the Bologna reforms were pushed forward by the university while the ministry then caught up. In Portugal, while waiting for the new government to take office before the relevant legislation could be passed, one university progressed as far as it could with internal deliberations about the new structures, exploring the best ways to reform the current curricula. In Spain, one university, while waiting for state legislation and framework to change, was preparing the implementation of the reforms by assessing the inherent potential for educational innovation and implications. Other institutions, e.g. in Germany, the Czech Republic, Finland, and Switzerland, used the Bologna reforms to push their own reform agenda forward quickly in order to enhance their positions on their relevant student markets but also with respect to outside stakeholders and partners. Very noticeably, all of the leaders from the seven non-university HEIs in this study made strong and proactive use of the Bologna reforms to enhance their position in the national dual systems and strengthen their master level and applied research position.

Success Factor 4: The right balance between national level regulation and coordination and institutional autonomy

The site visit interviews showed that the internal implementation processes were greatly affected, helped or hindered, by the **guidance, support and regulations at national level. The latter affected the readiness with which the Bologna reforms were accepted as a meaningful agenda for institutional change but also the extent to which they were used to enhance institutional quality.**

There were some countries in which the interplay between institutions and national authorities worked well and to the apparent satisfaction of most representatives at the institutions we visited. While there were individual points of criticism, there was an assumption that both levels tried to understand each other's positions and regarded the dialogue as an engagement in a complex but ultimately common cause. This seemed to be the case in Finland, Norway, Denmark, Ireland, Switzerland, and to a large extent (depending on the region) in Germany, for example. Here, the institutions reported and expressed appreciation for the considerable time that had been allocated to informing the institutions and inviting them to contribute to the deliberations on the contours of the national legislation or regulations. Bringing together a national reform agenda with institutional development agendas seemed to be feasible and mutually reinforcing. In Finland, the subject-based frameworks of the curricular reforms were regarded as particularly helpful and were felt to enhance inter-institutional cooperation

considerably. In Switzerland, it was appreciated that the national political level did not jump into rash legislation but instead built strongly on the coordination by the national rectors' conference which helped to prepare the national directives, safeguarding institutional autonomy as much as possible. (Only on the point of nationally imposed admission rules, it was felt that the national level had infringed on institutional profiling capacity and institutional autonomy.) At an institution in the French Community of Belgium, where institutional autonomy was generally felt to be rather limited, this limited autonomy was found to be alleviated by the intensity with which the HEIs had been included in the deliberation on the national legislation.

But more frequently, in most other national contexts, there were criticisms of the role of the ministry. In particular, there were complaints about the unsupportive mix between too much and hurried legislative prescription, after too little consultation, on the one hand, and too few incentives for action, on the other. Often ministries were said to have rushed into producing regulations or legal texts without sufficient consultation of institutional positions and realities. The resulting products were felt to not be thought through, sometimes even inconsistent, often insufficiently informed of the European debates. They often had to be revised later, implying some waste of time for all parties involved. In particular, frequent criticisms were voiced concerning the often rigid and sometimes uninformed interpretation of the Bologna reforms within the ministries' service units which were deemed much more problematic and less in the spirit of the Bologna reforms than the top declarations and intentions. Many university representatives said they would have needed more information and guidance but instead found that the civil servants were usually less informed than the university representatives regarding European developments and definitions. To impose, for example, that ECTS credits be related to contact hours and prescribe a minimum of contact hours, resulted in inconsistencies and an overcharging of the new programmes which both academics and students felt to be detrimental to the quality of the teaching offer since it left insufficient room for independent study and group work. Complaints about either **premature or unnecessary administrative overregulation which interfered with institutional autonomy** were voiced by institutions in Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, and the Slovak Republic. In the UK, a lack of ministerial interest was criticised regarding the Bologna reforms, rather than any interference.

A serious problem also arises at institutional level when there is a **mismatch between national or regional provisions for some subjects (like teacher training) and the new Bologna degree structures**. Such inconsistent structures were said to prevent efficiencies of scale at institutional level which had been possible before when programmes leading to different degrees in the same subject could be combined and interlaced. Thus additional human resources were being used for no net benefit.

Institutions were also **significantly affected by the speed prescribed by national actors for the full implementation**. A rushed process was reported to take away room for "creative manoeuvre" or a more fundamental redesign of some programmes. Not only were the most innovative ideas felt to need more deliberation time, it was also observed that some processes like the calculation of credits for individual courses or modules were done more superficially due to time pressure. With more time one could have checked the workload of the courses and looked at the appropriate weighting more closely. Conversely, it is also worth noting that the institutions which reported a particularly positive and deep institutional reform in the framework of the Bologna were those that, for internal reasons and pro-active attitudes, had started their implementation process early and had invested a lot of time into a pervasive deliberation and well-prepared decision-making process. This transformed the Bologna reforms into a genuine institutional reform agenda, a fully integrated part of the strategic plan, supported by incentives and according financial decisions.

In some countries, the institutional implementation strongly depends on the national level guidelines from non-governmental agencies such as accreditation bodies, as is the case in many eastern European countries, Germany, and the UK. For example, in Germany,

the Accreditation Council holds a key position in the process as it is entrusted to closely supervise the implementation of the provisions for the accreditation of Bachelor's and Master's Study Courses⁵. Such accreditation guidelines exert a straight-jacket influence on institutions, as some institutions e.g. in Poland, the Czech and Slovak Republic observed, regarding difficulties with introducing interdisciplinary curricula. Thus representatives from the different disciplines involved would formulate more traditional demands concerning minimal standards of each discipline rather than looking at the advantages of fostering new competences. Or a register of permitted courses would prevent the definition of new programmes around disciplinary interfaces. The latter case was also reported from institutions in Greece and the French Community of Belgium. With respect to course offer, further restrictions to institutional autonomy which concerned the language of instruction were also noted in the Flemish community of Belgium and Greece. In Flanders, the new ministry prescription that only 10% of the courses could be offered in English presented a serious problem to the more internationally oriented institutions wanting to position their competitive English master programmes in an international market. Apart from these restrictions of autonomy regarding curricular content, the majority of European institutions felt they had full autonomy with respect to the contents and design of their teaching offer.

University autonomy is much more restricted with respect to other dimensions of higher education, however. In this context we may recall the Ministers' conviction expressed in the Berlin Communiqué: *"Aware of the contribution strong institutions can make to economic and societal development, Ministers accept that institutions need to be empowered to take decisions on their internal organisation and administration. Ministers further call upon institutions to ensure that the reforms become fully integrated into core institutional functions and processes."* The rightfully demanded integration into the core institutional development is naturally more difficult to achieve if core elements cannot be shaped by the institution itself. **Such lack of autonomy was noted most often with respect to staff management and recruitment, as well as student selection.** Resultant delays in staff recruitment or promotion and the impossibility to introduce differentiated conditions and rewards in staff salaries and other resources make the more internationally oriented institutions less competitive on the international market. The most frequently voiced complaint concerned the fact that institutions could not select students but had to accept them, by national law, simply by virtue of having the right secondary school degree (Abitur, Matura or Baccalaureat etc.), or on the basis of grade averages of their secondary school performance, or after national entrance exams. For the second cycle, Bachelor degrees from the same country were often supposed to be admitted without further selection criteria (however, this seemed to pose less of a problem to most institutions). University representatives felt that their capacity to define the appropriate qualification profiles for their programmes was seriously undermined because of such nationally imposed admission rules. Especially with respect to internationally competitive programmes it was emphasised that standards of excellence should also be reflected in the selective nature of the programme which should bring the best qualified students together. The more autonomous institutions in the UK and Ireland openly commiserated their European partners for such nationally imposed constraints.

National or regional prescriptions were also mentioned regarding the number of teaching hours. Thus a university in central Europe was not allowed to vary the number of hours for different staff members (e.g. on the basis of research performance) and simply guarantee the provision of an overall number for the whole institution. This meant that its competitiveness on the international market of scientists was reduced since its ministry had just increased the

⁵ As stipulated in the "Resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the FRG" (2003), and in the "Common Structural Guidelines of the Länder". Each dean of a faculty must elaborate a self-evaluation report on the ways these guidelines are to be implemented for the organization of study programmes along the Bologna reform requirements, to be submitted to the process of external reviewing organized by the corresponding accreditation commissions.

already comparatively high number of teaching hours a professor had to teach. As a consequence, the best qualified applicants were reported to have lost interest in the positions.

All the above-mentioned restrictions of institutional autonomy were felt to undermine institutional flexibility, efficiency and motivation to institutional development.

In some countries, the perceived lack of autonomy had been addressed in recent legislation. In Austria and Denmark, for example, university autonomy has increased with the recent governance reforms. In Denmark representatives observed that “the governance reform which introduced an employed rector and an external board improved the university’s independence.” In Austria, a university rector reported he “suddenly found himself in the position of really running the institution. A new organisational plan had to be drafted, strategic aims defined, busy with legal changes, study regulations, personnel status, financing.” In spite of all the additional work which had to be invested in implementing the new governance structures, this new situation was greatly appreciated. It was felt to now be easier, for example, to create new study programmes.

In Estonia, Latvia, Ireland and the UK, HEIs greatly appreciated their institutional autonomy, accepting some additional accountability measures in return.

Generally, the **trend toward more autonomy is only slowly gaining ground in Europe**. But only in one country (Lithuania), it was reported that the previously introduced autonomy seemed to be decreasing with the Bologna reforms.

Success Factor 5: Time to adjust and fine-tune

Across Europe, even in the most positively disposed institutional environments, there is a growing sense of reform fatigue. Regardless of the added values and benefits which are attributed to the Bologna reforms, deans and academics express their concern at the enormous time investment which they had to subtract from other projects and functions.

There is a strong consensus at the institutions in this sample, from rectors and administrators to academics and students, that such far-reaching reforms as the complete restructuring of curricula, the change to credit accumulation systems and new assessment procedures engendered in the Bologna reforms, require considerable time not just for deliberation but also for subsequent adjustments and optimisation. The many open questions and the frequently noted high speed of implementation led a **large majority of institutional actors to emphasise that time was needed for fine-tuning and optimisation of the reforms**. Many were concerned that the politicians may want to design another major reform to enhance their own profile or visibility rather than letting these major reforms settle, allowing them to develop the best possible benefits. Hence there was a frequent plea from institutions to governments not to impose yet another reform on them too soon before the full potential of the Bologna reforms can be realised. As one student phrased it “Tell the ministers that it takes a lot longer to implement a reform than it does to conceive it.”

Success Factor 6: National financial support

During the site visits, it was often observed that there was a **considerable gap between the aims of the Bologna reforms and political declarations by the ministers, on the one hand, and the means and support given by the state to the institutions to realise these aims, on the other**. Unfortunately, the impressive consensus and commitment which the Ministers of Education of Europe have found and confirmed every two years after the Bologna declaration has remained a cost-neutral proposition in most European countries. Most Bologna signatory countries expressed their ministerial commitment only by setting the

legislative framework which institutions should set out to conform to, but have not supported the Bologna reforms with additional financial means, neither for the considerable implementation costs nor for the higher staff costs which many institutions find to be associated with the Bologna structures. Many HEIs emphasised that the introduction of the new degree structures and more flexible student-centred teaching imply considerable time investments not just for information, discussion, decisions, staff training and development when introducing the changes, but also for the extra provision offered through such restructured teaching and assessments, which involves more counselling, and more contact with students. Only some governments, such as Norway, Finland, Ireland, Netherlands, and Switzerland have attempted to meet the costs incurred, in the light of the profound upheaval and potential that the Bologna reforms imply. But even in these countries, the extra costs of the Bologna reforms incurred at institutional level are far from being covered. **Most of the costs have to be borne by the HEIs themselves. In times of restricted institutional budgets this means that the Bologna reforms are carried out by subtracting resources from other essential functions of higher education such as research.**

Many comments could be quoted to show how the lack of government funding is presenting a serious problem for universities all over Europe and how it is preventing institutions from realising the full potential of the Bologna reforms. (Full overview in Table 2) It was frequently emphasised that financial strain on the part of universities will inhibit reform and undermine the EHEA project. Institutions felt that the signatory governments should prove their commitments to the quality dimension of the reforms by supporting it with sufficient funds.

6.2. Bologna reforms as systemic challenges

In 2005, we have enough evidence to judge that, as the most wide-reaching reforms in European higher education in recent decades, the Bologna reforms have not only contributed to laying a common ground for the different national systems of higher education but have also had profound effects on the individual national systems themselves. The main systemic shifts deserve concluding attention.

The move to student-centred learning

Apart from the obvious intended effects of building more compatible degree structures and common transparency instruments such as ECTS and the Diploma Supplement, we can note far-reaching changes to the approaches to teaching, with many traditionally teacher-centred systems reflecting upon ways to place the students' needs in the centre of their attention. Such a change of focus is also making itself felt in the internal quality culture regarding teaching, with heightened attention to teaching performance, feedback from students on teaching and learning processes as well as to student support services. As yet, there is a large degree of divergence in Europe regarding teaching approaches and the degree to which student-centred learning can be said to define the everyday life at universities, with a clear northern/ north-western European dominance in student-centred learning environments and some scepticism in other parts of Europe towards believed poor knowledge acquisition in environments which are dominated by competence-based learning and flexible learning paths. Nonetheless, there seems to be a growing number of institutions across Europe that are beginning to move in the same direction. These changes do not only demand rethinking curricula and staff development but also result in a considerable demand of additional counselling, tutoring and new assessment techniques, which present a major challenge to HEIs as well as to the governments supporting them.

The move toward more compact programmes

Whether student- or teacher-centred, one frequently mentioned trend should be highlighted, although it may be more transitional in nature: the move from longer to shorter first cycle programmes often resulted in too much content being pressed into too little time. Sometimes this trend was motivated by the fear of losing essential disciplinary knowledge, i.e. the inclination to regard too many course units as being fundamental. Sometimes the nationally prescribed number of required student contact hours contributed to the problem. Whatever the cause, some academics and students feared that the compressed nature of the new programmes does not allow for enough time to develop a critical and reflective approach to the materials presented and generally did not foster an independent mind. There were frequent comments that efficiency, time management and completion in due time are now playing a greater role than before, while academic curiosity and intellectual development have become less important. Some were also worried that part time studies, which many students have to pursue in order to be able to support their studies, were being made significantly more difficult to manage in the new regime (see chapter 2).

The blurring differentiation between universities and other HEIs

A particularly striking outcome of this study's field research was that the broad differentiation between the two "types" of European HEIs, the universities and other HEIs, seems to have become blurred by the introduction of the new degree systems. It seems that the differentiation is not only reduced by virtue of introducing the same titles for both types of institutions – in most systems giving access to the same subsequent stage of progression – but also because of the new importance attached to the idea of employability which used to be the main competitive advantage of the non-university higher education institution. While universities are often struggling with the idea of what an academic Bachelor could actually offer to the labour market and how students would be accepted into the labour markets, other HEIs are often expanding their teaching offer to the master level and expanding their (applied) research capacity with it. These experiences were reported in Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Ireland and the Netherlands. Some systems already foresee applied professional and academic research degrees existing side by side within the same institutions (Hungary, Latvia, Portugal). Lithuania and the Slovak Republic have newly introduced a non-university sector. But all systems share the belief that with greater permeability between the two sectors should be an added value for students and graduates. At the same time, new ways of differentiating different institutional types will probably have to be devised to allow for complementary institutional profiles.

Retreating state funding of higher education

There is a frequently voiced fear that the Bologna reforms will exacerbate the wide-spread under-funding of higher education.

Firstly, these fears are fed by the perception that most governments have not supported the most fundamental overhaul of higher education in Europe in recent decades with financial support. In spite of ministerial commitments to the Bologna reforms, only few governments were committed enough to help the institutions with covering huge additional staff time invested. Thus many institutions have to stop short of the desired aims of quality enhancement which often involve additional staff time and competences, or subtract the needed resources from other essential university functions such as research. There is wide-spread concern that the prospected increase of the quality of teaching in Europe which the Bologna reforms helped to bring about will have to be paid with a decrease in the quality of research. Moreover, the widely appreciated idea of linking the quest for a European Higher Education Area with that of creating a more competitive European Research Area would obviously be lost if such constraints were to continue.

Secondly, many institutions fear that Bologna is being used as part of an agenda for the state to retreat from funding higher education. According to this thesis, state support of higher education will recede further by restricting full state funding to the first cycle degree, and keeping the Master level for a more select group of best qualified and/ or fee-paying students. The Master level would be restricted to an élite who manage to obtain a stipend granted on the basis of their earlier performance and to those who can afford the tuition imposed. Such a scheme would likely reduce the number of students able to carry their studies beyond the three or four years commonly associated with the Bachelor degree. This raises questions about having different public/private funding models at different levels of higher education, and may also raise questions about the financial incentives of the state to further reduce the length of 4-year Bachelors to 3 years.

In a large number of national contexts, HEIs are wondering about the future scope of state funding and the extent to which such funding will allow them to maintain or expand their competitiveness. While many are extending their private partnerships, they feel that the advantages of a largely state funded system of higher education regarding its long-term orientation, critical distance and innovative potential should not be underestimated.

Stronger higher education institutions for Europe

Implementing Bologna at HEIs has not just involved many different groups around a common agenda, but also heightened awareness of, and in some cases identification with the overarching institutional perspective, beyond the concerns of a given department, programme or faculty. The Bologna process has challenged institutions to reinforce their internal communication, coordination and decision-making processes. It has also made them more aware of the limits of their autonomy, of their legal and financial leeway. Many institutions see clearly where they should be heading in order to become stronger and more competitive but are still wondering where they will mobilise the goodwill and resources to support their move. The Bologna reforms have strengthened and confirmed institutional capacity to change. The future European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area depends on strong HEIs which are able to pursue excellence in regard of their respective missions.

6.3. Challenges for the future

- Most HEIs would benefit from **strengthening further their internal communication and institutional coordination** in order to allow for coherent implementation and optimal use of the innovative potential of the Bologna reforms.
- Institutions and governments should allow for **enough time for adjustments** and further optimisation of the Bologna reforms.
- **Institutional autonomy** of HEIs **should be expanded** where it is still restricted to increase their motivation and capacity to change.
- In order to allow the Bologna reforms to lead to an overall quality enhancement at HEIs, **governments should express their commitment to the Bologna process in financial support**. Otherwise institutions and higher education systems may run the risk of enhancing the quality of their teaching to the detriment of the quality of their research which would hurt the quality of teaching sooner or later.
- Governments are facing the challenge of continuing to provide **state funding for the master level** in order to maintain a high level of qualifications among university graduates.
- To ensure complementarity, **universities and other HEIs would benefit from redefining the differences of institutional profile to allow cooperation and creative interfaces for the future**. They will also have to work out the best possible

progression of students from one type of institution to another, maximising flexibility but also doing justice to their different profiles. Governments should create the right conditions to allow for permeability, flexibility and differentiation between institutional types.

7. Appendices

7.1 List of participating institutions

Institutions participating in *Trends IV* site visits

University of Salzburg, Austria
 Fachhochschule Vorarlberg, Austria
 Université de Bruxelles, Belgium
 HEC Liège, Belgium
 University of Ghent, Belgium
 University of Veliko Turnovo, Bulgaria
 University of Split, Croatia
 Brno University of Technology, Czech Republic
 University of Copenhagen, Denmark
 University of Tartu, Estonia
 University of Helsinki, Finland
 Helsinki Polytechnic Stadia, Finland
 Université de Lyon 1, France
 Université d'Aix Marseille 3, France
 University of Konstanz, Germany
 University of Bremen, Germany
 FH Oldenburg/Ostfriesland/Wilhelmshaven,
 Germany
 University of Ioannina, Greece
 Debrecen University, Hungary
 Budapest Business School, Hungary
 NUI Galway, Ireland
 Università degli Studi di TRIESTE, Italy
 Università degli Studi Federico II di NAPOLI,
 Italy

University of Latvia, Latvia
 Kaunas Technological University, Lithuania
 Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania
 University of Amsterdam, Netherlands
 Fontys Hogescholen, Netherlands
 University of Bergen, Norway
 Jagiellonian University, Poland
 Wroclaw University of Technology, Poland
 University of Algarve, Portugal
 University of Aveiro, Portugal
 Babes-Bolyai University, Romania
 Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovakia
 University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
 Universidad de Barcelona, Spain
 Universidad de Cantabria, Spain
 Umeå University, Sweden
 University of Stockholm, Sweden
 Universität St. Gallen, Switzerland
 Université de Fribourg, Switzerland
 Istanbul Technical University, Turkey
 Sakarya University, Turkey
 York St. John, United Kingdom
 University of Strathclyde, United Kingdom
 University College London, United Kingdom
 University of Cardiff, United Kingdom

Contributing Coimbra Group Network institutions

Karl Franzens Universität, Austria
 Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium
 Turun Yliopisto (Turku), Finland
 Åbo Akademi University, Finland,
 Eötvös Loránd University (Budapest), Hungary
 Trinity College Dublin, Ireland
 Università Degli Studi di Bologna, Italy
 Università Degli Studi di Padova, Italy
 Università Degli Studi di Siena, Italy
 Universiteit Groningen, Netherlands
 Universidade de Coimbra, Portugal
 Universidad de Salamanca, Spain
 Université de Genève, Switzerland
 University of Bristol, United Kingdom

7.2 National Rectors' Conferences that completed questionnaires

Austria
Belgium NL
Bulgaria
Croatia
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Italy
Latvia
Lithuania
Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Turkey
UK

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 Hanne Smidt, EUA Consultant
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 Ellen Hansen, Rektorkollegiet
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 Mart Laidmets, Estonian Rectors' Conference
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 Öktem Vardar, Isik University
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Both Questionnaires

Table 1: Other ongoing national level reforms (Source: Trends 4 data)

Country	Reforms
Austria	The University Act of 2002 has brought significant changes in the legal status, organisational and governance structures and funding of public universities. Some organisational changes are also expected for the teacher training colleges by 2007.
Belgium (FI)	Finance system for higher education will be reviewed, new context of associations (cooperatives between hogescholen and universities).
Bulgaria	(Legislative changes, mostly related to BP.)
Czech Republic	Change of the system of financing which should enable structural changes in the system of higher education and more efficiency in using state funds at HEIs
Denmark	Management reform at the universities. Political focus on research and on the idea of the Barcelona target of using 3% of GDP used for research.
Finland	Discussion on two-tier degrees in a university – polytechnic HE system
Germany	Reform of the salary scheme of professors, Reform of the qualifications period of young scientists (Juniorprofessor), essential decrease of funding for higher education, reform of the regulation of the student recruitment and selection process.
Greece	Re-examination of the national examination system for entrance into higher education.
Hungary	a completely new steering system of Institutions, more autonomy, instead of the former binary system a new linear system will be introduced, the differences among Universities and Colleges/Polytechnics will be diminished
Italy	The area of arts and music is currently undergoing a process of significant reform that began in 1999 with law no. 508 to create a system of higher advanced education and specialisation in the arts and music “Sistema dell’alta formazione e specializzazione artistica e musicale” or AFAM system.
Latvia	Changing selection principles at admission to HEIs – selection has to be carried out according to candidates’ results at centralised school-leaving examinations. Stricter rules and higher requirements to staff qualification at opening new HEIs.
Lithuania	Modernisation of secondary education
Netherlands	New Dutch law for Higher Education in 2007.
Poland	Act on the Rules of Financing Science: strengthening of the Minister’s impact on scientific policy and promotion of innovation, encourage support for research from private (also foreign) sources
Slovak Republic	Reform in the area of science and technology
Slovenia	The ministry already substantially changed the primary education system (from 8-years to 9-years scheme) and also the reform on the secondary education system is foreseen. In 2004 the “lump sum” of the financing of the HEIs was introduced based partially on the numbers of enrolled students and graduates with the different ranks of the faculties.
Spain	Professional careers in academia. Habilitation and accreditation of professors and lecturers. Creation of Quality Assurance Agencies both at national and regional levels.
Sweden	Discussion in various areas: principles for allocating resources to the institutions, monitoring the match between the professional (market) needs of society and the offered programmes, qualifications needed to enter HE-institutions, curricula of upper secondary school
Switzerland	Discussions on how to simplify the complex distribution of competences and to create the legal basis for better cooperation between the parties responsible for higher education (federal government and cantons).
United Kingdom	Higher Education Act (introduction of variable tuition fees), Government Decision on University Title (change to the basis on which the university title is accorded)

Table 2: Added value of the Bologna reforms

Opportunity and helping process of self-reflection and review of teaching and curricula either leading to a complete redesign of curricula or accelerating long needed reforms - rationalisation old the course offer - introduction of competence based teaching and learning	Graz, Ghent, Leuven, ULB, Abo Akad., Helsinki, Turku, Aix 3, Bergen, Aveiro, Bremen, FH Oldenburg Leuven, Debrecen, Leuven, Trieste, St Gallen, Aix 3
Internationalisation • Internationalisation of study programmes • Increased mobility • Improvement of international communication	Graz, FH Vorarlberg, Leuven, Brno, Estonia, FH Oldenburg, Bremen, Konstanz, St Gallen Graz
More transparency, also as a result of the implementation of ECTS and Diploma Supplement	Graz, Lyon 1
Improved employability and international employability of students	Graz, St Gallen
More flexible learning paths and student choices, more student-oriented approach	Leuven, Brno, Tartu, St Gallen, Fribourg
Fostering interdisciplinarity Process of discussing, comparing and implementing measures across faculty borders	Salzburg, Leuven, Helsinki, Lyon 1,
Earlier and more distributed assessment accompanying the studies rather than one big exam at the very end	St Gallen, Fribourg
More cooperation between universities nationally or regionally More competition between different types of institutions	Finland, France, Netherlands Austria, France, Germany, Switzerland
Reduction of drop-out rates, analysis on every level on how the “flow through” of students could get more efficient	Graz, Naples, Trieste
Improving orientation process of new students and student services	Lyon 1
Possibility to continue second cycles at another university	Brno, St Gallen
Opportunity for institutional positioning	Leuven, Konstanz, St Gallen, Fribourg
Implementation of Joint Degree Programmes	Graz, U Coll London
Chance for graduates who wish to return to the university after work experiences, LLL provision easier	Graz, FH Vorarlberg St Gallen
Enhancing research orientation and cooperation	FH Vorarlberg, FH Oldenburg, Fontys Hogeschool, Helsinki Stadia
More intensive discussion about quality issues on faculty level	Graz
Increase quality culture, increased awareness of the need to increase institutional autonomy Better understanding of the university as a whole Better involvement of the teaching staff in the institutional life Opportunity for more intra-institutional exchange Improved intra-institutional transparency	Lyon 1, Aix 3, Konstanz, Ioannina