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Bologna Process Stocktaking Report 2009

Report from working groups appointed by the
Bologna Follow-up Group to the
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Contents

Acknowledgements	4
Outline of the 2009 Stocktaking report	5
Executive summary	6
Conclusions of the 2009 Stocktaking	12
Recommendations of the 2009 Stocktaking	16
Bologna Stocktaking 2009	18
1 Overview	18
2 Methodology	22
3 Analysis of 2009 stocktaking results	29
3.1 Stocktaking on the Degree System	30
3.2 Stocktaking on implementation of quality assurance	50
3.3 Stocktaking on recognition, lifelong learning and mobility	66
3.4 European Higher Education Area in a global context	93
3.5 Future challenges	96
4 Stocktaking scorecards	97
5 Report on the Social Dimension of the Bologna Process	123

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April 2009*

Outline of the 2009 Stocktaking report

This report on the Bologna Process stocktaking was prepared by the Stocktaking Working Group for the Leuven/Louvain la Neuve Ministerial meeting in April 2009.

Based on the analysis that is described in detail in the main part of the report, the working group has drawn conclusions about the progress that has been made towards achieving the goals that were set by the Ministers in London. The report looks at the action lines in an integrated way, in recognition of the strong interdependence between them, and in particular the link between learning outcomes and other elements such as qualifications frameworks, quality assurance, recognition and lifelong learning. The working group has formulated recommendations for the future arising from the findings of the 2009 stocktaking.

The Executive summary at the beginning of the report includes the conclusions and recommendations of the stocktaking. The main text of the report is in five parts:

Part 1 explains the background to the 2009 stocktaking exercise, linking it to the findings of the 2005 and 2007 stocktaking reports and to the London Communiqué.

Part 2 describes the methodology that was used in the 2009 stocktaking and it examines the progress across the various action lines in an integrated way, in response to the recommendation in the London Communiqué that the 2009 stocktaking should attempt to do this.

Part 3 includes quantitative and qualitative analysis of the stocktaking results, including the elements that were covered by the scorecard indicators and the other aspects that were mentioned in the London Communiqué.

Part 4 includes the scorecards.

Part 5 contains the report of the Social Dimension Coordination Group, since the Ministers requested that the social dimension be included in the 2009 stocktaking.

Executive Summary

The indicators for the 2009 stocktaking were designed to verify whether the original goals of the Bologna process - which were expected to be achieved by 2010 - were actually being achieved in reality. Whereas in 2005 it was sufficient to show that work had been started, and for the 2007 stocktaking it was often enough that some work towards achieving the goals could be demonstrated or that legislation was in place, in 2009 the criteria for the indicators were substantially more demanding.

Because of the more demanding indicators, the overall picture for the whole EHEA is not as “green” in 2009 as it was in the two previous stocktaking reports in 2005 and 2007, although there are a number of countries that have improved their scores in this stocktaking exercise (see the summary for the various action lines below).

The more detailed analysis that was applied to the information provided in the 2009 national reports clearly showed whether the reforms really concerned the whole higher education system or applied only to parts of it. It is likely that this has lowered the scores of some countries that might have given an overall answer “yes” in 2007, when in fact some parts of the HE system were not actually covered by the reforms.

Degree system

Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle

Achieving the goal of implementing the first and second cycle degree system across all higher education in the EHEA seems to be only a question of time; however in some countries the actual proportion of students studying in the Bologna three-cycle system is still low, mainly because these countries have just recently started admitting students to bachelor and master programmes.

In some countries certain regulated professions and some specific disciplines are not yet included in the two-cycle system. With the present criteria these countries can still be in the “green” category. It will take more time and effort to include these disciplines and professions into the two-cycle system.

Access to the next cycle

The overall picture for this indicator looks very “green”, which demonstrates that there are no obstacles to access in legislation. However, the additional analysis shows that progress is not as significant as this suggests; in a number of countries graduates have to meet additional requirements to actually gain admission to the next cycle.

It is surprising that examinations, additional courses or work experience are quite often required when seeking access to next cycle in the same field of studies. This might suggest that HEIs do not fully recognise qualifications, even in the same field, issued by other HEIs in their own country.

Some countries have two levels of bachelor degrees, both of which are regarded as first cycle end qualifications, but which do not actually offer the same access to the second cycle. Some other countries have introduced two levels of master degrees with different rights in the labour market and admission to the third cycle.

Implementation of the third cycle

Overall, the implementation of the third cycle is progressing: the number of structured doctoral programmes is growing; more universities have established doctoral schools; the use of ECTS in the third cycle is becoming more widespread; more doctoral programmes include taught courses, and there are supervisory and assessment activities in place. There is no single model for the status of doctoral candidates: they may be considered students, early stage researchers or both; however in some of the new structured doctoral programmes, there is now a movement to introduce dual status. In some countries it seems that the need for interdisciplinary training and the need to provide doctoral candidates with the transferable skills for employment inside and outside academia have not yet been fully understood.

Implementation of national qualifications frameworks

There has been significant effort towards implementing qualifications frameworks and some progress has been made since 2007, however the deadline to have completed the implementation of NQFs for higher education by 2010 appears to have been too ambitious. Measuring success against the expectations for 2010, the picture is now less optimistic than it was in 2007 when countries only had to have started implementing their qualifications frameworks.

Six countries - some of which already had qualifications frameworks in place before 2005 - have completed self-certification of their NQF with the EHEA overarching qualifications framework, and some more are close to completion, while many are still at the early stages of development. There are still a large number of countries that are just beginning or have not yet started the implementation at institutional level, therefore the full implementation of national qualifications frameworks will take some time.

There is still not enough integration at national level between the qualifications framework, learning outcomes and ECTS, as was suggested in the 2007 stocktaking report. In attempting to improve their practice on each individual indicator, many countries appear to have pursued these action lines separately.

Employability

While countries say that employability is important, they have not gathered sufficient data to support this assertion. Due to the rapidly changing economic environment and its impact on labour markets, there is an urgent need for countries to set up systems to track the employability of graduates in the future. The number of bachelor graduates is growing and therefore the efforts to ensure employability of bachelor graduates need to be strengthened.

The acceptance of graduates in the labour market varies significantly: countries that have had a bachelor-master system for a long time see no specific problems and some other countries report increasing acceptance of bachelor graduates in the labour market, but there is a third group of countries with no bachelor-master tradition where the labour market seems to completely reject bachelor graduates.

It appears that the acceptability of bachelor degrees in the labour market can depend as much on the established custom and practice of different countries as on the effective implementation of the Bologna reforms.

Quality assurance

Implementation of internal quality assurance systems in accordance with ESG

While the implementation of external quality assurance is proceeding at a rapid pace, development of internal quality assurance (QA) systems at HEIs is progressing more slowly, especially because in some countries the internal QA systems are still thought to amount only to writing a self-assessment report for external review. As regards fulfilling Part I of the ESG on internal quality assurance, there has been good progress in some of the areas that have been established in HEIs for a long time, such as internal approval of programmes and publication of information. It is clear however that linking programmes with learning outcomes and designing assessment procedures to measure achievement of the intended learning outcomes are the most difficult parts and will take longer to implement. The 2009 national reports demonstrate that learning outcomes are often confused with overall programme goals which are not measurable and therefore cannot be used in student assessment.

The 2009 stocktaking clearly indicates that fully-fledged introduction of a learning outcomes-based culture across the EHEA still needs a lot of effort, and it will not be completed by 2010. It is important therefore to disseminate more actively the 2009 edition of the ESG where the link with learning outcomes is clearly underlined.

Stage of development of external quality assurance system

All countries have introduced external QA systems including self-assessment and external review; nearly all publish assessment results and carry out follow-up measures. However, the requirement to have carried out an assessment of the QA agency or at least to have fixed the date for such assessment shifted some countries from the “green” zone in 2007 to “yellow” in 2009. The fact that just 15 countries have organised assessment of their QA agency suggests that while the scheme of external QA has been widely implemented, in some countries it may not yet operate entirely in accordance with the ESG.

Level of student participation in quality assurance

Overall, student participation in QA has progressed since 2007; however the analysis of answers to additional questions pointed out some gaps: students often participate in

reviews only as observers, they are not always involved in preparing self-assessment reports and they are very seldom involved in follow-up measures.

Level of international participation in QA

With the requirement that international participation in review teams AND membership of an international QA network are now needed to score at least “yellow”, the number of countries in the “orange” category has substantially grown since 2007.

It is surprising that quality assurance agencies from only 22 countries are full members of ENQA. Given that full membership of ENQA requires compliance with ESG, this suggests that the standards and guidelines for external quality assurance and the work of QA agencies may not yet be fully implemented in some other countries.

The work on compiling the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) was just started in 2008 and the register as yet includes only a small number of agencies, therefore it was not considered appropriate to use the listing of the QA agency in EQAR as a criterion for this indicator in 2009.

Recognition

Stage of implementation of Diploma Supplement

It is clear from the results that the Diploma Supplement (DS), which is an important transparency instrument, is being implemented, but not as widely as would have been expected. Despite the commitment to issuing the DS to all graduates automatically, free of charge and in a widely spoken European language by 2005, only half of the countries have managed to implement it fully by 2009.

While the overall proportion of countries in the “green” zone is a little larger than in 2007, the more detailed questions on the issuing of Diploma Supplements shifted some countries substantially backwards compared to 2007. Countries in the “yellow” zone mainly fail to issue the Diploma Supplement to ALL graduates, or to issue it automatically.

Stage of implementation of Lisbon Recognition Convention

This indicator reflects only compliance of national legislation (or rather national legislation not being in conflict) with the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC). It is “greener” than in 2007 but the indicator alone does not measure the actual recognition practices, especially those inside the HEIs. Complementary analysis of the National Action Plans on Recognition submitted before the London conference shows that there is a long way to go before there is a coherent approach to recognition of qualifications within the EHEA.

As regards the practical implementation of the principles of the Convention, the analysis of the National Action Plans shows that the interpretation of these principles, as well as recognition procedures and even terminology used in different countries, differ enormously.

There are still legal problems in implementing the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) and its subsidiary texts, sometimes because the LRC is considered as a threat to the autonomy of HEIs: it is not fully understood that the LRC can enable HEIs to use their autonomy to facilitate the recognition of foreign qualifications and thus support both mobility and their own internationalisation. Some countries have found a good solution by including institutional recognition procedures in the list of aspects evaluated within both internal and external QA.

Stage of implementation of European Credit Transfer System

To score “green” or “light green”, credits had to be demonstrably linked with learning outcomes, so the scores of some countries shifted downwards compared to 2007, when it was enough that the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) was used for both credit accumulation and credit transfer.

Although ECTS has been part of the Bologna Process since 1999, it is still not fully implemented across all the countries. ECTS credits are widely used for both credit accumulation and transfer, but there are two main challenges in fully implementing ECTS: measuring credits in terms of student workload and linking them with learning outcomes.

Recognition of prior learning

While a small number of countries have quite advanced systems for the recognition of prior learning (RPL), the answers from many other countries suggest there is little or no recognition of learning undertaken outside the formal education system. There has not been much progress since 2007.

In some countries RPL appears to be included in national policy but it does not seem to be applied in practice; in other countries it happens in practice without any national procedures or guidelines being in place. Even where RPL systems exist, individuals are often insufficiently aware of the possibilities to have their previous learning assessed and recognised.

Some countries are using RPL to encourage more adults into higher education, thus improving the social dimension of higher education and promoting the inclusion of previously under-represented groups and improving the skill levels of the workforce. In some countries, the practice of RPL appears to be better developed in the non-university HE sector, although formal partnerships and linkages for RPL do exist between universities and other types of HEI in some parts of the EHEA. In a few cases, additional measures are being taken to increase access to HE by facilitating RPL for specific target groups.

It will not be possible to overcome the demographic and economic challenges through lifelong learning until RPL is systematically implemented in all countries. This requires firstly a change of culture in HEIs and secondly that credits are linked with learning outcomes, with appropriate methods developed to assess the full range of learning outcomes.

Flexible learning paths

Few countries have made an explicit link between flexible learning and their national qualifications frameworks, and this is an obstacle that prevents people who are already in the labour market from becoming involved in education. In addition, very few countries keep statistical data about the results of measures to increase participation by under-represented groups in flexible learning paths.

Joint degrees

Three quarters of the countries have amended their legislation to allow awarding of joint degrees, but half of the countries estimate that only between 1% and 25% of HEIs are involved in joint degree cooperation. It is evident that joint degrees are being established in all areas of study: engineering and natural sciences are clearly the most popular, followed closely by economics, business administration, social sciences, information technologies and health sciences. European studies, teacher training and environmental studies are also mentioned frequently. A number of actions are being taken to stimulate joint degrees: the most frequently mentioned are legal measures; support of joint programmes by additional funding; quality assurance/accreditation of joint programmes; codes of good practice and handbooks for establishing joint degrees.

In a number of countries there is specific support allocated for students studying on joint programmes, but several countries state that such students receive the regular student support.

European Higher Education Area in a Global Setting

It is clear that the Bologna Process has enhanced the cooperation between countries, organisations and higher education institutions inside and outside Europe. Considerable progress has been made in the fields of information, promotion, recognition and policy dialogue.

Social dimension of the European Higher Education Area

Virtually all countries take some action in order to enhance participative equity in their country, but only a minority of the countries has set up monitoring systems for measuring progress on the issue. Still fewer countries show evidence of an integrated strategy with synergies between social policy, government action and institutional practice, for example on matters such as funding arrangements, lifelong learning and recognition of prior learning.

There is still a long way to go before the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels will reflect the diversity of populations in the EHEA.

Conclusions of the 2009 Stocktaking

There has been further progress in the Bologna Process since London. Even though the overall picture may not look quite as green as it did in 2007, there are encouraging signs in that some of the action lines are almost complete and some countries have considerably improved their scores over the two-year period. The collective and voluntary inter-governmental approach has worked well in defining the shared vision of a European Higher Education Area and in encouraging a significant programme of reforms at institutional, national and European levels. Effective tools have been created that have enabled countries to implement wide-ranging changes in their higher education systems. Stocktaking continues to play an important role in the Bologna Process, and the method of collaborative peer-reported self-evaluation has been an effective catalyst for action at national level; it has also provided a way for countries to benchmark their progress and to set concrete targets for each two-year period. However, two significant factors have had an impact on the pace of progress: firstly, new action lines and activities have been added over the years, not least a change of paradigm with a shift to towards outcomes-based qualifications frameworks; secondly, countries have started the reform process at different times depending on when they joined the process. The 2009 stocktaking shows that not all the goals of the Bologna Process will be achieved by 2010. The following is a summary of the main conclusions of the 2009 stocktaking.

Degree system

1. Achieving the goal of implementing the first and second cycle degree system across all higher education in the EHEA seems to be only a question of time; however in some countries the actual proportion of students studying in the Bologna three-cycle system is still relatively low, mainly because they have just recently started admitting students to bachelor and master programmes. Also, in some countries certain regulated professions and some specific disciplines are not yet included in the two-cycle system.
2. The overall picture on access to the next cycle looks very “green” which suggests that there are no obstacles to access in legislation. However, on the ground the progress is not as significant as it might seem: graduates in a number of countries have to meet additional requirements such as examinations, additional courses or work experience to actually gain admission to the next cycle, even in the same field of studies. There are also some countries where different types of qualifications in one cycle do not offer the same access to the next cycle.
3. Overall, the implementation of the third cycle is progressing: the third cycle is being included in the national qualifications frameworks; ECTS is being widely used in the third cycle, and the pattern of at least three-year doctoral studies is strengthening. However, it seems that in some countries the need to provide

doctoral students with transferable skills for employment, whether in or outside academia, has not been fully understood.

4. There is no single model for the status of doctoral candidates: they may be considered students, early stage researchers or both, however there seems to be a tendency in an increasing number of countries that doctoral candidates are treated as early stage researchers whether they have student status or not.
5. The employability of graduates, especially those with bachelor degrees, varies significantly across countries: it appears that the acceptability of bachelor degrees in the labour market depends as much on the established custom and practice of different countries as on the effective implementation of the Bologna reforms.

Qualifications frameworks and lifelong learning

6. There has been significant effort towards implementing qualifications frameworks and some progress has been made since 2007, with six countries having already completed the self-certification process. However the deadline to have completed the implementation of NQFs for higher education by 2010 appears to have been too ambitious. There are still a large number of countries that are just beginning or have not yet started the implementation at institutional level, therefore the full implementation of national qualifications frameworks will take some time.
7. While a small number of countries have put in place quite advanced systems for recognition of prior learning, in most countries there is little or no recognition of learning undertaken outside the formal education system. There has not been much progress since 2007. More systematic development and application of RPL requires firstly a change of culture in HEIs; it also requires that credits are linked with learning outcomes and that appropriate methods are developed to assess the full range of learning outcomes.
8. Few countries have made an explicit link between flexible learning and their national qualifications frameworks, and this prevents people who are already in the labour market from becoming involved in education. In addition, very few countries keep statistical data about the results of measures to increase participation by under-represented groups in flexible learning paths.
9. There is still not enough integration at national level between the qualifications framework, learning outcomes and ECTS, as was suggested in the 2007 Stocktaking report. In attempting to improve their practice on each individual indicator, many countries appear to have pursued these action lines separately. The 2009 stocktaking clearly indicates that fully-fledged introduction of a lifelong learning culture - based on full implementation of a learning outcomes approach - across the EHEA still needs a lot of effort, and it will not be completed by 2010.

Quality assurance

10. All countries have introduced external quality assurance (QA) systems including self-assessment and external review; nearly all publish assessment results and carry out follow-up measures. The fact that just 15 countries have organised assessment of their QA agency suggests that there is a long way to go before there is clear evidence that all countries are working according to the ESG. Some countries with small higher education systems do not have a national QA agency but they organise external QA and international participation in other ways.
11. In most countries HEIs have established internal QA procedures, although some are much stronger than others. While systems for approval of programmes and qualifications are well developed, it is clear that linking programmes with learning outcomes and designing assessment procedures to measure achievement of the intended learning outcomes are the most difficult parts and will take longer to implement.
12. Overall, student participation in QA has progressed since 2007; however students often participate in reviews only as observers, they are not always involved in preparing self-assessment reports and they are very seldom involved in follow-up measures.
13. There has been some progress towards achieving a greater level of international involvement in the critical areas of participation in external review teams and membership of ENQA or other international QA networks, but there are still quite a large number of countries whose quality assurance agencies are not yet full members of ENQA.

Recognition

14. The Diploma Supplement (DS) is being implemented but not as widely as would have been expected. Despite the commitment to issuing the DS to all graduates automatically, free of charge and in a widely spoken European language by 2005, just over half of the countries have managed to implement it fully by 2009.
15. There seems to be widespread compliance of national legislation with the Lisbon Recognition Convention, yet there is a long way to go before there is a coherent approach to recognition of qualifications within the EHEA. The interpretation of the Convention's principles, as well as recognition procedures and terminology, differ enormously across countries. The contemporary approaches use quality assurance status, learning outcomes and level as the main criteria; some others first look at formal issues, content of the curriculum and the duration of studies.
16. ECTS has been part of the Bologna Process since 1999 and credits are widely used for credit transfer and accumulation but in a number of countries ECTS is still not fully implemented. There are two main challenges that are encountered in fully

implementing ECTS: measuring credits in terms of student workload and linking them with learning outcomes.

Joint degrees

17. According to national reports, three-quarters of the countries have amended their legislation in order to allow awarding of joint degrees. Joint degrees are being established in all areas of study but half of the countries estimate that only between 1% and 25% of HEIs are involved in joint degree cooperation. A number of actions are being taken to stimulate joint degrees, including legal measures; additional funding to support joint programmes; quality assurance/accreditation of joint programmes; codes of good practice and handbooks for establishing joint degrees.

Social dimension

18. Although almost all countries have taken some action to enhance participative equity in their country, only a minority have set up monitoring systems for measuring progress on the issue. There is still a long way to go before the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels will reflect the diversity of our populations.
19. National approaches to the social dimension are not yet successfully integrated with qualifications frameworks, strategies for lifelong learning, recognition of prior learning, flexible learning paths and support for mobility.
20. There are not yet sufficient data about the social dimension and mobility. The Eurostat and Eurostudent report is a first step in closing the information gap about participation rates and educational attainment levels in each country.

Global dimension

21. The Bologna Process has enhanced cooperation between countries, organisations and higher education institutions inside and outside Europe. While many countries report that they promote their own higher education systems internationally, very few of them seem to focus on promoting the EHEA.

Recommendations of 2009 Stocktaking

General recommendations to all stakeholders

Creating a dynamic and high-achieving EHEA will help the whole region to meet future challenges and adapt skilfully to a rapidly-changing global economic, political, social and technological environment. All stakeholders must re-affirm their full commitment to the goals of the EHEA and play an active part in the process of achieving them.

There is a need for continued close cooperation among all stakeholders to make the EHEA work successfully, guided by the collective vision of the participating countries. This collaboration will also enhance the effectiveness of links between the EHEA and other world regions.

Using the tools that have already been created within the Bologna Process will help to create a true culture of lifelong learning throughout the EHEA, with explicit links between learning outcomes, qualifications frameworks, quality assurance systems and recognition practices.

It is essential to adopt a more systematic approach to collecting and analysing data, to monitor progress on the agreed actions and to facilitate evidence-based policy-making and planning for the future.

Recommendations to countries

The following recommendations constitute concrete goals to be achieved in the short term.

Include all fields of study in the Bologna degree structure and promote greater awareness of the relevance of the degrees, both for employment and for access to the next cycle.

Implement a qualifications framework that includes all higher education qualifications.

Work towards achieving coherence in describing all higher education programmes using learning outcomes, to enhance the transparency of qualifications and to facilitate the full implementation of ECTS and the diploma supplement.

Ensure that the three parts of ESG – covering internal QA, external QA and the functioning of QA agencies - are fully implemented.

Engage fully in developing and implementing coherent and transparent practices for the recognition of higher education qualifications, so that a qualification has the same value across the EHEA.

Make lifelong learning a genuine reality for all citizens in the EHEA, by encouraging higher education to fulfil its public responsibility in enabling learners of all ages to participate in relevant programmes, enhancing the use of flexible learning paths and facilitating recognition of prior learning.

Promote greater mobility for students within and between cycles, exploiting fully the potential offered by the three-cycle system, using ECTS and increasing the supports for students studying abroad.

Collect and develop sound data and indicators to measure progress on the social dimension and on mobility.

Recommendations on the future stocktaking process

Stocktaking should continue, since it is widely acknowledged to have worked well as an integral part of the Bologna Process strategy. The methodology should be further refined based on the experiences of 2005, 2007 and 2009, with particular attention to simplifying the procedures and instruments, rigorously maintaining the reporting deadlines, and more effectively integrating data from sources such as Eurydice, Eurostat and Eurostudent. This will minimise duplication of effort and provide a sound objective data-set as a basis for quantitative analysis; additional complementary material for the qualitative dimension of the stocktaking can then be drawn from national reports.

There should continue to be a group that is given the responsibility of stocktaking, combined with a broader monitoring role. The functions of this group might be to:

- o Propose the issues for monitoring and stocktaking
- o Identify the data required
- o Analyse the data from various sources and compile stocktaking/monitoring reports at specified intervals
- o Make recommendations based on the findings of the stocktaking/monitoring exercises.

Bologna Stocktaking 2009

1 Overview of 2009 stocktaking

This part of the report explains the background to the 2009 stocktaking exercise, linking it to the findings of the 2007 stocktaking report and to the London Communiqué. It describes the methodology that was used in the 2009 stocktaking and it examines the progress across the various action lines in an integrated way, in response to the recommendation in the London Communiqué that the 2009 stocktaking should attempt to do this.

The role of stocktaking in the Bologna Process

The first stocktaking of progress in the Bologna Process was carried out in 2005, following a decision taken by the Ministers at their 2003 meeting in Berlin. When the stocktaking working group presented its report to the ministerial meeting in Bergen in 2005, the Ministers agreed that a second report should be prepared for their meeting in London in May 2007. In the London Communiqué, the Ministers asked for a further stocktaking report to be presented at their 2009 meeting in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve.

Since 2005, stocktaking within the Bologna Process has involved collaborative peer-reported self-evaluation, which has encouraged countries to take action at national level. All countries have made progress towards achieving the goals of the Bologna Process, and stocktaking has made the progress visible. The 2007 report recommended that the stocktaking exercise would continue and this was endorsed by the Ministers in the London Communiqué.

This report presents the results of the 2009 stocktaking, which was designed to check the progress that participating countries have made on the aspects of the Bologna Process that were included in the London Communiqué. The report gives an overview of progress since 2007 and also of progress towards achieving the 2010 goals of the Bologna Process.

Building on the findings of the 2007 stocktaking

The 2007 stocktaking report concluded that very good progress had been made on achieving the targets in three priority action lines set by Ministers in the Bergen communiqué: implementing the three-cycle degree system, quality assurance, and recognition of degrees and study periods. However, the 2007 report also identified a number of challenges that needed to be addressed if the Bologna goals were to be fully achieved by 2010.

Implementing the three-cycle degree system

The 2007 stocktaking found that the three-cycle degree system was at an advanced stage of implementation across the participating countries; the access from one cycle to the next had improved since 2005, and there was a growing trend towards providing structured doctoral programmes.

Work had started on implementing national frameworks for qualifications compatible with the overarching framework for qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

Some elements of flexible learning paths in higher education existed in all countries. In some countries they were at a more developed stage and included procedures for the recognition of prior learning.

Quality assurance in higher education

The 2007 stocktaking found that implementation of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, adopted in Bergen, had started on a widespread basis.

Student involvement in quality assurance had grown significantly since 2005, while there was still more work to be done on extending the level of international participation.

Recognition of degrees and study periods

The 2007 stocktaking found that there had been good progress towards incorporating the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention in national legislation and institutional practice. However, not all countries had yet ratified the Convention. In 2007, all countries had to submit National Action Plans for improving recognition and these were analysed over the 2007-2009 period.

The 2007 stocktaking also found that there was potential for an increase in the number of joint degrees awarded in two or more countries, as legal barriers to the recognition of joint degrees had been removed in most countries.

While it was found in 2007 that higher education institutions had begun to recognise prior learning (including non-formal and informal learning) for access to higher education programmes and qualifications, it was recognised that there was more work to be done in this area.

Linking higher education and research

The 2007 stocktaking found that many countries had begun to strengthen the links between the higher education and research sectors, and some had concrete plans to increase the numbers of doctoral graduates taking up research careers.

Achieving the 2010 goals of the Bologna Process

The 2007 report concluded that while the outlook for achieving the goals of the Bologna Process by 2010 was good, there were still some challenges to be faced, especially since progress was not uniform across all countries and all action lines.

In addition, while the 2007 stocktaking found that there had been good progress on specific action lines and indicators, it was considered important to look at these in a more integrated way because all aspects of the Bologna Process are interdependent. The report pointed to two themes that link all action lines: a focus on *learners*, and a focus on *learning outcomes*. The 2007 report suggested that if the Bologna Process was to be successful in meeting the needs and expectations of learners, learning outcomes should be used by all countries as the basis of their national qualifications frameworks, systems for credit transfer and accumulation, diploma supplements, recognition of prior learning and quality assurance. This was considered the critical precondition for achieving many of the goals of the Bologna Process by 2010.

The London Communiqué: issues for stocktaking in 2009

At the London Ministerial Conference in 2007, Ministers agreed that in the two years to 2009 they would concentrate on completing the agreed action lines, giving priority to the three-cycle degree system, quality assurance and recognition of degrees and study periods. They also agreed that they would focus in particular on the following areas for action:

- **Mobility** of students and staff
- The **social dimension** of higher education
- **Data collection** to measure progress towards the overall objectives for the social dimension and mobility
- **Employability** of graduates from each of the three cycles

- **The European Higher Education Area in a global context:** to improve the information available about the EHEA and to improve recognition based on the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

In the London Communiqué, the Ministers charged the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) with continuing the stocktaking process based on national reports in the period leading up to the 2009 Ministerial conference. They directed that stocktaking should continue to include the degree system and employability of graduates, recognition of degrees and study periods and implementation of all aspects of quality assurance in line with the European Standard and Guidelines (ESG). They requested further development of the qualitative analysis in stocktaking, particularly in relation to mobility, the Bologna Process in a global context and the social dimension. In addition, with a view to developing more student-centred, outcomes-based approaches to learning, they recommended that the 2009 stocktaking should address a number of themes in an integrated way: national qualifications frameworks, learning outcomes and credits, lifelong learning, and the recognition of prior learning.

¹ National Reports on 2007-2009 period can be found at <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/actionlines/stocktaking.htm>

2 Methodology

Terms of reference of the 2009 Stocktaking Working Group

The BFUG allocated the following specific tasks to the Stocktaking Working Group:

1. Identify the key issues to be addressed through the stocktaking and identify which issues should be covered by the quantifiable indicators
2. Develop the methodology to be used in this exercise, in particular addressing the requests by the ministers as stated in the London Communiqué:
 - identify the ways to further develop the qualitative analysis in stocktaking
 - identify the ways to address in an integrated way national qualifications frameworks, learning outcomes and credits, lifelong learning, and the recognition of prior learning
3. Collaborate with partner and other organisations in order to maximise the use of data sources;
4. Prepare the structure for the national reports to be submitted by Member States and used in the 2009 stocktaking
5. Prepare a report for approval by the BFUG in advance of the Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Conference in 2009.

Steps in the stocktaking process

In the period from November 2007 to March 2009 the working group met four times and, supported by the secretariat, it completed the following steps in the stocktaking process:

- defined the stocktaking methodology to allow for quantitative and qualitative analysis of data from various sources
- developed the stocktaking indicators and criteria for the 2009 scorecard
- formulated questions and devised the template for national reports
- gathered data by asking countries to submit national reports
- analysed data from national reports and other sources
- prepared the stocktaking report.²

² The working group met on 8 November 2007; 7 February 2008; 26-27 January and 13 March 2009.

The framework for stocktaking in 2009

The 2009 stocktaking built on the methodology that was developed in 2005 and further refined in 2007. It combined a quantitative and a qualitative approach to assessing progress within the Bologna Process. As on the two previous occasions, the working group decided that clearly measurable information would be included in the scorecard and other related issues would be covered in the text. In this way, the stocktaking exercise was manageable within the available resources.

It was decided that the data for the stocktaking would be drawn mainly from national reports submitted by all countries, backed up and validated by data from a number of other working groups. These groups have produced reports on the *EHEA in a Global Context*, *Data Collection*, *Mobility*, *Employability* and *Qualifications Frameworks* which are published separately. The report of the Social Dimension Coordination Group is annexed in full to this stocktaking report. The Stocktaking Working Group compared its findings with those of other groups and the results of the other groups are mentioned in this report where relevant to stocktaking. The Stocktaking Working Group also included a member from Eurydice, one from the EUA and one from ESU, which made it possible to share data.

The 2009 scorecard: stocktaking indicators and criteria

The working group used the 2007 scorecard indicators as a starting point, and made changes to take account of the progress that was expected to have happened within the two years since the previous stocktaking³. This meant that some of the 2009 indicators were omitted and some of the criteria for the colour categories were changed. The indicators for the 2009 stocktaking were approved by the Bologna Follow-up Group in April 2008.

National reports

The 2009 stocktaking was similar to the 2007 exercise in that the scorecard criteria were agreed at an early stage in the process. However, the 2009 template for national reports included a series of more detailed questions to elicit the appropriate data. It was sent to all participating countries in May 2008 together with the scorecard.⁴ This meant that all countries knew in advance the criteria against which progress on the indicators would be assessed in the stocktaking exercise. The deadline for submitting national reports was 1 November 2008, but very few national reports had arrived by the end of November; 39 countries had submitted their reports by the end of 2008. The total number of reports was 48: there are 46 countries in the Bologna Process, with two reports each for Belgium

³ Bologna Stocktaking report 2007 can be found at [http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/WGR2007/Stocktaking report2007.pdf](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/WGR2007/Stocktaking%20report2007.pdf)

⁴ The 2009 scorecard criteria and the templates for national reports are at <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/actionlines/stocktaking.htm>

and the United Kingdom.⁵ As on the two previous occasions, a few countries delayed the stocktaking process by submitting their reports very late - in several cases over three months late.

Analysing data from national reports and other sources

In their national reports, countries provided data about their progress on the Bologna action lines. They also described the processes initiated at national level to support implementation of the Bologna reforms. All national reports conformed to the template that was supplied, and the revised format of the questions seemed to make it easier to elicit the required information. However, some countries were later asked to supply more information on specific aspects that were unclear in their reports.

The secretariat sent the first draft of country scorecards to the countries for checking at the end of January 2009. If countries saw grounds to have a score revised, they were asked to supply relevant evidence to justify the revision. Some scores were changed on the basis of the new information that the countries submitted. In some other cases, it was decided that the score would not change but an explanatory note would be added to the text accompanying the country scorecard in the report.

While this stocktaking report presents an overview of the situation at the end of 2008, it is important to recognise that the situation is dynamic and ever-changing. Some countries have made more progress since scores were assigned on the basis of the information they gave in their national reports. This is mentioned in the note that accompanies each country scorecard, where appropriate.

When the analysis of stocktaking results from the national reports was complete, the working group had an opportunity to validate the findings against the reports of the other working groups, where they were relevant to stocktaking.

Integrating the Bologna action lines

The 2007 stocktaking report pointed out that while there had been progress on specific action lines and indicators, it was not enough to look at these in isolation because all aspects of the Bologna Process are interdependent. The report suggested that there were two themes that linked all action lines: a focus on *learners*, and a focus on *learning outcomes*. The London Communiqué clearly signalled that an important goal of the Bologna Process is “the development of more student-centred, outcome-based learning” and indicated that the 2009 Stocktaking exercise should “address in an integrated way national qualifications frameworks, learning outcomes and credits, lifelong learning, and the recognition of prior learning.” The endorsement of learning outcomes by the Ministers was a significant development, since the 2007 stocktaking report identified implementation of learning outcomes as a precondition for achieving many of the goals of the Bologna

⁵ <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/actionlines/stocktaking.htm>

Process by 2010. It remains equally true in 2009 that learning outcomes are central to the development of qualifications frameworks, systems for credit transfer and accumulation, the diploma supplement, recognition of prior learning and quality assurance.

In effect, the success of the Bologna Process depends on the comprehensive implementation of a learning outcomes approach in higher education. Learning outcomes are used in the Dublin descriptors, which are the basis of the three-cycle degree system. They also feature in the overarching framework of qualifications in the EHEA with which national frameworks are being aligned. They are an essential ingredient in quality assurance systems and in ECTS-compliant procedures for credit accumulation and transfer. They make transparency and recognition of qualifications more easily manageable. In short, learning outcomes encapsulate a learner-centred approach and shift the focus in higher education away from the traditional teacher-centred or institution-centred perspective.

A recent CEDEFOP study addressed the shift towards learning outcomes in European education policies and practice in the 32 countries taking part in the *Education and Training 2010* process⁶. The study found that there is broad agreement among policy-makers, social partners and education and training practitioners that learning outcomes can improve access to and progression within education, training and lifelong learning. The authors note that the shift to learning outcomes is important for several reasons: firstly, it moves the emphasis from *providers* of education and training to *learners* and it increases the transparency of qualifications, which is of benefit both to individual learners and employers. Secondly, it introduces a common language that can promote greater understanding, reducing barriers and building bridges between different education and training sectors and systems. Thirdly, it is an important tool for international cooperation, because learning outcomes focus on the profile and content of qualifications, rather than on the institutions that award them. The increasing use of learning outcomes is expected to have an impact on the organisation of institutions, as well as on curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and quality assurance.

The study shows, however, that countries still have a long way to go in implementing learning outcomes in their higher education systems: this is seen as partly attributable to the “bottom-up” institution-led approach, as opposed to an externally-imposed direction. It is as yet unclear how long it will take to implement the widespread reform at institutional level, which is where it counts most. This echoes the findings of the Bologna 2009 stocktaking exercise that the movement towards adopting a learning outcomes approach in higher education takes time. This is particularly evident in the slow progress that has been made on establishing national qualifications frameworks and arrangements for the recognition of prior learning. Very few countries have put in place national qualifications frameworks that provide seamless progression for learners throughout lifelong learning.

⁶ http://www.cedefop.europe.eu/etv/Information_resources/Bookshop/publication_download.asp?pub_id=525&dl_id=1663&pub_lang=EN

The CEDEFOP study notes that

The potential and widespread significance of learning outcomes is only just beginning to be realised. Their introduction is designed to facilitate the fundamental reform of existing qualifications and the creation of new ones fit for the 21st century. It is arguable that the main end product of the Bologna reforms is better qualifications based on learning outcomes and not just new educational structures. For this sort of bottom-up approach there is a need for fundamental change at institutional level where academics are responsible for creating and maintaining qualifications. This transformation from using traditional input/content approaches to output/outcomes approaches to conceive, validate, monitor and express qualifications is proving slow and difficult...The ministers responsible for implementing Bologna have supported profound changes driven by the adoption of learning outcomes, which are arguably the single most important catalyst for transformation working alongside credits and new style qualifications frameworks. (Ibid. p.82)

Learning outcomes provide a common language that is used in the development of qualifications frameworks, which in turn have been found to improve the transparency, quality, accessibility, linkages and public awareness and labour market recognition of qualifications within a country and internationally. Such frameworks also establish inter-relationships between qualifications for the purposes of recognising equivalence and for articulation and progression between qualifications. When they are based on learning outcomes and include arrangements for credit transfer and accumulation, qualifications frameworks support the recognition of prior learning - including non-formal and informal learning - for the purposes of access and the award of credits towards qualifications. From the learner's perspective, qualifications frameworks also improve access to learning opportunities for all, thereby promoting social inclusion; they open up alternative routes of entry to, progression within and exit from higher education; they provide greater opportunities for lifelong learning and they support the mobility of learners and workers.

As education and training systems have become more dynamic and diverse, and as economic and social demands upon them increase, it is not surprising that governments should regard qualifications frameworks as useful policy instruments. They bring a degree of co-ordination and coherence to disparate qualifications arrangements, and to the institutions and providers that award qualifications. Many of the national qualifications frameworks that have been developed in the participating countries share common features of improving access and progression, reducing sectoral boundaries and rigidities, providing for broader recognition of learning outcomes, flexibility and seamlessness. They seek to reconcile the tensions between the need for greater flexibility at individual level and the rigidity of institutional arrangements, between a focus on the learner and a focus on the system. National qualifications frameworks therefore can be seen as adding important value to the qualifications system by making it more transparent, more coherent, more accessible, more flexible, more consistent in quality and generally more responsive to the needs of learners, society and the economy.

However it is clear that very few countries in the Bologna Process will have completed the implementation of national frameworks for higher education by 2010: the deadline set by Ministers will not be met. Although some progress has been made since 2007, only a small number of countries have fully implemented qualifications frameworks and many are still at the early stages of development, so the full implementation of qualifications frameworks in all countries of the EHEA will not happen for some time.

The ECTS is a mechanism for the recognition of smaller “bundles” of learning outcomes than those associated with traditional qualifications, for the purposes of credit accumulation and transfer. It is particularly relevant in promoting student mobility and providing flexible pathways for lifelong learning, since learners can gather credits towards qualifications over a longer period if the conventional model of whole-time study is not suitable to their personal circumstances. Although ECTS has been part of the Bologna process since 1999, it is still not fully implemented across all the countries. In the 2009 stocktaking, credits had to be demonstrably linked with learning outcomes, so the scores on this indicator shifted downwards compared to 2007, when it was enough that ECTS was used for both credit accumulation and credit transfer. This indicates that there is still not enough integration at national level between the qualifications framework, learning outcomes and ECTS, as was suggested in the 2007 report. Many countries appear to have pursued these action lines separately without paying adequate attention to how they could be integrated in policy and practice.

There is ample evidence to support the important role played by qualifications systems in promoting lifelong learning. In 2002-2004, the OECD undertook a project which sought to examine countries’ experiences of dealing with the pressures and demands on qualifications systems over the previous decade, identify common policy issues and challenges, and share experience and instruments for designing and managing qualifications systems, including frameworks of qualifications. Each participating country produced an extensive background report and the resulting analysis is included in a 2007 publication⁷, which provides valuable insights into the impact of qualifications systems on learners, education and training systems, societies and economies. The findings of the project suggest that mechanisms such as qualifications frameworks, credit transfer, recognition of prior learning, and stakeholder involvement are especially powerful in promoting lifelong learning.

While the 2009 stocktaking has not allowed for a formal statistical correlation of countries’ scores on the various indicators, it is clear from the analysis of national reports that the most “successful” and high-scoring countries are those where learning outcomes have become embedded in higher education practice. These countries have generally made most progress on implementing national qualifications frameworks, lifelong learning and recognition of prior learning. Their quality systems are also more fully developed, and they have fully implemented the diploma supplement and ECTS.

In conclusion, it is abundantly clear both from the 2009 stocktaking and from other international studies that effective implementation of learning outcomes is linked to success-

⁷ http://www.oecd.org/document/53/0,3343,en_2649_34509_38465013_1_1_1_1,00.html

ful achievement of major Bologna Process goals, including in particular the development of national qualifications frameworks integrating the three-cycle degree system; credit transfer and accumulation; recognition of qualifications and of prior learning, and provision of flexible learning paths as part of the lifelong learning continuum. Conversely, the slow movement of many countries towards adopting a learning outcomes approach is an obstacle to progress on these other important goals. This represents a significant challenge for ministries and higher education institutions over the coming years. Many countries are still in the early stages of developing and implementing learning outcomes and qualifications frameworks. The support that the Bologna Process provides for collective efforts and sharing of practice among peers will be especially important as the work progresses in these countries.

3 Analysis of 2009 stocktaking results

This part of the report analyses the results of the 2009 stocktaking, showing where there has been any notable progress or lack of progress towards achieving the goals of the Bologna Process by 2010. It includes results, comments and analysis for each indicator in the scorecard and also for the other aspects of the stocktaking that were not included in the scorecard. The level of progress is assessed by comparing the 2009 data with the 2007 stocktaking results, where the indicators are directly comparable.

3 Analysis of 2009 stocktaking results	29
3.1 Stocktaking on the Degree System	30
Scorecard indicators 1-3	30
Employability of graduates	43
Implementation of the third cycle	47
3.2 Stocktaking on the implementation of quality assurance	50
Evaluating national QA systems against	
European Standards and Guidelines	50
Internal quality assurance inside HEIs	51
Scorecard indicators 4-6	57
3.3 Stocktaking on recognition, lifelong learning and mobility	66
Scorecard indicators 7-10	66
RPL and flexible learning paths	81
Joint degrees	87
Student and Staff mobility	89
3.4 The European Higher Education Area in a global context	93
3.5 Future challenges	96

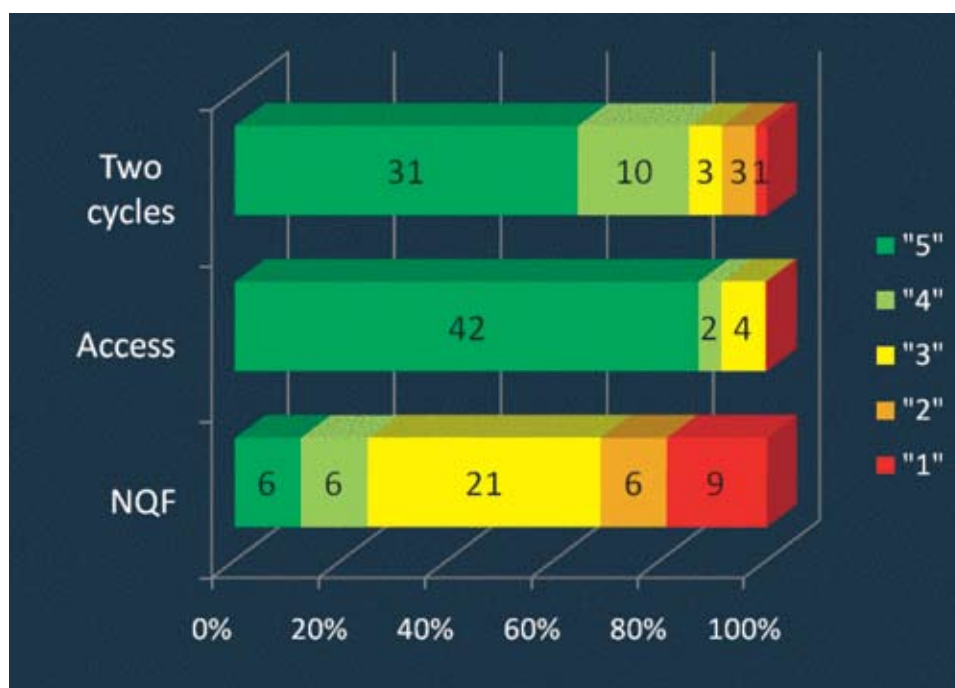
3.1 Stocktaking on the Degree System

Scorecard indicators 1-3

Table 1. Number of countries⁸ in each colour category for indicators 1-3

DEGREE SYSTEM	Green	Light green	Yellow	Orange	Red
1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	31	10	3	3	1
2. Access to the next cycle	42	2	4	0	0
3. Implementation of national qualifications framework	6	6	21	6	9

Figure 1. Degree system: number and percentage of countries in each colour category for indicators 1-3



⁸ Throughout this report, the term *countries* is used for simplicity, although in the cases of Belgium and United Kingdom there are actually two different *education systems* in the same country.

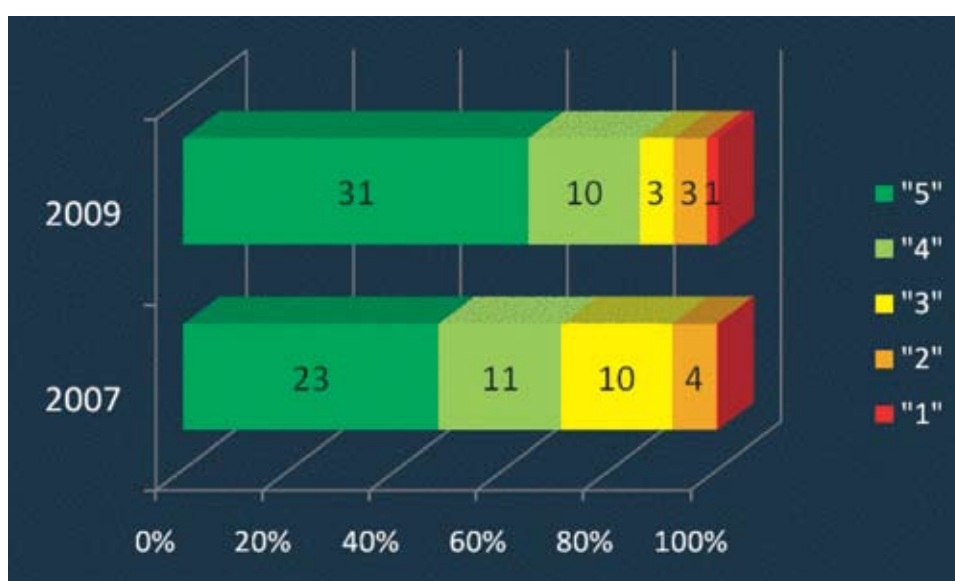
Indicator 1: Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle

Number of countries in each score category for Indicator 1	31	10	3	3	1
Green (5)	At least 90% of all students are enrolled in a two-cycle degree system that is in accordance with the Bologna principles				
Light green (4)	70-89 % of all students are enrolled in a two-cycle degree system that is in accordance with the Bologna principles				
Yellow (3)	50-69 % of all students are enrolled in a two-cycle degree system that is in accordance with the Bologna principles				
Orange (2)	25-49 % of all students are enrolled in a two-cycle degree system that is in accordance with the Bologna principles				
Red (1)	Less than 25% of students are enrolled in a two-cycle degree system that is in accordance with the Bologna principles				

This indicator measures progress on implementing the Bologna reforms in the degree system. Countries were asked to give the percentage of students below doctoral level enrolled in the two-cycle degree system.

Achieving the goals seems to be only question of time; however in some countries the actual proportion of students studying in the Bologna three-cycle system is still low.

Figure 2. Indicator 1: Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle. Number and percentage of countries in each colour category - 2007 and 2009



The results show that in around 85% of countries all or almost all students below doctoral level are enrolled in the two-cycle degree system in accordance with Bologna principles.

In both the 2009 and 2007 stocktaking, Indicator 1 measured the level of student enrolment in the two-cycle system. Figure 2 shows that there has been good progress on implementing the first and second cycle since 2007: even though the indicator was more demanding in 2009, the results are substantially better.

Most countries have completed the process of introducing the first and second cycle of the degree system: however there are still four countries that have less than half of their students enrolled in the two-cycle system. While it seemed from the results of the 2007 stocktaking that this action line would be fully implemented by 2010, the 2009 stocktaking shows that there is still a little way to go before this particular goal of the Bologna Process is achieved. In most cases this means that little or no additional effort is needed – for example in countries where the legislation is in place and students have already been admitted to the two-cycle system, it is just a question of time until all the students who were enrolled in the previous system have graduated.

Conclusion

The criterion for “green” on this indicator is that 90% of students are enrolled in the two-cycle degree system. This takes account of the fact that in some countries certain regulated professions (e.g. medicine) and some specific disciplines (e.g. art and music) are not yet included in the two-cycle system. With present criteria these countries can still be in the “green” category. It will take more time and effort to include these disciplines and professions into two-cycle system.

Recommendation

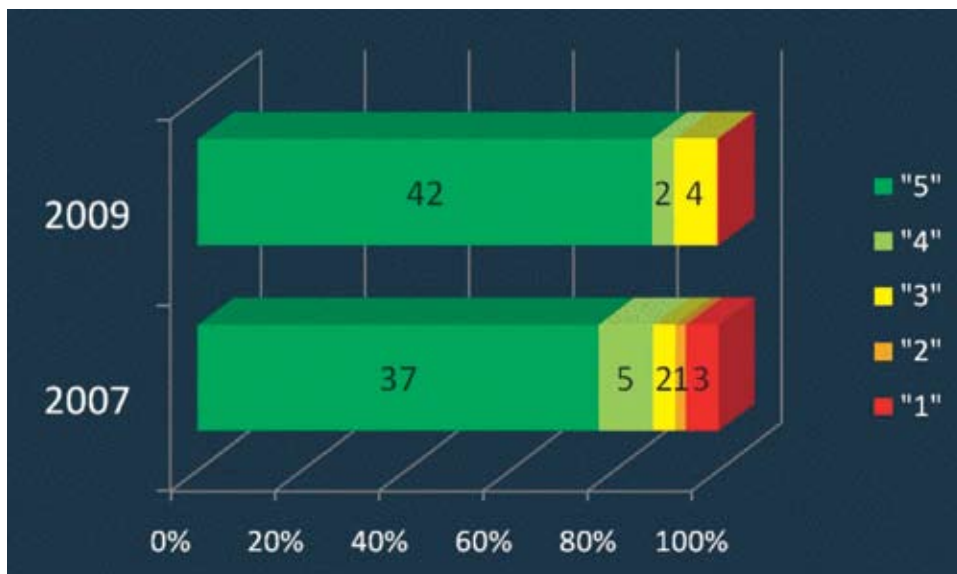
Efforts to include the professions and disciplines that are currently not included in the two-cycle system should be supported, and progress should be monitored in the coming years.

Indicator 2: Access to the next cycle

Number of countries in each score category for Indicator 2.	42	2	4	0	0
Green (5)	All first cycle qualifications give access to several second cycle programmes and all second cycle qualifications give access to at least one third cycle programme without major transitional problems				
Light green (4)	All first cycle qualifications give access to at least one second cycle programme and all second cycle qualifications give access to at least one third cycle programme without major transitional problems				
Yellow (3)	There are some (less than 25%) first cycle qualifications that do not give access to the second cycle and/or some second cycle qualifications that do not give access to the third cycle				
Orange (2)	A significant number (25-50%) of first and/or second cycle qualifications do not give access to the next cycle				
Red (1)	Most (more than 50%) first and/or second cycle qualifications do not give access to the next cycle OR there are no arrangements for access to the next cycle				

Figure 3. Indicator 2: Access to the next cycle. Number and percentage of countries in each colour category - 2007 and 2009

The results look good, but the additional analysis shows that the "green" is not so green in this indicator as in a number of countries students have to meet additional requirements to actually gain admission.



This indicator was meant to check whether national higher education structures ensure that students completing a Bologna cycle have access to the next cycle. The countries were asked to report the percentage of first cycle qualifications that give access to the second cycle, the percentage of second cycle qualifications that give access to the third cycle, and to specify any qualifications that did not give access to the next cycle. They were also asked to indicate whether there were any special requirements for access to second cycle programmes, including entrance examinations, completion of additional courses or work experience. As in the 2005 and 2007 stocktaking, access was defined according to the Lisbon Recognition Convention as “the right of qualified candidates to apply and to be considered for admission”. Thus, the indicator measured whether students had the *right to apply* and be considered for admission, rather than the actual student numbers progressing to the next cycle.

In 2009, indicator 2 was exactly the same as in 2007, so it is possible to compare the results and monitor change over the two-year period. Fig 3 shows that there has been some further progress on access to the next cycle since 2007: there are no longer any countries in which first or second cycle qualifications do not give access to the next cycle.

Figure 4. Number of countries applying special requirements for admission to a second cycle programme in the same field of studies

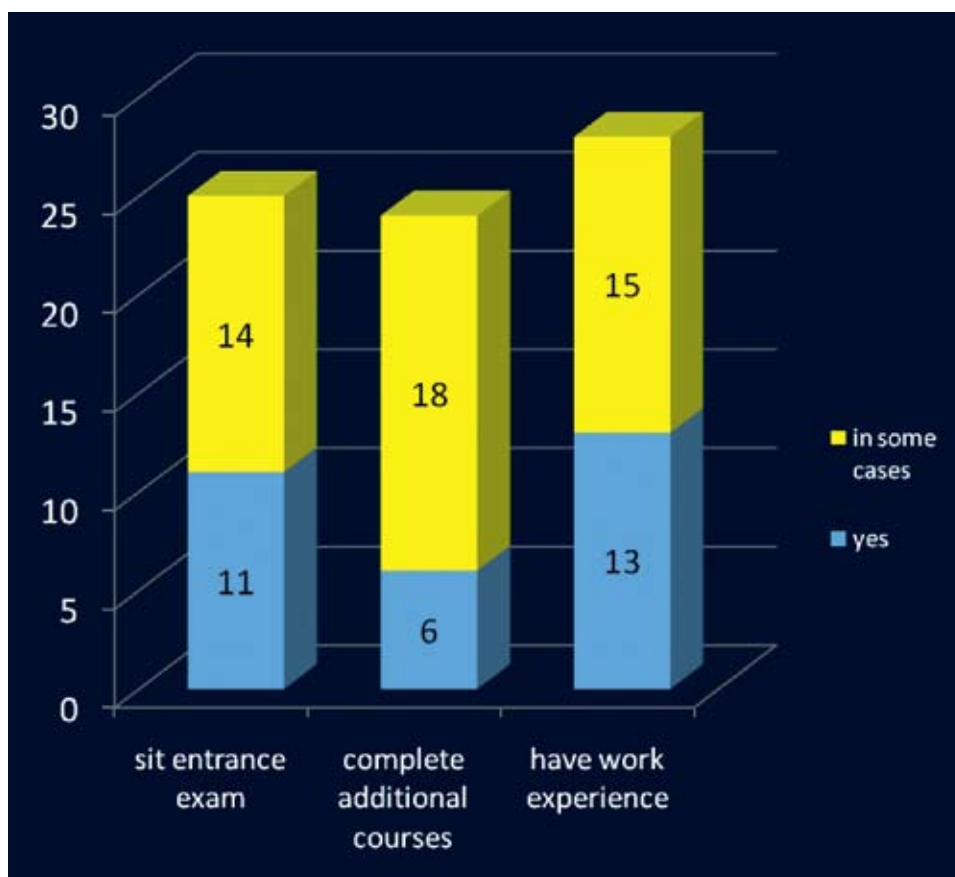


While almost 90% of the countries reported that there is access to the next cycle without barriers, there are nevertheless many cases where there are “special requirements” for progression from one cycle to the next cycle (Fig.4). In some countries entrance examinations, additional courses or work experience are required for progression either within the same field OR to different study fields, or when students switch from specific first

cycle qualifications, for example in a professional discipline. Although the countries and the HEIs do not regard these as “major transitional problems”, students and graduates may often have a different view. Fig.4 shows that in over one-third of countries some or all first cycle graduates must sit an entrance examination, complete additional courses or have work experience before progressing to the second cycle in the SAME field of studies.

Countries were asked which groups of students must meet these special requirements: all students; holders of particular first cycle qualifications, or students of the same field coming from other HEIs. The most common answer, given by nearly half of countries, is that the requirements apply to ALL students. More than 25% of countries report that holders of particular first cycle qualifications must meet the special requirements. This includes graduates from professional or vocational first cycle programmes who want to progress to academic study in the second cycle. In addition, some countries have two levels of bachelor degrees that match the Dublin descriptors, but some of these qualifications do not give direct access to the second cycle, so bridging courses or a period of relevant work experience may be required. Such measures are seen by those countries as ways of widening access to the next cycle.

Figure 5. Number of countries applying special requirements for admission to a second cycle programme for students coming from other fields of studies



First cycle graduates who want to progress to the second cycle in a different field of studies are even more likely to have to meet special requirements than those progressing within the same field. Almost two-thirds of countries expect such graduates to have work experience, half require them to complete additional courses, and in 40% of the countries they have to sit an entrance examination.

Conclusion

Although there is some progress since 2007, there are still many first cycle graduates who have difficulties when seeking admission to the second cycle. Some of these difficulties arise in countries where there are two levels of bachelor degrees, each of which matches the first cycle descriptor but not all of which give direct access to the second cycle. This different treatment of bachelor degrees means that some of the qualifications that match the first cycle descriptor are not regarded as “end of first cycle” qualifications. This presents a challenge to the overarching qualifications frameworks in an EHEA context.

Recommendation

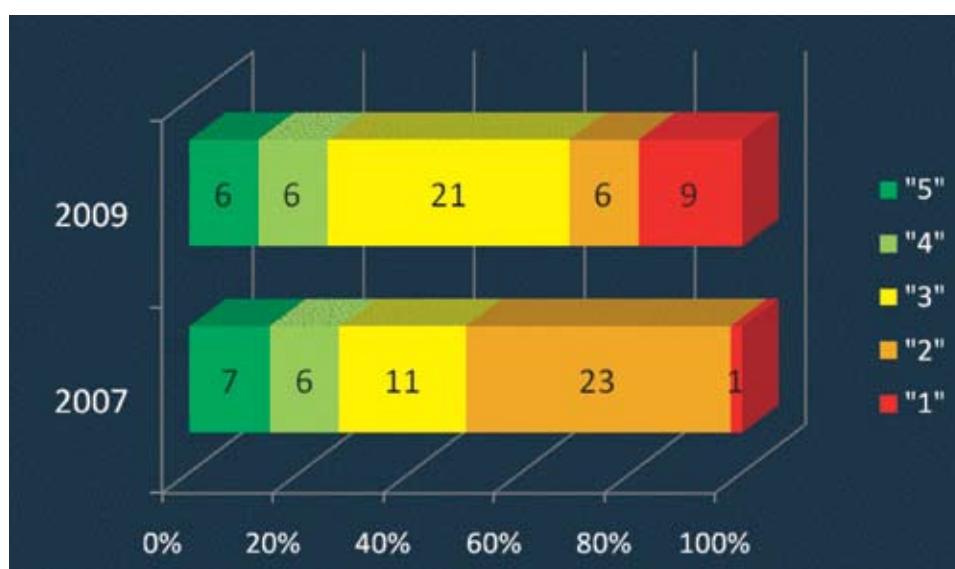
There should be more open and transparent information about the admission requirements at all levels - particularly for the second and third cycles - so that students do not interpret these as “major transitional problems”. On the contrary, in many cases the requirements can be a way of widening access to the second and third cycles for holders of professional qualifications or for people returning to higher studies following a period of work experience.

Indicator 3: Implementation of national qualifications framework

Number of countries in each score category for Indicator 3	6	6	21	6	9
Green (5)	A NQF compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA has been developed, and all national qualifications are visibly linked with learning outcomes National qualifications have been included in the NQF through a quality assurance procedure. The agreed self-certification procedure with participation of international experts has been completed, including publication of a final report.				
Light green (4)	A NQF compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA has been developed and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all necessary the necessary formal decisions for establishing the framework have been taken • implementation of the NQF has started • the agreed self-certification procedure has started 				
Yellow (3)	A proposal for a NQF compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA has been discussed at the national level but the necessary formal decisions for establishing the framework have not yet been taken				
Orange (2)	A proposal for a NQF compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA has been prepared and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • includes generic cycle descriptors based on learning outcomes • includes ECTS credit ranges in the first and second cycles and a timetable for consulting relevant stakeholders has been drawn up but the consultation process has not yet been completed 				
Red (1)	The development process leading to a NQF compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA has been completed but no timetable for consultation or adoption has been established or the development process leading to a NQF compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA has been launched but has not been completed or work on the development process leading to a NQF compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA has not been launched or is at a preliminary or exploratory stage.				

Figure 6. Indicator 3: Implementation of national qualifications frameworks. Number of countries in each colour category - 2007 and 2009

Measuring success against expectations for 2010, the picture is less optimistic compared to 2007, when countries just had to start implementing their qualifications frameworks – in 2009 only a small number of countries have fully implemented qualifications frameworks and many are just beginning the process.



This indicator was introduced in 2007, to monitor the stages of progress towards implementing a national qualifications framework in line with the framework for the EHEA that was adopted by the Ministers in Bergen. At the London conference in 2007, the Ministers noted that some initial progress had been made towards introducing national qualifications frameworks, but that much more effort was required. In the London Communiqué, they stated their commitment to implementing national qualifications frameworks for higher education and having them certified against the overarching Framework of Qualifications in the EHEA by 2010.

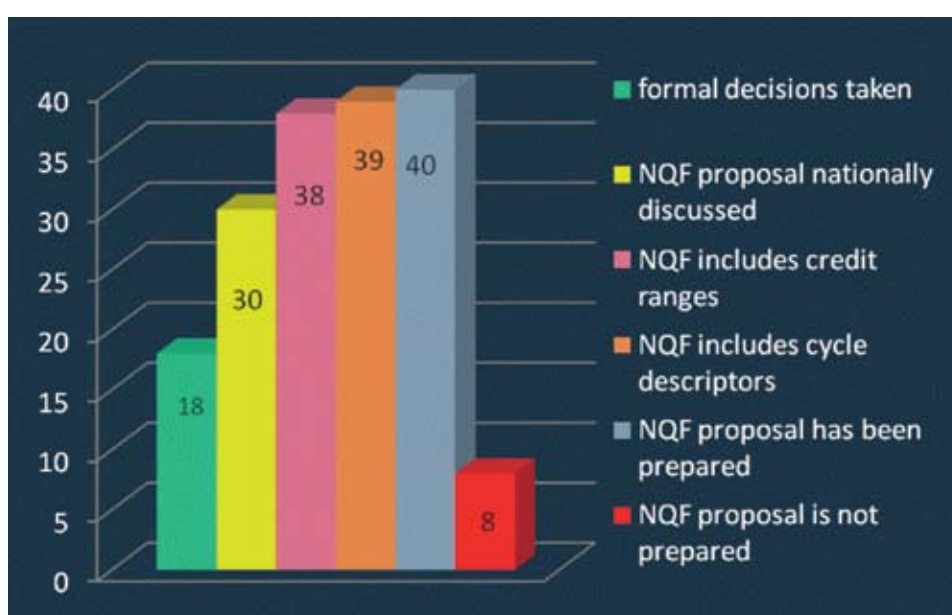
The indicator was substantially more demanding in 2009 compared to 2007: to be scored "green" in 2009 a country was required to have its national qualifications framework for higher education implemented and also to have completed self-certification of the NQF with the EHEA overarching framework. In addition, while in 2007 it was sufficient to have established a working group to score at least "orange", in 2009 it was required that a proposal for a national qualifications framework for higher education had already been prepared.

Even though the picture in 2009 looks less green than in 2007, there has been quite significant progress over the period. While only a small number of countries managed to complete the self-certification and score "green", a considerable number have prepared a national qualifications framework proposal and some of them have started implementation.

Figures 7 and 8 show more details on the status of the national qualifications framework proposal, implementation of the national qualifications framework for higher education at national and institutional levels, and the self-certification respectively.

Figure 7 reflects the situation in designing the national qualifications framework with cycle descriptors and credit ranges, discussing the prepared framework proposal nationally with all the stakeholders and making the necessary arrangements or formal decisions so that the NQF is officially approved.

Figure 7. Number of countries having fulfilled each step in preparing the national qualifications framework proposal for higher education



Four years after the commitment was made to develop NQFs in the Bergen Communiqué, more than 80% of the countries have prepared their NQF proposals; a couple of countries that have not completed the NQF proposal report that they have already prepared credit ranges or cycle descriptors, but almost a quarter of the countries still have not prepared a NQF proposal with cycle descriptors.

Thirty countries have discussed the national qualifications proposal with all the relevant stakeholders. Having the national qualifications framework proposal discussed is an important landmark in the development of the national qualifications frameworks, as at this point it is possible in principle to start implementation of elements of the NQF in practice even if the necessary arrangements and decisions for implementation of the NQF are not yet completed - which only 18 countries have managed to do so far.

According to the findings of the Qualifications Frameworks Coordination group, most countries are in the first five out of the ten steps towards developing NQFs: this is reflected in the report of the group.⁹

Figure 8. Number of countries having fulfilled each step in implementing the national qualifications framework



Six countries have already fully implemented the national qualifications framework, completed self-certification and published the report – but these mainly are countries that started to introduce their qualifications frameworks long before 2005. Another six countries report that there has been significant progress in implementation and seven answered that the work of describing all qualifications in terms of learning outcomes and competencies has been completed.

Ten countries have not yet started implementation of their national qualifications framework and nineteen countries state that while they have started implementation, they have not completed the formal arrangements and taken decisions on national qualifications framework implementation, which means that the implementation, if started, is still at an early stage. Thus, the data on Fig. 8 show that in more than half the countries implementation of the national qualifications framework either has not started or has been started but is still in its initial stages. Nevertheless, the results indicate that implementation may sometimes be more advanced at institutional level than at national policy level: in some cases HEIs have gone ahead and started developments (e.g. writing learning outcomes) while awaiting formal decisions establishing the framework. Such initiative is seen as positive; however it is important to ensure that all developments within the country are consistent with a coherent national qualifications framework.

⁹ www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/conference/documents/2009_QF_CG_report.pdf

As regards the self-certification which was compulsory to score “green” in the indicator 3, there are six countries/ educational systems that have completed the self-certification procedure and all of them have published their final self-certification report. Nine more countries claim to have started the self-certification, although in some cases this is taking place at a very early stage of implementing the NQF at institutional level, so therefore the process is likely to take some time to complete.

Conclusions

The deadline to have completed the implementation of NQFs for HE by 2010 appears to have been too ambitious. Although there has been significant effort towards implementing qualifications frameworks (cf. report of the QF coordination group) and there is progress since 2007, there are still a large number of countries that are just beginning or have not yet started the implementation at institutional level, therefore the full implementation of qualifications frameworks will take some time. The Qualifications Frameworks Coordination group states in its report that developing and describing learning outcomes is one of the greatest challenges that the EHEA will face over the next few years. This is also clear from looking at the implementation deadlines the countries have set for NQF implementation: a number of countries indicate that while they have made good progress in setting up and implementing their NQFs for HE, they do not expect to complete implementation by 2010 but are aiming to do it by 2012, 2013 or 2015.

It seems that there is not enough integration at national level between the qualifications framework, learning outcomes and ECTS, as was suggested in the 2007 Stocktaking report. In attempting to improve their practice on each individual indicator, many countries continued to pursue these action lines separately. As the 2007 stocktaking report noted however, national frameworks of qualifications will bring together a number of strands of the Bologna Process, all of which are based on a learning outcomes approach: quality assurance; credit transfer and accumulation systems; recognition of prior learning; lifelong learning; flexible learning paths and the social dimension.

The QF group report points out that the existence of two overarching frameworks may have caused delays in implementing the NQF in some countries.¹⁰ However in the London Communiqué the Ministers expressed confidence that national qualifications frameworks compatible with the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA would also be compatible with the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

¹⁰ www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/conference/documents/2009_QF_CG_report.pdf

Recommendations

- Countries should not wait until their whole national qualifications framework is developed in accordance with EQF, but they should continue to develop their higher education framework and link it with other levels of qualifications at a later stage.
- While any implementation of the framework at HEI level should be within the context of national policy to guarantee the credibility of qualifications, institutions should be encouraged and supported to work towards describing their programmes in learning outcomes (in the form of knowledge, skills and competences).

Employability of graduates

The Bologna working group on employability (Employability WG) has defined employability as:

...the ability to gain initial meaningful employment, or to become self-employed, to maintain employment, and to be able to move around within the labour market.

Point 7 in the National Report template dealt with the employability of graduates, particularly at the first cycle level, as well as the involvement of employers in curriculum development, quality assurance and in the governance of HEIs.

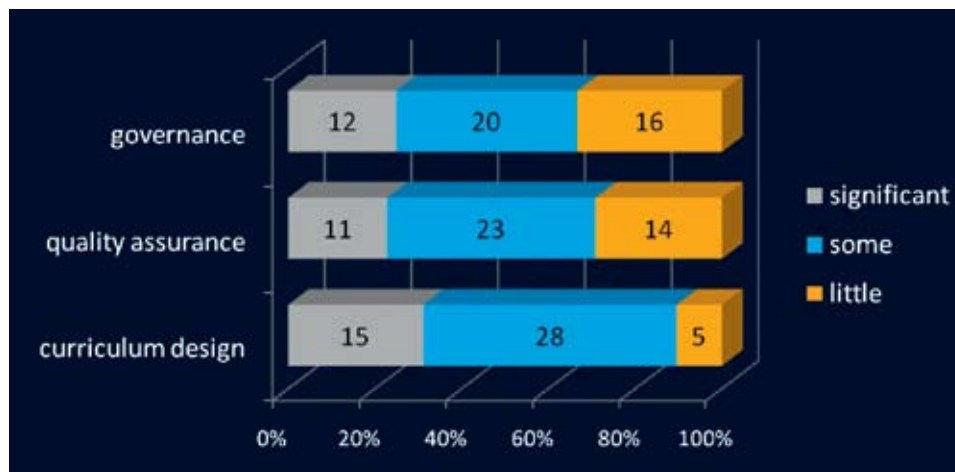
As in 2007, the answers from the countries did not provide sufficient information on the statistics for graduate employment to make EHEA-wide comparisons. While question 7a) of the National Report template explicitly asked countries to include the most recent statistical data on the employment status of graduates of all cycles, most countries at best provided overall unemployment data. There were a few exceptions where countries provided all the necessary graduate employment statistics. At the same time, some countries explained that they were unable to provide data on the graduates because the Bologna three-cycle degree system was introduced too recently and there were no graduates from it yet. However, from the answers to the rest of the questions on employability it was possible to make some qualitative analysis.

Involvement of employers

The answers to point 7b) in the National Reports demonstrated that employability of graduates is seen by higher education institutions and governments as one of the most important focal points for higher education. A number of countries have held discussions and consultations with all higher education stakeholders over the period since the London ministerial conference in 2007 and some have adopted legislation obliging HEIs to involve employers and other stakeholders in curriculum development, quality assurance and/ or governance of HEIs.

Figure 9 shows the number of countries that characterised the involvement of employers as “significant”, “some”, “little” or “none”. According to Figure 9 the involvement of employers is greatest in curriculum design – and indeed a number of countries reported that employers have been involved in programme committees, and in discussions of the curriculum before its approval or otherwise. Employers are less involved in quality assurance and governance of HEIs. Overall, there is room for improvement as “some” involvement, which is the dominant answer, is not a guarantee of the relevance of all degrees to the needs of labour market.

Figure 9. Involvement of employers in curriculum design, quality assurance and governance of HEIs (number of countries giving each answer)



The Employability WG has noted that employers and HEIs still have to learn how to work with each other in order to improve the employability of graduates. While some employers' dissatisfaction with the preparedness of graduates to work in their profession has been long known, the Employability WG has also indicated that some universities query whether employability should be a part of their mission and purpose – a phenomenon that may put at risk universities' own competitiveness, especially in the current global economic situation. It should be underlined that employability of graduates is one of the core purposes of higher education, as stated in the London Communiqué: preparing students for life as active citizens in a democratic society; preparing students for their future careers and enabling their personal development; creating and maintaining a broad, advanced knowledge base, and stimulating research and innovation¹¹.

Bachelor graduates in employment and further studies

As in the 2007 stocktaking, the quality of responses to this question was very varied and a great number of countries could not provide statistical data on first- and second-cycle graduates separately. In some cases this was because there have not as yet been any graduates of the Bologna three-cycle system. In addition, information from some countries was limited to the proportion of higher education graduates in the overall national unemployment figure. As in 2007, a great number of countries in their 2009 national reports were still optimistic regarding the employment prospects of higher education graduates, regardless of whether they graduate from the Bologna system or from "old" programmes. This is seen as being closely linked to the overall situation in the economy and the labour market, and it was repeatedly mentioned by countries that fluctuations in the economy probably have a much greater impact on graduate employment than the efforts of HEIs to improve employability.

¹¹ cf. London communiqué,
http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/MDC/London_Communique18May2007.pdf

To complement the findings of the 2009 stocktaking, the Data Collection Working Group found that the increased share of the population having completed tertiary education in recent decades, coupled with the emerging changes in economic conditions, means that new graduates are now entering a more competitive labour market than ever before. Young graduates who have completed their studies within the last two years are significantly more affected by unemployment than their more experienced peers.

With specific regard to the employment of graduates with first cycle qualifications, the observation is the same as in 2007: where the data were available, most “professional-type” bachelor graduates were in employment and only a small proportion of them chose further studies, while the reverse situation was observed for holders of “academic” bachelor degrees. Some countries reported that since 2007 the proportion of academic bachelor graduates in employment has grown, but this might be explained more by the overall economic and labour market situation in recent years than simply by better acceptance of first cycle graduates in the labour market.

Since the introduction of the Bologna three-cycle system, the employability of graduates with bachelor degrees has been a particularly strong issue in some countries, as was also confirmed by the findings of the Employability WG. However, the fact that bachelor graduates successfully enter the labour market in countries where the bachelor-master system has been in place already for a longer time suggests that the issue of employability of bachelor graduates might be mainly a transitional problem caused both by the perceptions of employers and by some countries rushing to introduce the reforms without sufficient effort to make bachelor degrees more relevant to the labour market.

It is also important to note that several countries more or less explicitly stated that they aim to encourage a high number of “academic” bachelors to continue in master studies and they therefore do not specifically promote the entry of first-cycle graduates to the labour market. Likewise, in countries that have binary systems, most professional bachelor graduates progress directly to the labour market. Some of these may choose to undertake master studies following a period of work experience, as noted in the earlier comments on Indicator 2, Access to the next cycle.

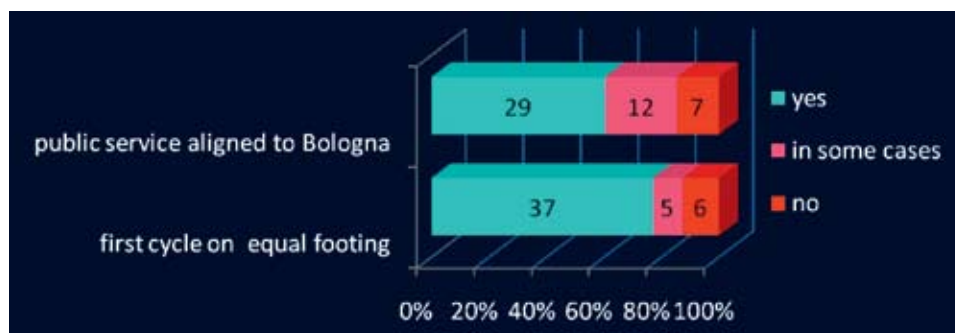
In the 2009 national reports, the most frequently mentioned measures to improve employability of graduates included involvement of employers in various ways: in curriculum design and development, in quality assurance and governance and in the preparation of professional standards and profiles. There was also an emphasis on including key competences in curricula, expansion of practical courses and internships/ placements, and full implementation of national qualifications frameworks. The Employability WG suggested actions that could be taken by governments, HEIS and employers to improve the employability of graduates, for example by raising awareness of the Bologna Process and the value of bachelor degrees; establishing national qualifications frameworks, and promoting greater dialogue between higher education institutions and employers.

Bachelor degrees and public service

Questions 7c) and 7d) in the National Report template were designed to clarify whether first-cycle graduates are able to pursue careers in the public service on an equal footing

with other graduates, and whether recruitment procedures and career structures in the public service have been aligned to take account of the Bologna changes respectively.

Figure 10. Measures taken to ensure that first cycle graduates are able to pursue careers in the public service (number of countries giving each answer)



The results are shown in Fig. 10. It should be noted that some countries may not have fully understood this question, especially the concept of “equal footing”. The results should therefore be interpreted with caution. The vast majority of countries stated that first-cycle graduates are indeed able to pursue careers in the public service on an equal footing with other graduates. Some countries however mentioned that the job descriptions of some higher public service professions corresponded to higher Bologna cycles and might thus not be open to first-cycle graduates.

A number of countries stated in their national reports that they have made changes to align their legislation or recruitment procedures for the public service with the Bologna reforms. As shown in Fig. 10, in around two-thirds of the countries holders of first-cycle degrees are not discriminated against when seeking jobs in the public service.

Conclusions

- While countries say that employability is important, they have not gathered sufficient data to support this assertion. With the growing number of bachelor graduates, as well as the rapidly changing economic environment and its impact on labour markets, there is an urgent need for countries to set up systems to track the employability of graduates in the future.
- The acceptability of bachelor degrees in the labour market can depend as much on the established custom and practice of different countries as on the effective implementation of the Bologna reforms.

Altogether, the employability issues indicated in the national reports seem to be in accordance with the findings of the Employability WG which has also identified the main challenges to improving the employability of graduates.

Implementation of the third cycle

Normal length of full-time doctoral studies

Overall, the implementation of the third cycle is progressing, the number of structured doctoral programmes is growing and more universities have established doctoral schools. Few countries provided statistical data on the proportion of doctoral students in the overall student body. Most countries indicated three years as the nominal length of doctoral studies, but some also suggested that the real time needed to acquire a doctoral degree may be longer, and often requires four years of full-time study. In two countries there still exist “old” doctoral programmes of two years’ duration but these are gradually being phased out. In a large number of countries, structured doctoral programmes include taught courses, which vary in duration from half a year (30 ECTS credits) to 1.5 years. Some countries state that organising doctoral studies is within the autonomous control of HEIs, and thus HEIs themselves decide whether to include taught courses or not. Such courses could include advanced studies in the chosen field of research, foreign languages, teaching methodology, and sometimes entrepreneurship. From the national reports it appears that there are more taught courses in those HEIs that have doctoral schools.

Access to doctoral studies

The majority of countries mentioned that in principle all second-cycle graduates are eligible for access to doctoral studies. However, where two types of HE programmes exist, the graduates from applied or professional second-cycle programmes may have to meet additional requirements, in most cases additional courses. There are also some countries where in principle a first-cycle graduate can be admitted to doctoral studies.

Supervisory and assessment procedures

Most countries have supervisory activities for doctoral students, which in many cases are determined by the higher education institutions themselves. The most common assessment procedure is periodic attestation or reporting, which may take place once a year, twice a year or once every two years. Some countries indicate that doctoral candidates have to sit exams.

Third cycle qualifications in qualifications frameworks

In comparison to 2007, more countries stated in 2009 that they have already included, or propose to include, doctoral studies in their NQFs. More countries also mentioned that they linked doctoral studies with learning outcomes, usually in taught courses.

Interdisciplinary training and the development of transferable skills

Some countries reported that they included interdisciplinary training and development of transferable skills in doctoral studies, mainly where doctoral schools have been established; others stated that it is not compulsory in doctoral studies.

Use of ECTS in doctoral programmes

The number of countries that use ECTS in doctoral studies has grown since 2007. Some countries use credit points across all doctoral studies, some use them for taught courses only, and others do not use them in any doctoral studies programmes.

Status of doctoral candidates

The country answers about the status of doctoral candidates varied and there appears to be no single type of approach across the EHEA. There are countries in which doctoral candidates are considered students, and there are countries where doctoral candidates are considered early stage researchers. In some countries both apply – some doctoral candidates who receive scholarships are considered students and others receive remuneration for their research work and are considered researchers. In addition, in 2009 there are more countries where a doctoral candidate has dual status - as both a student and an early stage researcher - than there were in 2007.

Funding

The funding mechanisms for doctoral students vary quite a bit, but the most common sources of funding seem to be scholarships, grants for specific projects or programmes, and funding through national budgets. In many countries, doctoral students are also employed as research assistants or junior lecturers. Other examples include block grant funding of institutions to support research infrastructure; national and international scholarships; scholarships from private foundations; special funding programmes for female doctoral students as part of an equal opportunities programme; employment of doctoral students as early stage researchers in full fellowship programmes; postgraduate study grants; national student loans; junior research programmes; exemption from tuition fees; fixed monthly state scholarships, and private funding.

Tracking systems

The majority of countries state that they have a tracking system in place to follow the further career of doctoral graduates. There is, however, quite a substantial minority of countries where there are no such tracking systems. Some of these countries report that they plan to establish tracking systems, while others do not. The form of the tracking systems varies. Some countries have systems where an annual or biannual report is published, while others refer to several types of surveys carried out much less frequently. For some countries it seems to be the responsibility of the HEIs themselves through to follow up their alumni,

while in other countries this is carried out by state offices such as higher education authorities or directorates, employment offices, national statistics offices or national secretariats for research and development. In some countries the two approaches are combined.

Links between higher education and research

Most countries focus on the important role that higher education institutions play in relation to research. A majority of countries state that the greatest share of all publicly funded research is conducted in higher education institutions, and for quite a few countries this holds true for all research, regardless of the source of funding. A large number of countries refer to research as one of the legally-stated core areas for HEIs, focusing on the fact that many higher education institutions are both teaching and research institutions. The principle of integrating research with teaching is also mentioned quite frequently, and in many countries quite a large proportion of people who are involved in research and development (R&D) work within the HE sector.

Even though most countries say that a large proportion of national research is carried out within the higher education sector, research institutes and the business and enterprise sector also account for a substantial part of the research undertaken. Co-operation between the various actors carrying out research is seen as a challenge, but is described by most countries as improving. Several countries have taken steps to improve this co-operation. Examples include the merging of HEIs and national research institutes; the setting up of common organisations or partnerships between HEIs, research institutes, academies of science and the business sector; the signing of framework agreements or partnership contracts; research pooling which encourages greater collaboration between networks and researchers; additional funding arrangements designed to make research in HEIs less dependent on the core funding of HEIs; improving the situation of young researchers; the co-ordination of all issues relating to research by one single Ministry; performance-related contracts for research activities between the Ministry and the HEIs; the concentration of research efforts in HEIs with a specific focus on a few areas of research only.

Several countries refer to national strategies, agendas and action plans for Science, Technology, Innovation and Research, but most of these seem to focus on research as such, and not particularly on the relationship between higher education and research.

Measures to improve co-operation, including financial figures

The percentage of GDP that countries say is spent on research is mostly ranges from 0.2% to nearly 3%, with most countries giving a figure of around 1%. Several countries indicate that they intend to increase this percentage by 2010, while several other countries report a significant increase in the funding of research over the last few years. When it comes to sources of funding, i.e. whether the majority of funding stems from public or private funds, the Bologna countries are more or less split down the middle. In several of the countries the difference is not substantial, i.e. the percentage from public and private funds is more or less the same. There are, however, a few notable exceptions, with countries where there is either almost NO private funding of research, and vice versa countries where private funds account for 99% of the funding for research.

2.2 Stocktaking on implementation of quality assurance

To carry out stocktaking in 2009 on implementation of the various aspects of quality assurance in line with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), some changes were made to the previous stocktaking methodology. In 2007 there were four indicators on quality assurance, of which three were devoted to external quality assurance, participation of students and international participation. The fourth 2007 indicator was targeted at the overall implementation of ESG: this proved less effective than the other indicators as most countries scored “green” or “light green” without necessarily fulfilling the requirements for the lower scores. In effect, for two-thirds of countries the 2007 indicator only showed that they had started work on aligning their quality assurance system with the European Standards and Guidelines, without giving a clear picture of how far they had actually progressed with this work.

For the above reasons, and also to carry out stocktaking on Part 1 of the ESG which concerns the internal quality assurance within the HEIs, it was decided that the 2009 stocktaking would include:

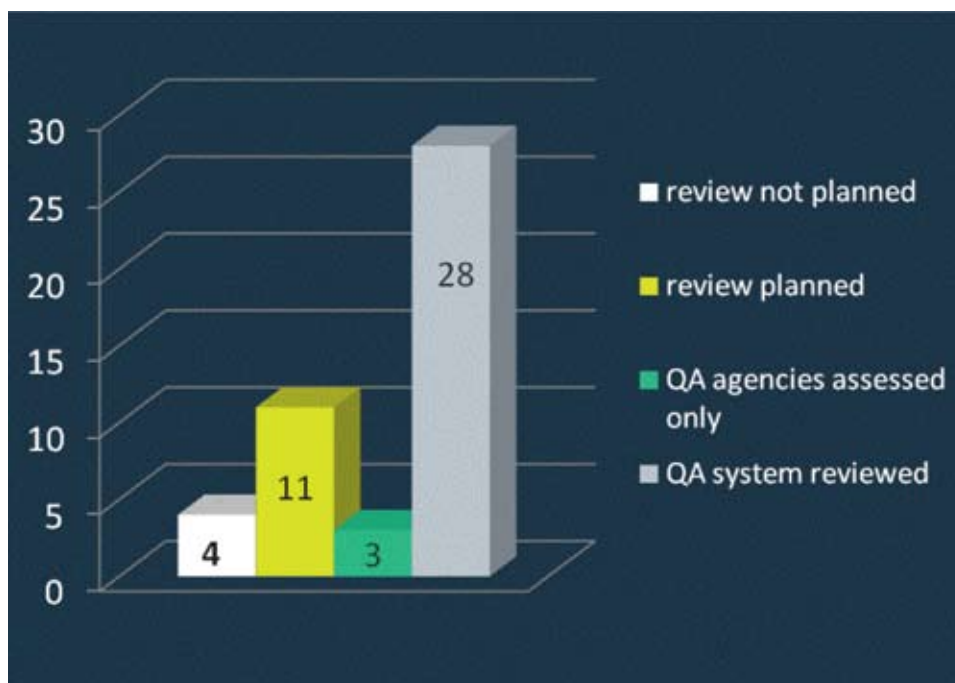
- qualitative analysis on various aspects of internal quality assurance
- indicators similar to three of those used in 2007, i.e. the indicators on:
 - external quality assurance
 - student participation in quality assurance
 - international participation in quality assurance.

Evaluating national QA systems against European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area

Slightly more than half of the countries have reviewed their quality assurance system against the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance (Fig. 11). Three countries have only reviewed their QA agencies’ compliance with ESG but have not included the review of the internal quality assurance in that review.

Another eleven countries answered that they were planning to carry out a review and indicated a date (usually the year, i.e. 2009, 2010) in which that would be done. Four countries have not assessed their QA systems against ESG and either have no plans to review their QA system or have not indicated any date when such a review will take place.

Figure 11. Reviewing QA system against ESG (number of countries giving each answer)



It is evident from the comments countries made that some of them have actually answered only about the external QA system and the functioning of their QA agency with regard to European Standards and Guidelines, while only nine countries explicitly mention ESG with regard to internal quality assurance inside HEIs.

Qualitative analysis of internal quality assurance inside HEIs

It should be noted that the answers of some countries suggest that they think internal quality assurance within higher education institutions means only preparing self-assessment reports, without any reference to learning outcomes-based and improvement-oriented internal quality assurance systems. In addition, some HEIs have established a *management system* and they claim that it is a *quality assurance system*. However some of these systems focus on measuring the performance of staff and/or units rather than on implementing ESG. This suggests there is a need to increase the focus on internal quality assurance within the EHEA.

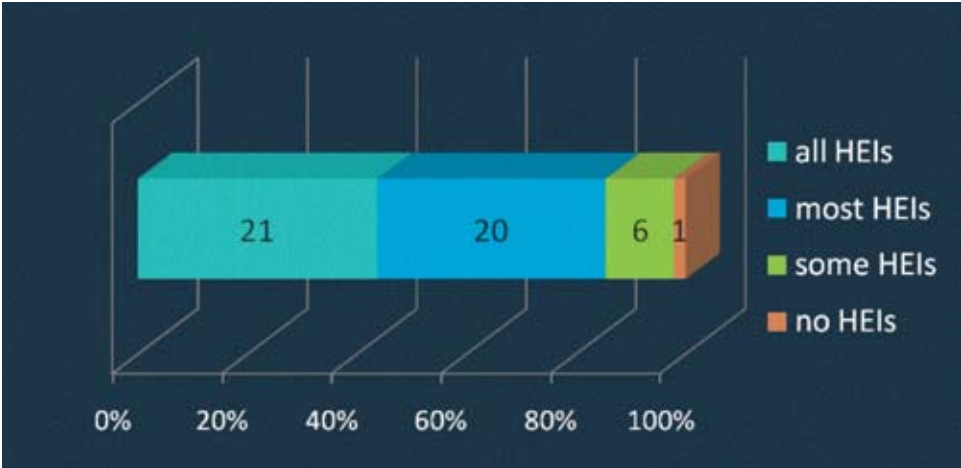
In order to align their QA systems with the ESG, more than half the countries have carried out consultations with stakeholders (Fig. 12) and after those consultations most of them have introduced financial incentives and/or other measures to improve internal quality assurance processes in HEIs. However, not all countries have gathered evidence on the results of these measures.

Figure 12. Measures to improve internal quality assurance processes (number of countries applying each measure)



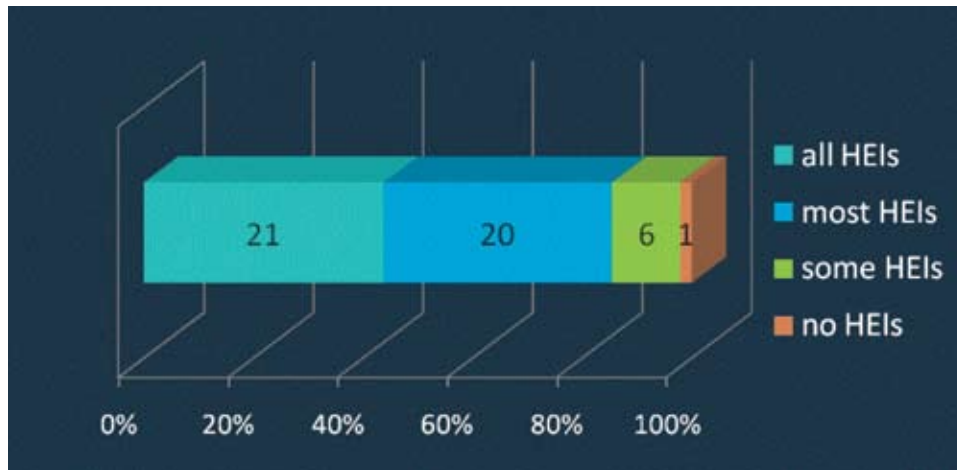
In many countries the main type of incentive is additional funding for either creating or strengthening internal quality units at the HEIs, while others carry out mapping of internal quality procedures already existing in the HEIs or auditing internal quality systems. The financial incentives in some countries are rather substantial (over €30 million in one case). A number of newer EU member states have chosen to fund these incentives from EU structural funds, while some countries of Eastern or South Eastern Europe apply for funding from the EU Tempus programme or seek loans from the World Bank. Under “other measures”, countries often mention that the requirement for HEIs to create internal QA systems in accordance with ESG has been embedded into national laws, regulations or codes of practice.

Figure 13. HEIs preparing and publishing quality strategy (number of countries giving each answer)



The majority of countries answered that all or most HEIs have published strategies for continuous enhancement of quality. Some countries noted that HEIs are not obliged to publish their QA strategies and some others described the quality strategy as a part of the overall strategy of a HEI.

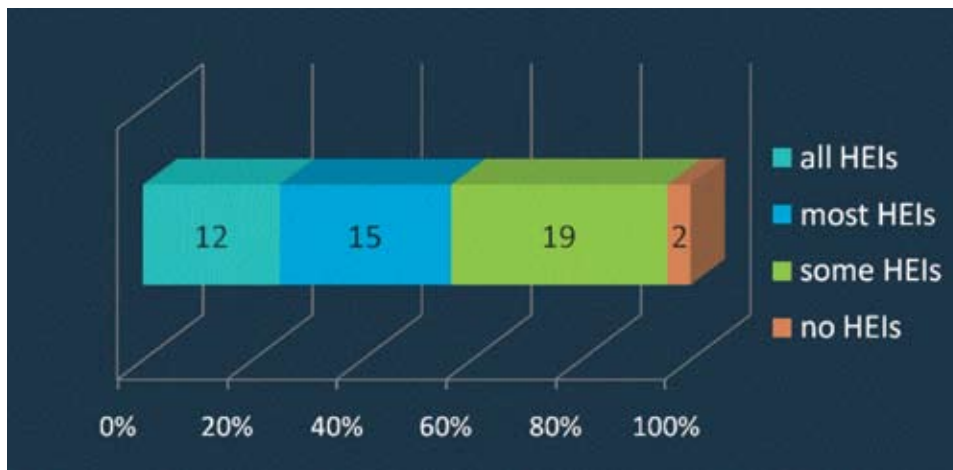
Figure 14. Procedures for internal approval of programmes and awards in HEIs (number of countries giving each answer)



Twenty-one countries (i.e. less than half) answered that all HEIs have arrangements in place for the internal approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards. A further twenty countries state that most HEIs do. The internal approval of programmes and awards may have various forms. The periodic monitoring may be organised through regular working programme committees including teaching staff and students, and in some countries also including representatives of employers. In some countries assessment is mainly done on the basis of student questionnaires, feedback from alumni or both. In a number of countries internal quality assurance is somewhat modelled on the external QA: programmes prepare their self-assessment reports and after that there is a review by peers. In other cases the programme is submitted to a HEI's internal validation board, curriculum board or senate for approval. In some countries the internal assessment and approval are carried out immediately before the next external accreditation. Several countries use EFQM screening for self-assessment of programmes. In some countries the basic procedures of internal assessment and approval are laid down by legislation.

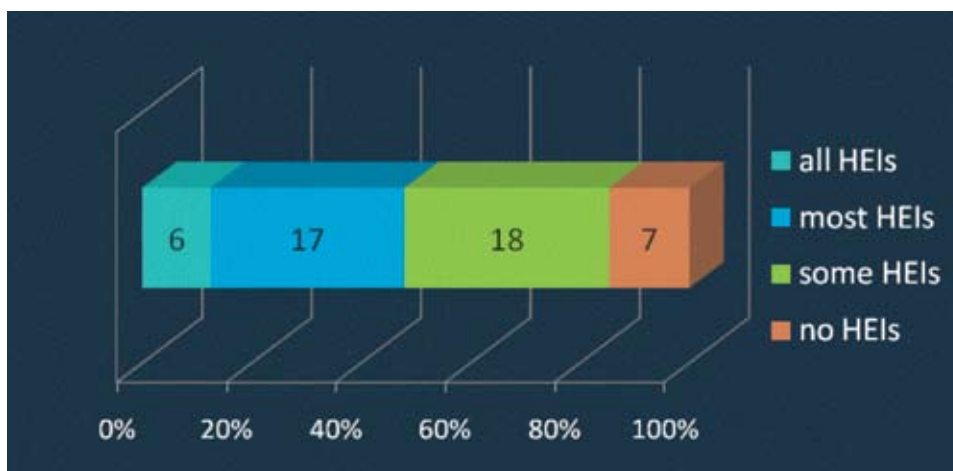
According to the national reports, in a quarter of the countries all HEIs have described their programmes in terms of learning outcomes (Fig. 15), while slightly more than a further quarter of the countries said that most HEIs have done it. However, this result seems too optimistic compared to the results of the survey carried out by the Qualifications Frameworks Coordination group, which showed that the implementation of learning outcomes is still the greatest challenge for the implementation of qualifications frameworks.

Figure 15. Describing programmes in learning outcomes (number of countries giving each answer)



Countries themselves underline in their National Reports that it is important to assist HEI staff in understanding and formulating learning outcomes and suggest a number of measures for it. Answers from some countries provide clear evidence of the above. Even more, some say that learning outcomes have been made an obligatory component of the programme description but also state that those learning outcomes “are not related to Dublin descriptors” or “not in the understanding of Tuning”. Some countries indicate that there is already a culture of learning outcomes at the applied higher education sector, but it will take time for universities to make this culture change; others underline the strong traditions of content-centred curricula and again they say that change will take time.

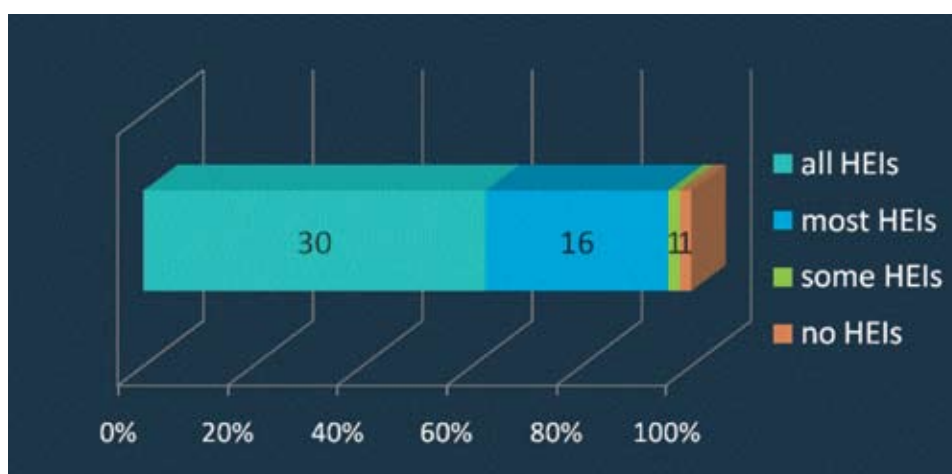
Figure 16. Designing student assessments to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes (number of countries giving each answer)



Introduction of student assessment procedures designed to measure achievement of the intended learning outcomes is slower than the formulation of the learning outcomes themselves – more than half the countries answered that it is done in just some or no HEIs (Fig. 16). Quite a few countries provide examples of measures that will be taken to introduce student assessments which will allow them to measure how well the stipulated learning outcomes have been achieved. Some countries are on their way to including the learning outcomes and student assessment issues into external quality reviews of the programmes.

However, a number of answers demonstrate that the very issue of student assessment based on learning outcomes continues to be unclear. Thus, in some answers student assessment to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes is understood as summative assessment; in others it is identified with the existence of national grading scales with published criteria for each grade – which are not specific to a particular course, programme and even study field. In a couple of cases the whole issue was understood as teaching being assessed by students at the end of the course.

Figure 17. Publishing up to date, impartial and objective information about the programmes and awards offered (number of countries giving each answer)



Nearly all countries have answered that either all or most HEIs publish up to date, impartial and objective information about the programmes and awards offered.

Conclusions

- o The national reports demonstrate that HEIs in most countries are actively working to establish coherent internal QA systems and aligning them with the external assessment procedures. A number of countries state that they do not prescribe particular mechanisms for internal quality assurance in HEIs but rather require that HEIs create them as they see fit, on condition that the internal QA of each HEI is coherent, effective and fits its purposes. Some countries use ISO, Total Quality Management or EFQM methodologies for internal quality assurance in HEIs.

- o While the implementation of internal quality assurance systems at HEIs is progressing and countries are coming closer to fulfilling Part I of the ESG, it is nevertheless clear that linking programmes with learning outcomes and designing assessment procedures to measure achievement of the intended learning outcomes are the most difficult parts and will take some more time to implement.
- o The optimistic view of how far HEIs have progressed in describing programmes using learning outcomes may be partly due to confusion between “learning outcomes” as statements of what the learner *will know, understand and be able to demonstrate after completion of a programme of learning (or individual subject/course)* and the overall aims or expected “outcomes” of programmes, which, of course, have always been defined for courses of study in higher education. It is also important to point out that simply describing learning outcomes is the “easy” part. One of the concerns of the Qualifications Frameworks Coordination group is that HEIs may indeed learn how to provide a technically correct formal description of learning outcomes without actually implementing them in practice.
- o There is a clear indication from the 2009 stocktaking results that fully-fledged introduction of a learning outcomes-based culture across the EHEA still needs a lot of effort, and it will not be completed by 2010.

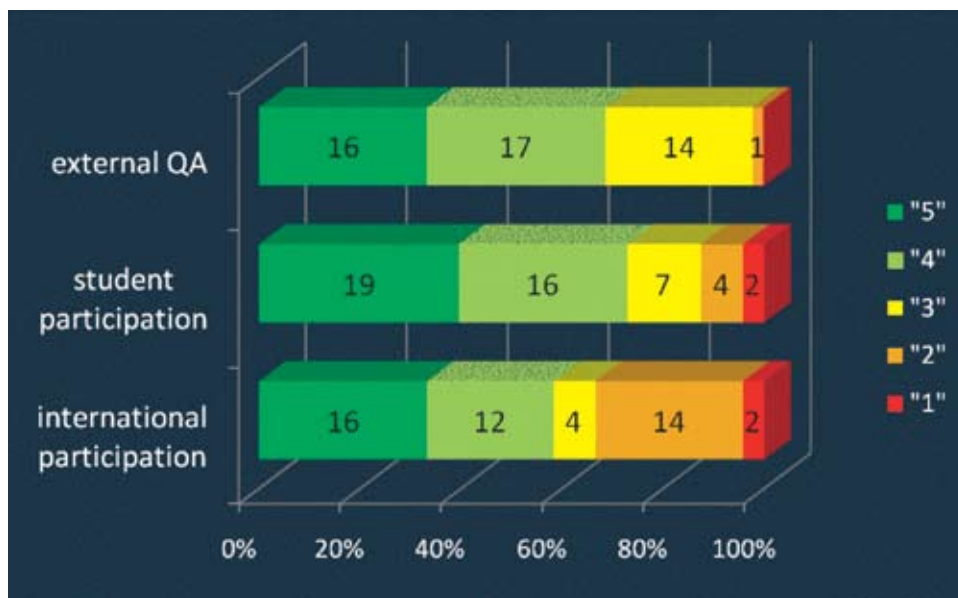
QUALITY ASSURANCE

Scorecard indicators 4-6

Table 2. Number of countries in each colour category for indicators 4-6

Quality assurance	Green	Light green	Yellow	Orange	Red
4. Stage of development of external QA system	16	17	14	1	0
5. Level of student participation	19	16	7	4	2
6. Level of international participation	16	12	4	14	2

Figure 18. Quality assurance: number and percentage of countries in each category for indicators 4-6

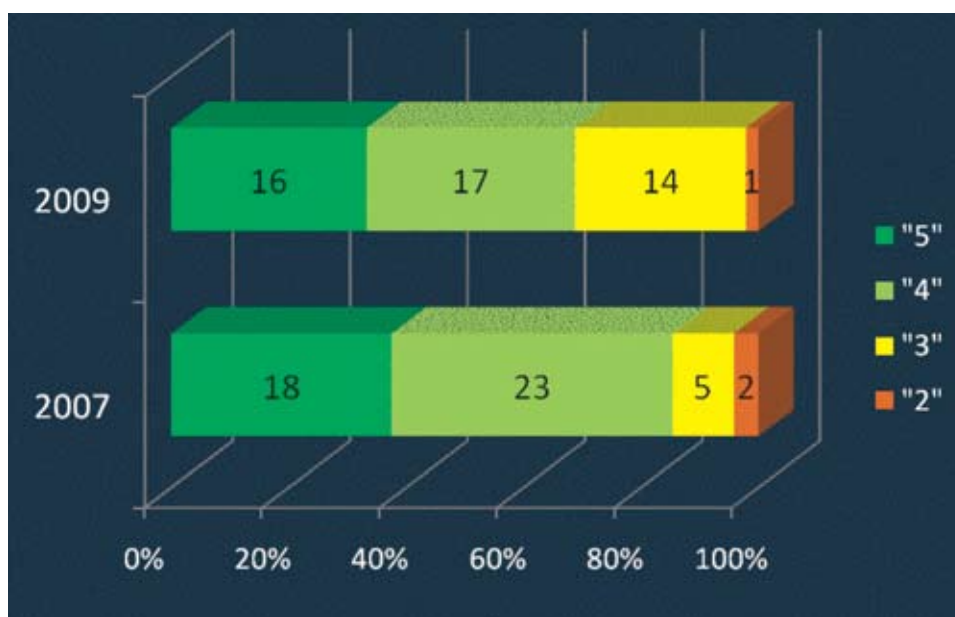


Indicator 4: Stage of development of external quality assurance system

Number of countries in each score category for Indicator 4.	16	17	14	1	0
Green (5)	<p>A fully functioning external quality assurance (QA) system is in operation at national level and applies to all higher education (HE). Evaluation of programmes or institutions includes four elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - self-assessment report - external review - publication of results - follow-up procedures. <p>In addition, peer review of the national QA agency(ies) has been completed according to the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA</p>				
Light green (4)	<p>A fully functioning external quality assurance system is in operation at national level and applies to all HE. Evaluation of programmes or institutions includes four elements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - self-assessment report - external review - publication of results - follow-up procedures <p>AND a date has been set for peer review of the national QA agency(ies) according to the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA</p>				
Yellow (3)	<p>A quality assurance system is in operation at national level, but it does not apply to all HE. The quality assurance system includes at least two of the four elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - self-assessment report, - external review, - publication of results, - follow-up procedures <p>No date has yet been set for a peer review of the national QA agency (ies).</p>				
Orange (2)	<p>Legislation or regulations on quality assurance of programmes or institutions, including at least the four elements above, have been prepared but are not implemented yet OR implementation of legislation or regulations has begun on a very limited scale</p>				
Red (1)	<p>There are no regulations or legislation on evaluation of programmes or institutions that include at least the four elements above. OR legislation or regulations are in the process of preparation</p>				

Figure 19. Indicator 4: Stage of development of external QA system. Number of countries in each colour category - 2007 and 2009

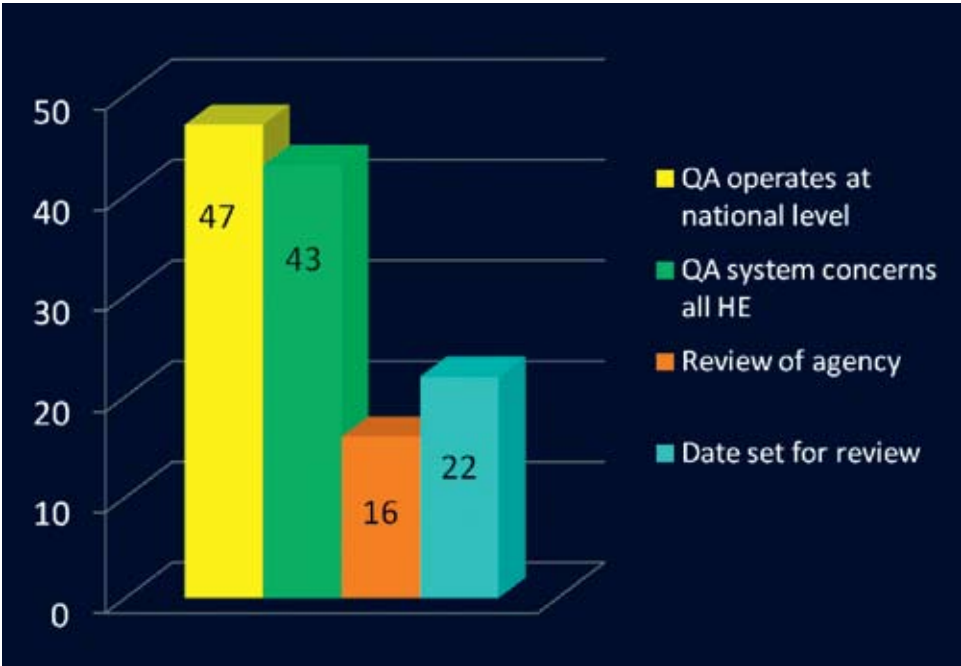
The requirement to have carried out the assessment of the QA agency or at least fix the date for such assessment shifted some countries from the “green zone” to “yellow” compared to 2007.



This indicator was intended to measure progress towards implementation of an external quality assurance system in accordance with the *Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA* (ESG). The criteria were more demanding in 2009 than in 2007, with a “green” score requiring that the peer review of national QA agencies has already been completed and “light green” meaning that at least the date of the review has been set. As a result, in 2009 there are considerably fewer countries in the top two “green” and “light green” categories than there were in 2007. A more detailed analysis of the answers is given in Fig. 20.

Nearly all countries have an external QA system operating at national level. In the vast majority of countries, the QA system covers all higher education; however in five countries it either does not cover pre-Bologna degrees or it operates in universities OR professional HEIs only.

Figure 20. Details on implementation of external QA system (number of countries giving each answer)



One-third of the countries have already carried out an external review of their QA agencies and another 22 countries say they have set a date for the review. In cases where the countries just refer to a year when the review will take place, it is likely that the review process has not actually started yet.

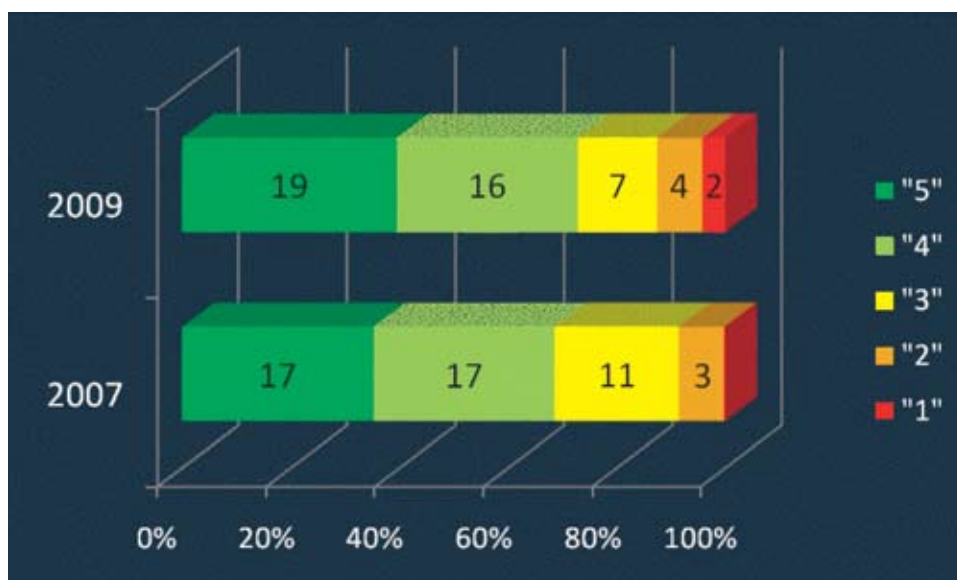
Indicator 5: Level of student participation in quality assurance

Number of countries in each score category for Indicator 5..	19	16	7	4	2
Green (5)	In all quality assurance reviews, students participate at five levels: - in the governance of national bodies for QA - in external review of HEIs and/or programmes: either in expert teams, as observers in expert teams or at the decision making stage, - in consultation during external reviews - in internal QA processes - in preparation of self-assessment reports				
Light green (4)	Students participate at four of the five levels mentioned above				
Yellow (3)	Students participate at three of the five levels mentioned above				
Orange (2)	Students participate at two of the five levels mentioned above				
Red (1)	Students cannot participate or participate at only one level mentioned above				

This indicator was more demanding in 2009 compared to 2007: one more level of student participation was added, and countries also had to have student participation in at least two of five levels to get out of the “red” category. Despite that, the results for the indicator look better in 2009 than in 2007. However, while it is clear that there has been progress on student involvement in quality assurance, there is still some room for improvement.

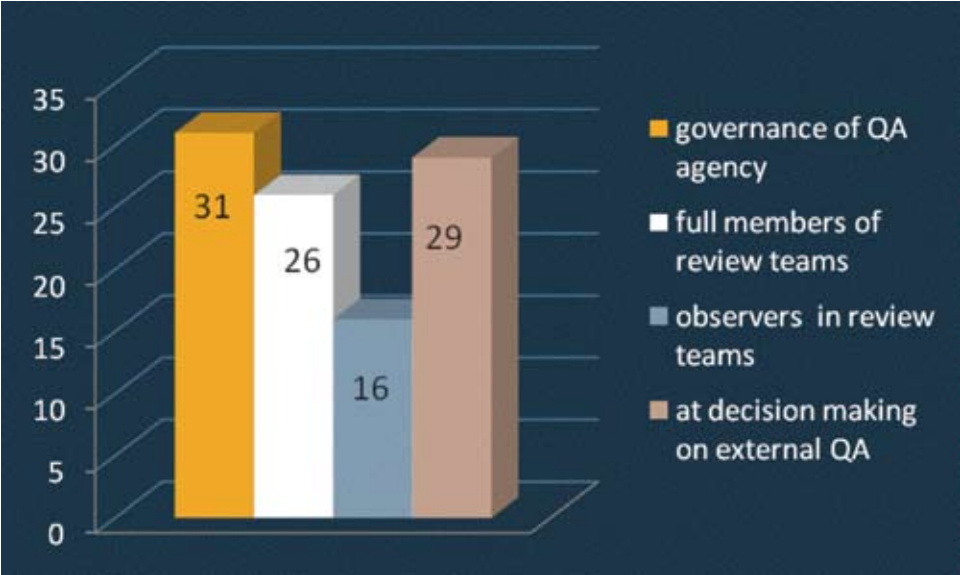
Figure 21. Indicator 5: Level of student participation in quality assurance. Number of countries in each colour category in 2007 and 2009

The overall student participation in QA has progressed since 2007, however the analysis of answers to additional questions showed some gaps in student involvement.



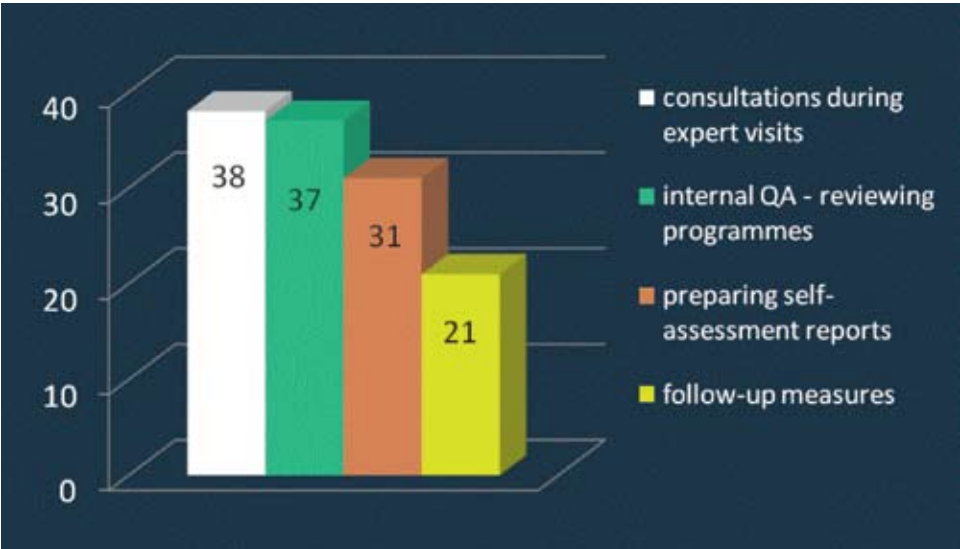
Figures 22 and 23 show the detail of student participation at the possible participation levels. Just under two-thirds of the countries involve students in governance of their QA agencies.

Figure 22. Student participation in QA as reviewers. (number of countries giving each answer)



The highest level of student participation is in the external review teams; however in about one-third of cases, students are observers rather than full members of the teams. Also, while student participation in expert seems rather high, in twelve countries where students participate in the expert teams they are not involved in the decision-making afterwards. In around three-quarters of the countries students participate in consultations during expert visits and in periodic review of programmes as part of internal QA, but there are far fewer countries where they participate in writing the self-assessment report. Many countries need to improve student participation in follow-up measures and decision-making on QA.

Figure 23. Student participation in QA within their HEIs (number of countries giving each answer)

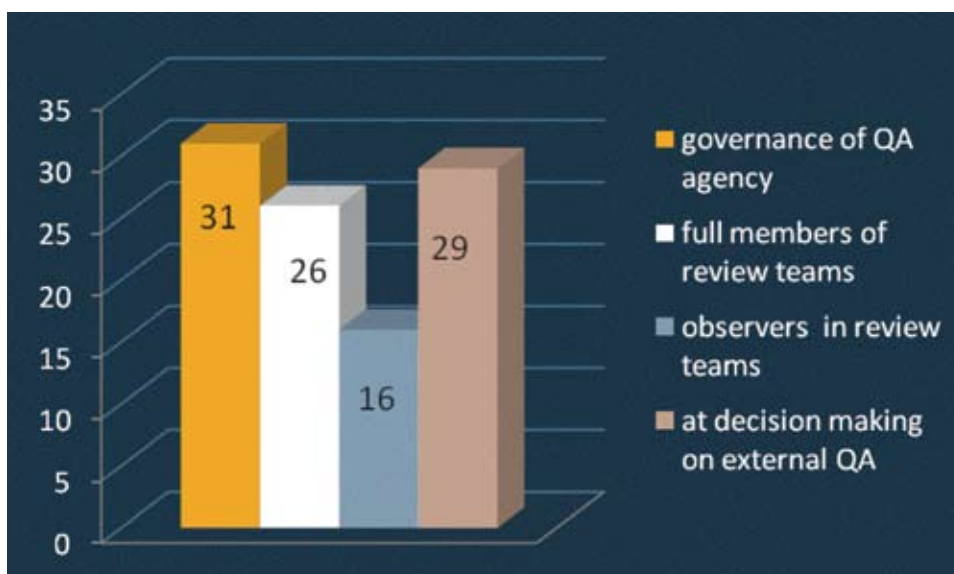


Indicator 6: Level of international participation in quality assurance

Number of countries in each score category for Indicator 6..	16	12	4	14	2
Green (5)	In all cases, there is international participation at four levels: 1) within teams for external review of HEIs and/or programmes, as members or observers 2) national quality assurance agency membership of ENQA or other international quality assurance network/s 3) in the governance of national bodies for QA 4) in the external evaluation of national QA agencies				
Light green (4)	International participation takes place at above levels: 1); 2) AND either 3) or 4)				
Yellow (3)	International participation takes place at levels 1) AND 2) listed above				
Orange (2)	International participation takes place either at level 1) OR 2) listed above				
Red (1)	There is no international involvement OR structures and arrangements for international participation are not yet clear				

Figure 24. Indicator 6: Level of international participation in QA. Number of countries in each colour category in 2007 and 2009

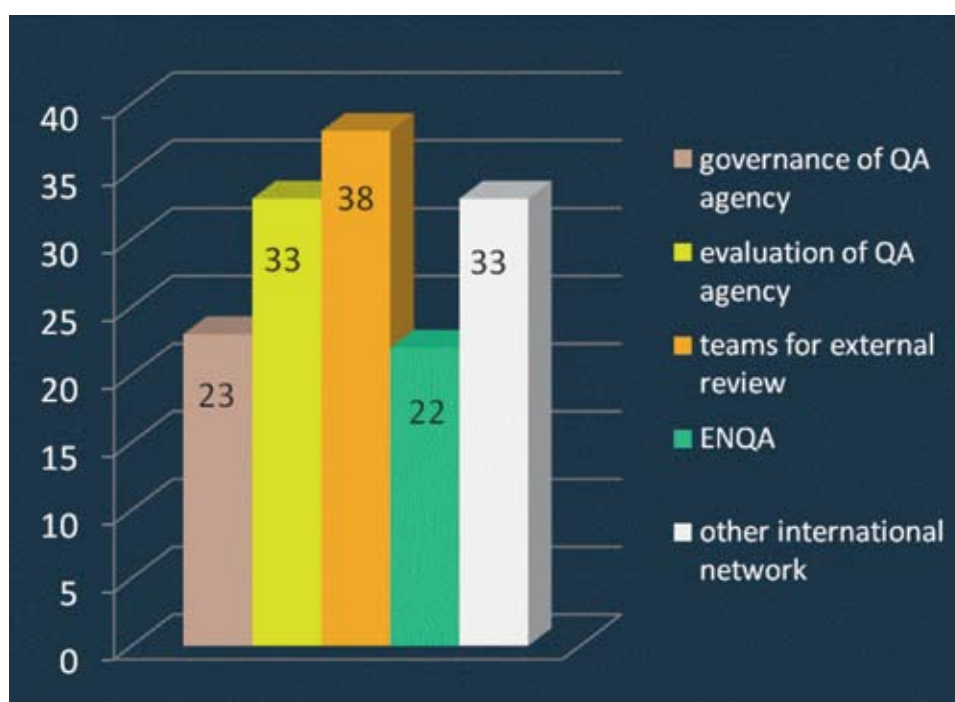
With the requirement that international participation in review teams AND membership of an international QA network are needed to score at least “yellow”, the number of countries in the “orange” category has increased substantially since 2007.



While the criteria for “green” on this indicator were the same as in 2007, the requirements for “orange”, “yellow” and “light green” were more demanding. The fact that more countries scored “green” in 2009 is evidence that there has been some progress in international involvement in QA, especially in the critical areas of participation in external review teams and membership of ENQA or other international QA networks, as shown in Fig. 25 below. However, some countries which failed to fulfil the more demanding requirements for “yellow” have moved to the “orange” zone.

Generally the results show that more international involvement in quality assurance is needed. The level of international participation is highest in the expert teams for reviews – around three-quarters of the countries involve foreign experts regularly; however in another five countries it happens only in some cases. While only less than half the countries have international participation in the governance of QA agencies, several countries said that they invite international participants to governance meetings of the QA agencies, but it is legally impossible to have them as members of the governing boards.

Figure 25. International participation in QA. (number of countries giving each answer)



Full membership of ENQA is a very important indication that a national QA agency complies with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance. Quality assurance agencies from only 22 countries are full members of ENQA; in more than half the countries QA agencies are not full members of ENQA, although the QA agencies in some of these countries have associate membership of ENQA and are striving to fulfil the criteria to become full members. Membership of an international quality assurance network other than ENQA also fulfils the criterion for “green”. Several countries had indicated membership of countries or their HEIs in the ENIC/NARIC network, EUA, EURASHE Coimbra and Utrecht networks but these were not considered as “international quality assurance networks”.

The work on compiling the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) was just started in 2008 and the register as yet includes only a small number of agencies, therefore it was not considered appropriate to use the listing of the QA agency in EQAR as a criterion for this indicator in 2009 (see note on EQAR below).

Conclusion

Given that full membership of ENQA requires compliance with ESG, this suggests that the standards and guidelines for external quality assurance and the work of QA agencies are not yet fully implemented in the countries that are not full members. In the future it is likely that inclusion of the national quality assurance agency or agencies in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) will be the main indicator of the credibility of a QA agency. However, it is not yet possible to apply this as an indicator because the register does not yet include a large enough number of agencies.

Note on the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)

EQAR was founded on 4 March 2008 by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), the European Students' Union (ESU), the European University Association (EUA) and the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE).

The EQAR Register Committee is made up of independent experts in quality assurance who review and take decisions on all applications received. The Committee has prepared Procedures for Applications based on the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG). Following the publication of the Procedures, a first call was issued to quality assurance agencies in August 2008 inviting them to apply for inclusion on the register.

The Procedures describe the process and the conditions that quality agencies need to fulfil if they wish to be listed on the register, including the conduct of the external review of the agency, and the compliance of their activities with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG).

As of March 2009, three quality assurance agencies are listed on the register and further applications are pending.

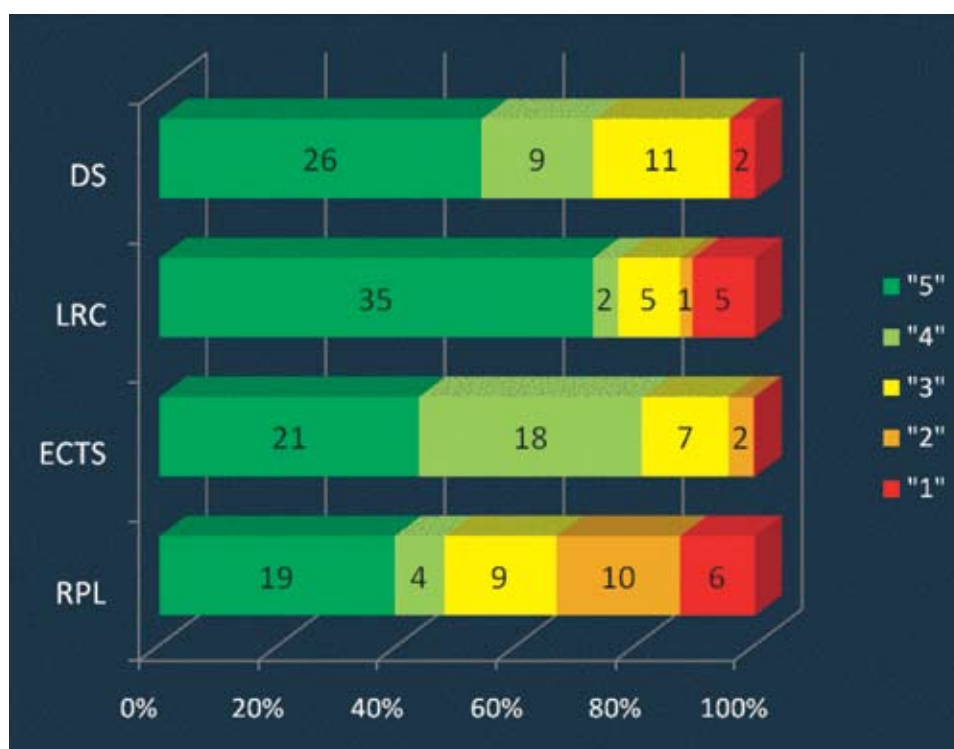
3.3 Stocktaking on recognition, lifelong learning and mobility

Scorecard indicators 7-10

Table 2. Number of countries in each colour

Recognition of degrees and study periods	Green	Light green	Yellow	Orange	Red
7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement (DS)	26	9	11	0	2
8. Implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC)	35	2	5	1	5
9. Stage of implementation of ECTS	21	18	7	2	0
10. Recognition of prior learning (RPL)	19	4	9	10	6

Figure 26. Recognition of degrees and study periods: number and percentage of countries in each category for indicators 7-10

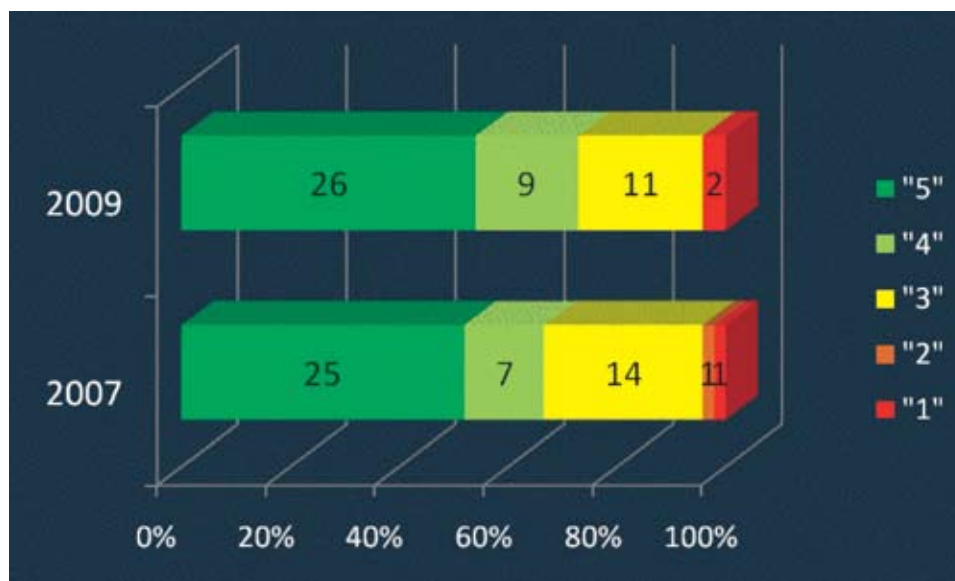


Indicator 7: Stage of implementation of diploma supplement

Number of countries in each score category for Indicator 7..	26	9	11	0	2
Green (5)	Every graduate receives a Diploma Supplement in the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format and in a widely spoken European language - automatically - free of charge				
Light green (4)	Every graduate who requests it receives a Diploma Supplement in the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format and in a widely spoken European language - free of charge				
Yellow (3)	A DS in the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format and in a widely spoken European language is issued to some graduates OR in some programmes free of charge				
Orange (2)	A DS in the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format and in a widely spoken European language is issued to some graduates OR in some programmes for a fee				
Red (1)	Systematic issuing of DS in the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format and in a widely spoken European language has not yet started				

Figure 27 Indicator 7: Stage of implementation of Diploma Supplement. Number of countries in each colour category - 2007 and 2009

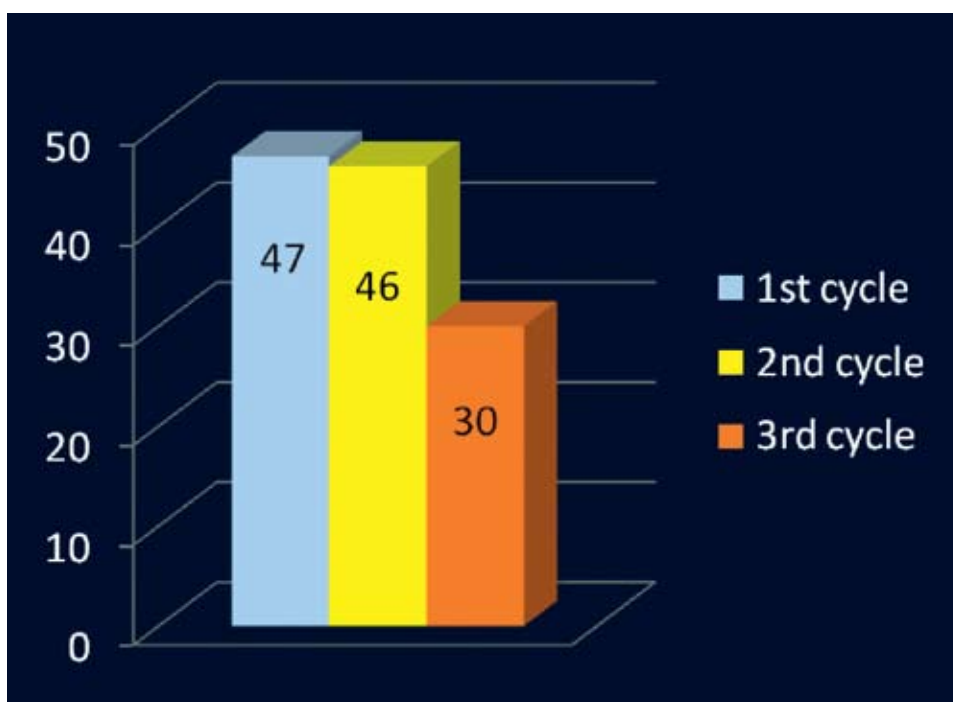
The change to more detailed questions on the issuing of Diploma Supplements showed that about one third of the countries made no progress compared to 2007. Countries in the yellow zone mainly fail to issue Diploma Supplement to ALL graduates, or to issue it automatically.



In just over half of the countries the Diploma Supplement (DS) is implemented fully, i.e. a DS in the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format is issued to all graduates, automatically, free of charge and in a widely spoken European language. In a number of countries where it is not yet issued automatically, the Diploma Supplement is issued to all students who request it. The criteria for this indicator were substantively the same in 2009 as they were in 2007, so some progress on the 2007 results would have been expected as countries rolled out implementation more widely. However this has not happened and it would be worth examining the reasons in more detail. The stocktaking analysis therefore took a closer look at several issues and first of all asked countries about the issuing of Diploma Supplement to various groups of graduates (Fig. 28).

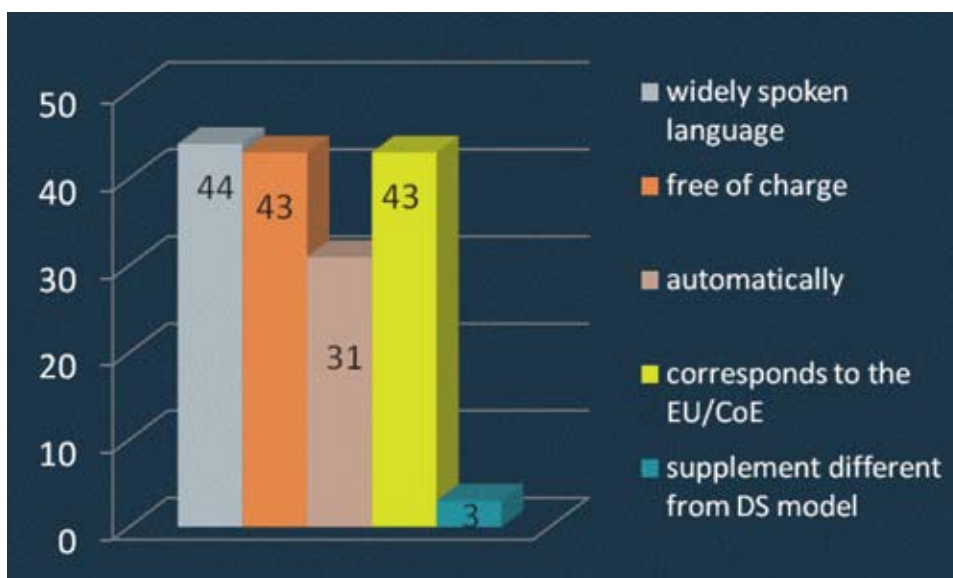
While almost all countries issue diploma supplements to first and second cycle graduates, less than two thirds of the countries issue the DS to graduates of the third cycle (it was agreed that in the 2009 stocktaking, issuing the DS to third cycle graduates would not be included in the criteria for this indicator). Answers also indicated two groups of graduates to whom countries often do not issue DS: seven countries do not issue DS to graduates of their remaining "old type" programmes and four countries do not issue it to graduates of short programmes within the first study cycle. Approximately a quarter of countries do not issue DS to some graduates, including those countries still awarding "old type" qualifications and those that have short study programmes in the first cycle.

Figure 28. Issuing Diploma Supplement to various types of students (number of countries issuing DS to students of each cycle)



Failing to issue Diploma Supplements to those two groups of students partly explains why the indicator does not show too much progress compared to 2007 – in 2007 many countries answered that they issued DS to “all” graduates, meaning graduates of the two Bologna cycles only.

Figure 29. How the Diploma Supplement is issued (number of countries giving each answer)



The vast majority of countries issue the DS in a widely spoken language which is most often English although a small number of countries also mention French, German, Italian, Spanish or Russian. In some countries, while the DS in English is issued free, a DS in

another widely spoken language is available for a fee. It is however surprising that over one-third of the countries still do not issue the DS automatically. Even more surprisingly, a couple of countries issue the DS automatically in the native language, but students have to request the English version. Three countries state that they issue a supplement that does not correspond to the EU/Council of Europe/UNESCO model.

Use of the Diploma Supplement for recognition of qualifications

Question 13.1 of the national template asked countries for information on the use of the DS for recognition of qualifications. Most countries reported that the DS could be 'a very useful tool' when admitting holders of foreign qualifications to the second and third cycles, but, at the same time, many also stated that it does not appear to be widely used. In a few countries HEIs follow general criteria, or even rules, established at a national level with regard to admission of students with foreign qualifications, and they mention that the DS has been officially indicated as a reference document.

It seems that in many countries the bodies responsible for admission – whether in HEIs or at a national level – still require further documentation besides the original diploma and the DS (for example the official detailed programme; the transcript of records; information on the marking system; a document from the competent authorities, or more detailed information on content of courses taken). The fact that many international applicants are still not equipped with a Diploma Supplement makes it more difficult for HEIs in many countries to consider the DS as the main reference tool which the recognition body uses to assess a higher education qualification for the purpose of access to further studies. Since the practice of requesting additional documents besides the DS to prove the validity of the qualifications in the awarding country still seems to be common, it is clear that in some countries the level of familiarity and understanding of the Diploma Supplement must still develop both within HEIs and in the labour market. At present, more familiar documents such as transcripts, statement of validity from ENIC/NARIC or from national or diplomatic authorities are still requested even when a Diploma Supplement can be presented.

Countries were also asked to describe the situation in respect of the languages accepted or the need for an official translation of the DS in the national language. The responses suggest that there is a great variety of approaches to the concept of 'widely spoken language'. While English is accepted in most cases, for other languages there may be a need for an official translation into the national language. Although only a few countries reported that an official translation in the national language is always needed, this is difficult to assess at the country level as it can vary depending on HEIs or on employers.

Almost all countries reported that they have taken initiatives at national and institutional levels to enhance the use of the Diploma Supplement as a tool for use in communicating with the labour market. In EU countries the Europass framework has enabled the promotion of the Diploma Supplement along with other reference documents that promote the transparency of qualifications. In many countries, further actions on achieving greater transparency are planned in connection with the implementation of the NQF.

Conclusions

- It is clear from the stocktaking results that the Diploma Supplement - which is an important transparency instrument - is being implemented, but not as widely as would have been expected. Despite the commitment to issuing the Diploma Supplement in the EU/CoE/UNESCO format to all graduates by 2005, automatically, free of charge and in a widely spoken European language, in 2009 the Diploma Supplement has been implemented fully in just over half the countries.
- The Diploma Supplement is not always issued to all students, so that graduates of the “old system” or short programmes may not receive it.
- There is a discrepancy between the information provided by the countries in their National Reports and the real life situation as reported by students. Many students have no knowledge of the existence of the Diploma Supplement while studying and therefore, since the Diploma Supplement is issued on request in more than one-third of countries, students might not know that they should request one when they graduate.
- A further problem to be considered is the timing of application for further studies: application deadlines for the second and third cycles can be before completion of the applicant’s degree, so at the time of application the Diploma Supplement may not yet be available. Thus, the decisions on admission and verification of study achievements often have to be made on the basis of other documents such as transcripts.

Recommendations

- Strengthen the promotional campaign about the Diploma Supplement as a transparency tool aimed at HEIs, students and employers.
- Encourage HEIs to link the production of Diploma Supplements to ECTS and qualifications frameworks, so as to properly reflect learning outcomes in the Diploma Supplement
- Promote the revised guidelines to those issuing Diploma Supplements (available on the web¹²)
- Encourage all countries to use the standard Diploma Supplement format
- Publicise the Diploma Supplement within the context of the Europass framework of transparency instruments.

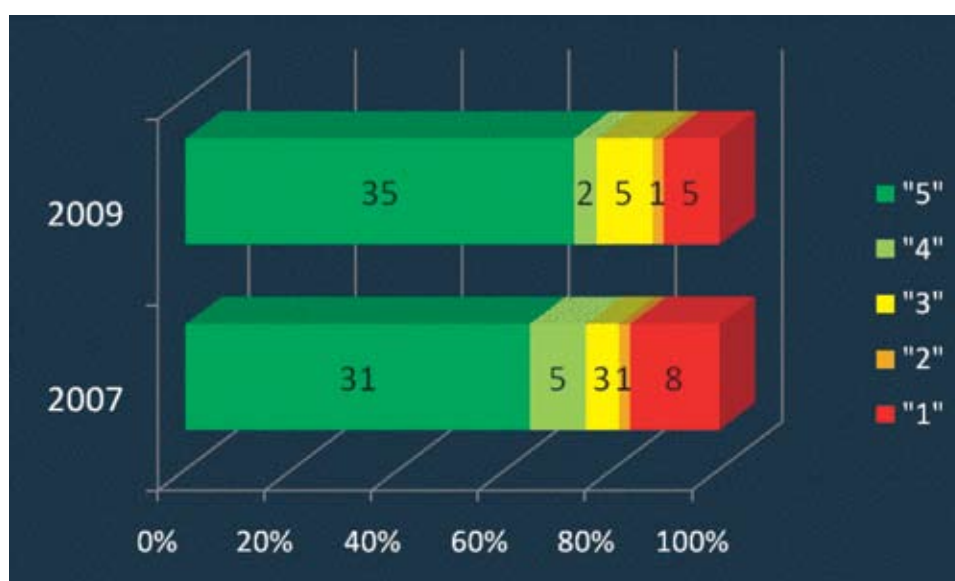
¹² http://www.enic-naric.net/documents/the_diploma_supplement.pdf

Indicator 8: National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention

Number of countries in each score category for Indicator 8..	35	2	5	1	5
Green (5)	<p>The Lisbon Recognition Convention has been ratified and appropriate legislation complies with the legal framework of the Convention. The later Supplementary Documents have been adopted in appropriate legislation and applied in practice, so that the five main principles are fulfilled and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - applicants have a right to fair assessment, - there is recognition if no substantial differences can be proven, - in cases of negative decisions the competent recognition authority demonstrates the existence of (a) substantial difference(s), - the country ensures that information is provided on its institutions and their programmes, - an ENIC has been established 				
Light green (4)	<p>The Lisbon Recognition Convention has been ratified and appropriate legislation complies with the Convention but further amendments of legislation are needed to apply the principles of the Supplementary Documents⁹ in practice.</p>				
Yellow (3)	<p>The Convention has been ratified and appropriate legislation complies with three or four of the five abovementioned principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.</p>				
Orange (2)	<p>The Convention has been ratified and appropriate legislation complies with one or two of the five abovementioned principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.</p>				
Red (1)	<p>The Convention has been ratified but appropriate legislation has not been reviewed against the legal framework of the Lisbon Convention or the Supplementary Documents⁹ OR the Convention has not been ratified</p>				

Figure 30. Indicator 8: Stage of implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. Number of countries in each colour category in 2009 and in 2007

This indicator reflects only compliance of national legislation (or rather, national legislation not being in conflict) with the Lisbon Recognition Convention. It is even “greener” than in 2007 but the indicator alone does not measure the actual recognition practices, especially those inside the HEIs. Complementary analysis of the National Action Plans on Recognition submitted before the London conference shows that there is a long way to go before there is a coherent approach to recognition within the EHEA.



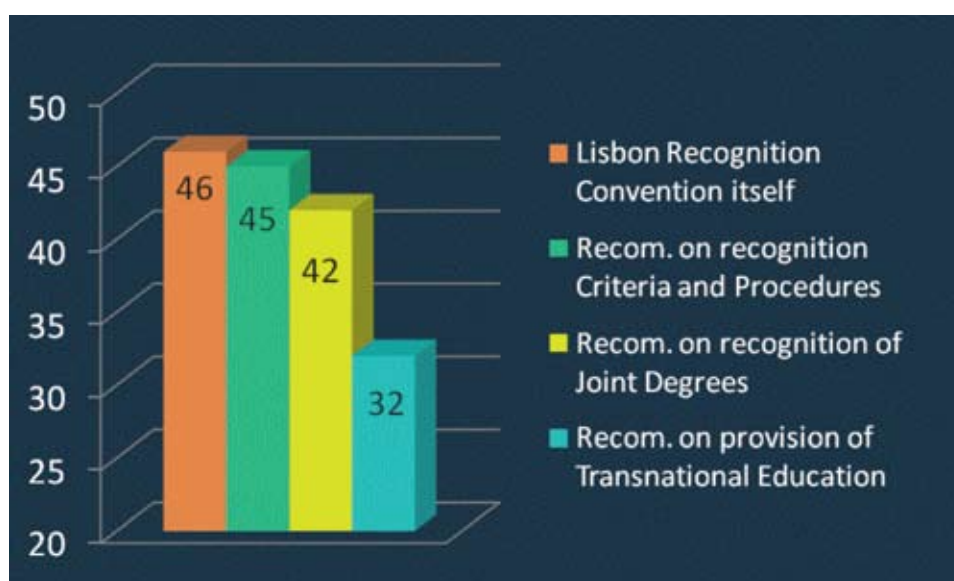
Recognition and transparency of qualifications are an important part of the Bologna process. This indicator reflects only compliance of national legislation with the Lisbon Recognition Convention; it does not measure the actual practices inside the HEIs. The results should therefore be interpreted cautiously. To have a realistic picture, more detailed qualitative analysis was carried out on the basis of the National reports and some of the main conclusions of the report “Improving recognition in the European Higher Education Area: an analysis of national action plans”¹³ are included below.

A significant number of countries state that their legislation is already in compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention, even if it has not been amended after joining the Lisbon Recognition Convention. In reality, while there may be no explicit contradiction between national legislation and the letter of the legal framework of the Convention, a question arises as to whether there is any contradiction with the spirit of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and its subsidiary texts.

¹³ “Improving recognition in the European Higher Education Area: an analysis of national action plans”, Report of Council of Europe, EU and UNESCO Joint Working group on national action plans for recognition, submitted to BFUG in October, 2008 http://www.aic.lv/ace/ace_disk/Recognition/exp_text/Rauhvarsers_Analysis_NAP_recognition.pdf

Over the 2007-2009 period three countries: first Germany and later Andorra and the Netherlands, ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention. Five educational systems are still in “red” as Belgium, Greece, Italy and Spain have still not ratified the convention. These countries are at various stages towards ratification – both the Flemish and the French communities of Belgium as well as Italy have made several changes in their national legislation but are still encountering legislative obstacles to ratification; Spain signed the Convention in the beginning of 2009 but Greece has so far not signed.

Figure 31. Compliance of national legislation with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and its supplementary legal texts



Asked whether the appropriate national legislation complies with the Lisbon Recognition Convention¹⁴, all but two countries answered that it does. As regards the supplementary legal texts to the Convention, while all but three countries claim that their legislation complies with the Recommendation on the Recognition Criteria and Procedures¹⁵, in six countries legislation does not comply with the Recommendation on the recognition of Joint Degrees¹⁶. In one-third of the countries, legislation does not comply with the Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education¹⁷. The answers also show that at least six countries still do not have a fully operational ENIC centre.

¹⁴ ETS NO 165 Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region, <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/QueVoulezVous.asp?NT=165&CL=ENG>

¹⁵ Council of Europe/UNESCO Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications, http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/recognition/Criteria%20and%20procedures_EN.asp

¹⁶ Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Joint Degrees, <http://www.enicnaric.net/documents/recommandation-joint-degrees-2004.en.pdf>

¹⁷ UNESCO/Council of Europe Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education, http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/recognition/Code%20of%20good%20practice_EN.asp

Conclusions

As regards the practical implementation of the main principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention - namely applicants' right to fair assessment; recognition if no substantial differences can be proven; demonstration of substantial differences where recognition is not granted; provision of information about the country's HE programmes and institutions - all or almost all countries answer positively. However, the analysis of the National Action Plans for Recognition (NAPs), which countries submitted before the London Ministerial conference, shows that the interpretation of these principles, as well as recognition procedures and even the terminology used in different countries, differ enormously.

The NAPs demonstrated that there are still legal problems in implementing the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and its subsidiary texts in the countries that have not amended their legislation and adopted the relevant principles. In some countries there are difficulties in implementing the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and its subsidiary texts due to the interpretation of the autonomy of higher education institutions. The HEIs need to understand that the LRC is not a threat to their autonomy, but rather it enables them to use their autonomy well to facilitate recognition of foreign qualifications and thus support both mobility and their own internationalisation.

The NAPs clearly demonstrate that the terminology used in different countries with regard to recognition is too diverse and unclear. The same terms have different meanings in different countries and in other cases different terms are used in different countries to signify the same concepts. This creates confusion and certainly does not improve mutual understanding.

The Bologna seminar on *Quality Assurance in Transnational Education – From Words to Action*¹⁸ recommended that Transnational Education (TNE) should be subject to the same principles of public good and public responsibility that constitute the basis for all higher education; in other words the same standards and guidelines for quality assurance apply to TNE as to any other programmes. It was suggested that there is a need to carry out a study of the TNE provision being offered within the EHEA to increase understanding of the different kinds of provision involved, how quality is assured and how TNE relates to national education systems.

Recommendations

To ensure more coherent recognition across the EHEA – it is necessary to

- find an appropriate solution to the 'triangle' of the Lisbon Recognition Convention legal framework as international legislation, national laws and regulations concerning recognition, and the issue of institutional autonomy in all countries

¹⁸ Held in London on 1-2 Dec, 2008

- make the recognition process a part of both internal quality assurance of higher education institutions and external quality assurance
- conduct an international discussion about the variety of national recognition practices (including the stages therein) and terminology
- continue the discussion and reach consensus on the understanding of “substantial differences”
- follow up by “tuning” national approaches to recognition, recognition practices and terminology
- increase cooperation between HEIs and ENIC/NARIC centres, encouraging HEIs to draw more fully on the expertise of the ENIC/NARIC centres in improving their recognition criteria and procedures and ensuring implementation of the principles of LRC
- follow the principles of LRC and implement the UNESCO/Council of Europe *Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education* in the cross-border activities of HEIs.

Indicator 9: Stage of implementation of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)

Number of countries in each score category for Indicator 9..	21	18	7	2	0
Green (5)	ECTS credits are allocated to all components of all HE programmes ¹⁹ , enabling credit transfer and accumulation, AND ECTS credits are demonstrably linked with learning outcomes ²⁰				
Light green (4)	ECTS credits are allocated to all components of more than 75% of HE programmes ¹⁵ , enabling credit transfer and accumulation, AND ECTS credits are demonstrably linked with learning outcomes OR Credits are allocated to all components of all HE programmes using a fully ECTS compatible credit system enabling credit transfer and accumulation ²¹ AND Credits are demonstrably linked with learning outcomes ¹⁶				
Yellow (3)	ECTS credits are allocated in 50-75% of all HE programmes, AND ECTS credits are demonstrably linked with learning outcomes OR ECTS credits are allocated to all components of more than 75% of HE programmes ¹¹ , enabling credit transfer and accumulation, but, ECTS credits are not yet linked with learning outcomes ¹⁶				
Orange (2)	ECTS credits are allocated in at least 49% of HE programmes OR a national credit system is used which is not fully compatible with ECTS				
Red (1)	ECTS credits are allocated in less than 49% of HE programmes ¹⁵ OR ECTS is used in all programmes but only for credit transfer				

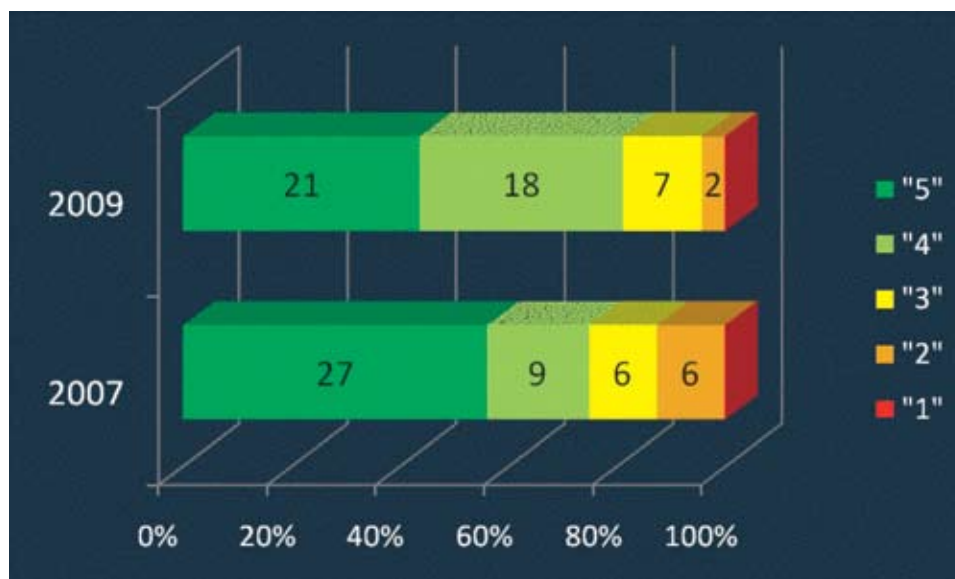
¹⁹ Excluding doctoral programmes

²⁰ i.e. learning outcomes are formulated for all programme components and credits are allocated only when the stipulated learning outcomes are actually acquired

²¹ A "translation" between the national system and ECTS must be provided in the national report.

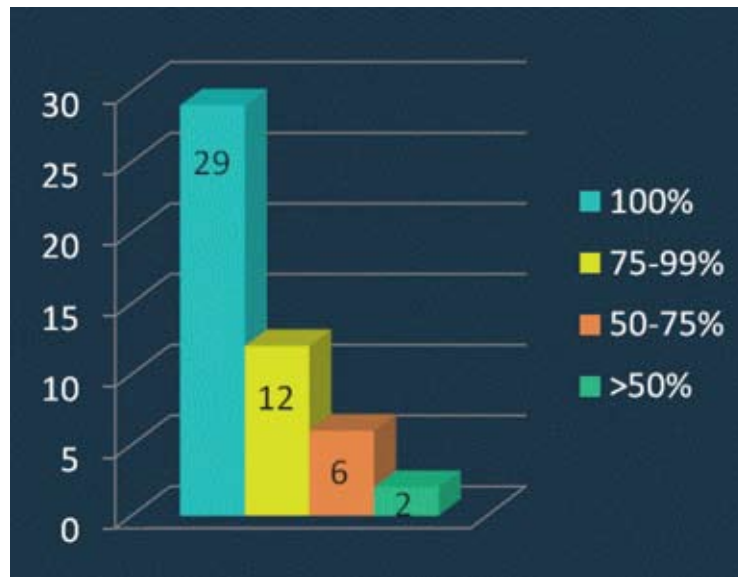
Figure 32. Indicator 9: Stage of implementation of ECTS. Number of countries in each colour category - 2007 and 2009

To score "green" or "light green" in 2009, credits had to be demonstrably linked with learning outcomes, so the scores of some countries shifted downwards compared to 2007, when it was enough that ECTS was used for both accumulation and transfer



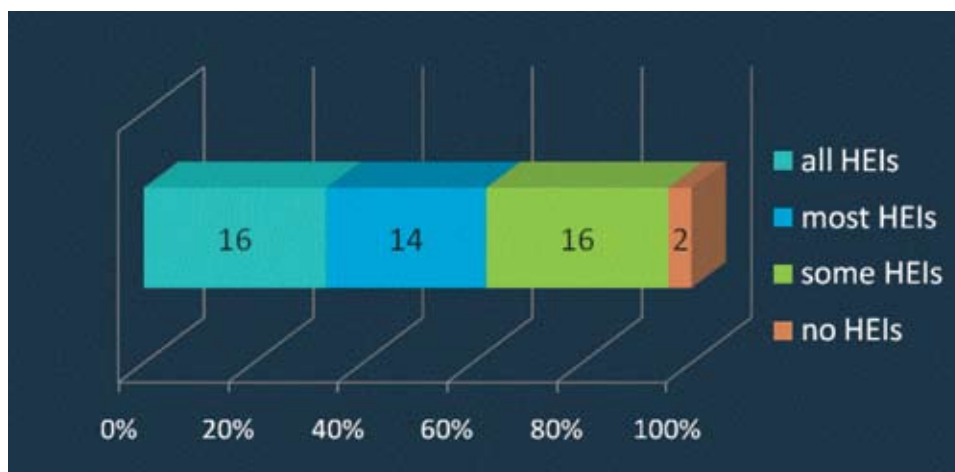
Following the finding of the 2007 report that very few countries linked credits with learning outcomes, the criteria for this indicator were modified in 2009. To score "green" or "light green", it is now required to demonstrate links between ECTS credits and learning outcomes. As a consequence of this change in the criteria, there has been a drop in the number of countries in the "green" category, as shown in Fig 32.

Figure 33. Percentage of HE programmes where ECTS is implemented. (number of countries giving each answer)



Twenty-nine countries have implemented a credit system that is used for both transfer and accumulation in all HE programmes; only two countries reported that they implement the credit system in under half of their HE programmes. (This count also includes the ten countries that use compatible credit systems other than ECTS.)

Figure 34. Linking credits with learning outcomes. (number of countries giving each answer)



One-third of the countries stated that all HEIs have linked credits with learning outcomes; another quarter said that most HEIs have done so. However, in nearly half the countries only some HEIs are piloting linking credits with learning outcomes and in a small number of countries it has not been started. Given that the whole issue of learning outcomes is still quite unclear in many countries (cf. comments in the section on *internal quality assurance* above), the progress on linking credits with learning outcomes may be over-estimated. In particular, the previous understanding that credits are allocated when the

student is assessed as having fulfilled all the requirements of the course may still be confused with achieving the learning outcomes.

In some countries there has been a long-term problem with the measurement of student workload, and a few countries have held discussions and collected information to improve the measuring of workload. In addition, some countries saw the “floating” value of 1 ECTS credit – 25-30 hours of student work - as a problem and they determined a fixed value.

Countries have introduced a range of support measures to improve implementation of ECTS: seminars, assistance by Bologna experts, international projects, and national financial incentives. All but four countries apply such measures to promote better understanding of learning outcomes; three-quarters say they are taking action to improve measuring and checking of student workload (which seems mainly to be done as part of regular programme reviews), and the majority of countries carry out support measures for their teaching staff.

Conclusions

Although ECTS has been part of the Bologna process since 1999, it is still not fully implemented across all the countries. The delay is partly because of the slow progress that has been made in implementing a learning outcomes approach in higher education. This has been discussed earlier in the report. Another problem in implementing ECTS concerns measuring credits in terms of student workload.

Stocktaking on lifelong learning

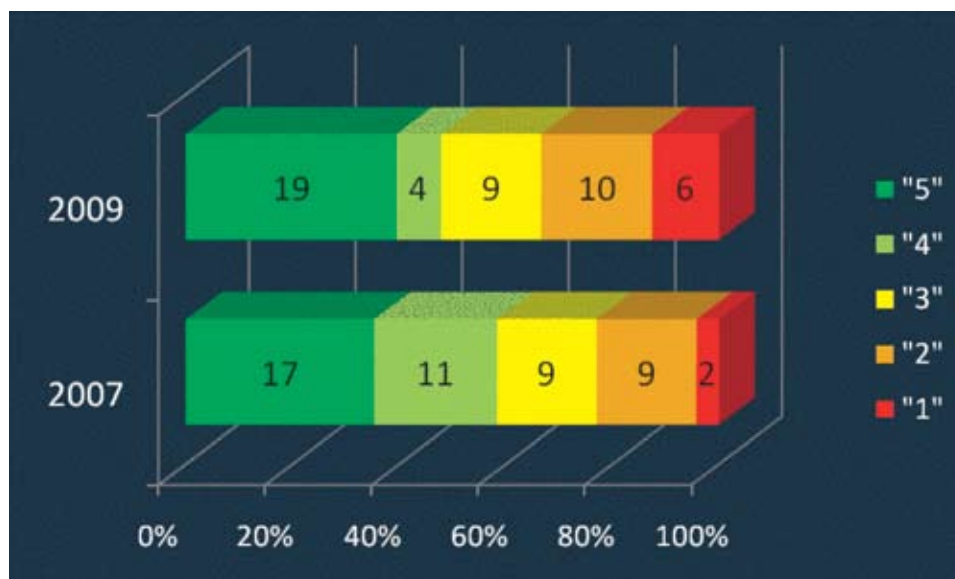
Indicator 10: Recognition of prior learning

Number of countries in each score category for Indicator 10	19	4	9	10	6
Green (5)	There are nationally established procedures, guidelines or policy for assessment and recognition of prior learning as a basis for 1) access to higher education programmes, and 2) allocation of credits towards a qualification and/or exemption from some programme requirements, AND these procedures are demonstrably applied in practice				
Light green (4)	There are nationally established procedures, guidelines or policy for assessment of prior learning but they are demonstrably used in practice for only one of the abovementioned purposes				
Yellow (3)	Procedures, national guidelines or policy for assessment of prior learning have been agreed or adopted and are awaiting implementation OR There are no specific procedures/national guidelines or policy for assessment of prior learning, but procedures for recognition of prior learning are demonstrably in operation at some higher education institutions or study programmes				
Orange (2)	Implementation of recognition of prior learning is in a pilot phase at some higher education institutions OR Work at drawing up procedures/national guidelines or policy for recognition of prior learning has started				
Red (1)	No procedures for recognition of prior learning are in place EITHER at the national OR at the institutional/programme level.				

This indicator was introduced in 2007, when the stocktaking report found that procedures for the recognition of prior learning were at an early stage of development in the majority of countries. The picture has not substantially changed for the better by 2009.

Figure 35. Indicator 10: Recognition of prior learning. Number of countries in each score category in 2009 and 2007

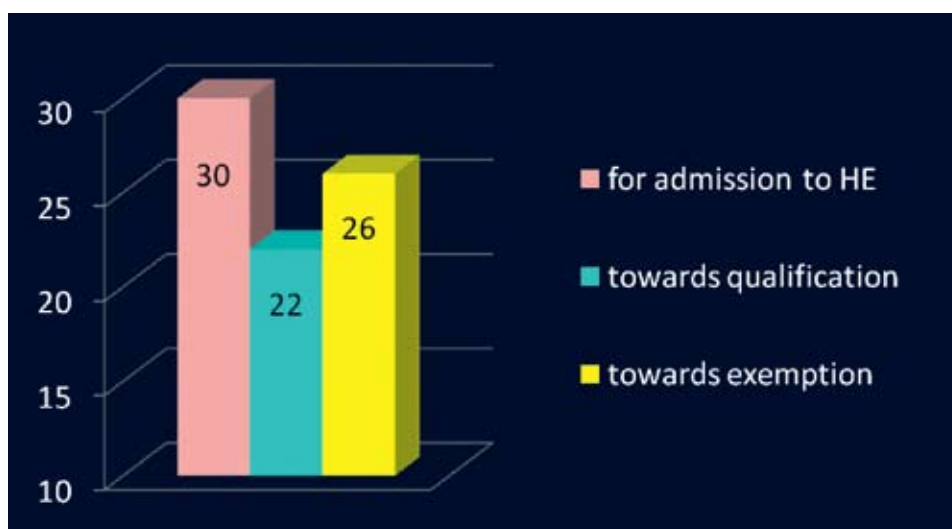
While a relatively small number of countries have well-established systems for recognition of prior learning, the answers from many other countries suggest that there is little or no recognition of learning undertaken outside the formal education system. There has not been much progress since 2007.



Measures for the recognition of prior learning (RPL), including non-formal and informal learning, are at different stages of development across the EHEA. In a few countries an enabling legislative framework has been in place for a number of years and the application of RPL is widespread. In others, developments are either still at an early stage or have not yet started. The answers from many countries suggest there is little or no recognition of learning undertaken outside the formal education system. Some countries apply a restricted definition of "prior learning", which means that only school qualifications or qualifications from other institutions are recognised. Further developments are planned in many countries in the context of lifelong learning policies, national qualifications frameworks, ECTS, the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) and the European credit framework for vocational education and training (ECVET).

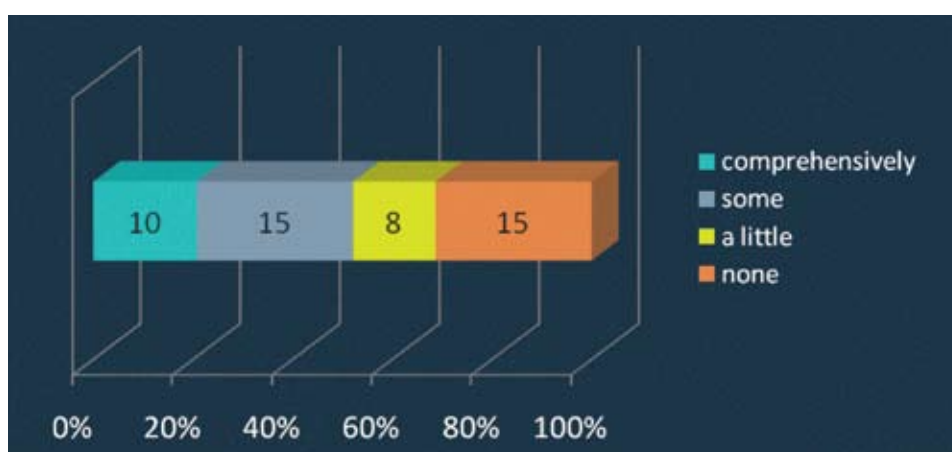
As shown in Fig.36, almost two-thirds of the countries said that they have established procedures for recognition of prior learning as a basis for admission to higher education, but fewer countries have established rules at national level for allocating credits on the basis of prior learning – in twenty-five countries there are procedures for allocating credits towards exemption from some programme requirements, but only twenty-two countries have national procedures for allocating credits towards a qualification on the basis of RPL. Some countries set upper limits for the number of credits that can be allocated for exemption or towards a qualification.

Figure 36. Nationally established procedures to assess prior learning(number of countries having each type of procedure)



In many countries, institutional autonomy is respected, so the practice of applying RPL is largely left to the discretion of HEIs and is dependent on individuals asking to have their prior learning or work experience taken into account. This can be supported by efforts at the national level to enhance the openness and transparency of procedures for RPL, and include an appeals procedure. Examples of the actions taken by countries include: development of national guidelines for RPL; staff development packs, and in one country, the introduction of a quality code for RPL.

Figure 37. Extent of application of RPL procedures in practice (number of countries giving each answer)



As shown on Fig. 37, although the number of countries formally having RPL procedures seems large, the extent to which these procedures are used in practice is moderate: ten countries comprehensively use the procedures, and fifteen other countries have answered that there is “some” implementation. Some countries declared that while they have procedures in place, there is little or no use of the procedures; interestingly, the

opposite is also true – some countries that report having no official procedures for RPL state that the usage of RPL is “comprehensive”.

Conclusions

- There are still difficulties for countries in understanding the concept of RPL: some of them consider that RPL means assessment of any kind of previous education for admission to the next level, for example assessing first cycle qualifications from another HEI for access to the second cycle. Very few countries actually mentioned non-formal or informal learning in their reports.
- In some countries RPL seems to be included in national policy but it does not seem to be applied in practice; in other countries it happens in practice without any national procedures or guidelines being in place.
- Even where RPL systems exist, individuals are often insufficiently aware that it is possible to have their previous learning assessed and recognised.
- Some countries are using RPL to encourage more adults into higher education, thus improving the social dimension of higher education, promoting the inclusion of previously under-represented groups and improving the skill levels of the workforce.
- In some countries, the practice of RPL appears to be better developed in the non-university HE sector, although there are formal partnerships and linkages for RPL between universities and other types of HEI in some parts of the EHEA. In a few cases, additional measures are being taken to increase RPL for specific groups, such as teachers and nurses.

The Coordinating Group on Lifelong Learning noted that a number of activities have taken place to promote better understanding of lifelong learning in higher education since 2007, and the group found that considerable progress has been made towards increasing the understanding of lifelong learning in a higher education context. The group’s conclusion that much remains to be done before lifelong learning becomes fully integrated within all higher education systems across the EHEA is in accordance with the findings of the 2009 stocktaking that significant effort is required to enhance the development and application of RPL.

Recommendations

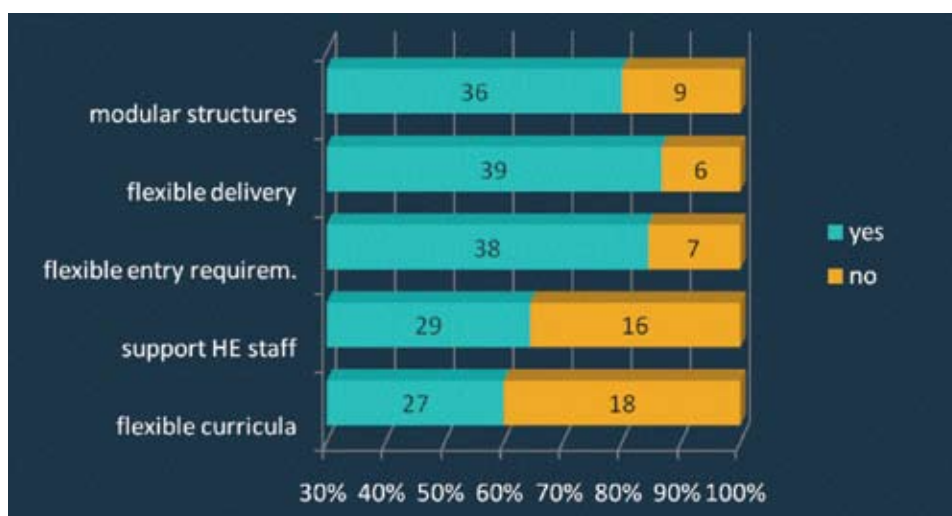
Action is needed to ensure that RPL practice becomes more coherent at the institutional level, even where there are no national procedures in place. Where national procedures are already in place, action should be taken to increase the practical application of RPL at institutional level. Action is also needed at national level to publicise opportunities for RPL among learners.

Flexible learning paths

Flexible learning paths are at a range of stages of development across the EHEA. Overall, considerable progress has been made to modularise curricula and thereby increase flexibility for learners: 75% of the countries answered that they are establishing modular structures. A number of countries have Open Universities and part-time, distance, e-learning and blended learning approaches can be found across the EHEA. Thus far, the emphasis has been on increasing the flexibility of entry points into higher education for under-represented groups. There is recognition that, while progress is being made, there is scope for further development.

As autonomous institutions, HEIs generally have discretion over their entry requirements. More than three-quarters of the countries offer flexible entry arrangements for targeted groups and flexible delivery to meet the needs of various groups of learners. Special measures are sometimes targeted at students with disabilities, older students, refugees or veterans.

Figure 38. Support for more flexible delivery



When it comes to promotion of flexible curricula and supporting staff in establishing flexible learning paths, there is support in more than half of the countries. Financial incentives to increase flexible learning paths are in place in a number of countries for both students and HEIs. The focus of these incentives for HEIs is largely on RPL and enhancing the scope for flexible admissions procedures. For students, the incentives are frequently reduced tuition fees or enhanced support packages. Credit for partially completed qualifications does not yet appear to be common, although credit accumulation practices are in place in some countries. Few countries have supported staff development on flexible learning or made an explicit link to their national qualifications frameworks. Very few countries keep statistical data about the results of measures to increase participation by under-represented groups in flexible learning paths.

The report of the Data Collection working group shows that around one-third of the 18- to 20-year-old age group in the Bologna area is expected to enter higher education. For people over 25 however, the entry rate is below 2% in almost all countries. Consequently there is a need for higher education institutions to play a more active role in providing lifelong learning opportunities, by widening access to students from all backgrounds and by recognising prior learning and work experience as a valid route of entry.

The report found that in spite of some improvements in recent years, social background still has a strong impact on entry to, and successful completion of, higher education. Young people whose parents have completed tertiary education have almost four times the chance of completing higher education themselves than have young people whose parents have at most lower secondary education.

Socio-economic background is also an important factor in student mobility: those from highly educated family backgrounds are three times more likely to have experienced a study-related stay abroad than those from families with a low educational background.

Conclusion

Few countries have made an explicit link between flexible learning and their national qualifications frameworks. Very few countries keep statistical data about the results of measures to increase participation by under-represented groups in flexible learning paths.

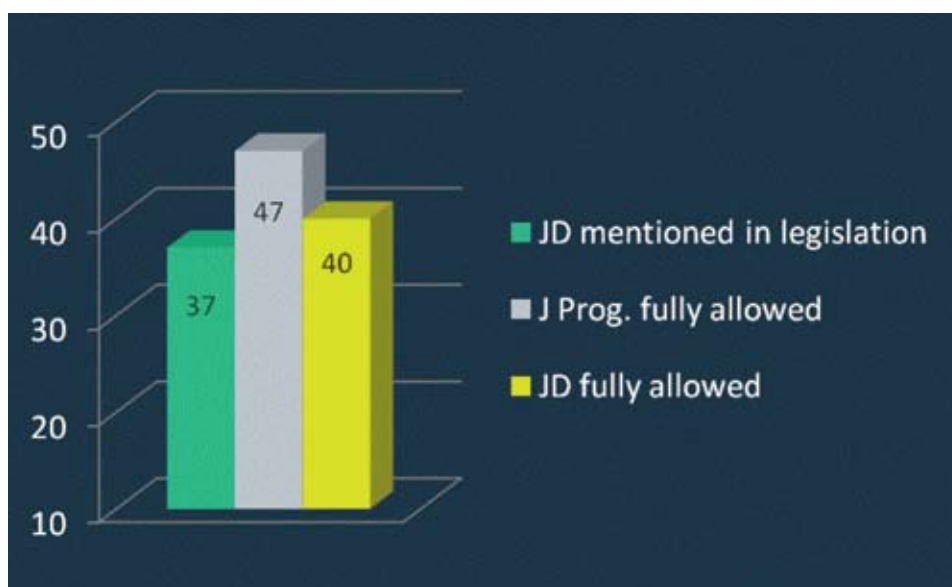
Recommendation

In times of financial and economic difficulties, countries need to pay more attention to developing flexible learning paths which will open up opportunities for people who are newly unemployed to enhance their skills and employability.

Establishment and recognition of joint degrees

In the 2009 stocktaking it was decided not to use a scorecard indicator for the establishment and recognition of joint degrees. There was an indicator on joint degrees in 2007, and so many countries stated that there were no legal problems in establishing joint degrees that all of them appeared in the “green zone” being scored either “green” or “light green”. Instead, for the 2009 stocktaking countries were asked to provide both qualitative and quantitative data regarding establishment and recognition of joint degrees.

Figure 39. Legislative position of joint degrees (number of countries giving each answer)



National reports showed that three-quarters of countries have introduced joint degrees into their legislation and more have prepared drafts for new legislation which includes clauses allowing joint degrees. Establishing joint programmes is now possible in all but one country and in about four-fifths of the countries the establishment of joint degrees is fully allowed. Several countries have prepared draft legislation explicitly allowing joint degrees and are awaiting its adoption.

Looking at the estimated total numbers of joint programmes, there could already be around 2500 joint programmes running in the EHEA. In a quarter of the countries, more than 50% of all HEIs are involved in joint degree cooperation. However, in almost half the countries less than 25% of HEIs are involved in joint degrees. Also, in one-fifth of the countries there are no joint degrees at all, while in two countries joint programmes do not even exist yet.

Figure 40. Estimate of the percentage of HEIs involved in joint programmes and joint degrees (number of countries giving each percentage interval)

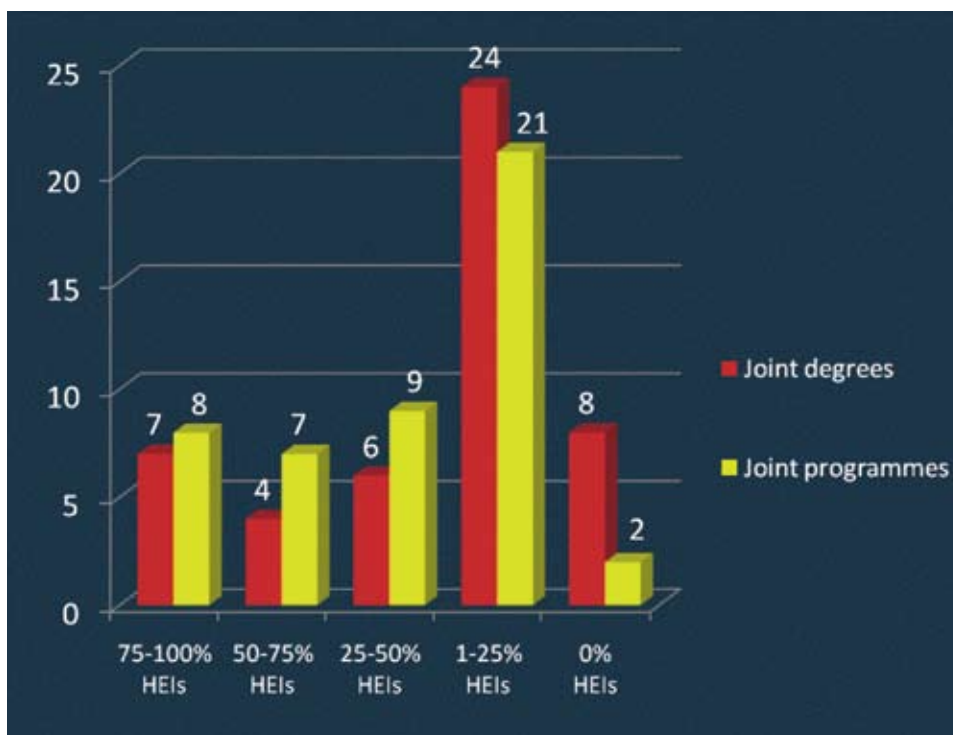
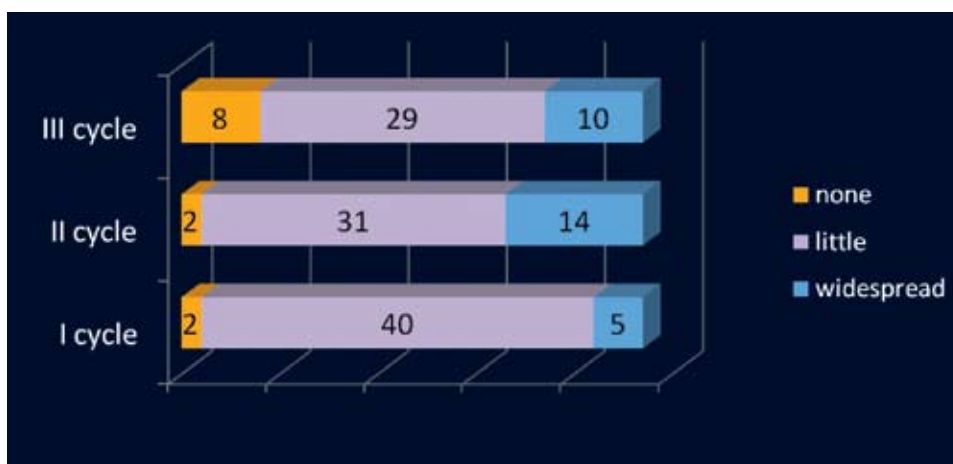


Figure 41. Level of JD cooperation in the three cycles²² (number of countries giving each answer)



²² The total numbers do not reach 48 because one country did not answer this question.

Countries were asked to characterise the level of joint degree cooperation in each of Bologna cycles as “none”, “little” or “widespread”. Generally, the main answer is “little” for all cycles. Joint degrees are somewhat more widespread in the second cycle than in the first cycle. However, it is the third cycle where there is the greatest number of countries with no joint degrees at all.

Conclusions

The answers of some countries reveal that there is still confusion between joint degrees on the one hand and overall student mobility or providing “foreign” HE programmes through franchise on the other.

Main study areas for joint degrees: It is evident that joint degrees are being established in all areas of study. However, engineering and natural sciences are clearly the most popular, followed closely by economics, business administration, social sciences, information technologies and health sciences. European studies, teacher training and environmental studies are also mentioned frequently.

Actions to stimulate joint degrees: The most frequently mentioned actions are legal measures that have made joint degree cooperation possible. Support of joint programmes by additional funding comes next, followed by establishing quality assurance/ accreditation of joint programmes, codes of good practice and handbooks for establishing joint degrees, often as part of country’s internationalisation plan of higher education. As an example of financial support, Denmark has allocated 4.400.000 EUR for marketing and development of double and joint degrees in 2008-2009. At the same time several countries report that they have no such measures at all.

Apart from the frequently mentioned support from Erasmus Mundus and other cooperation programmes (CEEPUS, NORDPLUS and others) that support students studying in joint programmes, in a number of countries there is specific support allocated for such students. Some countries have support for foreign students studying on joint programmes, but several countries state that such students receive the regular student support.

Student and staff mobility²³

Mobility is one of the core goals of the Bologna process. The importance of removing obstacles to student and staff mobility has been underlined in a great number of political documents related to the Bologna process. In the 2009 national reports, countries did not provide sufficient statistical data on which to base analysis of the numbers or percentages of mobile students. It can only be noted that the spectrum is very wide – the numbers can range from a modest couple of hundred mobile students per year to many thousands. Outward mobility of students is the most supported kind of mobility and there are

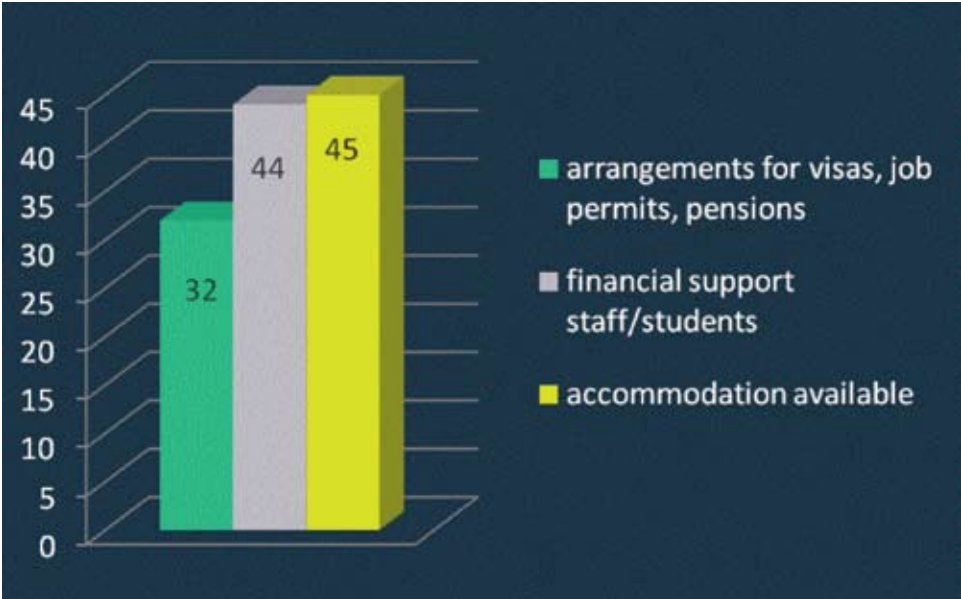
²³ Please also see the more detailed report of the Mobility Coordination Group, www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/conference/documents/2009_mobility_report.pdf

various ways in which it is supported. First of all, most of the countries involved in the EU Lifelong Learning programme supplement Erasmus grants from national or HEIs' financial resources. One country specifically states that it allocates the greatest part of this funding to ensure that students from low-income backgrounds can participate in mobility. Some countries link the size of support with the level of studies, allocating the highest grants to doctoral students and the next highest to students on master programmes. A number of countries allocate national funding to give grants to students not only for short mobility periods but also to undertake their whole study programme abroad, covering tuition fees and providing the same type of support as for studies in the home country. Some other countries pay the travel expenses of students going to study abroad. Several countries claimed to have sufficient funding for student mobility, yet they underlined that funding is not the only hindrance to mobility and that campaigning and the provision of targeted information are necessary to convince more students to take a study period abroad.

Several countries support student mobility by planning a "mobility window" or "free space" in the curriculum which can then be used for a period abroad or as a period for foreign students coming in to study. In some countries the mobility figures are used as indicators of external quality assurance/accreditation. This is a good way of stimulating mobility and is therefore worth following. Some other countries see improving recognition of study periods as one of the preconditions for increasing outgoing mobility.

When asked to identify the main obstacles to mobility, countries often mentioned lacking or limited funding, visa and work permit issues, failure to recognise courses studied abroad and the difficulties related to studying in a foreign language.

Figure 42. Actions to remove obstacles to student and staff mobility (number of countries giving each answer)



Ministers in the London Communiqué explicitly stated their commitment to making efforts within their governments to solve the visa and work permit issues and so far two-

thirds of the countries report that they have managed to ease visa and work permit arrangements for mobile students and staff (Fig.42). In response to the question regarding the availability of accommodation for incoming students, nearly all countries answered that accommodation is available in one way or another.

To increase incoming mobility, a number of countries stimulate the development of programmes taught in a foreign language (mainly English), providing English and/or host country's language support, and organising information campaigns or fairs in the target countries. Another measure to stimulate incoming mobility is providing scholarships to incoming students or providing foreign students with free accommodation. To increase the outgoing mobility of staff, several countries are planning to credit their teaching abroad towards their teaching duties at home.

Conclusions

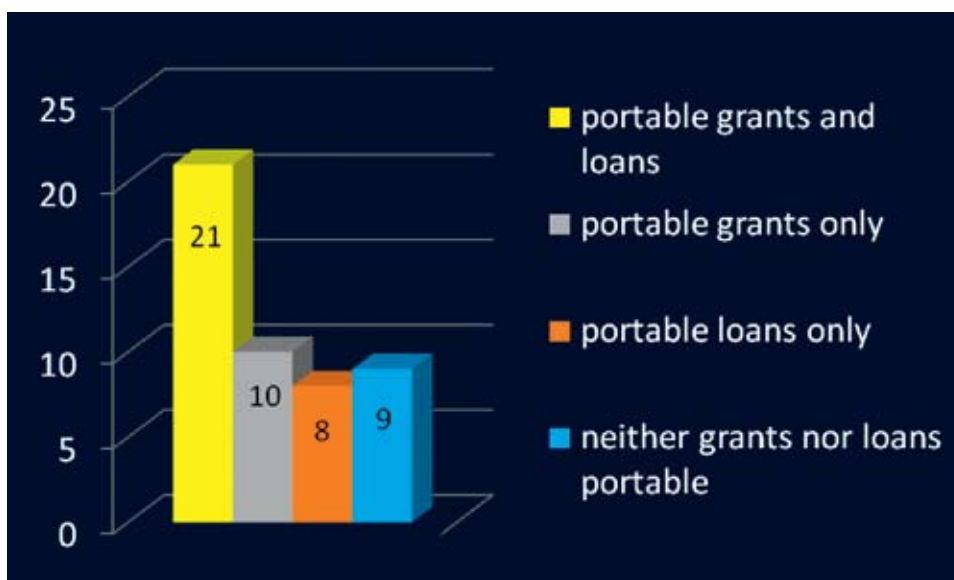
Many obstacles to large-scale mobility still exist and therefore a lot of work remains to be done to make mobility the rule in the European Higher Education Area. Making mobility work requires a comprehensive and strategic approach involving ministries, higher education institutions, employers, staff and students. There is also a need for better data about the real numbers of students and staff taking up mobility opportunities.

Recommendations

The stocktaking working group notes the recommendations of the Mobility Coordination Group to increase and diversify the supports for mobility at all levels (institutional, national, regional and European) and to collect data on student and staff mobility.

Portability of grants and loans

Figure 43. Portability of student support (number of countries giving each answer)



Country answers regarding availability of portable grants and loans are summarised in Fig. 43.

All-in-all, close to 80% of countries have some kind of portable support for mobile students: in more than 40% of countries there are both portable grants and portable loans, while around 30% of countries offer either portable grants or portable loans. Yet in about 20% of the countries students' "normal" support may not be portable for mobile students. However, in some of these countries there may be a very limited number of scholarships awarded to the brightest candidates for targeted studies abroad.

Conclusions

Portability of grants and loans is necessary to support student mobility, however some such obstacles appear to exist at national level. Further conclusions and recommendations on this topic are included in the report of the Network for Experts in Student Support in Europe (NESSIE)²⁴.

²⁴ www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/conference/documents/2009_NESIE_report.pdf

3.4 The European Higher Education Area in a global context²⁴

In the London Communiqué, Ministers noted that the Bologna reforms had begun to create considerable interest in many parts of the world and to stimulate discussion between European and international partners on higher education issues. They adopted the strategy “The European Higher Education Area in a Global Setting” and agreed that they would continue to work towards improving information; promoting the attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA; strengthening cooperation based on partnership; intensifying policy dialogue; and improving recognition of qualifications. They noted that this work should be informed by the OECD/UNESCO *Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education*.

The Ministers asked for a progress report on overall developments in this area at the European, national and institutional levels by 2009, with particular attention to two priorities: improving the information available about the EHEA, and improving recognition. They called on HEIs, ENIC/NARIC centres and other competent recognition authorities within the EHEA to assess qualifications from other parts of the world with the same open mind with which they would expect European qualifications to be assessed elsewhere, and to base this recognition on the principles of the LRC.

In the template for the 2009 national reports, countries were asked to describe any measures that they were taking to implement the “European Higher Education in a Global Setting” strategy. They were also asked to indicate what they have done to improve information on the EHEA outside Europe; to promote European higher education, enhance its worldwide attractiveness and competitiveness; to strengthen cooperation based on partnership in higher education; to intensify policy dialogue with partners from other world regions, and to improve recognition of qualifications with other world regions. In relation to the OECD/UNESCO *Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education*, countries were asked to describe any measures they have taken to implement the guidelines and to state whether the guidelines applied to cross-border provision of their education programmes and/or to incoming higher education provision.

The answers to these questions show that all the countries involved in the Bologna Process take this aspect very seriously and most have already taken active steps to implement the “European Higher Education in a Global Setting” strategy. While some countries have a long-standing tradition of co-operation with higher education institutions outside Europe, many more have now made international co-operation in higher education a national policy priority, and some have set up either dedicated agencies or a special sec-

²⁴ Please also see a separate report of Bologna working group of European Higher Education in a Global Setting, www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/conference/documents/2009_NESIE_report.pdf

tion within the relevant ministry to promote and improve global links. The list of countries with which the countries have made contacts is very extensive, with those mentioned ranging over all continents. The nature of the linkages varies considerably, from information-sharing activities such as the promotional fairs organised by the EU Commission, to official government missions, study visits, transnational conferences, capacity building and bilateral/multilateral agreements. Some countries in the EHEA have focused on specific regions when developing their transnational higher education activities, choosing to link for example with countries with which they have a shared language, culture or tradition.

A number of countries mentioned in their reports that the implementation of the Bologna reforms has made the EHEA more attractive as a higher education destination and provider: instruments such as the diploma supplement, the ECTS and national frameworks of qualifications have improved the transparency of higher education systems and standards in the EHEA, making them easier to explain to other countries. The ENIC network was seen as particularly useful in improving recognition between EHEA and other countries. National reports also mentioned a number of programmes that have actively promoted transnational links, including Erasmus Mundus, Fulbright, Tempus and Soros. Some countries have built up an extensive range of bilateral programmes and others have formed networks such as ASEA Uninet, EurAsia Pacific Uninet, Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) and the Euro Mediterranean Permanent University Forum.

Although countries were not asked to quantify their achievements for this aspect of the Bologna process, some national reports gave statistics which indicated the level of activity: for example during 2008 in Germany, a total of 19,327 international cooperation efforts were under way at 274 German higher education institutions, involving a total of 4,026 higher education institutions in 141 foreign countries. In the UK, the Prime Minister's Initiative has a target of increasing the number of international (non-EU) students in colleges and universities by 100,000 between 2006 and 2011.

Many Ministries also support HEIs in developing transnational cooperation, through measures such as joint degree programmes; facilitating student and staff mobility to and from countries outside the EHEA; scholarship programmes for students from countries outside the EHEA; exchange programmes or "distinguished professor programmes" for academic staff; supporting the use of ECTS packages as a tool of promoting HE institutions in Europe; promoting the issue of the Diploma Supplement in English or another foreign language (automatic and free of charge). In some countries, the higher education system accepts students from countries outside the EHEA on the same basis as home country or other EU students. Likewise, similar rules apply to the recognition of qualifications, where higher education institutions in many countries are required to apply the Lisbon Recognition Convention principles even where a qualification comes from a country that is not party to the Convention.

In relation to improving information on European higher education, enhancing its worldwide attractiveness and competitiveness, many countries report that they provide general information about the Bologna process and about the higher education system within the EHEA through their own higher education web sites, publications and media campaigns. However as far as promotion is concerned, most of them focus on promoting their own

national systems of higher education as part of the EHEA, rather than directly promoting the EHEA itself. Marketing and promotional activities at national level aimed at attracting students include participation in international fairs; publication and dissemination of information materials about study opportunities, using various communications media. HEIs also play an important role in developing their long-term contacts into international partnerships for institutional cooperation. They often build on the work of international organisations in higher education, inter-university networks and diplomatic missions. Some HEIs hold international workshops, exchange stays and summer schools and they cooperate with not-for-profit organisations, for example to offer scholarships for people from conflict zones or from countries that have suffered a natural disaster.

Many countries report that as part of implementing the OECD/UNESCO *Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education*, they apply the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention to all qualifications. It also appears to be fairly common practice that national quality assurance or accreditation procedures in higher education are applied to transnational or cross-border provision, both incoming and outgoing. Where this happens, it helps to ensure that all programmes are based on the same quality criteria and therefore promotes international acceptability. It was noted however that in some cases transnational education providers operate illegally without seeking licences or accreditation from official national sources, claiming to offer distance education with the support of institutions in their home countries.

Conclusions

It is clear that the Bologna Process has enhanced the cooperation between countries, organisations and higher education institutions inside and outside Europe. However, while considerable progress has been made in the fields of information and promotion, most countries seem to promote their own higher education systems internationally and very few promote the EHEA.

Recommendations

The working group on the European Higher Education Area in a Global Setting has advanced a number of specific recommendations which should be followed up in future stocktaking exercises.

3.5. Future challenges

The main challenges listed by the countries in their national reports can be presented in the following groups

Qualifications frameworks and lifelong learning

Establishing and self-certification of the national qualifications frameworks; paradigm shift towards student-centred learning; linking programmes and credits with learning outcomes

Lifelong learning in higher education - establishing flexible learning paths

Social dimension and particularly widening access and participation in higher education; ensuring possibilities to study for those who may lose their jobs as the result of recession

Funding and governance of higher education

Funding issues – assuring sufficient funding, establishing mechanisms for more efficient use of funds

Autonomy and good governance of higher education institutions

Mobility, internationalisation and employability

Mobility of students, staff and researchers; internationalisation of higher education institutions; making it possible to establish joint degrees

Relevance of qualifications to the labour market needs; improving cooperation with employers/ businesses; employability of bachelor degree graduates in particular

Quality assurance and recognition

Quality assurance and quality reputation of the country; establishing internal quality assurance systems

Recognition of qualifications; recognition of prior learning, proper use of ECTS and Diploma Supplement

Other challenges

Innovation and technology transfer; balance between teaching and research

4 Stocktaking scorecards 2009

This part of the report includes the individual country scorecards and the summary scorecard for all countries. The text under each country scorecard is summarised from two sections of their 2009 national report: Main developments since London 2007, and Main challenges for higher education.

ALBANIA

DEGREE SYSTEM

1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle

2. Access to the next cycle

3. Implementation of national qualifications framework

QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG

4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system

5. Level of student participation in quality assurance

6. Level of international participation in quality assurance

RECOGNITION

7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement

8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention

9. Stage of implementation of ECTS

10. Recognition of prior learning

ANDORRA

DEGREE SYSTEM

1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle

2. Access to the next cycle

3. Implementation of national qualifications framework

QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG¹

4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system

5. Level of student participation in quality assurance

6. Level of international participation in quality assurance

RECOGNITION

7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement

8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention

9. Stage of implementation of ECTS

10. Recognition of prior learning

Albania joined the Bologna Process in 2003. A new law on Higher education which is oriented towards Bologna reforms was adopted on 07 May 2007. Three-cycle system studies have been implemented following the scheme 3+2+3 (excluding medicine and architecture). Albanian public universities have adopted the new curricula as of academic year 2008-2009. Most of the HEIs in Albania, both public and private, already have in place elements for controlling, monitoring and reviewing their main processes; efforts are being made to join the components and form them into systems for internal quality assurance. Future challenges include: institutional autonomy and good governance of HEIs; curricular reform in line with the proposed NQF; establishing a fair accreditation system; integrating teaching and research; recognition of prior learning; establishing possibilities for lifelong learning; increasing student mobility and fostering greater participation.

Andorra joined the Bologna Process in 2003. A new law on higher education and universities was adopted in June 2008 and now one of the greatest challenges is to fully implement it. The new law establishes the three-cycle system and 30% of students are already studying in the system this year. In 2008 Andorra ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention and drafted a Government decree on recognition. Three more Government decrees have been drafted: on the National Qualifications Framework, on ECTS and on research and development. A working group has been appointed to develop a quality assurance agency and cooperation was established with French and Spanish quality assurance agencies. Future challenges include: establishing and consolidating the whole legislative system of decrees and mandatory rules which is indispensable for a small country like Andorra. The close cooperation with Spain and France offers opportunities to adapt some features of both educational systems for a very small community.

¹ Regarding Andorra it has to be noted that criteria for Stocktaking indicators 4 and 6 are not appropriate for countries with small HE systems. The criteria for these indicators emphasise the external assessment of the QA agency and membership of the QA agency in ENQA or other international QA networks. Those countries which due to the small size of their HE system have not established their own QA agency but rather seek assistance from foreign QA agencies are scoring low in those two indicators.

ARMENIA	AUSTRIA
DEGREE SYSTEM	DEGREE SYSTEM
1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle
2. Access to the next cycle	2. Access to the next cycle
3. Implementation of national qualifications framework	3. Implementation of national qualifications framework
QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG	QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG
4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system	4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system
5. Level of student participation in quality assurance	5. Level of student participation in quality assurance
6. Level of international participation in quality assurance	6. Level of international participation in quality assurance
RECOGNITION	RECOGNITION
7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement	7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement
8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
9. Stage of implementation of ECTS	9. Stage of implementation of ECTS
10. Recognition of prior learning	10. Recognition of prior learning

Armenia joined the Bologna Process in 2005. Since then a “Development Strategy of Education for 2008-2015” has been prepared, with the main objectives of enhancing quality; widening access to higher education; developing international cooperation; increasing attractiveness of education system as well as ensuring effective governance and financial management of HE. Transfer to the two-cycle degree system has been completed and almost 95% of students below doctoral level are enrolled in the two cycles. Two universities started to issue Diploma Supplements and all HE programmes are based on ECTS as of 2008. A proposal for creation of an independent national quality assurance agency has been prepared and submitted to the Government. Future challenges include in the short-term: overcoming inadequacies between learning outcomes and the labour market needs; strengthening financial management at HEIs; improving lifelong learning programmes; internationalisation of HEIs and creation of joint degree programmes. In the long term, the challenges will be better coordination of reforms to develop a competitive high-quality HE system and increase confidence in Armenia’s education system; improving and streamlining organizational structures and support systems, strategic planning, policy making and implementation of programmes, monitoring, budgeting and other related functions.

Austria was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. Since 2007, Austria has become a member of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education. The budget for needs-based study grants was raised and study fees for most students have been abolished as of 2009. Grants are now portable for a whole study programme in an EEA country or Switzerland. Future challenges include making a paradigm shift from teacher- to student-centred-learning and from input to output orientation; description of learning outcomes; implementation of the Austrian Qualification Framework for all education sectors; correct implementation of the whole ECTS package, improvement of recognition practices in line with the spirit of the Lisbon Recognition Convention; making bachelor and master programmes modular, including the provision of “mobility windows”.

AZERBAIJAN	BELGIUM-FLEMISH COMMUNITY
DEGREE SYSTEM	DEGREE SYSTEM
1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle
2. Access to the next cycle	2. Access to the next cycle
3. Implementation of national qualifications framework	3. Implementation of national qualifications framework
QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG	QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG
4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system	4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system
5. Level of student participation in quality assurance	5. Level of student participation in quality assurance
6. Level of international participation in quality assurance	6. Level of international participation in quality assurance
RECOGNITION	RECOGNITION
7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement	7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement
8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
9. Stage of implementation of ECTS	9. Stage of implementation of ECTS
10. Recognition of prior learning	10. Recognition of prior learning

Azerbaijan joined the Bologna Process in 2005. Key developments since then include: preparation for the introduction of a credit system; development of diploma supplement; measures taken on recognition of foreign HE qualifications. The content and structure of masters programmes have been renewed. In 2007-2008 eleven higher education institutions were accredited. Future challenges include: adopting a new law on education; renewing and adapting HE to the needs of society and economy; introducing more democratic principles in the management of higher educational institutions; ensuring student participation; setting minimum state requirements for the content and level of the masters curricula; revising all HE legislation; speeding up implementation of QA measures and involving international experts in QA; changing legislation with a view to promoting mobility of teachers and students.

Belgium was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. Key developments in the Flemish Community since 2007 include: shifting from mainly input funding (based on student enrolments) to a combination of input funding with output funding (successful completion of studies); completing the move to the two-cycle system (except veterinary medicine programmes); completing the self-certification of the national qualifications framework with the EHEA framework. VLIR and VLHORA which act quality assurance agencies are undergoing review with a view registration in EQAR. Work is continuing towards the ratification of the Lisbon Recognition Convention by all four parliaments in Belgium. This was completed by the Flemish Community Parliament in November 2006. The principles of the Convention are applied in practice and a fully operational ENIC is in place. Future challenges include: widening participation in higher education; funding of HE; further development of degree structure; review of quality assurance system as a whole by 2011; internationalisation of higher education; implementation of lifelong learning in higher education and strengthening the “knowledge triangle” (higher education-research-innovation).

BELGIUM-FRENCH COMMUNITY	BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA
DEGREE SYSTEM	DEGREE SYSTEM
1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle
2. Access to the next cycle	2. Access to the next cycle
3. Implementation of national qualifications framework	3. Implementation of national qualifications framework
QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG	QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG
4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system	4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system
5. Level of student participation in quality assurance	5. Level of student participation in quality assurance
6. Level of international participation in quality assurance	6. Level of international participation in quality assurance
RECOGNITION	RECOGNITION
7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement	7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement
8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
9. Stage of implementation of ECTS	9. Stage of implementation of ECTS
10. Recognition of prior learning	10. Recognition of prior learning

Belgium was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. Key developments in the French Community since 2007 include: full implementation of the three-cycle system, ECTS and Diploma Supplement; establishment of a Superior Mobility Council to deal with all kinds of mobility programmes; strengthening the independence of the QA Agency; approval of the NQF for higher education in 2008; legislation for further democratisation of HE; financial incentives promoting equitable access have been progressively put in place and are planned also for future. The Parliament and the Government of the French Community have ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention through the Act of 19 July 2007. Due to the federal structure of Belgium, ratification is needed by all four Parliaments. It is expected that the procedure of ratification will be completed by June 2009. Future challenges include: stimulating access to HE for all; promoting higher education in science and technology amongst women; guaranteeing the quality of HE in the context of globalization and emergence of new education and training providers; meeting challenges such as the constantly growing demand for education and training and an ageing population at the same time; promoting mobility and quality; reaching the objectives set up at the EU level; maintaining HE as a public good and reinforcing its funding while also encouraging private financing.

Bosnia and Herzegovina joined the Bologna Process in 2003. Since 2007, the Framework Law on Higher Education was adopted, after almost four years of political discussions. Two agencies have been established: the Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance, and the Centre for Information and Recognition of Documents in the Area of Higher Education. A Rectors' Conference has been established by agreement of the universities. Strategic documents were adopted implementing aspects of the Bologna Process including qualifications framework; ESG for Quality Assurance; recognition of qualifications, and diploma supplement. The Council of Ministers also adopted a strategy for education development for the period 2008-2015. Future challenges include: full implementation of the Framework Law on Higher Education; making newly established agencies in the field of higher education fully operational in the near future; integration of universities; introduction of structured doctoral studies; development of the lifelong learning concept and financing of higher education.

BULGARIA	CROATIA
DEGREE SYSTEM	DEGREE SYSTEM
1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle
2. Access to the next cycle	2. Access to the next cycle
3. Implementation of national qualifications framework	3. Implementation of national qualifications framework
QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG	QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG
4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system	4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system
5. Level of student participation in quality assurance	5. Level of student participation in quality assurance
6. Level of international participation in quality assurance	6. Level of international participation in quality assurance
RECOGNITION	RECOGNITION
7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement	7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement
8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
9. Stage of implementation of ECTS	9. Stage of implementation of ECTS
10. Recognition of prior learning	10. Recognition of prior learning

Bulgaria. Amendments to the Law on HE have been made with a view to stimulating the competition among HEIs, substantial increase of annual enrollment; creation of boards of trustees at universities; strengthening external control over the activity of universities regarding compliance with the law and spending of public funds; giving ministry more powers in determining tuition fees; prohibition for HE provision outside the universities and their branches. In 2008 the national QA agency gained full ENQA membership. Project of NQF is in line with the EQF, alignment with the QF of EHEA should be completed next year. Future challenges include: establishing a provision for knowledge society; guarantee academic autonomy of the HEIs; opening the education system to the world; efficient public funding for HE; involvement of employers and students in developing QA policies; guaranteeing HE of good quality and mobility; absorption of financial resources from EU Structural Funds; real and favourable providing of student loans; offering competitive HE within the framework of the EU; strengthening the universities' positions as centres for research and development; cooperation with business; HE in the field of high technologies; increasing the HE funding; HE development to improve the quality of labour force, providing more and better jobs and better social cohesion; strengthening the role of LLL; equal access to HE for all; attractive social package for young scholars.

Croatia joined the Bologna Process in 2001. Key developments since 2007 include establishing a system of tax reductions for research and incentives for investment by enterprises into higher education. The baseline for the Croatian Qualifications Framework was adopted in July 2007 which outlines the CROQF aims and principles; a 5-year working plan was adopted for implementation of a NQF. As of 2007 diploma supplements in the EU/CoE/UNESCO format are provided to students graduating from the Bologna cycles automatically, free of charge, in Croatian and English. The system of student representation has been reformed and all HEIs will have a student ombudsman. Future challenges include in short term: structural reform of universities, building stronger development strategies to fully implement the Bologna Process reforms; adoption of a new law regulating the status and remit of the quality assurance agency; development of a strong higher education information and analysis system. In long term: strengthening of HEIs in using lump sum budgeting; reform of tuition fees and the student welfare system; strengthening the role of students in the reform processes; implementing a learning outcomes approach; adoption and self-certification of the Croatian Qualifications Framework.

CYPRUS	CZECH REPUBLIC
DEGREE SYSTEM	DEGREE SYSTEM
1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle
2. Access to the next cycle	2. Access to the next cycle
3. Implementation of national qualifications framework	3. Implementation of national qualifications framework
QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG	QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG
4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system	4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system
5. Level of student participation in quality assurance	5. Level of student participation in quality assurance
6. Level of international participation in quality assurance	6. Level of international participation in quality assurance
RECOGNITION	RECOGNITION
7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement	7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement
8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
9. Stage of implementation of ECTS	9. Stage of implementation of ECTS
10. Recognition of prior learning	10. Recognition of prior learning

Cyprus joined the Bologna Process in 2001. Key developments since 2007 include agreement by the Council of Ministers to proceed with the establishment of a Cyprus Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency, and a draft legislative decree has been prepared and discussed. A group has been established to propose a new unified law for higher education; a committee has been set up with a view to introducing a National Qualifications Framework for Cyprus, in line with the QF for the EHEA and the EQF for LLL. Future challenges include: implementation of the HE education reform process; extending the HE capacity to satisfy the demand for university studies; increasing research activities to increase the involvement of the private sector; establishing centres of excellence to compete internationally; improving the attractiveness of HE by improving the quality of education; passing a new law embracing QA, autonomy and accountability; making the HE system student-centred, establishing the QA agency and implementing the National Qualifications Framework; enhancing student/staff mobility, introducing flexibility in studies and establishing LLL centres in all HEIs.

The Czech Republic was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. Key developments since 2007 include preparation of a White Paper on Tertiary Education which is currently under public discussion; reform of the research, development and innovation system; progress in the implementation of Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA; changes proposed in QA system to include greater cooperation with employers, strengthening the responsibility of HEIs and students for the quality of instruction, highlighting the role of lifelong learning, and enhancing the quality of university research. The Accreditation Commission has begun to involve students in the activities of its working groups. Future challenges include: implementing the priorities of the current Bologna period and setting new priorities for 2011-2015; preparing a new Tertiary Education Act by the end of 2009; establishing closer cooperation with employers and other stakeholders in enhancing employability of graduates, curriculum development, quality assurance; management and financing; introducing a new approach to the bachelor level and defining the place of professional tertiary education; introducing a functional national system of tertiary education qualifications; a thorough application of learning outcomes and ECTS, including compliance with the lifelong learning strategy; supporting the international dimension of HE and encouraging student and staff mobility; expanding the teaching in foreign languages and establishing joint and double degrees.

DENMARK	ESTONIA
DEGREE SYSTEM	DEGREE SYSTEM
1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle
2. Access to the next cycle	2. Access to the next cycle
3. Implementation of national qualifications framework	3. Implementation of national qualifications framework
QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG	QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG
4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system	4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system
5. Level of student participation in quality assurance	5. Level of student participation in quality assurance
6. Level of international participation in quality assurance	6. Level of international participation in quality assurance
RECOGNITION	RECOGNITION
7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement	7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement
8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
9. Stage of implementation of ECTS	9. Stage of implementation of ECTS
10. Recognition of prior learning	10. Recognition of prior learning

Denmark was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. Key developments since 2007 include: allocation of funding to reach the objective that 50% of age cohort will complete a HE programme in 2015; a large-scale merging of universities and research institutions to strengthen both research and HE activities; improved links between short cycle and first cycle programmes; introduction of compulsory work placements; double and joint degrees; a national accreditation system covering all new study programmes; revision of NQF in 2008; self-certification of the NQF is in progress; a new scholarship programme for studies up to two years abroad has been implemented and more scholarships are allocated for foreign students' studies in Denmark; a system for RPL has been established. Future challenges include: dealing with an ageing population, with an increased demand for highly-skilled labour and for recruitment to higher education; within the Bologna-process - a continued focus on transparency as regards recognition of qualifications, QA and mobility; maintaining continuous enhancement of HE provision at the same time as facilitating flexibility of governance, broadening access, establishing flexible learning paths and increasing internationalisation.

Estonia was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. Significant legislative amendments in 2008 included more strategic steering of HEI government, while protecting institutional autonomy; establishing an independent QA Agency for higher education; providing the legal basis for establishing joint programs and degrees; formally stipulating the students' rights for learning- and career-related counselling; requiring HEIs to change their programmes according to the learning outcomes approach by September 2009; adopting general principles for accreditation of prior learning and professional experience and allocating credits; implementing activities of the internationalization strategy of 2006; all of the above projects are supported by EU Structural funds. Future challenges include: limited funding for higher education; need to strengthen PhD training and support technology transfer; insufficient internationalisation of HE sector which may strengthen the image among young people that it is more interesting to study abroad; demographic decline in the age cohort of 15-17 will have a major impact on the number of students entering Estonian HEIs in the near future.

FINLAND	FRANCE
DEGREE SYSTEM	DEGREE SYSTEM
1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle
2. Access to the next cycle	2. Access to the next cycle
3. Implementation of national qualifications framework	3. Implementation of national qualifications framework
QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG	QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG
4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system	4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system
5. Level of student participation in quality assurance	5. Level of student participation in quality assurance
6. Level of international participation in quality assurance	6. Level of international participation in quality assurance
RECOGNITION	RECOGNITION
7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement	7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement
8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
9. Stage of implementation of ECTS	9. Stage of implementation of ECTS
10. Recognition of prior learning	10. Recognition of prior learning

Finland was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. Key developments since 2007 include: drafting new Universities Act to further extend the autonomy of universities and facilitate operation in an international environment; changing the status of universities to either foundations under private law or a new type of legal entity under public law; changing the legal status of all university staff and merging HEIs but the same time strengthening university autonomy; completion of transition period to Bologna degree system in 2008 (except a few fields having a transition period up to 2010); carrying out audit of the QA systems of Finnish HEIs by the Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council (FINHEEC); preparing proposal for a National Qualifications Framework. Future challenges include: continuing modernising higher education; strengthening the quality and research capacity of HEIs and adjusting to demographic change; financing; intensifying cooperation between HEIs; further internationalisation and strengthening competitiveness of the Finnish HEIs; pioneering innovation activity - achieving innovation-based, sustainably targeted productivity improvements; improving mobility and the attractiveness of Finland as a location for expertise; developing individuals and entrepreneurship; cooperation between HEIs and labour market to develop degrees and their relevance in the labour market; developing RPL procedures and making full use of NQF through putting more effort into curriculum development and describing learning outcomes.

France was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. Since 2007, a major reform of higher education has begun and it is planned to take place over the next five years. The 2007 Act on the freedoms and responsibilities of universities (LRU) defines two new public service missions for universities: participation in the construction of the European Higher Education and Research Area, and student guidance and professional integration. The LRU allows universities greater freedom to implement a development strategy and gives them greater autonomy for the management of their assets, human resources and budgets. The Act is accompanied by greatly increased investment in higher education to improve living and working conditions in universities, as well as the quality of training and the attractiveness of careers in university teaching and research. Future challenges include completing the modernisation of higher education with the three-cycle system; reform of doctoral studies; development of joint diplomas; the increased autonomy of universities and the new rules of governance.

GEORGIA	GERMANY
DEGREE SYSTEM	DEGREE SYSTEM
1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle
2. Access to the next cycle	2. Access to the next cycle
3. Implementation of national qualifications framework	3. Implementation of national qualifications framework
QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG	QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG
4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system	4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system
5. Level of student participation in quality assurance	5. Level of student participation in quality assurance
6. Level of international participation in quality assurance	6. Level of international participation in quality assurance
RECOGNITION	RECOGNITION
7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement	7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement
8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
9. Stage of implementation of ECTS	9. Stage of implementation of ECTS
10. Recognition of prior learning	10. Recognition of prior learning

Georgia joined the Bologna Process in 2005. Key developments since 2007 include: National Education Accreditation Centre officially nominated as authority responsible for information on HEIs, recognition and mobility issues, quality assurance and accreditation; legislation amended to allow joint programmes and joint degrees; regulations established for higher professional education programmes; additional funding allocated for students' social assistance programs; accreditation of programmes and HEIs has decreased the number of HEIs; a new accreditation model based on standards and indicators; Accreditation Centre internationally audited; student internal mobility organised; procedures developed for recognition of qualifications of displaced persons. Future challenges include: limited time to implement the reforms (since 2005); lack of full understanding of the Bologna Process and low level of involvement of social partners and other stakeholders; lack of resources for implementation; shortage of educational managers for implementation of the Bologna reforms at university level; too little information about the higher education system of Georgia outside and consequently, lack of trust. Solutions: elaboration of higher education strategy; intensifying cooperation with European counterparts, including involvement of foreign professors, establishing joint programmes and joint research projects, increasing mobility, implementing programme accreditation.

Germany was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. Since 2007 the proportion of students in bachelor and master programmes has grown from 45% in 2007 to 75%; accreditation of HEIs' internal quality assurance systems has been introduced; the Accreditation Council has undergone external evaluation; self-certification of the National Qualifications Framework for higher education has been completed; Germany has become a member of the European Quality Assurance Register and it has ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention; student mobility has been promoted for both German and foreign students, particularly through making residence and employment regulations more flexible; measures have been taken to increase participation in higher education and to stimulate mobility between HE and vocational education. Future challenges include: changing programmes that end with state examinations (law, medicine, teacher education) to the two-cycle structure; making curricula more flexible; further improving the quality of teaching; expanding counselling and support services; establishing more structured doctoral programmes; establishing internal quality management structures at all HEIs; implementation of the National Action Plan for Recognition; systematic integration of studies abroad into curricula; stimulating mobility of research staff; developing internationalisation strategies at HEIs; increasing acceptance of bachelor and master graduates in the labour market; facilitating access to higher education for vocationally qualified persons without formal higher education entrance qualifications.

GREECE	HOLY SEE
DEGREE SYSTEM	DEGREE SYSTEM
1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle
2. Access to the next cycle	2. Access to the next cycle
3. Implementation of national qualifications framework	3. Implementation of national qualifications framework
QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG	QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG
4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system	4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system
5. Level of student participation in quality assurance	5. Level of student participation in quality assurance
6. Level of international participation in quality assurance	6. Level of international participation in quality assurance
RECOGNITION	RECOGNITION
7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement	7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement
8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
9. Stage of implementation of ECTS	9. Stage of implementation of ECTS
10. Recognition of prior learning	10. Recognition of prior learning

Greece was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. Since 2007 two new laws have been adopted in the HE and research sector which stipulate several improvements in the governance and administration of HEIs, enhancing transparency and social accountability. New laws also provide for improvements in student support and services; introduce measures to improve the situation of disabled students and students from poor financial backgrounds. Greece has not signed or ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention although some of its principles already apply. Future challenges include: opening up Universities and TEIs to society as well as to international co-operation; further promoting access to higher education; ensuring enough HE graduates for specific sectors of the economy; creating new possibilities for young people with special needs and from lower socio-economic backgrounds to enter HE; development of a quality culture across all HE; carrying out an operational programme to enhance quality; implementing ECTS and DS; improving the academic environment through the enhancement of libraries and the expansion of digital services.

The Holy See joined the Bologna Process in 2003. Since 2007 a QA agency has been established and has started pilot projects in internal and external QA; preparations have started to establish a working group on recognition in a European and global context and to promote the work of the Holy See; national and regional meetings have been held with faculties and HE stakeholders to assure exchange between institutions of different national, cultural and legislative settings in Europe and to promote good practice; new legislation on HEIs in catholic "religious sciences" has been adopted which establishes two-tier (BA/MA) structure where both degrees give access to professions in the Church; QA measures have been taken to uphold the same academic standards all over Europe. Future challenges include: full implementation and self-certification of the NQF; further development of the QA Agency AVEPRO into a fully internationally operating QA agency; ensuring fair recognition of academic degrees of the Holy See in all European countries; collaboration in BFUG and ENIC Network especially regarding the global dimension; creation of one central HE internet portal and a central HE database of academic studies within the Catholic Church. The Holy See - as a participant in international conventions and initiatives outside Europe - wants to contribute to HE collaboration between different world regions.

HUNGARY	ICELAND
DEGREE SYSTEM	DEGREE SYSTEM
1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle
2. Access to the next cycle	2. Access to the next cycle
3. Implementation of national qualifications framework	3. Implementation of national qualifications framework
QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG	QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG²
4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system	4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system
5. Level of student participation in quality assurance	5. Level of student participation in quality assurance
6. Level of international participation in quality assurance	6. Level of international participation in quality assurance
RECOGNITION	RECOGNITION
7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement	7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement
8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
9. Stage of implementation of ECTS	9. Stage of implementation of ECTS
10. Recognition of prior learning	10. Recognition of prior learning

Hungary was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. Since 2007, performance based three-year financial agreements have been made with HEIs, thus strengthening their autonomy; performance-based student incentives have been separated from social support; second cycle programmes and admissions procedures have been established to accommodate graduates of the bachelors programmes introduced in 2006; NQF for HE has been approved but EQF will be fully implement by 2013; parliament abolished tuition fees. ECTS is being used for transfer and accumulation but further work is needed to link credits with learning outcomes in all HEIs. Future challenges include: revising training content and regulations with a view to promoting LLL; enhancing cooperation between HEIs and providers of practical training; implementation of competence-based teacher training; promoting the employability; strengthening the regional role of the HEIs; educating new generations of researchers; more programmes offered in foreign languages; ensuring funding for mobility and providing equal opportunities; working out quality strategies at institutional level and setting requirements for a research university.

Iceland was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. Key developments since 2007 include: establishment of an accreditation process and a National Qualifications Framework; revision of quality assurance practices; changes in management structures; increased autonomy and introduction of a common legal framework for all HEIs as well as merging some HEIs. Future challenges include those caused by the current economic situation in Iceland, which should be dealt with in the short term. Iceland needs to open up HEIs for people who face losing their jobs in the coming months; increase innovation and research in HEIs; analyse what actions can be taken to get scientific results faster into industry and create new jobs; develop a new strategy for quality assurance. The long-term challenges are streamlining the HE system; making it more adaptable to the future needs of society, and making it better aligned to the Bologna process as a whole.

² Regarding Iceland it has to be noted that criteria for Stocktaking indicators 4 and 6 are not appropriate for countries with small HE systems. The criteria for these indicators emphasise the external assessment of the QA agency and membership of the QA agency in ENQA or other international QA networks. Those countries which due to the small size of their HE system have not established their own QA agency but rather seek assistance from foreign QA agencies are scoring low in those two indicators.

IRELAND	ITALY
DEGREE SYSTEM	DEGREE SYSTEM
1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle
2. Access to the next cycle	2. Access to the next cycle
3. Implementation of national qualifications framework	3. Implementation of national qualifications framework
QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG	QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG
4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system	4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system
5. Level of student participation in quality assurance	5. Level of student participation in quality assurance
6. Level of international participation in quality assurance	6. Level of international participation in quality assurance
RECOGNITION	RECOGNITION
7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement	7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement
8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
9. Stage of implementation of ECTS	9. Stage of implementation of ECTS
10. Recognition of prior learning	10. Recognition of prior learning

Ireland was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. The main developments since 2007 involve measures to encourage and deepen implementation of policies at the institutional level. The University Framework Implementation Network was jointly established by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland and the Irish Universities Association at the end of 2007, to deepen the implementation of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) within the university sector; a study on the implementation and impact of the NQF was launched following the self-certification in 2007; a code of practice was published to enable higher education institutions to set their education provision for international students against sector-wide benchmarks; *Principles for Reviewing the Effectiveness of Quality Assurance Procedures in Irish Higher Education and Training* were adopted; the Strategic Innovation Fund aimed to promote institutional reform, enhance teaching and learning, improve access and lifelong learning; the Irish Universities Quality Board was reviewed with a view to EBQA membership; preparations began for merging various QA agencies. Future challenges include: ensuring full implementation of all of the elements of the Bologna process to encourage and deepen implementation of change at the institutional level.

Italy was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. Regulations on the operation of the QA Agency for universities and research were adopted in 2008; access to the second cycle has been eased; as of 2008-09 universities must apply the Dublin descriptors when reforming their first and second cycle programmes; a working group was established to develop the levels for the NQF for higher education and to identify the qualifications to be included; a strategy on LLL in HE has been developed and a new framework law reforming LLL was proposed; national guidelines for the recognition of prior learning have been prepared; scholarships for doctoral students have been increased. Future challenges include: in the short term - full implementation of ministerial decrees concerning the first Bologna reform, full implementation of the LLL guidelines for HEIs; in the long term - definition of the guidelines for the reform of governance and preparation of its legal basis.

LATVIA	LIECHTENSTEIN
DEGREE SYSTEM	DEGREE SYSTEM
1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle
2. Access to the next cycle	2. Access to the next cycle
3. Implementation of national qualifications framework	3. Implementation of national qualifications framework
QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG	QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG³
4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system	4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system
5. Level of student participation in quality assurance	5. Level of student participation in quality assurance
6. Level of international participation in quality assurance	6. Level of international participation in quality assurance
RECOGNITION	RECOGNITION
7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement	7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement
8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
9. Stage of implementation of ECTS	9. Stage of implementation of ECTS
10. Recognition of prior learning	10. Recognition of prior learning

Latvia was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. Key developments since 2007 include: further consolidation of the three-cycle system; starting the process of assessment of the national QA agency - a date has been set for the assessment; drafting a new HE law to provide for establishing a NQF, introducing a learning outcomes-based approach, establishing internal QA systems within HEIs, establishing a system for RPL, replacing the ECTS-compatible national credit system with ECTS, allowing joint degrees; a major EU social fund project has been planned for implementing the NQF, linking credits and qualifications with learning outcomes and establishing internal QA systems within the HEIs. Future challenges include: funding HE and the Bologna reforms is becoming the main challenge in the current economic situation; an equally important challenge is to adopt new legislation covering these reforms – otherwise further implementation of aspects such as the national qualifications framework or ECTS is not possible; the delay in adopting the law is also a challenge in itself as it brings the risk that the enthusiasm and the momentum for reform may be lost.

Liechtenstein has been part of the Bologna process since the beginning. Key developments since 2007 include: development of a reform concept for the HE system with a special focus on research in order to strengthen Liechtenstein as a location for science and research; development of a NQF for higher education qualifications was initiated and will be completed by 2010; the process of amending HE legislation - to include recognition of joint degrees, double or multiple degrees - was started. The external quality assurance in Liechtenstein is organised periodically and in all cases involves experts from other countries, mainly from Switzerland, Austria and Germany. Future challenges include: rethinking and revising regulations regarding courses of study in the area of continuing education (e.g. executive master, master of advanced studies), joint, double or multiple degrees as well as the implementation of graduate school in connection with doctoral studies; creation of a NQF and the development of national outcomes-based descriptors for the main types of qualifications; developing measures for recognition of prior learning.

³ Regarding Liechtenstein it has to be noted that criteria for Stocktaking indicators 4 and 6 are not appropriate for countries with small HE systems. The criteria for these indicators emphasise the external assessment of the QA agency and membership of the QA agency in ENQA or other international QA networks. Those countries which due to the small size of their HE system have not established their own QA agency but rather seek assistance from foreign QA agencies are scoring low in those two indicators.

LITHUANIA	LUXEMBOURG
DEGREE SYSTEM	DEGREE SYSTEM
1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle
2. Access to the next cycle	2. Access to the next cycle
3. Implementation of national qualifications framework	3. Implementation of national qualifications framework
QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG	QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG⁴
4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system	4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system
5. Level of student participation in quality assurance	5. Level of student participation in quality assurance
6. Level of international participation in quality assurance	6. Level of international participation in quality assurance
RECOGNITION	RECOGNITION
7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement	7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement
8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
9. Stage of implementation of ECTS	9. Stage of implementation of ECTS
10. Recognition of prior learning	10. Recognition of prior learning

Lithuania was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. Key developments since 2007 include: preparation of legislative changes and a long-term strategy for science and HE has been initiated, with a number of important development programmes in place; access and admission between the first and second cycles is regulated; the Research and HE Monitoring and Analysis Centre was established in 2007 to ensure an efficient strategic management of the respective fields; a Forum for Quality in Higher Education has been established. Future challenges include: continuous assessment of the implementation of Bologna action lines to concentrate efforts on achieving quality criteria; keeping a systemic approach, emphasizing interlinks of the Bologna action lines as well as connections with other national and EU policies; achieving effective functioning of the “knowledge triangle” (studies – research – innovation); implementing the social dimension as a horizontal theme; in the long term - development and implementation of a Strategy for Science and HE including rethinking the role of HE for social change and enhancing competitiveness

Luxembourg was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. Key developments since 2007 include: “short cycle within the first cycle”; a bill has been elaborated and negotiated with the social partners to define the first cycle in terms of quality assurance and accreditation of programmes, workload and learning outcomes, internships and relevance for the labour market; with regard to funding - annual progression rate of 18% in the public contribution to the university of Luxembourg has been established and a new law has been adopted on philanthropy to encourage endowments to the University of Luxembourg; a new bill defines access for holders of bachelor and master degrees into specific positions in the civil service; legislation has been drafted defining entry conditions into Luxembourg for early stage researchers from third countries giving them a special status and full access to social security benefits. Future challenges include: widening participation; scarcity of human resources - finding enough researchers to recruit; extending the funding base of the University.

⁴ Regarding Luxembourg it has to be noted that criteria for Stocktaking indicators 4 and 6 are not appropriate for countries with small HE systems. The criteria for these indicators emphasise the external assessment of the QA agency and membership of the QA agency in ENQA or other international QA networks. Those countries which due to the small size of their HE system have not established their own QA agency but rather seek assistance from foreign QA agencies are scoring low in those two indicators.

MALTA	MOLDOVA
DEGREE SYSTEM	DEGREE SYSTEM
1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle
2. Access to the next cycle	2. Access to the next cycle
3. Implementation of national qualifications framework	3. Implementation of national qualifications framework
QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG⁵	QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG
4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system	4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system
5. Level of student participation in quality assurance	5. Level of student participation in quality assurance
6. Level of international participation in quality assurance	6. Level of international participation in quality assurance
RECOGNITION	RECOGNITION
7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement	7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement
8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
9. Stage of implementation of ECTS	9. Stage of implementation of ECTS
10. Recognition of prior learning	10. Recognition of prior learning

Malta was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. Key developments since 2007 include harmonisation of second cycle qualifications awarded by the University of Malta, and the setting up of the Malta Qualifications Framework; initiatives to ensure that QA becomes an integral part of the HE system; slight increase in the number of mobile teachers and students. Future challenges include: funding for expanding research activities and providing high quality education; introducing new work practices of academic staff supported by better working and financial conditions; balancing between teaching and research activities in conditions of increasing student numbers. The main long-term challenges are growth in demand for HE in relation to the capacity and existing funding system for HE; fostering the learning outcomes culture within HEIs whilst ensuring that all students and academics understand qualifications framework, learning outcomes, workload and QA; consolidating the stakeholders' consultation process; monitoring of the process in all the relevant HEIs by the National Agency.

Moldova joined the Bologna Process in 2005. Key developments since 2007 include: introducing the second cycle of studies in all HEIs; aligning doctoral studies with the Bologna third cycle; preparing a draft of the NQF; some HEIs have elaborated their quality manuals; educational standards and requirements are currently being revised and improved; several changes have been made in evaluation and accreditation of HEIs to ensure better transparency; representatives of the branch ministries and students' organisations have been included into the evaluation and accreditation committees; independent National QA Agency has been created; an Information and Qualification Recognition Office has been established. Future challenges include: in the short term - adoption of a Code on Education which will serve as a legislative basis for further promotion of Bologna Process reforms; elaboration of NQF; further developing of the National QA Agency; ensuring synergy between HE and research; in the long term - QA; employability of graduates; enhancing academic mobility; enhancing attractiveness and competitiveness of national HE at international level.

⁵ Regarding Malta it has to be noted that criteria for Stocktaking indicators 4 and 6 are not appropriate for countries with small HE systems. The criteria for these indicators emphasise the external assessment of the QA agency and membership of the QA agency in ENQA or other international QA networks. Those countries which due to the small size of their HE system have not established their own QA agency but rather seek assistance from foreign QA agencies are scoring low in those two indicators

MONTENEGRO	NETHERLANDS
DEGREE SYSTEM	DEGREE SYSTEM
1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle
2. Access to the next cycle	2. Access to the next cycle
3. Implementation of national qualifications framework	3. Implementation of national qualifications framework
QUALITY ASSURANCE⁶, ESG	QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG
4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system	4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system
5. Level of student participation in quality assurance	5. Level of student participation in quality assurance
6. Level of international participation in quality assurance	6. Level of international participation in quality assurance
RECOGNITION	RECOGNITION
7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement	7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement
8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
9. Stage of implementation of ECTS	9. Stage of implementation of ECTS
10. Recognition of prior learning	10. Recognition of prior learning

Montenegro has participated in Bologna Process since 2003 and became a full member in 2007. Key developments since then include: adoption of several legislative and other documents which further the Bologna reforms; the law on recognition is aligned with the Lisbon Recognition Convention; guidelines on re-accreditation of HEIs and programmes; strategy for establishing the NQF; outcomes-based cycle descriptors and credit ranges have been the subject of public discussion; QA centre has been established at University of Montenegro; second cycle has been implemented with the clear possibility of full access for holders of first cycle qualifications; law on National Vocational Qualifications has been adopted which stipulates that HEIs are responsible for academic recognition, but Ministry of Education and Science for professional recognition. Future challenges include: implementing the NQF; formulating a strategy for development of HE; strengthening the links between HEIs and the labour market; increasing the efficiency of studies; implementation of joint degrees; restructuring the HE financing; increasing mobility.

The Netherlands was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. Key developments since 2007 include: short cycle studies within the first cycle have been introduced; Lisbon Recognition Convention has been ratified and corresponding legislation implemented; principles of student admission have been put into practice in line with the LRC; National NQF for HE has been self-certified with the EHEA overarching framework; a proposal to amend legislation in order to enable HEIs to set up joint degrees has been prepared; some mergers of HEIs have taken place. Future challenges include: building up a HE system that is internationally attractive and competitive, that has an international quality reputation and that is closely connected to modern societal needs: improving the study success, enhancing the access to HE and improving the flexibility of HE in view of LLL, enhancing quality and excellence in studies and research. The short-term challenges mainly are related to finalising the initial Bologna agenda: fully implementing NQF within the HEIs; introduction of Diploma Supplement in European format.

⁶ Regarding Montenegro it has to be noted that criteria for Stocktaking indicators 4 and 6 are not appropriate for countries with small HE systems. The criteria for these indicators emphasise the external assessment of the QA agency and membership of the QA agency in ENQA or other international QA networks. Those countries which due to the small size of their HE system have not established their own QA agency but rather seek assistance from foreign QA agencies are scoring low in those two indicators

NORWAY	POLAND
DEGREE SYSTEM	DEGREE SYSTEM
1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle
2. Access to the next cycle	2. Access to the next cycle
3. Implementation of national qualifications framework	3. Implementation of national qualifications framework
QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG	QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG
4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system	4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system
5. Level of student participation in quality assurance	5. Level of student participation in quality assurance
6. Level of international participation in quality assurance	6. Level of international participation in quality assurance
RECOGNITION	RECOGNITION
7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement	7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement
8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
9. Stage of implementation of ECTS	9. Stage of implementation of ECTS
10. Recognition of prior learning	10. Recognition of prior learning

Norway was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. Key developments since 2007 include: inclusion of doctoral level in the proposal for a national qualifications framework for higher education; NOKUT has been reviewed with a positive conclusion, its ENQA membership has been renewed and it has also applied for membership in EQAR; all HEIs are required to have internal quality assurance systems; mergers of HEIs as well as consolidation of research training in research schools and measures to increase the quality of teaching in HEIs have been proposed as a result of the system evaluation report presented in 2008. To fulfil the National Action Plan on recognition a working group was set up to redesign a national database for recognition of HE; legislative amendments have been proposed to clarify terminology and responsibilities, and to address the issue of fraudulent documents. Future challenges include: improving the social dimension of HE as there are still social differences in both access to and graduation from HE; reaching the goals for internationalisation that were set by the Quality Reform; increasing student and staff mobility, both incoming and outgoing, in terms of both quality and quantity; further development of course provision in English; introduction of a NQF for HE based on learning outcomes; developing still more flexible study programmes (distance/part time etc); ensuring labour market relevance of qualifications, particularly for general bachelors degree

Poland was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. Key developments since 2007 include: working out the proposal for National qualifications framework, including outcomes-based cycle descriptors and credit ranges; it has been prepared and discussed with the stakeholders and presented to the ministry, but it has not yet been approved. Future challenges include: development of a coherent assessment system for research and teaching activities of HEIs; establishment of National Academic Knowledge Centres; using NQF as a tool to introduce outcomes-based HE; making study requirements compatible with the Qualifications Framework for EHEA; strengthening links with labour market; specifying provisions on joint programmes; introducing RPL procedures and ensuring the flexibility of learning paths; focusing on practical realisation of quality assessment taking into account formal and legal aspects, as well as the importance of learning outcomes and quality of research.

PORTUGAL	ROMANIA
DEGREE SYSTEM	DEGREE SYSTEM
1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle
2. Access to the next cycle	2. Access to the next cycle
3. Implementation of national qualifications framework	3. Implementation of national qualifications framework
QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG	QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG
4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system	4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system
5. Level of student participation in quality assurance	5. Level of student participation in quality assurance
6. Level of international participation in quality assurance	6. Level of international participation in quality assurance
RECOGNITION	RECOGNITION
7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement	7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement
8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
9. Stage of implementation of ECTS	9. Stage of implementation of ECTS
10. Recognition of prior learning	10. Recognition of prior learning

Portugal was a signatory to the Bologna Declaration. Key developments since 2007 include: legal reform regarding the framework for quality assurance of tertiary education, for the recognition of foreign tertiary degrees; HE Evaluation and Accreditation Agency; Diploma Supplement; simplification of procedures and flexibility in access to tertiary education; additional requirements for HEIs to demonstrate the methods and practices in curriculum development; use of ECTS and cooperation with society with a view to extending the recruitment base and increasing the number of students; fostering the internationalization of research universities and their specialization; promoting the binary system, with polytechnic education concentrating on professionally-oriented and vocational training; a move has started towards universities as public foundations governed by private law, strengthening university autonomy under independent legal status; National Agency for Accreditation and Evaluation of HE has been established; introducing the Bologna three-cycle system is progressing and will be completed before the end of 2009; system of student loans with mutual guarantee underwritten by the State has been established, which improves access to tertiary education. Future challenges include: establishing policies considering long term approaches to changing environments; need to foster advanced human resources and knowledge-integrated communities; broadening the social basis of tertiary education.

Romania was a signatory to the Bologna Declaration. Key developments since 2007 include: implementation of the new legal provisions on university management; introduction of the second cycle; organization of third cycle studies in new doctoral schools; review of QA Agency (ARACIS) by EUA and ESU with ENQA full membership and acceptance in the EQAR as a final goal; an agency for the design and administration of the NQF in HE has been established; self-certification of the NQF is going on; a Ministerial Order has been issued establishing new methodology of recognition, making the process more transparent and simplifying recognition procedures. A major project is going on which is aimed at strengthening the link between learning outcomes and quality management of all three cycles; other projects aim to strengthen HE and research, particularly regarding access, student loans, tracking students' progress, establishing doctoral schools and evaluating research at the universities. Future challenges include: completion of the National Register for Qualifications awarded in HE; completing self-certification of the NQF; external evaluation of all HEIs in accordance with the ESG; redefining financial support schemes to improve access to and completion of HE. In the longer term: increasing competitiveness of HE and attracting more international students from the EHEA and beyond.

RUSSIA	SERBIA
DEGREE SYSTEM	DEGREE SYSTEM
1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle
2. Access to the next cycle	2. Access to the next cycle
3. Implementation of national qualifications framework	3. Implementation of national qualifications framework
QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG	QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG
4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system	4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system
5. Level of student participation in quality assurance	5. Level of student participation in quality assurance
6. Level of international participation in quality assurance	6. Level of international participation in quality assurance
RECOGNITION	RECOGNITION
7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement	7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement
8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
9. Stage of implementation of ECTS	9. Stage of implementation of ECTS
10. Recognition of prior learning	10. Recognition of prior learning

Russia joined the Bologna Process in 2003. Key developments since 2007 include: approving the list of higher education institutions implementing Bologna reforms; legislation has been passed making provisions for the implementation of the two-cycle system: bachelor - 4 years, master - 2 years or continuous training of no less than 5 years; introducing uniform state school-leaving examinations as a basis for admission to HEIs; quality assurance and academic recognition; allowing HEIs to adapt programmes to suit specific features of the institution; regulating the participation of employers in developing and implementing state professional education policy; integrating of education and science aimed at strengthening research and development and enhancing HE through new knowledge and scientific and technical advancement; merger of HEIs in Siberian and Southern Federal Regions leading to establishing two large universities; allocation of funding to support their innovative educational programmes. Future challenges include: labour-market reluctance in the recognition of bachelor degree; lack of readiness of some Russian HEIs to fully participate in mobility programmes because of shortage of funding, poor knowledge of foreign languages; insufficient flexibility and adaptability of educational programmes due to rigid regulation; imbalance between the graduation structure and the needs of the national economy.

Serbia joined the Bologna Process in 2003. Key developments since 2007 include changing the degree structure; implementation of ECTS in all HEIs, but not yet based on student workload and learning outcomes which still remains a priority; accreditation so far has been completed in over half of the HEIs and the process should be finished by October 2009; external review of the QA agency (CAQA) according to ESG is scheduled for 2009; a draft of the NQF has been prepared and a timetable has been set for discussion with stakeholders; EU programmes are being intensively used to increase student and staff mobility, particularly TEMPUS with some 50 projects; yet there are some obstacles related to financial support and visa issues. Future challenges include developing and implementing a national strategy for HE beyond 2010; adopting and implementing NQF; making the HE system more flexible and responsive to the needs of the labour market; introducing the concept of a functionally integrated university; reassessing student workload; increasing student involvement in the Bologna Process; providing fair financing to public HEIs.

SLOVAKIA	SLOVENIA
DEGREE SYSTEM	DEGREE SYSTEM
1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle
2. Access to the next cycle	2. Access to the next cycle
3. Implementation of national qualifications framework	3. Implementation of national qualifications framework
QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG	QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG
4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system	4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system
5. Level of student participation in quality assurance	5. Level of student participation in quality assurance
6. Level of international participation in quality assurance	6. Level of international participation in quality assurance
RECOGNITION	RECOGNITION
7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement	7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement
8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
9. Stage of implementation of ECTS	9. Stage of implementation of ECTS
10. Recognition of prior learning	10. Recognition of prior learning

The Slovak Republic was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. Key developments since 2007 include: the Higher Education Act has declared Slovak higher education institutions as part of the EHEA and the ERDA and regulates awarding of joint diplomas after completing the joint study programmes. Future challenges include: developing tools for identification of shortcomings in higher education, monitoring students' progress, innovation of methods and content of education in agreement with the changing needs of students and employers; ensuring employability of graduates; transferring the latest knowledge to the world of work; adapting the study programmes the suit new applicants as a result of demographic changes and the requirements of the labour market; enabling every student to study in a higher education institution regardless of his/her economic background.

Slovenia was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. Key developments since 2007 include: amendments to the Higher Education Act to set out conditions for establishing international alliances; status of the Council of Higher Education (CHE), which is a consultative, accreditation, evaluating and habilitation body, was changed; assigning the professional, administrative and technical tasks to the state-funded Secretariat of the CHE whose employees have the status of civil servants; amendments have been made to the Diploma Supplement due to the implementation of the Bologna reforms. Future challenges include: stimulating internationalisation of HE and increasing mobility; developing specific knowledge, skills and competences relevant for innovation, to encourage investment of business in HE; creating closer links of regional economies in HE; increasing quality and quality assurance in HE in line with ESG; introduction of learner-centred teaching and learning; fostering development of flexible study programmes and recognition of informal learning and joint study programmes; developing HE financing mechanisms to encourage production of applied knowledge and linking financing to quality indicators.

SPAIN	SWEDEN
DEGREE SYSTEM	DEGREE SYSTEM
1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle
2. Access to the next cycle	2. Access to the next cycle
3. Implementation of national qualifications framework	3. Implementation of national qualifications framework
QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG	QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG
4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system	4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system
5. Level of student participation in quality assurance	5. Level of student participation in quality assurance
6. Level of international participation in quality assurance	6. Level of international participation in quality assurance
RECOGNITION	RECOGNITION
7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement	7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement
8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
9. Stage of implementation of ECTS	9. Stage of implementation of ECTS
10. Recognition of prior learning	10. Recognition of prior learning

Spain was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. Key developments since 2007 include the introduction of several legislative changes which establish the national accreditation for access to university teaching and research posts; adapting official university education to the EHEA; regulating the access to official university studies at Bachelor degree level, but a major regulatory development process is currently underway. In 2009 Spain signed the Lisbon Recognition Convention. Future challenges include: promoting economic growth and social well-being; improving employability and adaptability of graduates; encouraging the independence of university institutions and promoting greater responsibility so that universities are able to meet the new global challenges; promoting the diversification of HE at local, regional, national and global level; adapting HE system to LLL, strengthening the scientific-technological skills in the university system as well as knowledge and technology transfer to the productive sector and to society in large; increasing the level of society's scientific culture, critical thinking; promoting creativity and spirit of entrepreneurship; strengthening the link between the knowledge-based EHEA and ERA and the Latin American Knowledge Area.

Sweden was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. Key Since 2007, the reform stipulated by the changes of legislation of 2006 came into effect including: introduction of the Bologna three-cycle system; degree descriptions have been reviewed; new degree descriptions are based on the expected learning outcomes and related to the EHEA overarching Qualifications Framework; HEIs have specified the learning outcomes of each course; a new two-year Master's Degree has been introduced; the credit system has been reformed in line with ECTS; the Diploma Supplement has been introduced also for the third cycle. Future challenges include: assessing the quality of the master degree programmes; increasing mobility of staff and students; validating competences of third country professionals; recognition of professional degrees; reforms in autonomy, financing and governance of HEIs; introduction of tuition fees for students outside the EHEA; abolition of compulsory student union membership. Overall, the future challenges can be grouped under four strategic fields - improved quality in teaching and research; reforms of the funding system strengthening autonomy of HEIs, and improving the Swedish position in the international research community.

SWITZERLAND	THE FYROM
DEGREE SYSTEM	DEGREE SYSTEM
1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle
2. Access to the next cycle	2. Access to the next cycle
3. Implementation of national qualifications framework	3. Implementation of national qualifications framework
QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG	QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG
4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system	4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system
5. Level of student participation in quality assurance	5. Level of student participation in quality assurance
6. Level of international participation in quality assurance	6. Level of international participation in quality assurance
RECOGNITION	RECOGNITION
7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement	7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement
8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
9. Stage of implementation of ECTS	9. Stage of implementation of ECTS
10. Recognition of prior learning	10. Recognition of prior learning

Switzerland was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. The implementation of the Bologna process progressed in the last two years, with medical students coming into the first cycle in 2007; the Universities of Applied Sciences started their first masters programmes in 2008, having awarded their first bachelor degrees in the same year; Universities of Teacher Education have awarded their first masters degrees in 2007. Future challenges include: consolidating the renewal of HE teaching already achieved within the Bologna process; removing administrative and other obstacles to mobility; implementing the NQF and more generally the student-centred learning approach with a consistent measure of student workload; completing the introduction of high-quality masters programmes; establishing joint masters programmes as well as joint professorships in several pedagogical domains; enhancing teacher-student ratios especially in the humanities and social sciences; creating reasonable and fair pathways between different types of HEIs; increasing the number of structured doctoral programmes; providing easily accessible and user-friendly information on study opportunities; evaluating achievement against the objectives of the Bologna reforms.

“the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” joined the Bologna Process in 2003. A new law has been adopted in 2008 which changed the current structure of the university as a loose association of legal entities into an integrated university; it also stipulated broader functions for the Senate and Rector; introduced University Councils comprised of representatives of students, employers’ association, local government etc.; established a new form of public-private non-profit HEIs with new forms of organization and management; established Rectors’ Conferences of public and private universities; strengthened national QA agency, established student and employer and international participation in QA; ensured compliance of the national QA system to ESG; described first and second cycle using ECTS and generic descriptors based on learning outcomes; aligned doctoral studies with the EHEA overarching qualifications framework; introduced the Diploma Supplement; established the legal basis for joint degrees. Future challenges include: in the short term - implementation of the integrated structure of university; organising structured PhD studies by 2010/2011; establishing an independent Council of Higher Education; in long term - increasing the number of citizens who are HE graduates; ensuring equitable access to higher education; strengthening life-long learning; supporting science and research activities; training teaching staff for improving the quality of HE studies.

TURKEY	UKRAINE
DEGREE SYSTEM	DEGREE SYSTEM
1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle
2. Access to the next cycle	2. Access to the next cycle
3. Implementation of national qualifications framework	3. Implementation of national qualifications framework
QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG	QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG
4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system	4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system
5. Level of student participation in quality assurance	5. Level of student participation in quality assurance
6. Level of international participation in quality assurance	6. Level of international participation in quality assurance
RECOGNITION	RECOGNITION
7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement	7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement
8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
9. Stage of implementation of ECTS	9. Stage of implementation of ECTS
10. Recognition of prior learning	10. Recognition of prior learning

Turkey joined the Bologna Process in 2001. Key developments since 2007 include: internal QA processes in Turkish HEIs are well in place, and starting from 2007 all universities are preparing their annual strategic plans; several independent national QA agencies have started work on acquiring the status of accredited external QA agency; a commission and a working group have been formed to work on the establishment of a NQF for HE and they have determined a clear timetable for each step, pilot implementation is foreseen in 2010 and full implementation by the end of 2012; flexible learning paths have been promoted via distance education programmes; a detailed national strategy on the social dimension has been prepared. Future challenges include: demand for higher education which is much higher than supply; improvement of the quality of education and full implementation of an internationally accepted national QA system; redesigning the financing model to ensure the diversity of resources and equal opportunities; improvement of the quality of vocational higher schools in order to meet labour market needs and expectations.

Ukraine joined the Bologna Process in 2005. Key developments since then include: approval of an action plan on QA in higher education ; amendments to the law on HE has been prepared according to Bologna provisions and recommendations; Ukraine has become a governmental member of the European Quality Assurance Register; a working group has been established to develop a NQF for higher education. Future challenges include: development of a NQF compatible with the EHEA overarching framework; introduction of the innovative institutional structure, three-cycle system and joint degrees; establishing programmes for foreign students; aligning university programmes with Bologna structure; development of the national qualifications framework for lifelong learning; creating mechanisms for recognition of prior learning; implementation of the Diploma Supplement in the EU/CoE/UNESCO format; creation of the national QA agency in compliance with ESG with aim of ENQA membership and inclusion into the EQAR; increasing outward and inward mobility; assuring portability of student grants and loans; provision of equal access to higher education; curriculum reform with a view to the needs of employers; promotion of cultural values and democratic ideals.

UK - EWNI	UK - SCOTLAND
DEGREE SYSTEM	DEGREE SYSTEM
1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle	1. Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle
2. Access to the next cycle	2. Access to the next cycle
3. Implementation of national qualifications framework	3. Implementation of national qualifications framework
QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG	QUALITY ASSURANCE, ESG
4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system	4. Stage of development of external quality assurance system
5. Level of student participation in quality assurance	5. Level of student participation in quality assurance
6. Level of international participation in quality assurance	6. Level of international participation in quality assurance
RECOGNITION	RECOGNITION
7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement	7. Stage of implementation of diploma supplement
8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	8. National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
9. Stage of implementation of ECTS	9. Stage of implementation of ECTS
10. Recognition of prior learning	10. Recognition of prior learning

UK-EWNI The UK was a signatory of the Bologna Declaration. Key developments since 2007 include: review of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA); Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland has been reviewed in consultation with HE institutions and interested organisations, and a revised edition published in September 2008; the qualifications framework is an integral part of QA in HE; and it aligns with EHEA overarching qualifications framework; variable tuition fees have been introduced that will bring new income into the HE sector and will enable HE institutions to maintain and improve competitiveness in the global HE market; student support system consisting of loans and non-repayable grants and bursaries has increased the number of higher education students - over 50% of young people from every social background and every part of the country aspire to go to university. Future challenges include: widening participation in HE; student mobility - particularly outward mobility but also maintaining attractiveness of UK HE; effective collaboration with social partners; increasing the number of students going on to doctoral studies (not only to provide the skills for research but also high level skills for employment); innovative teaching and research to respond rapidly to changing economic, social, political, and scientific developments; a more proactive approach to inter-cultural dialogue and understanding, both national and international.

UK- Scotland. Key developments since 2007 include: successful completion of an ENQA review of the QA Agency; development of new guidance on internal review with emphasis on various international dimensions of curricula, experience of international students, introduction of international reviewers; launching pilot international benchmarking; setting up a company to promote and further develop the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. Future challenges include: maintaining the competitiveness of Scottish higher education; maintaining and enhancing student and staff engagement with quality enhancement; increasing outward staff and student mobility, including students from under-represented socio-economic groups; improving retention, progression and achievement within under-represented socio-economic groups; responding to demographic changes by increasing flexible delivery paths and the recognition of prior learning; increasing skills utilisation, knowledge transfer and engagement between universities and businesses.

COUNTRY	Degree System			Quality Assurance			Recognition			
	2 cycles	Access	NQF	External	Students	Internat	Dip.supp.	Lisbon	ECTS	RPL
Albania										
Andorra										
Armenia										
Austria										
Azerbaijan										
Belgium Flemish										
Belgium French										
Bosnia Herzegovina										
Bulgaria										
Croatia										
Cyprus										
Czech Republic										
Denmark										
Estonia										
Finland										
France										
Georgia										
Germany										
Greece										
Holy See										
Hungary										
Iceland										
Ireland										
Italy										
Latvia										
Liechtenstein										
Lithuania										
Luxembourg										
Malta										
Moldova										
Montenegro										
Netherlands										
Norway										
Poland										
Portugal										
Romania										
Russia										
Serbia										
Slovakia										
Slovenia										
Spain										
Sweden										
Switzerland										
The FYROM										
Turkey										
Ukraine										
UK - EJNI										
UK - Scotland										

5 Analysis of the National Strategies on the Social Dimension of the Bologna Process

Summary Report prepared by the BFUG Coordination Group on Social Dimension in cooperation with the Centre of Social Policy Studies of the University of Antwerp

5.1. History and background

The Bologna Process has been the major impetus to recent reforms in the educational systems of countries in Europe. The social dimension has been an integral part of this Bologna Process since the first ministerial follow-up meeting in Prague in 2001. The social dimension was included in the Prague communiqué at the suggestion of the student representatives at the meeting. In all the subsequent communiqués (Berlin 2003, Bergen 2005, and London 2007) this social dimension was recognised as crucial for the success of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). In the London Communiqué Ministers confirmed the importance of the social dimension as follows:

“Higher education should play a strong role in fostering social cohesion, reducing inequalities and raising the level of knowledge, skills and competences in society. Policy should therefore aim to maximise the potential of individuals in terms of their personal development and their contribution to a sustainable and democratic knowledge-based society. We share the societal aspiration that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations. We reaffirm the importance of students being able to complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background. We therefore continue our efforts to provide adequate student services, create more flexible learning pathways into and within higher education, and to widen participation at all levels on the basis of equal opportunity.”

After the Bergen ministerial meeting, a Working Group on Social Dimension and Mobility of Staff and Students was set up to take forward the tasks given to the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG) for the action line of the social dimension and mobility. Given the considerable differences and challenges in relation to the social dimension of higher education (HE) between the participating countries, this Working Group considered it inappropriate to narrowly define the social dimension, or to suggest a number of detailed actions for all countries to implement. The Working Group proposed instead that each country should develop its own strategies and action plans for the social dimension. In their report the group proposed the following overall objective for the social dimension.

“We strive for the societal goal that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education should reflect the diversity of our populations. We therefore pledge to take action to widen participation at all levels on the basis of equal opportunity.”

(Report from the Bologna Process Working Group on Social Dimension and Mobility of Staff and Students in Participating Countries, [5], p.8.)

The Working Group proposed that “... by 2009 the countries report to the BFUG on their national strategies for the social dimension, including action plans and measures illustrating their impact. Such a strategy should start with the identification of possible under-represented groups. All stakeholders should actively participate in and support this work at the national level.” (Report [5], p.44).

Each country was asked to report on the national strategies it developed with respect to the social dimension of the Bologna Process. The countries were asked to complete these reports by 1 November 2008. The purpose of the present report is to present a summary of these national reports and to formulate some conclusions. For the purpose of steering the analysis of the national strategies on social dimension, the BFUG decided to establish a Social Dimension Coordination Group in the framework of the Bologna Work programme 2007-2009. This coordination group mandated the Centre of Social Policy Studies of the University of Antwerp for research input and editing of the analysis. The template used for the national reporting is included as Appendix 1 of this report.

When reading the national reports, it quickly becomes clear that there is a great variety in the detail, quality and focus of these reports. Some reports contain a careful description of the present situation, a clear explanation and motivation of the various policy measures, and a convincing strategic plan for the future. At the same time, it must also be acknowledged that some reports do not contain sufficient information to allow any further analysis. Some countries even stated that there are no specific under-represented groups in their higher education systems. Consequently, they submitted reports which are rather uninformative for the purpose of this analysis. Moreover, for some countries, there was a striking discrepancy between the rather optimistic description and the data on overall participation in HE provided by Eurostat and Eurostudent in their report on Social Dimension and Mobility in the Bologna Process [3].

For this summary report it was therefore impossible to evaluate the various countries' policy measures in terms of effectiveness or appropriateness. The national reports simply do not contain the empirical evidence required for such a comparative evaluation. Moreover, the institutional contexts in which the various countries are operating can differ substantially.

This report has, in general, avoided identifying individual countries. However, countries are identified in the event of a statement which is specific to a particular country, or when an example of good practice is given.

This summary report is structured as follows. In section 2 we identify the groups in society which, in the current situation, are reported to be under-represented in HE in the countries participating in the Bologna Process. Also, for each of these groups, the main obstacles to participative equity in terms of access and completion of studies are discussed. In section 3 we describe various measures taken by the governments to widen the general participation in HE. In section 4 we report the measures which were taken to improve the representation of the under-represented groups identified in section 2. In section 5 we report on the countries' strategies for the future. In a final section we formulate some conclusions.

5.2. Under-represented groups: the current situation

Achieving an equitable HE system, with fair and equal access to all groups in society, is an important policy priority in all the countries participating in the Bologna process. According to this view, each citizen should have access to high quality education, regardless of social or economic background, race, religion or gender.

Several countries report substantial progress over the last decades in the general participation rate in HE¹. At the same time, however, these same countries also typically acknowledge that some groups in their societies are still under-represented.

Apart from a few countries claiming that there are no under-represented groups in their higher education system, there is considerable agreement among the reporting countries that several or all of the following groups are under-represented:

- Groups with lower socio-economic background,
- (Less educated) immigrants and cultural minorities,
- Students with a disability,
- Non-traditional students (mature students, students with foreign qualifications),
- Female - male students (gender balance).

This identification of various under-represented groups in society is consistent with the common interpretation of the notion of equity², as applied to educational policies. According to this interpretation, inequalities in educational performance can only be tolerated if they can be explained by differences in individual preferences and efforts. They cannot be tolerated if they are caused by circumstances which are beyond a person's control, and national policies should be aiming at their mitigation. Possible examples of such circumstances are family background, living area, ethnicity, gender or presence of a disability.

We will now identify these under-represented groups in greater detail, and discuss the main obstacles to participative equity faced by these groups.

5.2.a. Groups with a lower socio-economic background

This group consists of students lacking the financial resources required for HE studies. The cost of HE studies includes the direct cost of tuition, study materials, living expenses, accommodation and transportation. In addition, HE studies also imply that students and their families forego the income the students could otherwise have earned on the labour market during their studies.

In most countries the total cost of HE is a serious obstacle to participation in HE for at least some individuals or families in society. In these cases, it is not the ability to learn but the ability to pay that determines participation in HE. In some countries tuition fees are very substantial and there may not be any financial support available to help meet them..Also,

¹ Various indicators can be found, e.g., in [8].

² See Wössmann L. and G. Schütz, 2006 [10], p.3.

the lack of affordable student housing, especially in larger university cities, sometimes poses a problem for students entering HE. Some countries (e.g. Belgium-French community, Switzerland) report that students prefer to go to nearby non-university institutes, rather than to more expensive universities. A strong and efficient financial support programme is then essential for diversifying and enlarging the student body entering and completing HE.

The groups in society lacking the financial means required to enter HE are often also groups where factors relating to “*social heritage*” make participation in HE difficult. In many countries the level of education of the parents to a large extent determines the type of education followed by the children. In lower income families HE is often perceived as elitist. Children of these families often follow their parents’ educational tradition and choose types of secondary schools from which the transition into HE is difficult. The relevance of social heritage for participation in HE can be very complex and deserves deeper research. Denmark has announced that it will undertake a research project of this kind.

Furthermore, to the extent that the situation of disadvantaged families (in terms of financial status and educational background) influences the performance of their children in primary and secondary schools, this will further complicate their transition into HEIs. For example, a good knowledge of the instruction language is essential in HE and this knowledge is sometimes lacking in these groups. There is ample empirical evidence that early intervention programmes, targeted at children with disadvantaged backgrounds, can significantly increase the equality of educational opportunity³.

In addition, in the case of admissions procedures for entering HE, these procedures sometimes test specific knowledge rather than general study aptitudes. Given that elitist secondary schools often provide better specific knowledge, admission to HEIs becomes more dependent on previous education, and thus also on the social origin of the applicants. This point is strongly emphasised in the national report of the Czech Republic.

Sometimes the weaker socio-economic groups are concentrated in *geographically isolated, deprived areas*, or in rural areas, as opposed to urban areas. It may also happen that secondary schools in certain regions provide lower quality education, which has a clear impact on their chances for accessing, progressing and completing HE programmes.

Many countries report progress in the participation of students with a lower socio-economic background, but these countries also acknowledge that further improvements are still very desirable.

5.2.b. Less educated immigrants and cultural minorities

Many countries acknowledge that children of less educated immigrants and of cultural minorities are under-represented in HE.

³ Several references are given in Wössmann L. and G. Schütz, 2006 [10].

As was the case in the previous group, the obstacles for greater participation in HE have to do with the lack of required financial resources, and the absence of any academic tradition in these families. Moreover, this group often suffers from a lack of social and cultural integration, and often encounters discrimination. Children often perform rather poorly in primary and secondary schools, and they may have an insufficient knowledge of the instruction language and of basic academic skills required to succeed in HE. Moreover, as reported by the Netherlands, if these students do progress to HEIs, they sometimes rather choose studies with a high social status, which is not always an appropriate choice for the individual student concerned.

It is also clear that immigration as such is not a sufficient factor leading to social exclusion. The United Kingdom⁴ e.g. reports that for some minority groups the participation in HE is above the national average. On the contrary, immigrants with lower educational levels are particularly vulnerable and are less likely to participate in HE.

5.2.c. Students with a disability

The group of students with a disability is very heterogeneous, as there are various types of sensory, physical, learning and/or communicative disabilities. Moreover, there is no single recognised definition of disability and no general taxonomy of subsets of disability. Despite this lack of a clear definition, the size of this group of students can be significant. E.g., the Netherlands report that 8% of the student population has some kind of disability.

The obstacles to participation in HE faced by this group are very diverse. They relate, for example, to problems of mobility and of access to buildings, opportunities for housing, the availability of appropriate teaching, learning and examination facilities, etc. There may also be a lack of information for the students in relation to the special arrangements (e.g. specific modalities for assessment) for which they can apply. There appears to be a low awareness among professors about the needs of students with a disability. Finally, several of these obstacles imply extra costs, both for the students involved and for the HEIs.

While some countries make specific provisions to meet the needs of students with disabilities, many others acknowledge that the needs of this group are insufficiently known or taken care of.

5.2.d. Non-traditional students (mature students, students with foreign qualifications)

Mature students

This group mainly consists of mature students who - for various reasons - left the educational system for some time and want to join the system again. If countries want to prevent these potential students from being confronted with dead-ends in their education and professional careers, opportunities for lifelong learning have to be developed.

⁴ We use the term United Kingdom to refer to England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Scotland has made a separate report.

This group of students faces many obstacles. First, the combination of studies with a job and with family life limits the time these students can devote to their studies. It also follows that these students are often unable to complete their studies within the usual time period.

Furthermore, these students often do not fulfil the regular admission requirements, necessitating the availability of non-traditional access routes to HE. For example, if these students previously followed vocational training programmes, the move to academic programmes requires bridging courses between vocational education and training and more academic HE programmes. At the same time, these students may have acquired competences and on-the-job experience which are very useful, but this prior informal or non-formal learning is often not formally recognised for the purpose of academic degrees.

Finally, these non-traditional educational trajectories often lead to extra financial expenses. The extra costs associated with childcare are an important example. Part-time study programmes may also imply part-time jobs, so that students have to forego part of their potential income.

As was the case with students with a disability, many countries report that the support given to mature students is still insufficient.

This observation is supported by the recent EURASHE report by A. Timofei [9] that also extensively discusses the existing impediments to the implementation of lifelong learning in the context of the Bologna Process.

Students with foreign qualifications

This group of non-traditional students consists of students with foreign degrees who want to continue their studies in a particular country. Some countries, e.g., Germany, report that this group of students is significant. These students may lack a sufficient knowledge of the instruction language, and their cultural integration is sometimes limited. They may not get full recognition of credits and/or of experience obtained in the country of prior education. Quite often, this also involves a move from vocational training to academic education. Here again bridging courses are required between vocational and academic programmes.

It should be observed that the foregoing issues not only relate to the social dimension as such, but are closely related to other action lines, like international mobility and recognition of qualifications in which the Bologna Process has still not achieved in full the goals as set out in 1999.

5.2.e. Female versus male students - the gender gap

With respect to the gender gap, the situation can be very different from one country to another. In most countries there used to be a general under-representation of female students in HE. However, several countries report that there is a clear tendency towards a greater equality. Some countries (e.g., Denmark, Belgium-Flemish Community, United Kingdom, Iceland, Latvia, Scotland, Slovenia, Sweden) even report a general under-representation of male students, especially in the first cycles of higher education.

In most countries gender imbalances persist within specific subject areas. Women are often under-represented in agronomy, engineering and applied sciences, while they are over-represented in educational sciences, humanities and social sciences.

Gender imbalances can be different between students at the bachelor and master level, students at the Ph.D. level, amongst academic staff, and the management of HEIs. Many countries report an under-representation of women at the staff and the management level within HEIs. Some countries report a weak representation of female students in the third and even second cycle of higher education, but this statement cannot be generalised. In some countries, e.g. Estonia, male students are underrepresented in doctoral studies, while they are over-represented in, e.g., Germany and Switzerland.

The circumstances leading to a generalised under-representation of women are well-known. Parents and teachers with traditional views may also influence the choices of future students. There may also be a lack of information in study programmes and professions.

Possible explanations of a general under-representation of male students are less obvious. For example, Estonia refers to the rigid regulations that exclude part-time students from obtaining study loans.

The causes and consequences of unequal gender balances in some study programmes may require more research. Sweden, for example, refers to a current analysis carried out by the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education on the reasons behind the unequal sex ratio in teacher education.

5.3. General measures to widen access to HE

In this section we report on policy measures which, in principle, affect all students equally, independently of whether these students belong to an under-represented group or not. Policy measures which are specifically intended for under-represented groups are reported in section 4.

5.3.a. Student participation in the governance of HEIs

Student participation in the governance of HEIs has always been an important issue in the Bologna Process. In the Berlin communiqué (2003) ministers state that “...students are

full partners in higher education governance. Ministers note that national legal measures for ensuring student participation are largely in place throughout the European Higher Education Area. They also call on institutions and student organisations to identify ways of increasing actual student involvement in higher education governance.” A report on the extent and the impact of higher education governance reform in Europe has been carried out by the Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies for the European Commission in 2006, dealing with the question in detail. See reference [1].

Several countries report that, in their countries, students are entitled to participate in the governance of HEIs. In these countries this representation of students in governing bodies is often underpinned by legislation. Most countries report that students also participate in internal quality assurance processes at institutional level.

5. 3.b. Provision of information and of guidance, counselling and tutoring services

The provision of information and the counselling of the students, at all stages of their educational trajectories, are important ingredients of the social dimension in HEIs. These services can help students to make appropriate choices for their study careers. They can improve student performance and reduce the level of dropout.

The provision of information starts in secondary schools. An example of good practice in the provision of information for students in secondary education is the “student-checker” service in Austria, established by the Ministry. Students in the last two years of their secondary school are educated about the added value of a HE qualification to one’s career opportunities, and receive counselling to make sure that they make an informed choice before enrolling in a HE programme.

A second example of good practice is the Aimhigher programme in the United Kingdom. This programme brings together universities, colleges and schools in partnership, providing opportunities and experiences for learners which help to widen their horizons, develop talents, increase motivation and maximise potential. It also helps students to apply for an institution that best suits their potential. Many countries also organise information fairs and conferences where students from secondary school meet representatives of HEIs.

According to the 2007 report/recommendations of the Bologna Working Group on Social Dimension and Mobility of Staff and Students, information on admission and study grants should be simple, transparent, and easily accessible. Information on admission procedures should include the rules applied with respect to (1) application, eligibility and exemptions from eligibility requirements, (2) how decisions on admission and exemptions from eligibility requirements are taken, and (3) rules on how to appeal.

In order to ensure a close follow-up of each student, several countries have introduced individual education plans in the form of agreements between HEIs and individual

students. In this way the student's study path, credit accumulation and time of graduation are closely monitored.

Some countries make a special effort to help first generation students to make the transition from secondary school to HE, e.g., by setting up tutoring systems for this target public. They also organise courses for first-year students to develop their basic academic skills, and to help them acquire development tools and working methods to succeed in HE. Individual counselling is especially important for first generation students with poor results at the end of the first semester (Belgium-French Community). Guidance is equally important for enhancing graduates' opportunities on the labour market.

In some countries HEIs are required to spend up to a minimum proportion of government funding on activities designed for first generation students.

All these efforts should result in greater student retention and completion rates. In some countries (e.g., Belgium-Flemish community) the government's HEI funding to a large extent depends on the number of graduating students, not on the number of incoming students. Similarly, in the United Kingdom⁵, HEIs are penalised financially if students drop out without obtaining any credits.

5.3.c. Provision of social support services to students

The great majority of countries report that the HEIs provide subsidised accommodation to students, and help students to find appropriate housing. Students often also benefit from subsidised transportation, meals, health care, and study material. From the reports, it is not always clear to what extent these services are also open to foreign students.

In many countries students unions are also financially supported. Some countries also report that they subsidise students' leisure and cultural activities.

5. 4. Measures to increase participation of under-represented groups

We first discuss measures which affect all under-represented groups. We then report on measures which are intended for specific groups.

A. Measures affecting all under-represented groups

A.1. Anti-discrimination legislation

Several countries have taken legislative initiatives and have approved anti-discrimination laws, often by incorporating international (European) agreements in their national legislation. These laws typically prohibit discrimination in general. In some countries these

⁵ We use the term United Kingdom to refer to England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Scotland has made a separate report.

laws are specifically intended to prohibit any discrimination by HEIs. E.g., in Sweden the Discrimination Act prohibits discrimination, and stipulates that the HEIs have to contact goal oriented work to actively promote equal rights and opportunities for the students participating in or applying for higher education, regardless of sex, transgender identity or expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability or age. Similar anti-discrimination legislation is reported by Croatia, France, Montenegro and Romania.

A.2. Regulating and monitoring agencies

Several countries report that for many HEIs efforts to improve access are still not fully part of the mainstream activities and strategies of these institutions. Governments can then assist HEIs in their work to attract and support students from under-represented groups by setting up regulating and monitoring agencies, thus safeguarding fair access to HE for under-represented groups.

Examples of these are the Office of Fair Access in the United Kingdom, the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education in Ireland and the Wider Access Regional Fora in Scotland. These agencies approve and monitor agreements in which individual institutions set out the measures they will put in place to safeguard fair access to HE for low income and other under-represented groups. They also encourage flexible delivery opportunities.

Similar individual access plans, formulating measurable objectives on widening participation in HE, also exist in Sweden.

A.3. Government financial support

Governments can give HEIs financial incentives to take action to widen access. Incentives can be given in terms of extra funding to meet additional costs incurred by actions taken by institutions to widen access from under-represented groups. This funding is intended to develop the necessary infrastructure and programmes of action which support wider access for people with a disability, mature students, people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and refugee communities, etc.

The aforementioned extra funding is linked to special projects aimed at increasing participation. Sometimes this extra funding is directly linked to the number of students from under-represented groups enrolled in each institution. In the Flemish community in Belgium the “Widening Access Incentive Fund” provides financial incentives to HEIs, taking into account the success rate of the students with disadvantaged background.

Finally, governments also provide special grants directly to disadvantaged students. See section 5.4.B.

A.4. Statistical and research evidence

Any policy intended to widen access and to improve completion rates for particular groups in society should be supported by statistical and research evidence. Some countries report

that they have sufficient evidence and research on which to base their policies. Several other countries report that they have insufficient or even no evidence.

Many countries report that they have created - or plan to create - a student data base, giving detailed information on the social situation of students. In some cases (e.g., Ireland) this is based on information gathered by the HEIs themselves. Several countries also plan to conduct regular student surveys.

Some countries (e.g., Scotland) produce annual reports on the success of widening policies, giving performance indicators of HEIs.

Data collection and research is typically done by a National Statistical Service, the Ministry of Education, or by a special agency. Student organisations can also be involved in conducting surveys. Several countries report that they have benefited from their participation in the Eurostudent Surveys on the Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe [4].

In some countries (e.g., Finland) Student Unions also conduct research in cooperation with the government.

Finally, it should be observed that some countries mention privacy or data protection problems when collecting data on the financial situation of students, their ethnic roots, possible disabilities, etc.

B. Measures intended for specific under-represented groups

In this section we report on measures which are intended to increase the participation of specific under-represented groups.

B.1. Groups with a lower socio-economic background.

The availability of adequate funding is essential to allow students from lower socio-economic backgrounds to participate in HE. Before discussing various instruments which can be used to improve the availability of funding, there is a fundamental issue which has to be clarified. Across Europe we can distinguish two opposite views when defining the financial strength of a student.

Most countries perceive a student as still a dependent, requiring maintenance, taken care of by his or her family. The need for financial aid is then determined by the financial situation of the student's family. Other countries perceive a student as an individual, independent of her/his family.

In the latter view the financial aid given by the government should in principle be the same for each individual student, independent of the parents' or the family's financial situation. This latter view is held, e.g., by Sweden, Denmark and Finland. In the Czech Republic the introduction of a generic study grant is an important element in that country's strategic plan for the future. More research could be done concerning the relationship between the prevalence of one of these two extreme views, and the degree of participative equity.

There are various types of indirect measures from which students can benefit financially. The first type consists of tax exemptions for parents with children in HEIs, exemptions from income tax on amounts spent on education and training, and family allowances which are continued till the end of the studies, usually limited to a certain age.

A second type of indirect measure refers to support for student housing and food services, transportation subsidies and health insurance. These subsidies are sometimes paid directly by the government and sometimes also by HEIs.

Most countries also provide direct support and assistance measures for students in the form of grants and/or loans. In fact, the availability of adequate funding through grants and loans is crucial, especially for students with a lower economic background. Almost all countries have worked out a variety of such financial measures. Systems of financial grants for students fall into three different categories: (1) grants can be merit based; (2) they can be based on the income of the family maintaining the student (means tested basis); and (3) grants can be generic. Countries which treat students as financially dependent on their parents typically have a combination of (1) and (2). Countries which treat students as financially independent persons usually have generic grants.

Many countries applying income based study grants use highly developed schemes linking the size of the scholarship with the financial situation (ability to pay) of the student. Special rates of maintenance grants exist for the most economically disadvantaged students. Scholarships are granted by the government, by the HEIs, or by non-profit organisations.

In most countries loans are granted on non-commercial terms. These loans are often guaranteed by the state.

Scholarships are sometimes intended to be used for specific types of expenditure. Accommodation scholarships are an example. Some countries also provide scholarships for student mobility within the Erasmus programme in addition to EC grants.

Many countries also partially or totally reimburse tuition fees. In some countries there are no tuition fees. Another way of assisting students is through the availability of part-time jobs for students. Some countries reserve budget financed study places for students with high academic performance.

In section 5. 2.a. we stated that people with a lower social-economic background are sometimes concentrated in isolated, deprived areas. To stimulate access from these regions these countries have taken several correcting measures.

- Several countries have developed a network of HEIs across the country, ensuring easy access into HE in all regions of the country. Several of these countries also encourage distance learning and e-learning.

- In Romania scholarships are granted to students from rural areas who promise to return to their home community for some period after graduation.

B.2. Less educated immigrants and cultural minorities.

Many countries provide financial support for these groups. Their governments pay tuition fees, or provide scholarships, loans or special grants for specific minorities.

Many countries offer extra language training, and create opportunities to improve the students' cultural integration.

Several countries have launched affirmative action programmes.

Parents are often urged to send their children to school from an early age, or to attend pre-school education. Some countries also offer full first cycle programs in the languages of significant minorities.

B.3. Students with a disability

To stimulate access by this group of students governments often provide extra grants or exemption from tuition fees.

Governments also often provide extra funding to HEIs admitting students with disabilities. They also often provide additional funding for expenses related to the support needed by disabled students. Many countries have improved the accessibility of buildings.

In Hungary students with a disability are awarded additional entrance points for their admission to HE. The HEIs also receive supplementary funding for each student with a disability they admit. This funding has to be used for special equipment and services for these students. In Sweden HEIs have to allocate a minimum proportion of government funding on disabled students. In Norway all HEIs are required to have action plans to ensure equal access for students with a disability. Other countries reserve a specific number of places for candidates with a disability

Several countries have taken legislative initiatives to approve laws forbidding any discrimination of persons with a disability.

Several countries offer special learning assistance for disabled students, and make special examination provisions. Some countries, like e.g. the Netherlands, support a national Expertise Centre, which offers advice to students and HEIs on specific issues and practical problems

The extent to which students with a disability can and do participate in international mobility schemes remains an open question.

B.4. Non-traditional students (mature students, students with foreign qualifications)

All countries are strongly committed to supporting lifelong learning for all citizens. They aim to enable mature students - often with work and family commitments - to improve their personal development, to acquire new skills in order to progress in their career or in order to reintegrate into the labour market. As stated in section 5.2.d., this group of

students requires flexible arrangements for admission and procedures for recognition of programmes, and rules for recognising prior learning. They also need more flexible learning paths and delivery methods. Studying in such a non-traditional way also often involves extra costs, both for the students and for the HEIs.

Flexible learning paths can also support linguistic minorities, students with a disability, and students with foreign qualifications. Non-traditional students can often benefit from extra support to finance their studies. They are given the opportunity to receive supplementary loans for additional costs in connection with their studies. Students with children are offered extra assistance with child care, or receive extra child allowance.

Statistics showing the effects of measures creating opportunities for flexible learning paths are typically not available. Some countries, however, can offer success stories. In Sweden, for example, the percentage of non-traditional students coming from a less favourable social background has risen from 18 percent to 25 percent between the academic years 1993/94 and 2007/07. However, there are also indications that the trend towards widened participation is less significant in recent years. Portugal also reports a significant increase in the number of students after the start of a new more flexible access regime.

B.5. Gender discrimination

In order to correct any gender imbalances, many countries have launched equal opportunity or affirmative action programmes. In some countries, e.g. Sweden, such actions can be legally enforced.

Better information or promotion campaigns on study programmes and employment opportunities are examples of other possible measures. Access to affordable childcare of good quality has also been instigated to prevent gender discrimination.

5.5. Strategies for the future

In the introductory section of this summary report the huge variation in the quality of the national reports was mentioned. This observation is especially true for the sections of the reports relating to Part III of the template “Process towards a more inclusive HE system (Strategy for the future)”, which is the basis for this section. Some countries very convincingly summarise their strategies for the future, while other countries provide hardly any information.

Concerning policy objectives, further improvements in access to HE for under-represented groups remains a policy priority for most countries. As specific situations vary widely between countries, they often have different more specific policy priorities, requiring the use of specific instruments to achieve these objectives.

Many countries want to give special attention to one or more groups which are under-represented in terms of access to HE. Cultural minorities and students with a disability are frequently mentioned.

For many countries the further development of flexible learning paths is crucial. This instrument is essential for lifelong learning, and it also a necessary ingredient in policies which try to improve the access of many under-represented groups. Again, the reader is referred to the complementary report by A. Timofei [9].

Other countries want to expand and to refine their system of student grants, or the funding rules of the universities. Many countries also stress the need to focus on the upper secondary education level as a key area for success in HE.

Any long-term strategy for educational policies must be based on reliable data and sound research. It must also incorporate the expected needs of the labour market⁶, the immigration policy, and the general budgetary policy constraints. All stakeholders should also be involved. Moreover, given that education is a policy area in which radical changes cannot be expected in the short run, targets, instruments and budgets should be defined several years in advance.

Several countries have defined exactly such fully integrated policies. A good example of such an integrated approach is Ireland's National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008 – 2013. See reference [7]. The following citation from that country's national report is very illustrative. "Ireland has achieved an unprecedented expansion in educational opportunities over the last four decades and has now reached entry rates to HE in excess of 55 per cent. Assessment of future skills needs in the National Skills Strategy predict that entry rates to higher education should reach 72 per cent by 2020. The over-arching single goal of the Widening Access strand is to develop initiatives to underpin the concept of lifelong learning and to improve access rates to third level from designated under represented groups, in order to achieve the envisaged rates of participation in HE" (p. 38).

Clearly, a close monitoring and measuring of progress is essential. In this respect many countries rely on yearly reports and on statistical data. Several countries report that Eurostudent IV will be very helpful.

In most countries the authority responsible for the preparation, implementation and evaluation of national strategies is the Ministry of Education. There is also typically a Council of HE in which all stakeholders (students, employers, government and HEIs) are represented.

5.6. Concluding remarks and recommendations of the social dimension coordination group

The main conclusion of this report is that, in general, the social dimension is an important element of the higher education policy of the countries participating in the Bologna Process. At the same time, it is also clear that the group of reporting countries is very diverse and heterogeneous. Some countries have recently experienced significant changes in their

⁶ See also the interesting document [2].

political regimes. The institutional contexts in which governments operate, the challenges they face and the instruments that are available to them are extremely diverse.

To further support and speed up the social dimension of the Bologna Process the working group has formulated a number of recommendations.

The analysis shows clearly that virtually all countries take some action in order to enhance participative equity in their country, but only a minority of the countries has set up monitoring systems for measuring progress on the issue. Still fewer show evidence for an integrated strategy with synergies between government actions and institutional practices, funding arrangements, lifelong learning strategies, recognition of prior learning, cultural and linguistic minority issues, guidance services, communication policy, social policy, anti-discrimination protection, tax system etc.

The coordination group concluded that there is still a long way to go before the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels will reflect the diversity of our populations. Therefore, this objective set for the social dimension at the Ministerial conference in London is still valid, and even more so in the context of globalisation, demographic challenges and the current financial crisis.

Nevertheless, it is clear that the answers in the national reports to the questions on which measures the Bologna countries have taken (or are about to take) to improve participative equity in the national reports, only provide part of the picture.

In the context of the 2009 Stocktaking exercise, the answers on the national strategies for the social dimension should be read also in the context of what countries report on lifelong learning, recognition of prior learning, flexible learning paths and support to mobility and on future challenges for the national higher education system as a whole.

It was also striking that the issue of the social dimension of higher education is a very wide topic, which requires integration of national policies on education with other policy areas.

1. Evidence-based policy making and the development of performance indicators

The coordination group saw a strong need of evidence-based policy making and for collecting and developing sound data and indicators in order to measure progress at national level with a view to possible future benchmarking.

The upcoming report of Eurostat and Eurostudent on Social Dimension and Mobility in the Bologna Process can therefore be seen as a first step to close this information gap, at least from the perspective of overall participation rates and average educational attainment levels in each country.

2. Students with a disability

From the national reports it is clear that achieving equality of opportunity for students with a disability remains an important challenge. The Social Dimension Coordination

Group recommends that governments and HEIs commit themselves to giving more attention to this group of students. This is also a recommendation expressed at the international seminar in Bruges on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. See [6].

A necessary first step is to agree on a set of data, giving information on the size and the composition of this group of students.

Countries should then report regularly on the progress they are making.

3. Provision of social support services for students.

For the daily life of the students, social support services are crucial. It is, therefore, essential to obtain more information on the quality of the provision of these services. For the moment this information is very limited.

General recommendation

The coordination group recommends that the 2009 Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué should reiterate the objectives for participative equity set by the Ministers in London 2007. Based on the outcomes of the analysis of the national strategies on the social dimension, the Ministers should commit themselves to continue collecting and developing sound data and indicators to facilitate monitoring of progress and evidence-based adjustments of policy-making towards a more inclusive higher education in Europe.

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This summary report is based on the national reports submitted for the Bologna Stocktaking 2009 exercise, especially on Part II on the Social Dimension of the Bologna Process, received from Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium-Flemish community, Belgium-French community, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, FYROMacedonia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Holy See, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Scotland, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom (England, Wales, Northern Ireland), UK (Scotland), Ukraine.

Template for National Strategies on the Social Dimension of the Bologna Process

I Definition of the Social Dimension in the London Communiqué.

“We strive for the social goal that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education should reflect the diversity of our populations. We therefore pledge to take action to widen participation at all levels on the basis of equal opportunity”.

II AS IS SITUATION (Current state of affairs).

1. Which groups in society are still underrepresented in your national higher education system? What are the main obstacles to participative equity in terms of access and successful completion of studies?
2. Please describe what measures your government is taking to increase the representation of groups identified in the question above. Please refer to the possible actions listed in the Bologna Working Group report on the Social Dimension and Mobility.
3. Describe what measures are being taken by the Government to help students complete their studies without obstacles related to their social or economic background. Again, please refer to the possible actions listed in the Bologna Working Group report on the Social Dimension and Mobility. Please indicate whether the measures apply to all students or only to certain levels or types of higher education institutions.
4. Does your country have statistical and/or other research evidence at its disposal to underpin the identification of underrepresented groups and the main obstacles to participative equity (see Q1). If yes, please specify. Or are regular student surveys organised with the aim of providing data concerning the social dimension?

III PROCESS TOWARDS A MORE INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM (strategy for the future).

5. How do you plan to tackle the challenges identified under Q 1 in the near future (2008 – 2010)?
 - (a) Which concrete goals do you want to achieve?
 - (b) What actions are planned for the different target groups identified above to assist them to overcome obstacles to access, participation and completion of studies by students? Please refer to Annex B and to the suggested approach outlined in the 2007 report from the Bologna Process Working Group on the Social Dimension and Mobility.

(c) Is there a specific budget for these measures for underrepresented groups? If so, please provide details.

(d) Is there a timeline for action? If yes, provide details.

6. What arrangements are planned for monitoring progress towards more equitable access, participation and success?

IV Information on the National responsibility for the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the national Strategies.

Please indicate which authority or other party is responsible for the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the national strategy and describe the way in which the various stakeholders are involved. Did your country designate (a) contact point(s) for the national strategy? If so, please add the coordinates of the national contact point(s).

